According to Luke: Redefining Authorial Intent in Literary Theory

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According to Luke: Redefining Authorial Intent in Literary Theory

by

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Abstract

This project defines intentionality more comprehensively than the traditional understanding by including the unconscious and unintended social elements of a text. To that end, I discuss relevant aspects of Cultural Studies including ideology, micro-culture, and macro-culture while exploring how these elements relate to literature. Through examining of the Gospel of Luke, I demonstrate that intention is not coextensive with meaning: When Luke, or any author, makes a statement, his secondary or latent presuppositions should be almost as important as his primary intent in determining ultimate meaning. I show that culture and authorship are intimately linked and that a proper reading is one that accounts for unintended elements of meaning.

This project's primary aim is not an examination of Luke, per se, but is rather the examination of the language, ideology, and social factors as they work in and through an author. As a result of his unique cultural position, Luke offers an excellent text to consider. My aim is not to elevate the theory at the expense of textual analysis but, rather, to develop a fuller understanding of the literary doxastic practice and thereby come to a fuller understanding of authorship itself. Through all of this, I unabashedly promote our interdisciplinary approach as the superlative theory.
Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The object of this text is to enter into the debate over authorial intent’s place and prominence in literary theory and criticism. I articulate an understanding of intentionality which accounts for ideological effects on language and artistic craft. Such a discussion fits neatly within the boundaries of a New Historicist, Marxist paradigm, but my deep ideology\textsuperscript{1} stance provides a slightly fresher origin. By deep ideology, I mean that the cultural influences on an author are so deeply rooted that, try as she might, she will never fully escape them. A similar approach has been taken by others, to be sure, but I concentrate on the repercussions of cultural indoctrination more closely than most Marxists have done. The human, conditioned from birth to speak a given language, falls prey to the presuppositions, mores, and values that are encoded within that language. Language is itself an Ideological State Apparatus and a given speaker can be subject to myriad, and often conflicting, ideologies depending on the homogeneity of his or her culture. When an author seeks to contradict, defy, or escape his culture’s prevailing ideologies, we may presume that his success is always only partial. In other words, the attentive critic might deconstruct a text to see where even the most rebellious of authors betrays a tacit dependence on the hegemonic presuppositions that he is rebelling against. I argue for intentionality while

\textsuperscript{1} The phrase, “deep ideology,” is my own but the underlying concepts are well established in Marxist criticism, particularly in the works of Louis Althusser, Stephen Greenblatt, and John Searle.
simultaneously undermining the common concept of agency. Textual meaning may have much to do with an author, but an author is a slave to her culture.

Despite my terminology, it should be noted that mine is not a Deconstructionist stance. In point of fact, an entire section of my first chapter is designed to highlight flaws in this school’s operating assumptions. We do not deconstruct the text simply because linguistics is subjective and grants us permission to do so. Nor do we deconstruct to prove that language is useless or that all words are empty signifiers. To wear such a lens would be to forgo the search for a text’s ultimate meaning and to focus on the limitless options one finds in the realm of interpretive possibility. My position, rather, views ideology as a frozen object—locked forever in its particular historic moment—that influences, if not dictates, textual meaning. The point here is that meaning is not coextensive with intent. What an author thinks she is doing (at the moment of articulation) does not comprise the entirety of what she has done (when viewed in retrospect).

One could say that a text’s meaning incorporates both the author’s conscious intent and the ideological intent of her culture. I am tempted to use the phrase ideological content instead of intent, for hegemonic influence on language is not consciously perpetrated by the bourgeoisie, but neither is it passively contained within language. Ideology operates both through our unconscious dependence on
hegemonic values and through the cultural elements encoded in language. The text is the product of its author, to be sure; but the author is in turn a product of her culture. To attempt to pull either text or author from the intricate socio-historical context is to deny oneself access to important elements of meaning.

To flesh out my argument, I take a linear and systematic (though by no means exhaustive) course that begins with the assertion that theory is both necessary and inescapable. I then discuss the shortcomings of Deconstruction and Reader Response theory—two popular schools whose fixation with subjective affect often takes its toll on textual meaning. From here I use Marxist theory, sociology, and sociolinguistics to explain how meaning is bound up in language and culture and how a proper reading must account for certain unconscious ideological components.

The second half of my project applies this deep ideology theory to the Gospel of Luke, a text whose conflicting cultures make it perfect for such an analysis. While this thesis is primarily concerned with theory, i.e., the philosophy behind literary examination, and thus my aim is not an overtly religious one, it is necessary to place this project within its native context: theological and Biblical studies.

The adaptation of Marxist literary criticism to the Gospels is a relatively new development. This is partly a result of the unique status the Bible has in many of its readers’ minds. Scholars are reluctant to apply the same critical scalpel to holy

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2 Perhaps the unconscious dependence on ideology results in encoded language or perhaps it is language acquisition that results in ideological indoctrination. We happily leave that riddle to other social scientists.
scripture that they have previously used on Homer and Hawthorne. Held by many as inerrant, “God-breathed,” and decidedly not literature (in the literati’s sense of the term), the Bible has enjoyed its own special forms of critical investigation.3

Invaluable to my reconstruction of Biblical scholarship’s evolution has been Nicholas’ (N.F.) Wright’s Jesus and the Victory of God. According to Wright, most scholars in the last century have “shied away from […] attempts at [personal and cultural] portraits” of Jesus, becoming instead “massively anachronistic, busily dressing Jesus in borrowed, and highly unsuitable, clothes” (3). These scholars have attempted to view Jesus in a vacuum, refusing to draw any conclusions about his life, personality, or cultural milieu. Wright goes on to claim that

Just as many Jewish scholars have preferred to study Talmud rather than Tanakh, the rabbis instead of the Bible, so the twentieth-century Christian theologians have expended more and more energy on the early church and less and less upon Jesus. [This tactic] appeared, after all, safer! (4)

Scholars have not concentrated on the Jewish nature of Jesus and instead have focused on his timeless, “pan-cultural” (or, more accurately, “acultural”) elements—a stance conveniently afforded them by “the victory of Alexandrian Christology over

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3 This is not to say that theological investigations are worthless or that the Lukan text should not be revered. On the contrary, this paper is written by a staunch theist and, truth be told, the choice of Luke’s Gospel was as much personal as it was practical. Contrary to the belief of some, one can be a Marxist and an orthodox Christian at the same time.
the Antiochenes [so that] the manhood of Jesus was conceived of as little more than the instrument of the divine Logos” (Riches 4). The quest for a higher Christology not only brought about the neglect of Christ’s human element but all too often scholars “cut off all those bits of the ‘Jesus’ piece that appeared too Jewish, too ethnically restricted, leaving [Jesus] the hero as the founder of a great, universal [...:] religion” (Wright 6). This scholastic response is as misguided as it is counterintuitive (not to mention a bit anti-Semitic). Although a homogenized, “Everyman” Jesus may be appealing to the evangelist whose job it is to make Christ relevant to every culture, it essentially denies the core tenets of my theory. Moreover, a view of Jesus that denigrates culture relies on the presupposition that scripture is a timeless text, completely devoid of any cultural baggage. If we can read Jesus out of context, the reasoning goes, then why not strip the Gospels of context as well? This ethnocentric stance is both ignorant and repugnant. According to Wright,

The Divine Savior to whom [many] pray has only a tangential relationship to first-century Palestine, and they intend to keep it that way. [Jesus] can, it seems, be worshipped, but if he ever actually lived, he was a very strange figure, clothed in white while all around wore drab, on his face a perpetual faraway expression of pious solemnity. This icon was one means by which Victorian devotion tried to cope with Enlightenment rationalism. (9)

Scholars like Martin Kähler and Rudolf Bultmann were famous for “stripping away the layers of Jewish apocalyptic mythology” from the Jesus narratives in a way which
could only imply that the theologian, in their minds, trumped the historian (Wright 15). By turning “Jesus of Nazareth” into “Jesus the Timeless Icon,” many excuse themselves from the arduous task of reconstructing the Bible’s original social context.

Perhaps the first scholar to think the humanity of Jesus a matter of any real import was the Deist, Hermann Samuel Reimaruss. Reimarus’ works, published posthumously, pondered what Jesus’ words might have meant in their original Hellenized Hebrew context (Riches 1-3). Taking a decidedly marginal view, Reimarus taught that Jesus came to reform Judaism and that it was only after his death that his followers decided to make a new religion with its own ethos (Riches 4). Lessing, the man who compiled and published Reimarus’ work, picked up the cultural-context torch in his Education of Mankind. According to John Riches, Lessing implies that

philosophy may be the way to truth for a few individuals, but for the vast mass of people advances in the truth are brought through religious [...] doctrines. If this is so, then a number of points follow. First, religious teaching must by nature be couched in terms that are intelligible to the people in the community to whom it is addressed, not in terms of ‘timeless, necessary truths of reason.’ Secondly, because religion is a constant process of education, the great religious teachers will be concerned to [...] express new truths in terms of their existing religious vocabulary.” (8)
Lessing essentially puts Scripture back into perspective: Even if Christ did come to start a new faith, he would still be forced to use existing religious language and metaphor in order to get his points across. If one could somehow excuse Jesus from this linguistic necessity on the grounds of his divinity, he or she could not grant similar allowances to Jesus' audience. The nature of the medium requires communal relevance. If a larger, universal application exists, it must be gotten at through a proper understanding of the original reception and not by denying the relevance of that reception. Lessing makes room for my Marxist, culture-bound contribution to this biblical discussion.

Reimarus and Lessing had a lasting effect on the scholastic community. Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer wrote on the significance of understanding the Bible in its original context and, thereafter, this became an increasingly common tactic (Wright 4). Between world wars, however, theologians directed attention elsewhere. Wright tells us that

Bultmann in his way, and Karl Barth in his, ensured that little was done to advance genuine historical work on Jesus [...]. Attention was focused instead on early Christian faith and experience, in the belief that there, rather than in a dubiously reconstructed Jesus, lay the key to the divine revelation that was presumed to have taken place in early Christianity. (22)
In this paper, I am not attempting to locate the historic Jesus, per se, but by putting Luke’s Gospel back into its cultural moment I will, perforce, reconstruct the message of Jesus.

