7 | Ideological Criticism

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The Bible, of all books, is the most dangerous one, the one that has been endowed with the power to kill.
—Mieke Bal (1991:14)

DEFINING IDEOLOGY AND IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM

The most complex problem in this chapter is also the most basic: defining *ideology* and *ideological criticism*. Definitions of ideology abound, and they differ widely on what is of central or marginal importance. Such definitions are, of course, never neutral; they are vested with sociopolitical significance in their own right, that is they are as "ideological" as ideological criticism itself.

Michèle Barrett provides us with a place to begin: "Ideology is a generic term for the processes by which meaning is produced, challenged, reproduced, transformed" (1980:97). Ideological criticism, it follows, is concerned with theorizing and critiquing those processes of meaning production as social and political realities. Found in various theoretical quarters and in different forms, ideological criticism's interests overlap, for example, with different forms of liberation hermeneutics, cultural criticism, rhetori-

cal criticism (see chap. 4), sociological criticism, Marxist literary criticism, reader-response criticism (see chap. 1), and ethical critique. For its part ideological criticism exposes three dimensions of the struggle present in the production of meaning: it reveals the tensive relation between the production of meaning and language; it highlights the multiple discourses operating within the text; and it lays bare the complex nature of power relations that produce texts, construct the institutional contexts of texts and their reception, and affect readers of those texts in their particular social locations.

Contemporary literary critics engaged in ideological criticism, including a growing number of biblical interpreters, draw heavily on the writings of the Marxist theorists Fredric Jameson and Terry Eagleton (see *Semeia* 59).[1] Both Jameson and Eagleton operate with a definition of ideology derived from Louis Althusser, for whom ideology is to be understood as the system of representations located in the everyday practices (especially the rituals) of a society. Eagleton speaks metaphorically of this system of representation as a "text" of the power relations of a society (1991:1; 1983:14–15). One of the tasks of ideological criticism, then, is to "read" this text. This entails paying special attention to the role of interpretation and interpreters within the system and to the various ways the text's system of representation operates to instanciate and empower particular notions of truth—whether individual, corporate, or transcendental truth—and particular values and actions.

Ideology lies at the very heart of the signification process. Employing Saussurean semiotics, Eagleton exposes ideology as a language-based phenomenon that bears in a special way on the literature of a society. "Ideology," Eagleton claims, "pre-exists the text; but the *ideology of the text* defines, operates and constitutes that ideology in ways unpremeditated, so to speak, by ideology itself" (1978:80). Ideology relates not just to the production of literary texts, but to the historical production of each and every signifier and signified within a society. This enables Eagleton to say about history that it serves as "the *ultimate* signifier of literature, as it is the ultimate signified. For what else in the end could be the source and object of any signifying practice but the real social formation which provides its material matrix?" (1978:72, emphasis his).

Also for Eagleton, ideology is to be explained in relation to discourse and power. Ideology is encountered in the discourse of every text—in both what

[1] Jameson might accurately be described as a poststructuralist Marxist theorist.

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a text says and what it does not say (cf. 1978:89). Literature in particular expresses and reproduces ideologies in overt and covert fashion, namely, through the conscious or unconscious appropriation of signs. Ideology, however, is not to be equated with a specific sign or a particular author's intended use of signs. It resides in the link that a society forges between discourse and power that empowers signification (e.g., in the reading and writing of literary texts) at its most basic level. "Indeed," Eagleton says, "'ideology' can be taken to indicate no more than this connection—the link or nexus between discourses and power" (1983:210). Therefore, it is not surprising that ideological criticism has come to be closely identified with the politics of reading or that the overtly political discourses of a society provide a rich treasure trove for ideological analysis. For Eagleton, politics (that is political discourse and action) and literature find themselves inextricably—in other words, ideologically—linked.

Central to most discussions of ideology and ideological criticism at present are issues of power and power relations (understood in personal, corporate, as well as societal terms). J. B. Thompson has said of ideology that it is "meaning in the service of power" (1990:7 and 20; cf. Eagleton, 1991:5).[2] Power must be associated here not just with issues of class dominance and what Marx calls "the economics of untruth" but with a host of other material relations as well, including sexuality, race, ethnicity, and gender (see Barrett, 1991:134–41; cf. J. Hillis Miller, 1988). From this point of view ideological criticism has as its primary purpose the task of exposing and charting the structure and dynamics of these power relations as they come to expression in language, in the conflicting ideologies operating in discourse, and in flesh and blood readers of texts in their concrete social locations and relationships.

