

Ideology and Narrative Fiction

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1 Definition

In the context of narrative fiction, ideology may be defined as the frame of values informing the narrative. This frame installs hierarchical relationships between pairs of oppositional terms such as real vs. false, good vs. bad, and beautiful vs. ugly. These preferences may be explicitly stated in the text or remain more or less implicit. The reader can engage with the frame in variety of ways: he or she can make it explicit (and thus engage with the hierarchy discovered in the text), construct it only partially, or disregard it completely. It is always the reader who pieces together the ideology of the fiction at hand, but relevant choices invariably emerge from an interaction between three elements: reader, context and text. Theories of ideology can be categorized according to the element they stress: psychological approaches are mostly concerned with the reader, sociological analyses tend to highlight the context (including the author), and discursive inquiries focus on the actual text. Any aspect of narrative form can lead to multiple ideological interpretations on the part of the reader, but some narrative scholars (esp. in gender and postcolonial studies) have wanted to associate formal characteristics such as voice and focalization with a specific ideological meaning.

2 Explication

Ideological analysis is relational, since ideology is typically defined in terms of the relation between one domain considered to be the expression of the ideology (consciousness, art, fiction) and another domain considered as the source (the unconscious, the social and economic infrastructure). The sociologist Mannheim regards the study of ideology as part of a broader sociology of knowledge that connects ideas to the social systems in which they arise. His “relationism” (Mannheim [1936] 1968) finds a middle ground between determinism (ideas are caused by social conditions) and relativism (Eagleton [1991] 2007: 107–10).

In general, three main approaches to ideology can be discerned (see 3.1), though

they intertwine and overlap. As a collective set of beliefs, ideology can be approached from a sociological angle (with a stress on the collective element) or from a psychological perspective, ranging from traditional Freudian psychoanalysis (focusing on the subconscious undercurrent of the beliefs) to present-day cognitive studies that focus on the mental schemata involved in the set of beliefs (van Dijk 1998; Emmott & Alexander → Schemata [1]). A third tradition focuses on language and discourse and, more generally, on semiotic systems as the centers of ideological enunciation.

Some representatives of these three traditions zoom in on narrative fiction to study the workings of ideology (see 3.2). As a result of the so-called ethical turn (Eskin 2004), philosophers and literary scholars alike have studied the reading of narrative fiction as a form of moral engagement with the textual other. Famous examples include Nussbaum ([1990] 1992) and Miller (1987). While the former stresses the need for a humanist, “loving” and respectful approach to the laws contained in the text, the latter highlights the inevitable relativism of the norms developed in the act of reading.

Within the discipline of narratology (see 3.3.), attention to the ideological dimension of narrative fiction has involved a wide variety of approaches, ranging from textually oriented efforts (e.g. structuralism) over pragmatic proposals (e.g. rhetorical narratology) to broad contextualizations (e.g. feminist and postcolonial narratologies).

The disputes between the various general approaches to ideology center on (1) the kind of deep structure (e.g. sociological or psychoanalytical); (2) the nature of the relation between deep and surface level (e.g. deterministic or dialectical); (3) the concrete form of ideology: negative (dissimulation, illusion) or positive (social function of collectivization), small (ideology restricted to some forms of [false] consciousness linked to specific classes) or large (ideology as general worldview not tied up with particular classes). In the broadest sense, ideology is close to common sense, doxa (Bourdieu [1980] 1992: 68), and lived experience.

3 History of the Concept and its Study

3.1 Ideology in General

The **term** ideology was coined at the end of the 18th century by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy, who systematized its usage in the various volumes of *Éléments d'Idéologie* ([1801–15] 1827). He used the term to indicate a new science of ideas, fulfilling the empiricist (and in his case, revolutionary political) ideals of the Enlightenment, even turning ideology into a part of zoology (Larrain [1979] 1980:

27).