More important to my cause than the soci-historical founder of Christianity is, of course, Luke’s portrayal of Jesus’ life and message. Luke, after all, was writing between 62 and 85 C.E.—decades after Jesus’ ministry (Keener 321). When Luke sat down to write an “orderly account” for his patron, Theophilus (Luke 1.1), the Christian sect had already become a religion in its own right, defining itself within and against the greater social network of Rome and Jerusalem. Divine revelation may be found in “early Christian faith and experience” or it may be in the personhood of Jesus of Nazareth. While theologians puzzle this out, we literary theorists may say with confidence that the depiction of Jesus and the textual revelation of Christian ideology is necessarily locked in the culture and language of the Biblical authors. In sum, my text has relevance in both literary theory and Biblical criticism circles because of its dependence on cultural theory.

We shall begin by discussing the importance of theory itself, focusing on its inescapable presence whenever the human mind engages an unknown object such as a text. From there I shall explain why some of the current schools of criticism are ill-equipped to engage the cultural component of authorship. Next I shall explain the deep ideology theory before employing it to examine Luke’s gospel. In Luke, I shall trace both his conscious and his unconscious dependence on the larger Hellenized culture of his day.
Part I: Theory and Authorship

Chapter 1

The Importance of Theory

As this is being written, many students and professors would tell me that theory is unimportant and that I should forget it and focus my attention elsewhere. If I was given a dollar for every time someone rolled their eyes when I mentioned theory in the classroom, I would be writing this thesis from a private beach house in East Hampton. One could not throw a stone into the average American Lit classroom without hitting at least three people who thought that studying theory was passé. Perhaps these folks are jaded by the theory frenzy of previous generations or maybe they simply believe that meaning is self-evident in a text. Whatever their motivation, the instigators of this grassroots revolution do a disservice to the literary discipline. To claim that we are somehow beyond theory—or beyond the necessity of articulating theory—is in effect, to throw entire departments of professors out on their ears and to slam shut the book of literary debate that has been open since before Plato’s time.

It has become increasingly prudent, if tedious, to begin any serious scholarly exercise with a defense of theory itself. As we shall see, theory is not only important, but it is indispensable and—much to my peers’ chagrin—it is inescapable. We use theory on a daily basis because theorizing is hard-wired into the human mind. As
fatigued as some might be by the previous few decades' endless quest for bigger and
better theories, there are still myriad questions that need to be asked whenever we
approach a text—questions whose answers betray theoretical bias and pit us one
against another.

It is easy to sympathize with the shell-shocked veterans of the theory wars.
After all, thorny questions about the nature of the text and the roles of author and
reader have kept otherwise peaceful scholars at each others' throats for decades. I
recall a professor whose feminism was so fierce that any paper lacking inclusive
language automatically dropped a letter grade and another whose allegiance to New
Criticism made extra-textual sources anathema. Theoretical battle lines divide
colleagues within and between institutions and frighten entire freshmen literature
classes into becoming engineering majors. Yet theory is as important as texts
themselves because it is in the theory that we see human craft analyzed by human
reason. Not only is theory necessary, it is exceedingly helpful in increasing our
knowledge about human thought and action. Moreover, as I discuss below, one's
choice of theoretical bias is crucial and some schools of thought are more worthy of
our attendance than others. Although I am not sufficiently arrogant to think my
particular project a theoretical coup de grace, I unabashedly assert the supremacy of
my theory. So, with apologies to the quivering masses of new engineering students,
I admit from the beginning that I do not bring peace, but a sword.

To begin our discussion of theory we must consider epistemology. It is
important to remember that theory is more the property of philosophy than of literary
circles and, as such, it is proper to discuss it on philosophy's terms. Theory, after all, is an organized system of propositions which attempts to explain a set of phenomena. Theories are heuristic tools that we use to order the seeming chaos of nature. All theories, including literary ones, are technically "doxastic practices." The philosopher William Alston describes these practices "as a system or constellation of dispositions or [...] 'mechanisms', each of which yields a belief" (Alston, *Perceiving* 153). Put another way, doxastic practices are socially transferred mechanisms for forming beliefs about our surroundings. These practices are mental constructs that humans use to help rationalize the world. They are best-fit models. They are inventions. They have within them certain limitations which ought to be discussed.

Alston tells us that doxastic practices have a level of intrinsic circularity because they depend on their own-stated presuppositions—no theory being able to rest entirely on *a priori* truths. This concept requires some unpacking. Alston uses sense perception (i.e., the trust we have in our cognitive ability to properly translate raw sense data) as an example of a doxastic practice that cannot validate its worth without presupposing its own validity (*Epistemic* 6). You can trust that the objects you see are actually there only by relying on your own sense perception or another individual's corroborative sense perception. Alston writes that you form the perceptual belief that there is a goldfinch just outside the kitchen window, basing your belief on your sense experience in the usual way [...]. Your belief is correct. But how do I know your belief is correct? The most obvious way is to take a look myself to see
whether there really is a goldfinch there. But then I am relying on the reliability of sense perception in order to amass my evidence. In supposing that I have ascertained in each case that the perceptual belief under examination is correct, I have assumed that my sense is yielding true beliefs. Thus I am assuming [that sense experience is a reliable source of perceptual beliefs] in adducing evidence for it, and so it would appear that my argument is circular. (*Epistemic 6*)

Because of this circularity we have difficulty adjudicating between theories. After all, each seems to be subjective—a matter of taste, not of debate. Although Alston's goldfinch example is a simple (or at least more subconscious) doxastic practice, its more complex cousins also suffer the same circularity. Each doxastic practice validates itself and each theory is as good as the next. Many do not wish to adhere to the dogma of one school or another for exactly this reason. Wringing their hands in despair or, more likely, slouching in their armchairs of academic apathy, too many people abandon theory.

It is true that one may never find flawless proof of one practice’s validity, but that does not mean that we may paint the walls of academia with relativism. Return for a moment to Alston’s example. Using complex argumentation, Alston proves that sense perception (and all doxastic practices) cannot be validated by an appeal to *a priori* truths (*Epistemic 8-9*). And yet, we do not go about our lives denying the reliability of our eyes and ears. Science itself is based on empiricism and we could not trust it if we doubted the validity of the human senses.
Doxastic circularity is overcome by faith—proper, warranted faith that rests on some basic presuppositions (e.g., that our senses do not, as a rule, lie to us, etc.). It is important that we base our doxastic faith on what is warranted. A warranted belief is one which pragmatism and probability support. I may trust my eyes and my ears because they have served me well enough in the past (pragmatism) and because it is enormously more probable that my eyes are functioning properly than to suppose that some magical trickster is painting false images on my retina (probability).

Probability and pragmatism are tools that not only allow us to trust certain doxastic practices; but also may actually help to establish one theory’s superiority over another. When adjudicating between practices, one must pragmatically employ probability. In other words, which theory does not obviously defy the author’s probable intent or the reception group’s likely reading? This is not to say that all subsequent interpretations are limited by the boundaries of that first author-audience connection, but one must not espouse a reading that entirely contradicts that interaction either. This immediately discounts the ramblings of some of the more imaginative Deconstructionists—a group which cares little for pragmatism and chooses, rather, to put its stock in linguistic possibility. Although they may be playful, they go too far when they defy the author’s probable intent and the reception group’s probable interpretation.⁴

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⁴ We assume, here, the belief that meaning is a product of the author’s intent, language, and historic moment. Accordingly, that for which the Deconstructionist searches in the text is not textual meaning.
Another way in which probability influences our choice of theories is through an interdisciplinary approach. If we shake off the trappings of Western discrete thinking, we can come to a holistic view of humanity and human craft. Common sense tells us that a human text stemming from a human mind is going to have human qualities. So the social sciences which contemplate the mind should inform our literary doxastic practice. Findings in sociology and linguistics cannot be ignored for they reveal much about artistic craft and human communication. It is highly probable that the mind, as described by these sciences, is influenced by language change, ideology, and culture. It is also highly probable that the humanities have more in common with each other than they do in contrast and that the best understanding of one field will corroborate—or at least not defy—the discoveries of its fellow fields.5

If corroborative evidence from nonliterary fields can point to the superlative literary doxastic practice, we should feel obliged to embrace that practice as the most nearly ideal (i.e. the most pragmatic). This tactic, however, is often frowned upon. The New Critics, for example, are infamous for their desire to seek a “pure” reading of a text, clinically detached from the author or the text’s larger context.

per se, but textual effect or textual significance. These concepts are more fully discussed in the following chapter.

5 Indeed, corroborative evidence from unrelated fields is known as the “convergence principle” in sociolinguistics, and a careful investigator looks for such evidence to increase the probability that his/her hypotheses are correct. For more on this see R. Bell’s Sociolinguistics: Goals, Approaches, and Problems. London: Batsford, 1976.
Even the more adventurous critics will eventually draw the line and warn us against stepping beyond the natural borders of our discipline. The Western mind has a penchant for ordering the universe into smaller and smaller categories until we have strict and inflexible barriers separating the discourses. History is expected to stay removed from philosophy and literary studies is expected to keep a distance from sociology. To blur the lines intentionally is seen as adding extraneous confusion to one's studies. In "The Threads of Literary Theory," Joseph Margolis writes that

> From time to time one discipline or another tends to become noticeably untidy. It betrays a certain shameless interest in ideas intended for other disciplines; sooner or later we all become beneficiaries, protected to an extent by the monitored *fait accompli*, from having to justify our own ranging across breached professional lines. This sort of fecund piracy has been gathering force in literary theory. (1)

This interdisciplinary theft is now common procedure. Many defy the older, discrete thinking and opt, instead, for a more organic view of humanity and creativity.

