Form and Context:
An Essay in the History of Narratology

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Abstract  This essay compares two distinct traditions of narrative theory: on the one hand, that of structuralist narratology as it emerged in the 1960s and in its various subsequent manifestations; on the other, that of German-language Erzähltheorie as codified in the 1950s, with a prehistory dating back to German classicism. Having mapped the connections between these traditions, this essay then concentrates on exploring how narratology, unlike German narrative theory, has come to broaden its project exponentially since its first critical incarnation as a strictly formalist poetics. While the German tradition has concentrated on rhetoric and voice (with reception theory constituting a largely separate area of inquiry), narratology, which frames the text within a symmetry of real, implied, and fictional intelligences, has always had the potential to pose questions about how narrative functions in relation to a surrounding world of ideas. Of the two only narratology can therefore theorize both authorship and reading. In specific terms, this essay argues that the controversial narratological abstraction of implied authorship represents the only point at which a negotiation between textual and contextual worlds can logically take place. Evidence of how crucial such theorization has been in the development of contextualist narratology is sought in the examination of a test case, namely the much-disputed project of feminist narratology.

French structuralist narrative theory has a well-known history, the moment

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of its genesis usually recognized as identical with the 1966 publication in Paris of the seminal eighth issue of *Communications* containing a collection of essays by members of the Poétique group. Along with Gérard Genette’s more analytically comprehensive codification of narrative forms in his 1972 book *Figures III*, this work constitutes the immediate ancestry of the formalist tradition that established itself in North America around 1980 under the ambitiously scientific name of narratology. The catechism of narratology’s more remote prehistory is equally well rehearsed, with its reverential acknowledgment of the contributions and influences of Russian Formalism, structuralist anthropology and linguistics, French structuralist literary theory, and so on.

But while this tradition in its various phases has commended itself to students of narrative literature in and beyond France and North America, those versed in the history and practice of literary scholarship in German will be familiar with a different and historically quite separate tradition of narrative theory. This dates most immediately from 1955, the year Eberhard Lämmert and Franz Stanzel both published extended studies of narrative form, and thus antedates the famous issue of *Communications* by over a decade. Despite their priority and the important positions they have assumed in the canon of postwar German-language Erzähltheorie, Lämmert’s and Stanzel’s books have not enjoyed anything like the popularity and influence of their French-language counterparts among scholars writing in English. Indeed judging by the frequency of references to it in English-language theory and criticism, Lämmert’s *Bauformen des Erzählens*, which has never been translated into English, is largely unknown in North America, at least outside communities of Germanists. Stanzel, on the other hand, has made somewhat more of an international impression. Although his first book, *Die typischen Erzählsituationen im Roman* [Narrative Situations in the Novel], was translated into English in 1971, thus prior to the publication of Genette’s *Figures III*, it attracted relatively little attention. However, his third book

1. While Lämmert’s title translates as “structural forms of narrative,” it should be noted that the German title implies no association with any structuralist endeavor.

2. In its overall structure Stanzel’s 1955 book presents a comprehensive typology of narrators based on the following three categories of novel: “auktorial” [authorial], for which he refers to Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749); “Ich-Roman” (first person), as in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* (1851); and “personal” (figural), as in Henry James’s *The Ambassadors* (1903). A fourth section on James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) discusses the possibilities for combining the three types of narrative in one text. The typology of narrative situations that emerges is shown by Stanzel in a rudimentary graphic wherein the three forms are arranged as points on a circular continuum, implying the possibility of intermediate forms. This circle, representing the situations possible in epic literature, is set within a larger circle on which three points—the epic, the dramatic, and the lyric—are marked. Correspondences are established between the figural narrative situation and the dramatic as well as between the first-person situation and the lyric.
of narrative theory, *Theorie des Erzählens* (1979), in which he substantially re-
vises a number of aspects of his conceptual framework, is relatively well
known to English-language narratologists and narratological critics in its
1984 translation entitled *A Theory of Narrative*. Stanzel of course also enjoys
an international reputation as a scholar who has published in both English
and German on British, American, and Canadian fiction.

Between them, Lämmert’s and Stanzel’s studies point ahead with vary-
ing degrees of precision toward certain of the broader analytic concerns
basic to the so-called “classical,” low-structuralist narratology of Genette
and his disciples, such as Seymour Chatman, Gerald Prince, Shlomith
Rimmon-Kenan (albeit with an important reservation I will discuss later),
and Mieke Bal, whose work has appeared in English. This is partially true
of Lämmert’s work on the temporal organization of narrative, which ad-
dresses among its areas of focus (a) the sequencing of narrated events and (b)
the relationship between narrative time and narrated time. Regarding the
former, Lämmert’s detailed analysis of different kinds of analepis (“Rück-
wendung”) shares certain interests with Genette’s work, whereas his dis-
cussion of narrative foreshadowing techniques (“Vorausdeutung”) has rela-
tively little in common with Genette’s analysis of narrative prolepsis. The
latter shares certain concerns with Genette’s work on duration (“durée”).
The thematic connections with structuralist narratology are less problem-
atic in the case of Stanzel’s work over the last forty or more years on the
presentation of consciousness in narrative fiction and his development of
a highly sophisticated typology of narrators. He is concerned most espe-
cially with the phenomenon of mixed forms incorporating aspects of both
figural and authorial narration, and in this he shares important interests
with theorists working in the structuralist tradition.

