

Moss Zarb, Julia Clare Zillah. *From the Horse's Mouth: Critical Issues of Post-Publication Authorial Influence*. Thesis (PhD [Comparative Literature]), University of Toronto. Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 2001. (Publication No. NQ63612)

Abstract

The divorce of the author and the text has arguably been one of the main projects of twentieth-century critical writing. Formalist theories, in particular, have dominated with an idea that the author is, and must be, irreparably separated from a text after the point of publication. This dissertation investigates theories that both challenge and support the proposition that the post-publication voice of an author may have some critical merit. It is undertaken using personal correspondence between the author, Julia Moss Zarb, and four Canadian writers; Robert Kroetsch, Carol Shields, Matt Cohen, and Marie-Claire Blais. Each chapter works from a different angle to examine the possible uses and limitations of extra textual communications. The chapter, "Process is Always in Process," for example, presents a theoretical dialogue between Kroetsch and the author regarding issues of intentionality. The chapter, "Process Pre-Staged," on the other hand, offers a consideration of the interaction between Blais' expressions in personal correspondence and the body of selected published texts. Throughout the work, conflicts between the reader's and the author's authority are in central focus. Ultimately, this dissertation identifies critical value as potentially arising out of a situation where the reader is empowered with the interpretive discretion to allow or disallow post-publication authorial statements into the reading process. Whether drawing on phenomenology, postmodernism or genetic theory as tools for comprehending the reader/author/text rapport, or employing a comprehension of poststructuralism and New Criticism to divine deep-seeded modes of resistance, it is arguable that interpretation of post-publication authorial statements during the reading process creates, for the reader, a potentially significant liminal effect. Throughout this course of inquiry, it becomes apparent that an author's own words may be used with a pre-meditated conservatism to open points of entry and reentry into his or her works. With an awareness of the difference in degree between allowing a writer to guide towards an alternative means of entering a text and accepting his or her input as directive, each chapter demonstrates that consideration of an author may create a portal through which a reader may approach a work.