The Difference Approach to Narrative Fiction
Just at this point a movement caught my eye and, glancing back to the apartment building, I saw that the front door was open.

– Kazuo Ishiguro (The Unconsoled)
The Difference Approach to Narrative Fiction
A Recurring Critique of Narratology and Its Implications
for the Study of Novels and Short Stories
Abstract


The aim of this thesis is to advance the critical examination of narratology, or the study of storytelling. I analyze four versions of a critique of the dominant theory of narrative fiction in narratology and discuss this critique’s methodological implications. The critics, Sylvie Patron, Lars-Åke Skalin, Richard Walsh, and the proponents of unnatural narratology have, I suggest, similar understandings of narratology’s handling of works like novels and short stories as well as similar alternative approaches. I situate the critique among relevant theories of fiction and salient aspects of narratology, and conclude that the most radical critics have a difference approach to narrative fiction. This means treating this literary practice as following another rule system for creating meaning than other kinds of storytelling. These critics seem to base their reasoning on their readerly intuitions about how novels and short stories function; yet their approach also lends itself to, for instance, discussions on how such works afford life visions or worldviews. In contrast to this approach, I describe narratology, in the critics’ view, as having a sameness approach that treats narrative fiction as a subtype of “narrative” in the sense of the communication of events by a narrator.

The three opening articles of the thesis comprise a metadiscussion of the critique. I here describe, in part with Greger Andersson, the critics’ ideas, characterize the critique as a whole, and speculate about why it has had no apparent effect on narratology. The two latter articles utilize the difference approach in analyses of Angela Carter’s “The Loves of Lady Purple” and Sara Stridsberg’s Drömfakulteten (The Faculty of Dreams) while discussing narratological concepts and issues. Future studies might continue this discussion or inquire further about, for example, the relations between different narrative practices or what role different intuitions about narrative fiction play in descriptions and analyses.

Keywords: Angela Carter, narrative fiction, narrative theory, narratology, Sylvie Patron, Lars-Åke Skalin, Sara Stridsberg, unnatural narratology, Richard Walsh

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In this PhD thesis I set out to continue the critique of narratology – the study of storytelling – that Lars-Åke Skalin and others at Örebro University have advanced for a while. The critique concentrates on narratology’s approach to and description of works like novels and short stories. The goal was to broaden the scope and include Skalin among scholars from abroad who have presented similar critiques and handled narrative fiction (novels and short stories) similarly. My examination of this critique has resulted in five articles and this volume about the articles, in which I interpret and synthesize the included parts and present a general picture of the project.

I would like to thank several people for making this thesis possible. First of all, I am grateful for the idea for the project from Greger Andersson as well as his engaged and wise supervision. Any mistakes in the finished product should be blamed on me. I have also enjoyed the conversations we have had in, mostly, my office during the past five years about a variety of subjects. My secondary supervisor, Pär-Yngve Andersson, should be thanked for his support and down-to-earth comments on parts of the draft(s).

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The image on the front page was painted by Johanna Brunzell, my partner in sunshine and rain; thank you for the picture and for being there.

Tommy Sandberg, August 2019
ARTICLES


The texts, or proof versions of the texts (II and III), can be found as attachments at the end of the book – reprinted with permission from the publishers.
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A Recurring Critique of Narratology

For thousands of years, literature has been establishing its role in Western society. Literary theorists have continuously tried to come to terms with and map out different kinds of literature: dramas, poems, fairy tales, operas, memoirs, and so forth. One of the prominent literature varieties is that which sometimes goes under the label “narrative fiction,” which primarily comprises works that modern readers recognize as novels and short stories. The tradition of writing these kinds of stories is often said to have taken shape in the late eighteenth century, flowered during the nineteenth century with the birth of social movements and realism, and become more varied in the twentieth century with the expansion of modernism in art.\(^1\)

What is an adequate way of talking seriously about narrative fiction? Scholars have offered many suggestions. They have approached works like novels and short stories as, for instance, having a particular (peculiar) grammar in relation to everyday speech, as “made up” in contrast to attempts to “tell the truth,” or as a way to create meaning by particular means. During the latter half of the twentieth century, narratology was established as a “distinct subdiscipline of textual studies” (Kindt and Müller 2003: V) or even as a whole “humanities discipline” (Meister 2014: par. 2), which focused on storytelling. However this research field should be designated, or what its exact nature is, it offers intriguing answers to the issue of how to talk about the kind of “storytelling” that works like novels and short stories comprise. It does so from the standpoint of the concept of narrative. Works of narrative fiction are thus, in narratology, treated as “narratives.”

To study purported narratives of different kinds is as popular as ever among literary scholars as well as psychologists, sociologists, and others. A large group of academics with diverse interests have found notions about storytelling useful when approaching phenomena particular to their respective research domains. When describing this development, it is not uncommon to refer to the “narrative turn” in both the humanities and the social sciences.

At the same time, however, common notions and models of narrative in

\(^1\) It is also possible to say that it began, as everything else, in antiquity. However, I refer in this thesis predominantly to the modern tradition that started to grow under the rise of the capitalist economy.
this growing area of research have been criticized by literary scholars interested in narrative fiction for representing works like novels and short stories inaccurately. Narratologists have had broad aspirations and accordingly approached not only novels and short stories but *all kinds of activities and discourses* as narrative, making narrative fiction all but one instance of it; even human life itself has been theorized by some as narrative in nature, that is, as pertaining to stories and storytelling. In narratology, narrative fiction has for these reasons naturally come to be viewed primarily as an example of a general human practice or way of being in the world – as belonging to the broad category of narrative. It is narrative that matters.

One scholar who has described this focus as having consequences for the study of narrative fiction (in particular novels) is Michael McKeon: “Treated as a local instance of a more universal activity, the novel has been subsumed within narrative in such a way as to obscure or ignore its special, ‘generic’ and ‘literary’ properties” (McKeon 2000a: xiv). Ulrika Göransson (2009) agrees with this perception and uses it as a point of departure in her doctoral thesis. On the basis of a notion of text-types, Göransson wishes to tone down the role of *narrative* in narrative fiction by claiming that it is only one textual element among others. According to her, the term “narrative” can thus be used adequately only as a synecdoche when it comes to novels: as pointing to a part to describe a whole (2009: 97). To illustrate her argument she discusses, among other things, the central role of *descriptions* in works by the Swedish author Göran Tunström.

McKeon and Göransson make up two examples of critiques aimed at narratology, but there have been other, more elaborate attempts to shed light on the inaccurate nature of narratology’s common theory (description, or model) of narrative fiction. In these cases the term “narratology” also often refers to the theory itself. The critics seem to share the conclusion that the theory is hinged with anomalies if one compares it with actual texts and hence that narrative fiction, or some kinds of narrative fiction, is different from narrative (i.e., narration) as a general activity. The most radical versions of the critique state that narrative fiction needs to be distinguished from other types of storytelling and be described as a particular practice

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2 Throughout the thesis I will use “narratology” in both senses, as referring to a research field that has presented a specific theory and as referring to this theory itself; which denotation holds at different moments should be clear from the immediate context. Since the term can have several denotations and since there are interconnected ambiguities surrounding what narratology is and does, I will discuss the issue further in section 3.2.
(narrative fiction is “different,” not the “same,” see pp. 24–27). The critical projects are also united in their aspiration to formulate an alternative description of narrative fiction, or some kinds of narrative fiction, and in the fact that they do this in close dialogue with narratology. Important for the sake of this thesis is that the critique has been largely neglected in the discussions about narrative fiction in narratology. It is my contention that this particular kind of critique of narratology could give rise to a fruitful academic exchange of ideas if better integrated into the current debates, especially ones concerning narratology’s value in the study of narrative fiction. A first step to accomplish this would be to give a proper description of the relevant theorists.

I will in the thesis analyze some examples of scholars who have presented the mentioned type of critique – three individual scholars and one group of scholars. Sylvie Patron describes narratology from a linguistic perspective as a “communicational” model of narrative held to apply also to novels and short stories, and contrasts it with what she argues is a more accurate “non-communicational” model of what she refers to as “fictional narrative.” Lars-Åke Skalin describes, from an aesthetic perspective, narratology as having a mistaken way of theorizing its object and discusses literary fiction as art. Richard Walsh criticizes, from a pragmatic perspective, what he refers to as the mistaken theory of fiction in narratology and contrasts it with a theory of “the rhetoric of fictionality” in which narrative fiction is deploying fictionality for some rhetorical ends.3 And finally, the proponents of unnatural narratology criticize narratology for ignoring texts that do not readily fit what they call its “mimetic” model, that is, a model that presumes that narrative texts aspire to represent the actual world or what is possible given the framework of the actual world, and that narration itself is also restricted to this framework. The unnaturalists revise and expand narratology to accommodate not only typical, realist, or expected texts but also what they call “unnatural” ones.

While I acknowledge the differences between the four critiques, I focus specifically on their common denominators and suggest that, together, they represent an alternative approach to narrative fiction relative to what they hold is the common approach in narratology. The delimited focus means that I do not aspire to give full pictures of the critics’ oeuvres or trace their apparent influences and recurring references in detail.

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3 In Walsh’s work fictionality is, as I understand it, a particular use of imagination to produce meaning in a given context.
One might ask why the critics discuss (what they hold to be) narratology at all if they do not accept it. A better discussion partner if they are interested in narrative fiction would perhaps be McKeon’s field, the theory (and history) of the novel. However, the critics seem to be interested in the same problem as many narratologists, namely that of describing and analyzing narrative fiction in relation to storytelling or to acts that might be understood as storytelling. They also seem to agree with mainstream narratologists that the established narratological terminology has a value, after all. One might thus claim that the critics do not wish to abandon the common theory of narrative fiction in narratology but instead recontextualize, reformulate, or in other ways revise it.

The analysis of the critique of narratology comprises five articles, three written by me individually and two written together with my supervisor, Greger Andersson. Besides literary theorists, I refer in the included articles to philosophers and linguists who have come up with ideas or concepts discussed by the critics, narratologists chosen for their relevance to the present issues, and additional theorists from whom I borrow useful terms. The first three articles – in the order they have in the argument of the thesis (Sandberg 2019; Andersson and Sandberg 2018, 2019) – are metadiscussions of the critique and the alternative approach to narrative fiction that the critics, on the whole, seem to suggest or point towards. The latter two articles (Sandberg 2018, 2017) align with or adopt the alternative approach when discussing central narratological concepts and issues in relation to works of narrative fiction. In order to get at the methodological consequences of the critique I move on from meta-reasoning about the critics’ notions to, so to speak, operationalizing them and showing what the alternative approach to narrative fiction might comprise.

1.2 Aims and Research Questions
The ultimate aim of the present analysis is to advance the critical examination of narratology with a focus on how narratology handles narrative fiction. I hope to fulfill this aim by taking a broad grip on a recurring yet neglected critique of the field: I analyze the notions put forth by Patron, Skalin, and Walsh, as well as the proponents of unnatural narratology, and try to demonstrate the consequences these notions would have if taken seriously in the study of works like novels and short stories. Since it seems

4 This order differs from the order the articles were originally published in their respective journals and books.
that the four versions of the critique point out the same or similar problems with narratology and propose similar solutions or alternatives, I strive in the first hand to fixate their common denominators. Formulated in terms of research questions, I aspire to answer this:

- What do the critics of narratology suggest about narratology’s description of narrative fiction and, counter to this, about narrative fiction as they understand it?
- Why has the critique not had any apparent effect on the discussions about narrative fiction in narratology?
- If the critique was accepted, what would it mean for the use of narratological terms and distinctions in the analysis of works like novels and short stories?

1.2.1 Article Summaries
The articles included in the thesis relate to the research questions in different ways. Most generally, the first three articles deal with the initial two questions and the concluding two articles deal with the last question. They might at the same time be said to respond to five distinctive problems actualized by the critique of narratology. I will now present the articles with emphasis on problem formulations, partial questions, and partial aims.5

Article I (Sandberg 2019). The first article is an overview of the critique that interests me. It describes the different versions of the critique – focusing specifically on contact points – and attempts to summarize them under general terms. The problem that motivates the article is similar to the overarching problem of the thesis, namely that the critique is relevant but has not been properly examined before. I try to answer the questions: What do Patron, Skalin, Walsh, and the proponents of unnatural narratology aim their critique at and what are their alternatives to narratology or to the aspects of narratology that they criticize? More generally, how can the critique be characterized as a whole in relation to narratology? By answering

5 A more extensive description of how the articles answer the research questions is provided in Chapter 4. Conclusions to draw from the articles and from the whole thesis are then presented in Chapter 5.
this, I hope to offer an adequate understanding of the critics’ perception of narratology as well as the alternative approach(es) to narrative fiction that they suggest.

**Article II** (Andersson and Sandberg 2018). The second article speculates about *why* the critique, in particular as advanced by Patron, Skalin, and Walsh, has been neglected; that is, why it has had no apparent impact on the discussions about narrative fiction in narratology. That this issue has not been resolved also motivates the article and might be rephrased as a question: Why has the critique of the putative common approach to narrative fiction had no apparent effect on narratology? Andersson and I discuss what narratologists might mean when saying that narrative fiction – including the reading of it – abides to the “same” logic, or rule system, as narrative practices in general, since, in our view, this is one of the main claims that the critics oppose. We then give examples of how narratologists relate to their own theory when they analyze works of narrative fiction. With this article, Andersson and I hope to clarify the picture of how the common versions of narratology seem to be understood and deployed by narratologists themselves in relation to how the critics understand them.

**Article III** (Andersson and Sandberg 2019). This article is a brief reply to a critique by Mari Hatavara and Matti Hyvärinen aimed at the second article, but which also affects distinctions made in the first one. It is motivated by the need to listen to and understand the critique, leading to a clarification of central ideas presented in the criticized article. How can Andersson and I address the critique and clarify our understanding of the scholars who question narratology? By answering this Andersson and I hope to reduce the risk of misunderstandings and encourage further discussion of the critique of narratology and the value of narratology in the study of narrative fiction.

**Article IV** (Sandberg 2018). The fourth article discusses an important concept in narratology, *voice*, in relation to perceived vocal qualities in the English author Angela Carter’s short story “The
Loves of Lady Purple” (1992 [1974]). The premise comes from my interpretation of some versions of the critique of narratology, namely that narratological terms should be congruent with the analytical practice and with readers’ spontaneous apprehension of narrative fiction. What motivates the article is that the common narratological terminology is held to be useful in the analysis of works like novels and short stories, but that it is not clear that the terms describe texts accurately, especially when given conceptual status. Since it is also unclear if the critics have assigned more accurate meanings to the term “voice,” suggested meanings might be evaluated. The article’s question is: How well do suggested denotations for the term “voice,” stemming from both an influential narratologist (Genette) and two of the thesis’s critical scholars (Patron and Walsh), capture elements in a short story that readers will arguably perceive as vocal qualities? The aim of answering this is to offer an indication of the value of using suggestions for a narratological concept, voice, when attempting to describe elements in narrative fiction.

Article V (Sandberg 2017). Several critics, in particular the unnaturalists, claim that narratology does not give an accurate account of experimental, postmodern, or otherwise non-realistic fiction. In the fifth, and final, article I therefore deal with the question: How could an experimental novel that deviates strongly from the common model of narrative fiction in narratology be handled if an alternative approach was adopted? The aim is to demonstrate how an account might look based on the radical alternative approach implied specifically in Patron’s, Skalin’s, and Walsh’s critique of narratology, which treats all kinds of narrative fiction as anomalous in comparison with the common narratological model. To answer the research question and accomplish the aim, I analyze an experimental novel, the Swedish author Sara Stridsberg’s Drömfakulteten (2006), in relation to key terms and issues in narratology, such as the “narrator,” “narrativity,” and reading strategies. The article is motivated by the argument that the implications of the critique of narratology for the study of works like novels and short stories have not received proper attention.
1.3 Outline

In this introductory chapter, I have claimed that narrative fiction is an important literary practice and that scholars have tried to come up with useful descriptions of it. One example is describing it as “narrative.” However, narratology – the study of storytelling – has been criticized for presenting a theory that does not hold for narrative fiction. This critique can, I argue, be examined further since it might be valuable; by presenting a broad picture of the critique I hope thus to advance the critical examination of narratology. The thesis focuses on the critique’s understanding of narratology, the alternative approach it suggests, and the consequences it supposedly would have if its notions were integrated into the analytical practice.

Chapter 2 gives a more comprehensive picture of the critique and the alternative approaches to narrative fiction suggested by the individual critics. I base this picture on the understanding that the critics in relevant respects share perception of narratology and narrative fiction. In the last part of the chapter I then delineate the theoretical starting points in the thesis’s articles, which draw from the critics’ view of narratology and narrative fiction.

Chapter 3 situates the critique in what I contend are two decisive contexts. I thereby introduce the elements that interest me in the discussion about how to properly approach narrative fiction. First comes the issue of how “fiction” has been defined, usually as contrasted with “fact.” Since the term is central to the discussion of narrative fiction, it is used by narratologists as well as the critics of narratology. Then comes the metadiscussion on narratology itself. I focus here on what I deem are relevant aspects connected specifically with the critique, such as how far narratology as a research field extends, if it is unified or diversified (and in what senses), and questions about narratology’s object, aspirations, and method. The latter also relates to the field’s historical development into the twenty-first century – what has changed and what has not? I end the chapter by listing important elements from the two contexts, the theory of fiction and narratology, that the critics could be said to problematize.

In Chapter 4, I discuss how the articles answer my research questions and take notes on the working procedure. Finally, in Chapter 5, I suggest some conclusions that can be drawn from the articles and from the thesis as a whole, discuss aspects of the articles that have been criticized, and point towards further studies related to the critical examination of narratology. The chapter is followed by a Swedish summary. The printed version of the thesis contains the five articles, placed at the end of the book.
2. THE CRITIQUE OF NARRATOLOGY AND ITS SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE

2.1 The Critical View on Narratology

The theoretical conflict in the critics’ discussion of narratology concerns how to talk adequately about narrative fiction. The critics, in my understanding of them, do not agree that (what they perceive as) the common approach in narratology to works like novels and short stories is up for the task; they therefore contest central assumptions and descriptions in narratology. On the next few pages I will present an overview of what the critics react to as well as a picture of what falls under the labels I have chosen for the critics’ understanding of narratology’s handling of narrative fiction and their alternatives to this handling. These labels are the “sameness approach” and the “difference approach.” In the sameness approach, it is presumed that narrative fiction can be subsumed within a wider notion of narrative and thus understood as belonging to the same activity as other, resembling practices. In the difference approach it is presumed that narrative fiction is a distinct practice, or language game, which produces meaning according to a different logic, or set of rules, than other narrative practices, in particular those commonly understood as dealing with facts and which are often referred to as “non-fiction.”

Gerald Prince has argued that narratology should be understood as the “science” or “theory” of narrative.6 Accordingly, “narratology presumably studies what is relevant to narrative” and “attempts to characterize all and only possible narrative texts to the extent that they are narrative” (Prince 2003b: 3). More recently, Jan Christoph Meister has described narratology in broader terms as a “discipline” that

has developed into a variety of theories, concepts, and analytic procedures. Its concepts and models are widely used as heuristic tools, and narratological theorems play a central role in the exploration and modeling of our ability to produce and process narratives in a multitude of forms, media, contexts, and communicative practices. (Meister 2014: par. 2)

This quotation is taken from Meister’s post on “Narratology” in the living handbook of narratology (lhn.uni-hamburg.de), which supposedly represents views that are widely agreed upon. The contemporary focus is, as

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6 The idea was originally presented by Tzvetan Todorov in the late 1960s.
evident, in line with Prince’s older suggestion – it is “our ability to produce and process narratives” that matters in narratology. And apparently narratology does not, in Meister’s description, seem especially interested in the particularity of narrative fiction as a distinct historical practice. The discipline is heterogeneous, has broad aspirations, and is deployed in the study of “a multitude of” aspects pertaining to narrative. Notwithstanding its heterogeneity, narratology has, among other things, a set of “concepts and models” deployed in analytical situations, and even specific “narratological theorems” that guide the study of the central object.

Perhaps surprisingly, it can be argued that narratology was born out of the theory of the novel. As McKeon states, the novel as a research object became so popular from the eighteenth century and onwards that it was eventually equaled with narrative per se; it was novels that were narratives, and the term “narrative” was accordingly applied predominantly to such literary works. In the theory-focused second half of the twentieth century, literary scholars reacted against this and wished to include more “forms of fictional narrative” besides the novel in the study program (McKeon 2000a: xiii–xiv). However, the theoretical discussions went in an unsuspected direction, McKeon notes, as they resulted in a dismissal of categories that literary scholars had long taken for granted, including notions of “genre” and “literature.” Because scholars had begun to look for more general features of language, older categories were thought to be inaccurate descriptors of the texts that the scholars wished to approach (McKeon 2000a: xiv). This is to say that it was not literary practices as people knew them that were theorized anymore, but practices related to general linguistic “rules” intended to replace the old terminology. This suspicion towards established cultural categories was integral to the development of narratology, according to McKeon: “during the past few decades interest in the theory of the novel as a literary-historical genre has been replaced by interest in narrative or ‘narratology,’ the study of verbal narrative technique as it cuts across the chronological and disciplinary divides of historical practice” (McKeon 2000a: xiv). There was, in other words, a conflict between history (cultural categories) and ideas about general structures of language, which narratology won: “the novel has been subsumed within narrative.”

The critics that interest me in this thesis react similarly to the broad focus on narrative that McKeon describes and that I hold can be seen in Prince’s and Meister’s assessments of narratology. Andersson clarifies that the critique of narratology – he specifically refers to the version promoted by Skalin – does not go against the intuition that different narrative practices
resemble each other or have common denominators, but towards the “ambition to find a system (and thus to construct a model) that would be valid for all the different phenomena that are covered by the term ‘narrative’” (2009: 63). I would suggest that this generalizing tendency and its consequences, central also in McKeon’s description of narratology, is the most overarching target of the critique. Whatever the precise targets are among the individual critics, they are related to this tendency and the problems it is thought to cause, including the common model of narrative. The critics seem to feel that the model does not correspond with their perception of narrative fiction, or some kinds of narrative fiction, and thus claim that narratology, viewed as a theory, is inaccurate if taken literally as a description of works like novels and short stories.

Skalin experiences this lack of correspondence between the theory and his own perception and argues that the cause behind the apparent inaccuracy of narratology is that scholars studying narrative have adopted a fallacious way of theorizing. They have approached works of fiction as if they were “natural” (i.e., not human-made) objects that can be classified instead of approaching them as intentional objects met and interpreted as deliberate compositions. Pointing towards this understanding of narratology is also the suggestion that narratology in some versions gives way to theoretical reductionism, that is, explains a social phenomenon as if it were a phenomenon on a “lower” level of reality, such as events in the brain of the reader.

Patron argues that narratology is a logical system quite easy to prove wrong when compared to actual novels and short stories. To my mind, narratology can from a standpoint similar to Patron’s even be seen as a prescriptive system, and hence not descriptive as it claims to be. It might be true, as Klaus Speidel suggests, that narratology shares with metaphysics that it “is often revisionary rather than descriptive, inadvertently prescribing how to think about the objects in the world rather than describing how we actually think about them” (Speidel 2018: s77). The rift between theory and history circumscribed by McKeon and reflected in the critique can, if this description of narratology was accepted, be stated as a problem of finding an adequate abstraction level for talking about activities that people already know about (cf. Walsh 2007: 170–171). This suggestion is in line with Walsh’s argument that narratology has adopted a mistaken theory of fiction that describes fiction as a “game” where authors “pretend” to write true propositions about the real world and that readers play along with this, knowing very well that the propositions are not true. Walsh argues that this theory of fiction is mistakenly based on an idea of truth-talk
and does not give heed to the situatedness of novels and short stories as they deploy fictionality (imaginative constructs) for some rhetorical end.

The proponents of unnatural narratology, finally, argue that narratology is incomplete. While it is valid in many cases, they suggest, it does not account for all texts: the “unnatural” ones that do not fulfill certain norms implied in the narratological model. Because of this lack, the unnaturalists propose that the textual corpus studied by narratologists be widened and that the terminology be revised and expanded to go along with this more heterogeneous corpus. They thus seem to accept the idea that there is a default mode of narration, which more radical versions of the critique deny; this makes it possible to say that some works of narrative fiction conform to the presumed standard mode while others do not.

A common denominator among the critics is that they argue that narrative fiction – or some kinds of narrative fiction as in the case of unnatural narratology – should be studied as a particular practice or language use. The salient difference between narratology as perceived by its critics and the critics’ own perspective might therefore be formulated in terms of focal points. Mainstream narratology – including parts of unnatural narratology – tends to focus on the narrative in “narrative fiction” while the scholars criticizing it tend to focus on the fiction, or the particular way works of narrative fiction function. In the thesis’s articles I come time and again back to this suggestion about the particularity of works like novels and short stories, and label the approach that seems to be implied in the suggestion the difference approach to narrative fiction.

What keeps the suggested difference approach together is not only that the scholars that interest me present similar views on narrative fiction, but also that they present similar critiques of narratology. Used in some of the articles is a label intended to describe the critics understanding of narratology: the sameness approach. The characteristic of this approach is that it takes as its point of departure the view – or implied view – that narrative comes in many varieties, that narrative fiction is one of these varieties, and that this literary practice accordingly adheres to the same logic as the presumed logic of narrative in general. Narratologists do not explicitly claim that they have a sameness approach, but the critics claim that the theory of narrative fiction created by narratologists presupposes it. The critics thus refer to a tendency in narratology, or a recurring way of talking about the objects under consideration. It shows here and there, which the discussions throughout the thesis should demonstrate, but is perhaps most acutely manifest in introductory textbooks’ descriptions of narrative and narr-
The important assumption in the present context is that narrative is “everywhere,” not only in, for example, literature. It leads Abbott to make a specification: “As soon as we follow a subject with a verb, there is a good chance we are engaged in narrative discourse. ‘I fell down,’ the child cries, and in the process tells her mother a little narrative” (Abbott 2002: 1). At the same time, however, it is the “overall structure” that makes something a narrative, even though it does not hinder the occurrence of “micro-narratives” inside this or other structures (Abbott 2002: 2). Abbott goes on and refers to the view “that narrative is a ‘deep structure,’ a human capacity genetically hard-wired into our minds” which has a function in human life (Abbott 2002: 3). No distinction is made between the presumed function of, for example, a novel and other “narratives” in this theoretical description. It is the general aspect of narrative that interests Abbott and which, I contend, makes him talk about what narrative fiction and other, resembling practices purportedly share.