> There is nothing untidy or scandalous about interdisciplinary dialogue. As necessary as it may be to separate biology from psychology, for example, one must sometimes consider both of them in order to diagnose a patient safely. Similarly, there is no need to cut off literary theory from the social sciences for there is nothing about them that demands such an unnatural separation. To understand the product of human creativity, we must factor in what other fields tell us about humanity and the
creative process: So the best literary theory will not unduly silence other disciplines but will rather seek to align itself with them in a meta-discipline that attempts to understand the "human" from every angle.

Another obstacle that keeps literary types from serious theoretical investigation is that the quest for truth and for knowledge often becomes secondary to personal aims and ideological agendas. Even if one could prove that a given theory best explains the phenomenon of literature, many would ignore it and prefer those theories which support their own inclinations. I have witnessed many scholars wrench a text's arm behind its back to bully an interpretation from it that is neither textually implicit or contextually explicit. One such person chose to retrofit a Mary Wollstonecraft idealism onto a very early stage of women's letters which predated but did not predict her "Vindication of the Rights of Women." Usually the cause of such maneuvers is the presupposition that every culture and every historic moment secretly sympathizes with the postmodern reader's ideals. We see the recent film adaptation of *Little Women* supplanting Marmy's hearth-and-home patriarchal leanings with a suffragist zeal for female power. While this revisionist approach may reinforce our personal tastes, it is hardly professional. The most respectable methodology will not hold the current culture as the standard but will impartially reconstruct the historic moment of a text's articulation and on that base an interpretation.

If readers have to ground their interpretations in the rigorous study of history, culture, and the like, they become increasingly aware that some readings
are just not defensible. Accordingly, some shrug off our entire interdisciplinary argument. When backed into a corner, they may even try to deny the practicality of theory itself. To adjudicate between theories is tiresome, and would require much of them, so they shrink from their philosophic duty and cuckold academic integrity. As scholars, it is our responsibility to find the most ideal theory and to employ it regardless of the toll it may take on our personal philosophies. We depend on theories so they might as well be solid, and even those who would claim that they are without literary creed betray a theoretical bias.

Any time the human mind engages the chaos of nature, be it on a mountain or on a page, it must extract meaning by creating epistemic bridges between the known and the unknown. Through an internal and often subconscious process, our minds apply theory to life on a daily basis. So while one might claim that she follows no school of theory, she is doubtless speaking the party rhetoric of one camp or another and is simply unaware of it. Doxastic practices are necessary and unavoidable. In most of literary cases, the individual is following the lead of Stanley Fish, Louise Rosenblatt, Wolfgang Iser, and other Reader Response critics. Such scholars place the locus of meaning at the point of contact between the text and the reader, thus rendering meaning a slippery and subjective thing and allowing the reader to focus on their personal reaction rather than the social context. Readers are drawn to this because it is less concerned with meaning or intent than it is with response. It does not consider the text as a social artifact and it obstinately refuses
to articulate a methodology that can be properly engaged in debate. Interpretation, some say, is response and response is necessarily subjective—ergo why belabor theory? While some readers shy away from discussing theory, they nonetheless depend on it and, more's the pity, frequently find themselves in a school such as this: a school that often neglects large aspects of textual formation, sacrificing them to the impossible belief that meaning is in the eye of the beholder.

The impression that a text makes on a reader should not be completely ignored but I think it unwise to claim that the most important aspects of meaning are found in subjective response. “What the text means” and “what the text means to me” are not synonymous phrases and should not be used interchangeably. Reader Response is not the only literary theory that covets too narrow a scope. In point of fact, it may be said that most other theories are types of Reader Response Criticism that merely insist on directing interpretative focus to one minute concern or the other. After all, what is a Feminist interpretation if not the response of a critic who is sensitive to feminist concerns, highlighting them in his textual analysis? And is not a traditional Marxist interpretation the response of a reader who is concerned

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6 For what would one say to the critic whose credo is that the individual reader is coauthor of a text's relevance and significance? The operating presupposition discredits the search for the "best" interpretation because it does not place meaning within the text’s semantic and historic moment but in the reader's aesthetic, subjective moment.

7 It should be pointed out that I am myself a Marxist. However, my particular brand of theory (which straddles Cultural Poetics and New Historicism) is less a Reader Response variation as it is a set of beliefs about textual ontology—I do not begin with my reaction but with the nature of the text as a
with economics, class warfare, and the like, being sensitive to them in her reflection on the text? It is not unimportant to consider how the reader gets on with the text, but it is dangerous to stop one's analysis with this initial response and to claim that meaning is constituted in visceral reaction. Likewise, it is not inherently wrong to consider a text's portrayal of gender roles and relationships, but if such a reading is at the expense of other textual and contextual elements, one does a disservice to the text. My point is not to belittle these schools, per se, but to assert that bringing one's agenda to a text often makes one see ideological phantoms and to impose his or her own cultural moment's assumptions on another culture's text. Literary analysis needs to escape this "reader as coauthor" mentality and return to an informed exegetical approach that tries to clear its mind of all assumptions save those that are known to have existed at the time of textualisation. We forget that the text was the intellectual property of the author long before we encountered it. Our reactions may be valid and important, but they should not lead our analysis.

The notion that meaning is secondary to response depends upon the erroneous presupposition that the reader's reaction to carbon black ink on white paper is the only (or at least the best) thing that can be taken from a text. This implies that a text's primary use is to entertain and not, as may be the case, to increase our knowledge about humanity and culture. The problem, as I see it, is that too many readers think of a text as a finished product and, giving little if any social artifact. I seek to uncover the historic moment of textualisation and allow that to dictate my reading.
thought to its actual construction, attempt to read meaning into the text rather than extracting it from the text. To begin to understand textual analysis, one must first have a proper understanding of (and a proper respect for) the text. To that end, we must direct our attention more specifically to the particular claims of certain literary schools, pointing out their limitations and weaknesses.
Chapter 2
The Limitations of Traditional Views

In critiquing traditional approaches to literary theory, particularly as they relate to authorial intent, one could do worse than to begin with intentionality's champion, E.D. Hirsch. Hirsch's 1960 article, "Objective Interpretation," masterfully defends the role of the author in determining textual meaning. Insofar as I agree that conscious intent is crucial to a proper reading, I accept the Hirschian methodology with the few, if significant, provisos (discussed in the next chapter). Hirsch presupposes that the author has more control over her language than the social sciences might suggest. Nevertheless his thoughts on the literary doxastic practice make a sufficient platform from which I shall unleash my own critical arrows. My goal, after all, is not to eradicate intentionality but to broaden it, chiding those theories which exclude intention and intention's social accoutrements.

It has been my claim that meaning is not coextensive with intention. Hirsch draws an equally helpful distinction in "Objective Interpretation." He posits that textual meaning and textual significance are two discrete entities (Hirsch 1686). So as not to confuse Hirsch's comparatively narrow concept of meaning with our broader, social one, I will use Sinn, the term that Hirsch borrows from Gottlob Frege, to signify "textual meaning" and Bedeutung to mean "textual significance" (1686). Bedeutung is tied up in the culture of the reader and will necessarily shift as the
society evolves. Hirsch comes to this “protean view” of significance by applying to “interpretation certain [...] insights from linguistics and philosophy” (1686). So, prima facie, I will have much more in common with Hirsch than with those theorists who call for a rigid separation between the disciplines.

Thus it may be helpful to study how a text’s Bedeutung changes over time, but that change is only fully realized when one can first grasp the text’s Sinn.

I agree with Hirsch that far too many schools of interpretation refuse to concede the existence of Sinn, much less to recognize its importance to theory. Hirsch’s argument is against “modern theories which hamper the establishment of normative principles in interpretation and which thereby encourage the subjectivism and individualism which have for many students discredited the analytic movement” (1687). As we shall see, one may acknowledge the slipperiness of language and the
interpretive subjectivity of *Bedeutung* while not falling into the reductio ad absurdum trap of absolute subjectivity. There is no freedom in denying *Sinn*. As Hirsch puts it the significance of textual meaning has no foundation [...] unless meaning itself is unchanging. To fuse meaning and significance, or interpretation and criticism, by the conception of an autonomous, living, changing meaning does not really free the reader from the shackles of historicism; it simply destroys the basis both for any agreement among readers and for any objective study, whatever. (1688)

This argument seems to be leveled at both the Reader-Response theorists and the Deconstructionists, i.e., those schools which do not posit the existence of meaning as separate from significance.

*Deconstruction Theory:* [Sinn]ers in the Hands of an Angry Theorist

There seems to be a pattern among literary theorists—a penchant for structuring essays and articles around two terms. I use "meaning" and "intent," Hirsch uses "Sinn" and "Bedeutung," and Roland Barthes chooses "work" and "text" to make his case. The shift from Structuralism to post-structural Deconstructionism can be traced in Barthes' body of criticism. Through exploring the interplay between connotation and denotation, signifier and signified, Barthes and the Deconstructionists write witty, sportive essays about textual interpretation that smack too much of relativism to suit a critic like Hirsch:
A “work,” for Barthes, is the physical object—the book, the poem, etc.—while the “text” is a living and active thing, “experienced only in an activity of production” (1471). The text, we are told,

is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. [...] the Text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the stereographic plurality of its weave of signifiers. (Barthes 1472)

In other words, Barthes would have us believe that texts cannot be wrangled into any fixed interpretation, but must be allowed to move and bend with semantics and language change. It is important here to note the relationship between signifiers and signifieds. Prior to Barthes and his peers, many held the belief that a signifier (a phonetic or textual marker) was assigned to a signified (an objective concept) with a more or less one-to-one correspondence. When one discusses a tree, he or she uses an arbitrary label (tree) for a collection of attributes and images that transcend language and have a real, ontological basis (Saussure 964). Words are mere referents for these “transcendental signifieds.” The heart of the Deconstruction school is the assertion that signifieds have no transcendent qualities and, as subjective items, they lack that one-to-one correspondence—a notion borrowed from Structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure and championed by the prominent French critic Jacques Derrida (de Man 1516; Bressler 123). It is with this Post-structural mentality that Barthes embraces the “stereographic plurality” of signifiers—his theory rests in “difference” and linguistic
possibility. Paul de Man even goes so far as to claim that “rhetoric radically suspends logic and opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration” such a way that a given “sentence has at least two meanings, of which the one asserts and the other denies its own illocutionary mode” (1519-20).\(^9\)

Of course even the most relativistic critic would admit that a given piece of writing has an intended effect and is thence subject to some authorial linguistic restraints. Barthes escapes this trap by claiming that “the author is reputed the father and owner of his work: literary science therefore teaches respect for the [...] author’s declared intentions [but] as for the Text [however], it reads without the inscription of the father” (1473). So while a work is confined by intentionality, the lauded “Text” is different and free from authorial constraints. Here we see certain shared presuppositions between Deconstructionists and Reader Response critics. Both would repeat those famous words of Horace, that “words once uttered forget the way home.” What these critics also presume in common is that the text should trump the work in establishing effect. Moreover, ultimate meaning (if it exists) is not as important as personal interpretation. Such critics are decidedly not [Sinn]ers— theirs is the realm of Bedeutung.