The most influential **sociological** theory of ideology is found in Marxism. However, there is no consensus on the exact meaning of ideology in the Marxist tradition. Marx himself changed his view. *The German Ideology* (1845–46), the early study with Engels, conceptualizes ideology as a false form of consciousness that legitimizes and dissimulates the fundamental divisions of society grounded in the division of labor and entailing such dualisms as thinkers vs. doers, capitalists vs. laborers. From 1858 (*Grundrisse*) onwards, Marx described the workings of ideology through the theory of reification: capitalist commodities negate the process that produced the goods and that are responsible for their value, namely the relations of production and the surplus value added by the work of the laborer. Ideology presents goods as valuable in their own right and thereby excludes the economic process creating that value. This ideology is inherent in the capitalist mode of production and can therefore no longer be restricted either to a form of false consciousness or to the realm of the superstructure.

Marx's commentators highlight diverse aspects of his concept of ideology, ranging from positivist and deterministic materialism to relativist and dialectical historicism, and including many in-between positions. These interpretations also differ as to the degree of coercion involved in ideology. Bourgeois ideology may be seen as a forcefully imposed tool of indoctrination in class struggles, but it may also appear as a self-imposing process. Gramsci's idea of hegemony typically involves non-coercive adherence to the dominant worldview via all kinds of institutions belonging to the "civil state, such as the family, youth movements, and television." Ideology, "used in its highest sense of a conception of the world," may be a factor facilitating this adherence (Gramsci [1971] 2005: 328).

Next to sociology, **psychoanalysis** is another field that has made notable contributions to the study of ideology. In Freudian psychoanalysis, the ideological process is captured in terms of mechanisms such as sublimation and suppression which make unconscious urges (governed by the pleasure principle) acceptable while adapting them to the reality principle. Freud's studies of religion (esp. [1928] 1961) provide a good example of this approach. In the same tradition, Reich ([1933] 1970) approached fascist ideology with reference to the suppression of the pleasure principle, a mechanism in which the family plays a central role. Lacanian psychoanalysis has become the main source of ideological study and critique in the work of Žižek, who inverts the traditional sociological view: "The fundamental level of ideology, however, is not that of an illusion masking the real state of things but that of an (unconscious) fantasy structuring our social reality itself" ([1989] 2008: 30).

The third tradition describes ideology in **linguistic, discursive and semiotic** terms. Structuralist linguistics may have the reputation of studying language in isolation, but it has generated a lot of attention to ideology as well. In structuralist anthropology, Lévi-Strauss ([1962] 1966) places ideology in the frame of mythical or “savage thinking,” which he does not regard as a failed but as an exaggerated form of rationality: it installs rational relations (e.g. of cause and effect) between objects and subjects that have no such links (as in fetishism). This rationalization is a defense against arbitrariness; it brings about harmonious relations between opposed elements. As a result, social tensions are dissimulated. Lévi-Strauss tends to study this mechanism as an innate capacity of the mind. Godelier (1977), on the other hand, focuses on the social and political conditions of this capacity. He uses Marx’s theory of reification to ground mythical thinking such as fetishism in social relations.

As Williams (1977: 21–44) shows, early Marxism paid little attention to language and usually reduced it to an ideological dissimulation of economic tensions. One positive exception is *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, a two-volume study by Vološinov ([1929–30] 1973). Vološinov did not reduce language to a misleading representation and application of a fundamental structure, but underscored its practical and creative nature. Instead of being an abstract, fixed and arbitrary signifier, the linguistic sign is a concrete, changing and conventional sign that derives its meaning and function from the social relations in which it is used. In this dialectical and never-ending interaction between language and society, consciousness and ideology develop hand in hand: “The logic of consciousness is the logic of ideological communication, of the semiotic interaction of a social group. If we deprive consciousness of its semiotic, ideological content, it would have absolutely nothing left” ([1929–30] 1973: 13). Language can only function as long as it is social and ideological. There is no abstract or non-ideological language. And vice versa, for there can be no ideology without a sign system: “Everything ideological possesses *meaning*: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a *sign*. *Without signs there is no ideology*” (9).