The talk gives rise to the need for making a qualified definition of narrative. Abbott speculates about how many events need to be represented for something to be a narrative – noting that scholars interested in the topic do not agree about what should count as a narrative proper (Abbott 2002: 12). An assumption recurring in these discussions is that stories (or events) are “mediated” by discourse. Abbott states that stories “are not bound by any particular discourse but can travel from one set of actors or film or prose rendition to another, and yet still remain recognizably the same story” (Abbott 2002: 18). This means that the story has an existence on its own, outside discourse, and that issues like the story’s identity can be discussed, for example, by asking if this is the same story as this other story or not.

Abbott hesitates here and questions if the apparent story is not an effect of the discourse rather than something with an existence on its own, but seems to settle on the idea that stories can, after all, be discussed autonomously.
Abbot’s examples come, notably, from fiction.

Monika Fludernik (2009) gives a similar presentation of narrative, yet emphasizes that the events and the story in novels, as well as other phenomena that she counts as narrative, pertain to a “world,” made-up or real, which the reader, at least in the case of fiction, creates in the mind during the reading act. Most narratives, such as novels, moreover have a “narrator” behind the story as well as other characteristics. What I wish to emphasize here is that, as in Abbott’s case, an assumed requisite for studying the putative object is to be able to define it (see Fludernik 2009: 2–6 and Ch. 4 about the suggested “structure” of narrative).

Narratology has an important role to play in this. Fludernik, for instance, describes narratology as synonymous with “narrative theory,” whose “objective is to describe the constants, variables and combinations typical of narrative and to clarify how these characteristics of narrative texts connect within the framework of theoretical models (typologies)” (Fludernik 2009: 8). The objective is, according to Fludernik, opposed to interests common among literary scholars. Narratology “is text-oriented; the contexts of production, publication, distribution and reception of narratives occupy an area on the periphery of narratology and relate more to the historical/situational research done in literary studies” (Fludernik 2009: 9). Yet narratology is at the same time thought to have spread as “a sub-discipline of the study of literature” that focuses specifically on narrative fiction and similar practices. Fludernik even claims that “most literary theorists would argue that the precision of narrational terminology is helpful in arriving at clearer interpretations of texts” (Fludernik 2009: 9).

This understanding, I would argue, boils down to the idea that narratology is a, or is concerned with, theory – which makes it possible to study the object “narrative” in and for itself as an autonomous phenomenon under which works like novels and short stories can be categorized. When Fludernik claims that “narratology’s most prominent feature is its implicit universal validity” (2009: 9; cf. Andersson 2009: 63), she apparently has this theoretical side of narratology in mind.

The distinction between a sameness approach and a difference approach not only functions as a way of understanding the critique of narratology’s handling of narrative fiction and the alternative implied in this critique. It

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8 Interestingly, this view seems to conflict with the common view that contemporary narratology is in fact context-oriented (see pp. 66–68 below).
is also intended to provoke inlays in the debate about the value of narratology seen as a theory of narrative fiction, including the theoretical and practical issues at stake. I therefore use the labels to discuss theoretical assumptions about narrative fiction and to make possible further inquiries into issues related to the study of this practice.\(^9\)

### 2.2 Approaching Narrative Fiction as a Distinct Literary Practice

#### 2.2.1 The Critics’ Suggestions

One characteristic of approaching narrative fiction as a unique practice is that it can give rise to different descriptions and vocabularies, which might incorporate terms borrowed from narratology. Patron, Skalin, Walsh, and to some degree the proponents of unnatural narratology, suggest their own versions of what I refer to as the difference approach that come with specific ways of talking about works like novels and short stories. It is apparent, however, that several of the critics come back once and again to the fundamental idea that textual forms function differently in different contexts. This idea implies that putatively narrative elements might have a specific expression and function in one storytelling practice and other expressions and functions in other practices, but also that those elements might differ between individual works or be non-existent. For instance, not all works of narrative fiction contain a “narrator” in any reasonable sense of the term. The idea also implies that different kinds of storytelling have different functions on a general level. Skalin, for instance, thinks that “narration,” the verb form of “narrative,” should be viewed as just a label that people attach to different acts that function differently and demand different kinds of attention. These acts accordingly need to be described individually. The talk of functions in context points, I think, towards a specific approach to narrative practices in general, even though it mostly focuses on narrative fiction.

To approach narrative fiction as a particular practice means, quite uncontroversially, to try to give heed to how works like novels and short stories create meaning and how readers comprehend this meaning. This is the same as creating a “semantics” or “semiotics” of fiction. Many proposals for how the meaning-making process occurs are obviously possible, and it is my contention that the critics of narratology present suggestions from

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\(^9\) The distinction between the sameness approach and the difference approach could perhaps as well have been stated as the “narrative approach” versus the “fiction approach” to reflect the suggested points of departure.
perspectives that are bound together by the fact that they use narratology as their discussion partner. They criticize narratology for being inaccurate and then present alternative descriptions of narrative fiction, or, as in the case of the unnaturalists, of some kinds of narrative fiction. Naturally, then, the critical scholars tend to use dichotomous distinctions between narratology’s view of narrative fiction and their own, often arguing that narratology mistakenly approaches narrative fiction as “communication” in a particular sense of the term. This communication relates to the so-called real world or non-real (“fictional”) worlds by referential language produced by a (“fictional”) narrator. According to several of the critics, narrative fiction instead relates to the so-called real world in a sense similar to works in the domain of art – that is, through a kind of creative or imaginative language.

Although the critics’ standpoints resemble each other, however, their individual descriptions of narrative fiction differ. Patron, to begin with, presents a “non-communicational” model of what she refers to as “fictional narrative.” The non-communicational model is contrasted with the “communicational” model, which Patron associates specifically with Gérard Genette. According to the communicational model, there is always a (“fictional”) narrator in narrative fiction who recapitulates events to a presumed listener. Since the model is built around this premise, it leads the scholar to ask questions about the presumed narrator’s relation – spatially, temporally, epistemologically – to his or her story. The non-communicational model is instead based on textual evidence. In Patron’s view, the notion of the obligatory narrator is unwarranted and fiction pertains to another kind of presentational logic.

Patron’s linguistic approach to the issue contains an attempt to describe the particular grammar of novels and short stories. This raises questions about the grammatical origin of textual elements and if these elements, grammatically speaking, have a speaking subject or not (or express a subject of consciousness or not), a variable having import for the meaning of the text. A salient consequence of this reasoning is that it would be valid to talk about a narrator only if, and where, there is a speaking subject that relates events grammatically present in the work.10

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10 Another consequence is that one might have to subscribe to the view that narratology, if slightly modified, perhaps could accommodate first person fiction, which usually has a grammatical “I” subject inscribed consistently throughout the text, making it reasonable to refer to the text as “having” a (fictional) narrator (cf. Patron
If acknowledging that fiction has a distinct grammar, one also has to acknowledge what Patron refers to as “a poetic intention (to create) which is manifest, recognizable, and distinct from an intention to communicate” (Patron 2013: 247). The “poetic intention” is to present a meaningful composition to the reader. Such compositions, Patron suggests, hang together via “other organizational networks” than “the logico-temporal order of events” stemming from a narrator. Patron suggests that these networks consist of “recurrent themes and motifs” (2010: 268). Fiction, if I understand Patron correctly, functions according to the simple logic of an author using certain linguistic means for some ends. When readers interpret a novel or a short story, they presumably focus on these aspects – means and ends – to figure out what the work means and how the author creates this meaning as well as its accompanying effects. In Patron’s perspective, the grammar seems to be a pivotal factor in this accomplishment.

Skalin’s aesthetic approach to the issue of describing narrative fiction resembles Patron’s in important respects, especially in presenting the logic of fiction as a means for ends relation. According to Skalin, works of narrative fiction can be compared to artistic performances such as, for instance, a dance show or a piece of music. A central move in his approach is, in other words, to understand novels and short stories as artworks. 11 Skalin’s perspective holds references to functions and effects as well as to motifs and themes, the latter two being conceptualized, he asserts, as in aesthetic music theory rather than conventional text theory. The notion of fiction as performance comes into play here and has a prominent role in the aesthetic approach (e.g., Skalin 2016, 2017). Skalin describes fiction as a so-called cognate object comparable to a dance show or the singing of a song: when one dances or sings it is impossible to separate the dance or song from its performance (e.g., Skalin 2012, 2017). The performance accordingly presents itself and nothing else, which is to say that its meaning and effects are “given” by the work and not created, ascribed, or “found” by the reader (see Skalin 2016). This is to say that readers have no part in the meaning-production of the work. When they read or listen to fiction the attention is aimed towards the performance itself as it is given as an object for the senses.

11 At least those works that can be referred to as “literary” are artworks in Skalin’s sense of the term. Other kinds of fiction belong, as I understand it, to resembling but different practices which might, for example, be mostly for entertainment in an everyday meaning of the word.
or for reflection.

The reader is normally, Skalin suggests, invited specifically to take part in the depiction of passion, loss, or even a destiny, and similar feelings and human concerns, and to reflect over whatever wisdoms about human life the author is trying to convey. Skalin is in this and other points inspired by the ancient philosopher Aristotle, who presented a similar view on the function of the Greek tragedy. On the whole, Skalin’s perspective also implies something about what literary critics might and might not discuss. Disagreements among literary critics, which are not uncommon, should be limited to disagreements about what the author is trying to accomplish with the performance or how the work’s motifs should be perceived; such discussions would be especially common when it comes to ambiguous works that are open for many interpretations, even though ambiguity might be what the author actually lays forth for the reader.

The means for ends relation, which has a place in both Patron’s and Skalin’s descriptions of narrative fiction, is also assumed in rhetoric and implies a pragmatic perspective. Walsh’s (2007) approach, explicitly pragmatic, points out fictionality as a rhetorical means for communicative goals. Fictionality is, according to Walsh, a device comprised of using the imagined, or “invented” (see Nielsen, Phelan, and Walsh 2015), in a communicative situation. Readers understand spontaneously that this is the rhetoric deployed in a work of fiction and try to interpret the work’s elements on the basis of their relevance for the author’s (perceived) rhetorical aim. As a consequence of understanding fictionality as a device rather than as a quality, or mode, of narrative, a central move of Walsh’s is to reformulate common narratological distinctions and concepts to concur with the rhetorical nature of works like novels and short stories. The suggested alternative to narratology thus consists of changing the meaning of the common distinctions and concepts to pertain to textual effects – implicating that meaning in narrative fiction (and wherever fictionality is deployed) should be seen as semiosis in the sense of the “articulation of sense data” rather than the “communication” of, say, a story (cf. Walsh 2007: 104). When the reader gets the impression that there is a story preceding the discourse, or that the author or narrating character seems to refer to events that have occurred before their formulation in discourse, these stories or events are only effects created by textual signification (see Walsh 2007: Ch. 3).

Walsh (2007: Ch. 6) also gives fictionality a broader cultural significance, suggesting that it functions as an exercise for humans’ “narrative understanding” of their lives, or of the world. He compares it to an exercise like
jogging, which is a serious, “indirectly purposeful” activity: “When you go for a jog, you may not be trying to get anywhere in particular, but you are certainly not pretending to run” (Walsh 2007: 50).

The proponents of unnatural narratology (Alber et al., e.g., 2010, 2012, 2013) seem to give their object of study a similar significance, or function, when they emphasize the role of the “unnatural” as an important aspect of narrative. However, the unnaturalists are less radical, I would say, than the previous three scholars because they accept the common model of narrative fiction in narratology and argue that the problem is not that it is mistaken but that it is incomplete. According to this argument, the model needs to be revised and expanded to accommodate works or utterances (“narratives”) that do not fulfill the expectations inherent in the model. Examples of works ascribed this role are experimental, postmodern, or avant-garde fiction – literature that does not strictly follow mimetic norms (i.e., the conventions regulating realist fiction). The unnaturalists state that they try to develop a poetics of the unnatural to go with the poetics of the mimetic in current narratology. The new poetics consists of additional terms and notions that describe the communication of the “unnatural” and instances of “unnatural” representation per se, but also what the purpose of offering “unnatural” representations might be. As I understand it, then, the aspects of narrative that interest the unnaturalists are held to be functional in a similar sense as Patron, Skalin, and Walsh think all elements in narrative fiction are functional, that is, means for ends. Examples of “unnatural” representations are talking animals or supernatural events; examples of “unnatural” narration are when the temporal order of events is contradictory or when a narrating character is represented as knowing more than should be possible from his or her vantage point.

It is my contention that the unnaturalists partially share intuitions about narrative fiction with the previous three scholars and can be said to represent the same type of critique as they do. If they were more radical they would, I assume, present the view that all elements in narrative fiction are equally and similarly functional, meaning, as Maria Mäkelä (2013) has suggested, that the practice of narrative fiction is “unnatural” on the whole.

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12 Realist fiction apparently has a normative role as a standard type of narrative fiction in both narratology and the literary domain. In the latter context this role comes through in the fact that so-called genre fiction, like horror, fantasy, or experimental fiction, tends to be designated in relation to realism, that is, as texts that deviate from a presumed standard.
if compared with the common narratological model. The reason for this is that it does not – the argument goes – follow the same logic as the logic of communication; therefore, not even realist fiction could be seen as an attempt to represent a world in an exact or lifelike fashion. Unnatural narratology seems, though, to not question the core distinctions and concepts of narratology. An effect of this is that the unnaturalists tend to keep the overarching system intact in their reasoning about works like novels and short stories.

With the exception of unnatural narratology, the critics’ perception of narratology as inaccurate leads them to suggest that there is a general problem with the theory – according to some of them even in the very way it has been construed – which cannot be resolved with revisions and additions. This is the radical aspect of the critique. Patron, Skalin, and Walsh state that narrative fiction is qualitatively different from other kinds of storytelling, and they attempt to describe both what is wrong with narratology’s theory of narrative fiction and how such works, in their view, actually function.

2.2.2 Theoretical Starting Points in the Articles

In the theoretically oriented articles of the thesis (Sandberg 2019; Andersson and Sandberg 2018, 2019), there are not as many literary analyses as there are attempts to situate, understand, and describe what scholars say. In the latter two articles (Sandberg 2017, 2018), however, I discuss a short story and a novel in relation to narratology, using notions from the critics as a point of departure. That is to say, I attempt to reason like a difference theoretician as well as illustrate what kind of reading a difference approach might generate.

This means, first of all, that I understand the literary works as functioning according to a particular logic. An important aspect of this logic, the reasoning goes, is that readers acquire knowledge about it via socialization, which gives them the ability to intuitively grasp most works.13 That is to say, they are able to understand texts that are flagged as a novel or short story, even though challenging works, such as experimental fiction, demand a more active interpretative effort. In some cases the meaning might even elude the reader because of a lack of knowledge about that specific work.

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13 Literary scholars are of course often specialized in different kinds of literature, bearing knowledge that might complement and perhaps override their previously acquired intuitions.
The notion of readerly intuitions demands a clarification since a pivotal part of what I refer to as the difference approach is the contention that descriptions of novels and short stories should be related to such intuitions. I return, for instance, to the suggestion that terms should denote aspects of a work that readers can recognize but may have no words for (until now, that is). This stands in opposition to letting terms denote fixed concepts that are part of a logical system (e.g., narratology). When it comes to the spontaneous recognition of textual aspects, I presume that readers are aware of the world they live in and have the ability to recognize and interpret signs, yet are also to a lesser or greater degree aware of literary conventions. Together, these knowledges lend readers the ability to recognize what a novel or short story is “about” (its theme(s)) and also what it pictures; it might thematize, for instance, grief and thus picture a sad woman who has lost her dog and tries to go on with her life; values in the academy and thus picture a male professor’s life crisis and, ultimately, suicide; or bullying and thus picture a cat who befriends a mouse and gets expelled from the felid community. (Novels and short stories tend to have slightly discordant themes.) I also presume that readers have the ability to recognize general storytelling patterns based on experience from, mostly, fiction: the battle between protagonists and antagonists and other conflicts, internal or external; beginnings; rising action; happy and bad endings, et cetera, and also deviations from these patterns. To distinguish or make overt distinctions between different (story) elements might even be an inherent tendency in the way humans think. However, in the context of this thesis such tendencies fall under a different topic than narrative fiction, the reading of such works, and how to approach them as a literary scholar. The salient aspect of the notion of readerly intuitions – or spontaneous apprehension – is in the present context the recognition of the conventions, or rules, that make narrative fiction meaningful; this equals an ability to understand the particular signification processes in works like novels and short stories. A general consequence of being aware of conventions is that one seldom conflates a book of historiography or a personal anecdote told at the kitchen table with a novel. These activities are, so to speak, different language games which take place in different situations and have different cultural functions, or social

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14 It does not matter here, I take it, if the system was originally based on some intuitions about something; when these intuitions are raised to become logical relations the relations presumably lose contact with their basis.
Put differently, the intuitions that I refer to are a kind of knowledge about what to expect from a particular language game – narrative fiction – and about what makes up a reasonable way to interpret particular instances of it – individual novels and short stories. This presupposes that there are conventions regulating how narrative fiction is written and understood that are particular for that practice. It also presupposes that readers have, in principle, different reasons for attending to a novel or short story than for attending to another “narrative” object. This includes having different expectations.

A main point of the critique seems to be that the common versions of narratology are inaccurate because they do not give heed to these intuitions, at least not consistently. As I understand the critics, specifically Patron, Skalin, and Walsh, they strive to be consistent and suggest what they hold to be more accurate descriptions than narratology’s (cf. Andersson and Sandberg 2018). While the common versions of narratology could be viewed as attempts to make visible the rule system that regulates the production and reception of narrative fiction, the critics suggest that literary scholars as well as layreaders often intuitively use as their starting point another rule system, meaning that they do not read works like novels and short stories in the expected way. This dissonance is important since it can be viewed as a symptom of inadequacies in narratology. When narratologists identify this type of dissonance between the rule system assumed by the theory and their spontaneous apprehension of a work, they either need to do violence to their intuitions (which they do not, as long as they do not have a strictly application-oriented method), disregard the rule system modelled by narratology, or expand this system by adding \textit{ad hoc} features.

The two latter moves would indicate that narratology is not even viewed as a rule system (or a logic, or a grammar) for how readers understand narrative fiction but as a heuristic tool: an ideal model that scholars compare with actual readings in order to theorize about common intuitions regarding narrative fiction. This leads to interesting challenges that can be discussed in relation to the suggested difference approach, for example how narratological distinctions – like that between story and discourse and between different levels of communication (see pp. 62–63, incl. footnote 29, below) – and

\footnote{What these roles or functions might be is not a topic that I discuss in depth in the thesis, although some suggestions obviously float under the surface.}
concepts – like *voice*, *narrator*, and so forth – could be described and employed as analytical concepts, or heuristic devices, in the analysis of works like novels and short stories.

A starting point in my article on the voice concept and Carter’s “Lady Purple” is that textual elements should be understood in terms of what functions they seem to be carrying out inside the text (i.e., as means to one or several ends). In the discussion of the applicability of the voice concepts by Patron, Walsh, and Genette, I thus say that “it seems appropriate to test [the voice metaphors] against empirical material to see how well they correlate with the object” (Sandberg 2018: 165). By the perhaps awkward wording “test … against empirical material” I mean that I will discuss “which concept can best explain the phenomena we meet in ‘Lady Purple’” (Sandberg 2018: 165) – the phenomena being what a competent reader would perceive as vocal qualities or voices in the short story. What do they look like and what functions might they have? The perception of textual phenomena is here thought to ideally occur without presuppositions about relations between fixed components as these are described in common versions of narratology.16

In my next article (2017), which was published before the Carter article, I do not claim to “test” anything but instead describe Stridsberg’s *Drömfakulteten* on the basis of the idea about intuitions, or spontaneous apprehension. Accordingly, I discuss the perceived functions of the novel’s textual elements, or its “forms,” with reference to Skalin’s distinction between *frames* and *forms*. The frame is in this context the perceived language game – narrative fiction, or its specific variety “literary fantasy,” as Stridsberg calls the novel in a paratext – and the forms are the textual elements that function inside the frame, striving towards fulfilling a compositional wholeness (or a complete meaningful unit, or a global experience; it might be designated in several ways). I refer in the abstract to “the intuitions of reviewers” (Sandberg 2017: 256), whose descriptions of the novel open my discussion of the novel. I here presume that the reviewers do not engage prefabricated theories when discussing this work. In fact, they seem to be generally “sympathetic to the intentions of Stridsberg” (Sandberg 2017: 257) and are thus able to describe *Drömfakulteten* as if they had a difference approach. This does not mean, however, that narratologists would not

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16 I return to this topic on pp. 104–106 when discussing how having a difference approach seems to come with placing “ostensive” reasoning before a reasoning based on theoretical assumptions.
make similarly qualified interpretations of the novel (they are, normally, apt readers) but rather that this kind of reading presupposes that scholars follow their intuitions as readers and do not apply narratology as a given rule system.

The topic of intentions is interesting in its own right. I do not discuss it in depth in any of the articles but I distinguish generally between the author’s willful and not-so-willful accomplishments. The suggestion that descriptions of works like novels and short stories should concur with the author’s intentions does not mean that they should only concur with her conscious or explicit aims. Authors surely have intentions that they are, at least on some level, aware of, but they are, I hold, not in full control over what they present to the reader. The scholar, in turn, can only make hypotheses about the author’s intentions, and these hypotheses might be more or less plausible.

When discussing, in the analysis of Drömfakulteten, what the text offers the reader I use a notion of affordances. Affordance is a concept used by the psychologist James. J. Gibson (2015 [1978]) to discuss perception in embodied environments. How a subject interacts with its environment depends, according to Gibson, on what can be perceived in it, that is, what the environment affords in terms of action. According to literary scholar Caroline Levine, who discusses this idea in relation to both literature and other aspects of society, affordances are “the potential uses or actions latent in materials and designs” (Levine 2015: 6). In the present context, however, the potentiality in question is limited to those aspects of meaning and experience that are actually offered by the work; when readers take part in it they do it in the sense of consuming it (in the meaning this word has in connection with eating, not capitalism). How good a book is when used as a stool for reaching the jam on the top shelf or what idiosyncratic things the text as a linguistic construction may inspire individual readers to do is, in other words, irrelevant in the present discussion. My utilization of the term “affordances” centers on potential uses restricted to the textual “environment” of Drömfakulteten seen as offering something to comprehend, experience, and be affected by.

Novels and short stories have affordances, as I envision them, in a manner similar to what was once expressed by Nicholas Wolterstorff, which should also be in line with Walsh’s idea about the rhetoric of fictionality. Wolterstorff discusses the activity of the author of fiction (the “fictioneer”) thus:
The ... stance characteristic of the fictioneer is that of presenting. The fictive stance consists of presenting, of offering for consideration, certain states of affairs – for us to reflect on, to ponder over, to explore the implications of, to conduct strandwise extrapolation on. And he does this for our edification, for our delight, for our illumination, for our cathartic cleansing, and more besides. It’s as if every work of fiction were prefaced with the words “I hereby present that ...” or “I hereby invite you to consider that ...” (Wolterstorff 1980: 233, quoted in Pettersson 2010)

The “certain states of affairs” that Wolterstorff mentions as the “offering” of fiction equal the affordances in Stridsberg’s novel. However, these states of affairs should not be misinterpreted in terms of events and psychical states belonging to the real-life person Valerie Solanas – whom Drömfaktultet is built on – and mediated by the discourse. In my view, the offering instead consists of the textual construction itself, correlating to a reading experience and comprising motifs and other functional elements. This is to say that the reader, according to how I understand the difference approach, encounters the text on the immediate level of appreciation and the dissipation of values and meaning. These experiences, values, and meanings concern, as Anniken Greve puts it, themes relevant for humans; works of narrative fiction can be viewed as contributions to ongoing conversations (cf. Greve 2012).

My notion of affordances lends itself to discussions of aspects of these contributions that could be said to concern ideology. In the concluding articles (Sandberg 2017, 2018), I take up ideology and its relation to salient textual elements. I contend here that novels and short stories “afford” ideology to the same extent that they contain perspectives, or points of view. Narrative fiction directly (intentionally) and indirectly (unintentionally, or rather non-intentionally or unreflectively) dissipates ideas or worldviews that readers can reflect over or compare with other ideas or worldviews as well as relate to their own lives and the so-called world at large. That

17 The text is “about” Solanas in the sense that she is the central theme of the novel. However, the image that Stridsberg presents of her character, Valerie, should not be conflated with information that can be judged on its accuracy as “facts.” The image, I hold, has the status of a motif and corresponds to a vision (i.e., a “literary fantasy”).

18 Similar statements are made in narratological discussions about the points of view inherent in texts and movies, although these statements tend to ascribe points of view to characters and to a putative narrator figure held to be (at least theoretically speaking) responsible for the discourse – rather than to the text itself.
narrative fiction is a bearer of ideas is one of the (arguably common) intuitions about the practice that I try to integrate in my talk of voices in “Lady Purple,” and even more so in the discussion of what Drömfakulteten affords.

One might ask here if contemporary narratology has not already integrated in its debates the topic of ideology in narrative fiction. Recent special issues and anthologies explicitly pick up the theme of narratology and ideology and discuss, in relation to works of narrative fiction and other suggested instances of narration, how “narrative forms” can be viewed as less than neutral (see e.g., Olson and Copland 2016; or the volume Narratology and Ideology 2018, edited by Dwivedi, Nielsen, and Walsh). A question that I will not answer here is in what ways and to which degree these formal elements are held to be particular to narrative fiction or held to belong to a general category of narrative in which narrative fiction is equaled with or treated similarly as other, resembling practices.

I will conclude this presentation of the theoretical starting points with the issue of perhaps the most central element in narratology, namely “narrative” itself. How could this term be employed in the study of narrative fiction? Critics of narratology, such as Patron, Skalin, and Walsh, take as their point of departure the “fiction” aspect of the practice of narrative fiction, relating it to a specific grammar, the fine arts, or a rhetoric, and thus give narrative a secondary role in their theorizing. A premise, adopted from the critics, in the final two articles is that the author tries to accomplish something and uses certain means – such as narrative – for this end, or these ends. Narrative might here be understood as an element pertaining in some way to events occurring on a temporal axis, and this element needs to be described on the basis of its potential role in the language game under consideration. In the case of narrative fiction, this role could perhaps be described as a motivistic variety (i.e., a motif) that affords meaning in a deliberate composition.