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\(^9\) I find this particularly amusing. Apparently language violates the law of non-contradiction every day. If a given sentence can mean \(A\) and \(\sim A\) at the same time, how can we have any faith in communication? If this were the case, then we’d expect dialogue to be a very tedious and difficult task—for every thing we said could conceivably be its own antithesis! The entire premise is rather absurd and yet de Man would have us believe that this is the nature of language.
As freeing as it may be to ignore Sinn and to focus on the “fatherless” text, one must consider the purpose of such a pursuit. It seems obvious that the so-called Adamic principle of linguistics is flawed—the process of naming being itself an artificial categorization of nature’s chaos in order to force meaning onto existence. Humans name things in an attempt to master them. The Deconstructionists rightly deflate human ego by pointing out that nature is not so tidy as to fit easily into discrete categories. There is no transcendental Tree, but there are trees. Things have commonality but they also have difference. Language is fluid, it changes with the times, and it defies the rigidity of those prescriptive academics who would use it to fence in nature’s wilderness. On the other hand, language is a very useful tool. We need not blindly follow a pre-Saussurian allegiance to rigid sign/signifier pairs, but why go to the opposite extreme? Why render language futile by using it to deconstruct itself?

It seems to me that the Deconstructionists blame language for being an artifice. This is tantamount to discovering a spade in the woods, looking it over and then concluding that since it obviously did not sprout from the ground, it is useless to us. Of course the spade is not organic. Of course it is an artifice. Being a human invention, it has intrinsic failings and limitations. And yet it is a spade and is useful for digging holes. Just as one must have a certain amount of faith in the utility and reliability of doxastic practices, she must likewise have faith that language, though flawed, is useful and mostly reliable for communicating one’s point. As I see it, there is little pragmatism behind Deconstruction theory because it points out linguistic
limitations without explaining why those limitations are important, if they are probable, and how their revelation might aid man’s quest to better understand himself. Moreover, I am not entirely convinced that those linguistic limitations are quite as severe as Barthes et al. would have us believe.

There is, in sociolinguistics, a concept known as “prototyping.” According to theorists like E. Rosch and R.A. Hudson, humans, with a refreshing amount of universality, hold in mind typical instances—“prototypes” of given objects—a set of core concepts against which subsequent, differentiated items might be defined (Wardhaugh 236). The prototypical bird, for example, more resembles a robin than it does a toucan, an ostrich, a penguin, or an eagle in almost every cultural setting (Wardhaugh 236). Wardhaugh writes that “a variety of experiments has shown that people do in fact classify [...] objects of various kinds according to” prototypes and that “the remarkably uniform behavior that people exhibit in such tasks cannot be accounted for by a theory which says that concepts are formed from sets of defining features” (236). Our prototypal bird is not merely the collection of particulars like “beak,” “wing,” “feathers,” etc. If this were the case, then prototypes would not exist as such. Instead we’d have some people’s quintessential bird as an ostrich and others as a dodo. Barthes, in short, would have won the day. A prototype, however, is a

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10 We might add that the Deconstructionist not only declares the spade useless, but she uses it to dig its own grave. It is with marked absurdity that these critics use language to undermine the effectiveness of language. One is reminded of the young student who would argue against the usefulness of logic, all the while using induction, deduction, and debate to prove his point.
common and central image—we think of robins because birds of its size, shape, and habits are found the world over in remarkable numbers. The prototype is akin to a Platonic form in this respect. The fact that we employ prototypes with ease and with regularity and that these prototypes stem from objects that are typical, common, everyday; and straightforward, has a devastating effect on a doxastic practice like deconstructionism.

To return to a previous example; there may be no absolute image of a tree; but there is indeed a prototypal one—a tree that resembles an average, common tree like an elm rather than its diminutive friend the bonsai. Perhaps no one-to-one correspondence exists between this signified and our word “tree;” but the tree image is not formed from the sewing together of attributes, but from some internal, nearly primal (and almost universal) epistemological tendency. There will be variation between people’s prototypes, but the mental images will have much more in common than in contrast. So Barthes’ stereographic plurality, which rests on near limitless possibility, seems to be less and less practical when viewed in light of prototype theory.

This should restrict a Deconstructionist reading, hindering it from straying too far from the original message that its language employed. It is possible for the written word to betray the author’s intent in some instances, but that does not mean that one may justifiably forgo the study of intentionality altogether. The notion that the truest meaning will be close to the original communicated message seems so evident that it is practically a truism. The written word can be trusted, most of the time, to
communicate messages adequately. Although language restraints might allow for
der wider interpretations, these Barthian "objects of possibility" have little practical value
and contribute little to critical dialogue.

In "Interpreting the Variiorum," Stanley Fish, the self-styled father of Reader
Response criticism, writes that the "transferring of responsibility from the text to its
readers is what the [text] asks us to do" and that this response "is therefore what the
[text] means" (2074). He goes on to claim that the "structure of the reader's
experience rather than any structure on the page" is what determines a given
interpretation (Fish 2074). When confronted with the issue of intentionality, Fish
claims that
to construct the profile of the informed [...] reader is at the same time
to categorize the author's intention and vice versa, because to do either
is to specify the contemporary conditions of utterance, to identify, by
becoming a member of a community made up of those who share
interpretative strategies. (2081)

This is Reader Response criticism in its most condensed form. According to this
school, one's reading will depend on what he brings to the table—what experiences
and insights his unique existence has added to the text's signification. Another
famous Reader Response critic, Wolfgang Iser, formalizes this process. Calling it the
GAP theory, Iser claims that "the reader fills in the blank in the text" that exists between the word on the page and the cognitive processing of it (1681). According to Iser, "the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic [i.e., the author's text] and the aesthetic," i.e., the "realization accomplished by the reader," and that textual significance lies somewhere in the middle (1674). In sum, Response criticism gives the reader prominence in the interpretative process and admits that meaning will be determined by the experiences of the reader's community.

Fish's "interpretative community" is, as we shall see, very similar to the sociolinguist's "speech community," a notion that I borrow to flesh out my own theory. Likewise, Iser's description of gap-filling is in keeping with what modern psychology has to say about the learning process. While there are theoretical bits with which I take no issue, however, in practice the Reader Response critic places much more emphasis on the aesthetic than on the artistic. Sinn once again takes a backseat to Bedeutung.

One must ask oneself what Fish means by the "informed" reader or what many critics have labeled the "ideal reader." Such a reader is knowledgeable about the original linguistic context of a given work of literature and has the necessary faculties to follow authorial intent in a text. In short, the ideal reader will be in an interpretive community that is sufficiently similar to the author's and thus her response will be nearly synonymous with the original intention. So far, I have only reiterated Fish's own claims. One of this school's greatest shortcomings, however, is
that many of its adherents are far from ideal and have increasingly suggested that the reader need not be quite so informed after all.

Most of the reader response rank and file seem to be younger students who have had very little theory or jaded academicians who have had too much of it. If every critic who subscribes to this particular doxastic practice were as thorough and meticulous as Stanley Fish, I would have very few problems with response theories. Yet there has been a growing opinion that all interpretative communities are created equal and that the pains of becoming an informed reader are needless. Many critics focus on what the text means to the individual rather than what the text meant to the intended audience. It does seem logical that the usage of a text is found in its relation to the individual reading it but only if this “usage” is rooted in entertainment. As literary scholars, our calling is not to bring the warmth of the book club into the classroom but to apply disciplined study to works of literature. We all have favored texts that “speak to” us and our experiences, but our primary aim should be knowledge acquisition and not entertainment. As theorists we must say that the text’s illocutionary linguistic intention trumps our own emotional attachment when it comes to ascribing meaning. After all, if response becomes meaning and response is necessarily relative, then why pursue intention? Why bother becoming informed? Why attend American Lit class at all?

Deconstruction places interpretation squarely in the gap between sign and signified while Reader Response places it in the gap between text and reader. As Louise Rosenblatt once said, interpretation is a “transactional process” between text
and interpreter in which the text is merely a tool to elicit past experience (Bressler 66). How can one expect unity in such an environment?

When one’s primary tool for unlocking textual meaning is subjective experience, it is easy to see how most modern theories may be considered types of reader response. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Marxism is merely a form of response that comes from an interpretative community whose fixation with power and economics looms large in its reading. Similarly, Feminism is the response from an interpretative community of feminists, Psychoanalysis is the response from a Freudian, Lacanian, or Jungian community, etc. As long as interpretation begins with the reader, it will be a type of Reader Response. Deconstructionism begins outside the reader (tackling language itself) and New Criticism tries to stay strictly within the parameters of the autotelic text, but most other theories begin with their own presuppositions and seek evidence of them in the text regardless of authorial intention.  

