WAYS OF WORLDMAKING IN LITERATURE AND OTHER MEDIA: THEORETICAL RECONCEPTUALIZATIONS AND CONSTRUCTIVIST CRITICISM

ANSGAR NÜNNING & VERA NÜNNING

1. Revisions: Ways of Worldmaking Revisited and Supplemented

When Nelson Goodman published his seminal book *Ways of Worldmaking* (1992 [1978]), in which he delineated his influential theory of symbolic types and symbol systems, he was mainly concerned with developing what he later called a "neutral comparative study that can reveal a good deal not only about relations among the several arts but also about the kinships and contrasts between the arts, the sciences, and other ways that symbols of various kinds participate in the advancement of understanding" (Goodman/Elgin 1988: 31-32). The emphasis is thus on comparing the commonalities of, and differences between, various artistic media and symbol systems, as well as on gauging their respective cognitive potential. Though it may be open to debate just how neutral any theory or 'comparative study' can ever be, his formal theory of symbol systems makes no ideological or normative stipulations, focusing instead on the ways in which the world we know is always already made from other worlds. According to Goodman, there is no such thing as a given world – the only thing we can ever have access to are culturally shaped world-models or world-versions: "Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking." (Goodman 1992: 6)

Goodman's theory of worldmaking has provided a highly flexible framework for comparative inquiry that is potentially applicable to a broad range of cultural activities and processes, including literature, film, music, computer games, and other media – a potential which it is the main aim of the essays in the present volume to demonstrate. Recent years have seen an increasing interest across a broad range of disciplines in the question of exactly how worlds are made and how the relation between worldmaking and orders of knowledge can be described. In their tellingly entitled book *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences*, Nelson Goodman and Catherine Z. Elgin emphasize the broad range of disciplines and perspectives that their approach encompasses: "We work *from* a perspective that takes in the arts, the sciences, philosophy, perception, and our everyday worlds, and *toward* better understanding of each through significant comparison with the others." (1988: 164) Despite their wide-ranging perspective and their proclaimed intention to further understanding not only in philosophy but also in the arts and the sciences, the reception and discussion of

Goodman's ways of worldmaking approach has mainly been confined to the domain of philosophy, though there are some laudable exceptions to the rule (cf. Herman 2009).

Despite the fact that the very terms of the titles of Goodman's two most famous books *Languages of Art* (1976) and *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978) clearly signal that "the limited attempt to produce a comparative theory of symbols has become a global project" (Mitchell 1991: 29), his "neutral comparative study" (Goodman/Elgin 1988: 31 f.) is arguably neither as neutral nor as global as its self-proclaimed intentions might suggest. W. J. T. Mitchell was the first to explicitly address the question of "exactly what Goodman is excluding under the rubric of value" (1991: 23), exploring "the scope of Goodman's project, what lies inside and outside the domain of his inquiry" (ibid.: 24). According to Mitchell, "there are three basic subject areas that Goodman routinely excludes from his system: values, knowledge, and history" (ibid.). In her essay "What Goodman Leaves Out", Catherine Z. Elgin (1991b: 89) confirms that Goodman "stands accused of multiple sins of omission", though she does a very good job of showing that he is arguably not guilty as charged, on the grounds that reference and the processes of symbolization that Goodman is interested in are, as Elgin maintains, independent of history.

The main goal of this volume will neither be to act as arbiter of hostilities between Goodman and his critics nor to provide a sustained philosophical exegesis of his works, but rather to redress the balance by focusing on exactly those areas and dimensions of worldmaking that Goodman was not particularly interested in. As the title of this volume indicates, the focus is on the aesthetic and political dimensions of cultural worldmaking, i.e. on the cultural contexts, functions, and ideological implications that processes of symbolization are always involved or implicated in. The contributors proceed from the assumption that Goodman's theory of symbol systems on the one hand, and the study of the aesthetic, historical, and political dimensions of worldmaking on the other – despite their contrary theoretical and methodological assumptions – are not as incompatible as is suggested by those of their respective practitioners who tend to ignore each other's work. Ernst Cassirer, among others, has shown that different historical contexts produce and promote different symbolic forms and that these, in turn, tend to organize the receptivity of understanding in distinct patterns (cf. Cassirer 1953-1996). It is therefore argued that an alliance between theories of symbol systems and the study of literature, culture, and media could be an important force in the current reconceptualization of cultural studies: Such an alliance can open up productive new possibilities for the analysis of both the relationship between aesthetic ways of worldmaking and their cultural contexts, and the epistemological, historical, and cultural implications of symbolic types and symbol systems. In addition, such a move promises to throw new light on both the diachronic development of cultural ways of worldmaking and their changing functions.

Another main objective of this volume is thus to explore the usefulness and range of the approach ushered in by Goodman for the study of literature, media, and culture at large. Useful concepts for exploring this question, which have come to the forefront

of research, are the notions of narrative and media. For the ways in which we make sense of the world and our experiences, narrative structures are of fundamental importance. In his pioneering account of the creation of the autobiographical self, felicitously entitled *How our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (1999), Paul John Eakin has shown that narratives are at work in processes such as identity formation, ordering experiences, remembering, and negotiating values. Although narration can be viewed as universal practice, the ways in which narratives are formed and in which they in turn function as ways of worldmaking is culturally and historically variable. Media do not only provide a means of communication, they also shape cultural processes and our understanding of reality. Given the fundamental impact media have on ways of worldmaking, the question of how new media structure reality constitutes a central research area in a variety of disciplines, including cultural studies, media studies, psychology, and sociology.