This explanation might seem to apply to a static phenomenon, but I also hold that reading a short story or novel effectuates a forward movement comprising a “following,” usually of events as they unfold. This “following,” I would say, ends when the last page is turned; the reader has now consumed a complete experience or a complete meaning unit and might

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19 Olson and Copland also mention what they call “aesthetic” forms, referring specifically to Levine (2015), who discusses forms as structuring principles that organize as well as might stir up both social reality and literary conventions.
digest it. The “following” occurs even when the work does not present a linear line of events but presents a narrative motif that is, as I call it in the article on *Drömfakulteten*, “fucked up.” What comes to mind here is the *shape* of the narrative element. I discuss this issue in relation to Stridsberg’s novel referring to Marie-Laure Ryan’s notion of “narrativity,” which she suggests comes in different values. Regarding narrativity, a text, or a part of a text, can be, for example, “diluted” (i.e., non-salient) (Ryan 1992: 375) or manifest “antinarrativity.” The latter might take the form of, for example, a “collage” or a “scrambled picture” (Ryan 1992: 379–380). Yet in *Drömfakulteten*, I argue, there are also parts that look like summaries, which Ryan probably would describe as being cases of “simple narrativity” (Ryan 1992: 371–372).

In a similar way, I discuss the vocal qualities of “Lady Purple” in the Carter article, referring specifically to the “didactic voice” that permeates the text, and their relation to perspective. When it comes to the Stridsberg article, I turn, besides to narrative, to the narrator motif. Is it reasonable to refer to something in *Drömfakulteten* as a “narrator” or as pertaining to a “narrator”?

I also take up holistic descriptions. All in all, *Drömfakulteten* might be described as affording

‘an image of the life and works of Valerie Solanas,’ ‘a literary fantasy with a dreamlike atmosphere,’ or ‘a critique of the political system.’ It is a text that offers ways of viewing Western society and its dominating discourses, of viewing Solanas, ‘fucking up,’ illness and health. Importantly, Stridsberg deploys forms that avoid fixating the main character to the conventions of biographical writing, which is in line with Solanas’ own political aspirations. The novel also offers potentially new ways of writing fiction … (Sandberg 2017: 269)

This is to say that I reason from the premise that motifs and other elements should be discussed in relation to relevant terms, and that it might be illuminating to try to pinpoint the overall affordance of a work in a kind of summary.
3. THE CRITIQUE’S PLACE IN NARRATOLOGY

The questioning of narratology’s common description of narrative fiction includes a critique of the account of fiction as well as of the account of narrative. It also includes, on a positive note, relating to other perspectives, for instance, understandings of fiction that give the narrative aspect a different sense and role than in narratology. On the whole, the critique can be said to relate to two salient discussion areas in narratology.

The first of these concerns how to demarcate “fiction” vis-à-vis “fact.” Philosophers and literary scholars relevant to mainstream narratology have tended to describe fiction as an imaginative variant of a more fundamental practice, narration, which is comprised by discourse consisting of propositions about a putatively autonomous “world” (the so-called real world or fictional worlds). Opposing views instead present fiction as a distinct activity distinguished by a logic, or grammar, that defies the logic, or grammar, regulating statements about a world, as being a rhetorical enterprise that involves imaginative discourse, or as being a historical practice that de facto is usually separated from factual narration and therefore can be described as a distinct phenomenon. The question in the latter case is how works of narrative fiction function in relation to, for example, historiography.

The second area of concern is the (meta)discussion on narratology itself. There are different views on where the field begins and where it ends, and where the limits of its focus are and should be. Narratology might be seen as a discipline, a theory, or even a method in the study of narrative fiction. At the same time, however, there seems to be a consensus that it is primarily concerned with “narrative” and aspects pertaining to this object, which are held to be manifest in all prospective storytelling practices, narrative fiction and otherwise. In cognitive narratology, narrative is even held to be pivotal for the individual’s orientation in life in general.20

My intention in this chapter is not to review all possible suggestions or

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20 The greater issue of how to adequately talk about narrative fiction has been up to debate in several fields connected with literary studies, such as aesthetics, the theory of fiction, and the theory of the novel, as well as narratology. Not surprisingly there has therefore been a certain cross-fertilization between these fields. It seems that narratologists, for instance, have had different emphases or objects (narrative, fiction, literariness, etc.), different perspectives (the text, the author, the reader, cognition, etc.), and different theoretical starting points (scientific, pragmatic, literary criticism, etc.) in their research. However, they are all bound together by being interested in narrative in some way.
perspectives, but rather to examine salient lines of thought that are also present in the critics’ discourses, either as opposed to these discourses or as concordant with them. I will accordingly offer an overview of the two discussion areas – striving to come as close as possible to the core issues discussed in the critique – and then summarize the critics’ relation to what I have said in points that problematize narratology. These points might be examined further by analyzing the critique.

3.1 The Fact versus Fiction Debate
The approach to narrative fiction in narratology has long been closely connected with different attempts to distinguish “fiction” from “fact.” The two oppositional categories are central in the area known as the theory of fiction. Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2013), for instance, presents the issue in terms of “Fictional vs. Factual Narration,” that is, as concerning two different modes of storytelling. Often the discussion of the problem from this perspective concerns the relation between language and the so-called real world and thus focuses on the difference between “factual” language and “fictional” language. Schaeffer mentions three common definitions of the difference between fact and fiction: the semantic definition focused on questions of referentiality and truth (including non-referentiality and non-truth), the syntactic definition focused on so-called fictional signposts (i.e., that there are symptoms, or linguistic peculiarities, that give away that something is fiction), and the pragmatic definition focused on speech acts, thus taking into account the intentions of language users. I understand these three types of definitions as philosophical answers to the issue of how to demarcate fiction. In the thesis’s discussion of the critique of narratology salient answers of this kind are possible worlds theory, pretense theory, and similar theories that posit the existence of fictional worlds that are separate from the “actual” world. These theories tend to suggest that readers read fiction “as if” it referred to a world in a manner similar to how factual discourse refers to the so-called real world.

Among the philosophical answers are also ideas that contrast specifically with the “world talk” and theories of reference and truth in fiction. These

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21 Already in that conceptualization definite assumptions are being made about “narration” as a general activity. The assumption can be found also in, for instance, the title of Ryan’s article, “Narration in Various Media” (2014), a title which implies that first there is narration, and then it can occur in different media without its nature being changed.
contrasting ideas posit that fiction comprises another domain of meaning-making than the factual genres. It has been suggested that works of fiction deploy a logic – or grammar – distinct from everyday referential speech. It has also been suggested that “fictionality” can be viewed as a rhetorical resource – a specific deployment of imagination – encountered in both narrative fiction and other narrative practices, with the difference that it is used globally in typical instances of the former case and locally in the latter. What unites these ideas is that they do not present works of fiction as something “made up” in relation to attempts to “tell the truth.” Instead, they present narrative fiction as a generic activity that abides to a different rule system than that concerning referential talk about a world. This rule system should be understood as pertaining to a specific signification process; as implicated in the very term “rule system,” this signification process is regulated by other norms and conventions than those which regulate the factual genres.

Norms and conventions are important aspects of what might be deemed historical answers to the issue. Such answers might focus on what kind of activities terms like “fictio” and “mimesis” have referred to historically and refer to today, and how the activities themselves have changed through time. Although the critique of narratology does not pertain to a historical perspective per se, it seems that several of the critics take as their point of departure narrative fiction as an established literary practice (i.e., as a phenomenon existing in history and thus regulated by contingent rules). This is so even though they sometimes build their descriptions of narrative fiction on a theoretical reasoning that uses philosophical notions of fiction.

3.1.1 Possible Worlds Theory

The kind of definition that is presented in what might be labelled “world theories” of fiction is based on semantics, or questions of referentiality and truth. The suggestion that the issue of demarcating fiction from fact is of a semantic nature takes, according to Schaeffer, as its point of departure “20th-century philosophical theories of reference.” Its proponents hold that propositions referring to something in the known world are factual while propositions referring to something “non-existing,” and hence “referentially void,” are fictional (Schaeffer 2013: par. 15). While Schaeffer

22 It is probably fair to say that these theories were based on the assumption that the first function of language is to represent things, thereby suggesting that linguistic discourse first and foremost refers back to existents outside of it, like a “world” or “reality.”
suggests that this theory in itself simplifies the problem, it seems that he ascribes to the view that “fictional narration” nonetheless consists of *propositions about something*. That, I would suggest, is the central thesis in world theories of fiction.

There is something speaking in favor of semantic definitions of fiction, Schaeffer claims, because “that there is a semantic difference between fact and fiction certainly is part of our conception of fiction” (Schaffer 2013: par. 17). Indeed, it is a common everyday assumption that works like novels and short stories do not refer to aspects of the purported real world that humans live in or have lived in historically. Rather, they pertain to non-existing entities or imaginary beings, the products of fantasy.

In common versions of possible worlds theory, an important and technically advanced contribution to the theory of fiction, works of fiction do not refer to the “non-existing” but rather to the non-present – alternative, potential, or *possible* worlds. The idea of the “possible” is taken from an area in the philosophy of language called modal logic, which investigates propositions about possible, counterfactual, and similar states of existence (i.e., states that can be expressed in language by the use of words like “would,” “might,” “perhaps,” and so on). Ryan draws from this and makes a basic distinction between “the ‘actual’ or ‘real’ world” and “alternative, or non-actual possible worlds” (2013: par. 2). She refers to philosopher David Lewis’s understanding of “fiction as stories ‘told as true’ of a world other than the one we regard as actual” (Ryan 2013: par. 5). Lewis’s approach can be valuable to literary theorists, Ryan suggests, since

(1) it regards statements about fiction as capable of truth and falsity... (2) it assumes that the real world serves as a model for the mental construction of fictional storyworlds; but (3) it does not limit the fictional text to an imitation of reality, maintaining, on the contrary, that texts are free to construct fictional worlds that differ from [the actual world]. Readers imagine fictional worlds as the closest possible to [the actual world], and they only make changes that are mandated by the text. For instance, if a fiction mentions a winged horse, readers will imagine a creature that looks like real world horses in every respect except for the fact that this creature has wings. (Ryan 2013: par. 6)

That one can produce true and false claims about works of fiction is, I would say, hardly debatable. However, in the quotation Ryan also implies that the worlds of fiction are based on “the real world” yet can be different from it, and also that these fictional worlds are a “mental construction” regulated by the facts of the putative real world that people live in. Readers,
in this view, “imagine” things on the basis of their knowledge from the world they live in and just add the necessary components, like the wings on a winged horse, to complete the picture in their minds.

The idea implied in the latter notion, that the internal picture of the winged horse or any other internal picture has its basis in the so-called actual world, is called “the principle of minimal departure” in Ryan’s oeuvre (e.g., 1991) and “the reality principle” in Kendall Walton’s (1990) work. Sten Wistrand (2012) takes this idea as a point of departure in his critical discussion of the theories of Ryan, Walton, and similar scholars and philosophers, such as Lewis. Wistrand asserts that the notion of fictional worlds leads to asking certain questions about how texts should be interpreted. When possible worlds theorists discuss what works of fiction refer to and how, they are thus preoccupied with inquiries into what is true and not, and what exists and not in a given world.

Wistrand calls such interpretations of worlds that Ryan discusses readings “from within” (e.g., Wistrand 2012: 30). They are based on the idea that fiction is about something on a propositional level – an idea implying that the discourse and the world that is purportedly referred to are ontologically distinct. Instead of the textual construction, it is the presumed world that is interpreted by the advocates of world theories (cf. Andersson 2016 on “epistemic” interpretations). The approach “from within” is perhaps most visible in how literary characters are treated. That characters are semiotic constructions and have functions in literary works is acknowledged in possible worlds theory, Ryan asserts, even though the theory is built on the assumption that characters are approached by readers as “non-actual individuals” (Ryan 2013: par. 21). According to Uri Margolin, characters are in this view “endowed with inner states, knowledge, and belief sets, memories, attitudes and intentions—that is, a consciousness, interiority and personhood” (Margolin 1990: 455, quoted in Ryan 2013: par. 21). Ryan claims that it is this very aspect, concerning the “ontological status” of the characters, “that explains their ability to arouse emotions in the reader” (Ryan 2013: par. 21). This view of readers as comprehending and reacting to literary characters as if they were real persons has noticeably inspired further studies, based on cognitive theory, of so-called fictional minds (Ryan 2013: par. 22). Such studies compare reading fiction with how people draw inferences from others’ behavior, thus treating “fictional minds” as analogous with real minds (cf. pp. 71 below).

However, when it comes to the issue of how to employ narratology adequately in literary analysis, possible worlds theory should perhaps not be
taken literally. As Ryan suggests, literary scholars’ use of possible worlds theory to discuss fictional worlds might be metaphorical talk (Ryan 2013: par. 30). In any case, I think that the notion of fictional worlds has led to a particular way of talking about literature. This includes referring to world constructions in the mind of the reader and to characters as real people. The notion of fictional worlds has resulted in a set of distinct questions concerning, for instance, to what degree the worlds are complete and incomplete, or, as in one of Ryan’s examples, textual functions: How are bits of information about the fictional world spread out throughout the text to generate suspense (Ryan 2013: par. 14)? Possible worlds theory might moreover be able to explain how fiction relates to life. Fictional worlds are not cut off from the actual world, Ryan suggests; the proximity between the actual and the fictional worlds allows, at least according to some possible world theorists, authors to offer “reliable information,” “make relevant statements,” and even “provide valuable insights about reality” (Ryan 2013: par. 7). In other words, it is held that possible worlds theory, whatever version of it one prefers, can explain how fiction can be relevant to people.

An example could be Umberto Eco’s (1994) “encyclopedia theory” of fiction, where the world concept can be readily understood as metaphorical, or even be seen as a theory about how discourses – like those commonly labelled factual or fictional – relate to each other. It seems that Eco suggests that works of fiction in different ways align with and deviate from knowledge that can be found in encyclopedias and that they build their representations (i.e., worlds) on this knowledge. In other words, encyclopedias, representing the facts of the so-called actual world, are used as a resource in the creation of literary works – or in terms of possible worlds theory, of “fictional worlds.” According to Ryan (2013: par. 14), Eco is one of the

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23 Richard Rorty (1982: 135–137) has made a similar remark about fiction, claiming that the very idea that the function of language is to represent a world (the “actual world” to use Ryan’s term) outside of discourse is “absurd.” The idea has value, though, because it has made possible modernist literature that plays with, or ironizes over, it and overturns discursive conventions. Among others, Rorty refers to the Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges as one who does this. If I am correct, Rorty’s theory, viewed as a more radical variant of Eco’s, makes it possible to discuss how works of fiction relate to other discourses, like encyclopedic ones. The salient questions would concern intertextuality, that is, questions about how texts relate to other texts or draw from them to produce meaning. However, as such discussions do not answer how authors generate suspense and other literary effects, they could not, in my opinion, replace possible worlds theory without losing potential explanatory
theorists also interested in how world constructions – that is, how authors dissipate information – can generate literary effects. Possible worlds theory might, in other words, give insights into how narrative fiction functions, and do so on the basis of a referential notion of language.

3.1.2 Pretense Theory

Another theory that recurs in narratological debates, and that presumes the existence of a default world of facts or reality when discussing how readers understand fiction, was presented forty-four years ago by John R. Searle (1975). Searle suggests that fiction should be viewed from a pragmatic perspective as a particular speech act. The main claim is that fiction is the act of pretending to tell the truth, or to refer to the actual world, and that the reader knows this and plays along. The theory is thus built around a semantic notion of truth and can be understood as an answer to the problem of reference in fiction that also engages the possible worlds theorists. Yet it focuses on a particular agreement between the author and the reader that makes fiction possible.

Speech acts are intentional. Thus, one can recognize the ontological status of a discourse, Searle suggests, if one is able to grasp what the author has set out to do. A fictional discourse consists of “nonserious” propositions in contrast with discourse comprised of “serious” propositions, which is factual. The difference between the two, according to Searle, is that the utterer of “nonserious” propositions is not “committed” “to the truth of” them (1975: 322). Instead the utterer engages in an act of pretension: “to pretend to do or be something is to engage in a performance which is as if one were doing or being the thing and is without any intent to deceive” (Searle 1975: 324). More specifically, writing fiction is a “nondeceptive pseudoperformance which constitutes pretending to recount to us a series of events” (Searle 1975: 325), and these events are put forth via pretended illocutionary acts. In Searle’s words, “the author of a work of fiction pretends to perform a series of illocutionary acts, normally of the representative type” (1975: 325) that consist of “statements, assertions, descriptions, characterizations, identifications, explanations, and numerous others” (1975: 325, footnote 5). The acts do not pertain to truth in any other form than in that they pretend to do so.
Searle sums up what he thinks actually occurs in fiction by comparing it to some other kinds of pretension:

It is a general feature of the concept of pretending that one can pretend to perform a higher order or complex action by *actually* performing lower order or less complex actions which are constitutive parts of the higher order or complex action. Thus, for example, one can pretend to hit someone by actually making the arm and fist movements that are characteristic of hitting someone. The hitting is pretended, but the movement of the arm and fist is real. Similarly, children pretend to drive a stationary car by actually sitting in the driver’s seat, moving the steering wheel, pushing the gear shift lever, and so on. The same principle applies to the writing of fiction. The author pretends to perform illocutionary acts by way of actually uttering (writing) sentences. (Searle 1975: 327; his italics)

An important feature of these pretensions is that the audience, or the reader, can play along and pretend for themselves that the events actually happened. According to Searle, one can pretend that the references (to, for example, a fight or someone driving a car, I assume) are linked to real existents, which opens up the possibility of talking about the latter as existing or having occurred. Similarly, literary characters can, according to Searle, be referred to as if they existed in the fictional story; such talk about fiction is “serious” (1975: 229–230).

Connected with this discussion is a problem that Searle, just like the possible worlds theorists, feels obliged to resolve: the possibility in fiction to refer to both presumably real and fictional (non-existent, or non-real) existents. As Schaeffer suggests, actual discourses are not black-and-white. There are obviously “mixed situations” where some propositional sentences refer to non-existent existents while others in fact do refer to real existents – for example the proper name “Napoleon” in a historical novel (Schaeffer 2013: par. 16). Searle calls the latter kind of designation “serious.” That, for example, Dublin can figure in a work of fiction means, according to Searle, that there are “nonfictional commitments involved in the work of fiction” and this makes it possible to distinguish between literary genres. For instance, the naturalistic novel and the fairy tale can be distinguished on the basis of “the author’s commitment to represent actual facts, either specific facts about places like London and Dublin and Russia or general facts about what it is possible for people to do and what the world is like” (Searle 1975: 331). An important aspect of this is coherence, Searle argues; the author binds herself to a “contract” which, depending on the genre chosen, sets the general balance between factual and fictional discourse in
the work, as well as the proximity between the two kinds of discourse. That is to say, the author sets expectations for how much the work will be aligned with or breach – to use Eco’s terminology rather than Searle’s – encyclopedic discourse (see Searle 1975: 331). All this talk of “mixed situations” seems to lend itself to creating a classificatory genre system based on referential parameters.

Yet while Searle suggests that “serious” speech acts, such as messages, can be conveyed through the work of fiction (1975: 332), it is not immediately clear how pretense theory could account for textual functions or how fiction produces meaning. The kind of answer that Searle proposes for how to demarcate fiction vis-à-vis fact might, however, have another significant merit. Just like the idea that the semantics of fact and fiction differ is widespread, Schaeffer asserts that all cultures have spontaneously made a difference between pretense and non-pretense, that is, when something should be taken as play or not (Schaeffer 2013: par. 3). Pretense theory can accordingly be taken to reflect a common intuition about fiction’s role in society, that is, in the domain of playful meaning-making.24

The theory also comes in more versions than Searle’s. A famous example is the theory of fiction as “games of make-believe” (Walton 1990). Common to these theories is the idea that fiction is written and read as if it were a playful imitation of referential, or factual, discourse. The theories can even be discussed as “as if” theories of fiction (e.g., Zetterberg Gjerlevesen 2016: pars. 16–19) since they suggest that fiction is read as if it were fact.

Important in the context of this thesis is that narratology can be said to be this kind of theory. Schaeffer, for instance, suggests that narratology is built upon the pragmatic theory of fiction (which he later ascribes specifically to Searle) when stating the difference between fact and fiction in terms of real versus fictional narrators. He refers here to the version of narratology promoted by Genette (Schaeffer 2013: par. 1) and then discusses this as “mainstream narratology according to which the narrator (not necessarily personified) is a structural element of any narration, be it factual or fictional, first-person or third-person” (Schaeffer 2013: par. 19).

Genette himself writes about what he calls the “intransitivity” of fiction:

The fictional text … depends … on the fictional character of its object, which

24 Walsh (2007) criticizes Searle’s pretense theory, but it would be interesting to further examine in what senses Walsh’s theory of the rhetoric of fictionality differs from it in this particular respect.
determines a paradoxical function of pseudoreference, or of denotation without denotata. This function is described by speech act theory in terms of pretended assertions, by narratology as a dissociation between author (the real enunciat or) and narrator (the fictitious enunciator) ... and by still others, such as Käte Hamburger, as a substitution, the “I-Origo” of the author being replaced by the “I-Origo” of the characters. (Genette 1993a: 25–26; his italics)

It is obvious that he has accepted Searle and also Hamburger when referring to this “dissociation” and “substitution” of the author. As I will take up in the next subsection, however, only a part of Hamburger’s theory of fiction is similar to Searle’s – a suggestion that implies a different interpretation of the two scholars. Matías Martínez and Michael Scheffel (2003: 222), for instance, present Searle in direct opposition to Hamburger (Martínez and Scheffel 2003: 222), and Schaeffer presents both Searle and Genette in direct opposition to her (Schaeffer 2013: par. 19). Schaeffer writes that “Hamburger ... contends that, contrary to pretense, fiction is narratorless.” One should notice, though, that while Schaeffer refers here to Hamburger’s notion of third-person fiction to state the difference between pretense theory and Hamburger’s conception of fiction, Genette in the quotation above seems to have found a similarity between Searle’s and Hamburger’s theories. This might be connected with an aspect of Hamburger’s theory that has been criticized. It is held that she is being inconsistent when presenting different logics for third-person and first-person fiction and that her theory thus only partially comprises an alternative to pretense theory. The upcoming part of this section will engage in Hamburger and similar theories that fully or partially contrast with possible worlds theory and pretense theory.

3.1.3 The Deviating Grammar of Fiction
The point of departure in Hamburger’s The Logic of Literature (Logik der Dichtung) has been described as being “not sameness but difference, the quiddity or quintessence of fiction that sets it apart from all other linguistic performances, including, above all, historical narrative” (Cohn 1999: 23–24). The very words that Dorrit Cohn uses in her description, “sameness” and “difference,” demonstrates the affiliation between Hamburger and several of the scholars who criticize narratology at the center of this thesis. Besides Hamburger’s suggestion for how to demarcate fiction from fact, there are other, similar ones, such as Cohn’s own and the ones presented by Ann Banfield and S.-Y. Kuroda. At least Hamburger and Banfield – but also Kuroda – turn directly against assumptions in narratology that are discussed
in the articles of this thesis. They are also portal figures in some of the alternatives to narratology presented by the critics (see Sandberg 2019).

Hamburger aspires to describe the language of literature as distinct from the language used in everyday communication. Her theory is sometimes understood as primarily pointing out the deviating grammar of fiction since works of fiction hold peculiarities on the sentence level, resulting in a “syntactic” demarcation (e.g., Schaeffer 2013: par. 19).

While it is true that Hamburger discusses the deviating grammar of fiction as compared to a more general grammar, however, I would say that she is not interested in superficial differences. Rather, her general move is to point out the difference in functionality between two kinds of grammars. She thus distinguishes between the logic of the “statement” (Aussage; see Hamburger 1993 [1973]: 24) and of “creative language” (i.e., dichtende Sprache; see Hamburger 1993 [1973]: 7), implying that fact and fiction have different relations to the so-called real world. The statement is characterized by having a subject-object relation, which means that a “statement is the statement of a subject about an object” (Hamburger 1993 [1973]: 31). The philosophical foundation behind this notion is intricate, but it is clear that Hamburger posits a view that can be compared to that of possible worlds theory – yet only on factual statements. When it comes to fiction, Hamburger differs from possible worlds theorists – and obviously from pretense theorists too – by claiming that the language of fiction does not consist of statements about a world, be it non-actual or not, and therefore deviates from, so to speak, ordinary grammar.

Because Hamburger does not accept the idea that there is a subject–object relation in fiction, Genette has contrasted her theory specifically with narratology. Narratology is in Genette’s view built around the separation of the act of telling and the content told, which is the theoretical move that makes different modes of narrative, such as the “factual” and the “fictional” modes, possible ab initio. According to Genette, Hamburger dismisses, by finding the separation of the telling and the told inapt for fiction, “the notion of narrative itself” in favor of a notion of fiction. “Narrative” is thus attached to the category of fiction, making it “narrative fiction,” instead of the other way around (Genette 1993b: xvi).

In terms of being fiction and not narrative, works like novels and short stories do not have a narrator relating a story (which would make the narrator the statement-subject of a series of statements) but a third-person subjectivity evoked by having characters put forth in the third person. As Caroline Domenghino formulates it, Hamburger’s theory involves a “shift
of subjectivity from that of a first person to that of a third person” implying that there is “no ‘narrator,’ because a narrator would represent an external governing consciousness with ties to the outside” (Domenghino 2008: 29). This shift, or difference, can be elaborated in the following way. Texts imbued with first-person subjectivity are regulated by epistemological and stylistic restrictions; authors of, say, biographies and autobiographies are obliged to write only what they can know about other persons or speculate about them. Texts having third-person subjectivity are, as opposed to this, not regulated by such restrictions; authors of third-person fiction are free to express their characters’ subjectivity (including those characters’ thoughts) how they wish (cf. Cohn 1999: 24–28). The difference between the two kinds of subjectivity, however, also reflects the peculiarity of Hamburger’s theory of fiction. By equaling fiction with third-person works, the theory obviously concerns only third-person fiction. I will return to this peculiarity in a moment since it has consequences for Hamburger’s view on fiction in general (i.e., in its generic sense including both first-person and third-person works) and because it has drawn critique from literary scholars.