The natural result of all of this is that textual meaning is up for grabs. Even within theories one finds much variation and debate. It is often said, for example, that no theorist belongs to strictly one school or another but each is an eclectic blend of approaches. What we end up doing is applying a given lens to a text because we feel

\[11\] I am by no means calling for a return to New Criticism. My claim is that if one begins outside of the text, he or she should look to those sources which reconstruct the historic, cultural, and linguistic attitudes that comprise the text's historic moment. Moreover, when examining a text that is far removed from one's own culture (e.g. the Lukan text) he must factor in outside voices in order to hear clearly the text's original message (i.e. its Sinn).
that the text lends itself to such a reading. Our allegiance varies depending on what
book we happen to be engaging. Moreover, no school of criticism, with the possible
exception of the New Critics, has a codified set of rules, an established methodology,
or one orthodox way to go about interpreting a text. One cannot come to any
definitive answers about a text because of the inherent relativism of the process we
call literary analysis. One cannot prove that one’s reading is the superlative one
because so many posit that as long as you have textual evidence to support you, you
cannot be wrong. All of this has come about because we’ve denied Sinn, celebrated
Bedeutung, and have destroyed any objectivity within our discipline. Hirsch was spot
on when he claimed that championing Bedeutung and making meaning an inherently
subjective thing—living and in flux—“simply destroys the basis both for any
agreement among readers and for any objective study whatever (1688).” There may
not be one absolute interpretation for a text but some readings—those that originate
from a proper theoretical starting point—are more ideal than others.
Chapter 3

Ideology and Theory

By now the reader is most likely demanding an explication of my own theory. We've had our fun dismantling the flawed presuppositions of other schools but can I do any better, myself? I begin with the admission that mine is a doxastic practice whose roots are in the rich soil of Marxist theory and New Historicism. Following in the steps of Karl Marx, Louis Althusser, Terry Eagleton, and others, I focus predominantly on ideology and its relationship to artistic craft. There has been a steady evolution within Marxist theory and although many people still believe that we reduce the canon to a simplistic clash between haves and have-nots, most Marxists hold a complex and stratified view of social interaction.\footnote{It would be truly amazing if all texts were merely retellings of Dr. Seuss' \textit{Star-Bellied Sneeches}, but this is not how we Marxists do things.} All too often, the Marxist literary theory is confused with the socialist government system as if the two were inseparable. Perhaps this is why many Marxists readily traded labels when the followers of Stephen Greenblatt married his New Historicism to their own practice and called the union "Cultural Materialism" (Bressler 241). Regardless of title, we scholars view literature from a wide-angle lens and employ literary analysis as a means of uncovering knowledge about humanity itself. It is no surprise that an interdisciplinary approach is practically required in this type of doxastic practice.
In the last chapter, I mentioned that despite his excellent arguments, there are aspects of Hirsch's approach with which I disagree. Although I find Sinn and Bedeutung very useful classifications, I think that Sinn should not be restricted to the author's conscious intention. There are social implications—what one might venture to call an ideological intent—that arise prior to and during the writing process. This ideological intentionality is, in many ways, independent of the author and predates both author and Sinn. Ideology saturates the mind and the language of the human and it is bound up in both meaning and significance. Individuals are the product of their historic moment and, in many ways, History is an author whose text is humanity.

Authors presuppose that certain phrases and styles will not need unpacking and that shared presuppositions exist between themselves and the ideal reader. This sociolinguistic presupposition demands Fish's ideal interpretative community. To be ideal, a reader must be as knowledgeable about the ideology of a language as possible. Michel Foucault claims that "verbal clusters [are] discursive layers which fall outside the familiar categories of a book, a work, or an author" (1622). The Sinn, in short, is only fully realized after the encoded ideology—which transcends conscious intent—is appreciated within the text.

A Crash Course in Cultural Theory

"Literature," we are told, "is the process and result of [...] composition within the social and formal properties of language" (Williams 1568). This seemingly
obvious remark has powerful connotations in literary discussion. If literature is the result of a language’s social properties, then we need to define what those properties are. Languages are purveyors of ideology, a point championed by sociolinguists and Marxists alike. According to the famous linguist Benjamin Whorf,

formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar [...]. We dissect nature by lines laid down by our native languages. The categories that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut up nature, organize its concepts [...] largely because [of] an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, but its terms are absolutely obligatory; we cannot talk at all except by subscribing to the organization and classification of data which the agreement decrees. (qtd in Wardhaugh 221)

This statement, the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, has had a great impact on its field. Human society is influenced by language and vice versa. There is a tacit
agreement among members of speech communities\textsuperscript{13}, a shared set of assumptions about life that permeates their words. Culture's effect on language has not gone unnoticed by literary critics. A common belief among Marxists is that "there is an ideological dimension to every signification" (Hebdige 2454).

Pierre Bourdieu asserts that "a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, [the understanding of] the code, into which it is encoded" (1810). In other words, the ideal interpretive community \textit{must} have access to the linguistic code of the author—a feat which often requires extra-textual, historic sources. The ideological code that is carried in our writings is, for the most part, unconscious. We have been indoctrinated to such a degree that we rarely realize how great an impact our culture has had on us. Formerly, Marxists held that ideology saturated a culture in a top-down manner, originating in the bourgeoisie and trickling down to the proletariat through the various institutions that made up the superstructure (Marx 771-72). This overly simplistic model, which assumes a one-way cultural transaction, has been jettisoned in recent incarnations of the theory.

Whereas Marx implies a dissection of society into two major groups, others posit \textit{many} subcultures—each with its own construction of power, stratification, and \textit{Weltanschauung}—that exist within a system whose pace is set by an empowered

\textsuperscript{13} A speech community is "any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage" (Gumperz 219).
group which wields hegemonic control (Jameson 1947). So while the major points of a culture's ethos may be set by the sceptered elite (hereafter referred to as the "hegemonic group"), structures of power differ from subgroup to subgroup. These subgroups consciously and unconsciously mirror the hegemonic group.  

Cultural rule is maintained as long as the hegemonic group "succeed[s] in framing all competing definitions within [its] range," so that subordinate groups are, if not controlled, then at least contained within an ideological space [...] which appears [...] to be permanent and 'natural,' [and] to lie outside of history" (Hebdige 2455). Here we see the subtlety of social interaction. The empowered group maintains control not through despotic measures, but through crafting the shared ideology. A certain degree of internal colonization occurs, subordinate groups unwittingly buying into those (bourgeois) values which hold them in check simply because they have been trained to see those values as normative. Hegemonic control of the masses is hidden from the consciousness of the agents of production [i.e. the proletariat]. The failure to see through appearances to the real relations which underlie them does not occur as the direct result of some kind of masking operation consciously carried out by individuals, social groups, or institutions. On the contrary, ideology by definition thrives beneath consciousness. It is here, at the level of 'normative common sense,' that ideological frames of reference are most firmly sedimented.

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14 An example from Sociologuistics might be the adoption of Received Pronunciation in Great Britain or the advent of Network English here in the States (Wardhaugh 45-46).
and most effective, because it is here that their ideological nature is most effectively concealed. \(^{15}\) (Hebdige 2452)

The issue of "common sense" is very important. Common sense knowledge is, sociolinguistically speaking, a set of assumptions shared by a community which may or may not be true but are largely uncontested among the constituent members (Wardhaugh 252-53). By controlling the avenues to power, the hegemonic group not only sets itself up as an example for other groups to imitate (thus ensuring its own longevity), but its values saturate the superstructure and unconsciously influence others.

In *The Social Construction of Reality*, sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann explain that

society, identity and reality are subjectively crystallized in the same process of internalization. This crystallization is concurrent with the internalization of language. Indeed, for reasons evident from […] observations in language, language constitutes both the most important content and the most important instrument of socialization. (133)

From the slightly different vantage point of a sociologist, we see corroboration of the Marxist and Whorfian claims about culture's influence on language. At the time when individuals internalize their identity and their reality they are concurrently internalizing language. Moreover, as a socializing tool, language carries cultural

\(^{15}\) For more on this, see Althusser's *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, particularly pp 1489-91.
connotation. Louis Althusser, famous for his concept of Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), points out that literature is a tool through which the hegemonic group maintains its hold over others (1489). In sum, language and literature serve to maintain and perpetuate a culture’s dominant ideology (Eagleton 2243; Jameson 1944). This fact has profound effect on our concept of interpretation.

For the typical Marxist, literary analysis is an evaluation of the text in such a way that a “prior historical or ideological subtext” is uncovered, “it being understood that that ‘subtext’ is not immediately present, as such, not [as] some common-sense external reality […] but rather [it] must itself always be (re)constructed after the fact” (Jameson 1945). We know that language encodes more than the speaker’s conscious intent. We also know that a proper understanding of a message involves knowledge of what is unspoken—what is implied, taken for granted, or unconsciously imbedded in one’s Weltanschauung. We know, in short, that meaning is not coextensive with intent.

The Task at Hand

Sometimes ideological elements are consciously incorporated in our texts. My shifting use of male and female pronouns, for instance, is an example of how the gender egalitarianism of my own ideology is consciously reflected in my words. Much of our ideology, however, is unconscious. Whether conscious or not, ideology is present and it effects Sinn. Deep ideology theory does not threaten Hirsch’s argument because a past culture’s ideology is changeless (locked forever in the text’s
temporal moment) and, I argue, it is an important part of Sinn. The ideology that controlled the language and craft of a given author is a solid, frozen entity that we can uncover through linguistic examination of the text (and of extra-textual items that betray the cultural influences on the author's moment).