Lurking behind these 1955 texts is a relatively long tradition in German
philology, a prehistory that is entirely different from that of the structural-
ist project. It derives its basic categories and lines of inquiry from classical
poetics, and this derivation manifests itself in the fact that the canonical
texts of German narrative theory often have as their context the study of
the relationship between the epic and the other genres. The tradition’s di-
rect origins are found in the poetics of German classicism, in particular
in two brief essays by Goethe. His 1797 collaboration with Schiller, “Über

In his later *Theorie des Erzählens* (1979) Stanzel includes a far more sophisticated graphic repre-
sentation of his typology of narrators in epic literature. This representation again is circular
in form, but now the general system of categorizations is more fully developed, and a great
deal more of the circumference is filled with examples of pure and hybrid narrative situations
drawn from the canon of Western narrative literature. For insightful commentaries on and
reactions to Stanzel’s work see especially Cohn 1981, Diengott 1987, and Fludernik 1996.
epische und dramatische Dichtung” [“On Epic and Dramatic Poetry”] (see Goethe and Schiller 1949 [1797] and 1986), distinguishes between mimetic and rhapsodic discourse by focusing on the temporal distance that separates the represented events from their recapitulation in the performance of the rhapsodist. That essay also anticipates the later awareness of the process of manipulation of chronology in narrative. The second essay in question, “Naturformen der Dichtung” [Natural forms of poetry], was published in 1819 in the collection of notes and commentaries pertaining to the Westöstlicher Divan [West-Eastern Divan]. This essay is also concerned with the basic differences between genres, and here Goethe (1949 [1819]: 87–89) discusses hybrid phenomena that draw on the textual forms of both dramatic and epic literature. His suggestion that the three poetic natural forms—epic, lyric, and dramatic—could be illustrated by means of a circle accommodating both pure and hybrid forms clearly prefigures Stanzel’s famous graphic endeavors.

Having here indicated, albeit with extreme concision, the radical differences between the intellectual origins of these two modern traditions of narrative theory, I will progress now to the central comparative project of my essay. This project concentrates on what I see as two crucial though relatively unexplored aspects of the relationship between the German-language and the French-American traditions. The first of these is historical, and its examination requires mapping the extent and the sites of those few practical and theoretical engagements that have taken place between the two traditions over the last two decades. The second centers on fundamental differences in conception and function between these two historically distinct analytic traditions, and in addressing this aspect I will explore possible reasons why, unlike its German-language counterpart, the French-American

3. A history of the intervening years would be organized around such texts as: Friedrich Spielhagen, Beiträge zur Theorie und Technik des Romans [Essays on the theory and technique of the novel] (1883); Otto Ludwig, “Formen der Erzählung” [Forms of narrative] (1891); Käte Friedemann, Die Rolle des Erzählers in der Epik [The role of the narrator in epic literature] (1910); Emil Ermatinger, Das dichterische Kunstwerk [The literary work of art] (1921); Ernst Hirt, Das Formgesetz der epischen, dramatischen und lyrischen Dichtung [The formal laws of epic, dramatic, and lyric literature] (1922); Oskar Walzel, Gehalt und Gestalt im Kunstwerk des Dichters [Meaning and form in the poetic work of art] (1925) and Das Wortkunstwerk [The verbal work of art] (1926); Roman Ingarden, Das literarische Kunstwerk [The Literary Work of Art] (1931 [1973]) and, later, Vom Erkennen des literarischen Kunstwerks [The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art] (1968 in German, first published in Polish in 1937 [1973]); Robert Petsch, Wissen und Formen der Erzählkunst [The nature and forms of narrative art] (1934); Günther Müller, Die Bedeutung der Zeit in der Erzählkunst [The significance of time in narrative art] (1947) and “Erzählzeit und erzählte Zeit” [Narrative time and narrated time] (1948); Wolfgang Kayser, Das sprachliche Kunstwerk [The linguistic work of art] (1948) and Entstehung und Krise des modernen Romans [The genesis and crisis of the modern novel] (1953); and Käte Hamburger, Die Logik der Dichtung [The Logic of Literature] (1957 [1973]).
tradition has demonstrated a powerful capacity to develop far beyond an initial concentration on a typology of narrative forms. In doing so, as is well known, it has come to accommodate itself to the literary-critical paradigms that have developed from and subsumed the purely formalist concerns of low structuralism and have become dominant in the contemporary study of narrative as practiced in North America. This second aspect will necessarily involve an examination of the way authorship, particularly implied authorship, is theorized in the structuralist tradition, a topic not without its unresolved controversies. As a test case of that theoretical question, I have chosen the highly dynamic and at times controversial project of a feminist poetics of narrative. My argument thus aims to range over some breadth of territory. Its first steps will be, however, relatively small ones.

**A Tale of Two Formalisms**

As I noted earlier, Stanzel’s and Lämmert’s work is central to the canon of postwar narrative theory in the German-speaking countries. Not only is Genette aware of both Stanzel and Lämmert, but he seems to attach considerable importance to their work in his *Figures III*. In stark contrast, however, the German-language theorists are cited only relatively infrequently and are discussed very rarely in subsequent English-language theory and criticism. But those exceptions that do exist are significant in that they suggest the work of North American Germanists to have been the principal meeting place at which the comparative discussion of these two distinct theoretical traditions has proven productive in terms of the formalist insights it has engendered.

4. To give an admittedly crude illustration of the status of Lämmert’s and Stanzel’s work in studies of “classical” narratology, a quick survey reveals that in the three special issues of *Poetics Today* on narratology in 1980 and 1981 Stanzel is cited by only three authors: Stanzel himself (1981), Dorrit Cohn (1981) writing about Stanzel, and Brian McHale (1981) writing about Cohn. Lämmert is cited only by Cohn. In the three special narratology issues of *Poetics Today* ten years later, during which time Stanzel’s *Theorie des Erzählens* had been published in German and in English translation, still only six essays refer to Stanzel (including those by Stanzel himself [1990] and Cohn [1990]) and none to Lämmert. Furthermore of the theorists concerned with the adoption and refinement of Genette’s structural(ist) paradigm, Seymour Chatman makes no mention of their work in *Story and Discourse* (1978), and he refers to Stanzel only once, and then only in a list of names, in *Coming to Terms* (1990a: 118); Mieke Bal merely includes them in the bibliography to her 1985 *Narratology* (translated from the Dutch); and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan lists them in the bibliography to her 1983 *Narrative Fiction*, mentioning each just once in passing in the corpus of her text (54, 71).