The salient question now is how the creative language of (third-person) fiction functions besides expressing subjectivity via its characters. It seems that Hamburger distinguishes herself from other approaches to fiction by comparing the language of (third-person) fiction not only with the use of statements to point out differences, but also with art to point out similarities. The latter entails the claim that separates Hamburger’s theory from possible worlds theory, narratology as described so far, and similar theories, namely that fiction follows another logic than propositional talk about a world does. This logic is the logic of the artist’s brush. Hamburger states “that the act of narration is a function, through which the narrated persons, things, events, etc., are created: the narrative function, which the narrative poet manipulates as, for example, the painter wields his colors and brushes.” The author does therefore not “narrate about persons and things, but rather he narrates these persons and things; the persons in a novel are narrated persons, just as the figures of a painting are painted figures” (Hamburger 1993 [1973]: 136; her italics). That is to say, Hamburger understands fiction as artistic creation, and if there are “worlds” in any sense in fiction, they would be painted worlds.

The distinguishing feature of this logic comes through in Hamburger’s notion of mimesis. When Aristotle presented his dramaturgical theory of the tragedy in Poetics, he suggested that this artistic practice represented humans as they might behave in reality, as they might behave if more base
than in reality, or as they might behave if nobler than in reality. Also, the tragedy should follow a certain pattern with a beginning, a middle, and an end, as well as some other intricacies. Hamburger’s notion of *mimesis* reflects her understanding of Aristotle; *mimesis* thus comprises the representation of “men in action,” not in the sense of imitating or “copying” them but in the sense of substantiating them. As Hamburger asserts, the central denotation of *mimesis* is ‘to make, to produce’,” implying that fiction writers create pictures of characters more than anything else (see Hamburger 1993 [1973]: 10–12). This is perhaps equivalent to saying that the logic of fiction is not the logic of reference, or pretended/imitated reference, to a world but rather the logic of producing motifs, as in the fine arts, that is, a signifying activity; in Hamburger’s case, then, fiction signifies “men in action.”

However, as a consequence of admitting third-person subjectivity only for third-person works, Hamburger thinks that first-person fiction needs a separate description. The logic implied in this description is that of pretended statements. As Schaeffer asserts, this leads Hamburger to suggest that only third-person fiction is, strictly speaking, fiction (Schaeffer 2013: par. 19). Attempts to resolve this hard-to-accept idea have been made, for example by Schaeffer, who says that the two logics historically have tended to be mixed in the same works; Hamburger’s distinction is, in other words, unnecessarily purified (Schaeffer 2013: par. 21).

Schaeffer designates Hamburger as well as Banfield as having a “syntactic” approach to the issue of demarcating fiction, as they describe grammatical peculiarities in its language (Schaeffer 2013: par. 19). One might perhaps question if Hamburger actually has a syntactic approach – or if she just refers to these peculiarities as part of her discussion of how fiction functions – but it is fair to say that she at least suggests that fiction has some distinctive visible features,25 an idea stated by several theorists besides Hamburger. Banfield refers to the “unspeakable sentences” of fiction (1982), Genette to the “indexes” of fiction (1993: Ch. 3), and Cohn to the “signposts of fictionality” (1999, Ch. 7). One of the critics of narratology, Patron, draws from Banfield when presenting her “non-communicational” theory of narrative fiction. However, she also draws notions from Kuroda, whose theory has striking concordances with Hamburger’s description of third-person fiction. It might be suggested that Kuroda abolishes the need for two different

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25 One could turn to Chapter 3 (esp. pp. 59–133) in Hamburger’s *The Logic of Literature* for examples of linguistic peculiarities that indicate that a text is fiction.
logics for third-person and first-person fiction and thus avoids the kind of critique put forth by Schaeffer against Hamburger. Kuroda bases, according to Patron (2014), his theory of language on a critique of Searle and others who hold that “communication” is the first function of language.

If I understand Kuroda (2014) correctly, the communicative function is not actually activated in first-person fiction but evoked, meaning that communication is a discursive effect; the reader is given the sense that a narrator is reporting about past events. Unlike Hamburger, Kuroda thus avoids turning back to a notion of “imitation” of statement language. No imitation takes places; the creator of the discourse – that is, the author – has just borrowed the grammar (or rather the syntax) of communicational language. That is to say, the author uses the same grammar (or syntax) as in communication, with the difference that it is used inside the linguistic function associated with fiction. Communication in this theory does therefore not actually occur but is sometimes manifest as a surface feature. By introducing this notion, Kuroda fends off the need for suggesting different logics for third-person and first-person fiction. Instead, he sorts those works under the same linguistic function, which, as I understand it, is similar to Hamburger’s signification logic.

3.1.4 Fiction in History
Besides the ideas discussed there are other ways to describe fiction in relation to factual discourse. These approaches can perhaps lead to a metaperspective on the more philosophical suggestions. There have, for instance, been attempts to describe what “fiction” and similar terms have referred to historically, and there have been attempts to point out that the functionalities or cultural roles of fact and fiction are not as clear-cut as one might be inclined to believe. The latter points towards a dissolution of the distinction between the debate’s two guiding categories.

Let me begin the discussion with historical meanings of relevant terms. When Cohn turns to “fiction,” she notices that “[d]ivergences in the significance of the term are plainly visible from dictionary entries under fiction. Their only common denominator, it appears, is that they all designate ‘something invented’” (Cohn 1999: 1). At the same time, she continues, it is obvious that “in English critical language, fiction, as the designation for an invented narrative—novel, novella, short story—has been current for more than a century and is, of course, a standard term for publishers, book reviewers, and librarians” (Cohn 1999: 1). The problem is, according to
Cohn, a rising terminological confusion: “In contemporary literary scholarship … this sense of the word is often compounded with its other meanings” (Cohn 1999: 1–2), and “its meaning as a philosophical term—to the degree that it comes to the attention of literary scholars—tends to throw critical discourse into considerable disarray. The reason is that, oddly, hardly anyone has noticed that *fiction* means something entirely different in philosophical discourse than in the discourse concerned with literature” (Cohn 1999: 3–4). Cohn gives examples of meanings on the pages after her initial assessment, but for the point of my argument, Schaeffer’s take on the word’s Latin precursor, “fictio,” should suffice. It is apt since it also gives a context to pretense theory (see subsection 3.1.2).

In Latin, *fictio* had at least two different meanings: on the one hand, it referred to the act of modeling something, of giving it a form (as in the art of the sculptor); on the other hand, it designated acts of pretending, supposing, or hypothesizing. Interestingly, the second sense of the Latin term *fictio* did not put emphasis on the playful dimension of the act of pretending. On the contrary, during most of its long history, “fiction,” stemming from the second sense of the Latin meaning, was used in reference to serious ways of pretending, postulating, or hypothesizing. Hence the term has usually been linked to questions of existence and non-existence, true and false belief, error and lie. (Schaeffer 2013: par. 7)

Here it becomes clear that *fictio* has two different denotative fields, the first revolving around the sense of *mimesis* that Hamburger explicates, and the second revolving around the referential sense connected with semantics and certain notions of pretense. However, as “the playful dimension” is often lacking in the latter denotations, Schaeffer goes on and lists types of fiction that might be distinguished from its “artistic” variety, such as cognitive illusions, acts of deception, theoretical entities, and thought experiments (2013: pars. 8–11). The thought experiment, for instance, is a distinct activity with a distinct purpose that can be described as “an experimental device of a logical nature, a suppositional or counterfactual propositional universe intended to help resolve a philosophical problem” (Schaeffer 2013: par. 11). This insight, that “fiction” can be used to describe thought experiments of this kind among other non-artistic activities, might lend itself to the conclusion that the disparity of already established meanings of the term has been underestimated in the discussions concerning how to demarcate fiction from fact, leading to the kind of “disarray” that Cohn mentions.

Another underestimated aspect might be that other terms besides “fiction” have been used historically to designate different yet resembling
activities. An example would be the Greek *mimesis*, which Schaeffer suggests lies close to the artistic sense of *fictio*. Schaeffer in fact claims that it is this concept, rather than *fictio*, that has had the greatest resonance in historical discussions of certain kinds of art forms (see Schaeffer 2013: par. 12). When Hamburger takes on fiction, she indeed builds her theory on Aristotle’s description of the Attic tragedy. In its age-old sense the mimesis concept does not comply with the idea proposed in, for example, possible worlds theory, that fiction refers to non-actual circumstances. Works of fiction rather create the semblance of life by depicting it.

Recently, a notion of “fictionality” has been advanced as an answer to how to define fiction that traverses the two denotative fields of *fictio*, the one concerned with “pretending, supposing, or hypothesizing” and the one connected with *mimesis*. It also traverses Cohn’s observation that “fiction” designates a literary genre in many everyday situations (i.e., what I call “narrative fiction” in this thesis). A main inspirational source for the interest in fictionality is Walsh’s *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* (2007), indicating that Walsh, as one of the scholars that I describe as putting forth a critique of narratology, has influenced the discussions in narratology. This seems to be contrary to my statement in the introductory chapter that the critique has not been much integrated into the field. However, while the talk of fictionality has given impetus to the study of fictionality in and outside of fiction, it has, I contend, not affected the discussions about how to approach narrative fiction as a literary practice.

Fictionality is conceptualized as being based on the human ability to imagine what is not present at the moment. It is held by some scholars to be a widespread rhetorical resource deployed in the fiction genres *as well as* in other discourses, termed narrative or not. Simona Zetterberg Gjerlevsen describes it “as a means to communicate what is invented and as such transgresses the boundaries of both fiction and narrative. In this perspective, fictionality is not bound to any genre or limited to narrative representation” (2016: par. 1). That fictionality is seen here as a means is clear enough, yet I believe that the “invented” in itself could be interpreted as a discursive quality or even an ontological category (something *is* invented; cf. Dawson 2015: 79) and thus be reminiscent of the possible worlds theory’s notion, borrowed from modal logic, of the “non-actual.”

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26 The actual word “non-actual” can sometimes also be found in the writings of fictionality theorists (e.g., Nielsen, Phelan, and Walsh 2015: 61 [in the author’s note on Nielsen], 64, 65).
James Phelan, and Walsh suggest in a joint article, fictionality is used in, among other things, “thought experiments, scenario thinking, and risk assessments” (2015: 63) and deals on a more general level with “possibilities and alternatives—what is, what is not the case and could never be the case, with what is not the case but could be the case, with what should have been the case, and so on” (2015: 64). They argue that “nonfictive discourse is peppered with hypotheticals, counterfactuals, speculations, and other deviations from the actual” (2015: 64). Based on these quotations, it seems that the talk of fictionality pertains to activities that lack the “playful dimensions” that Schaeffer mentions. Yet according to Paul Dawson, the characteristic of this talk of fictionality is that it goes beyond discussing “the logic of propositions” per se and instead focuses on “rhetorical devices in natural language that are not strictly concerned with the transmission of information” (Dawson 2015: 79).27

What are the concerns of fictionality and the value of studying this rhetorical resource, then? Fictionality functions, according to Nielsen, Phelan, and Walsh, as “a vehicle for negotiating values, weighing options, and informing beliefs and opinions” (2015: 62). One “adopts a distinct communicative stance” to accomplish many different aims (2015: 65, cf. 67). The notion of fictionality makes it possible to study a rhetorical resource in different contexts and pinpoint, Nielsen, Phelan, and Walsh suggest, “some aspects of what generic fictions do and how they contribute to shaping our perception of the real world” (2015: 70). While being critical to the approach, Dawson situates it in an ongoing debate about how to demarcate fiction: “Rather than offering a new philosophical perspective on fiction, or a new mode of textual analysis, the rhetoric of the fictionality turn offers a way to understand the use-value of fiction. Like the narrative turn, it simultaneously seeks to expand the significance of fiction while undermining its specificity” (2015: 95). This, I think, means that the same overarching critique that has been directed against narratology – that it ignores the particularity of narrative fiction as a recognized literary practice – can be aimed at the study of fictionality. While narratology can be accused of approaching narrative fiction as “narrative” at the expense of its salient characteristics as “fiction,” “the rhetoric of the fictionality turn,” as Dawson calls it, can perhaps be accused for approaching narrative fiction as a global use of the “invented” to communicate meanings, values, et cetera at the expense of

27 Cf. the notion of “literariness,” which has been discussed in a similar way as a quality that can be found in many discourses, and not only generic fiction.
distinguishing it as a study object of its own, which exists as a singular phenomenon in the world.\(^{28}\) However, the study of fictionality might also be viewed as a specific research interest that lacks the intention of giving a holistic description of narrative fiction.

This would contrast with scholars contending that the study of literature concerns whole genres (e.g., McKeon 2000b: 1). These scholars presumably hold the view that genres, their history, and their conventions are more relevant study objects than texts’ relations to concepts given fixed denotations, such as *fact* and *fiction* (or *fictionality*). How fiction is different from fact might, from such a perspective, perhaps be seen as a non-issue since – the reasoning goes – “fact” and “fiction” are only labels attached to some general discursive activities. Alternatively, scholars might take the labels as their point of departure but show that there is no strong division line between their referents since – the reasoning goes – in real life the functional status of genres is fuzzy. The reason for this fuzziness might be that previously recognized genres undergo historical changes, a putative insight which could instill an ambition to replace the old terminology with a new, more timely one. Some scholars have indeed adopted this perspective, dismissing that works of fiction can be easily separated from, say, historiographic works and hence that they, in principle, can fit under the same description.

James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz (1994), for instance, asserted already twenty-five years ago that it was not clear any longer that historiography and works of fiction connect with the so-called real world in different ways. The reason for this was that the two sorts of discourse could travel and become entangled in actual texts, so all that remained were borderliners – texts with no clear-cut categorical identity. Phelan and Rabinowitz suggested that “border-crossings have become bolder and more frequent” but also that “fiction” had widened its denotative field and come to designate more practices than (narrative) prose fiction, which was the traditional context of the term. Following this development, they say, “the term *fiction* has increasingly been replaced by *narrative*” (Phelan and Rabinowitz 1994: 3). (As narrative is the primary object of narratology, I will elaborate on notions about it in the next section). There are other, similar views on the

\(^{28}\) As far as I am aware, this kind of critique has been directed against the whole domain of cultural studies, which aspires to produce general theories of society. The problem that has been pointed out seems to be a too-strong reliance on highly abstract categories which, the argument goes, neglect the salient differences between socially recognized phenomena.
demarcation of fiction from fact. Historian Hayden White, for instance, has suggested that historiographical accounts are “verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found” (White 1978: 82; his italics), and Schaeffer refers to the idea that fact is as socially constructed as fiction (2013: pars. 2–4; cf. Eco 1994).

It should be noted that Phelan and Rabinowitz, White, and other scholars who put forth similar views do not specifically address borderline cases that present difficulties for interpreters and, sometimes, provoke public outcries because they breach the norms surrounding truth, lying, and falsification. These scholars rather seem to posit that some discourses that show certain similarities or resemble each other should be approached as narrative or that such discourses are ambiguous per definition when it comes to their status as factual or fictional, seen as epistemological categories.

Nevertheless, a contrasting view would dismiss the clumping together of narrative fiction and historiography. Scholars having this view would point out that different interests lie behind the production of novels and historiographic works; the roles of the two genres differ in actual context. One thus needs to take into consideration aspects such as purposes and intentions and how individual cases relate to norms and conventions. So despite the suggestions that some discursive activities lend themselves to be described as entangled or as actually belonging to a general phenomenon (narrative), it would, according to this alternative perspective, make sense to claim that there is a decisive difference between narrative fiction and historiography (and other genres concerned with “fact”). The two kinds of works are attended to, and interpreted, differently and are held as making different cultural contributions.

To claim that there is a difference on the level where discourses take place – the “social” level where humans live and interact – should be in line with the critique of narratology that I analyze in this thesis. Most of the critics take, as I understand them, as a point of departure the conviction that there is a difference between fact and fiction that is there notwithstanding what philosophers and literary theorists say on the subject. This difference would hold even if the norms and conventions surrounding the practices are sometimes, or often, breached, and even if they are indeed ambiguous or difficult to pinpoint. The scholar’s task, the critics seem to say, is to describe the already-existing difference between practices, or this already-existing practice (narrative fiction), even if it is difficult.

How does the critique of narratology relate to the “philosophical” theories of fiction I have reviewed in this section? In the thesis’s articles, I suggest
that at least the most radical among the critics of narratology dismiss, first of all, the idea that fiction is a mode of narrative in a specific sense of that term, including the idea that its language is a, so to speak, negative mode of referential language. This means that fiction should not be understood as feigned truth or as imitating another discourse type or activity; it does not contain propositions about a “world” that is like the so-called real world, yet “non-actual” or “fictional,” and which can be discussed as a self-contained entity. The representations in fiction might at the most pertain to a semblance of such a world, an *evocation of existence*, and adhere to what might be referred to as a creative logic of signification. The critics’ descriptions of fiction in relation to fact (perhaps with the exception of unnatural narratology) thus mostly resemble Hamburger’s theory and similar ones. Hamburger distinguishes between the “statement language” of the everyday and the factual genres and the “creative language” of (third-person) fiction, which functions according to the logic of Aristotelian *mimesis*. This conception also affects the view of what should be the focus of the scholar’s attention while reading. The interpretive activity should not be aimed towards the assumed “world” of the work, but towards the work itself as a purposeful construction. The work consists of concrete elements that should be approached on the basis of their presumed functions in, or relevance for, the whole.

### 3.2 Narratology: Its Nature and Aspirations

While narratology as well as its critics draw from established theories of fiction, narratology itself is perhaps best understood as the study of narrative with a special interest in narrative fiction. I will in this section address aspects of narratology specifically relevant to the thesis and which relate to narratology’s object, method, and aspirations as well as to its history. A salient issue is if narratology should be viewed as a limited, “restrictive,” study of narrative based on more or less qualified definitions of its object, or if it should be viewed as a more diversified enterprise united in its interest in narrative and aspects of narrative. Related to this issue is if, or in what way, common assumptions as well as central distinctions and concepts have remained intact throughout the historical development of narratology, and what this means for the perception of the field. I will, besides dealing with these issues, also review narratology as a study of narrative in terms of meaning-making, which focuses on a way of thinking and talking supposedly central to humans. In this context, it is held that a putative basic capability or tendency lies behind all narrative practices and the interpretation
of both life itself and narrative texts, including works like novels and short stories. Finally, I will turn to the proposal that narratology is a method: a framework or terminology intended to be deployed as a heuristic tool in analyses of individual texts.

3.2.1 The Restrictive View on Narratology

In 2003, the editors of an anthology titled *What Is Narratology?* described contemporary narratology as “a distinct subdiscipline of textual studies” (Kindt and Müller 2003: V). A decade later, Meister summarizes narratology similarly but more broadly as a “humanities discipline” and also specifies that it focuses on “the logic, principles, and practices of narrative representation” (Meister 2014: par. 2). The question is what this focus on narrative, “narrative representation,” and other resembling notions of the object comprise.

Prince gives a lucid and often-cited answer when asserting that narratology studies “what all and only narratives have in common” (2003a [1987]: 66). He has also argued for a “restrictive” view that should be separated from “expansive” views that incorporate perspectives or aspirations from literary studies. But then he adds: “After all, whether it is expansive or restrictive, narratology presumably studies what is relevant to narrative.” That is, the proper object of narratology would in both its restrictive and expansive versions still be narrative in the first hand, which is to say that the real restriction in narratology concerns its focus on that putative general phenomenon. Prince goes on and pinpoints his understanding of narratology accordingly:

Narratology is concerned (significantly if not exclusively) with the *differentia specifica* of narrative, what in narrative is distinctive of narrative. There is a lot more than narrative in narrative (comic power, colorful images, psychological insight) and narratology aspires (among other things) to account for narrative *qua* narrative (in its narrativity): it attempts to characterize all and only possible narrative texts to the extent that they are narrative (that they exhibit features specific to narrative). (Prince 2003b: 3)

There is some ambiguity as to what some of the parenthetical comments imply, but the elementary focus on “what in narrative is distinctive of narrative” and “narrative *qua* narrative” is restated and further elaborated later in the text when Prince talks about “text-internal studies of specific (sets of) narratives”:
Some of them—the study of the tragic vision of André Malraux’s fiction, for example, or that of the comic dimension of David Lodge’s novels—would, I think, be judged narratologically irrelevant by restrictive and expansive narratologists alike. The same could be said, more generally, of the characterization of a text’s ideology, the interpretation of its meaning, the description of its style (or particular use of one medium or another), the evaluation of its beauty. Unless, of course, those studies happened to exploit as points of departure, articulation, or reference certain narrative features (focalization, say, or frequency). In that case, restrictive narratologists would draw different boundaries than those their more expansive colleagues might devise. (Prince 2003b: 9)

While in the first quotation Prince admits that “[t]here is a lot more than narrative in narrative,” he now mentions narratological categories like “focalization” and “frequency” (both taken from Genette) and states that these are narratological categories proper, which I suppose are thought to occur in all narrative practices, including fiction, albeit perhaps with different functions depending on the context. Prince seems here to devise a narratology that is specifically uninterested in the particularity of narrative fiction; it is telling that he deems as “irrelevant” literary aspects like “the tragic vision” and “the comic dimension” of literary works as well as “a text’s ideology, the interpretation of its meaning, the description of its style … the evaluation of its beauty.” Only in special cases should these be considered at all, and if they are considered this is done, if I interpret what is said in the quotation correctly, by Prince’s more “expansive” colleagues. All in all, Prince’s view on narratology seems to serve as a clear-cut example of what McKeon finds “subsuming” about this research field.

Narratologists have, because of their focus, naturally been interested in defining their object. One of Prince’s own definitions of narrative, which bears on his restrictions on what narratologists should study, reads like this:

For an entity to be a narrative, it must be analyzable as the representation of one (or more than one non-randomly connected, non-simultaneous, and non-contradictory) transformation of one (or more than one) state of affairs, one (or more than one) event which is not logically presupposed by the transformed state and/or does not logically entail its transform. (Prince 2003b: 5–6)

The definition essentially entails a focus on “the representation of” change, and what is changed is a “state of affairs” or an “event,” or a whole series of such entities. This echoes, I contend, many common definitions of narrative, including those presented in textbooks (e.g., Abbott 2002: 12).
A less technical variation compared to Prince’s is offered by James Phelan. It holds a concrete storytelling situation with a narrator giving an account of the past. Indeed, it is “a (default) rhetorical definition of narrative: somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purposes that something happened” (Phelan 2017: ix), or alternately: “a teller using resources of narrative to achieve a purpose in relation to an audience” (Phelan 2017: x). It is a characteristic of both Prince’s “text-type” definition of narrative and Phelan’s definition of narrative as a specific communicative act that they are thought to be valid for all kinds of purportedly narrative texts and irrespective of the context.

The idea that a “somebody” – an author or a narrator – is “telling” something in narrative, including in works of fiction, is central in most definitions. It is a necessary ingredient in the widely accepted distinction between the story (the content) and the discourse that relates the story. Understanding the relation between “content” and “form” is in fact one of the perennial issues in literary studies. It got a famous treatment in the beginning of the twentieth century by the Russian formalist Boris Tomashevsky when he distinguished between the order of the events, fabula, and the order in which they were presented in the discourse, syuzhet (see Pier 2003: 76). It acts as a precursor to the (however different) story–discourse distinction in narratology, which, as Fludernik suggests, “perhaps constitutes the most basic of all narratological axioms” (Fludernik 1996: 333). The distinction is indeed a necessary component in possible worlds theory (cf. Wistrand 2012: 17) as well as in Phelan’s model of “narrative communication” (2017: 25–26). The version popularized by narratology shares with possible worlds theory the premise that the states of affairs or events that make up the story – or the “non-actual world” – have an existence prior to or outside the discursive communication of them, either literally or as a construction made in the mind of the reader on the basis of textual triggers. A salient consequence of this idea is that story and discourse can be studied separately and, at least when it comes to the communicational model of narrative, scholars might attempt to give answers to questions concerning how the narrator mediates the content. This is a foundational element in, for instance, Genette’s Narrative Discourse (1980). Patern even goes as far as to suggest that “narratology,” as the term is commonly used, can be restated as “Genettean” since

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29 Even though Phelan (2017: 13) points out Seymour Chatman as his precursor, the constituents are basically the same in both his, Chatman’s, and Genette’s models. All three theorists perceive narratives as having a sender, a sent story, and a receiver.
it is based on the idea of a narrator recounting events (Patron 2006: 118f; Patron 2013: 245; cf. Andersson 2012: 292).\footnote{Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller, however, seem to oppose Patron’s understanding when saying that the tendency to equate narratology with Genette’s theory ended some years into the 1980s when poststructuralism entered the scene (Kindt and Müller 2003: VI).}

At stake in Genette’s model is the relation between the telling instance, the telling, and the told. This sorting of elements is based on a model of situated communication among people in the real world. The way that the story’s events are represented in discourse – including the narrator’s temporal and spatial position vis-à-vis these events – can, according to Genette, be studied under three headings. \textit{Time} relates to “order,” which concerns the order in which the story events are told, to ”duration,” which concerns the rhythm of the story, that is, at which “speed” the different events are represented, and to ”frequency,” which concerns how many times events occur and how the discourse represents this. \textit{Mood} relates to “distance” (or simplified: relations of telling and showing) and “perspective” (who sees and how much, but Genette is also famous for distinguishing between who sees and who speaks). And \textit{Voice} concerns when and where the telling takes place in relation to the events. Genette’s aim seems to be to present a theoretical model as well as to characterize Marcel Proust’s modernist novel suite \textit{À la recherche du temps perdu} (Remembrance of Things Past) by comparing it to that model. A conclusion is that Proust skids in relation to it. The innovative author does, in other words, not adhere to the model as it could be taken to describe a kind of ideal storytelling situation.