Language-oriented approaches that do not pay attention to material conditions tend to look at ideology as a rhetorical effect of language that turns words into realities. The analyses of Yale critic de Man define ideology as the power to present linguistic reality as *the* reality: “What we call ideology is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenalism” (de Man 1986: 11).

Quite often, theories of ideology combine two (or even all three) of the traditions mentioned above. Habermas links the Marxist tradition with a discursive, communicational approach. Communicative structures may become distorted in

such a systematic way (related to tensions in the social economic system) that it looks as if it were the right and only way. As a result, it seems impossible to communicate and think outside the distorted system, which thereby becomes accepted as the dominant, normative and natural “universe of discourse” (Habermas [1981] 1984–87). Ideology is that process of naturalization whereby the dominant discourse becomes the only one (Eagleton [1991] 2007: 133).

Van Dijk’s multidisciplinary approach to ideology involves “cognitive and social psychology, sociology and discourse” ([1998] 2003: 4). He defines ideology neutrally as “socially shared beliefs that are associated with the characteristic properties of a group, such as their identity, their position in society, their interests and aims, their relations to other groups, their reproduction, and their natural environment” (1998: 12). His approach is in no way Marxist, but he does confine ideology to social groups (to distinguish it from generally shared and uncontested beliefs), which he studies in the framework of social psychology and discursive mechanisms that separate one group from another.

A Marxist version of such an approach can be found in the work of Zima (1981: 83–9), who sets up two links between language and social classes. First is the “sociolect,” which refers to the lexical and semantic structure of a language typical of a certain social class. Second is the “discourse” of that group, which for Zima comes down to a specific use of syntactic structures. Together, these two aspects infuse language with the ideology of social classes.

Another Marxist slant on discourse analysis is provided by Laclau, who combines Gramsci’s notion of hegemony with a focus on aspects of discourse. Ideology produces “the belief that there is a particular social arrangement which can bring about the closure and transparency of the community. There is ideology whenever a particular content shows itself as more than itself” (Laclau 1997: 303). Ideology dissimulates the openness and undecidability inherent in discourse and blocks the endless struggle for hegemony between the various discourses.

Althusser combines (post)structuralism with Marxism, Lacan with Gramsci. Ideology suppresses certain unconscious “problematics” and imposes typical answers to problems that are allowed to surface (Eagleton [1991] 2007: 137). Ideology is not a theory or a false consciousness, but a lived experience of social relations, an experience replete with the Lacanian “imaginary” confusion of subject and object. To Althusser, ideology “expresses *the way* [people] live the relation between them and their conditions of existence: this presupposes both a real relation and an ‘*imaginary*,’ ‘*lived*’ relation” (Althusser [1965] 2006: 233–34). Central to the modern organization of these relations is the State and its ideological apparatuses such as family, church and the media. The State acts as a Subject (comparable to Lacan’s

Other)—a model for becoming a subject.

3.1 Ideology in Narrative

Since the novel became popular during the period of the rise of the bourgeoisie, when the term ideology was coined, and since the novel has often been studied as the bourgeois genre par excellence (e.g. Lukács [1950] 2002; Jameson 1981: 152ff.), it is not surprising that the study of narrative fiction and of ideology have often met. In general, literary studies of ideology aim at uncovering the connection between, on the one hand, the literary field (involving narrative techniques, but also authors and publishing houses), and on the other hand, psychological or socio-economic domains and aspects such as unconscious fantasies or class and gender.

3.1.1 The Marxist Tradition

Williams links “narrative stance” (e.g. the choice of an omniscient narrator) to social mechanisms and “conventions of selection and exclusion [...], involving radical social assumptions of causation and consequence” (1977: 176). Goldmann’s (1964) genetic structuralism links literature with the social realm through the mediation of class worldview: the successful author elaborates, systematizes and renders explicit the *vision du monde* that remains implicit in the non-artistic class members.