5. In the German-speaking world the dominant trend in the formal study of narrative has been a continuation of work in the postwar tradition, whose boundaries and interests were mapped by Stanzel and Lämmert in 1955, with an emphasis on the analysis of individual literary texts. While the general field has meanwhile not been completely immune to the intel-
manist and narrative theorist Dorrit Cohn, which has engaged extensively
with Stanzel’s theoretical project for a number of years. But other signifi-
cant exceptions exist, such as the 1992 anthology Neverending Stories: Toward
a Critical Narratology, which is edited by three Germanists, Ann Fehn, Ingebo
gorg Hoesterey, and Maria Tatar, and includes a number of essays that em-
brace this German-Austrian tradition, or the 1996 study Towards a “Natural”
Narratology by Monika Fludernik, a professor of English at a university in
Germany.

Cohn’s Transparent Minds (1978), published the year before the appear-
ance of the Theorie des Erzählens, operates with an explicit knowledge of
Stanzel’s conceptual framework, especially of the aspects of the Austrian’s
work dealing with the three types of narrative situation and how they pertain
to her own subject, the presentation of consciousness in fiction. Cohn’s
1981 review essay of Stanzel’s third book in Poetics Today, entitled “The En-
circlement of Narrative,” is described by Hoesterey (1992: 4) in Neverending
Stories as “a mise en abîme of the international debate” between traditions of
theory in which Cohn “puts the various structural approaches to the sys-
tematic study of narrative into historical perspective for the first time, draw-
ing a striking parallel between narrative theory as developed by the Poétique
group in Paris and by Stanzel in his early work.” Cohn (1981: 158) more than
anyone else has succeeded not just in outlining the points of similarity and
difference between Stanzel’s and Genette’s typologies but also in achiev-
ing her stated aim of “bring[ing] Stanzel more fully into the international
main stream.” By this Cohn clearly refers to her aims in more than just her
comparative commentary on two European traditions of narrative theory:
indeed, the originality of her own book Transparent Minds results to a con-
siderable degree from her ability to effect the meeting of Genette’s “analyti-
cal” approach (ibid.: 159) with Stanzel’s encompassing “grand synthesis”
(ibid.: 161).

In her introduction to the anthology Neverending Stories, a rather nostal-
gic Hoesterey (1992: 5) sees the debate between the two traditions, span-
ned two or three years either side of 1980, as characterized by “theoretical

lectual thrust of structuralist criticism, one can for the most part describe the relationship
between the two traditions at best in terms only of a distanced contemporaneity. As for the
broader picture of literary-critical scholarship in German, Patrick O’Neill (1996: 12) describes
how “neither structuralist- nor poststructuralist-inspired criticism in a semiotic vein made
anything like the impact in German-language criticism that it made in criticism written in
French and English.” What O’Neill calls “semiotic formalism” (as opposed to “aesthetic for-
malism”) is seen as “something of a ‘lost generation’ in German literary history—prevented
from establishing itself by the prestige of historical scholarship in the first place, and essen-
tially leapfrogged, overtaken before it had a chance to happen, by the growing hegemony of
a new generation of sociocritically oriented cultural studies” (ibid.).
refinement at an all-time high, with intense dialogue marking differences even as it effaces them by conveying the sense of common narratological enterprise.” According to Hoesterey (ibid.), the “fundamental and lively controversy” that arises around 1980 in connection with the grammatical concept of “person” aligns Stanzel and Cohn on one side and Genette, Bal, Rimmon-Kenan (and presumably Chatman, Prince, and Wayne Booth) on the other. And this debate, with the same general constellation of participants, has flourished intermittently ever since and with particular vigor around the technical differentiations and terminological complications that litter the general area of free indirect discourse (or style), or erlebte Rede. Among its main contestants one finds Cohn (1983), Genette (1983), Cohn and Genette in their energetic correspondence (in French 1985, in English 1992), Nilli Diengott (1987), and most recently Stanzel himself (1988, 1990, 1992).

Questions of Context and the Theorization of Authorship

For all its sustained liveliness and its noteworthy degree of conceptual refinement, this debate has also been quite remarkable for the narrowness of its scope. Considered in a broader context, it seems astonishing that it has evidently been conducted quite independently of and virtually untouched by the profound and far-reaching redefinition of English-language narratology that began during the 1980s. This regenerative process has seen the study of narrative take steps away from a relatively pure formalism and toward more contextually driven concerns, and its first retrospective critical assessments are in several essays in the 1990/1991 narratology issues of Poetics Today. Given the productive potential of this reconceptualization within the anglophone tradition, it seems both obvious and important to ask why the formalist debate initiated by Cohn and centering on the accommodation of Stanzel’s work has proven so remarkably impervious to the changes that have taken place in most other areas of narratological enterprise. And behind that question lies the larger question of the general resistance of German Erzährltheorie to the issues of narrative context and function that are becoming increasingly important in the development of its English-language counterpart.

First and most bluntly, the postwar urge in writing and publishing circles in West Germany and Austria to retrieve literature and the scholarship of aesthetics from their subordination to any kind of overtly ideological value system provides a historical context. The study of genre and of narrative form has a long and relatively untainted history with strong roots in German classicism. I write here “relatively untainted” since it is important to
note that this tradition had proven by no means intrinsically immune to the effects of ideological appropriation. In 1955 both Lämmert and Stanzel cite with some frequency the work of Robert Petsch, whose book *Wesen und Formen der Erzählkunst* [The nature and forms of the art of narrative] was published in Germany in 1934 and then revised and extended in 1942. Petsch’s work, particularly his designation of basic epic forms, at times seems to anticipate some of Stanzel’s categories, but its insights into narrative typology are overshadowed by its theory of the evolution of literary genres. This is informed by essentially racist notions of the German people as privileged with the mental equipment appropriate to the production of the purest and most rigorously objective, long narrative forms. It is these ideal forms, supposedly realized in such works of German classicism as Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* [Wilhelm Meister’s apprenticeship] (1795–1796) that Petsch views as the most highly evolved types of literature. Given these circumstances it is hardly surprising that, despite their reference to other aspects of Petsch’s work, both Lämmert and Stanzel are clearly keen in 1955 and (in Stanzel’s case) beyond to distance themselves from anything even superficially resembling this kind of scholarship in either theoretical word or critical deed.

