



HAL
open science

Ethos Attribution: For a Metahermeneutic Narratology

John Pier

► **To cite this version:**

John Pier. Ethos Attribution: For a Metahermeneutic Narratology. *Poetics Today: International Journal for Theory and Analysis of Literature and Communication*, 2017, 38 (4), 717-729. Copyright 2017, Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of the publisher. www.dukeupress.edu. 10.215/03335372-4184314 . hal-03948089

HAL Id: hal-03948089

<https://hal.science/hal-03948089>

Submitted on 19 Jan 2023

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

John Pier. "Ethos Attribution: For a Metahermeneutic Narratology".
Poetics Today 38.4 (2017): 717-729.

Ethos Attribution: For a Metahermeneutic Narratology

John Pier

Université François-Rabelais de Tours

Liesbeth Korthals Altes, *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation: The Negotiation of Values in Fiction*. Frontiers of Narrative Series. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014. xvi + 325 pp.

Historically speaking, it can be said that modern narrative theory derives from two main sources. On the one hand, Plato opposed *haple diegesis*, the "pure" mode in which it is the poet himself or herself who speaks, with *mimesis*, where the poet speaks as though he or she were someone else. In the epic these modes are mixed. Aristotle considered that *mimesis* exists either in a straight form (one person speaking continuously), as several persons speaking without intervention by the poet, or as a combination of the two modes. These delineations later gave rise to theories of mediacy, perspective, and speech and thought representation. On the other hand, Aristotle also maintained that *mythos*, the structuring of incidents into a plot, is the most important element of tragedy and of the epic. This position led to Boris Tomashevsky's Russian formalist narrative theory and to Vladimir Propp's morphology of the Russian folktale, close predecessors of the branch of structural narratology that sought to isolate the underlying structure of narrative content, a line of reasoning that was itself succeeded by a number of formal refinements.

In *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation* Liesbeth Korthals Altes does not follow this configuration but rather seeks to frame theoretical approaches to narrative in a different light. She contends that despite the important advances made by modern literary theory, Russian formalism, by establishing literary

study as an autonomous academic discipline, resulted in the bracketing out of questions relating to ethos attribution, authorial intention, and the moral and existential aspects of literature. Such restrictions are to the detriment of interpretational and other processes that cannot be adequately addressed on the basis of analysis and description alone. This is not to deny, however, that important strides have been taken by certain currents of research so as to remedy the lack of investment by narratologists in these somewhat neglected matters. Significant work in this area has been carried out, for example, in the study of narrative empathy, the theory of mind, and research in cognitive hermeneutics in an attempt to bridge the gap between C. P. Snow's two cultures (cf. 16). It was up to intertextual and, for Korthals Altes, particularly rhetorical approaches to narrative to fully investigate questions of authorship and ethos. She notes that this orientation, with its focus on the narratologist as interpreter, combines what W. H. Abrams (in his fourfold distinction among "theories of poetry") called the "mimetic" and the "expressive" conceptions with an emphasis, respectively, on verisimilitude and sincerity, as opposed to the "autonomist/aesthetic" conception (58–59). It is within this general framework that we find a series of lucid and well-documented syntheses carefully geared to the author's overall goal: to develop an interpretation-friendly narratology by acknowledging the diversity of interpretations while at the same time seeking to identify the mechanisms and conventional practices of meaning attribution, thereby contributing to "a heuristic for spotting ethos clues in literary narratives, as other narratologists have done for tracking the unreliability of narrators, for instance," but also by devising a *meta-hermeneutics*, a set of procedures aimed at "a reconstruction of socially encoded pathways along which interpreters . . . assess a discursive ethos" (ix).

Divided into seven chapters, *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation* comprises, after the introduction "Why Ethos?," three parts: (1) "Ethos, Narrative, and the Social Construction of Meanings and Values," (2) "Ethos in Narratology: The Return of the Repressed," and (3) "Further Explorations: Contracts and Ethos Expectations." The closing statement, "On Narrative, Ethos, and Ethics," offers a few reflections on how the metahermeneutic method might contribute to ethical reading and criticism (although this is not the subject of the book as a whole).