For the Frankfurt school, this view of literature focuses too much on worldview and content. Benjamin’s ([1934a] 1998/2003) study of the author as producer highlights literary technique as the progressive and critical way to relate literature to social and economic production techniques. Traditional techniques reproduce bourgeois ideology, whereas new techniques disrupt that ideology and may contribute to political innovation: “technical progress is, for the author as producer, the basis of his political progress” (95). This is not a cause and effect relation, but a dialectical interaction between literature and society. It makes literature political, and politics literary. Benjamin ([1936] 2010) summarizes this as “politicizing art” (as opposed to the fascist estheticization of politics), referring to this as “the literarization of the conditions of living” ([1934b] 2005: 742).

To Adorno ([1970] 1998) the critical power of literature resides in its negativity: it refuses (in the sense that it says no to) the capitalist mode of production. In capitalism, mass produced goods are not only interchangeable, but their value is thought to reside in their exchange value (basically their translatability into money), which is disconnected from the surplus value created in the labor process. Literary works of art, on the contrary, are unique, not interchangeable and hence not subjected to the logic of exchange value. This way, they run counter to capitalist ideology. Without negativity, cultural products are subjected to the industrial logic of

capitalism, forming part of what Adorno and Horkheimer ([1947] 2007) labeled “the culture industry.”

3.1.1 Psychological approaches

Psychological studies of ideology in narrative rarely stress the critical powers of fiction. In line with the Freudian theory of the writer as a day-dreamer, fiction is often regarded as an imaginary form of consolation and even escapism. Davis links the ideological potential of novels with their power to transport the reader to another world: “Novels are not life, their situation of telling their stories is alienated from lived experience, their subject matter is heavily oriented towards the ideological, and their function is to help humans adapt to the fragmentation and isolation of the modern world” (1987: 12). For Davis, ideology consists of “public ideas wedded to collective and personal defenses” (15). The ideological effect of fiction resides in its defense mechanisms (such as projection, identification and denial; 20–1) which enable readers to find illusory solutions to social, political and personal tensions. As ideological instruments, novels invite this escapism on the level of spatial location, characterization, narration and speech representation. Davis’s analyses reveal these aspects of narrative fiction to be ideological and defensive refractions of social and political structures: thus “[fictional] locations are intertwined with ideological explanations for the possession of property” (54)—explanations derived from, e.g. colonialism (colonizing space) and monetary economics (acquiring space).

3.1.2 Discursive Approaches

Early language-oriented approaches to ideology in literature were developed within the “Baxtin Circle” (Holquist in Baxtin 1981: xxii). Baxtin himself continues Vološinov’s approach. He studies the novel’s dialogic and polyphonic narrative as a deviation from monologic and hegemonic bourgeois discourse (Shepherd → Dialogism [2]). The novel’s disruptive ideology is comparable to the ‘carnavalesque’ disruption of the social order. Ideology to Baxtin is a general and neutral term, coming close to “idea-system.” In that sense, ideology is inherent to every form of discourse and every utterance. Hence, “The speaking person in the novel is always, to one degree or another, an ideologue, and his own words are always ideologemes” (Baxtin 1981: 333).

Uspenskij explicitly aligns his work on “point of view” in fiction with Vološinov and Baxtin ([1973] 1983: 5–6). He uses “ideological” as a synonym of “evaluative (understanding by ‘evaluative’ a general system of viewing the world conceptually)” (8). He does not defend one ideology over the other, but develops a typology that neutrally systematizes various points of view, such as the monologic versus the

dialogic. His system links up the ideology of a work of fiction at the phraseological level (e.g. the phrasing of the narratorial ideology vs. the style used to describe a character's perspective), the spatiotemporal level (e.g. the authorial camera viewpoint involving no clear spatial and temporal coordinates vs. the localized viewpoint of a character) and the psychological level (e.g. the internal perspective of a character vs. the external stance of an invisible narrator). Interestingly, Uspenskij does not use the term ideology when he mentions that the phrases used to name and describe characters (e.g. princes vs. peasants) "reflect absolute social norms of a class society" (24).

