



A Theory of Thrills, Sublime and Epiphany in Literature

By Nigel Fabb

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This book offers a psychological account of thrills, of the epiphanic experience of seeing ordinary things in a profoundly new way, and of the experience of the sublime.

This book offers a psychological account of thrills (goosebumps and tears), of the epiphanic experience of seeing ordinary things in a profoundly new way, and of the experience of the sublime. The unifying characteristic of these 'strong experiences' is that they all begin with surprise. They are important in literature: literature is about these experiences, and literature can cause these experiences. This book offers an overview of theories of these kinds of experience, and of what might cause them to happen. In the final chapter, various literary strategies are explored as possible causes. The book draws on psychological accounts of surprise, and of emotion, and cognitive approaches to what knowledge is, why it is possible to have feelings of profound knowledge, and why what we know can sometimes not be put into words.

Readership

Students and scholars of literature, stylistics, cognitive poetics, and the psychology of aesthetics.

Key selling points

- First to treat them together: the experience of the sublime, of 'epiphany' which is generally a profound experience of something ordinary, and the feeling of 'thrills' which can be a shiver down the spine or sudden tears.
- Reviews some of the work on the sublime and epiphanies, including life-changing epiphanies, in the literary critical, philosophical and psychological literature.

Contents

Acknowledgements; Dedication; 1. Introduction: Strong experiences and what causes them; 2. The study of strong experiences; 3. Epistemic feelings and knowledge; 4. Arousal, emotion and strong experiences; 5. The psychological background; 6. How literature triggers strong experiences; 7. Conclusions; Bibliography; Index

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Author or co-author of eleven books on literature and linguistics.

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