Recipient of the prestigious 2016 Perkins Prize awarded by the International Society for the Study of Narrative, Korthals Altes's study draws on a wide and diverse scope of scholarship that embraces historical poetics, hermeneutics, sociology, relevance and argumentation theory, cognitive science, ethics, and anthropology and on various strands of contemporary narrative theory, including German and particularly French sources that are often not taken into consideration in mainstream narratology. It also includes

numerous analyses of mainly French-language narrative works that both illustrate and substantiate the theoretical positions staked out by the author. Moreover, the various topics dealt with contribute in a clear and systematic way to the general architecture and development of the argument, and in many cases the commentaries present insights that readers will appreciate as source material in its own right.

The pages devoted to reintroducing ethos into narrative theory are representative of the systematic way Korthals Altes musters a range of concepts and research trends to address current research issues and reframe them within the context of her study. She begins with a reminder that Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* puts forth three types of persuasion: *pathos* (appeal to emotion), *logos* (rational argument), and *ethos* (trustworthiness of the speaker). Adding Marcus Tullius Cicero's *prior ethos* (the image of the speaker already held by the audience), the author argues that these forms of persuasion prove highly relevant when confronted with modern discourse analysis, communication studies, and cognitive research on mind reading, empathy, worldviews, and cultural values.¹ It is within this framework that, for instance, ethos attribution, by expanding the analytic perspective beyond textualism, gives access to the meaning of a work that goes deeper than its semantic content (2–5).

Ethos attribution, by challenging the autonomy of literature and of literary scholarship that embraces this view, casts a wide net into numerous aspects of literature and, more specifically, of narrative. It is noted, for example, that the death of the author was succeeded by Michel Foucault's *author function* which, through the influence of deconstructive and Lacanian positions on the subject but also as a result of various historical, sociological, narratological, and discourse analytic studies on the topic and of the ethical and the narrative turns, led to the return of the author. These developments raised a series of hermeneutic and interpretational questions that have not been widely taken into consideration by narratologists.² “Since structuralist times,” writes Korthals Altes, “scientificity has often been considered to come proportionally to one's distancing from interpretation, and from hermeneutics generally” (19). To remedy this situation, she sets her narratological study within the hermeneutic tradition—not that of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but rather with an emphasis on a metahermeneutic understanding of interpretation based on empathy, reflection, and argumentation (15–16). “Far from embracing total subjectivity, such metahermeneutics articulates shared

1. See in particular a section on French discourse analysis with its comments on ethos as index and stereotype, ethos *topoi*, and ethos and embodiment (60–65).

2. The status of the author and the different forms of author ethos are examined in works by various authors, particularly Michel Houellebecq, James Frey, Philip Roth, Christine Angot, and François Bon.

grounds for commonality *and* disagreement” (99). Metahermeneutics thus seeks “to catch interpreters’ cognitive processes in the act, to reconstruct their pathways and their textual, extratextual, and even nondiscursive triggers—and to show that this holds for narratologists as well as, perhaps, for ordinary readers” (249).

Accommodating narratology to interpretation entails, as the first part of the book demonstrates, the development of such a metahermeneutics. Ethos attribution can take place only within a broader cultural and social context. To provide this context with a theoretical framework, Korthals Altes incorporates into her system the idea of culture as “distribution of cognition” together with the evolutionary scientist Merlin Donald’s notion of “metacognition,” in which culture is defined as “a distributed cognitive system within which worldviews and mental models are constructed and shared by the members of a society” (22; quoting Donald 2006: 5). Related concepts (such as relevance theory) are also presented, in particular that of the negotiation of values as a further refinement of metacognition.