Historically, literature enjoys a special relationship to power: "I mean more particularly those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power" (Eagleton, 1983:15). In the same way that people are implicated in the working of social order, literature plays an important role in the ideological operations of a culture, whether it be for just or unjust (or some combination of both) reasons. However, the ideological character of a society is tied to and reflected in not only literary texts but also its aesthetic productions which are regarded as "texts"—its art, architecture,

[2] Thompson maintains that to study ideology "is to study the ways in which the multifarious uses of language intersect with power, nourishing it, sustaining it, enacting it" (1984:2).

music, dance, and more. In post-Enlightenment Western culture in particular a special bond exists between the production of ideology and aesthetics. About this relation Eagleton says: "the text itself" is not to be thought of as "the production" as opposed to the "reflection of an ideological 'solution'" (1978:88–89). Eagleton here relies on a Marxist conception of art that regards art not simply as the reflection of the social order and its ideology but as a *producer* of ideology in its own right (cf. Macherey). Texts are implicated in both the representation and reproduction of ideology.

To say that all readings of a text are ideological is to insist that the act of reading is fundamentally ethical (cf. Siebers; J. Hillis Miller, 1987b; Levinas, 1994). This ethical force is present in Althusser's conception of ideology as a "material practice" (see esp. 1972:155–59)—that is, "the 'lived' relation between [people] and their world" (Althusser and Balibar, 1979:314; see Eagleton, 1991:18–23); the ethical question, therefore, belongs at the heart of the ideological discussion. Althusser's emphasis on the "lived relation" between people is meant to expose and underscore the differences and conflicts of these human relations as systemic and corporate realities, that is, something more than the individual person's actions and desires. As signifying *practice*, the ideology of a text is tied structurally to the ethical push and pull of interpretation. Ideological criticism, we might conclude, at root has to do with the ethical character of and response to the text and to those lived relations that are represented and reproduced in the act of reading. When it comes to reading biblical texts in particular and making sense of the ideological discourse, struggles and conflicts of the Bible, the reader is faced with the challenge of and responsibility for ethical questioning and action (Levinas, 1994).

Ideological reading, as we define it, is a deliberate effort to read against the grain—of texts, of disciplinary norms, of traditions, of cultures. It is a disturbing way to read because ideological criticism demands a high level of self-consciousness and makes an explicit, unabashed appeal to justice. As an ethically grounded act, ideological reading intends to raise critical consciousness about what is just and unjust about those lived relations that Althusser describes, and to change those power relationships for the better. It challenges readers to accept political responsibility for themselves and for the world in which they live.

By way of summary, Catherine Belsey gathers together a number of the key defining elements this way. As a signifying practice (and as part of the "language games" people play), ideology is "the sum of the ways in which people both live and represent to themselves their relationship to the con-

ditions of their existence. Ideology is *inscribed in signifying practices*—in discourses, myths, presentations and re-presentations of the way 'things' are—and to this extent it is inscribed in language. . . . While ideology cannot be reduced to language and, more important, language certainly cannot be reduced to ideology, the signifying system can have an important role in naturalizing the way things are" (1980:42, emphasis hers).

For Belsey, the experience of reality is fundamentally discursive: discourse shapes and gives expression to our common sense (1980:5–7) and to the real power relationships that exist among people. Appealing to Roland Barthes (1972a), Belsey contends that the way people ordinarily talk, tell stories, and relate those stories to their lives is one of the central means by which ideology is represented and reproduced. To learn what is ideologically important about a community or a culture, we need only listen carefully to the stories it tells and how it tells them. In Western culture, the stories most influential in shaping and producing its ideology are found in the Bible.