It is this socio-historical and functional dimension of literature and other media as ways of worldmaking which the articles in this volume explore, focusing on the aesthetic practices and politics of worldmaking. In doing so they not only revisit and revision Goodman's influential theories of symbol systems, they also adapt, modify, and supplement it by applying the framework of the worldmaking approach to a broad range of aesthetic practices and media. While Goodman's comprehensive philosophy of art focuses largely on developing a systematic taxonomy of symbol systems and types of rendering, restoring meaning and content to art (cf. Wollheim 1991: 39), the articles in this volume explore the interrelationship between aesthetic practices and the ideological and political implications of their ways of worldmaking. In doing so, they provide some amplifications and applications of the approach ushered in by Goodman. The articles show that such processes as composition and decomposition, weighting (i.e. emphasis or ratings of relevance), ordering (and reordering), deletion and supplementation, and deformation – the main process Goodman identified and explored as components of worldmaking (cf. Goodman 1992: 7-17) – are never merely 'neutral'. On the contrary, these processes of selection and deletion, ordering, weighting, and deformation – all of which play a prominent role in worldmaking – can have far-reaching ideological and political consequences, in that they serve to remodel the world-version that people often take to be 'the reality'. Some of the underlying reconceptualizations that provide the theoretical underpinnings of the case-studies in worldmaking will be outlined in the next section.

2. Reconceptualizations: The Ideology of the Form and the Politics of Symbolic Worldmaking

To present the outlines of the aesthetic, cultural, and contextualizing approach to worldmaking that this volume attempts to develop and test, we briefly need to historicize and contextualize the debates in which the contributors make a modest attempt to

intervene. When Goodman invented his ambitious theory of ways of worldmaking, three of the things that were lost were context, history (or diachrony), and cultural as well as political functions of worldmaking, including the dissemination of aesthetic and other values. Although we have recently witnessed both several *cultural turns* (cf. Bachmann-Medick 2006) and a great revival of interest in the study of symbolic forms (e.g. narratives across various disciplines: cf. Ryan 2004; Heinen/Sommer 2009), formal approaches like Goodman's and Ernst Cassirer's theory of symbol systems or structuralist narratology on the one hand, and context-sensitive interpretations of narratives or other symbol systems on the other, still seem to be oceans apart (cf. Sommer 2007; Nünning 2009).

A number of wide-ranging changes or *turns* in literary and cultural studies have, however, been conducive to fostering interest in the cultural, historical, and political significance of the symbol systems developed by literature and other media. These complex changes in the theoretical and critical climate, which have been dubbed respectively as cultural turns (Bachmann-Medick 2006), as the historical turn, anthropological turn, ethical turn, postcolonial turn and narrative or narrativist turn, have greatly increased interest in what Jerome Bruner (1991b) called "The Narrative Construction of Reality".

These *turns* have not only significantly changed the theoretical landscape and critical climate, they also arguably tally well with the proposed reconceptualizations of Goodman's ways of worldmaking as representing not merely a set of symbol systems but also a set of aesthetic and political practices that serve to fulfil important cultural functions (see section 3 below). The contextualist and functionalist approach to cultural ways of worldmaking adopted by the contributors puts the basic insights and analytical tools provided by Goodman's theory of symbol systems to the service of a cultural analysis of literature and other media. Focusing on the study of aesthetic forms in their relationship to the culture which generates them, they explore "cultural experiences translated into, and meanings produced by, particular formal narrative practices" (Helms 2003: 14) or other symbolic types or symbol systems.

Drawing upon the categories, insights, and research strategies of various approaches in literary and cultural theory, the articles serve to show that such an integrated approach can arguably shed light on both the semantic potential of symbolic forms and the functions that they serve to fulfil within the changing cultural contexts in which they are embedded. It is the task of such an interdisciplinary approach to cultural worldmaking to contextualize literature and other media by situating them within the broader spectrum of discourses that constitute a given culture (cf. Gymnich/Neumann/Nünning 2006). Contextualizing literary and medial ways of worldmaking is a prerequisite in order to catch up with the *cultural turns* in literary criticism and theory, but the study of literature, media, and culture can also profit from drawing upon the analytical tools provided by Cassirer's and Goodman's theories of symbol systems. As Bal (1999: 39) has pointedly observed, what is needed is "a narratological analysis of culture" and "a cultural analysis of narratives". In a similar vein, the articles in this

volume proceed from the assumption that what is needed is an analysis of literature, media, and culture in terms of ways of worldmaking and a context-sensitive, cultural, and historical analysis of ways of worldmaking.

Such a contextualist project is, of course, very much indebted to various new approaches that have recently emerged in literary and cultural theory. It has most in common with the approaches subsumed under such headings as the New Historicism, Poetics of Culture, and Cultural and Historical Narratology (cf. Helms 2003; Nünning 2009). Each of these new theoretical approaches moves, in its own way, from a description of symbolic types, narrative strategies or other textual phenomena to broader cultural questions and various contexts: "The root transformation can be described as a shift from text-centered and formal models to models that are jointly formal and functional – models attentive both to the text and to the context of stories" (Herman 1999b: 8).

Proceeding from the assumption that an aesthetic analysis of symbol systems can shed new light on the ideological, epistemological, and political implications of different ways of worldmaking, such a context- and culture-sensitive approach to ways of worldmaking strives to cross the border between textual formalism and historical contextualism, and to close the gaps between formal bottom-up analysis and cultural top-down synthesis, putting the analytical toolkit developed by Goodman and Cassirer to the service of context-sensitive interpretations of literature and other media. Though the ubiquity of symbol systems makes it difficult to establish the boundaries of such a culture-oriented project, it is possible to outline some of the conceptual and methodological consequences that it entails.