The Marxist has to ask herself how far she wants culture theory to influence her methodology. Is it important to discover if the author is a member of the hegemonic group or of a subordinate group? If so, how does one determine this? If ideology is so deeply entrenched, can one truly and effectively speak out against dominant cultural values? Following the implications of Whorf, we may safely conclude that for an individual to be relevant, i.e., to utilize language effectively, she must agree with at least some of the culture's ideological presuppositions. Every individual buys into some parts of the hegemony. It is possible for someone to speak against her cultural ethos, but she cannot extricate herself entirely from the ideology.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari facilitate our discussion with their concept of "minor literature." A minor literature, according to these critics, is "that which a minority constructs within a major language," and a main characteristic of minor literatures is that everything in them is political [...] the social milieu serving as [more] than a mere environment or backdrop" (Deleuze and Guattari 1598). Thus, a minority text will be one which is so aware of its status that it holds politics in mind at all times. Such a literature is ideal for examining ideological influences on a text because its purpose is partly to contest the hegemony. In such a text, we could see where the attempt at disassociation succeeds (i.e., where a marked break with
hegemonic values and beliefs appears) and where it fails (i.e., where the ingrained hegemony is so deep that the author is unaware that she is supporting it). Antonio Gramsci writes that

one of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing toward dominance is its struggle to assimilate and conquer ‘ideologically’ the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals. (1141)

In light of this, we may say that if a minority group wishes to gain power, it will breed its own intellectuals and will seek ways to define itself against the hegemonic group, while at the same time seeking to convert the intellectuals of other subgroups to its cause.

In a given society, there are relatively few people who have enough autonomy to break from linguistic constraints and the hegemonic group’s influence. As Bernstein puts it, “historically and now, only a tiny percent of the population has been socialized into knowledge at the level of [...] control” (163-68). So a majority of people will never truly transcend the ideology-infused constraints of their primary language.

But what about a burgeoning religious group? Surely a cult—which defines itself against the status quo—is the most capable and the most willing to break away from linguistic and social constraints. Religious groups, since they are generally
zealous in nature, are the most likely to nurture their own intellectuals and to
proselytize the intellectuals of other subgroups. If we could locate an evangelistic,
counter-cultural religious group whose leaders have captured its budding ideology in a
text, we could very easily put our theory to the test. “The Gospel According to Luke”
offers us such an opportunity: In the Lukan text we see Christianity’s attempts to define
itself against the immediate Judaic backdrop and the larger Hellenistic ideology.
Part II: The Third Gospel and Ideology

Chapter 4

Luke as General Historiography: Genre, Audience, and Authorship

Our analysis of Luke shall begin with its genre for through determining where the Lukan text exists on the literary spectrum, we can draw conclusions about its intended audience and the degree to which it fulfills or defies expectations of craft. Frederick Danker claims that Luke is an "aretology," a term derived from the Greek aretē, which concerns the "role played by deities [and leaders] in the welfare of their" followers (3). Although it is true that aretological elements exist in Luke, the general consensus is that this gospel is more accurately a type of Greco-Roman historiography known as "general history" (Danker 25). David Aune explains that this type of literature charts "the important historical experiences of a single national group from [its] origin to the recent past" (88). The reader would do well to note the similarity of this concept and minor literature. The two, for our purposes, are synonymous. The early Christians were not, strictly speaking, a political nation but their communal tendencies, strange rites, and cult status mark them as such for all practical sociological purposes. Luke, or more accurately Luke-Acts, is specifically
designed to chronicle the birth of a new people; a new ideology; and a new social paradigm. 

According to Joel Green, we may expect an historiographic text to give prominence to recent history while "determined research is placed in the service of persuasive and engaging instruction" (6). General histories concern themselves with "veracity" and "narrative" so that the truth of what happened is put into a coherent, teleological order (Green 15). Thus we may expect an author such as Luke to be more concerned with arranging the narrative along lines of causation than along lines of objective chronology. Luke assumes that the facts of his text are common knowledge and will remain relatively uncontested and so he focuses instead on "the sequencing of events and the interpretive aim that weaves its way forward through narrative, surfacing here and there while lurking beneath the story elsewhere" (Green 15). Luke's authorial intention is not to convince Theophilus that Jesus' incarnation, ministry, and resurrection happened but to explain to him why all of this is important and why Christ should be honored.

Bearing in mind that narrative was privileged over veracity, we see a small but obvious break from Synoptic tradition in Luke's general history. In the fifth chapter, we are introduced to a paralytic who is lowered by his friends through a hole cut into the roof of a house where Jesus is performing miracles (Luke 5.19). In the Matthew

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16 It is taken for granted, by most scholars, that Luke and Acts are two halves of one general history (Keener 185; Green 6; Danker 1). For our purposes, however, we need not concern ourselves with the book of Acts—Luke offers enough conscious and unconscious ideology,
and Mark versions of the story, the men cut the hole through a thatched roof, but Luke changes the thatch to Greco-Roman tile (Danker 122; Mark 2.4; Luke 2.18, Matt. 24.17). In other words, Luke deviates from his source for the sake of cultural relevance. Although this gospel is placed in its necessary Jewish frame, Luke implicitly and explicitly tips his hat to hegemonic Roman language and values to make and substantiate his claims.

Luke opens his general history with a preface that follows Greco-Roman convention to the letter. In it we find the expected dedication, “remarks regarding the subject matter, its importance and implications, [...] mention of its predecessors, a claim to appropriate methodology, and [then] the transition to the work itself” (Green 34). Although we do not know who Theophilus was; we may conclude from his patron position and his designation as “Most Excellent” (kratiaste), that he was wealthy and perhaps a member of high society (Keener 187). So from analyzing the style, form, and diction, we may conclude that Luke was an educated author, writing to an urbane audience in the conventional way. 17

Luke’s historiography is also typical of its genre through its use of sources. Craig Keener explains that historiography “usually started with one main source and wove in material from another source or sources” (187). In Luke’s case, the main

17 There is little need to go into the exact identity of Luke much more than this for the text reveals enough about him to give us an idea of his aims and abilities. germane to our discussion is not Luke’s original vocation but his role as a religious authority and Christian historian. Whether or not he was a physician has little bearing on our topic except, perhaps, to mention that Luke seems to emphasize miraculous healing more than the other Gospels and uses an educated style of writing.
source was Mark's Gospel and the secondary source was Q, that ubiquitous oral or written catalogue of religious sayings that now survives only in those books of scripture which quote it (Keener 187). It should be said, however, that although Luke's gospel is typical of its type in many ways, it sometimes consciously deviates from the norm.

The elevated style of the Prologue is jettisoned in the fifth verse. Here we see Luke adapting to the "Hebraic rhythms" of the so-called Septuagint style (Keener 187). As Danker says, it is as if

Intent on bridging Jewish and gentile religious-cultural experience [Luke] abandons the lofty [Greek style] and [...] at the same time, he formulates his narrative in such a way that Greco-Roman audiences could make contact with material that would otherwise have been dismissed as tales recited in an unknown tongue. In this way Luke reaches out to [both] Jew and gentile [...]. In brief Luke takes account of the evocative power possessed by a literary work and shows awareness of the cultural models that various publics might bring as instruments for interpreting such a work. (3)

Though a Gentile, Luke demonstrates a deep knowledge of Judaism that is articulated in such a way that it doesn't lose relevance in Greek circles (Danker 1). This maneuver testifies to Luke's mastery of literary craft and rhetoric. Moreover, we may infer that just as Luke is a converted Greco-Roman intellectual, his aim is to convince and convert other intellectuals.
Luke's decision to write in Septuagint Greek has an effect that "is something like that of a contemporary sermon delivered in the style of the King James" English, which would request the Greek reader to respect Jews because of their ancient traditions (Danker 27). This is very interesting. Luke tries to validate Judaism in Rome's eyes through merging elevated Greek and historic Hebrew styles. Though he pays homage to the power of these groups, it cannot be forgotten that Luke's text is supposedly designed to establish and defend a new group—the Christians. Within the gospel's genre itself we see the complex game of respect and rhetoric that is needed in order to validate a burgeoning ideology. Luke fits within a well-established genre, for

many general histories were written by 'barbarian' intellectuals who wished to communicate to the Greeks the achievements (and superiority) of their native lands. The writing of such histories reflects a national consciousness of a people united (particularly in opposition to […] Romans) by language, geography, and customs. (Aune 89)

The very tradition that Luke consciously operates within demands a close scrutiny of ideology and language.
Chapter 5

Conscious Ideology: Hellenism and the Linguistics of Power

Luke is a member of the Greco-Roman macro-culture by virtue of his Gentile status and a member of the Hebrew micro-culture by virtue of his historian role and his impressive knowledge of Jewish lore\(^\text{18}\). It is not surprising, therefore, that his argument for Christ's importance would use the concept of "beneficence" which was prized by both groups (Danker 4). Here we see a conscious use of ideological values to substantiate the Christian claim of Jesus' divinity and historic importance.

Beneficence was an important Roman virtue and sometimes aretologies were written just for philanthropists (Danker 3). This virtue, closely tied to honor and justice was almost always associated with the divine. Danker tells us that because deities in the Greco-Roman world were evaluated in terms of their beneficence, Luke stresses that the God of Israel is the ultimate in philanthropic excellence, the Supreme Benefactor. [...] Since uprightness and a sense of justice are among the primary attributes celebrated in [...] Greco-Roman honorary documents, Luke exhibits

\(^{18}\) Also, it could be argued that the lines between the two groups were blurred by the Roman occupation of Israel and the subsequent Hellenization of the Jews. One would always be aware to which group one belonged to, but obvious cultural diffusion occurred.
these explicitly and implicitly as the dominating features of [...] Jesus Christ. (5)

Many scholars have thought that Luke was a physician—a conclusion supported by his educated style and his fixation on healing miracles (including some which do not occur in the other gospel accounts) (Green 21). Regardless of his past career, healing in this cultural context was considered the ultimate act of beneficence and Luke’s emphasis on Jesus as a healer would mark Christ as a very important and virtuous individual (Danker 7).