As a political and literary concept, then, ideology has enjoyed a long and complex history, and in the course of its career, the reception and use of this term has often been negative. In the index to *The Bible and Liberation*, for example, Norman Gottwald compiles references to ideology under two broad categories: "used non-pejoratively" and "used pejoratively" (539). Owing to Marxist influence, ideology has been narrowly defined in a negative way as idealistic political thinking grounded in a certain type of false consciousness about the fundamental historical realities of the world. In its broader, popularized use, ideology has come to be equated with the imposition of leftist politics, whether it has to do with forms of social activism or the narrow interpretation of values in texts. For example, the adjective *ideological* is commonly associated with "bias." In fact, in light of these associations the term has become so highly charged and diluted that some theorists have argued for the adoption of a different terminology altogether in order to refocus and preserve the heart of ideological critique: "we [need language that can] point with more accuracy to an instance that might previously be labelled ideological: a partial truth, a naturalized understanding or a universalistic discourse, for example" (Barrett, 1991:168; we will return to the issue of the "ideological" nature of ideology below). Reflecting the movement away from a concentration on the classic notion of class struggle and the negative identification of ideology with the mystification of truth that comes from the dominant state power, ideological criticism has in recent years taken a decided textual or literary turn, as Eagleton's efforts underscore. In raising the question about ideological criticism of the Bible we

are concerned, therefore, not only with texts, the ideology of texts, and the subjects of texts, but with the ethical demand to respond through critique to the material conditions of the lives of people past and present who have a stake in those texts. And as Erich Auerbach (1953) has so convincingly demonstrated, the narrative text central to Western culture's self-definition and understanding of the world is the Bible.

Hence, ideological criticism of the Bible entails the twin effort (1) to read the ancient biblical stories for their ideological content and mode of production and (2) to grasp the ideological character of contemporary reading strategies (see Schüssler Fiorenza, 1988). This is far from the disinterested objective exercise prescribed within certain positivist circles. In today's highly charged theoretical atmosphere, and against the backdrop of a postmodern condition where aesthetic, epistemic, and political norms are rapidly being transformed, ideological criticism is to be seen as a resistant act, a positive, ethical response. It is a critical action designed to expose cultural systems of power that shape the lived relations not only of readers of the Bible but of the vast majority of the world's peoples who in varying ways have suffered real poverty, oppression, and violence. Not all ideological-critical readings are transformative: some are resistant readings that work to alter present conditions for the better, while others strive to reinforce the present lived relations, the status quo. How are we to distinguish one kind of ideological reading from another? How can ideological reading itself become coopted? Who is to decide? How can biblical critics read the Bible ideologically without being coopted? What are the implications for today's postmodern culture of reading the Bible against the grain? What possible practical difference does ideological critique make in readers' individual and corporate lives? These are some of the theoretical and practical concerns ideological criticism brings to the foreground when reading the Bible.

IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM AND THE BIBLE: CRACKING THE SINGULAR VOICE

> Ideological commitment is not first and foremost a matter of moral choice but of the taking of sides in a struggle between embattled groups.
> —Fredric Jameson, (1991:290).

Today it is commonplace for literary critics of the Bible to charge historical critical exegesis with refusing to give sufficient attention to its own

ideological character. The simplistic (and ideological) appeal to objectivity, as opposed to subjectivity, no longer works as an adequate response to the need to disclose self-interest and value (Bernstein, 1983, 1992); the invoking of positive knowledge and the appeal to objective historical reality are elements of the value-laden gesture of modern scientific discourse (Aronowitz, 1988:3–34; Reiss). Echoing historical criticism, ideological criticism insists that each and every biblical reader comes to the text with expectations and preconceptions, with hope and imagination (Bultmann 1960). But going beyond historical criticism ideological criticism insists that every engagement with the text is conflictual: it produces some degree of struggle and rupture in what would appear to be the natural expectations readers bring to their reading of texts (cf. Wink; Clevenot). Totalizing universal and essentialist claims about the text are rightly regarded with suspicion: ideological criticism problematizes, undermines, and ultimately subverts such claims. Biblical scholars would be wise to follow the lead of feminist hermeneutics in this regard. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* observes: "feminist inquiry . . . deliberately articulates its theoretical perspective without pretending to be value-free, positivistic, universal knowledge" (1992b: vol. 2b:783).[3] When readers of the Bible dispute the meaning of the Bible, critical approaches—whether traditional historical-critical or feminist—expose their ideological interests. To employ a martial metaphor, today the biblical text is an interpretive battlefield in which power is sought by all and truth is claimed by everyone.