First, such a culturalist framework for the analysis of ways of worldmaking conceptualizes culture not as 'text', but as an ensemble of symbolic types (e.g. narratives, metaphors, performances, etc.). From this point of view, cultures are not so much 'imagined communities' (*sensu* Anderson 1983) but 'symbolic communities' or 'narrative communities', i.e. communities forged and held together by the symbol systems they project and by the stories the members tell about themselves and their culture. In what is arguably the best narrative or narrativist theory of culture to date, Wolfgang Müller-Funk (2002: 53) has argued that cultures differ not only with regard to the subjects and themes they are particularly interested in, but also with regard to their favoured modes of storytelling, the forms with which their narratives are constructed. Müller-Funk has therefore made the valuable suggestion to conceptualize cultures as 'narrative and memorial communities':

> Without any doubt it is narratives that form the basis of collective, national memories and that constitute politics of identity and difference. Cultures should always also be conceived of as narrative communities which are distinguished from each other by their reservoir of narratives. (Müller-Funk 2002: 14; our own translation)

Second, though it leaves the narrow confines of taxonomy and categorization of symbol systems and symbolic types, a contextual and cultural framework for the analysis of ways of worldmaking is informed by a critical practice that only the toolbox of clas-

sical theoretical approaches in literary and cultural studies can provide. The processes which Goodman explored as playing a prominent role in worldmaking, i.e. composition and decomposition, weighting (i.e. emphasis or ratings of relevance), ordering (and reordering), deletion and supplementation, and deformation (cf. Goodman 1992: 7-17), provide a convenient and useful point of departure for such an integrated cultural analysis, but they need to be supplemented by other categories like those developed for the study of drama, narrative, and other genres and media. We should like to emphasize that the precise semiotic analysis of symbol systems is by no means obsolete for anyone interested in coming to grips with the aesthetics and politics of worldmaking.

Third, questioning the traditional notion that the relationship between literature or other media and reality is based on mimesis, such a cultural approach to worldmaking proceeds from the assumption that it is more rewarding to conceptualize ways of worldmaking as active cognitive forces in their own right, as something which is involved in the actual generation of ways of thinking and feeling, and of attitudes and, thus, of something that stands behind historical developments. In his seminal work *Imagining the Penitentiary* (1987), in which he argued that English literature formulated widespread attitudes towards prison which facilitated the conception of the 18th-century penitentiary, Bender sums up this new understanding of the active and constitutive role that fictions can play in the process of forming institutions and shaping mentalities:

> I consider literature and the visual arts as advanced forms of knowledge, as cognitive instruments that anticipate and contribute to institutional formation. Novels as I describe them are primary historical and ideological documents; the vehicles, not the reflections, of social change. (Bender 1987: 1)

Conceptualizing narrative fictions and other ways of worldmaking as cognitive forces, such a cultural approach explores the ways in which the formal properties and practices of symbolizations reflect, and influence, the unspoken mental assumptions and cultural issues of a given period. It focuses on the power of literary fictions, and other ways of worldmaking, "to represent a medley of voices engaged in a conversation and/or a struggle for cultural space" (Scholes 1998: 134). As Gabriele Helms (2003) has convincingly demonstrated, the framework of a cultural narratology is arguably germane to both Bakhtin's intense concern with social norms and values and to his perceptive attempts to relate the dialogic structure of novels to the world views and ideologies of the societies from which they originated. Helms argues that the "term 'cultural narratology' describes the place where dialogism and narrative theory meet, allowing the analysis of formal structures to be combined with a consideration of their ideological implications" (Helms 2003: 10). Helms is one of the first scholars to provide a conceptual and methodological outline of a cultural narratology and to actually test its usefulness.

Such an approach implies, of course, that formal techniques and symbol systems are not just analysed as structural features of a text, but as symbolic modes which are

highly semanticized and engaged in those processes of cultural construction that Goodman christened worldmaking. What Helms had said about narratives and cultural narratology arguably also holds true for other kinds of symbol systems and ways of worldmaking. As Helms (2003: 7) emphasizes, "a cultural narratology would enable us to recognize that narrative techniques are not neutral and transparent forms to be filled with content, and that dialogic relations in narrative structures are ideologically informed."

Along the same lines one can argue that Goodman's "neutral comparative study" (Goodman/Elgin 1988: 31) does not deal with neutral and transparent forms to be filled with content either, but with symbolic types and processes that are highly semanticized and even ideologically charged. Though we do not want to question the usefulness of Goodman's "relatively neutral or value-free characterization of symbol types" (Mitchell 1991: 23), Goodman's approach can be supplemented with a complementary perspective that focuses on the question of the semanticization of symbols and forms. Such a move is arguably compatible with Goodman's approach, since, as Mitchell has pointed out, aesthetic values "are excluded only temporarily" from Goodman's framework, "finally to be relocated in the cognitive; ethical and political values, one presumes, would also be ultimately relocated in the cognitive and would grow out of Goodman's picture of human subjects as freely choosing between visions, versions, and systems" (ibid.: 25). In order to accommodate and explore norms and values, the project of a cultural and functional approach to ways of worldmaking as delineated above can profitably draw on Fredric Jameson's concept of the "ideology of the form" (Jameson 1983: 141), which implies that "form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right":

> What must now be stressed is that at this level "form" is apprehended as content. The study of the ideology of form is no doubt grounded on a technical and formalistic analysis in the narrower sense, even though, unlike much traditional formal analysis, it seeks to reveal the active presence within the text of a number of discontinuous and heterogeneous formal processes. But at the level of analysis in question here, a dialectical reversal has taken place in which it has become possible to grasp such formal processes as sedimented content in their own right, as carrying ideological messages of their own, distinct from the ostensible or manifest content of the works. (Jameson 1983: 99)

If one accepts the idea of a semanticization of narrative forms, then one should also pay more attention to the ethical, ideological, and political implications of both the symbol systems explored by Goodman and many other ways of worldmaking in literature and other media. Form and content, symbol systems and contexts, symbolic types and functions, are, after all, more closely intertwined than adherents of Goodman's approach or structuralist narratologists have tried to make us believe. Symbolic types and other ways of worldmaking are always embedded in questions of contexts and functions, and we would arguably be wise to pay more attention to the interrelationship between symbol systems on the one hand and the aesthetics, ethics, and politics of worldmaking on the other. "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" (1980), to quote the title of one of Hayden White's influential essays, is inextricably

intertwined with Jameson's notion of "the ideology of form" (Jameson 1983: 99) and with what White himself has called "the content of the form" (White 1987).