Taking another step toward the specification of cultural and social context, the author introduces the results of work that combines cognitive research and hermeneutics. Cognitive frames and schemata and the theory of mind play a role here, but a central principle of Korthals Altes’s ethos construction, and one that runs throughout her argument, is actually taken from a different source: the sociologist Erving Goffman’s (1974) “framing” or “framing acts.” This principle is crucial not only to the processes of selection that occur during interpretation but also to the elaboration of the entire metahermeneutic program.

The informative pages on hermeneutics, aptly subtitled “The Return of the Repressed” (37–50), can only be commented on briefly here. One of the main points in this section is the complementarity between the cognitive processes of meaning making and those that occur in the course of hermeneutic interpretation as a fundamental cultural practice. It is emphasized that the intersection between cognitive science and interpretation yields a metahermeneutics in which neither complete objectivity nor subjectivity prevails but where “relevance and meaning-making paths are laid out and contested, for which skills of both interpretation and reasoning are vital” (50). This is an important point, for in narratology the cognitive turn tends to favor scientific inquiry at the expense of interpretation, although Korthals Altes does note the existence of some work of a metahermeneutical nature that integrates both cognitive processing and interpretation. In particular, she points to David Herman’s (2009) cognitive-pragmatic model based on the interaction of contexts, actions, persons, and ascriptions (CAPA).

The following chapter explores ethos as a social construction mediated through a series of socially determined framing acts. Included in the discussion are considerations of authorial ethos, habitus, and posture (with reference to Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Viala, and Jérôme Meizoz); literary value as a factor contributing to ethos attributions; the Aristotelian notion of ethos as rearticulated by French discourse analysis; and sociological models of conflict (Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot) as a framework within which to study competing interpretational practices and value regimes.

Posture is a key notion in this chapter, as it mediates between the individual and the social, embodying an author's "mode of self-presentation," a "personal way of investing or endorsing a role, even a social status" (53; quoting Meizoz 2004: 51). If in cognitive terms posture and ethos correspond to schemata, scripts, and mental models, then from a sociological perspective they appear as socially determined phenomena set in a relation of competing or even conflicting interpretational strategies. "The social space thus appears as a locus of struggle over cognitions, in which individual interpreters negotiate what makes meaning for them, among conflicting options" (56).

In yet another connection representative of Korthals Altes's keen sense for drawing lines of relevance between what may appear as divergent or unrelated theoretical positions, the metahermeneutic potential of Dominique Maingueneau's (cf. 2004: 103–7, 190–202) three levels of "scenography" or textual understanding is underscored: (1) global scene, indicating whether a discourse is fictional or nonfictional, literary, religious, and so forth, thereby triggering conjectures about authorial ethos; (2) generic scene (or generic frame for Korthals Altes), raising certain expectations about authorial ethos (cf. prior ethos); and (3) discourse scenography, a particular communication situation (68–70). By forming a series of "embeddings," it should be observed, such scenographic framing acts highlight features that have been more or less neglected in the various communication models adopted by narratologists over the years, potentially putting research regarding narrative communication on a new footing.

As a final question taken up in the second chapter, since a work's ethos and genre (particularly in hybrid narratives rife with generic and other ambiguities) may be subject to disagreement among readers, resulting in incompatible readings of a text, Korthals Altes looks toward sociological research on conflict in search of a metahermeneutic appraisal of the issues. She thus turns to Boltanski and Thévenot's (1991: 201–60) model of six discursively framed "Worlds": (1) Inspired World (arts, creativity), (2) Domestic World (family life, mutual love and support, etc.), (3) World of Opinion (e.g., the media), (4) Civic World (politics, judicial system), (5) Industrial World (work, efficiency, technical skills, etc.), and (6) World of Commerce (profitability) (74). These

domains are by no means exclusive of one another. In today's society, for example, in what way is the university regarded as an Inspired World, an Industrial World, a World of Commerce, or some combination of all three? Uncertainty as to the answer to questions such as these is not foreign to literary interpretation where, depending on what value regime is enlisted by different readers, much controversy may arise as to the genre of a work and the ethos of its author and to what reading strategy is most appropriate.³