3.1.3 Combined Approaches

Both in sociological and discursive approaches, literary ideology is regularly described as a form of closure. Jameson analyses the ideological process in Conrad's early novels as an attempt "to seal off the textual process" (1981: 216) from the economic and social context that infuses it, described in Jameson's Marxist terminology as "late nineteenth-century rationalization and reification" (266). A comparable view is propounded by Eagleton, who sets out to investigate "the most potent of all ideological forms—that of narrative. For narrative is certainly a paradigm case of closure" (1979: 71). However, Eagleton does not go on to analyze narrative, but simply uses it as a metaphor for a closed (ideological) system. In his view, Christianity is a narrative while Marxism is not, since the latter disrupts linear and closed models.

Jameson, like Althusser, studies ideology from a combined psychological and sociological perspective. He focuses on the social, political and cultural frames that influence the act of literary interpretation while remaining at the level of the subconscious. Such a focus on the dynamic and transformative mediation between the literary and the non-literary goes against ideology defined as "strategies of containment" (Jameson 1981: 53): the prevailing strategies of interpretation (re)produce boundaries (e.g. between literary form and political struggle) and thereby ensure "ideological closure" (52). Jameson's alternative comprises three interpretative stages. The first reads the individual text as a symbolic act, a symbolization of (unconscious) political tensions. In the second phase, the text is studied as discourse and linked with "collective and class discourses" (76). The text is placed in the social context, loses its individuality and becomes an *ideologeme*, "that is, the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (ibid.). The third stage expands the context (political in the first, social in the second) to "the horizon of human history as a whole," thus broadening the perspective (symbol in the first, discourse in the second) to sign systems. The work is now seen as a textual form of production interlacing various

sign systems that are linked with various “modes of production” in the Marxist sense of the term (ibid.).

Macherey adapts Althusser’s ideology theory to the study of literature. Althusser regards ideological power as an appeal that is made by a powerful institution (a Subject) and that creates adherence in the subjects identifying with it. From this perspective, Macherey studies subjects in the literary domain, namely authors, characters and readers ([1966] 1978/2006: 40). In their case, the process of adherence and identification comes about through language. The language of literature plays with everyday language and the “everyday ideology” (72) it embodies. The evocation of a storyworld invariably evokes (i.e. confirms) and parodies (i.e. contests) everyday ideology (68–9). In this double nature, it presents and makes explicit the contradictions and distinctions that are at the basis of language and ideology but that usually go unnoticed. Reproduction and contestation of ideology are at the heart of literature. As a result, literature is neither autonomous nor a reflection of social reality.

3.2 Ideology and Narratology

Before the breakthrough of postclassical narratology, ideology in fiction was most often studied as the “range of cultural stereotypes or accepted knowledge” (Culler [1975] 1994: 141) contained within the narrative and accepted by the reader as natural and self-evident. In Barthes’ *S/Z*, ideology forms part of the “cultural code” that refers to a body of cultural knowledge activated by the narrative ([1970] 1974: 19–20). To Genette, the founder of classical structuralist narratology, the ideology of a narrative can be found in the “body of maxims and prejudices that make up both a world-view and a system of values” ([1969] 1979: 73, our translation) and that incite the reader to accept the storyworld as plausible and credible. Ideology, in other words, founds the narrative’s verisimilitude or *vraisemblance*. Cultural conventions are turned into natural and self-evident givens. To represent this ideological process in a simple way, Jameson (1981: 46–9) turns to Greimas’s semiotic square (1970: 136–38), which lays bare the oppositions and values that ground the storyworld.

This line of reasoning is developed by Tambling (1991). When studying narratives, he investigates “the everyday life beliefs that operate through a culture” (3) and that are present in the ideological, seemingly natural system pervading the narrative. The system consists of “oppositions, which seem natural and seem to dictate their own terms,” though, in fact, they “are cultural, part of a conventional way of thinking that is so automatic [...] that they are passed off as natural and spontaneous ways of thinking” (25). Successful narratives present these oppositions

in a way that convinces and seduces the reader. This may take many forms: the narrative may be a faithful and one-dimensional embodiment of the prevailing cultural system, or it may be multi-voiced and critical of that system. There is not one 'correct' recipe to get the ideology across to the reader, for there are many different types of readers.