Moreover, cultural, historical, and political analyses of ways of worldmaking require thicker descriptions (*sensu* Clifford Geertz) than those offered by representatives of analytical philosophy, descriptions which take into account formal, thematic, and functional features of texts and the ways in which epistemological, ethical, and political issues are articulated through particular ways of worldmaking:

> The political enters the study of English primarily through questions of representation: who is represented, who does the representing, who is object, who is subject – and how do these representations connect to the values of groups, communities, classes, tribes, sects, and nations? (Scholes 1998: 153)

The notion of ideology of the form and the idea of a semanticization of literary forms outlined above provide a theoretical and methodological framework that allows the critic to tease out the ideological, normative, and political implications of ways of worldmaking.

What is the point, then, of such a contextualist, cultural, historical, and political reconceptualization of ways of worldmaking? Such a cultural approach recognizes that, since "ideology is located in narrative structures themselves" (Helms 2003: 14), symbol systems and symbolic types are never merely 'neutral'. On the contrary, analyses of the semanticization of narrative forms and other symbolic types can shed light on unspoken assumptions, attitudes, ideologies, as well as values and norms prevalent in, and implicitly disseminated by, texts, genres, and media. Once symbolic types are understood as socially constructed cognitive forces, they become valuable sources for the study of cultures past and present because analyses of "their narrative forms provide information about ideological concepts and world views" (Helms 2003: 14).

In addition to including norms and values as well as contexts of worldmaking such an approach has the added value of supplementing Goodman's synchronic theories with a diachronic perspective. As Mitchell has convincingly shown, all Goodman offers in order to account for historical developments of ways of worldmaking "is a binary model of structural change: the static maintenance of the familiar and the disruptive appearance of the novel" (Mitchell 1991: 25). Such a binary model does not, of course, do justice to the manifold and complex ways in which symbol systems can be transformed. Moreover, to gauge whether a work is conventional or innovative inevitably requires looking at the historical contexts in which it is embedded. By exploring issues of contextualization, history, politics, and values involved in worldmaking, the chapters in this volume attempt to amplify Goodman's approach, taking it beyond its original scope into new territories.

In addition, such an integrated approach, taking in the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of ways of worldmaking, also sheds light on the functions that various ways of worldmaking serve to fulfil. Though Goodman (1992: 94) has called his approach "a critique of worldmaking", in his "comparative study of these versions and visions and of their making" he does not really bother to actually 'critique' ways of

worldmaking or to pay any attention to either an exploration of the ideological or political implications that are often involved in such processes as selection, ordering, and weighting.

3. (Re-)Constructions and Refigurations: On the Functions of Worldmaking

As we will briefly try to show in this section, ways of worldmaking are never merely a disinterested or neutral way of viewing or structuring reality; instead they can fulfil a range of cognitive, normative, and political functions. There are several functions that can be identified, although many of them are syncretized in specific instances, texts or media. The most obvious function that ways of worldmaking serve to fulfil is already entailed in the very terms: they serve to construct or indeed make the worlds that we regard as reality or as the real world by imposing form and order upon a chaotic reality. Their function is to impart some sort of structure to the amorphous and chaotic reality, thus serving as cognitive unifying and ordering devices.

What deserves to be emphasized is that the structure ways of worldmaking allow us to impart to particular aspects or domains of the world is not there independent of them. Symbol systems represent coherent organizations of complex phenomena in terms of 'natural' (or naturalized) categories. Despite their inevitably reductive character, even simple ways of worldmaking can fulfil heuristic or cognitive functions. As conceptual tools, ways of worldmaking resemble models. Imposing form and structure upon an untidy, contingent, and chaotic reality, they serve as models for thought, as the conceptual fictions we live by, to borrow the felicitous title of Lakoff and Johnson's important book (cf. Lakoff/Johnson 1980).

One might even go so far as to argue that ways of worldmaking inevitably create the very realities they purport merely to describe: "changes in our conceptual systems do change what is real for us and affect how we perceive the world and act upon those perceptions" (Lakoff/Johnson 1980: 145 f.). Offering ways of organizing complex experiences and historical changes into structured wholes (cf. ibid.: 81), metaphors, concepts, and other ways of worldmaking "not only provide coherent structure, highlighting some things and hiding others" (ibid.: 139), they are also capable of giving people a new understanding of respective domains, playing "a very significant role in determining what is real for us" (ibid.: 146). Such an approach shifts its attention to the ways in which symbol systems function as active cognitive forces in their own right – forces which are involved in the actual generation of attitudes, discourses, ideologies, and norms and values. Though Goodman is not primarily interested in these issues, his theory of symbol systems does have far-reaching cognitive and epistemological implications which upgrade the status of the aesthetic, as Mitchell has rightly emphasized:

> The formal theory of symbol systems cannot be bracketed off as a special, limited project, but must take in the totality of cognitive universes. Since Goodman regards the world and cognition as completely mediated by symbol systems, the "languages of art" do not have an ornamental or supplementary relation to epistemology; the new epistemology is constituted by the aesthetic, the semiotic, and the symbolic. (Mitchell 1991: 26)

In addition to the important recognition of the function of actually constructing the worlds that we project through our ways of worldmaking, both the general prefiguration and premediation, and the refigurating effects that ways of worldmaking inevitably have should be taken into account. Paul Ricœurs's procedural mimesis-model offers a suitable theoretical reference point for coming to terms with these complex issues. Ricœur distinguishes three levels or degrees of mimesis, which he describes as prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration.