If the first part of *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation* situates ethos attribution within cultural or metacognitive and social contexts, the second part goes on to examine the issues of ethos and interpretation in broad narrative terms. As an antidote to the multitude of narratologies that have sprung up over the past few decades, a metahermeneutical narratology is indeed worthy of close consideration, a narratology in which interpretations are not tacked onto the formal analysis of narratives as an afterthought but one in which there is an "oscillating between developing general models of narrative and proposing tools and justification paths for interpretations" (91). It is in this spirit that, in a chapter on the relations between hermeneutics and cognitive science as they pertain to narrative, Korthals Altes proposes a "mapping" of orientations in narrative theory, a mapping which in practice tends to combine in various ways:

- 1) A *theory* of narrative, coupled with a theory of meaning making, covering the whole range from simple decoding to complex interpretation. . . .
- 2) A *metahermeneutic narratology*, analyzing from a metacritical perspective conventions by which people make and interpret literary narratives or through which they attribute an ethos to narrators or authors. . . .
- 3) *Hermeneutic programs*, such as critical ethical, feminist, or theoretical narratologies, in which the adjective—ethical, feminist, and so on—defines the relevance frame, which in turn determines what textual elements become signifying in the first place and how they are taken to signify. . . .
- 4) *Narratological hermeneutic practices*. . . can be traced back to such explicit or implicit hermeneutic programs. Narratological concepts and procedures then may function first as a heuristic, second as a justification vocabulary, and perhaps occasionally, as an authority effect. (95–97)

This schema is intended to buttress the necessity of hermeneutic interpretation in narrative analysis as a complement to the theories and categories

3. In illustration of the issues, the remainder of this chapter summarizes the radically opposed appraisals of Houellebecq's oeuvre by two French critics, Dominique Noguez and Jean-François Patricola.

discussed in the first two chapters. At the same time it is but one of the many developments in *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation* that are sure to inspire fruitful comparisons with similar and competing models, including those of rhetorical narratology, one of the narrative theories with which this book has the most affinity.⁴

Chapter 4, revisiting the concepts of narrative and communication, embeddedness, intentionality, fictionality, and reading strategies, reviews state-of-the-art research on these topics. This material cannot be commented on in detail here due to lack of space. Suffice it to say that the aim of this chapter is to further refine the broad categories presented in the previous three chapters by placing them within a specifically narrative framework with the aim of determining how conventions influence the sense-making processes that affect the reading experience and the reader's expectations with respect to ethos.

To whom is ethos attributed? The character, the narrator, the author? Examining a passage from Philip Roth's *Human Stain* (2000: 226–34) in which ethos cannot be unequivocally attributed to any one figure, Korthals Altes in chapter 5 goes on to review the structuralist, the rhetorical, and the cognitive literature devoted to character. She maintains that “interpretive heuristics and argumentative pathways” are a means “to explain and justify retrospectively the analyst's own construction and interpretation of narrative character” (139). It is on this basis that she sets out a metahermeneutic approach that takes account of readers' framing acts in a sense akin to Goffman's framing. Along similar lines of reasoning, she adopts the idea that the narrator gains pertinence according to the storytelling situation and at the same time that the presence of the narrator is dependent on the interpretational strategy and generic framing adopted by the reader. The narrator should thus be regarded as a function rather than as an agent or an authorial device, raising the question of optional narrator theories (Richard Walsh's views on this topic are discussed). Placing unreliable narration within this framework, Korthals Altes notes that Ansgar Nünning's cognitive-rhetorical perspective exemplifies the metahermeneutic approach. She also asks whether in certain cases the process of ethos attribution might lead us to speak not of an unreliable narrator but of an “unreliable authorial narrator” or possibly of an “unreliable author” (154).

4. This topic is worthy of further discussion. Note, however, that where rhetorical narratology defines narrative as “somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened” (Phelan 2005: 18), metahermeneutic narratology seeks to explore the avenues of ethos attribution and interpretation along the lines of reasoning set out in Goffman's framing acts.