French structuralism quickly became the starting point for a broader approach of ideology in narrative. At the outset, this tradition, initiated by Hamon (1984), continued to hold on to the text itself as the source of "the ideology-effect." That effect was supposedly "inscribed in the text," namely as a normative and often contradictory system of values (9). In the narratological work of Korthals Altes (1992), Greimas and Hamon are combined with an ever-growing attention to the role played by the reader. In her earlier analysis of the narrative's "value-effect," Korthals Altes focuses on the text influencing the reader, whereas her more recent work (1999) reverses the hierarchy. Jouve (2001), influenced by Korthals Altes's early studies, sticks to the former position in his study of the "value-effect." That effect is inscribed in the conscious organization of the text (e.g. plot organization, characterization and speech representation), whereas the "ideological effect" operates on a subliminal level (11).

In postclassical narratology, the rhetorical paradigm provides the most common framework for an approach to ideology. This line of inquiry studies narrative as a form of communication between sender (author, implied author and/or narrator) and receiver (narratee and/or reader). A guiding light here is Booth, who introduced the implied author as the source and locus of the narrative's ideological norms and choices ([1961] 1983: 70-7) (Schmid → Implied Author [3]). The implied author is not only used to study the ideology of the text, but also to evaluate the reader's response: readers that go against the implied author violate the text's norms and as a result refuse the "friendship" (Booth 1988: 175) offered by the narrative.

From the rhetorical perspective, Phelan and Rabinowitz have paid attention both to the ideological workings of a text and to the moral judgments readers continually make (Phelan → Narrative Ethics [4]). Ideology is part of the thematic component of the text, to be distinguished from the mimetic (reference to the real world) and the synthetic (reference to the artificial construct) elements (Phelan 2005a: 20). Reading always entails making 'narrative judgments' concerning not just narrative elements such as actions, but also ethical and aesthetic values of the narrated world and the narration (Phelan [2005b] 2008: 324). Moral judgments are part of what Doležel calls the narrative's "axiological component" (1998: 123-25). To Rabinowitz, such judgments follow 'the rules of signification' (1987: 84-93), one of four set rules of reading involving a process of linking textual aspects to the reader's everyday

way of making sense of the world. Characters and narrators play a central role in the formation of moral judgments, but all narrative elements have a part to play.

In combining the world of the text with the realm of the reader, rhetorical narratology tries to reconcile the claims of the text (typically imposed by the authority of the implied author) with the freedom of the narrative audience. Consequently, the reader's response is at the same time linked with the ethics of everyday life (Gregory 2009) and phrased in terms of respect for the textual offerings (Chambers 1984: 146–48). The “narrative ethics” developed by Newton combines this rhetorical approach with the philosophy of Levinas concerning the appeal that the other (in this case, the text) makes to us. Newton (1995: 17–8) situates the ethical workings of narratives on three levels: a narrational ethics (focusing on form, i.e. narration), a representational ethics (focusing on content, esp. the characters) and a hermeneutic ethics, which pertains to the reader's “response as responsibility” (21).

The intimate link between narratology and (moral) philosophy is part of what Eskin (2004: 557) called “the Double ‘Turn’ to Ethics and Literature”: this involves “a ‘turn to ethics’ in literary studies and, conversely, a ‘turn to literature’ in (moral) philosophy.” The issue of *Poetics Today* he edited (2004) provides a representative selection of philosophical and narratological approaches to the manifold relations between ethics and esthetics, ideology and narrative.

Fludernik's ([1996] 2005) natural narratology broadens the link (inherent in rhetorical narratology) between narrative and everyday life, and as such provides a general frame which can accommodate critical and political approaches of ideology such as gender and postcolonial theories (358–70). The unnatural narratology advocated by Richardson (2006) unravels the ideology of natural narratives by focusing on the critical transformations of that ideology in narratives that ostentatiously defy mimetic and natural presuppositions. As such, it sides with “ideological critique” which, according to Elias “examines the ways in which subjects both incorporate and resist definitions of life-world and selfhood structured by hegemonic social powers” (2010: 281). A critical type of narratology looks beneath “the said” in a narrative and “reveals the political unsaid of both the text and the social conditions that produced it” (ibid.).