The fundamental thought-figure of the following conception is a three-dimensional model, which is based on Ricœur's concept of a 'circle of mimesis' with the three levels of prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration (cf. Ricœur 1984 [1983]). Literature and other ways of worldmaking are first of all related to and preformed out of a pre-existent, extra-literary reality (prefiguration): Literary works and the products of the media come into being in the context of cultures, in which symbolic orders and symbol systems already circulate certain versions and concepts of the present and the past (manifested in social interaction, journalism, literary genres, and media of other symbolic systems). Secondly, literature and other media can represent versions of present and past world-models (configuration): They often generate or project socially unsanctioned, excluded, and repressed forms of alternative versions as well as the values and norms that underpin them. Therefore, they can be viewed as models and test-cases that generate alternative or possible worlds through a series of specifically aesthetic procedures or literary forms. In turn, ways of worldmaking, thirdly, have the capacity to affect extra-literary reality (refiguration), i.e. to influence the worldmaking processes that occur in non-literary institutions.

Ricœur's model may be helpful here, in that it makes clear that the creation of world-models or versions of reality through literary works or other media rests on dynamic transformation processes – on an interaction among the 'prefiguration' of the text, that is, its reference to the pre-existent extra-textual world (*mimesis* I), the textual 'configuration' that creates a fictional object (*mimesis* II), and the 'refiguration' by the reader (*mimesis* III). The literary process thus appears as an active constructive one, in which cultural systems of meaning, literary processes of formal configuration and practices of reception are equally involved and in which reality is not merely reflected, but, instead, first poetically created (cf. Ricœur 1984: 107) and then "iconically enriched" (ibid.: 127).

In addition to their cognitive, constructive, and refigurating functions, ways of worldmaking can also fulfil important normative functions because they often authorize, disseminate, and propagate ideologically charged values, views, and world-versions. It arguably bears reiterating that symbol systems are never 'neutral', but always semanticized and potentially even ideologically and/or politically charged. Through its

aesthetic forms, literature, as well as other media, can thematize, represent, and disseminate norms and values in their cultural contexts. The order of the symbolic systems that prevails in the extra-literary reality, e.g. of norms and values that actually exist in the real world, and the literary or possible worlds created within the medium of literature can enter into a relationship of mutual influence and change. Literature and other media can be important for the dissemination and popularization of norms and values, but they can also serve to authorize or legitimate evaluative and ideological stances, or to create alternative systems of values (cf. Erll/Grabes/Nünning 2008; Baumbach/Grabes/Nünning 2009).

Lastly, and arguably no less importantly, ways of worldmaking can be instrumental in the formation and maintenance of collective identities, because they provide conventions and habits for coming to terms with 'the world'. Literature and other media can be central to the formation of collective identities and "imagined communities" (cf. Anderson 1983) for the simple reason that not only a nation but "any imagined community is held together by the stories it generates about itself' (Arata 1996: 1) and by the symbol systems that its members habitually deploy. Sharing a set of ways of worldmaking arguably serves to forge communities and even nations, as the great importance that is generally attributed to the role that a common language plays for reinforcing national identity may serve to illustrate.

Working simultaneously on different cognitive, emotional, normative, and ideological levels, literature and other media can be seen as playing a creative and productive role in generating norms and values, indeed in making the worlds that we live by and in. Shaping habits of thought, communal feeling, as well as views of the present and past, literature and other aesthetic media have played an important part in the making, and remaking, of mentalities and world views. By projecting configurations and hierarchies of values, literature has not only served to organize the conceptual and emotional codes people live by, but, more often than not, also to challenge these codes. This is another reason why it is arguably productive to conceive of ways of worldmaking not merely as 'neutral' symbolic types, but as cognitive tools that shape the aesthetic, cultural, and political worlds we make and live in.

4. Worldmaking in Literature and Other Media: Structure of the Volume

Proceeding from the assumption that literature is "the only place where the construction of world-models as such becomes thematic, and where this thematization can bear upon all positions from ortho-models to remote fantasy worlds" (Schmidt 1984: 265), a constructivist approach focuses on the formal devices used in literary texts for foregrounding the subjectivity, relativity, and constructivity of experience, knowledge, and worldmaking at large. Constructivist criticism specifically tries to analyse those thematic and structural features of literary texts that have bearing on wider epistemologi-

cal issues and to explore the possible connections between the formal ways of worldmaking deployed in literary texts and their epistemological and political implications (cf. e.g. von Glasersfeld 1979; Nünning 1990). Through a formal analysis of fiction, constructivist criticism tries to explore the question of what assertions about the nature of reality and history reside in the structure of literary fictions. If there is no reason why linguistic or stylistic strategies of constructing reality in fiction should differ from those used in non-fictional contexts (cf. Schmidt 1984: 266), then the study of the ways in which literature thematizes and reflects the problems attached to the constructions of world-models may provide valuable insight into the ways in which human beings try to make sense of their past and present reality.

Exploring the forms and functions of worldmaking in literature and other media, the chapters that follow engage in what can be called 'constructivist' criticism. In a pioneering article, Henry D. Herring has persuasively shown that the informing principles of constructivist criticism are completely different from the presuppositions of deconstruction. Emphasizing the central role of construction involved in generating conceptual models of the world, constructivist theory tries to account for the complex cognitive processes through which "an individual (or collectivity) actively generates a construction of the world" (Herring 1985: 39), whereas the "deconstructionist position ignores an adequate explanation of how people continue to think, feel, and act in uncertainty" (ibid.: 42). In contrast to the deconstructionist approach, which eliminates the subject, does not recognize a self definable independently of the network of linguistic relationships, and maintains that language and texts only obtain meaning in relation to other texts, constructivism recognizes that the individual is the sole source of values and meaning in his or her world and must therefore accept complete responsibility for his or her acts and choices. Delimiting itself from what constructivists tend to regard as ingenious feats of deconstructionist verbal juggling, "[c]onstructivist criticism as practice focuses on the cognitive strategies created in the work" (ibid.: 44).