Even ideological criticism cannot exempt itself from the ideological struggle that takes place in and over texts. The postmodern condition sets the stage for a reading against the grain not only of those historical approaches that would bracket or deny ideology, but also of those literary and cultural critical approaches that would posit a singular, unitary reading of the Bible (ideological or otherwise). For example, Meir Sternberg argues that the Bible is an ideological text written in didactic style but with a single, unifying, nonconflictual ideological theme. Sternberg regards the Bible as "ideologically singular" in its values and ideas (1985:36–37). He summarizes his position: "Most significant, even where or so far as the ideological

[3] In a recent book on criticism edited by McKenzie and Haynes, the title of Danna Nolan Fewell's chapter is "Reading the Bible Ideologically: Feminist Criticism." Several questions emerge: Of all the criticisms discussed in this book, is feminist criticism the only ideological reading? Does an ideological reading imply or require a feminist reading? Isn't every criticism ideological? Is any criticism more or less ideological than any other?

and the aesthetic functions (or viewpoints) part company, the Bible recognizes no conflict between them, such that whatever is not all for the heavenly cause must be against it" (1985:156). The ideologically singular character of the Bible is expressed through its rhetoric (in its canonical form), which constantly teaches this one ideology. Sternberg's forceful narratological approach leads him to all but ignore the political side of ideology by imposing his own agenda—the need to chart a single ideology for the text. As a result, ideological conflict is ruled out for Sternberg because as omniscient narrator he imagines himself completely in control of his own reading (see esp. his chap. 3, "Ideology of Narration and Narration of Ideology," 84–128). Since the Bible has an ideology and because it is written in such an indoctrinating style, Sternberg remains confident that the interpreter is in a position to recognize both easily. But the cost of Sternberg's univocal reading is high: it is insufficiently self-reflexive, and, most important, it can not allow for conflict and differences among readers and readings.

This reading is not entirely surprising given Sternberg's fuzzy understanding of ideology. Ideology sounds vaguely like faith in a "flexible hierarchy" (composed of the trinity of history, aesthetics, and ideology; 1985:156). Whereas other ideologically sensitive readers, like Norman Gottwald, for example, refuse to privilege history over ideology or aesthetics, Sternberg wants both an interplay and a separation of these functions. He asserts, "literary theory has not yet fashioned the tools for making *poetic* sense of ideas and ideology" (1985:36). Here is an instance where the fear of Marxist theory, especially Marxist literary theory, leads to a one-sided statement. Sternberg's ideological criticism of the Bible is not ample enough to take into account historical (in particular, Marxist) and literary critical aspects of ideology at once.

Sternberg's position on the singular "truth claim" for the Bible raises a number of important questions about ideological criticism: Do texts have one ideology or several ideologies? Is ideology a hermeneutical construct that resides outside of the text, and if so where precisely is it? Does every text have its own ideology(ies)? Is there such a thing as a corporate ideology to be located in the canon of sacred scripture? What happens ideologically when reader-hearer-audience and text meet and converge? Is there an "ideology of meeting"? And the question that constantly hounds ideological criticism: How do these criticisms connect specifically with issues of social justice, ethical action, and transformation? Recalling Catherine Belsey, "it is the role of ideology to *construct people as subjects*" (1980:58). The important question that ideological criticism raises in this culture of

criticism is how does criticism—narrative, feminist, poststructuralist, rhetorical, and so on—make a difference in the texture of lived relations in a postmodern world today? How does criticism aid in affirming difference and encountering the Other as valued human being, as subject? Recognizing the constructive role ideology plays in cultural and literary criticism is of vital importance.

The notion of ideological singularity raises multiple problems for a postmodern reading that would be tempted to detach itself from history. To argue against the Bible having a singular ideology is not necessarily to insist on the claim that the Bible has multiple ideologies, that the Bible has an ideology at all, or even that ideology is buried in the subtext or deep structures of the text. Ideological readings do tend to focus on the texts that support their political agendas. But the ideological use of ideological criticism per se is a matter of extreme concern. It is incumbent on ideological critics to subject their approaches to critical self-appraisal to expose their own agendas, knowing all the while that it is impossible to expose everything completely. As is true with any reading strategy—but especially so for ideological criticism—the ideological rationalization of appropriating biblical texts raises the issue of the ethics of reading and the status of the many, often-conflicting voices that claim the authority of the Bible in their lives.

Like the ideology of a text, ideological criticism is not one thing, one way of reading; it is legion. It comes in many voices, speaks many languages, and resides in many different disciplines and critical approaches, including psychoanalytic theory, cultural criticism, sociolinguistics, subaltern studies, feminist theory, and deconstruction, to name a few. For this reason, the discussion of ideological criticism can serve as an important bridge between literary criticism and cultural criticism. In this respect it has some of the characteristics of a "criticism encompassing criticism." For many of today's critical readers of the Bible, ideological criticism is helping to forge alliances among discourses that are, in Bakhtin's terms, a *heteroglossia* or *polyglossia* but have shared commitment to transformation of society. In the postmodern context, ideological criticism of the Bible is one place where critical forces are converging with common purpose.