The power of such extrinsic historical factors should by no means be underestimated. Nevertheless, however strong their influence on scholarship in German may have been in the 1950s, it would be utterly wrong to suggest that German literary scholarship in general has in recent decades failed to engage either with the realm of ideas (and ideologies) or with the catastrophes of history. Therefore another explanation must exist for the resistance to any extratextual interests that has characterized both the subsequent work of Stanzel into the 1990s and the scholarship in English on the relationship between his work and the narratological tradition. I propose that the explanation is to be found in a factor intrinsic to the conception of narrative underlying the tradition in which Stanzel is working, namely that simply no site exists in German *Erzähltheorie*, with its intense concentration on the activity of the fictional narrator, where the kind of development that has occurred in North American narratology logically could take place. Unlike the German-language tradition, anglophone narratology postulates the familiar structuralist paradigm of a narrative communication situation, with the text at the center of an, albeit still somewhat contested, symmetry of “real,” implied, and fictional intelligences. The importance of this symmetry lies, of course, in the tradition’s essential capacity to theorize both authorship and reading. The paradigm that informs the German tra-

6. For a discussion of Petsch’s work in the context of German-language narrative theory see Leech 1985: 133–95.
dition lacks any such symmetry. Since Goethe the literary text has tended to be implicitly understood by Erzähltheoretiker as an organically structured entity, the product of a single, historically determined authorial subject. It is only since the work of Roman Ingarden, to which Stanzel (1984: 152–53) acknowledges a certain connection in his own work, and of the development of critical methodologies derived therefrom that narrative theory in German has moved at all toward the inclusion of the activity of reading in its understanding of how narrative functions. Nevertheless, the undisputed presence at center stage in the German formalist tradition remains that of the narrator, and the simultaneous theorization of both writing and reading essential to anglophone narratology plays either no role in German Erzähltheorie or just that of a latecomer. In German thought the study of the act of reading has found its place of privilege and has achieved prominence in a historically largely separate field of endeavor: namely, that of hermeneutics.

Ingarden’s subject matter does, however, represent a significant area of shared interest between the French-American and the German-language traditions, and the influence of his work is seen, albeit with a variety of consequences, not just on Stanzel’s theoretical work but on that of theorists and critics working within the structuralist tradition. This represents then a further significant point of intersection between the two traditions. Ingarden’s theoretical work on the phenomenology of reading lies behind the body of work in the area of literary hermeneutics and reception theory, work that is associated most commonly with the names of Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, colleagues at the University of Konstanz. Jauss’s magnum opus Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik (1977, 1982b), while known thanks to its translation into English (Jauss 1982a, 1989) as a work on literary hermeneutics, has remained on the periphery of the anglophone narratological consciousness. By contrast, Iser’s work—in particular his essay “The Reading Process” (in English, 1972b; in German, 1975) and his book-length studies Der implizite Leser ([1972a]; The Implied Reader [1974]) and Der Akt des Lesens ([1976]; The Act of Reading [1978])—has exerted a considerable influence on the ways reading is theorized in anglophone narratology. But even while Iser’s theoretical work became a powerful force in both German- and English-language literary scholarship, and while it has indeed permitted a crossover of ideas and perspectives between traditions of narrative theory, it serves nonetheless also to draw attention to a sig-

7. Jauss’s study is in two parts. The first appeared in 1977 (English translation 1982a), and a volume containing both parts was published five years later (Jauss 1982b). A selection of essays from the second part appeared in English translation in 1989.
significant difference in the disciplinary organization of literary theory within and outside the German-speaking world. This difference in turn has roots in the deeper, theoretical difference that the present essay addresses. For while the structuralist-narratologist paradigm of a narrative communicative system has provided an opportunity to incorporate Iser’s and, by more or less conscious or explicit osmosis, Ingarden’s ideas into a more broadly conceived narrative theory, the German-language tradition of Erzähltheorie, with its concentration on narrative form and technique per se, shows a far less integrated relationship with the theoretical and critical study of reception aesthetics and hermeneutics. By way of an illustration of this separation, the terms in which Stanzel (1984: 152–53) notes the importance of Ingarden’s concept of “areas of indeterminacy” suggest that this point of coincidence between his own work in narrative theory and Iser’s work in reader-response theory is, while worth noting in passing, of no particular explanatory significance.

To state that the German-language and anglophone traditions share an interest in the theorization of reading is by no means to suggest that the same holds true for the theorization of authorship. On the contrary, the theorization of authorship is manifested in anglophone formalist narratology in the more or less acknowledged participation of an implied author in the narrative communication situation, but this theorization is absent from and, for the reason discussed above, quite irrelevant to the German-language tradition. My proposition is that this implied intelligence occupies precisely the point in the process of narrative communication that admits an interaction between contextual considerations and formalist analysis. Viewed from this perspective, it is quite logical that the arch-formalist of French structuralism, Genette, in his Nouveau discours du récit (1983), attacks this theorization as superfluous and so carries out, to quote Cohn’s 1984 letter to Genette, the “dazzling execution of the implied author” (Cohn and Genette 1992: 258). It is, perhaps, equally unsurprising that Cohn’s dispute with Genette’s Nouveau discours avoids any confrontation on this very point, the question of the inclusion of the implied author in the structural paradigm, which she designates a matter “of mutual, but not mutually controversial, concern” (ibid.: 258).