The best-known examples of this critical tradition are provided by the narratologies inspired by feminism (Lanser → Gender and Narrative [5]) and postcolonial theory. Since the 1980s, feminist narratology has highlighted the central role played by gender, sex and sexuality in the construction and interpretation of narrative fiction. Working against the limitations of structuralist narratology and its mostly male practitioners, scholars such as Lanser (1986, 1992) and Warhol (1989, 1999, Warhol

in Herman et al. 2012) have insisted that “even the broadest, most obvious elements of narration are ideologically charged and socially variable, sensitive to gender differences in ways that have not been recognized” (Lanser 1992: 23), arguing that in fact all “politically significant and historically grounded differences” (Warhol in Herman et al. 2012: 11) should be placed at the center of narratological inquiry. While feminist narratology has long since moved beyond the early “presupposition that the speaker’s gender can explain the form of the narrative” (Page 2003: 53) and instead holds that “gender is produced through narrative processes” (Robinson 1991: 4), it does not fail to foreground issues related to (the resistance against) patriarchy, ranging from a “communal voice” (Lanser 1992) to the incorporation of male uncertainty in the (biblical) construction of woman (Bal 1987).

In Prince’s concise definition, postcolonial narratology “is sensitive to matters commonly, if not uncontroversially, associated with the postcolonial (e.g. hybridity, migrancy, otherness, fragmentation, diversity, power relations); it envisages their possible narratological correspondents; and it incorporates them” (2005: 373). Attention to these matters may lead to richer accounts of narrative diversity, e.g. by focusing on “immediate discourses [...] issuing from a group” (377) or by including the narrator’s status as colonizer or formerly colonized as an element on the same level as his intrusiveness or self-consciousness. Prince is convinced, in other words, that working with the toolbox of classical narratology on “postcolonial” texts will have implications for the theory. In earlier contributions, Fludernik (1999), Gymnich (2002) and Birk and Neumann (2002) seemed more interested in the ideological relevance of this application. According to Birk and Neumann, “it is the task of postcolonial narratology to describe the narrative strategies that help to construct stereotypical representations of the Other, and also to analyze their function” (123–24, our translation).

For Sommer, both feminist and postcolonial narratology constitute a persuasive example of “contextualism” in the study of narrative fiction. Seeing their potential for the future place of the discipline, he argues on behalf of an “intercultural” narratology which would “combine structuralist descriptions of textual features with cognitive insights into narrative comprehension, within an overall interpretive framework of intercultural concepts” (Sommer 2007: 62). An excellent early example of such an encompassing narratological approach can be found in Sternberg’s study of biblical narrative as governed by “three principles: ideological, historiographic, and aesthetic” (1987: 41). These principles “join forces to originate a strategy of telling that casts reading as a drama, interpretation as an ordeal that enacts and distinguishes the human predicament” (46). The biblical emphasis on knowledge centers on the limitations of man, with various narrative strategies “twisting, if not blocking, the way to knowledge” (47). The audience, however, is not

entirely lost when it comes to developing the “proper” attitude to characters and events. Thus the reader’s orientation is helped by “the rule that complexity of representation is inversely proportioned to that of evaluation: the more opaque (discordant, ambiguous) the plot, that is, the more transparent (concordant, straightforward) the judgment” (54).

4 Topics for Further Investigation

To determine the ideological workings of a narrative, it is vital to clarify the exact role played by the text (its so-called force or appeal) and the reader (his or her disposition, including frames and scripts). *Empirical* and/or *sociological* research might throw light on the interaction between the two, which remains vague in existing approaches. In addition, *discovery procedures* that point to relevant textual signs of ideology are still waiting to be formulated.

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