With the attribution of ethos to authors, Korthals Altes rehabilitates a factor bracketed out by structural narratologists and somewhat neglected by postclassical approaches (the latter being inclined, when speaking of authors, to look at biographies). From the metahermeneutic perspective, she argues, it is preferable to adopt Foucault's author function or the notion of authorship.⁵ On this basis (and with reference to certain developments in French discourse analysis), six "facets of authorial image" are outlined: (1) the author as a biographical, "flesh and blood" person; (2) the author in the role of a writer ("authorial posture");⁶ (3) the image of the author in light of his or her earlier work (cf. prior ethos); (4) the author image constructed on the basis of peritexts and epitexts;⁷ (5) implied author (alternatively the abstract, inferred, or hypothetical author); and (6) the author as narrator (157–59). These distinctions, whose profiles vary in the individual work according to discourse genre and reading strategy adopted, have the interest of combining narrative categories into a system that is also compatible with sense making and interpretational procedures, one of the principal goals of *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation*. Also noteworthy, particularly with regard to metahermeneutics, is that with the introduction of the notion of authorial posture, a space is carved out through which it is possible, in narratological terms, to account for two opposing tendencies. The first is that deeply ingrained ideas about the autonomy of literature (and of the arts generally) are brought into question.⁸ That the boundary between life and art is blurred in various cases is fittingly illustrated with Korthals Altes's perceptive analyses of works by Michel Houellebecq, James Frey, François Bon, and Christine Angot, among others. The other tendency toward which authorial posture makes it possible to adopt a theoretical stance is the growing "ethicization" witnessed in recent literary criticism and theory, a practice that highlights the connection between everyday life and literary experience. Among other things, this leads Korthals Altes to call attention to the need for further exploration of "the relationship between the inferences summarized under [the] concept of implied author, [that is,] those that result from clues about authorial posture which readers may glean from the public domain of paratexts, and readers' other strategies to come up with overall meaning intentions for a text they

5. Korthals Altes coedited a collection of essays on the topic of authorship, Dorleijn et al. 2010.

6. For further comments on posture, see 57–58.

7. Peritext includes elements such as chapter titles or notes found inside the textual space; epitext can take the form of author interviews, private correspondence, and other elements that lie outside the text (cf. Genette 1997 [1987]). According to Gérard Genette, these two categories constitute the paratext, presenting a text to its readers as such and making it public within a community of interest.

8. The autonomy of literature is the subject of a collection Korthals Altes coedited, Dorleijn et al. 2007.

read" (168). The facets of authorship, as elaborated within the framework of metahermeneutics, incorporate but at the same time cut across a number of distinctions that are current in rhetorical narratology, the notion of authorial posture in particular being likely to elicit further discussion.

The chapter on ethos attribution gathers together a considerable amount of narratological lore. As in the other chapters, this is not simply a survey or a review of the literature on a given topic, nor is it an attempt to outline a comprehensive theory of character, narrator, and author. Rather, it presents a wide body of research on these topics chosen in view of elaborating some of the essential elements of an interpretation-friendly narratology. Examining character, narrator, and author through the lens of ethos attribution both consolidates a number of current developments in narrative theory and opens up paths of inquiry that many readers will want to follow up with investigations of their own.

Having defined the parameters of ethos in ancient rhetoric and then, in the first part of the book, set out how literary interpretation interacts with the negotiation of values in culture and how ethos is constructed socially, the second part shows in what ways the principles of hermeneutics and cognitive science combine in literary interpretation and how a number of narratological concepts and categories might be viewed in the light of ethos attribution. Part 3 goes on to apply these findings to particular cases. First is the problem of the framing function of genre (the question of genre being only sporadically taken into account by narratologists) and the authorial posture by which one genre is chosen over another, a choice that triggers certain ethos expectations and the reading strategy adopted by the reader. To guide her reflections on the connection between genre, authorial posture, and ethos clues, Korthals Altes proposes two case studies: Bon's engagé novel *Daewoo* (2004), an example of *writing the social*,⁹ and Angot's autofiction *Sujet Angot* (1998), an example of *writing the subject*.¹⁰ By various means, both textual and extratextual, and through the use of the mass media (television and now, increasingly, digital technologies as well), these works counteract expectations about the autonomy of literary narration. *Daewoo* accomplishes this thanks to its documentary or engagé nature, even though its logos-based ethos is somewhat offset by pathos-based clues (179), enabling Bon to posture himself and his narrator in "a complex ethos projection" (190) as a social witness without lapsing into a documentary or social voice. *Sujet Angot*, by contrast, operates as an "autobi-