The passage by Genette to which Cohn responds here is itself a response to Rimmon-Kenan’s (1983: 87–88) unambiguous redefinition of the implied author as a depersonified “construct inferred and assembled by the reader” rather than as an anthropomorphic entity, an author’s second self, as the

8. Cohn’s letter to Genette, from which these two quotations are drawn, was first published in French translation (Cohn and Genette 1985: 101).
implied author was originally conceived by Booth (Booth 1961: 70–71). If one identifies this textual intelligence as a “set of implicit norms” (Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 88) rather than as an author’s deliberate projection, a definition over which Chatman’s (1978: 148–49) Story and Discourse equivocates, one can make it function as more than just a formalist index, what O’Neill (1994: 67) refers to as “a narrative gold standard,” against which the reliability of an individual narrator can be measured. Rather, the norms and values it comes to represent can be considered to include those of the larger cultural discourses that have come to represent the concerns of contemporary narratology. Thus an abstracted intelligence, such as an implied author that is itself the product of negotiations between intratextual and extratextual realms, can be argued to be the only kind of intelligence capable of negotiating between, on the one hand, the formal characteristics of individual narratives and, on the other, those critical concerns of narrative theory that have increasingly concentrated on “the narrative level of textuality, extratextual discourse, that level for which the narratology of the sixties [not to mention of course the work of Stanzel and Lämmert] had no place in its conceptual repertoire” (ibid.: 159).

Toward a Functionalist Narratology

An interesting illustration of the possibilities of a more broadly conceived theory and practice is found in Fludernik’s radical reconceptualization of narratological thought in the 1996 study Towards a “Natural” Narratology. Fludernik, like Cohn and the editors of Neverending Stories, works to some extent in the space between the German and French-American traditions. Her study defines itself primarily in relation to Stanzel’s work. Fludernik (1996: 27–28, 330) acknowledges a substantial and perhaps primary intellectual debt to Stanzel, and she characterizes the relationship of her own theory, which is explicitly capable of accommodating context-driven concerns, to different parts of Stanzel’s project as a series of acts of integration, subsumption, supersession, and radical opposition. Also indicated in her work is a secondary and far less sympathetic relationship with the low-structuralist tradition exemplified by Genette, which is suggested at least to have generated some “useful conceptual tools” (ibid.: 330).

In fact while Fludernik proceeds from an explicit affiliation with Stanzel’s work, a further major component of her study, on the one hand, makes

9. Prince (1987: 42), elsewhere little concerned with authorial subjects, deftly avoids the distinction in his Dictionary of Narratology (though at the price of confusing Booth’s and Rimmon-Kenan’s definitions), where he refers to the “author’s second self, mask, or persona as reconstructed from the text.”
her work especially interesting in the present context and, on the other, further complicates the history of the crisp and clean division of narrative poetics into two separate traditions. Implicit in Fludernik’s “natural” narratology is her association with a tradition of poetics, narrative and otherwise, whose roots are found in yet another geographical location, Tel Aviv. An essential and dynamically productive aspect of the work carried out there since the 1960s and published in considerable part (at least during the last two decades since its launch) in Poetics Today lies in the conscious elusion of the binary distinction between formalist and nonformalist (or contextualist) poetics. In doing so it has, even during the heyday of the systematization of formalist narratological terminology in English, provided a place for the generation of a synthesis between the sometimes microscopic study of form, characterized by a blindness to thematic context, and the broad interpretative sweep of a historicist criticism with little interest in the particulars of the rhetoric of narrative.\(^9\) This work is manifested in the project of a mature narratology that, to cite the editor of Poetics Today, “offers a principled alternative-and-corrective to both extremes—the atomistic and the reductionist—so that, once developed, the theorist could review their achievements and turn them to the best account within an integrated framework” (Sternberg 1992: 505). This narratology is informed by an understanding of itself as “functionalist” (ibid.: 529), whereby what narrative (fictional and otherwise) is in formal terms and what narrative does in terms of its communicative function are seen as indivisible from each other, except at the expense of falling victim to either of the extreme (and dead-end) consequences indicated above. It is just such an understanding that Mark Currie (1998: 6, 8) refers to when he writes (echoing Sternberg’s metaphor) of narratology’s having undergone “a very positive transition away from some of the limits and excesses of its youth,” of its having escaped “the absurdity of a debate which casts formalism as the polar opposite of historicism when the two camps have [during the 1980s and 1990s] clearly forged a more cooperative relationship.” Indeed Currie sees this debate as having fundamentally misrepresented developments in critical theory and practice that are clearly visible in retrospect. He writes:

Whatever revolutionary moment structuralist narratology may have inhabited in its heyday in the 1960s, the impact of narratological method was certainly greater in literary studies at large in the 1980s, when it was operating alongside new critical developments from deconstruction and various new historicisms. Rather than a model of linear displacement, it would be more realistic to see the

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10. Hoesterey (1992: 4) likewise notes the importance of work done in Tel Aviv in helping “move narrative theory into a truly intercultural stage in the 1980s.”
new criticisms of the 1980s and 1990s as approaches that were enabled and re-
sourced by narratology—as the products and not the successors of narratology.
(ibid.: 10)