Taken together, the common definitions of narratology’s object, notwithstanding their differences, tend to circle around the representation of states of affairs or events. The focus of the definition can be on the represented content\footnote{Cf. the discussion in section 3.1 about the thematic definitions of fiction that envision fiction either as the \textit{mimesis} of “men in action” (Hamburger) or as narrative having the quality of being “fictional” (e.g., Schaeffer).} or on the storytelling situation. If there is a “restrictive” moment in narratology, it can perhaps be said to be this interest in finding definitions of narrative that hold for all narrative practices and that can supposedly inform analyses of a great variety of texts, including works of narrative fiction. As I will argue next, this “restrictive” moment continues although narratology, according to the common stories of its development, has grown to
be more diverse and truly “expansive” in the way Prince uses the term.

3.2.2 A Development towards Diversity?

Some narratologists hold that mainstream narratology has kept a core of concepts and distinctions throughout the expansion of the field, and that these concepts and distinctions make up the essence of what is usually referred to as “narratology.” That is to say, a recognizable theoretical foundation has resisted the changes over the last decades, and it has come to represent narratology as a whole (cf. Andersson 2009: 66–68).

What is the origin and status of this presumed foundation? Despite Prince’s insistence than narratology should focus on “narrative qua narrative” and ignore aspects that are associated specifically with narrative fiction, narratologists have often referred to works like novels and short stories when advancing their theories. For this reason it is not seldom claimed that narratology began as a theory of narrative fiction but that this has now changed. Now narratology is a diverse, interdisciplinary project holding a multitude of perspectives on the central object. However, scholars tend to refer to the distinctions and concepts created in the previous study of narrative fiction when theorizing about narrative, which gives both narrative fiction and the common theory of narrative an ambiguous role in the field.

Narratology’s development, from being concerned primarily with narrative fiction to being a broad study of everything “narrative,” can be described in slightly different ways depending on how deep the backtracking goes. Some track the history of narratology all the way back to Plato and Aristotle (e.g., Meister 2014: pars. 17–18), while others place the decisive events in the nearer past – in literary criticism at the turn of the twentieth century and during the first half of that century. According to David Herman, one can recognize in subsequent narratology the sentiment that René Wellek and Austin Warren expressed in their Theory of Literature from 1949, “that narrative fiction, including novels and short stories, constitutes only a particular subtype of narratively organized discourse, not the canonical form of narrative as such” (Herman 2005: 21). The circulation of such ideas was part of the important development leading to narrative theory eventually becoming its own field of inquiry. Herman writes, for instance, that the focus on “higher levels of narrative structure” initiated by literary critics in Germany and Russia were central to the change: “The new focus helped uncouple theories of narration from theories of the novel, shifting scholarly attention from a particular genre of literary writing to all discourse or, in an even broader interpretation, all semiotic activities that can be
construed as narratively organized” (Herman 2005: 24; his italics; cf. McKeon 2000a: xiii–xiv). This “uncoupling” is indeed a central aspect of what McKeon describes happens with the novel: “Treated as a local instance of a more universal activity, the novel has been subsumed within narrative in such a way as to obscure or ignore its special, ‘generic’ and ‘literary’ properties” (McKeon 2000a: xiv).

Yet it was structuralists in the 1960s who gave birth to the modern notion of narratology.32 In an issue of the journal Communications (1966), prominent theorists – among them were Roland Barthes, Claude Brémond, Eco, Tzvetan Todorov, and Genette – presented their views on a common theme. They made references back to, for instance, the earlier formalist, or “morphologist,” Vladimir Propp, who attempted to describe the underlying structure of a series of Russian wonder tales (cf. Meister 2014: pars. 34–35). Broadly speaking, the structuralists aspired to find universal structures – or “grammars” – that lie under or exist on an abstract level above individual discursive expressions. Individual texts are in this perspective viewed as variations on the same structure.

However, it is held that Genette’s study of Proust pertains to another approach than that of Propp and his successors. Göran Rossholm and Christer Johansson put it thus: “The French structuralists dominated the scene of narrative theory during the 70s, but after 1980 – the year when the English translation of Genette’s highly influential book, Narrative Discourse, appeared – the focus moved from story narratology, the study of the structure of the story, to discourse narratology, the study of how the story is told” (2012: 7). Yet while the difference between these two kinds of studies is important to notice, the focus on the story and the focus on the discourse are often held to belong to structuralist, or classical, narratology (cf. Meister 2014 and Kindt and Müller 2003: VI). According to these views, then, the real breach occurred later.

For later, the story goes, came the “narrative turn.” Classical narratology in all of its versions had to stand back when the interest in narrative widened and spread. The new narratology included a critique of the previous “scientific” aspirations. The poststructuralist trend that replaced the structuralist one added postcolonial studies, gender studies, and similar areas to the study of narrative as well as inspired meta-reflective activities (Rossholm

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32 My understanding of the contemporary critique of narratology does not hinge on these early theorists, except for Genette, who I give due treatment in this chapter.
According to Rossholm and Johansson, the narrative turn on the whole resulted in a) interdisciplinarity, b) a broadened focus towards also non-verbal media, c) the assimilation of semantic (possible worlds) and pragmatic (“as if”) theories of fiction, and d), after Monika Fludernik’s 1996 book on “natural” narratology, a shift towards talking about “the continuity between what is considered to be the basis of different kinds of narratives, namely everyday verbal informative communication, and narrative literary works in general” (Rossholm and Johansson 2012: 9).

The notion of postclassical narratology was introduced by David Herman, who argued that there were now “narratologies” in the plural (Herman 1999). What could be seen in these “narratologies” was the shifting of weight from, for instance, “text-centered” to “context-oriented” analyses, from the systemic level to individual texts, from functional analysis to how readers interpret narratives, from universal grammar to using narratological concepts in the analytical practice, and from synchronic to diachronic studies (Nünning 2003: 243–244). It has been suggested that postclassical narratology comprises a “consolidation” and “diversification” of earlier narratology – a “reorientation” of a field taking in new influences (Alber and Fludernik 2010: 2). Thus, it may be argued that narratology over the years has come to encompass not a theory of narrative but, as Meister has it, “a variety of theories, concepts, and analytical procedures” (Meister 2014: par. 2).

While discussing cultural expressions (e.g., literature) in context has been done outside narratology for a long time, the move towards “culture” and “context” relative to narrative is presented by some narratologists as original. One of the essential movements during postclassical narratology’s development, it is said, was that away from studies of textual functions pertaining to narrative (pace structuralism) and towards contextual “cultural studies.” Jan Alber and Fludernik suggest that such studies are particularly foregrounding the question of narrative’s function in social, historical, ideological, or psychological contexts. Rather than merely analyzing how texts work, and which of their elements are responsible for which meaning or design effects, the current emphasis lies on what these narratives achieve in communication, which ideological or identity-related messages they convey, what ‘cultural work’ (Tompkins 1986, Beck 2003) they perform, and what possible effects they may engender in the real world. One could, therefore, argue that all narratology nowadays is context-sensitive. (Alber and Fludernik 2010: 22; their italics)
This interest in “cultural work” implies that the critique of narratology that I discuss in this thesis has misrepresented the study of narrative as neglecting conventions and history. If narratology is “context-sensitive” the critique would be superfluous, or at least there would be a consensus that narratology is a contextual study of particularly narrative practices. However, as seen in the first sentence of the quotation the general notion of narrative continues to haunt the talk of narratology (i.e., the word choice is not a coincidence). Consider, for example, that when Alber and Fludernik assert “that narratology’s object of analysis has shifted since the 1980s,” they refer to the “much wider spectrum of ‘texts’” than before that are viewed as narrative (2010: 21; their italics). One might thus conclude that it is still that putative category, “narrative,” that is in focus in the description by Alber and Fludernik – it is texts as narratives that are supposedly studied on the basis of their “cultural work.”

It does not end there. Right before Alber and Fludernik suggest that narratology is “context-sensitive,” they assert that there is still a core theory of narrative at play. This “classical model” is criticized today, they say, but it is effective in narratology nonetheless as scholars continue to discuss narratological concepts or strive to revise the model by adding new distinctions, themes, and theoretical influences (Alber and Fludernik 2010: 21). It has been claimed that the model in question has contributed with a set of “narratological axioms” (Fludernik 1996: 333), which apparently are still intact today, as mentionings of theoretical entities like “narratological theorems” (Meister 2014: par. 2) should imply.

But what are these retained foundations of the classical model? A pertinent suggestion is the distinction between story and discourse together with the idea that narrative is communication in the sense that Phelan’s above model implies (e.g., Fludernik 2005: 42).33 Andersson has reviewed this and similar suggestions and concluded that it is aspects of Genette’s model in particular that narratologists hold have survived in postclassical narratology (Andersson 2012: 290–291, 2009: 66–67).

33 One should notice, though, that Fludernik contests these foundations and offers an alternative definition of narrative. Narrative should not be understood to be connected with representations of events, she holds, but of human-like experience. Moreover, she criticizes narratology’s communicational thrust because it mistakenly asserts that all narrative texts are read as pertaining to “the typical storytelling situation”: “The persistence of this preconceived notion that somebody (hence a human agent) must be telling the story seems to derive directly from the frame conception of storytelling rather than from any necessary textual evidence” (1996: 47).
It has similarly been suggested that “there is more that unites than separates today’s narrative theory and the classical narratology of the 60s and 70s,” for instance, the “systematic ambition” (Rossholm and Johansson 2012: 7f; cf. Meister 2014: par. 10). The interest in context exemplified by the references above is thus, after all, arguably in line with Prince’s assertion that narratology examines “narrative qua narrative” and that the value in adding corpuses of texts lies in the fact that it opens up for making further generalizations: “the exploration of even a single text in a particular context can throw new light on narrative and its functioning” (Prince 2003b: 9).

As I understand it, the proposed core elements are thought to be applicable not only to narrative fiction or, for example, historiography, but to all kinds of narrative practices. However, they also relate to what I think is a salient ambiguity in the historizing of the field (or “discipline,” if that term is preferable). Despite Prince’s insistence that narratology should focus on “narrative qua narrative” and ignore aspects that are associated specifically with narrative fiction, narratologists have often referred to works like novels and short stories when advancing their theories. For this reason, scholars have claimed that narratology began as a theory of narrative fiction. Fludernik, for instance, asserts that: ”Having started out with a focus on the novel, narratology is now held responsible for explaining narrative in general” (2005: 50). And according to Martínez and Scheffel, Genette is among those who reacted in the 1990s to a purported bias towards – indeed – narrative fiction: “Instead of studying all kind of narratives, for Genette, narratological research concentrates de facto on the techniques of fictional narrative. Correspondingly, Genette speaks of a ‘fictional narratology’… in the pejorative sense of a discipline that sets arbitrary limits on an area of study.” This is to say that “what is merely a special case, within a wide field of narratives, is here elevated to narrative par excellence” (Martínez and Scheffel 2003: 221). It should be uncontroversial to conclude, then, that the very notion that narratology has expanded towards new media and otherwise new material implies that the field is held to have started with a particular textual corpus. This corpus happened to consist, the reasoning goes, of works of narrative fiction and similar texts.

However, if Andersson is correct, the idea that narratology was based on narrative fiction – or “the techniques of fictional narrative” – is mistaken. Rather, narratology was, and still is, Andersson suggests, based on a notion of informative accounts (i.e., “non-fiction”) or situated storytelling with a narrating agent relating events to a listener. Together with world theories (e.g., possible worlds theory) these notions of narrative make up the basis
for “Genettean” narratology in Andersson’s view, and accordingly they make up the basis for narratology on the whole, including the aspiration to describe narrative in general terms (see Andersson 2009: 68; cf. Andersson and Sandberg 2018, 2019). This perception of narratology as providing a theory intended to hold for all narrative practices does not clash with the claim (which I surely think is correct) that works of narrative fiction have been the primary texts investigated by narratologists, but rather with claims that these kinds of works are described accurately by, for instance, Genette’s model. Approaching narrative fiction in terms of this model would mean to accept the premises of narrative communication, that is, certain assumptions about the story in relation to the discourse and about different narrative instances such as the narrator, the “world” of the told events, and the narratee.

Let me summarize the argument of this subsection. I began by stating that some scholars view classical narratology as born out of the theory of the novel; what happened was that the focus shifted from the popular literary practice to narration in general. This move can be connected to the French structuralists in the 1960s and 1970s. Genette belongs to this group but differs from the other theorists by not focusing on how stories are structured but on how stories – or event sequences – are represented in the discourse (story narratology leaves room for discourse narratology). The shift from classical narratology to postclassical narratology that occurred later is held to have come with more radical changes. At the turn of the millennium, it could be suggested that there was now not only one theory of narrative but many theories, even many narratologies. New materials had been introduced and areas like postcolonialism and feminism were integrated into the field. It became common to interpret individual “narratives” in their context.

Yet, I asserted, the focus was still on narration or narrative as a general phenomenon. While the answer to the question in the heading is affirmative – yes, narratology has been diversified – narratologists seem to agree that a core of concepts and distinctions has remained active. Some scholars argue that the core is essential to narratology’s identity. At the same time, narrative fiction has an ambiguous place in the theory. Is the common theory of narrative made specifically for works like novels and short stories or is it invalid for such works (even though it was developed in the study of them)?
3.2.3 Cognitive Narratology

There is an aspect of contemporary narratology that raises many fascinating questions: the interest in innate capabilities connected with storytelling. The idea that narrative can be explained by, for instance, human cognition runs parallel with the broadened focus on narrative in different media, in different times, and as a fact of life. It concerns both how features in narrative depend on deep-seated human tendencies and how readers interpret stories. Alber and Fludernik recognize the explanatory value of the cognitive model but also that its terminology has a bigger reach than the linguistic terminology of classical narratology. Today’s narratology can handle *many kinds of storytelling*, not only the verbal kind (Alber and Fludernik 2010: 22; their italics; cf. Fludernik 2005: 49).

Meister similarly dismisses that narratology is just a text theory:

> However, contemporary “postclassical” narratology cannot be reduced to a text theory, either. Over the past twenty years, narratologists have paid increasing attention to the historicity and contextuality of modes of narrative representation as well as to its pragmatic function across various media, while research into narrative universals has been extended to cover narrative’s cognitive and epistemological functions.” (Meister 2014: par. 6)

The quotation suggests that narratology’s object has changed from texts to almost everything that has to do with narrative. The idea of narrative, however, seems to have remained intact in one important respect. Narrative is still envisioned as a universal activity with specific “modes” and “functions,” implying that first there is narrative, and then come its modes, its functions, and the history of these aspects. Also, the “narrative universals” that Meister mentions can be explained by reference to cognition and ways of knowing. As far as I can see, this understanding of narrative complies with Prince’s delimitation of narratology’s object as that which every “narrative” shares. It is narrative that matters rather than individual narrative practices approached on the basis of their particular way of functioning.

A specific critique, which I will return to later in the subsection, has been raised towards the focus on “narrative universals.” The argument in this critique is that cognitive and evolutionary theory cannot readily apply to social-historical practices that involve appreciation and the dissipation of meaning and values. Theories that involve aspects that supposedly lie prior to or beyond the level of reality where, for example, literature is produced and read, have a problematic relation to that more visible level of reality (i.e., where humans live and care about things such as literature).
That contemporary narratology is open for the mentioned critique is, I contend, due to its general approach to narrative – its broad aspirations. David Herman, for instance, has studied narrative “as a powerful and basic tool for thinking” (2003: 163) and argued for “viewing narrative theory as a subdomain of cognitive science” where “stories can be studied as a primary resource for building and updating models for understanding the world” (2003: 185; cf. Herman 2002: 5, 2013: 16). According to Andersson, Herman thus seems to hold that cognitive narratology “is the position to which the development has come so far (if not its end)” (Andersson 2012: 282–283). When talking specifically about narrative fiction, scholars interested in cognitive theory often refer to “storyworlds” and the interpretation of “fictional minds” in relation to mental model building (e.g., Margolin 2003), thus subscribing to versions of possible worlds theory. Herman, again, talks like this: “storyworlds ... can be viewed as global mental representations enabling interpreters to draw inferences about items and occurrences either explicitly or implicitly included in a narrative” (2002: 10; cf. 5). Also drawing on a broad understanding of narrative – as it was introduced by scholars such as Jerome Bruner and Paul Ricoeur outside the discussions in narratology – psychologists and literary scholars alike sometimes refer to hermeneutics, discussing narrative – including fiction – in terms of meaning-making and interpretation on a putative general level (e.g., Brockmeier 2013; cf. Meretoja and Davis 2017: 6).

Perhaps Fludernik’s approach best exemplifies my understanding of how narrative as a basic processing strategy can be approached without adhering to an idea of “fictional worlds.” In Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology Fludernik develops a notion of “natural narrative” that is roughly equal to “spontaneous conversational storytelling” (1996: 13). Such storytelling “cognitively correlate[s] with perceptual parameters of human experience” that “remain in force even in more sophisticated written narratives, although the textual make-up of these stories changes drastically over time” (Fludernik 1996: 12). The premise for the theory is, in other words, that some elementary parameters are found in all narrative practices from simple

34 This is to say that “some cognitive parameters can be regarded as ‘natural’ in the sense of ‘naturally occurring’ or ‘constitutive of prototypical human experience’. The term ‘natural’ is not applied to texts or textual techniques but exclusively to the cognitive frames by means of which texts are interpreted. Nor will the ‘natural’ in these pages be opposed to the unnatural. Fictional experiments that manifestly exceed the boundaries of naturally occurring story(telling) situations are, instead, said to employ non-natural schemata” (Fludernik 1996: 12; her italics).
narratives proliferate on a scale from the more immediately spontaneous enactment of conversational storytelling to increasingly more deliberate and reflexive manifestations in the creative shapings of literature. In relation to such a scale, spontaneous forms of storytelling can be imaged as natural and prototypical since they provide a generic and typological resource for more subtly and complexly textured artifacts of creative structuration. (Fludernik 1996: 19)³⁵

The “perceptual parameters of human experience” visible in all narratives, wherever they are on this complexity scale, are expressed in a quality that Fludernik calls “experientiality,” which concurs with the evocation of a “human (anthropomorphic) experiencer of some sort at some narrative level” (1996: 13). She clarifies this in the following way: “The representation of human experience is the central aim of narrative, and it can be achieved both by means of the low-level narrativity of action report and by a variety of telling, viewing and experiencing patterns in sophisticated combination” (1996: 51). This means that “historical writing and action report are not actually narrative in the fullest sense” but have “restricted narrativity, narrative that has not quite come into its own” (Fludernik 1996: 26). Instead it is narrative fiction that has come the most into its own as narrative since “[t]he relationship between narrativity and fictionality in my model turns out to be very close and it cuts across the fictional vs. non-fictional boundary” (Fludernik 1996: 38).³⁶ Fludernik’s bases this on the Whitean idea that narrative is in itself fictional – “fictional” here meaning the same as “mimetic” in its power of evocation, that is, of creating the sense of a world (Fludernik 1996: 37). As a consequence of this view narrativity, as a quality founded on the experientiality that mimesis produces, correlates with narrative fiction – the practice most engaged in presenting subjective experiences – and also, in all essence, makes the very terms “fictional” and “fictionality” redundant (Fludernik 1996: 39). Neither does Fludernik adhere to the distinction between “fact” and “fiction” since

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³⁵ Fludernik has structured her historical study of narrative among these lines, finishing off with the perhaps most artificial, “non-natural,” or self-reflexive variant of the phenomenon: postmodernist, experimental fiction.

³⁶ A historical study of literary representations of telling, observing, and experiencing “allow[s] an excellent insight into the extension of natural parameters, an extension that made possible the development of entirely non-natural models such as that of omniscient and, later, reflector-mode narration” (Fludernik 1996: 51).
for narratologists the crucial distinction is not between the fictional and the historical or between the hypothetical and the real, but that between the narrative and the non-narrative, with historical discourse situated ambiguously on the borderline between these two fundamental types of discourse. (Fludernik 1996: 42)37

In other words, the notion of experientiality reduces the need for making those distinctions; the salient category is narrative, which represents consciousness, or human experience. This implies not a theory of fiction but rather a non-theory of fiction, which necessarily has consequences for how narrative fiction and the reading of it are approached.

Indeed, a prominent feature of Fludernik’s theory is its reader orientation. This is essential since the critique of narratology at the center of the thesis is partially aimed at narratological suggestions for how readers interpret narrative fiction. According to Fludernik, the reading process is characterized by “narrativization” – that is, the grasping of a discourse as narrative.38 Readers, expecting to meet experientiality, narrativize the literary text by interpreting it on the basis of prototypical cognitive frames pertaining to real-world experiences of storytelling situations, of living in a world, and/or of observing a world, as well as to knowledge of oral and written conventions and genres (Fludernik 1996: 43–53; importantly, to the latter kind of knowledge “non-natural” aspects can be assimilated over time). In other words, readers “link unknown and unfamiliar material with what they are already familiar with, thereby rendering the unfamiliar interpretable and ‘readable’.” They go about narrativizing “in order to grasp, and usually transform, textual irregularities and oddities” (Fludernik 1996: 45). In short, readers presume that the texts they read are based on “natural” parameters and that elements that do not immediately fit these should be interpreted as doing so.

37 For clarification, Fludernik presupposes that there are different narrative practices but suggests that the important difference between them does not lie in regarding their status as “fictional” or “factual,” or even in whether they belong to the fiction or fact genres, but rather in how these practices relate to the elementary parameters that interest her.

38 Fludernik here uses as her point of departure Jonathan Culler’s (2002a [1975]: 153–187) more inclusive notion of “naturalization” – the activity of making sense of literature on the basis of (often literary) conventions. As Culler puts it, the reader tries “to make the text intelligible by relating it to various models of coherence” (2002a [1975]: 186).
The theory, as I understand it, thus presupposes the existence of a grammar—or logic—that can contain deviations, and that these deviations need to be explained on the basis of that grammar. This is similar to Hamburger’s theory of fiction with the exception that, in Hamburger’s view, the “irregularities and oddities” encountered in fiction indicate that fiction, striving to represent “men in action,” has another grammar than the language of reality statements. Schaeffer, however, suggests in line with Fludernik that despite the deviations it is still the same (narrative) grammar. Indeed, the “deviations” and “anomalies” of the kind that Banfield and Hamburger have found have become more and more articulated throughout the history of fiction, and this is so because writers, intentionally or not, have moved towards maximizing immersion (Schaeffer 2013: par. 35), that is, the specific reading experience of being involved “in an invented universe.” While a thought experiment is intended to solve a philosophical problem, Schaeffer says, “an artistic fiction, in contrast, invites mental or perceptual immersion in an invented universe, engaging the reader or the spectator on an affective level with the persons and events that are depicted or described” (Schaeffer 2013: par. 11). The reason that deviations occur in the ordinary narrative grammar is thus that the fiction genres, as exerting human cognition, have continuously fine-tuned the immersive effect.

This sounds to me like a verifiable theory. However, not all studies of human cognition in relation to narrative fiction might be plausible. Brian McHale, for instance, makes a case for the argument that one cannot account for historical changes (i.e., literary history) by making reference to more or less timeless neurological or cognitive structures. McHale’s critique is aimed at Fludernik’s “historicist cognitive narratology” (his italics) and similar attempts at combining structure with history. The idea in these versions of narratology is dissatisfactory, McHale says, and

I remain unpersuaded. I don’t see how “neurocognitive structures” and “species-specific cognitive mechanisms” that have evolved over tens of millennia, and that are presumably stable and permanent features of modern-day *homo sapiens*, are likely to give us much purchase on change occurring at the historical scale of decades and centuries; and if they don’t capture change and difference at that time-scale, then I don’t see how the approaches that evoke such structures and mechanisms can claim to be “historicist.” (McHale 2005: 67)

This critique boils down, I think, to recognizing that cognitive and evolutionary approaches are not designed to solve historical problems, that is, in
the present context, to describe contingent uses of language. The issue that McHale points out apparently concerns the transmissibility between theories or explanatory levels. He in fact seems to restate the critique of reductionism in the philosophy of science, which is based on the contention that one cannot explain social phenomena with reference to neurons in the brain and similar “hardware.” The “hardware” in the present case, however, is of a more speculative kind, being some putative cognitive activities (or “structures” and “mechanisms”) accredited to humans. So, if I understand McHale’s critique correctly, he accepts the idea that it is possible to create interesting readings based on cognitive theory, but he dismisses the suggestion made by Fludernik and others that the cognitivist historical approach is able to “reconcile cognitivism and historicism” in the analytical practice. According to McHale, this approach can only “alternate between cognitivist moments and historicist moments, between structure and history – first one thing, then the other” (2005: 67).

What conclusions can be drawn from this? Perhaps McHale’s critique affects developmental ideas based on cognitive theory but not the idea that purported narrative universals can be explained by reference to cognition or to the idea that cognitive theory can provide a basis for how stories create meaning and how readers interpret these stories. However, even though it might be true that cognitive theory cannot account for historical change, one might accept the idea that experiential cognitive frames exist and that there are common interpretive processes behind all narrative practices at some level. That is to say, one might accept that there is a universal tendency among humans to, mentally or with signs, construct courses of events taking place in a physical environment (a “world”). Narrative might well be one of two fundamental ways to create meaning, or order experience (Bruner 1986), or even a way of being in the world (Ricoeur 2002 [1991]). This tendency to order discourse or life itself in a story-like manner could perhaps explain the ideas that narrative fiction is an “exercise” in the “narrative understanding” of life (e.g., Walsh 2007), a “simulation” of conflict for the ultimate purpose of handling the future (that is, of enhancing behavioral flexibility; e.g., Gottschall 2013), or “pretension”/“play.” Giving a cognitive and an evolutionary basis for narrative lends itself for claiming that there are aspects of creating and following a story (or what is held to be a story) that indeed are the same regardless of whether it is an oral account of what happened yesterday, a conventional novel, or something else.

However, an alternative approach might shift weight from the common
background to all narrative practices to the fact that it amounts to something to write a novel or to read a novel. The talk of narrative as a basic model of meaning-making does presumably not account for the latter because, as part of its generalizing aspirations, this talk focuses on a level of reality “lower” than the social level (i.e., so-called social reality). A salient issue if one wishes to reconcile the two approaches might therefore be to explain how suggested narrative universals relate to narrative fiction as a particular as well as a whole practice that is also appreciated as a particular as well as a whole practice in the social domain.

There might also be another solution. Narratology, in its different guises, is successful and defended by its proponents, even among those who study works like novels and short stories. Perhaps a reason for this is that narratology is thought to explain crucial aspects of the production and reading of narrative fiction and other kinds of discourse, or that it simply has a heuristic value in the analytical practice.