Jesus as the Honorable Man

Central to the Hellenist ideology was the notion of honor (timē)—a concept that had much more significance then than it does now. As Seneca puts it, “that which is honorable is held dear for no other reason than because it is honorable” (qtd in de Silva 22). Men and women valued honor above pleasure, above personal safety, and above profit. According to Quintilian, it was the primary factor in rhetorical persuasion (de Silva 24). So, for instance, when Luke has Jesus use the honor-laden challenge-riposte system of debate to silence his detractors, the reader should take note. The significance of this social tactic is lost on those readers who are ignorant of the ideological weight that honor carried in Luke’s day.

Although it may be foreign to many of us, the honor-obsessed, “agonistic” culture of the Greco-Romans is still very much alive today (de Silva 29). In such a
society, honor can be won or lost through debate in a public forum. David de Silva explains that

the challenge-riposte is essentially an attempt to gain honor at someone else's expense by publicly posing a question that cannot be answered. When a challenge has been posed, the challenged must make some sort of response (and no response is [...] considered a [negative] response). It falls to the bystanders to decide whether or not the challenged person successfully defended his [...] own honor. (29)

When Christ interacts with Pharisees, Sadducees, and other teachers of the law, it is often in a challenge-riposte situation.

**Challenge-Riposte: Christ the Rhetorician**

Consider Luke's thirteenth chapter. Here we see Jesus confronted by a synagogue official for healing a woman on the Sabbath. The official challenges Christ by saying to the crowd, "there are six days in which work should be done; so come during them to be healed, and not on the Sabbath day" (Luke 13.14). Jesus' riposte is found in the next two verses. He says,

You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and [...] water him? And this woman [...] should she not have been released from [Satan's] bond on the
Sabbath? As he said this, all his opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing [...] (13.15-17)

Jesus’ answer is a crafty one, beginning with a metaphor that would resonate with the crowd and then concluding that his actions were not a violation of Sabbath restrictions but were in reality an act of beneficence. We see that the official is shamed and that Jesus, by virtue of the people’s response, is the winner.

Another Sabbath healing in the next chapter results in Jesus gaining even more honor. In this case, Jesus initiates the game, asking the lawyers and Pharisees whether it is legal to heal on the Sabbath (14.3). The resulting silence indicates that these men are unable to defend themselves, thus forfeiting their honor. According to Green, this particular group of Pharisees held an “advanced social position” because they had scribes among them (547). We may safely conclude, then, that winning the game against such a prestigious group was quite a statement. Had we not known the important social function of the challenge-riposte system, we would have greatly underestimated this interchange and others.

Luke loves challenge-riposte interactions. In the twentieth chapter we see the religious establishment asking where Jesus’ authority originates and he, in turn, asking them about John’s baptism. Luke writes,

On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted him and they spoke, saying to Him, ‘tell us by what authority you are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You
this authority? Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I will also ask you a

question, and you tell Me: ‘Was the baptism of John from heaven or

from men?’ (20:1-4)

The reader should note how the priests, scribes, and elders asked Jesus this question in front of a large group of onlookers. Luke directs attention to Christ’s popularity, drawing such esteemed attention. Clearly this is an instance of challenge and riposte. Jesus gets the better of them, however. The pro-John crowd will not name them victor if they answer the one way and Jesus will have a snappy retort if they answer the other. Stuck between losing to Christ and risking their lives (which, according to the rules, would make Jesus the winner anyway), they are forced to abandon their efforts.

So that it is not construed as a draw, Luke contrasts the priests’ “we do not know” with Jesus: “I am not telling,” implying that he knows the answer while they claim not to. Other examples abound.

In Luke chapter six, we see only Jesus’ side of a riposte interaction. After asking him about eating grain on the Sabbath, the Pharisees and scribes are strangely silent for the next few verses (Luke 6:1-2). We may assume that the rage they express in verse eleven is due to this silence coupled with their inability to meet Christ’s challenge or explain his healing miracle (Luke 6:9-10). Luke demonstrates the superiority of Christ by having him win a double portion of the Pharisees’ honor in one interaction.

Later Christ is challenged again only this time the Pharisees have planted in the crowd “spies who pretended to be righteous in order that they might catch him in
some [sedition] statement so that, by his riposte, they could make him appear guilty in the eyes of Rome (Luke 20.20). The religious elite stood to win Christ’s honor through the expected silence or through the subsequent arrest should his riposte prove too political. It is no small wonder that they are shocked into silence when Christ answers their question about taxes by saying “render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s and to God the things which are God’s” (20.25-26). Jesus’ answer is enigmatic enough to amaze the crowd and to seem politically innocuous. Similarly in the next few verses, Christ evades the Sadducees’ trap about marriage in the afterlife by asserting that those in heaven do not marry but are like the angels (20.36). It is important to note two things in this case.

The first is that the question was purely rhetorical since the Sadducees denied any form of afterlife (Luke 20.27). The second is that in verse thirty-seven Christ grounds his reply in the words of Moses, a particularly beloved patriarch. For the Sadducees to refute this they would have to deny a substantial part of their Christ tradition. Thus Christ explodes the Sadducees argument while demolishing their future credibility. Luke depicts Jesus warning his disciples about the scribes in the next verse and, throughout the book, he highlights how Christ can detect the logic of the scribes’ challenges to avoid entrapment. In this way Luke paints Jesus as a particularly good rhetorician, making him more appealing to his audience. By depicting Jesus as a master of rhetoric, Luke crowns him with honor upon honor, all the while increasing the “honorability” of the Christian message.
Kinship, a third component of the Hellenistic ideology, is as important as beneficence and honor. The Jews prided themselves on being God's chosen people and subsequently privileged genealogy and family ties. One can see, for instance, how the Sadducees would be reluctant to say anything disparaging about Moses. Kinship, after all, bestows a certain amount of hereditary honor on an individual, a concept that is as important in Greco-Roman culture as it is to Hebrew culture. De Silva writes that “people are not just free-floating individuals out there in the [Roman] world but are located within larger constellations of ‘family’” and “their merits begin with [...] the reputation of their ancestral house” (158). Luke's account of Christ's genealogy traces “the line of Joseph back to Adam and thus back to God. It is a genealogical argument for the universality that Luke will claim for Christ's rule” (de Silva 161).

While Luke may use kinship positively to make his case for Jesus' rule, he has his characters apply kinship negatively to certain religious officials. The phrase “brood of vipers” is used by John the Baptist and, according to de Silva, this particular epithet was “the most virulent of insults available to people in the ancient world” (163). Jesus also attacks the lawyers by saying that it was their “fathers” who killed the prophets (Luke 11.47). It is difficult for the modern reader to grasp the depth of ignominy that such insults would imply. Through kinship—as through
honor, and beneficence Luke establishes Jesus and Christianity's new ideology as believable and honorable while attacking the flaws of its Judaic source.

Just as Luke twists concepts of ancestry to make Jesus divinely important and to cast a shadow of ill repute onto the scribes, he also twists traditional narrative archetypes to make the new sect of Christianity stand out against the larger Jewish backdrop. A very clear example of this appears early on in the book. Perhaps an in-depth look at portions of Luke's first chapter will flesh out this point.

What Luke Really Meant: Considering Mary and Zechariah

To begin our discussion, it is important to bear in mind that a disinterested view of history and the so-called objectivism of historians are modern trappings that cannot fairly be assigned to ancient authors. As Luke is more often read as a religious or historical text than as a skillfully crafted literary work, people often overlook his symbolism and the structure of his gospel. Because of this, many fail to see the significance of the parallel between Zechariah and Mary in Luke's first chapter. Zechariah's silence, scholars tell us, serves to act as the sign he requested in verse 18 and as punishment for his disbelief (Green 79). Green discusses how Mary asks a very similar question and is answered with impunity because she reacted with belief in verse 45 and not doubt (89). I find Green's explanation unsatisfactory because it oversimplifies to the point of distraction.
The difference between the two questions is semantic and, as far as the message is concerned, trivial. In verse 18, Zechariah asks how he will know the message "for certain." In verse 34 Mary’s words are, "how can this be?" Both queries betray the speaker’s doubt about the validity of Gabriel’s message. Both follow up the question with a statement of rationale; Zechariah cites his age and Mary her virginity as obstacles to the prophecies’ fulfillment. In both the content and the argument of the message, the two express the same basic doubt. Green tries to escape this by claiming that Gabriel was privy to an insight that is denied the reader (79). While the theist may very well believe this, the scholar is forced to substantiate it and the text does not help much in this matter. Theology renders the point moot through the "dual authorship" claim that the fallible words of men (e.g., Luke) are rendered infallible by the divine authorship of the Holy Spirit working within the human. While this view is a fascinating one that I myself believe, it often diverts attention from the human author and textual implications. At the risk of sounding like a New Critic, I think we’d do well to stick close to the text for in so doing we may find an alternative understanding.

As mentioned above, Luke draws an obvious parallel between Mary and Zechariah (and his wife Elizabeth). On the one hand we find a fertile virgin and on...

\footnote{To his credit, Green does discuss the parallel between these two characters but only to claim that it was Luke’s purpose to link John and Jesus together (84, 84). Green then goes on to discuss the contrasts between the two stories (with some intriguing insights) but still concludes that Zechariah had more doubt than Mary (84).}
the other a barren couple. Mary questions Gabriel’s message and offers a counter argument. A few verses previous Zechariah had done the same. The interaction between human and divine messenger is an obvious parallel and we are meant to see it. We are also meant to see, however, the obvious differences in the parallel. It is not Elizabeth who receives the message but her husband. Given what we see in latter portions of Luke, the traditions and power structures of the Jews are not all necessarily translated into Jesus’ Kingdom of God—particularly when it comes to women and family. It becomes reasonable; thence, to assume that the Zechariah incident is serving both a narrative and symbolic role.