9. Engagé writing is (1) "an act accomplished by the writer on the public scene," (2) "requires personal investment by the real author," and (3) "takes a stand on political, social, or ethical issues" (181; see Denis 2000: 30–50).

10. "Autofiction is the genre in which . . . self-interrogation is pushed to its highest—ludic or anxious—degree of reflexivity" (192).

ography by procuration" (196), even at the risk of showing its author to be insincere and inauthentic. As a result, this work is subject to a double perspective: from that of the narrative audience, real-life norms and authenticity appear to prevail, while from that of the authorial audience, unreliability is bubbling under the surface (198). The discussion of these two novels is couched in the language of rhetorical narratology, but it is interesting to note that it also contains some accents of Bakhtinian polyphony.¹¹ Thus the projection of ethos in *Daewoo* is reconstructed with reference to its "dialogic context" (190), whereas Angot's autofiction is described in terms of its "generic hybridity" (193). The book does not pursue this connection, but it is possible that some readers will want to look more deeply into how Bakhtinian concepts relate to Korthals Altes's proposals for metahermeneutic narrative analysis.

The final chapter is devoted to sincerity and irony, topics that are particularly challenging for the analysis of ethos attributions in narrative. Reviewing the ancient rhetorical and subsequent treatments of sincerity and irony and Wayne Booth's important work and the contributions of Gricean maxims and relevance theory to these matters, Korthals Altes identifies seven theses on irony that are central to the analysis of ethos in literary narrative (217–18). She then discusses at some length Dave Eggers's postmodern novel *A Heart-breaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2001), examining, among other things, the authorial ethos of sincerity marked with a tinge of pathos which is at the same time ironic due to the hyperbolic use of redundancy. Such features cannot be adequately analyzed by standard narratological procedures or described simply as discourse effects, for they are also dependent on the predisposition of mental models toward metahermeneutic conjecture and reasoning of one type or another.

The book's concluding section reiterates the necessity of including the diversity of interpretational perspectives in theories of narrative fiction. Narratology serves "as a heuristics for close reading" (250) which is conducive to aesthetic attention, but it also represents a crucial step toward ethical reading and ethical narratology. And even though ethical narratology is not the central concern of Korthals Altes's study, metahermeneutics does point in the direction of such a theory in that it is receptive to a diversity of interpretations and fosters the negotiation of values and meanings within the scope of shared consciousness.

The achievement of *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation* is to have brought together into a timely and comprehensive synthesis a number of state-of-the-art developments in narrative theory while at the same time opening up

11. Even though the sole reference to Bakhtin is on page 13.

avenues for further inquiry and debate. The book strikes a rare balance in narratological research insofar as it systematically lays out ways for integrating the latent but sporadically exploited implications of ethos attributions into narrative analysis and interpretation without hardening its findings into a set of abstract theorems or a constraining methodology. Moreover, at a time when literature and literary studies are in a crisis, Korthals Altes mounts a spirited defense of the social relevance of the literary field by developing a narratology which is open to ethical, rhetorical, and ideological criticism—a quality of her book that certainly did not go unnoticed by the members of the 2016 Perkins Prize reading committee.