3.2.4 Narratology as Method

Is it a mistake to understand the common versions of narratology as a set of resembling or interconnected theories? Is narratology rather a methodological tool – a device or terminology – that can be deployed in the analysis of literary texts and other phenomena that lend themselves to be approached as stories? The change in narratology from a search for common structures during the structuralist, classical phase to a focus on how certain structural aspects function in different contexts and the interpretation of individual works or utterances, might suggest that it is so. Alber and Fludernik’s description of postclassical narratology as having points of contact with cultural studies and contention that it should be perceived as the study of “narrative’s function in social, historical, ideological, or psychological contexts” (2010: 22) gives an indication in the same direction.

At the same time, it is apparently still narrative that matters. If the reasoning in this thesis is correct, it matters rather than, for example, literary practices or oral storytelling viewed as individual phenomena governed by their own sets of norms and conventions. The study that Alber and Fludernik envision presupposes, at least theoretically, an idea of what narrative as a general object is; this can be seen in the fact that scholars value and build their reasoning on certain definitions and models of narrative, for example the idea that narratives always refer to a world and the communicational model in which a sender (narrator, teller) relates events to a recipient (nar-
As a matter of fact, to use narratology in the study of narrative fiction and other practices presupposes that narratology is a theory or some other kind of theoretical foundation functioning as a basis for methodology. That is to say, only narratology in the sense of a core of concepts and distinctions, or in the sense of a theory, can be used as a tool.

Meister shares the view on narratology as both theory and method. In his description of narratology as a whole “discipline” he states that “the concept of discipline subsumes theory and method, acknowledging narratology’s dual nature as both a theoretical and an application-oriented academic approach to narrative” (Meister 2014: par. 5; cf. Fludernik 2005: 38–39). The discipline furthermore “has a defined object domain, explicit models and theories, a distinct descriptive terminology, transparent analytical procedures and the institutional infrastructure typical of disciplines” – it is even “taught in undergraduate and graduate courses” (Meister 2014: par. 9). This description obviously suggests that narratology pertains to both theory and method but also that it has an extensive academic role. Perhaps the latter – that narratology among other things is a teachable discipline concerning that object, or “object domain,” narrative – makes it important to discuss narratology’s application value, or pertinence in the analytical practice.

The critics of narratology that I discuss in this thesis engage in this evaluative activity. However, they have precursors. Critical voices were raised already during the classical era of narratology and their criticism concerned the application of significant concepts and notions. Jonathan Culler, for instance, discusses the usefulness of the “indispensable premise of narratology” that the story can be separated from its presentation in discourse (Culler 2002b [1981]: 170–171). The logic inherent in the preconception that events precede the discourse in works of narrative fiction (the logic of the story–discourse distinction) is, however, in Culler’s view, incompatible with the logic of signification that tends to give meaning to literary texts. Yet, according to Culler, the logics are still able to exist simultaneously in, for example, the Greek tragedy Oedipus and George Eliot’s novel Daniel Deronda (Culler 2002b [1981]: 172–178). In fact, the apparent paradox is inherent in narrative itself:

One could argue that every narrative operates according to this double logic, presenting its plot as a sequence of events which is prior to and independent of the given perspective on these events, and, at the same time, suggesting by
its implicit claims to significance that these events are justified by their appropriateness to a thematic structure. (Culler 2002b [1981]: 178)³⁹

Culler goes on and discusses these contradictory logics as “the two principles of narrative” describing them as “the priority of events and the determination of event by structures of signification” (Culler 2002b [1981]: 179). Culler does, in other words, not reject the core distinction in narratology between story and discourse but supplements it with a notion of signification where the meaning of actions and events is given by the discourse as a textual effect. Subsequently, he concludes that the “irreconcilable opposition” between the suggested logics means that “one must be willing to shift from one perspective to the other, from story to discourse and back again” (Culler 2002b [1981]: 187). This seems to indicate an analytical practice where the scholar oscillates between two kinds of descriptions to get at the complexity of narrative meaning-making.

It remains that the assumption that the story precedes the discourse – or at least that readers perceive such a relation during the reading act and that it is feasible to talk about it as if it were real – is widely accepted in narratology. The relation is described as part of the primary logic that all “narratives” follow, including works of narrative fiction. With regards to this narratologists can still discuss, for instance, Genette’s work (1980) which raises important issues about narratology as method; tellingly, the subtitle of his *Narrative Discourse* is *An Essay in Method*. McHale, discussing the irreconcilable relation in narratology between historicism and structuralism, points out that Genette presents narrative in terms of a system of “transhistorical norms” and simultaneously demonstrates that the modernist writer Proust does not abide to them – Proust’s novel suite becomes an exception that proves the rule. In one move, then, Genette develops a universal system and characterizes a group of novels – a historical product – as deviating from it. According to McHale, an alternative could have been to more consistently follow a remark Genette himself makes in passing “and acknowledge the anomalous character of all literary narrative relative to

³⁹ Since Culler discusses narrative in general, he gives examples where the “double logic” is effective in other practices besides narrative fiction. In a segment about the linguist William Labov’s study of so-called natural narrative (oral recounts of personal experiences) he points out that signification can occur simultaneously with the recounting of events, as when “an action one reports has the primary function of emphasizing the dramatic character of an event” – the narrator here evaluates what happened in order to make the narrative purposeful (Culler 2002b [1981]: 185).
One could even have “viewed Proust’s practice, not as anomalous relative to some tranhistorical norm, but rather as typical of a particular historically determined period style – the period style of high modernism” and thus have understood Genette’s system as contingent and primarily applicable to this style (McHale 2005: 66; his italics). In any case, McHale concludes – in the same vein as in his assessment of Fludernik’s cognitive approach – that narratology pertains to an analysis which, at best, is alternating between narratological moments and historicist moments. There is no “pure” practice of narratology to be found, and no “pure” historicist narrative theory either, but neither is there any stable synthesis or seamless integration of the two – only a patchwork, a little of this and a little of that, first one thing and then the other. (McHale 2005: 68)

Andersson notices similarly that the theory of narrative presented by Genette is thought to function well as a heuristic device. It is pivotal to Andersson, however, that Genette is able to point out how Proust deviates from the theory. His “understanding stands, so to speak, over his own theory (or method). He is, put simply, first understanding Proust in an intuitive way and does then, secondly, relate this understanding to his suggested theory” – and thus he avoids, according to Andersson, “interpretations that ordinary (competent) readers would consider to be contra-intuitive [sic] or even mistaken” (Andersson 2012: 300). This should be taken to mean that Genette’s version of narratology can be deployed in literary analysis, but also that one needs to take care to not deploy the theory “indiscriminately as an established rule-system” (Andersson 2012: 301).

That narratological concepts and distinctions, like those stemming from Genette, might be used heuristically is also visible in general expressions. Scholars say that narratology offers interpreters “a set of instruments” (Fludernik 2005: 38), or a “toolbox,” in the study of narrative fiction and other narrative practices. The applicability of notions about narrative has been discussed by, for instance, Nünning (2012), who focuses on storytelling in relation to culture in general, and by Dawson (2016), who discusses the idea of a narratological toolbox. An important issue in this context is if the suggested notions retain their meaning when travelling from one research area to another, and to what degree they might be useful in disparate contexts.41

40 Alternatively, one might describe these norms as pertaining to an ideal model of situated storytelling.

41 The issue is complicated since different scholars refer to different notions about
The issue is of special concern to the critique of narratology since narratologists seem to agree that the home domain of the common versions of narratology was and still is narrative fiction, and that the theory was developed as a description of this literary practice. If it is true that the logic suggested in narratology (as a theory) is not the logic of narrative fiction (or not the only logic, as Culler has it), but the logic of a specific kind of communicational language game, the terms and distinctions need to shift meaning to adhere to the current context. The problem can be illustrated as applied to, for example, the notion of the narrator. The term “narrator,” one might argue, needs to shift meaning from the sense it has in the communicational model (referring to the speaker responsible for utterances) to another sense when discussed in relation to narrative fiction (as a character or motif). It might thus function as an element in a metaphorical talk of narrative fiction.

Culler seems to adopt this latter standpoint when referring to the logic of the story–discourse distinction as a deliberate assumption that is valuable since it can actually help explain textual effects (2002 [1981]: 171–172 and so on). Phelan similarly acknowledges that he uses narratological concepts pragmatically in his analyses, even pointing out that they work in some cases but not in all (2017: 26).

Based on these examples, one might conclude that at least what I would refer to as the common narratological terminology – employed by Genette, Phelan, and others – that centers around the notion of the narrator should not be thought of as universally applicable. Rather, in the hands of an apt reader it might be able to explain elements in works like novels and short stories. By comparing the theoretical model with a work, like Proust’s canonical novel suite, the scholar can even characterize this work in interesting ways. The precondition for this is only that one understands narratology’s aspirations (e.g., that what is presented as theoretical necessities is actually something else) and has internalized an understanding of the meaning-making practice that Proust and other authors participate in.

It seems that the salient conflict in the discussions on narratology as method is between concepts and distinctions on a theoretical level (i.e., a narrative, which indicates that they do not agree about what “narratology” denotes. That is to say, it is not only suggestions from classical narratologists, such as Genette, that literary scholars refer to and deploy in the study of narrative fiction, but also suggestions from Ricoeur and other theorists that lie outside this thesis’s immediate context.
highly abstracted level) and readerly intuitions about how a particular narrative practice— or even a particular work of fiction—functions. The scholars I have referred to are competent readers who can combine these levels of understanding to give interesting descriptions of texts. An issue to be further discussed, however, is how to give the intuitions primacy over the theoretical model. A radical alternative in this context would be to let go of the model and the logic it implies and have its terms denote functions met in actual texts. This would retain the narratological vocabulary but change the meanings of its words.

3.3 Summary: Problematic Aspects of Narratology

In this chapter, I have sought to place my analysis of the critique of narratology in a context. It seems, for instance, that narratologists have presented theories based on the idea that there is something in common among all prospective narrative practices, including narrative fiction, and that this commonality can be found and described. Pivotaly, it is held that scholars have focused specifically on narrative fiction when developing these theories. Central distinctions and concepts in narratology have therefore been developed in part for scholars to be able to handle narrative fiction in terms of narration in general. One might indeed say that common versions of narratology do not only describe what can be perceived in actual texts (e.g., novels and short stories) but also draw their notions from assumptions that have been derived from these observations, which are then claimed to be valid for all kinds of narrative texts. The interest in the commonality of all narrative practices furthermore seems to demand particular understandings of fiction that can be related to, and fit together with, a specific conception of narrative.

As for the history of the field, narratologists were initially interested in story structures. This changed early on to a focus on how narrative discourse relates, or even mediates, the stories (its content). It is in fact claimed that there still exists a “core” of concepts and distinctions based on this “discourse narratology.” Discourse narratology, I would say, has functioned as a foundation in different introductions to narratology, even though the development of postclassical narratology is often thought to show that narratology is not unified but consists of a whole cluster of theories, methods, and assumptions about storytelling. Cognitive narratology is one of these more recent developments that I have referred to in my discussion. It focuses on a proposed general human tendency to order mental activities and discourses in “narrative” form. The common denominator in
all narrative practices is in this context placed in putative cognitive structures, such as “storyworlds” in the mind of the reader.

A salient issue is how literally the common versions of narratology should be understood. I ended my overview of salient aspects of narratology by reviewing the idea that narratology should perhaps be understood as an analytical tool rather than a qualified theory (or set of related theories).

Patron, Skalin, Walsh, and the unnaturalists sort out and criticize (what they hold to be) recurring aspects of narratology that are related to its generalizing tendencies and the consequences of these tendencies. Even though the critics emphasize different aspects of narratology in their respective discourses, I have extracted, based on the descriptions in this chapter, what I think are some general points that lend themselves to critical examination.

- Narratologists have historically aspired to create a universal theory – one that holds for many different narrative practices, including narrative fiction. However, the results of this quest arguably do not give heed to the particular functionality of different phenomena. It could be seen as a mistake to think that narrative fiction, or some kinds of narrative fiction, can be described accurately in terms of a general linguistic or narrative system.

- A specific understanding of fiction recurs in narratology, which draws from possible worlds theory, pretense theory, and “as if” theories in general. A presupposition in these theories is that the first function of language (and other symbolic systems) is to “tell the truth” or refer to entities or events outside of discourse. According to this logic, narrative fiction relates to, or is even a variant of, the primary “truth-telling” or referential function by, for instance, “imitating” it or making references to a “non-actual” world instead of the “actual” world. The assumed relation between the language of fiction, other discourses, and life, reality, and similar existents outside of discourse can be questioned. Opposed to these theories of fiction is, for example, the idea that language holds different rule systems or games, where referential games are only one kind and are associated with factual discourse. In this perspective, narrative fiction is a historical practice, which upholds a distinct grammar, logic, or rule system that is associated with literature (the novelistic tradition in particular) or art.
• The understanding of fiction that recurs in narratology is visible in the common “communicational” model of narrative. This model builds on the notion that narrative, and accordingly works like novels and short stories, is a particular kind of communication – or recapitulation – of events. At the center of this system is the putative narrator who recounts events to a putative listener; the communication, in its default state, accordingly has separate levels: the narrator’s level, the level of the world or the events that are told, and the level of the listener. The story–discourse distinction hinges on this logic.42

• Related to the previous point is the common idea that the communicational model is built on observations from works like novels and short stories and thus pertains specifically to narrative fiction. One of the general critiques picked up in the thesis, however, is that this model is not accurate if assumed to hold for narrative fiction since it describes a different rule system.

• A common idea in contemporary narratology is that narration is an overarching activity or even a fundamental way to create meaning in both discourse and everyday life. However, that humans tend to create meaning by using a particular discourse type or a particular way of ordering experience and other materials is an explanation on a general level that does not automatically transfer to particular narrative practices. Narrative fiction, for instance, can be said to be regulated by a set of rules for producing meaning that holds for that specific language game but perhaps not for other games, even though they might relate to the same deeply ingrained human tendency.

• The final aspect that lends itself to a critical discussion in the present context is that narratology is presented as a theory but used as a method (i.e., a heuristic device). Those scholars who describe narratological model on the whole, the proponents of unnatural narratology present it as in fact valid for many narratives.

42 While Patron, Skalin, and Walsh problematize this narratological model on the whole, the proponents of unnatural narratology present it as in fact valid for many narratives.
tology as a theory with an accompanying method seem to understand narratology not as a research field (in an open sense as the broad, interdisciplinary study of narrative practices) but as a discipline (in a closer sense where narratology is a set of related theories, tools, and methods that are also subject to conferences, university courses, and journals devoted to storytelling). The issue here is if the common versions of narratology, as a theory or model of narrative, can be deployed adequately in the analysis of works of narrative fiction, and if there are sound alternative ways of deploying the narratological terminology.
4. HOW THE ARTICLES ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

By collecting and discussing the critique of narratology under general terms I hope to advance the critical examination of narratology. In a group of articles I, firstly, try to pinpoint the salient notions of the critics and to characterize the critique as a whole. To characterize the critique, I suggest a distinction between a sameness approach and a difference approach to narrative fiction (see pp. 24–27 above). The two designators position the participants – narratology as understood by its critics and the critics themselves, at least the most radical of them – in the debate about how to describe works like novels and short stories. Secondly, I speculate about why the critique has been neglected in the debates about narrative fiction. Thirdly, I discuss the critics’ notions in relation to narratological terms and issues in analyses of a short story and a novel. When I discuss the different alternatives, I implement assumptions found in the critique, in particular the assumption that the description of narrative fiction should correspond to how these kinds of works operate. According to at least Patron, Skalin, and Walsh, works like novels and short stories offer a meaningful unit to the reader, which consists of elements whose relevance and functions are decided by the context in which they are deployed.

The opening three articles (Sandberg 2019; Andersson and Sandberg 2018, 2019) engage in the first research question: What do the critics of narratology suggest about narratology’s description of narrative fiction and, counter to this, about narrative fiction as they understand it? These articles comprise a metadiscussion of the critique as such. In the first of them, I describe my understanding of the critics and their alternative approaches to narrative fiction as well as relate the critics’ overall approach to their understanding of narratology. This is where I introduce the distinction between the sameness approach and the difference approach. The second article builds on the critics’ understanding of narratology and narrative fiction and the perception that the critique has not been well integrated into the discussions of the latter. It thus responds to the second research question in particular: Why has the critique not had any apparent effect on the discussions about narrative fiction in narratology? Andersson and I here try to construct a picture of narratology as presented by the critics, what narratologists might mean when saying that readers interpret all putative instances of narrative in the “same” way, and speculate about why the critique has not had any visible impact. The latter might be viewed as a
problematization of the critique, indirectly showing that the critics, overall, have not sufficiently treated an important dimension of narratology. This dimension concerns how narratologists actually relate to and deploy narratology in their analytical practice. The third article, finally, clarifies central arguments in the previous one – about the sameness approach contra the difference approach – as it is a reply to a critique (Hatavara and Hyvärinen 2019) directed against the second article.

The two concluding articles (Sandberg 2017, 2018) engage in the third, and last, research question: If the critique was accepted, what would it mean for the use of narratological terms and distinctions in the analysis of works like novels and short stories? These articles focus on the putative consequences of the critique if the alternative approach was taken into consideration in the analysis of literary works. The problems that guide the analyses have hypothetical formulations just like the overarching question: if this or that term or general approach was used, how would an analysis look? The articles thus move on from the metadiscussions in the initial studies towards a kind of operationalization of the so-called difference approach. The reason for not just metatheoretically discussing the possible implications of the critique is pragmatic: it becomes clearer and more concrete to also show the implications in actual analyses. This also mimics the critics themselves as they continuously pick up a dialogue with narratology, discussing its concepts and terms in literary analyses.

Showing how a difference approach might look in analytical situations involves discussing relevant issues and narratological concepts and terms. This is done on the premise that narrative fiction is a practice distinct from other kinds of storytelling and that it does not correspond with the common model of narrative proposed in narratology. In the difference perspective, the elements of novels and short stories are understood on the basis of their presumed functions in the analyzed work. A general strategy when discussing these functions in the latter articles is to deploy ostensivity, that is, to point to scenes and segments from texts and then relate them to established narratological terminology as well as to other descriptive terms.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will present the individual articles in the order they have in the thesis. As the order of the articles does not always correspond with the publication dates and as some ideas were developed late in the process, I will throughout the chapter reflect on the working procedure as well.
4.1 Articles I–III

4.1.1 Describing the Critique’s Central Notions

What do the critics aim their critique at and what are their alternatives to narratology or to the aspects of narratology that they criticize? More generally, how can the critique be characterized as a whole in relation to narratology?

The opening article, “The critique of the common theory of narrative fiction in narratology: Pursuing difference” (Sandberg 2019), was published in the journal *Frontiers of Narrative Studies* in a special issue on “Sameness and Difference in Narratology” (FNS 2019; 5:1) where I served as guest editor together with Andersson and Per Klingberg. I began writing this article early in the working process, yet it was eventually published next to last in the line. A draft before the terms “sameness” and “difference” were part of the project – titled “Four Critical Perspectives on Narratology” – was presented in June 2016 at the International Conference on Narrative (organized by ISSN) held in Amsterdam, and a later draft was presented in November 2017 at a symposium in Örebro (arranged by Andersson, Klingberg, and me) that lead up to the thematic issue of *Frontiers*. The final version was accordingly written during 2018 and reflects the reasoning I had adopted during that time in the working process.

In this article, I describe the notions of the individual critics and try to formulate in what sense they can be said to have the same standpoint, that is, the same kind of critique of narratology. I argue that they tend to claim that narratology has as its point of departure some specific premises that can be questioned and that it has presented a theory that does not hold for narrative fiction. The gist of my reasoning is that the critics point out problems with narratology as a theory, or model, of narrative fiction as well as suggest alternatives to it which, they think, do better justice to the literary practice in question. Formulated in terms of an aim, I hope to offer an adequate understanding of the general object of the critique as well as the alternative approach implied in the critics’ respective works.

I begin the article by presenting the critique as directed against narratology’s neglect of the particularity of narrative fiction, its “special qualities,” because of the focus on narrative in a general sense. I specify how I perceive the critique by saying that it is not concerned primarily with
ontology (i.e., it does not give answers to how to distinguish between discourse that pertains to a putative real world and discourse that does not), but instead with the issue of how to describe an already-established literary practice accurately.

I then describe the critics’ individual “approaches” to the issue of describing narratology and narrative fiction; this is done on the basis of how the critics seem to perceive themselves, although I try at the same time to sort them into my own overarching argument. Patron has a linguistic approach, Skalin an aesthetic approach (although he also discusses pertinent issues in the philosophy of science), and Walsh a pragmatic approach. The unnaturalists’ perspective is, naturally, unnatural narratology. When describing the scholars’ approaches, I delineate their central concepts and distinctions, contrasting their views on narratology with their alternative descriptions of narrative fiction, including their individual vocabularies. The first three scholars, Patron, Skalin, and Walsh, contest that the story–discourse distinction in narratology is valid for narrative fiction. This distinction is a necessary ingredient in the communicational model of narrative and has crossed over from certain theories of fiction (and of language in general) that presupposes that the primary function of language is to represent a “world” outside of discourse (see subsections 3.1.1, 3.1.2). The proponents of unnatural narratology, Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, and Richardson, differ from the previous scholars by accepting the distinction and drawing many of their notions from the terminology of “Genettean” (communicational) narratology. The unnaturalists wish to revise and expand this narratology to accommodate “unnatural” texts or elements of texts; they often refer, in this context, to experimental, postmodernist, and avant-garde fiction. Accordingly, it is only a certain kind of fiction that, in the unnaturalists’ view, does not fit the common theory and therefore needs a proper description. By not questioning the basic premises of narratology (which I suggest unnatural narratology do not) and even building on them, I do not deem this approach as radical as those of Patron, Skalin, and Walsh. However, the unnaturalists seem to share views on the common model of narrative fiction with the other three theorists – they just do not think that this model should be invalidated as such. One might perhaps also argue that they are interested in partially different issues than the other three scholars.

The material grounding the first article consists chiefly of scholarly discussions and analyses from the seven critics. I base the section on Patron on articles published between 2006 and 2018; the section on Skalin on articles and conference papers written predominantly in English between 2004 and
2018; and the section on Walsh on his *The Rhetoric of Fictionality: Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction* (2007). However, in the section on Walsh I also refer to collaborative articles where he discusses occurrences of fictionality (which is viewed as a rhetorical resource) outside of narrative fiction as well as mention some further studies Walsh’s book has inspired. When it comes to unnatural narratology, I refer to joint articles assigned to both Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, and Richardson as well as to a few articles from each of the individual contributors.

In the concluding section, I pinpoint what the different versions of the critique have in common and what the implied approach might mean for the study of narrative fiction if taken seriously. I suggest that at least the first three scholars that I have analyzed criticize essential assumptions and concepts that they hold are present in common versions of narratology; they are thus presenting radical critiques. At this moment – presuming that the reader attends to the thesis’s articles in the order they have in the thesis and not in the order of publication – I introduce the labels that throughout the thesis designate how the critics and the common versions of narratology, as understood by the critics, handle narrative fiction: the difference approach and the sameness approach.

**4.1.2 Suggesting Why the Critique Has Had No Apparent Effect**

"Why has the critique of so-called sameness narratology had no apparent effect on the discussions in narratology?"

“Sameness versus Difference in Narratology: Two Approaches to Narrative Fiction” (Andersson and Sandberg 2018) was published in the journal *Narrrative* (26:3, October 2018). To prepare for the article Andersson and I read recent texts by Phelan and Liesbeth Korthals Altes as well as studies in literary education about how young readers talk about fiction. Andersson and I then took the critique as our point of departure and speculated about why it has not been integrated much into the discussions in narratology. The result comes in the form of an attempt to clarify how (what Andersson and I call) sameness narratology is understood and used by narratologists in the analytical practice. According to the critique, narratology would, if taken at face value in literary analyses, generate unsatisfying interpretations that would show that the theory is anomalous. However, narratology might perhaps be useful despite the critique, not least since narratologists do not
seem to take the suggested model of narrative as the kind of theory it is often presented as.

We begin the discussion by presenting what we hold are four different aspects of “sameness” proposed in narratology and which Patron, Skalin, and Walsh do not accept. The first proposal is that narrative is a discourse type or “category” that occurs in different contexts, among them narrative fiction, and that it is the proper research object in narratology. The second proposal is that the primary kind of narrative is factual narration – or a kind of narration suggested in a specific conception of “non-fiction” – and that works like novels and short stories are based on, or have a secondary relation to, this kind of narrative. Factual narration pertains here to the communication of events by a teller to a listener – what might be referred to as informative accounts of what has happened. Andersson and I assert that “many narratologists presume that fiction is a mimesis, that is, an imitation of non-fictional forms. Accordingly, readers will read fiction “as if” it were non-fiction and analyze it in terms of non-fiction, even though they are conscious that it is not” (2018: 244). The third proposal is that narratology has a core of concepts and distinctions that has remained the same in spite of the widening and diversification of the field, and that these concepts and distinctions can be used to describe narrative fiction. The fourth, and final, proposal is encountered in postclassical narratology; scholars from disciplines such as literary studies, psychology, and sociology suggest that readers interpret works like novels and short stories and other “narratives” in the same way, at least on a putative basic, or lower, level of comprehension. An example is when readers – the reasoning goes – attend to so-called fictional minds (representations of thoughts and inner perceptions), as if they were the minds of actual persons.43

Andersson and I continue the article by discussing what an insistence on sameness might lead to in the analytical practice, or what it would lead to if taken literally. We here refer specifically to some kinds of suggested misreadings, but we also relate to how narratologists use the narratological model in concrete cases. A great deal of the article is devoted to the issue of what we refer to as “frameshifts” in the analytical practice. We suggest

43 There is some ambiguity connected with this last point regarding whether scholars mean or do not mean that readers interpret fiction in the same way as they interpret non-fiction, and in what sense readers do so if that is the case. Andersson and I turn briefly to this issue on pp. 248–249 and state it, in our next article (2019), as a problem for further discussion.
“that sameness narratology will invite readers to shift frames so that they begin to reason about fiction as if it were non-fiction or to apply certain terms taken from the domain of non-fiction in the study of fiction as if they had the same sense and function in this context” (Andersson and Sandberg 2018: 247). We notice, however, that narratologists are seldom inclined to make the mentioned mistakes; Ryan even dismisses the very idea that narratologists would make them as a “straw man.” Therefore, we clarify that our point is that the common narratological “theory allows for a reasoning about fiction as if it were non-fiction, where questions about what ‘has happened’ [i.e., about a presumed ontologically independent ‘world’] really would be relevant” (Andersson and Sandberg 2018: 249). We go on and offer examples where narratologists seem to oscillate between the two logics, or rule systems: the narratological system and the system that these scholars – and readers in general, we assume – intuitively think holds for works like novels and short stories, based on their experience from this kind of literature. When shifting perspective in this way, narratologists begin, according to Andersson and me, their reasoning about certain textual elements on the basis of narratology but then draw conclusions on the basis of their readerly intuitions about the functions of these elements; in the end they thus seem to actually subscribe to a difference approach to narrative fiction. Phelan, for instance, hangs on to his model of narrative in the analysis until he meets textual functions that it cannot explain, or that it would explain unsatisfactorily. In this moment, he shifts to a reasoning based on his more spontaneous perception of narrative fiction and is able to explain the function in this way.