Given the foregoing conceptual and functional underpinnings, it would certainly be desirable to outline some practical directions of research that the kind of contextual, cultural, and functional approach to ways of worldmaking delineated above opens up. But since the articles that follow serve to test the applicability and demonstrate the usefulness of this approach, a very brief overview of the structure of the volume and of some of the key hypotheses and leitmotifs of the following articles may suffice. Useful concepts for exploring the question of how ways of worldmaking and cultures mutually impinge on each other are the notions of politics, (literary) narratives, and media, which have come to the forefront of interdisciplinary research, but which have not yet been thoroughly explored as ways of worldmaking. Hence, this volume focuses on three key issues or concepts as a starting point for exploring ways of worldmaking and their interdisciplinary relevance and ramifications, viz. (1) politics of worldmaking, (2) worldmaking in literature, and (3) worldmaking in other media.

The articles in Part I of this volume ("The Politics of Worldmaking") discuss the intricate relationship between worldmaking and politics, thus addressing an issue

which Goodman's constructivist approach largely ignores. What the articles of this section illustrate is the extent to which worldmaking is imbued with cultural values and thus inevitably implicated in power relations. The making of a meaningful and socially significant world has wider political and ethical implications. What is at stake is the power of processes of worldmaking to convey culturally significant truths, the evidence of 'facts'. From this perspective, politics, i.e. the struggle for social power and for the power to define truth, is essentially a negotiation of the diverse forms of worldmaking, responding to conflicting interests, needs, and norms. Francesco Pitassio addresses a number of fundamental issues surrounding the politics of worldmaking in films, showing the extent to which Italian neorealism contributed to the construction of the nation. From this view, the nation is best understood as the result of a set of discursive practices, which creates highly suggestive national self-images and thereby fosters a sense of belonging. Erik Granly Jensen's contribution focuses on Walter Benjamin's radio art and shows that, like Goodman, Benjamin regards the artwork as an entity in itself; yet instead of 'world' Benjamin uses Leibniz's concept of the 'monad'. To the extent that this imaginary world is always founded on a conflict with other worlds, worldmaking is inevitably implicated in cultural hierarchies and is thus to be understood as a profoundly political act, which serves particular interests. Anette Storli Andersen's contribution focuses on the theatre as a way of worldmaking and thus stresses the importance of the body and of performance to processes of worldmaking. Proceeding from the assumption that the performance is not to be understood as something which already exists but as something which is brought forth by the actions, perceptions, and responses of both actors and spectators alike, Andersen shows how the theatre functions as a community-building institution. Ways of worldmaking both define a culture and legitimate social groups. Thus, as Enrico Lodi shows with regard to literary representations of the Spanish Civil War, ways of worldmaking are an influential means of organizing contemporary politics and of ushering in forms of cultural signification, which open the space for the negotiation of collective memories and self-definitions.

Literary narratives are of fundamental importance for the ways in which we make sense of the world and our experiences. They not only provide means of communication, but they also shape cultural processes and our fabrication, and understanding, of reality. As the chapters in Part II ("Worldmaking in Literature") of this volume demonstrate, literary narratives are at work in negotiating values, constructing and deconstructing knowledge, and fabricating storied versions of 'the world'. The articles in this part compellingly illustrate that literary narratives, while being closely linked to other media and discourses, are a highly specific form of worldmaking: literature provides a space for experimenting with alternative ways of worldmaking. Moreover it can articulate the previously unarticulated in culture, thus putting forward imaginary versions of the world that cannot be experienced in other, more pragmatic forms of discourse. Heide Reinhäckel addresses a number of key issues concerning literary worldmaking. Her contribution focuses on the aesthetic strategies which Sebald's

novels employ to construe worlds, showing that these worlds in fact consist of a variety of heterogeneous worlds. In this view, literary worldmaking is an ongoing, dynamic, and open process involving the intertextual construction and reconstruction of symbolic forms. The idea that any (literary) world is always made up by multiple worlds is at the heart of Irina Bauder's contribution, in which she explores the interplay between actual and possible worlds in 18th-century romance. Narratives always point to what is not told, to an underlying system of alternative stories. Literary ways of worldmaking therefore not only construct coherent worlds, rather they also implicitly draw attention to what remains untold, thus making us aware of the necessary selectivity of any and every constructed world. Stefanie Schaefer gauges the complexity of literary worldmaking, analysing how chaotic data are turned into a more or less coherent world, a universe centring on the lived experiences of human agents. What Schaefer shows is that autobiographical storytelling involves an act of self-positioning in relation to what is culturally defined as acceptable. The study of autobiographical fiction thus turns into a laboratory in which we can experiment with the possibilities for culturally admissible constructions of the self and the world. The essentially ambiguous, indeterminate, and complex nature of literary worldmaking is at the centre of Alexander Bareis's article. Proceeding from the assumption that the topic of 'ways of worldmaking' reaches the very core of theories of possible and/or fictional worlds, Bareis raises important questions concerning the specific truth of non-actual worlds. How, after all, do we know what is true in these non-actual worlds, especially if the question is not answered directly by statements in the world of the work itself? The contribution by Mikkel Astrup offers further insights into the complexity of literature, demonstrating how literature can experiment with values and promote complex ethical judgements. Focusing on Samuel Beckett's plays *Worstward Ho* and *Molloy*, Astrup analyses how desire – which, according to psychoanalysis, lies at the heart of subjectivity – guides practices of (literary) worldmaking and is thus presented as reality.