As verse five tells us, Zechariah was a priest and a righteous man. Moreover, he and his barren wife echo Abraham and Sarah, the founders of the Hebrew people. Luke takes pains to paint this couple in a sympathetic light, telling us first of their righteousness and then later of their barrenness (Luke 1.6-7). The story of Zechariah seems very much in keeping with traditional Jewish stories—a couple is barren, they seek the Lord, the Lord intervenes and sends them a special child. If we contrast this with the Mary narrative, we see something else entirely. Gabriel seems to violate the expected order of things. The angel is visiting a woman, thus beginning the validation of women seen throughout the entire book. Mary is not barren and she did not seek the Lord. Rather, she is singled out by the divine. Gabriel talks to her and not to her husband, opting to visit her before her marriage. The will of the Lord, in this matter, is to operate outside the normal bounds of the marriage institution—a fact which would (and did) shock Jewish sensibilities. Viewing this parallel in light of the entire
gospel, it becomes increasingly probable that Luke’s intention was to show the similarities between Judaism and the Christian sect while at the same time highlighting the novelty and superiority of Christianity. Luke associates the old way with John and the new with Jesus, symbolically crowning Christianity as the better of the two.

Just as Mary’s unorthodox story deviates from the norm (represented here by Zechariah), the Christian ideology will resemble the Jewish and yet will be notably different. Instead of reading theistic “metatextual” elements into the text, a more straightforward appreciation of Luke’s use of parallels and symbolism allows literary craft to shine through. Moreover, this literary craft does not contradict the theistic reading and, if anything, serves to enrich it.
Chapter 6

Unconscious Ideology: Deconstructing Luke

What does deep ideology theory have to say about Luke? Are there any instances in which Luke insists that the Christian ideology contains x while his language betrays an unconscious adherence to Rome’s y? We find in Luke two main examples, though others surely exist, where the radical elements of his gospel are undercut by the author’s inability to stop thinking like the hegemonic group.

If we return to the concepts of kinship and honor, we find our first example of unconscious ideology. Central to Luke’s text is the idea that identity is defined differently in the Kingdom of God. This is found both in the teachings of Christ and within the structure of the narrative itself. For instance, Jesus likens the people of the Kingdom to children (a group that was essentially ignored and denied status until they came of age) so that his listeners might know that the kingdom is not a place where status matters (Luke 18.15-17; Keener 239). In his famous Beatitudes, Jesus privileges the poor, the hungry, and the downtrodden above the wealthy and well fed.

Also, looking at Luke’s craft, we see a conscious effort to raise the status of widows and women. In the very first chapter, we see how barren Elizabeth is blessed with a child, setting the tone for the redemption of women theme in Luke. When Jesus is presented at the temple in the next chapter, we see Anna, an elderly widow, recognizing Jesus as the Messiah (Luke 2.37). Luke incorporates women, particularly the barren and the widows, to enforce the redemptive nature of Christ’s purpose.
angel’s interchange with Mary, as discussed above, is also culturally atypical and would send a powerful message. When Gabriel greets Mary, he calls her “favored” and tells her that the “Lord is with her” (1.28). It is not surprising that the next verse finds Mary “perplexed.” After all,

God often encouraged his servants that he was ‘with’ them. Greetings were normal, but rank and status determined whom one should greet and with what words. As both a woman and a young person (perhaps twelve or fourteen years old) and not yet married, Mary had virtually no social status. Neither the title (‘favored’ or ‘graced one’) nor the promise (‘the Lord is with you’) was traditional in greetings, even had she been a person of status. (Keener 190)

Not only does Gabriel honor her beyond her station, he honors her as if she is more worthy than any other human. This would send shockwaves through both Jewish and Gentile audiences.

Though his message might appear to be that the underprivileged are valued by God and a new era of egalitarianism is on the way, Luke’s words undercut this. In contrast with his sources, Luke conspicuously leaves celebrated women (e.g. Ruth) out of Jesus’ genealogy, knowing that his Greco-Roman audience would have more respect for an all-male chronology (Luke 3.23-38). In chapter 8 we see prominent women financially supporting the ministry but we see none of them involved as disciples (3). When Peter’s mother is healed of a fever, she immediately begins serving Jesus and his followers (4.39). It is implied that this is a good thing, testifying
to the potency of Christ’s miracles, but later Jesus praises the woman who neglects domestic chores in order to be instructed by him (10.41-42). Moreover, though Gabriel and Elizabeth call Mary “blessed,” Jesus contradicts a woman in chapter 11 when she blesses his mother, redirecting her blessing to “those who hear the word of God and observe it” (1.28, 41; 11.27-28). Which is it? Is woman man’s equal, able to comprehend the Kingdom of God, or is she supposed to support the men and allow them to direct her destiny? It would appear that conscious intent is arguing for the former while ideological intent is arguing for the latter.

An even stronger and perhaps more subconscious example of deep ideology undercutting Luke’s message is his depiction of authority figures. In Christ’s parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, in his Beatitudes, and in numerous other instances, we see that God’s Kingdom is one of flipped binaries. The rich languish in punishment while the poor and the outcasts are invited to feasts (16.19-31; 14.16-24). Examples of this privileging of society’s dregs are nearly as numerous as examples of Christ’s indignation toward the wealthy, the self-righteous, and the aristocracy. To note all of these would be to cite the entire gospel. Suffice it to say that this flipped binary is the key to understanding what Jesus was all about. It is all the more startling, then, to see Luke’s narrative defy this very premise.

If we are not to look at the world through the eyes of social status, Luke’s entire argument is suspect. Consider how he substantiates Jesus’ authenticity. Though Jesus would explode the conventional notions of kinship and lineage, Luke is careful to mention that John the Baptist’s father, Zechariah, is a priest “of the division of
Abijah” and that Jesus’ presentation at the temple is validated by Simeon who was “righteous and devout” (1:5; 2:25). Even in the example of virtuous women cited above, we are told that they are members of high social circles, proving that the message has reached the aristocracy (8.3). Luke draws on those with honor and status to validate the Christian message, surrounding Jesus with socially “reliable” characters. A perfect example of this is Christ’s interaction with the centurion.

In the seventh chapter, we see a high-status Roman centurion who not only requests Jesus’ aid, but even claims that he is unworthy of receiving Christ in his house (1-6). He says, “I am also a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave ‘Do this!’ and he does it” (7.8-10). A Roman of rank and privilege cedes authority to a Jew! There is no finer example of commandeering social stratification than this. In the Kingdom, it should not matter whether the man was a centurion or a leper, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile. Christ came to defy categories of power, not to use them to his advantage. Here we see Luke placing an apolitical Messiah in a blatantly political situation. Although Christ did apparently cure the man’s child, it seems to undercut his anti-status message to craft the moment in such a calculated way. Clearly Luke is thinking along lines consistent with hegemonic expectations and a Roman system of values, rather than according to the Christian ideology he purportedly believes. My point is not that Luke is out to hoodwink us or that he was not a Christian believer. Rather, I merely point out that his Roman ideology is unavoidable and, particularly in a conventional genre like historiography,
it is to be expected that he would come off sounding more Roman than he’d like.

Luke’s deep ideology saturates his text and we, centuries removed, are more able to see it than he was.
Conclusion

Although I could continue to dissect Luke, I feel enough has been brought to the table to substantiate my exegetical claims. We can safely assume that Luke was conscious of his actions when he wrote such radical things as Jesus’ privileging the underclass while spurning the so-called righteous. We can equally assume that Luke’s reliance on hegemonic rules of message substantiation sometimes violate Christ’s revolutionary claims. The ideology Luke seeks to describe and the ideology he secretly pays service to are perhaps equally important. What Luke means to say and what he actually says both contribute the Sinn of his gospel.

In examining Luke, I have focused on a handful of examples of deep ideology at work. It was not my purpose to write an exhaustive social commentary on the gospel but simply to use Luke as a case study—a guinea pig for my theory. Many critics are reluctant to admit that an author has limited control over his or her text. Others would shrug off intentionality altogether, claiming that it adds little value to textual significance and is thus not worthy of our time. I set out to highlight the necessity and practicality of theory, to note the limitations of non-interdisciplinary doxastic practices, and to demonstrate how the social sciences (along with probability and pragmatism) point to an ideal theory that is decidedly New Historicist in appearance. Furthermore, I have stood on the shoulders of my Marxist forbears and have applied their thoughts to Biblical studies in an attempt to demonstrate the necessity of factoring ideology into an interpretation.
What are the implications of this? Meaning can be described as the sum of conscious authorial intent and unconscious ideological intent. One cannot divorce the human sciences from literary studies without sacrificing the second half of this equation. All too often readers focus on their own ideologies and seek to tease them out of a text, regardless of whether or not these ideologies were legitimately there in the first place. It is impossible to ever decode the entire set of ideological components in a given text since they would be as manifold and as layered as they are in the human who penned it. It is possible, however, to uncover quite a bit of the ideology—particularly when it is vastly different from our own.

We err if we stubbornly assert that meaning and authorial intent are synonymous—the former contains the latter, but it is also a function of the historic moment of articulation, deeply infused with hegemonic values and constrained by language itself. Many are reluctant to admit that we are essentially slaves to our ideology. This is due, in part, to our society’s fixation with autonomy and with our instilled fear that any controlling force which threatens this perceived autonomy is necessarily evil. It is all the more ironic that this autonomous individualism is communally indoctrinated into us at both the formal and informal level as ideological common sense. As literary scholars we should emulate the sociologist who endeavors to limit his value judgments when analyzing a foreign culture and forms his opinions from the expectations and rules of that people and not from those of his own.

The purpose of the literary critic is very similar to that of the anthropologist. We are to view works of literature as social artifacts, using them to learn about the
people who wrote them. For literary students, reading should not be primarily entertainment and to view it as such is only to scratch the surface of texts. It is our obligation to humanity to use textual analysis as a vehicle for increasing our knowledge of ourselves and of our history. For a trained intellectual to shy away from this duty is to render his Master of English into an entertainer’s Master of Ceremonies and the only philosophy he is worthy to be a doctor of is relativism. Sinn, ideological intent, and sound doxastic practices are necessary and important and subjective response, however intriguing, should not be the height of our textual interactions. If this project has added to the war on relativistic schools of interpretation and has convinced even one scholar to trade Derrida for Althusser or Eagleton, I consider it a success.
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