Based on this and similar examples of the analytical practice in narratology, Andersson and I suggest that narratology is commonly not viewed as a scientific theory but rather as a heuristic device that allows the interpreter to describe literary texts by comparing them to the theoretical model and find out, for instance, where they deviate from it. This method lends itself to characterizing works of narrative fiction. We refer in this section to Genette’s analysis of Proust’s work as an illuminating example with counterparts in subsequent narratology. Ultimately, the “Genettean” deployment of narratology could perhaps be said to help accentuate the functionality of narrative fiction as compared to factual narration.

The reasoning about narratologists’ relation to their theory points towards an answer to why the critique of narratology has had no apparent effect on narratology: it depends on the status and purpose of the theoretical
model. We end the article, however, by suggesting an alternative use of the model’s terminology that adheres to the difference approach from the start.44

4.1.3 A Reply to Hatavara and Hyvärinen’s Critique

How can a critique of the understanding of narratology that Andersson and I presented be addressed, and how can the distinction between the sameness and the difference approaches be clarified?

The article by Andersson and me provoked a critique from Hatavara and Hyvärinen (2019). We were invited to produce a brief answer to this, and the resulting text is included as the third publication of the thesis. “A Reply to Mari Hatavara and Matti Hyvärinen” (Andersson and Sandberg 2019), which replies to Hatavara and Hyvärinen’s critique and answers their questions, was published together with the critique in an issue of Narrative (27:3, October 2019). Andersson and I take care to listen to the critique and attempt to clarify important notions in the original article. The risk of misunderstandings is thus hopefully reduced and the dialogue about sameness and difference in narratology can continue in a fruitful manner.

Centrally, Hatavara and Hyvärinen accuse Andersson and me of having a “polarizing rhetorical strategy.” We therefore begin our reply by motivating and explicating our distinction between what we hold are two incompatible approaches to narrative fiction – the one based on “sameness” and the one based on “difference.” The argument is that the common versions of narratology presume that narrative non-fiction (or factual narration) and narrative fiction pertain to the same type of communicative act and hence function according to the same logic, or rule system.45 The critical scholars that we refer to in the article – Patron, Skalin, and Walsh – question this and assert that narrative fiction is a particular language game that demands a particular kind of interpretation. This seems to mean that it is another act to write a novel than it is to write historiography or tell about events in

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44 Besides attempting to, so to speak, operationalize this alternative in the concluding articles of the thesis, I also discuss it, as well as the suggestions made by me at the end of the previous article (Sandberg 2019), in section 5.2 below. There, I elaborate on what I think are general implications of the critique.

45 Fiction and non-fiction are the salient categories in this context, I contend, because the discussions in narratology are intertwined with the “fact versus fiction debate” (see section 3.1) among philosophers, historians, and literary theorists.
one's life. While we can accept that these narrative practices or activities resemble each other on a superficial level, we hold that the critics assume that they function according to different logics, or rule systems.

The strategy in the rest of the reply is to pick up points of disagreement with Hatavara and Hyvärinen as well as to answer the questions they pose to us. The last point concerns a presumed misinterpretation of what "sameness" means in an example we quoted. Yet, we assert, we actually referred to several instances where the word is used in a book edited by both Hatavara and Hyvärinen (The Travelling Concepts of Narrative 2013). What we had hoped to convey was that the meaning of the word – that is, what it refers to in the examples – is uncertain to us. Thus, the final move in the reply is to request further clarification about what the passages on "sameness" mean and how they relate to the proposed aspects of sameness that we discussed in our original article.

One might ask regarding this text if Andersson and I suggest that the difference approach is a narratological approach on par with the putative sameness approach and what that would mean. The simple answer is that the approach might be labelled “narratological” since the immediate context is narratology and that it responds to the issue of how to describe a practice that is often perceived as storytelling. However, it is not narratological if that means to approach narrative fiction as narrative in a qualified sense, for instance, as communication about events and other entities that can be discussed as having an existence of their own.

4.2 Articles IV–V

4.2.1 Evaluating Core Concepts

How well do suggested denotations for the term “voice,” coming from both an influential narratologist and two of the thesis’s critical scholars, capture elements in a short story that readers will arguably perceive as vocal qualities?

In the first three articles, I come back to the idea that terms, according to the critics of narratology, cannot just have a fixed meaning in a theoretical system and then be applied as a filter in analytical situations. To be useful, narratological terms need to describe functions discernible in actual texts or, broadly speaking, functions that might occur in narrative fiction. The
fourth article of the thesis uses this idea as its starting point and builds on the implied premise that it is not clear that suggested concepts in narratology refer to such functions. The article is motivated by a felt need to evaluate suggestions made in narratology, but also opposing suggestions. The critics of narratology hold that narratology’s description of narrative fiction is inaccurate, but it remains to be decided if their alternative suggestions are better off in this regard.

The article is titled “An Evaluation of the Voice Concept(s) in Theories of Literary Fiction: Suggestions by Patron, Walsh, and Genette” (Sandberg 2018) and was published by the University of Niš in the volume From Narrativity to Narrativity: Half a Century of Narratology, edited by Snežana Milosavljević Milić, Jelena Jovanović, and Mirjana Bojanić Čirković. The article was the first manuscript I finished. This was early in the process of writing the thesis: in 2016, before the outline of the project was completely set.

I delimit the article in several ways. First of all, I single out one important narratological concept, voice, and discuss how well some suggested meanings of it pinpoint what competent readers would spontaneously perceive as vocal qualities in a text. Secondly, I choose three scholars’ suggestions: Patron’s and Walsh’s since they belong to the critics of narratology, and Genette’s since he is one of the most influential narratologists (and often associated with narratology as such) and since he appears in most of the critics’ discourses, including Patron’s and Walsh’s. Furthermore, Genette is criticized by both Patron and Walsh when they discuss voice specifically.

Other proposals about voice have of course been made in connection with narratology, indicating that there is no unified view on the concept. In a brief section in the beginning of the article I concentrate on different (metaphorical) meanings of the word “voice” and notice, for instance, that narratology’s communicational model focuses on who makes utterances while scholars had previously been interested in how texts are written, thus staging studies of style.

Thirdly, I refer to a specific work of narrative fiction. The reason for choosing this short story is that it apparently thematizes “voice” while the word also seems apt to use for partially different functions in the text. The

46 “Literary fiction” designates the literary practice, narrative fiction. This article and the next one in the order the publications have in the thesis both use the designation since they were written before I had decided on “narrative fiction,” which arguably suits the narratological context better.
short story is also chosen for idiosyncratic personal reasons; it has an (ambiguous) political content, seemingly commenting on difficult feminist issues. Carter’s “The Loves of Lady Purple” (1992) was originally included in *Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces* published in 1974. It depicts a puppet master putting on a marionette show whose protagonist is a violent prostitute and killer who, in the end of the story, comes to life, sucks the blood out of her creator and burns the theater down. Then she goes outside to continue the destructive life she, in the hands of the puppeteer, led on the stage. It is an intricate piece, and a central aspect of it is Carter’s play with (authoritarian) voices. As I interpret the short story, it seems to say that descriptions (discourses) can be internalized and make up the borders of a subject’s behavioral repertoire; perhaps the story can therefore be read, as Michelle Ryan-Sautour (2010) suggests, as a male discourse about females and, ultimately, the limited possibilities for women in a patriarchal society.

My discussion centers around a paragraph encountered early on in the text. Ryan-Sautour has suggested that this paragraph is permeated by a “didactic voice” and that this voice effect invites a metatextual interpretation. Someone is teaching about the puppeteer and his show, and there seems to be parallels between what this “teacher” does and what the puppeteer himself does. Thus, there is both a discursive voice effect and voice as a theme.

Moreover, the exalted discourse describing the puppeteer and his doings does not change during the presentation of the plot of the marionette show; it is still the, so to speak, primary “didactic voice” that recapitulates the theater performance.

Ryan-Sautour entertains the idea that both the narrating voice and the puppeteer hail or attribute characters, thus giving them an identity from the outside and establishing a power relation. The Marxist term “interpellation” can be used to describe this feature (cf. Ryan-Sautour 2010: pars. 29–30). The term can get at how voices might be connected with ideology in the sense that a voice, by presenting discourse, establishes a worldview or a view – that is, an idea – of the other.

I begin my analysis with Patron’s (2011) suggestion. It may be argued, however, that Patron’s discussion is at variance with Walsh’s and Genette’s. She proposes that the concept should be abandoned by narratologists because it has been given several incompatible meanings, including by Genette in one and the same work. This is not really a suggestion for what “voice”

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47 I appropriate this idea for my purposes, not putting weight on Ryan-Sautour’s theoretical assumptions and goals.
should denote in an analytical situation, but it is still a suggestion–at least it illustrates the sentiment that narratologists have been inconsistent when presenting their models of narrative.

The suggestion by Walsh relates to Genette more positively. I present Walsh as offering his voice metaphors in response to Genette. He reformulates, from a pronounced pragmatic perspective, Genette’s conception so that the term “voice” denotes rhetorical functions surrounding the “representation” of voices. The first aspect of voice in Walsh’s version comprises the very act of representing (i.e., the voice of the text itself as part of the rhetorical means of representation) as well as the representation (depicting) of narrating situations (e.g., as in first-person fiction). The second aspect comprises the representation of characters’ voices; the function of this is to characterize characters, or express characters’ subjectivity. The third aspect, called “interpellation,” comprises the expression of a subject position, which means that the representation hails and thus holds a perspective or a worldview; the perspective can be aligned with characters but does not need to be. In any case, the “subject position comes forward not as a discursive quality but as an implicit embedding of a perspective in the discourse” (Sandberg 2018: 168). As opposed to the Marxist understanding of interpellation, this implicit embedding does not have to do with power relations, even though it happens to do so in “Lady Purple.”

While Walsh connects voice with perspective, Genette (1980) connects it with storytelling situations (the relation between the presumed fictional narrator and the story this person recounts) under the grammatical category “Person” and puts most of the issue of perspective in a different discussion. This means that Genette focuses on aspects concerning the relation between subject and object rather than, for instance, on how authors represent voices. An assumption carrying this focus is that there is always a first-person narrator behind the text, even in third-person fiction. In the latter case, he or she is just not visible, according to the theory. The narrator, however visible this agent is in the text, performs four different functions, Genette asserts, and these pertain to attempts to affect the presumed receiver, the so-called narratee, of the narrative. I give attention to two of these functions, which bear on how the narrator offers his or her perspective on the content of the telling, that is, the story.

After processing Patron’s protest against voice in narratology, I turn to

48 This builds on the story–discourse distinction central to common versions of narratology.
the suggested concepts from Walsh and Genette and discuss if and how they would describe the “didactic” voice in “Lady Purple.” Following this is a conclusion about which aspects involving this voice the suggestions can account for and which they cannot.49

4.2.2 Analyzing an Experimental Novel

How could an experimental novel like Stridsberg’s Drömfakulteten that deviates strongly from the common model of narrative fiction in narratology be handled if an alternative approach was adopted?

The fifth article is titled “A ‘fucked up’ novel, narratology, and the Difference approach to literary fiction” (2017) and was, like the first one, published in the journal Frontiers of Narrative Studies (FNS 2017; 3:2). The article was the second text I wrote and was sent in as an answer to a call for papers for a special issue on “Experimental Literature and Narrative Theory.” In this article I analyze the novel Drömfakulteten (The Dream Faculty, 2006)50 by Sara Stridsberg – a “literary fantasy,” as a paratext suggests, about the elusive radical feminist Valerie Solanas. The novel mixes alphabetical lists, associative prose, dramatic dialogue (including scenes where Stridsberg injects herself into the novel as “the storyteller” and interviews the dying Valerie in a hotel room), and other elements which contribute to the overall effect. I chose the novel since its experimental form would presumably shed light on the inaccuracy of the common versions of narratology as these are described by the critics. Drömfakulteten would, in other words, better than a realist novel make salient the particular functionality of the language game of narrative fiction. Like Carter’s short story, the novel was also chosen for idiosyncratic personal reasons.

During the analysis of Drömfakulteten, I discuss the issues “the narrator, what kind of reading the text insists on, and what the text actually offers the reader” (Sandberg 2017: 257–258). I claim to do this with a difference

49 I point out that Walsh and Genette both lack adequate notions of voice as style, or manner of speaking, which concerns the issue of how texts are written. Perhaps I should have elaborated more on this topic in the article (e.g., discussed what effects stylistic aspects can achieve) and taken note of points by, for example, Dawson (2013).

50 The novel has recently been translated into English under the title The Faculty of Dreams (2019).
approach to narrative fiction, which has as its focus to describe the “functions” that the textual elements have in the “frame” of narrative fiction. Since Stridsberg’s intention apparently is to write a “literary fantasy,” I take cues specifically from that framing in my discussion of what the author is presenting to the reader.

I discuss the three issues with the presumption that a difference approach would be able to handle narrative fiction well. On the contrary, using a sameness approach would have laid bare the anomalies in narratology’s theory of narrative fiction and led to having to explain the novel’s deviations from the theory (cf. the discussion in Andersson and Sandberg 2018). The difference approach avoids, I assert, such difficulties and would produce an account of Drömfakulteten that is in line with the spontaneously perceived rule system of narrative fiction.

The first move of the article is to reference reviews that characterize the novel. Because of the non-conventional, experimental nature of Drömfakulteten it is not self-evident how to talk about it, and I therefore use these reviews as a starting point for my analysis.

In the next step, I describe the difference approach with reference to Skalin’s (2004, 2008) distinction between frames (in this case fiction, or Stridsberg’s apparent intention to write a “literary fantasy” about the elusive feminist icon Valerie Solanas) and forms (the textual elements Stridsberg uses for her project and which exert their functions as part of the frame). When explicating the difference approach, I mention how it might lead to a different characterization of the novel as compared to using an unnatural perspective, which would have as its point of departure the “Genetean” model of narrative and focus on how the text deviates from it. Presumably, an unnatural approach would also involve ascribing these putative deviations a meaning or function.

When discussing how Drömfakulteten might be described, I refer to notions put forth by Patron, Skalin, and Walsh while deploying ostensivity. That is to say, I point to a segment or a scene and then suggest how it can be described with reference to the three critics and others. With regard to the first issue, about the narrator, I draw particularly from Patron’s discussion of the narrator in narratology and suggest that narrators in fiction might occur as motifs or as the representation of voices. Discussing one of several associative alphabetical lists with no apparent deictic centers, I speculate about what these lists accomplish in relation to Stridsberg’s overarching goal (i.e., what functions they have in the “literary fantasy” frame).
I then speculate similarly about a snippet of dialogue presented in dramatic lines as in a play, where Stridsberg appears as a character: “the storyteller.”

Narratologists have suggested ways that readers understand fiction that the critics of narratology have dismissed. In the next section, on the frame issue (that is, what kind of reading the text insists on), I assert that readers will not read *Drömfakulteten* as a biography about Valerie Solanas; the reason is that it is not chronological but rather associative and symbolic, and that it consists partly of fragments from Solanas’s most famous work, *SCUM Manifesto*. Indeed, the novel is “fucked up” as the title of the article indicates. When discussing this quality, I refer to Ryan’s idea that texts can have different kinds of narrativity, which I understand as different sorts of event sequencing, or different “shapes.” These shapes can be viewed as variations on an essential motif: the narrative.

The third and last issue is what the novel offers its readers. I claim first of all that *Drömfakulteten* has many forms and that these forms tend to have “facets,” which is to say that they perform several functions at once. In the section on the recurring multiplicity of textual elements’ functions, I draw from Walsh and, importantly, refer to these functions as “affordances” (see pp. 36–39 above). I conceptualize affordances as open enough to capture two parts of *Drömfakulteten*’s design: both directly intentional aspects and aspects that come as part of the deal. Among the former aspects are the portrait of the main character that is presented in the text and the floating atmosphere that lends support to the idea that this is a “literary fantasy” and not an attempt at biography. Among the latter aspects are those that follow automatically with most (or all) works of narrative fiction. I have in mind here the means that Stridsberg uses to create, for example, the mentioned atmosphere, the characters, and the motifs, but also aspects such as ideological underpinnings (i.e., aspects pertaining to worldview), regardless of whether they are fully intentional or not. I end the analysis with some suggestions for how the novel could be characterized as a whole in one sentence.
5. DISCUSSION

The impetus to the critique of narratology that I focus on in this thesis was, according to my interpretation, that the scholars that interest me noticed problems with the common theory of narrative fiction when setting it up against their perceptions of how works like novels and short stories function. In other words, they experienced difficulties when attempting to apply the theory to fiction.

These difficulties are understood and handled differently by the critics. The unnaturalists suggest that the theory is incomplete since the problems primarily occur in relation to experimental, avant-garde, or postmodernist texts; thus, they develop what they refer to as an “unnatural” poetics to complement the “mimetic” poetics of narratology. Patron, Skalin, and Walsh, however, suggest that the problems occur in relation to all works of narrative fiction. The theory does not describe this language game accurately; rather, it describes another language game, which is assumed to hold for “narrative” in general. The three scholars thus attempt to present alternative descriptions of narrative fiction that get at its linguistic specificity (Patron); represent another way of theorizing this practice and view at least “literary” novels and short stories as art (Skalin); and build on a recontextualization of narratology’s conceptual apparatus, making terms and distinctions correspond with the rhetoric used in narrative fiction (Walsh). All critics relate to established narratological terminology when developing their alternative approaches since they, obviously, feel that it has a value and that narratology should not be abandoned. As I understand the critique, then, its goal is “only” to revise certain assumptions, aspirations, and/or aspects and, in the radical cases, suggest a new understanding of the salient objects.

In this chapter, I will further discuss the results of my examination of the critique. To begin with, I will present salient conclusions to draw from the included articles and link them to the three overarching research questions. Then I will elaborate on the conclusions with a focus on implications that the radical notions might have for the study of narrative fiction. In the penultimate section, I will discuss eventual shortcomings of the thesis by responding to and speculating on some points put forth by Hyvärinen when criticizing me and Andersson, as well as pinpoint what I think are some of the thesis’s positive contributions. Lastly, I will mention some issues that the thesis has left untouched and which might be further explored.
5.1 Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions that can be drawn from the individual articles and relates them to the general research questions. The first three articles deal with the question: (1) What do the critics of narratology suggest about narratology’s description of narrative fiction and, counter to this, about narrative fiction as they understand it? In the introductory article (Sandberg 2019), I claim that the critique has a common ground and that it can be described as a whole, and the second and third article elaborates on this description. Conclusions to draw from the introductory article are:

- The critique advanced by Patron, Skalin, and Walsh regards narratology’s description of narrative fiction on the whole while the less radical proponents of unnatural narratology think that the description is inaccurate only when it comes to experimental or otherwise non-realist fiction. The radical critics understand narrative fiction as a distinct practice, or language game; works like novels and short stories are in this view governed by a logic, or rule system, that should not be conflated with any putative logic, or rule system, of narrative per se. This “difference approach” might be contrasted with what the critics hold is a more common “sameness approach” in narratology, which handles narrative fiction on the basis of the putative sameness of, or similarity between, narrative fiction and other practices regarded as storytelling.

The second article (Andersson and Sandberg 2018) draws from the understanding of the critique encountered in the first article yet responds more specifically to the second question: (2) Why has the critique not had any apparent effect on the discussions about narrative fiction in narratology? A suggestion in this article is that narratologists do not perceive narratology as its critics do, literally as a theory of narrative fiction; rather, they use it as an analytical tool, or device. They thus oscillate in their analytical practice between explanations based on the rule system of communication inherent in narratology and, when the limitations of this model materialize, the rule system they spontaneously think effective in narrative fiction in their role as readers. The latter can explain apparent anomalies in works like novels and short stories with reference to relevance and functions (see e.g., Phelan 2005: 36–37; Korthals Altes 2014: 125–126). One can conclude that:
• Even though scholars can, and do, make use of narratology’s common description of narrative fiction as a heuristic device in the analytical practice, a difference approach would be preferable. It would not pertain to mistaken universal claims about, or theories of, narrative and lead scholars to more consistently base their analyses on their readerly intuitions about how works like novels and short stories function (i.e., produce meaning).

Andersson and I then clarify in the third article (2019) what was said in the previous article, for example that Patron, Skalin, and Walsh hold that works like novels and short stories do not abide to the communicational logic that they think inherent in common versions of narratology. The following conclusion can be drawn:

• The distinction between the difference and the sameness approaches should be understood in the immediate context of the critique. It is relevant to specific issues in narratology, in particular concerning what the critics say and the issue of how to talk about narrative fiction “on its own premises” as a recognized, unique practice.

The two concluding articles deal with the third, and last, research question: (3) If the critique was accepted, what would it mean for the use of narratological terms and distinctions in the analysis of works like novels and short stories? The critics, in particular Patron, Skalin, and Walsh, suggest that terms should (always) denote presumed functions in literary works. However, it is not clear that they do or what an analysis based on this idea would comprise. For instance, assuming that it is reasonable to refer to some elements in narrative fiction as pertaining to “voice” or “voices,” what does the voice concept in the critique’s context actually denote? Conclusions to draw from the third article (Sandberg 2018) are:

• Suggestions for what aspects of works of narrative fiction the term “voice” should refer to tend, at least based on Walsh’s and Genette’s suggestions, to be mostly limited to perspective (perspectives bound to characters and perspectives in other ways imbedded in the text, including ideological underpinnings). However, a limitation like that, or similar putative deficiencies, should not be a reason to abandon “voice” or other narratological terms. There are still aspects of fiction that it seems appropriate to refer to as “voice,”
“voices,” “vocal,” et cetera, and which might be related to perspective as well as to other issues, such as style.

In the final article, I attempt to demonstrate what it would mean to have a difference approach, and in that way thus give an answer to what the radical versions of the critique imply for the analytical practice. I end my analysis of Stridsberg’s *Drömfakulteten* by suggesting how the functional unit that is the novel, according to the critics’ perspective, can be described: as “‘an image of the life and works of Valerie Solanas,’ ‘a literary fantasy with a dreamlike atmosphere,’” et cetera (Sandberg 2017: 269). This conclusion can be drawn from the article:

- The difference approach does not lend itself to treating unconventional and non-realistic aspects of novels and short stories as deviations or “unnatural;” they are instead seen as functional parts in the language game of narrative fiction. Scholars interested in narratological issues and terms and having a difference approach can, in other words, contribute in the pursuit of holistic descriptions of all kinds of narrative fiction, even cases where realism and other conventions are upset.

These were conclusions based on the individual articles. The most important general conclusion of the thesis is, in my view, that the critics of narratology point out how the common theory of narrative fiction is inaccurate and that at least Patron, Skalin, and Walsh offer a radical alternative to this theory – which I have understood as more of an alternative approach than a theory of a comparable kind. This rather open approach is, presumably, more consistent with how works like novels and short stories function. (Perhaps it is also more in line with traditional literary studies, which discuss historical context, what authors might try to achieve, the relation to conventions, and so forth.)

**5.2 Implications of the Critique**

In this section, I will further interpret and explain the answer to the research question about the possible implications of the critique if taken seriously in the analysis of novels and short stories. The focus will be on suggestions I make at the end of some of the articles about what the critique of narratology entails. The section can shed light on the analyses in the articles on *voice* and *Drömfakulteten* and clear up any vagueness.
As stated above, the critics often discuss the narratological terminology. The terms suggested in the common model of narrative fiction should not be abandoned but can still be used, the critics often seem to say, as long as these terms describe perceptible functions in actual texts. Examples could be “voice” and “narrator,” but also terms that I have not discussed in the thesis such as “focalization,” “unreliability,” et cetera. “Narrative” itself might also be discussed – what could be referred to as narrative aspects of works like novel and short stories?

Since the scholars I am interested in problematize narratology’s tendency to generalize about narrative, they usually dismiss the idea that narrative can be given a description that holds for all kinds of practices commonly perceived as storytelling. As a consequence, the most radical among the critics dismiss the idea that fiction is the “fictional” mode of a more general activity, narration. This also involves a critique of some common theories of fiction, like possible worlds theory, pretense theory, and other “as if” theories. These theories suggest that works of fiction consist of (pretended) references to a world outside, and larger than, the text – the so-called fictional world. The theories also suggest how readers interpret fiction, for example as if it was factual narration (although readers, according to this reasoning, are aware that it is not and just play along). Following the critique one has to come up with alternative ways of talking about narrative fiction where its language is not seen as (pseudo-)referential and where there is no such hypothetical entity as a fictional world. The “world” might, according to how I understand the radical critics of narratology, at best be seen as a discursive effect, or a specific signified environment (e.g., a setting containing a group of characters involved in some complications).  

I think that the critique implies placing ostensive reasoning before a reasoning based on theoretical assumptions. This holds even though none of the critics refers to it in that way; Patron, for instance, would perhaps rather say that she prefers inductive reasoning before deductive reasoning.