In eluding the formalist-nonformalist debate, Fludernik’s study, like Cur-
rrie’s case for a “cultural narratology” (96), can indeed be read as driven by
the kind of programmatic position made explicit in Sternberg’s (1992: 533)
argument that “we badly need detailed studies of how and why the genre’s
universals interact with everything else in narrative practice: texts, authors,
periods, canons, subgenres, media, audiences, competences, and sociocul-
tural frameworks. . . . They [i.e., such studies] would also constitute the
best argument for the two-way traffic between poetics and hermeneutics,
text and context, narrative and other forms or genres, the literary and the extraliterary, verbal and nonverbal representation: all pairs whose artificial divorce has not done much for either side, least of all in narratology.” Two things need here to be emphasized. First, it should
be absolutely clear that there is an essential difference between this kind
of functionalist understanding of narrative, whereby a given text’s commu-
nicative dimension may be informed by ideologically motivated concerns of
one kind or another, and the ideological presuppositions on which Petsch’s
evolutionary theory of narrative forms is founded. The critical distinction
is not between a set of ideas that one finds abhorrent and another set that
one may embrace. Rather, it is between, on the one hand, the subordi-
nation of the analysis of rhetoric to a fixed ranking of literary forms serving
a predetermined end and, on the other hand, a view of narrative as driven
by a functional interaction of textual rhetoric with ideas (including ideo-
logical systems) that may be negotiated between the subject positions of
authors and readers in and beyond the text. Second, it needs to be stated
that such an understanding of the interrelatedness between form and func-
tion was asserted (if not always put into practice) by the broader tradition
in anthropology and linguistics with which structuralist narratology nomi-
nally associated itself. Seen in that context, French-American narratology’s
first popularization as a narrowly conceived formalist project produced, to
cite this journal’s editor again, something of a logical perversion: a kind of
“structuralism at variance with the idea of structure” (Sternberg 1990: 907).
In contrast to this lopsided perversion, it is the recognition of the vital im-
portance of the connection between formal manifestation and communica-
tive process (preserved in the Tel Aviv tradition) that Fludernik’s project,
deriving and diverging as it does from the formalist categories of Stanzel’s
work, brings to bear in the development of a “‘natural’ narratology.”

Unlike Cohn’s work or the anthology Neverending Stories, Fludernik’s
project is concerned primarily neither with the synthesis nor with the comparison of the German-language and French-American traditions of narrative theory but rather (1996: 332) with the development of a narratology that extends the diachronic scope of existing analytical models, expands the corpus of literary texts and genres studied, and applies itself to a broader diversity of media. Furthermore the capacity to incorporate questions of cultural or social context is by no means crucial or even central to her argument. That capacity is, nevertheless, decidedly a factor in the functional, communicative dimension of Fludernik's “natural” narratology, and her study makes an explicit case for its inclusion (ibid.: 358–71). What makes this capacity possible in a model defined primarily in relation to Stanzel’s typology of narrative situations (and thus what makes Fludernik’s work especially interesting in the present context) is, I propose, the expansion of the theoretical paradigm to include the idea and function of implied authorship.

Not that Fludernik is particularly comfortable with either the term or the concept. Indeed, implied authors seem to promote among theorists of narrative a tendency to hedge, however essential the presence of such intelligences may be to their argument. So on the one hand Fludernik seems compelled to define the term almost as often as she uses it: as the site of “the entire novel’s frame of values” (183), as “the frame of the text’s values as a whole” (203), as the source of “non-attributable features of discourse” (218), as “an abbreviation for the narrative’s overall meaning structure” (381 n. 30), and lastly as the site of “the world view that the reader constructs for the text as a whole” (395 n. 7). On the other hand her own discourse hints at a distanced undermining of her own certainty of the validity of the concept: apart from referring to the intelligence it identifies no less than three separate times as “notorious” (47, 213, 361), she occasionally italicizes the term, places it in inverted commas, or shores up her own repeated definitions by reference to a generally accepted usage of the term. It is obvious that Fludernik’s understanding of implied authorship has much more to do with Rimmon-Kenan’s 1983 redefinition, which I discussed above, than with the concept as originally defined by Booth. Apropos Rimmon-Kenan, it is important at this point to qualify her characterization earlier in this essay and elsewhere as a “disciple” of Genette’s (cf. Sternberg 1990: 909 n. 3). Her work in 1983 differs significantly from that of other formalist narr-

11. Cf. Currie’s (1998: 96) two arguments for a “cultural narratology”: “The first is the idea that narrative is ubiquitous in the contemporary world, in fact so commonplace that it would be difficult to think about ideological issues and cultural forms without encountering it. The second is that culture not only contains narratives but is contained by narrative in the sense that the idea of culture, either in general or in particular, is a narrative.”
Ratologists in the importance she attaches to incorporating the contested idea of implied authorship into a predominantly formalist paradigm. As in Fludernik’s work, it is again possible to see in this difference an effect of the Tel Aviv connection. Rimmon-Kenan, whose intellectual roots are in the Tel Aviv tradition, stands out among the codifiers of narratology around 1980 for her concern to preserve the space in which the functional dimension of narrative can be theorized, the space where ideas are negotiated and communicated between writing and reading subjects.

For all Fludernik’s discomfort, in a sense it matters little whether one actually calls this abstraction the implied author, and indeed the baggage that accompanies Booth’s term is considerable. It is important, however, that contextualist critics and theorists of narrative often seem to rely implicitly on such an intelligence as necessary to their project. A particularly vivid example is Sally Robinson’s study of contemporary women’s fiction *Engendering the Subject* (1991). Robinson (1991: 12) sees these negotiations in terms of “encounters . . . between conflicting subject-positions,” but her description of what she understands by this must be immediately familiar to anyone versed in the literature on implied authorship as a necessary position within the narrative communication system. She writes:

I believe, along with Diana Fuss, that the “notion of subject-positions reintroduces the author into literary criticism without reactivating the intentional fallacy.” The woman writing always writes from some position, but this position is never singularly and authoritatively inscribed in her text. Rather, the positions occupied by the speaking subject (its author and/or narrator) are multiple and contingent, as are the positions occupied by the subjects spoken in the text (its characters), and the positions occupied by the subjects of the text’s address (its readers). These positions are not guaranteed or consolidated by the gender of writers and readers, prior to the text’s reading; the (gendered) subjectivities of writers, readers, and even texts themselves, should not be reified or essentialized. These subjectivities are not products, but rather, effects that emerge in the process of reading. (ibid.: 12–13; citing Fuss 1989: 35)

In citing Robinson’s study I have deliberately invoked a gender-oriented perspective on this question, since of all the areas in which the study of the interrelation of context and narrative form has been pursued it is in relation to questions of gender that the debate has been both most energetic and