THE IDEOLOGICAL STANCES OF LIBERATION HERMENEUTICS

In critical biblical studies today, one important place where ideological criticism plays a central role is in liberation theologies and materialist readings of the Bible. The focus of our discussion henceforth will be on liberation

theology as a form of ideological criticism. Some of the better-known liberation theologies include: Latin American, Asian (Minjung in South Korea), Mujerista, African American, South African,[4] feminist,[5] and gay and lesbian theologies. Reflecting a perspective concerned with issues like class, gender, sex, race, and ethnicity, these "readings from below" attempt to interpret the Bible out of their own concrete political, economic, and social circumstances. This makes for great diversity—and a certain level of conflict and tension—among liberationist readings. Every liberationist reading is potentially different because, it seems, each marginalized or oppressed group can produce a liberation theology out of its unique historical context. The aim of this part of the chapter is to examine select readings of the Bible that openly claim to be ideological, some of which define themselves explicitly in liberation theological terms.

Whether Marxist or not, liberation readings find themselves constantly pushing against the boundaries of the text, asking questions that challenge the given social order by questioning its dominant myths, values (in particular, of the colonizer, of patriarchy), and practices. Liberation readings tend to state their political purpose and stance up front. We want to say again that those critics who prescind from talking subjectively about their approach are equally engaged in making an ideological statement—as Eagleton notes about nontheoretical readers who operate with their theory (see our Introduction)—for by not admitting their ideological stance they effectively reinstate, by default, the normative criticism. Liberationist forms of ideological criticism are important because they expressly declare the value-laden character of biblical texts and readings, which is a necessary first step toward bringing about transformation.

In the language of liberation, ideological readers are engaged in a hermeneutic of suspicion and a hermeneutic of survival.[6] Ideological criticism

[4] Some key texts in liberatory biblical studies include Sugirtharajah; Mosala; Ela; Ateek; Moon; Tamez; Pixley; Pixley and Boff; Felder, 1989b; Copher; and Weems, 1988.

[5] See Daniel Boyarin's statement in his review of Mieke Bal's *Lethal Love:* "Feminist readings, then, can model the ways that other suppressed subjects can 'creep in, and rewrite themselves back into the history of ideology' [*Love* 132], including gays, blacks, and Jews into European culture and women and Palestinians into Jewish/Israeli culture. To me, this is a most moving and beautiful exemplum of how to tear down the master's house without using the master's tools" (1990b:41).

[6] Schüssler Fiorenza offers that "a critical feminist interpretation insists on a *hermeneutics of suspicion* that can unmask the ideological functions of androcentric text and commentary" (1992b:785). See also chap. 6.

from this perspective is inherently suspicious, but not in the sense that the reader is cautious about taking risks. Reading and dealing with texts (especially the Bible) is always a risky business whether it be by the privileged or the powerless, risky for the knowledgeable critic or the ordinary reader. A text and reading that is liberating for one person or group may well be oppressive to another. Ideological criticism, to repeat, must ever be concerned with exposing the discourse-power relations wherever they may be found, especially those at work in their own readings.

Two biblical texts central to liberation theology are the Exodus-Conquest and the Cross-Resurrection narratives. By examining conflicting readings of these narratives, we will draw attention to the issues of inclusiveness-exclusiveness and the ethics of reading; in this way we will discover something about the ideology operating behind ideological criticism.

DECOLONIZING EXODUS AND CONQUEST: READINGS IN TENSION

> The peoples heard, they trembled;
> pangs seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
> Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed;
> trembling seized the leaders of Moab;
> all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.
> —Exodus 15:14–15

The stories of the Exodus and Conquest have been central to liberation readings of the Bible from its inception: Gustavo Gutierrez was one of the first theologians to apply the Exodus to the oppressive political situation in Peru (1973); in the early days of the American Civil Rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr., employed Exodus imagery to reflect the freeing of African Americans from the hands of the white oppressor; James Cone (1969, 1984, 1990) compared the liberating event of the Exodus to the African American response to white oppression and privilege; black South Africans relied on this biblical story in their ultimately successful struggle to bring an end to government-imposed Apartheid; Moon Hee-Suk Cyris (1985) cites the need to preserve the Exodus memory among South Koreans held as political prisoners. Thus, Moses' words to Pharaoh, "let my people go," have a resonance for oppressed and marginalized communities throughout the world. The Exodus narrative speaks to the common experience of suffering and the aspirations for life and freedom in all kinds of contexts.