51 I assume, however, that this does not mean that readers (e.g., layreaders who do not read for scholarly reasons) do not, or should not, extrapolate on literary works as if they had a referential element – that is, talk about the “fictional world” and its presumed constituents, such as persons and events, making comparisons between that world and the readers’ own lives or understanding of the world they live in. It only means that scholars who have a difference approach are interested in whatever meaning the work conveys and what effects the text creates, and try to describe this, which is a different activity. This activity seems to stay within the limits of textual, or reading, comprehension based on an awareness of the work’s context.
when she analyses novels and short stories. This kind of reasoning is important, and I allude to it in several of the thesis’s articles. In one instance, I side with the difference approach as part of that article’s rhetoric and say “that there is a risk of misconceptions inherent in a theory that contains purely theoretical constructs, for example the obligatory narrator found in common versions of narratology. More empirical approaches strive to overcome such abundant theorizing” (Sandberg 2017: 270). The expression “empirical approaches” refers to approaches based on ostensive or inductive reasoning, which comprise pointing to a textual element, or a text, and offering descriptive terms that other scholars might ponder and agree or disagree with, based on what they themselves can see in the text. I relate to the same reasoning when discussing how well suggested voice concepts describe textual features in Carter’s “Lady Purple.” I state the research problem thus: “If voice metaphors are supposed to function as tools of some kind in the analysis of narrative [sic], it seems appropriate to test them against empirical material to see how well they correlate with the object” (Sandberg 2018: 165). The “test” is to compare a term imbued with specific denotations with textual elements that readers probably would perceive as “voice” or “vocal” in some sense and see how well they go together. The idea is that “voice” – if one accepts the understanding of narratology in, and consequences of, the radical versions of the critique – cannot be included in a theoretical model (of narrative or narrative fiction) consisting of fixed components; the term needs to point towards recognizable textual features.

In the introductory article, I suggest more broadly that the critique of narratology provides two options:

The first would be to redefine, qua Walsh, the narratological concepts to make them describe how actual texts function. The second, more radical change, would be to introduce a new vocabulary (a new way of talking with fresh distinctions and terms) either to mesh with or compete with the old one. With the latter kind of change new questions would be asked and narratology would be pluralized in a new sense. (Sandberg 2019: 31)

I have already discussed the first option. The second idea, “to introduce a new vocabulary,” however, implies that there is an openness to the difference approach that has made it possible for the critics to present different alternatives. To create or loan vocabularies is also not directly opposed to what narratologists do, according to common descriptions of postclassical narratology. It is, for instance, held that impetuses from postcolonialism,
gender studies, psychology, et cetera have been incorporated into the study of narrative. Alber and Fludernik refer in this context to the “reorientation” of a field taking in new influences (2010: 2). The assumed reorientation is connected with the focus on how that putative object, narrative, is steeped in culture and replete with ideology. However, if the study object were not narrative in general but narrative fiction, the focus would be on how works like novels and short stories are similarly steeped and replete. I attempt to get at this aspect of the difference approach when discussing the ideological bearings of Stridsberg’s Drömfakulteten in relation to the notion of affordances. This notion should be seen as a loan from the psychology of perception given a new sense in the context of literary analysis. Yet concepts from non-narratological literary theory, which purportedly describe what scholars have encountered in literary works, might also be used, or re-used, together with the psychological and narratological terms.

The radical critics of narratology state that narratology as a theory of narrative fiction does not describe what can be seen in actual novels and short stories and is therefore inaccurate. Instead, the reasoning goes, narratology describes another language game, often presented as narrative as such. The issue becomes how to handle the particular language game of narrative fiction. Adherents of the difference approach attempt to consistently describe works like novels and short stories on the basis of what can be seen in the text, and when doing so they relate to narratological terms and other terms that they prefer.

5.3 Evaluative Remarks

What are the potential shortcomings of the thesis? What are its main positive contributions? Thankfully, some critical responses to the first two articles help me, to begin with, to identify possible weaknesses in my reasoning about, and conceptualization of, the salient entities. The opposition between the sameness approach and the difference approach might, for instance, be seen as too sharp. It might perhaps also be argued that it is not settled what it actually entails to understand narrative fiction as a distinct language use.

In this section, I will attempt to respond to such criticisms and speculate about how the critics (esp. Patron, Skalin, and Walsh) would tackle some problems that surface in this context. I will, when discussing the thesis, not refer to the critique from Hatavara and Hyvärinen (2019), which I have already responded to in an article (Andersson and Sandberg 2019). The present concern is instead another text, written by Hyvärinen (2019) alone.
I shall briefly take up what I hold are the critique’s most important points; these include the accusation that the idea of a sameness approach in narratology is a straw man and, related to this, that the understanding of narratology is too rigid, or a simplification. Hyvärinen also suggests that the relationship between the non-fiction genres and fiction is not as clear-cut as Andersson and I have suggested that the difference theorists assume (cf. pp. 57–58 above).

Andersson and I tried in our article (2018) to anticipate the accusation that the idea that narratologists have adopted a sameness narratology is a straw man. We did this by clarifying that we do not think narratologists usually make interpretative mistakes as a consequence of assuming that fiction and non-fiction follow the same rules; rather, the common theory of narrative fiction in narratology lends itself to such “disquieting interpretations” (Andersson and Sandberg 2018: 248–250). Still, Hyvärinen’s point is that no one actually subscribes to a sameness approach that presumes that narrative fiction and other narrative practices are the same or that readers interpret different kinds of texts in the same way. However, while Hyvärinen seems to refer to the actual beliefs of narratologists, Andersson and I discuss a tendency in narratology at which the critics aim their critique – namely that the common theory of narrative fiction presupposes sameness. The tendency is to present narrative fiction in terms of a general notion of narrative that concerns the communication of events that have occurred outside the text, which is a characteristic of non-fiction (i.e., texts with truth-claims regulated by certain norms and conventions). We also illustrated how narratologists in the analytical practice oscillate between approaching narrative fiction on the basis of their theoretical model and approaching it as a distinct language game governed by rules that the scholars intuitively grasp. This, we suggested, means that one can deploy narratology either on the basis of sameness – which the scholars we refer to seem to do, though sometimes shifting to explain textual features on the basis of difference – or presuppose difference from the start.

However, Hyvärinen also seems to dismiss the idea that fiction and non-fiction practices can be connected with specific logics, or rule systems. The proponents of the difference approach rely on “problematic binary oppositions based on a functional reductionism” (Hyvärinen 2019: 57–58) and engage in “identity politics” (Hyvärinen 2019: 58). While “identity politics” arguably is an adequate yet mischievous term for the strategy I deploy in the thesis’s first article (2019) and Andersson and I deploy in the thesis’s second article (2018), and while it might be true that some scholars can be
accused of “functional reductionism,” the primary aim of the thesis, as a whole, is not to argue for the critics’ perspective. It is rather to describe, and point out analytical consequences of, the critique of narratology on the basis that it has not been thoroughly examined. A main result has been that the critique entails an approach to narrative fiction that seems to be opposed to (what the critics perceive as) the common approach in narratology.

Perhaps Hyvärinen’s problem with the articles he criticizes has most to do with their rhetorics. Even though he does not accept the notion that the rule system supposed to be valid for narrative fiction is qualitatively different from the rule systems of other narrative practices, he agrees with Andersson and me that narrative fiction can be referred to as a specific “language game” (Hyvärinen 2019: 71). This means that his understanding of narrative fiction is not directly opposed to the difference approach. Yet there is some unclarity in how Hyvärinen’s approach differs from my understanding of the difference approach (especially as effectuated in the Drömfakulteten analysis) when he says that narrative fiction might well be referred to as a particular language game but then also claims that language games are not “fully independent islands of language use”; rather, “genres and functions [are] always getting mixed in any language use” (Hyvärinen 2019: 71). Perhaps Hyvärinen just points to the fact that authors draw from different resources (or borrow, as he calls it a moment earlier, different “speech genres”) when composing their works, and that they also can have several purposes for their works, which is in line with the difference approach. However, I am not sure if that is what Hyvärinen means. In the view of some of the radical critics, those resources would in any case – when deployed by an author of fiction – be integrated into and have functions inside the frame of fiction. Put differently, they would be relevant in direct relation to the rhetorical aim of the author; they would become parts of a whole. The understanding of what kind of “communication” one partakes in affects the attention to and interpretation of both singular elements and the whole. This idea entails that narrative fiction in fact can come in different variants and have close relatives, although the discussion apparently concerns a standard type that usually does not give rise to confusion about what act or practice it is.

Another point in Hyvärinen’s critique that I wish to mention concerns the relation between what is commonly held as non-fiction genres and fiction. Hyvärinen states that the description of non-fiction as informative accounts (which relate “facts”), that Andersson and I (and also Skalin) refer to, is a simplification, suggesting that non-fiction can have more, and even
other, functions than being plainly informative. He here refers to oral storytelling, including real-time conversations (rather than, for example, established genres such as historiography) (Hyvärinen 2019: 65–66).52 However, Andersson and I allude in our article to the debate in the theory of fiction and narratology about how to demarcate fiction from fact, where it is widely held that non-fiction pertains to information (or truth-talk) and fiction to “non-actual” or “pretended” information. Our argument that non-fiction is commonly described as a primary activity and that fiction has a secondary relation to this activity bears, in other words, on a specific problem concerning the relation between two established categories. The salient question in this context is if narrative fiction should be viewed as an imaginative variant of factual narration (i.e., as consisting of works that are “made up” as compared to aspiring to “tell the truth”) or as based on the activity of imagining as such.

I will try to clarify this problem as I understand it since it also concerns ideas in cognitive narratology about narrative as a basic capacity for creating meaning. To begin with, it seems likely that there are common cognitive processes behind different narrative practices; from the perspective of evolutionary theory it would be uncontroversial to suggest that humans have abilities that can be used in a wide array of concrete activities. There might accordingly be some “fundamental” cognitive aspects involved in the discrimination of events and the ordering of them in time sequences or the infixation of experiences or self-images in plots with a beginning and an end, et cetera. To create meaning by “narrative” means can, if this reasoning is feasible, be given an analogue in survival behavior such as hunting or getting along socially. However, in some common theories of fiction (pretense theory in particular) the desire to recount events or life in, so to speak, narrative ways has the epistemological privilege over the desire to play with that activity, for example by imitating it. This places narrative fiction in a secondary relation to factual narration (which recounts “what has hap-

52 Neither the critics nor I would probably refute this, but a clarification might be in order. It is the overarching language game of non-fiction that seems to be the critics’ (Patron’s, Skalin’s, and Walsh’s) target and thus interests Andersson and me. That non-fiction is informative does not preclude that, for instance, a historiographer presents an anecdote or borrows some stylistic elements, like scenic presentation, from fiction in his or her work to inform the overall factual representation of a historical event. Neither does it preclude that a factual representation might be entertaining.
pened” on a general level, but perhaps also on a sentence level). If alternatively the use of imagination, or “play,” is acknowledged as having a freestanding function in human life, the issue remains as to decide what activity, narrative or fiction, should be given primary status when it comes to works like novels and short stories. The critics, overall, seem to lean towards giving that role to fiction.

What I mean to say is that making use of imagination, or playing (cf. “art”), might be viewed as a purposeful “parasitation” on direct survival behavior, but it might also be argued that activities engaging imagination as such enhance flexibility in, for instance, hunting, social situations, or, closely related to narratology, “our narrative understanding” (Walsh 2007: 8). The former suggestion presupposes that there are simple forms of storytelling that perform primary cognitive functions involving orienting the subject in an environment, and describes narrative fiction as an elaborated variant of these forms (pace Fludernik; see pp. 71–73 above). The latter suggestion instead envisions fiction as differing in functionality from other forms of storytelling, simple and otherwise, since the use of imagination to orient subjects in an environment is itself a kind of survival behavior, which perhaps competes with narration. Narrative fiction might perhaps otherwise be said to combine with narration to achieve its ends.

This reasoning leaves cognitive narratology with the option to suggest that there are common processes behind different narrative practices, but not that narrative fiction and other practices are equal as modes of narration. Also, cognitive narratologists would still be able to argue that narration comes in simple and complex forms and that some of these forms are primary and others secondary. If one aspires to say something about narrative fiction and would like to follow the critique of narratology, however, one would start with the category of fiction, as a marker for those imaginative, or artistic, works that are recognized as novels and short stories.

The different versions of the critique could inform contributions to the sort of issues just discussed. Moreover, it seems that the distinction between the sameness approach and the difference approach does not only demarcate what I think is the difference between the critics’ understanding of narratology and of narrative fiction – it also generate debates about the entities involved in the discussion.

5.4 Issues to Be Further Explored

As Hyvärinen’s critique makes apparent, the thesis holds openings for further inquiries into topics that have surfaced in the thesis but which have
One point that presents an opening for further studies relates to the fact that the critique that I focus on in the thesis has been put forth in a delimited context; its advocates mostly colloquize with narratologists and theorists known by narratologists. Critical voices have also been raised from perspectives outside narratology. McKeon (2000a) describes narratology from the standpoint of his own research area, the theory and history of the novel genre, and Andrew Gibson (1996) has presented a critique from a post-structuralistic, deconstructive perspective that might be compared with the notions of the scholars that I have discussed in the present context.

Regarding the critique that I have focused on, the understanding of it that I present in the thesis can itself be critically examined. Hyvärinen and Hatavara set out to do this. Such “critiques of the critique” are welcome contributions that might lead to greater clarity on issues regarding the critique as well as common assumptions among narratologists. I have not myself examined the chequeredness of the putative sameness approach (post-classical narratology is diversified in an important sense), but rather taken selected measures. It remains to sort out what scholars mean when suggesting that fiction and non-fiction create meaning in the same way and that readers – at least on some level – interpret all kinds of narrative discourse in the same way. Furthermore, what consequences would such “sameness” statements have for the analysis of narrative fiction viewed as a distinct literary practice?

Similarities and differences among narrative practices and in narratology itself could, to be sure, be further analyzed. This could include addressing questions about so-called borderliners that challenge the assumed boundaries between rule systems. It might be desirable to analyze similarities and differences not least since handbooks and introductions for students tend to present narratology as a unified framework whose (communicational) rule system applies to all “narratives,” including works of narrative fiction. At the same time, there are ambiguities regarding narratology’s status (is it a theory, a method, a research field with a common type of object, or a full-fledged discipline), object (is it narration or narrative in a general sense, and aspects pertaining to this, or is it more loosely what could be understood as storytelling practices), and aspirations. Perhaps these ambiguities cannot be resolved because scholars pursue – as they should – different research interests. It might then be so that narratology does not have a unified identity.
but only tendencies and more or less common interests and theories. Because of this disparity future handbooks and introductions should perhaps delineate narratology as a general area of research. This would be at odds with the argument that narratology is a discipline, as Meister (2014) puts forward, yet it would, at least partly, be in line with the common understanding of postclassical narratology as a diversified enterprise.

The most radical of the critics of narratology seem to encourage scholars to relate in a particular way to the specific theory of narrative fiction that is being criticized. Established narratological concepts and distinctions have a value, but how can they be used without accepting the foundational assumptions in the criticized theory? The general answer is that they could be used as part of a vocabulary employed in the talk of storytelling, yet with its notions and terms having different denotations in different contexts.

I will end this thesis on that broad note, glancing towards the issue of what vocabularies are suited to talking about narrative fiction. What role do different intuitions play when scholars offer descriptions of works like novels and short stories? Readers do, I think, often have a sense that there exists a world beyond the text, which the text, so to speak, represents. Yet they are also aware, I presume, that novels and short stories are written with a purpose; authors try to say or express something by linguistic means and draw from their knowledge of life as well as from literary conventions developed over time. What kind of theory is suitable for this object type? Should narrative fiction be approached as, for instance, storytelling, pretense, or art? There may perhaps never be final answers to such questions, but their discussion remains as important as literature itself.
SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

Denna avhandling består av fem vetenskapliga artiklar och en kappa som sammanfattar artiklarna och relaterar dem till avhandlingens övergripande syfte. Kappan innehåller fem kapitel: en inledning med problem- och syftesformulering, en teoretisk bakgrund, en inplacering av mitt forskningsämne i en relevant kontext, ett metodkapitel där jag återger hur jag besvarar mina forskningsfrågor för att uppnå mitt syfte samt en diskussion där jag drar slutsatser, tar upp eventuella invändningar mot mina resonemang och föreslår vidare forskning i relation till mitt specifika ämne.


Syftet med avhandlingen är att föra den kritiska diskussionen av narratologin framåt, med avseende på hur narratologer ofta har närmat sig narrativ fiktion. I mitt studium av narratologikritiken redar jag ut vad de utvalda

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kritikerna säger och vilka konsekvenser det sagda skulle ha om det implementerades i analysen av romaner, noveller och liknande verk. Särskild tonvikt ligger på att peka ut gemensamma nämnare i kritiken. Avhandlingen svarar på tre huvudfrågor:

- Vad säger narratologikritikerna om narratologins beskrivning av narrativ fiktion och, motsatt denna, om narrativ fiktion så som de själva uppfattar denna praktik?
- Varför har kritiken inte fått någon märkbar effekt på diskussionerna om narrativ fiktion i narratologin?
- Vad skulle kritiken, om den accepterades, få för konsekvenser för användningen av narratologiska termer och distinktioner i analysen av verk som romaner och noveller?

De tre första artiklarna i avhandlingen berör de två inledande frågorna och de två sista artiklarna berör den tredje frågan. Alla fem texter tar itu med delproblem som är aktuella i samband med den narratologikritik som jag intresserar mig för.

När jag diskuterar texternas teoretiska utgångspunkter i kappan noterar jag att det redan i den första artikeln framträder en central distinktion. Den ställer narratologins uppfattning av narrativ fiktion, så som narratologikritikerna uppfattar den, mot narratologikritikernas egen förståelse av denna sorts skön litteratur. Jag kallar det sätt som narratologin, enligt kritikerna, normalt närmar sig verk såsom romaner och noveller på likhetsapprochen (the sameness approach) till narrativ fiktion. Benämningen bygger på kritikernas uppfattning att de dominerande versionerna av narratologi betraktar narrativ fiktion som följande samma regler för meningsskapande som andra ”berättande” praktiker. Den kontrasterande benämningen gäller för framför allt Patrons, Skalins och Walshs påståenden; jag talar om dessa tre kritiker som representanter för skillnadsapproachen (the difference approach). I denna approach betraktas narrativ fiktion som en särskild praktik, eller ett eget ”språkspel”, som följer sina egna, historiskt kontingenta, normer och konventioner.

I slutet av kappan, liksom i en av artiklarna, diskuterar jag en invändning mot denna dualistiska uppdelning. Jag försvarar distinktionen och betonar att syftet med den är deskriptivt. Den fungerar både som en slutsats om kritikerna i den första artikeln och som en teoretisk utgångspunkt i de senare artiklarna. Kritikerna riktar sin kritik mot likhetsapproachen och företräder själva en skillnadsapproach, vilken framträder som ett alternativ till
narratologin sedd som en teori om narrativ fiktion. Alla fyra kritiska perspektiv har det gemensamt att de, till exempel, diskuterar textelement – eller vissa utvalda textelement, som hos onaturalisterna – som medel till mål.


Walsh kritiserar framför allt narratologins fiktionsteori, vilken beskriver fiktion som bestående av låtsade sanningsstående. Enligt Walsh följer fiktionsverk snarast ”fiktionaltetens retorik”. (Fiktionalitet är, enligt Walsh, ett allvarligt menat sätt att ”öva sig” i den ”narrativa förståelsen” av livet.) I detta framställningssätt används ”det föreställda” eller ”det uppfunna” för olika syften. Textelementen i fiktionsverk måste därför förstås utifrån deras relevans i en meningsskapande akt. Walsh är pragmatisk och söker omdelina narratologins terminologi till att bättre motsvara fiktionalitets retorik.

Varken Patron, Skalin eller Walsh accepterar tanken att fiktion är baserad på en sorts kommunikation av ett föregivet innehåll. De förknippar sådan kommunikation med texter med faktaanspråk och vill betona de specifika anspråk och regler som de uppfattar styr narrativ fiktion.


Efter att ha beskrivit mina teoretiska utgångspunkter presenterar jag de två viktigaste kontexterna som narratologikritiken ingår i och relaterar till. Först behandlar jag sålunda debatten om hur ”fakta” och ”fiktion” ska särskiljas. Sedan behandlar jag frågan om narratologins väsen, forskningsobjekt och vetenskapliga aspirationer. Jag tar upp vad jag anser vara centrala fiktionsuppfattningar anknutna till narratologin respektive till narratologikritikerna, liksom aspekter av narratologin som är särskilt relevanta i samband med kritikernas påståenden.

I den första kontexten invänder i synnerhet Patron, Skalin och Walsh mot tanken att fiktion kan förstås som ”åtsad sanning” eller som ”imiterande” en annan diskurstyp eller aktivitet – historia eller fakta. Fiktionsverk innehåller inte propositioner om en ”värld” så som i faktagenrerna, menar kritikerna. Det är därför ett misstag att i samband med fiktion tala om en värld som är som den så kallade verkliga världen men påhittad och möjlig att diskutera som om den hade en självständig existens. I stället kan fiktion förstås som signifierande, eller skapande en känsla av, en självständig värld (jfr Käte Hamburgers teori). Forskare med detta synsätt riktar sin uppmärksamhet mot verket som en syftesbämd komposition vilken så att säga
skapar världseffekter.

Emedan många fiktionsdefinitioner har filosofisk bakgrund finns det även sådana som utgår ifrån vad ord som ”fiktion” har betecknat historiskt sett. Narratologer säger ibland att gränsen mellan fakta och fiktion är eller har blivit oviktig och att frågan om huruvida yttrandet är narrativa eller icke-narrativa är viktigare. Narratologikritikerna verkar däremot utgå ifrån tanken att det de facto finns en socialt etablerad skillnad mellan fakta- och fiktionsverk; aktiviteterna regleras av olika syften, normer och konventioner, vilka är öppna för brott, tillåter experiment och kan beskrivas.

Jag föreslår i relation till den andra forskningskontexten, som berör narratologin som sådan, att den vanliga fiktionsuppfattningen inom berättarteorin är relaterad till ämnets tendens att beskriva narrativ fiktion utifrån idén om att det finns något gemensamt hos alla presumtiva narrativa praktiker och att detta gemensamma kan hittas och beskrivas. Centrala distinktioner och begrepp inom narratologin har därför delvis utvecklats för att forskare ska kunna hantera narrativ fiktion i termer av berättande generellt. Dessa distinktioner och begrepp, tillsammans med allmänna antaganden om berättande, har används som fundament i introduktionsböcker till narratologin. Ett viktigt argument som jag lägger fram är att detta fundament anses finnas kvar trots att den senare utvecklingen inom berättarteorin ofta påstås visa att forskningsfältet inte är enhetligt utan består av många olika teorier, metoder och antaganden om berättande. Kognitionsnarratologin är ett av dessa senare tillskott. Den utgår ifrån tanken att narrativa praktiker har det gemensamt att de bygger på nedärvda mentala förmågor, till exempel en påstådd tendens hos människor att skapa ”storystrukturer” i sitt inre, inte bara vid läsning av fiktion utan även som orienteringspunkt i livet. Frågan är hur väl denna tanke kan överföras till analysen av konkreta litterära verk.

En relaterad fråga avslutar min diskussion av för kritiken centrala narratologiska aspekter. Den handlar om hur bokstavligen de dominerande versionerna av narratologiska verkan på nedärvda mentala förmågor, till exempel en påstådd tendens hos människor att skapa ”storystrukturer” i sitt inre, inte bara vid läsning av fiktion utan även som orienteringspunkt i livet. Frågan är hur väl denna tanke kan överföras till analysen av konkreta litterära verk.

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andra artikelm med hänvisning till att skillnadsapproachen erbjuder ett enklare alternativ.


Den femte artikeln (Sandberg 2017) tar avstamp i tanken att flera av

I det avslutande kapitel drar jag slutsatser utifrån artikeldiskussioner. Till att börja med anser jag att min tolkning av narratologikritiken ger skäl till att beskriva kritiken som innefattande de två oppositionella ”approacher” som jag nämnt (se distinktionen ovan). Enligt kritikerna talar narratologin om narrationens allmänna regelsystem, till vilket romaner, noveller och liknande verk anses höra, medan åtminstone Patron, Skalin och Walsh talar om den narrativa fiktionens särskilda regelsystem. Fastän det tycks som om narratologer inte tar den generella beskrivningen bokstavligt utan använder den som ett analytiskt redskap så drar jag, tillsammans med Andersson, slutsatsen att en skillnadsapproach hade varit att föredra. Forskare som anammar den skulle utgå mer konsekvent från det regelsystem som verkar gälla för narrativ fiktion än vad forskare som anammat en likhetsapproach gör. Att jämföra romaner och noveller med en generell, eller ideal, modell över berättande, och peka ut verkens kongruenser och avvikelser från denna modell, ingår med andra ord inte i skillnadsapproachens metod. I stället betraktas *alla* aspekter av narrativ fiktion som kongruenta med, eller ”naturliga” inom, det regelsystem som gäller för fiktionsverk. Det är här viktigt att notera att Anderssons och mitt förslag gäller i kritikens omedelbara kontext och svarar i huvudsak mot problemet att beskriva enskilda narrativa praktiker rättvisande.

Med basis i de två avslutande artiklarna drar jag slutsatsen att vissa förslag för vad ”röst” ska beteckna i narrativ fiktion tycks vara begränsade till perspektiv som framträder i texten. En sådan begränsning, eller andra påstådda brister, är dock inte en anledning till att överge ”röster” eller andra narratologiska termer. Det finns fortfarande aspekter av fiktionsverk som det går att omtala som ”röster”, vare sig det rör perspektiv eller sådant som till exempel stil. Alla aspekter av narrativ fiktion ses ur skillnadsperspektivet som möjliga att betrakta som havande funktioner i en helhet. Det inkluderar röstaspekter men också okonventionella och orealistiska inslag.

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Narratologikritiken och andra kritiska röster mot narratologin kan undersökas vidare. Detsamma gäller likheter och skillnader mellan olika narrativa praktiker och frågor om blandformer, så kallade borderliners, som utmanar tänkta gränser mellan olika regelsystem. Det går även att fråga sig vad narratologins likhetspåståenden egentligen inbegriper: Hur relaterar det som anses gemensamt hos alla sorters narration till studiet av faktiska romaner och noveller? Vad kan narratologiska termer beteckna i studiet av narrativ fiktion? Det förblir också en öppen, och viktig, fråga hur narrativ fiktion ska teoretiseras. Utifrån vilka antaganden går det att tala om denna litterära praktik: Har fiktionsverk att göra med till exempel ”världar”, ”berättande” och/eller ”konst”, och i så fall på vilket sätt?
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