Another one of the lacunae in Goodman's account concerns the role of media and medialization as important factors that shape our ways of worldmaking. As S. J. Schmidt (2008) has convincingly shown, all our ways of constructing or fabricating world-models are thoroughly shaped by the conditions of mediality. Media not only provide means of communication, they also structure cultural processes of signification and our fabrication of reality. Given the fundamental impact media have on ways of worldmaking, Part III of this volume ("Worldmaking in Other Media: Music, Computer Games, and Institutions") is devoted to the question of how different media are used to make worlds by paying attention to certain things rather than others, to structure information in certain ways and to use specific symbolic forms to create and disseminate cultural knowledge. This section consists of a number of in-depth case studies: Martin Lüthe analyses the complex relationship between music and worldmaking, illustrating how the African-American record label Motown shaped constructions of 'blackness', 'whiteness', 'male', and 'female' in the US-American culture during the 1960s. Drawing on discourse theory, Lüthe examines the media-specific structures of

music that can be exploited to construct and perpetuate specific world-models. Rudolph Glitz shifts the focus to computer games, scrutinizing how these produce worlds to be explored. Focusing on Sid Meier's *Civilization*, Glitz examines both the historically-informed aesthetics of the game's ludic fictions and their potential to cause political controversy. What he demonstrates is that Meier's computer games use very specific aesthetic strategies to promote alternative histories, which are highly charged with ethical and political norms. Anna Seiderer's contribution focuses on the post-colonial museum as part of African countries' colonial heritage, showing how these function as a very potent means of worldmaking. Instead of depicting existing versions of a nation's history, museums produce, in the act of configuration, the very reality or world which they purport to portray. Museums and the archives behind them are therefore inevitably rooted in power relations; they build the values and beliefs that define collective identities and dominant ideologies. Hence, the contributions gathered in Part III attest and contribute to the ongoing dialogue between, and interdependence of, the extra-medial world and the variety of possible worlds constructed and popularized in various media, showing how these worlds ultimately become the realities we live by.

Though it may go without saying, we should like to conclude by readily admitting that this volume does not, of course, make any claim to have exhausted the wide topics of the aesthetics and politics of worldmaking in literature and other media. The contributions merely attempt to offer exemplary case studies illustrating how the flexible framework of Goodman's theory of worldmaking can be fruitfully applied to an analysis and interpretation of a wide range of texts and cultural forms. What the editors and contributors hope to have accomplished, then, is to make some modest contributions to "the always needed worldmaking labor of reconceiving reconceptions in philosophy and other arts and sciences" (Hernadi 1991: 3) and to provide case-studies that, by looking at the aesthetics and politics of worldmaking, serve to show "that the arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of the understanding" (Goodman 1992: 102).

While the theoretical comments and suggestions outlined above were meant to serve as reconceptualizations and amplifications of Goodman's approach and concepts, the articles that follow will provide constructivist criticism in practice, applying and amplifying Goodman's flexible framework, and gauging some of those issues, as discussed above, that he left out. We sincerely hope that Goodman's seminal works and the articles in this volume will complement and illuminate each other and that this volume will serve to enhance interest in the questions of what goes into worldmaking, of what the ideological and political implications are, and of how literature, media, and other cultural practices serve to make the worlds that we should neither take for granted nor accept without critical questioning.

References

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Arata, Stephen. 1996. *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Bachmann-Medick, Doris. 2006. *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften.* Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.

Bal, Mieke. 1990. "The Point of Narratology." *Poetics Today* 11 (4): 727-753.

—. 1999. "Close Reading Today: From Narratology to Cultural Analysis." In: Walter Grünzweig and Andreas Solbach. *Grenzüberschreitung: Narratologie im Kontext.* 1999. 19-40.

Baumbach, Sibylle, Herbert Grabes & Ansgar Nünning (eds.). 2009. *Literature and Values: Literature as a Medium for Representing, Disseminating and Constructing Norms and Values.* Trier: WVT.

Bender, John. 1987. *Imagining the Penitentiary: Fiction and the Architecture of Mind in Eighteenth-Century England.* Chicago/London: U of Chicago P.

Berka, Sigrid. 1991. "An International Bibliography of Works by and Selected Works about Nelson Goodman." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25 (1): 99-112.

Brown, Theodore L. 2003. *Making Truth: Metaphor in Science.* Urbana/Chicago: U of Illinois P.

Bruner, Jerome. 1986. *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds.* Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard UP.

—. 1991a. "Self-Making and World-Making." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25 (1): 67-78.

—. 1991b. "The Narrative Construction of Reality." *Critical Inquiry* 18: 1-21.

Cassirer, Ernst. 1953-1996. *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms.* 4 Vols. New Haven: Yale UP.

Eakin, Paul John. 1999. *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves.* Ithaca/London: Cornell UP.

Elgin, Catherine Z. 1991a. "Sign, Symbol, and System." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25 (1): 11-21.

—. 1991b. "What Goodman Leaves out." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25 (1): 89-96.

Erll, Astrid, Herbert Grabes & Ansgar Nünning (eds.). 2008. *Ethics in Culture: The Dissemination of Values through Literature and Other Media.* Spectrum Literaturwissenschaft. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.

Feldman, Carol Fleisher. 2001. "Narratives of National Identity as Group Narratives: Patterns of Interpretive Cognition." In: Jens Brockmeier & Donal Carbaugh (eds.). *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture.* Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 129-144.

Fludernik, Monika. 1999. "'When the Self is an Other': Vergleichende erzähltheoretische und postkoloniale Überlegungen zur Identitäts(de)konstruktion in der (exil)indischen Gegenwartsliteratur." *Anglia* 117 (1): 71-96.