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12. Robinson’s formulation echoes that in Teresa de Lauretis’s *Alice Doesn’t* (1984), which suggests the problem with “classical” narratology is that “the very work of narrativity is the engagement of the subject in certain positionalities of meaning and desire”; thus it fails “to envisage a materially, historically, and experientially constituted [implied?] subject, a subject engendered, we might say, precisely by the process of its engagement in the narrative genres” (xvi).
most fruitful. Among the numerous scholars of narrative literature whose work has contributed to the many-sided project of a feminist narratology, Susan Sniader Lanser and Robyn Warhol have argued the theoretical issues most explicitly in defense of the logical feasibility of such scholarship. This occasionally heated debate is crucial to the paradigm shift that has taken place within narratology, and it helps shed light on the reasons one model of the functioning of narrative has undergone this shift and one model has not. Since the development of a feminist narratology stands in the present context as an example of a more general phenomenon, I would at the outset draw attention to Warhol’s observation on the omission of gender as a factor influencing the models described in the standard texts of formalist narratology. In *Gendered Interventions* (1989) she writes that this “oversight is not a sexist one: not only gender, but all variables of context remain outside of classical narratology’s realm” (Warhol 1989: 4). The discussion that follows stands therefore as an illustrative test case for contextualist narratology in its full variety of manifestations.

**The Case of Feminist Narratology**

In *Fictions of Authority* Lanser (1992: 5) argues that “both narrative structure and women’s writing are determined not by essential properties or isolated aesthetic imperatives, but by complex and changing conventions that are themselves produced in and by the relations of power that implicate writer, reader, and text.” In this context Lanser at no point discusses any such intelligence as an implied author, but in fact her argument, though far less explicitly than that of Robinson (and Fuss as cited by Robinson), has to do with the logically necessary negotiation between textual and extratextual worlds. Lanser declines to discuss the nature of the intelligence that conducts this negotiation. If, however, one reads either Robinson’s or Lanser’s argument next to Chatman’s “Defense of the Implied Author” in *Coming to Terms* as the focal point of an agglomeration of “codes and conventions” (Chatman 1990a: 75), one gets the clear impression that all three—Robinson and Lanser, who are working from a specifically feminist perspective, and Chatman, who (no longer the formalist) is here exploring the general functional dimension of narrative—are writing about closely related if not identical entities. Chatman (ibid.) describes the implied author as

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13. In *The Narrative Act* Lanser (1981: 50) is actually sceptical about the conceptual validity of such an intelligence as an implied author. She notes: “At a crucial moment in literary history . . . the word ‘implied’ did provide a respectable prefix with which the mention of the author became permissible.”

14. Given the characterization of Chatman as a disciple of Genette earlier in this essay, his
“the source of the narrative text’s whole structure of meaning—not only of its assertion and denotation but also of its implication, connotation, and ideological nexus.” I propose that this general line of argument in the theorization of authorship bridges a logical gap and permits the satisfactory accommodation of such established and important concerns of feminist narratology as voice, forms of narratorial address, and especially the gendering of plots within the “classical” structuralist narrative communication situation.

When Lanser (1986: 341) first argues for the recognition of a “feminist narratology,” she suggests that she might be seen as “trying to force an intersection of two lines drawn on different planes.” Although few narratologists—beyond Chatman, O’Neill, to a lesser extent Fludernik, and now me—devote much attention nowadays to the implied author, I would argue that this structuralist abstraction in the sense discussed above is the only point where these lines can logically intersect. Without such a point of negotiation, Lanser’s synthetic proposal is vulnerable to the kind of counterattack launched by Diengott in her uncompromising 1988 response, which sees Lanser’s project as an unnecessary, disorderly, and logically perverse intrusion onto narratology’s well-cultivated turf. Diengott (1988: 49–50) states in her conclusion that “there is no need, indeed, no possibility of reconciling feminism with narratology. Whereas narratology is quite clear about its premises and methods, feminist critics seem not to be very clear about their object of inquiry. Furthermore, if I may take Lanser as exemplifying an attitude of some feminists, it seems that they feel compelled to appropriate fields of study which rely on totally different premises and questions to their own enterprise. I am not claiming that Lanser is not discussing important issues in her analysis. What she does has its value and its legitimacy inclusion here may seem surprising. Although his position here is not a feminist one, his understanding of the overall project of narratology has broadened exponentially since his Story and Discourse in 1978 (see Chatman 1990b).

15. Despite Lanser’s title, “Toward a Feminist Narratology,” her combination of terms is not original. In The Heroine’s Text Nancy K. Miller (1980: x–xi) writes of organizing her study of “the ideological subscript of literary femininity” on “the supervising grid of a feminist narratology.” Here again the possibility of seeing a negotiated implied intelligence as the author of that subscript suggests itself. Significantly, some hesitation continues about juxtaposing feminism and narratology in a simple phrase. Thus Joanne S. Frye (1986: 17–18, 29) writes of “a feminist poetics of the novel,” later, however, warning that “the development of taxonomies and morphologies of narrative and the structuralist analysis of codes or literary conventions . . . necessarily threatens the feminist concern with changing women’s lives or reinterpreting the lived experience of gender.” Margaret Homans (1994: 5) writes of a consensus “among feminist critics who consider themselves to be doing narrative theory.” Warhol faces this head-on in Gendered Interventions. In the introduction she asks, “Why Don’t Feminists ‘Do’ Narratology?” and she subsequently writes consistently of “feminist narratology” (1989: 3).
macy, but it has nothing to do with narratology.” In seizing on this line of argument (and here one is reminded also of Cohn’s decision not to disagree with Genette on the question of the usefulness of the implied author) Diengott explicitly invokes Genette’s position on context and authorship as identical with her own.