The Spanish theologian Alfredo Fierro suggests that the Exodus event is paradigmatic for Christians acting in historical situations of oppression. He summarizes the Exodus theology this way: "It becomes an image and a standard accompanying one's revolutionary understanding of the time. In the case of theology, the Exodus is a symbol of throwing off the yoke, breaking away from established institutions, and evincing the ability of a people to fashion or refashion a life for themselves. They throw off the suffocating convenience of their age-old situation, lured on by the enticements of a new promised land. The Exodus symbolizes a theological grasp of history as the possibility for change and discontinuity, as malleable material in human hands, as a line of action based on the awareness that one has been liberated by God" (144–45).

A typical element of liberationist readings is the narrative identification of the context of ancient Israel with the contemporary context of the reader. But is the identification of the oppressed reader with the Israelites the only narrative possibility? Ideological critique raises a suspicious question about this dominant reading of Exodus and of the tendency to read these foundational narratives in just such a singular way. South African scholar Itumeleng Mosala warns that the liberatory text must be read suspiciously because those readings justified in terms of being the Word of God can become a dominant reading that excludes others. "The insistence on the Bible as the Word of God must be seen for what it is: an ideological maneuver whereby ruling-class interests evident in the Bible are converted into a faith that transcends social, political, racial, sexual, and economic divisions. In this way the Bible becomes an ahistorical, interclassist document" (1989:18). "There is no cultural document that is not at the same time a record of barbarism," says Walter Benjamin (1979:359), who reminds us of the risk of making any particular reading of the Bible dominant.

In the case of liberation readings of the Exodus and Conquest narratives, ideological criticism insists that we recognize the Bible as a conflictual site of multiple readings, investments, and historical experiences and that every reading has the potential of becoming dominant and of suppressing other readings. Ideological criticism, then, raises very pragmatic questions about reading the Bible: what are the lived relationships of the different conflicting readers of this text, and how can theory help us understand these different contexts? In the words of liberation theology: whose side are we on, God's or Pharaoh's? And which side is God on? Are there even sides at all? As readers battling for our readings how do we keep the question of

interests open and keep from silencing the text? Cheryl Exum offers this explanation: "The relation of reading to truth involves the issue of interests, and our interests determine the questions we ask of a text" (46, after Bal). Ideological criticism helps to keep our interests and concerns in front of us as we read. Or to put it another way, ideological criticism keeps reading from becoming sedimented and naturalized, even liberationist readings.

The effort to "decolonize" the Exodus and Conquest narrative is consistent with ideological criticism's aim to recognize the manifold voices and conflicting interests that must enter the exegetical fray. To decolonize is, on the one hand, to identify oppressive sociopolitical presence in the text and in the history of its interpretation in the dominant ideology and, on the other hand, to identify the liberating message of the text and the history of interpretations of the text by oppressed readers. As a bridge between the social and the literary worlds of the Bible, ideological criticism has the potential of leading toward a different hearing of the Bible's liberatory message by insisting we include indigenous readings that are not typical or natural.

At its best, ideological criticism brings out those voices that have been subject to suppression, marginalization, even exclusion and violence. Those familiar with liberation theology and its readings from below have perhaps identified with the ancient Israelites in the story, but what about the other indigenous voices that are there to be heard in this story? A Native American reading of the Exodus and Conquest offers a very different kind of identification and reading from below, an indigenous reading from a very different context that makes other sense of these biblical texts.

Native American Reading: Robert Allen Warrior Latin American liberation theologians by and large make a connection in these stories between the class struggle of the poor against the rich and the indigenous against the imperialist powers. The journey to the promised land serves as a source of hope and inspiration in a revolutionary situation, whether it be nonviolent revolution (King) or the violent overthrow of a dictatorship (the Nicaraguan Sandinistas). The cathartic effect or emotional release from the status quo of oppressed people in liberation theology is directly tied to the promise that "all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away" (Exod. 15:15) and that God has prepared the land for the oppressed. At the heart of the liberation reading of the Exodus story is the opposition of the freedom of the Israelites to the suppression of the Canaanites.