Fohrmann, Jürgen. 1997. "Textzugänge: Über Text und Kontext." *Scientia Poetica: Jahrbuch für Geschichte der Literatur und der Wissenschaften* 1. Tübingen: Niemeyer. 207-223.

Glasersfeld, Ernst von. 1979. "Reflections on John Fowles's *The Magus* and the Construction of Reality." *The Georgia Review* 33: 444-448.

Goodman, Nelson. 1976. *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

—. 1991. "On Capturing Cities." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25 (1): 5-9.

—. 1992 [1978]. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

— & Catherine Z. Elgin. 1988. *Reconceptions in Philosophy and Other Arts and Sciences*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett.

Grünzweig, Walter & Andreas Solbach (eds.). 1999. *Grenzüberschreitungen: Narratologie im Kontext*. Tübingen: Narr.

Gymnich, Marion, Birgit Neumann & Ansgar Nünning (eds.). 2006. *Kulturelles Wissen und Intertextualität: Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien zur Kontextualisierung von Literatur*. ELCH 22. Trier: WVT.

Heinen, Sandra & Roy Sommer (eds.). 2009. *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter.

Helms, Gabriele. 2003. *Challenging Canada: Dialogism and Narrative Techniques in Canadian Novels*. Montreal/Kingston/London/Ithaca: McGill-Queen's UP.

Herman, David (ed.). 1999a. *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*. Columbus: Ohio State UP.

—. 1999b. "Introduction: Narratologies." In: David Herman. *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*. Columbus: Ohio State UP. 1-30.

—. 2009. "Narrative Ways of Worldmaking." In: Sandra Heinen & Roy Sommer (eds.). *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter. 71-87.

Hernadi, Paul. 1991. "Guest Editorial: More Ways of Worldmaking." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25 (1): 1-4.

—. 2002. "Why Is Literature: A Coevolutionary Perspective on Imaginative Worldmaking." *Poetics Today* 23 (1): 21-42.

Herring, Henry D. 1985. "Constructivist Interpretation: An Alternative to Deconstruction." *Bucknell Review* 29 (2): 32-46.

Jameson, Fredric. 1983 [1981]. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. London: Methuen.

Knellwolf, Christa & Margarete Rubik (eds.). 2009. *Stories of Empire: Narrative Strategies for the Legitimation of an Imperial World Order*. Trier: WVT.

Kotte, Christina. 2001. *Ethical Dimensions in British Historiographic Metafiction: Julian Barnes, Graham Swift, Penelope Lively*. Trier: WVT.

Lakoff, George & Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago/London: U of Chicago P.

Maine, Barry. 1999. "Erich Auerbach's 'Mimesis' and Nelson Goodman's 'Ways of Worldmaking'. A Nominal(ist) Revision." *Poetics Today* 20 (1): 41-52.

McHale, Brian. 1992. *Constructing Postmodernism*. London: Routledge.

Mitchell, W. J. T. 1991. "Realism, Irrealism, and Ideology: A Critique of Nelson Goodman." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25 (1): 23-35.

Movracsik, J. M. 1979. "Reviews. Goodman, Nelson. Ways of Worldmaking." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (4): 483-485.

Müller-Funk, Wolfgang. 2002. *Die Kultur und ihre Narrative: Eine Einführung.* Wien/ New York: Springer.

Nünning, Ansgar. 1990. "Bausteine einer konstruktivistischen Erzähltheorie: Die erzählerische Umsetzung konstruktivistischer Konzepte in den Romanen von John Fowles." *DELFIN* 7 (1): 3-17.

—. 2009. "Surveying Contextualist and Cultural Narratologies: Towards an Outline of Approaches, Concepts and Potentials." In: Sandra Heinen & Roy Sommer (eds.). *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research.* Berlin/New York: de Gruyter. 48-70.

—, Herbert Grabes & Sibylle Baumbach. 2009. "Metaphors as Ways of Worldmaking, or: Where Metaphors and Culture Meet." In: Sibylle Baumbach, Herbert Grabes & Ansgar Nünning (eds.). *Metaphors: Shaping Culture and Theory.* REAL – Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature 25. Tübingen: Narr. XI-XXVIII.

Putnam, Hilary. 1979. "Reflections on Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking.*" *The Journal of Philosophy* 76 (11): 603-618.

Ricœur, Paul. 1984 [1983]. *Time and Narrative.* Vol. 1. Chicago/London: U of Chicago P.

Ryan, Marie-Laure (ed.). 2004. *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling.* Lincoln/London: U of Nebraska P.

—. 2006. "From Parallel Universes to Parallel Worlds: Ontological Pluralism in Physics, Narratology, and Narrative." *Poetics Today* 27 (4): 633-674.

Schmidt, Siegfried J. 1984. "The Fiction Is That Reality Exists: A Constructivist Model of Reality, Fiction, and Literature." *Poetics Today* 5 (2): 253-274.

—. 2008. *Systemflirts: Ausflüge in die Medienkulturgesellschaft.* Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft.

Scholes, Robert. 1998. *The Rise and Fall of English.* New Haven/London: Yale UP.

Sommer, Roy. 2007. "'Contextualism' Revisited: A Survey (and Defence) of Postcolonial and Intercultural Narratologies." *JLT – Journal of Literary Theory* 1: 61-79.

Ullian, Joseph S. 1991. "Truth." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25 (1): 57-65.

White, Hayden. 1973. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe.* Baltimore, MD/London: Johns Hopkins P.

—. 1978. *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism.* Baltimore, MD/London: Johns Hopkins P.

—. 1980. "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality." *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1): 5-27.

—. 1987. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation.* Baltimore, MD/London: Johns Hopkins P.

Wollheim, Richard. 1991. "The Core of Aesthetics." *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 25 (1): 37-45.