In a telling image Korthals Altes likens the unique interactions engaged by readers' ethos attributions and the reading of narratives in general to a kaleidoscope. "The kaleidoscope," she writes, "stands for viewing from a certain angle, under a certain aspect, and for reframing a scene or a mental representation with the wonder of seeing configurations change before our own eyes" (249). As this image suggests, and indeed as the argument of the entire book confirms, *Ethos and Narrative Interpretation* exemplifies "narratology as a heuristic for interpretation," an orientation distinct from the "autonomist," "contextualist," and "foundationalist" approaches to narrative theory that Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (2003) comment on. Korthals Altes herself characterizes narratology in a similar way, but at the same time she goes further than such a heuristic conception¹² in that she advocates a meta-hermeneutic narratology, that is, a narratology which is not the mere handmaiden of interpretation but rather one that assumes the impact on narrative form and analysis of diverse interpretations considered as the social negotiation of values and meanings. In this light the four interlocking "mappings" of narratology discussed above can be said to provide a broad conceptual framework for Korthals Altes's narrative theory. Metahermeneutics, then, raises the possibility of rethinking the divide between narratology and interpretation that has long stirred the narratological research community. Although the matter calls for further examination, it may well be the case that metahermeneutics operates by extending narratological reasoning into the area of narrative interpretation in crucial ways while at the same time offering insights into the interpretational stances that even the most neutral narrative analyst cannot avoid.

Another area where metahermeneutics may serve as grounds for rethinking present-day narrative research is the status of postclassical narratology, characterized by a multitude of heterogeneous approaches. The various

12. Modeled after Genette's (1980 [1972]: 265) characterization as "a procedure of discovery, and a way of describing" (quoted in Kindt and Müller 2003: 208).

“narratologies,” it has often been observed, are in many cases mere “applications” of the narratological tool kit to interpretational or ideological agendas that tend to lose sight of properly narratological concerns. The aim of metahermeneutics, in contrast to such practices, is to set interpretation, which is indissolubly linked to ethos attributions, on a footing in narrative analysis whereby interpretation can be appraised as an object of study in its various dimensions. In this way metahermeneutics, through the series of framing acts it focuses on for taking into consideration the cognitive, social, generic, and other factors involved in the process of narrative interpretation, has the potential, in conjunction with the pragmatic and argumentative criteria offered by relevance theory, for renewing the debate on the cultural and historical dimensions of the narrative art.

References

- Angot, Christine
1998 *Sujet Angot* (Paris: Fayard).
- Boltanski, Luc, and Laurent Thévenot
1991 *De la justification: Les économies de la grandeur* (Paris: Gallimard).
- Bon, François
2004 *Daewoo* (Paris: Fayard).
- Denis, Benoît
2000 *Littérature et engagement: De Pascal à Sartre* (Paris: Seuil).
- Donald, Merlin
2006 “Art and the Cognitive Revolution.” In *The Artful Mind: Cognitive Science and the Riddle of Human Creativity*, edited by Mark Turner, 3–20 (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Dorleijn, Gillis J., Ralf Grüttemeier, and Liesbeth Korthals Altes, eds.
2007 *The Autonomy of Literature at the ‘Fin de Siècles,’ 1990 and 2000: A Critical Assessment* (Louvain, Belgium: Peeters).
- 2010 *Authorship Revisited: Conceptions of Authorship around 1900 and 2000* (Louvain, Belgium: Peeters).
- Eggers, Dave
2001 *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (New York: Vintage Books).
- Genette, Gérard
1980 [1972] *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).
1997 [1987] *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Translated by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Goffman, Erving
1974 *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper and Row).
- Herman, David
2009 *Basic Elements of Narrative* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell).
- Kindt, Tom, and Hans-Harald Müller
2003 “Narrative Theory and/or/as Theory of Interpretation.” In *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*, edited by Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller, 205–19 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter).
- Maingueneau, Dominique
2004 *Le discours littéraire: Paratopie et scène d'énonciation* (Paris: Arman Colin).

Meizoz, Jérôme

2004 *L'œil sociologique et la littérature: Essai* (Geneva: Slatkine).

Phelan, James

2005 *Living to Tell about It: A Rhetoric and Ethics of Character Narration* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press).

Roth, Philip

2000 *The Human Stain* (London: Cape).