In "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today," Robert Allen Warrior offers a different ideological reading. Warrior asks, We are very familiar with who the Israelites are, but who are the Canaanites? His answer: They are the indigenous people of the land of Canaan who were eventually conquered and subjugated by the Israelites.[7] As an Osage Indian, Warrior provides a Native American liberation reading that is grounded in a very different experience than the normative liberationist readings of the Exodus narrative. He relates, "The obvious characters in the story for Native Americans to identify with are the Canaanites, the people who already lived in the promised land" (262). The Canaanites and the Canaanite side of the story have not been told. Not only were the Canaanites destroyed in the biblical text; they have been erased from the reconstruction of these biblical stories altogether. Warrior's concern here is to raise the question about the presentation-representation of the Canaanites in the narrative (262) and their role within the stories of the Exodus and Conquest.

This liberatory text is therefore not nearly as hospitable to the Canaanites as to the Israelites. Warrior centers attention on the biblical passages that emphasize the deliverer-warrior Yahweh who will destroy the Canaanites and all other indigenous people (Deut. 7:1–2). The language, culture, religion, and heritage of the Canaanites are seen as the negative "other," foreign and thus dangerous and to be avoided at all costs. Warrior sees this "interreligious praxis" as deadly to the Canaanites because the God of the Israelites is the destroyer of the Canaanites: "They were assimilated into another people's identity and the history of their ancestors came to be regarded as suspect and a danger to the safety of Israel. In short, they were betrayed" (264).

Warrior makes the hermeneutical and historical point that the myth of the chosen people and the Exodus and Conquest narratives provided the Puritans and other European settlers in North America with a biblical text whose particular ideological reading justified the destruction of indigenous peoples. Warrior concludes, "As long as people believe in the Yahweh of deliverance, the world will not be safe from Yahweh the conqueror" (265). The god of the oppressor is not to be trusted. The dominant reading of the

[7] Edward Said also reads from a Canaanite perspective in his review of Michael Walzer's *Exodus and Revolution*. This reading has been adopted by Rob Nixon to interpret the apartheid story in South Africa: "The Exodus narrative and its New Testament analogues have a hold on the imaginings of Afrikaans and African nationalism alike" (1991:48).

text by the oppressed in this case proves to be dangerous—oppressive—for indigenous peoples. Warrior's Native American liberation reading serves as a critique of the normative character of liberationist readings of Exodus by suspiciously searching out his own specific culture and experiences for an understanding of liberation that is suppressed by the dominant reading strategy.

Warrior's reading shows that the ideology of one liberation reading has paradoxically become the dominant ideology against which another liberation reading reacts. The oppressed have reversed roles and become the oppressors. Warrior's reading also reveals the "strategies of containment" (Jameson) used in liberation readings that make it possible to ignore and even erase the voices and history of the Canaanites. The Exodus and Conquest narratives, therefore, serve up more than historical and archaeological contradictions. They expose the interpretive contradictions and tensions inherent within liberation exegesis and the dangers of an ideological reading that does not recognize in itself multiple and heterogeneous reading (Derrida's *différance*, see our chap. 3)—even reading against its own grain—as an essential feature of the construction of meaning. Multiple, conflicting stories are exposed through an open ideological reading, and Warrior's linking of Native Americans with the indigenous Canaanites is one way to distill yet another voice and experience.

To use Belsey's poststructuralist terms, ideological critique serves as an important critical tool for *decentering* the reading subject and the subject matter being read. This means first recognizing the privileged identification made between the reader's interest and the narrative and then deliberately shifting that identification to allow for the text to be a text "for" another reader and reading experience. Here we see the ethical character of ideological reading of the Bible emerge. It is tied to efforts to expose the structures of power and containment that operate not just for their reading, but for all readings, including liberationist ones. This way the endless cycle of revolution and the binary oppositions or dualisms that ever-link oppressed and oppressor are exposed, revealed, and, we hope, transformed in accordance with the central message of liberation the text transmits. At the same time, an ideological reading may force readers to face up to another aspect of the text, in this case its holy war ideology. However liberatory the Bible may be, it is also, as the feminist critic Mieke Bal says, a text that kills (1991). Warrior's reading of the Exodus narrative leaves us wondering whether in the ideology of Exodus Israelites can be free only if the Canaanites "melt away."