Warhol (1989: 5) argues in Gendered Interventions that “narratology typically regards context as a component of story, rather than of discourse. In other words, context has been a factor in narratological analysis of what fiction depicts, but not in discussions of how fiction’s contents get rendered into language.” She then continues with the proposal that narrative discourse be considered “within its historical or ideological context” (ibid.). Describing this in practical terms, Warhol’s later argument that “[g]ender in writing strategies arises . . . from the writer’s making a series of rhetorical choices, whether or not those choices are consciously intentional” (ibid.: 19) suggests the necessity of just the kind of implied authorial intelligence that Chatman posits. This intelligence, whose identity is negotiated in this case in the mode of reading advocated by Warhol, can be identified as the author of an implicit subscript, composed out of the codes and conventions of a specific historical context, that informs the rhetorical choices made by the writer and that constitute narrative discourse. This intelligence thus becomes the point of intersection between formal rhetoric and context.

When Prince (1995: 79) subsequently takes up the argument against Lanser’s work in terms rather more conciliatory than those invoked by Diengott, he agrees that “narratological models should include—along with a syntactic, a semantic, and a discursive component—a pragmatic one.” But the precise terms of how Prince (ibid.: 82) understands this element remain undefined beyond the suggestion of the need to “strive for more self-awareness, flexibility, and attention to the concrete,” while he criticizes Lanser’s work for “yielding to the interpretative temptation” and thus for “conflating criticism and poetics.” Prince here seems to argue in two opposite directions at once, since his insistence in this context on a strict definition of narratology as a poetics, with no space for the theorization of authorship or of the extratextual, leaves him no room (and no clear idea of how) to incorporate “the role of context” to which, he agrees, narrative poetics ought to be “more sensitive” (ibid.: 78).19 Having admitted, not

16. Even Prince (1996: 159), hardly a champion of Lanser’s work, writes of Lanser’s being “vehemently taken to task” by Diengott.

17. Elsewhere Prince (1996: 164) writes, similarly nebulously, in response to Lanser’s project: “In short, without yielding to the interpretive temptation and without renouncing the ideal of a description of narrative and its possibilities that would be explicit, systematic, and universal, narratology should and can take into account calls for more self-awareness, flexibility, and attention to the concrete.”
surprisingly, to being “perplexed” by Prince’s argument, Lanser concludes her response by drawing attention to what has already been happening in the study of narrative for over a decade. When she suggests that “narratologists and (narratological) critics—including Prince himself—are in fact producing ‘feminist narratology’ both theoretical and praxeological,” she is arguing that the narratological model has already productively incorporated contextual concerns, in this case specifically those of gender, in a way that would be conceptually impossible within the bounds of any strictly conceived formalist poetics that is blind to the theoretical consideration of authorship (Lanser 1995: 93).

This brings us finally full circle to the kind of specifically formalist agenda that characterized Stanzel’s and Lämmert’s theoretical projects. Those thinkers, like Cohn in 1985, Diengott in 1988, and Prince (in part at least) in 1995 and 1996, would surely have concurred with Genette’s position on implied authorship in 1983 in the Nouveau discours du récit for the very reason that their respective theoretical models share with Genette’s a fundamental incapacity to theorize the context of authorship. But whereas by the mid-1980s, as Currie has noted, theoretical and critical developments were already beginning to interact with and to subsume the exclusively formalist concerns of early structuralist narratology, Stanzel’s ingeniously complex and versatile typology of narrators has remained, despite its later refinements, simply an ingeniously complex and versatile typology of narrators. A consideration of this difference in conception and potential application is, as I observed earlier, absent from the debate comparing the German-language and the French-American traditions, and this is astonishing given the far-reaching implications of recent developments in narratology. By concentrating its energy exclusively on various technical details and terminological differences concerning certain types of narrator as identified by two distinct formalist typologies, this debate has somehow remained oblivious to the larger and more fundamental difference between the theoretical models that support the two traditions’ contrasting understandings of narrative as either communicative process or intellectual product. One tradition has proven inherently capable of theorizing context and authorship, of contributing to the constitution of, to coin Chatman’s (1990b: 309) term, contextualist narratology; the other, for all its virtues, simply has not.

That Stanzel, and by implication the tradition he represents, has remained utterly untouched by the paradigm shift in narratology is illustrated nowhere more clearly than in the three 1990/1991 special issues of Poetics Today on “Narratology Revisited.” The general tone of these issues is set by Christine Brooke-Rose’s title question, “Whatever Happened to Nar-
ratology?” (1990). At least two major figures of classical structuralist narratology offer answers that represent significant shifts away from the positions on which their reputations were originally built. Chatman answers tentatively with the title question “What Can We Learn from Contextualist Narratology?” (1990b), and Mieke Bal’s (1990) essay, tracing the development of her own work away from formalist analysis toward the study of the relationship between form and context, argues rather more forcefully that narratology’s only “point” has manifested itself in this development. In stark contrast with this kind of discussion is Stanzel’s (1990) remarkably defensive essay, in this context something of a sore thumb sticking out awkwardly at the back of one of these issues. Its concern is to respond to three earlier commentaries by Cohn, Diengott, and Chatman on his own *Theorie des Erzählens*, and its focus is limited to a discussion of typological details of the system developed in that book. In the context of the *Poetics Today* discussion of the dynamic process of a major paradigm shift, Stanzel’s essay makes a peculiar impression whereby his work in the 1990s comes to read like a series of rather tired footnotes to a brilliant earlier project that has been unable to respond to the radically changed—and still changing—concerns of the study of narrative. In contrast, the other *Poetics Today* essays in 1990/1991 clearly suggest the versatility and flexibility of the emerging functionalist model of a complex narrative communication situation, a versatility and flexibility that have always been logically alien to German *Erzähltheorie*.

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Elsewhere Chatman (1989: 52) writes of his two personalities in terms of “the old-time formalist in me” and “the rejuvenated radical who bubbles up as I read the latest generation of literary theorists.” In the same context he argues, like Warhol, for recognition both of the contextual dimension of rhetoric and of “the responsibility of looking as squarely as we can at the complex interface between a fiction and ideas bombarding it from the real world” (ibid.).
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