A Sociopolitical Reading of the Exodus: Norman Gottwald A Native American reading of the Exodus and Conquest stories serves as a critique and ideological counterpoint to traditional liberationist readings. A reading like Warrior's, which begins from another place, calls the dominant readings into question and forces into the open the question of accountability. Focusing on the Canaanites as a people displaced from the land (and narrative) by the Israelites by means of a holy war ideology demonstrates that an absolute privileging of the Israelites, while understandable, is to be resisted. The ideological character of the flight of the slaves from their Egyptian oppressors and the conquering of the land of Canaan and the setting up of a new nation of Israel, which are elements in the fiction of revolution, now begs reexamination. What is hidden and suppressed here? Can we identify the ideology(ies) of ancient Israel? Are those investments written into the biblical narrative, and if so at whose cost?

The biblical narrative preserves an ideology that invites identification with the Israelites. An important reader in search of this ideology is Norman Gottwald. He sets out to describe this ideology without placing a value judgment on whether it is true or false. Gottwald's interest lies in showing how ancient Israelites understood their existence and the ways they organized themselves in light of their perception and memory of certain social and class conflicts.

Gottwald's proposes a peasant-revolt model that attempts to factor into account both the hermeneutics of liberation theology and the Marxist analysis of class and class struggle. The elements of Gottwald's critical framework are drawn from sociology, cultural anthropology, literary criticism, and a Marxist analysis of history. Within the model that he develops the Exodus narrative serves a double function as both *event* and *process:* Exodus as event designates the flight from Egypt through the settlement in Canaan; Exodus as process marks the movement "from a collective life determined by others to a collective life that is self-determined" through "social and political revolution" (1989:253). Gottwald calls for the acknowledgment of the "nonhistoriographic nature of the traditions" of the Exodus that derive from exilic and postexilic times (253–54). All that can be said historically about the Exodus is summarized by Gottwald this way: "Whatever happened in Egypt, Israel sprang to birth in Canaan in the approximate sociohistorical manner attested in the exodus traditions: by resistance to state oppression and by a bold bid for self-determination" (254). The Exodus is "a divine-human collaboration in social revolution" (259). The broad cate-

gories of class consciousness and struggle developed here are consistent with the popular liberation readings of the Exodus and with liberation hermeneutic, but his analysis differs in the extent to which it pays careful attention to the competing sociohistorical realities that are reflected in the biblical narratives.

Gottwald delineates four "horizons" or "moments" expressed in the biblical stories: "Horizon no. 1 is that of the hypothetical participants in the events reports" (254); "Horizon no. 2 is that of the Israelite social revolutionaries and religious confederates in the highlands of Canaan in the twelfth and eleventh centuries" (255); "Horizon no. 3 is that of Israelite traditionists in monarchic times who conceive Israel of the exodus experience as an essentially national entity in transit toward its secure establishment as a state of Canaan" (256–7). "Horizon no. 4 is that of the late exilic and postexilic restorers of Judah as a religious and cultural community that had lost its political independence" (257). By assessing the Exodus in terms of these four horizons or moments, the textual levels and contradictions come to the surface. The bottom line is also exposed, namely, that God liberated the Israelites and had special plans and a special place for them. The authority of God in the Exodus is central, whether or not Israel was armed against the Egyptians or whether Jericho was a walled city in the twelfth century B.C.E.

Accordingly, Gottwald's peasant-revolt model centers on an ideology of class consciousness and revolt. Gottwald posits a peasant farming situation comparable to serfdom, with Canaanite overlords and Egyptian pharaohs overseeing the overlords. Peasant Israelites and Canaanites joined forces to revolt against the feudal system. The *'apiru* were mercenary rebels who added to the class warfare. It is Israel's response to the cultural systems of Egypt and Canaan, therefore, that serves as the basis for the ideology of the biblical narratives.

In Gottwald's model ideology means "the consensual constitutive concepts and attitudes of early Israel" (1979:65). These attitudes include the religious beliefs and theology of ancient Israel in the realm of its larger social world and the interrelationships of Israel with other cultural systems. For Gottwald, the ideology of ancient Israel is "the consensual religious ideas which were structurally embedded in and functionally correlated to other social phenomena within the larger social system . . . and also to define and energize the Israelite social system oppositionally or polemically over against other social systems" (1979:66). What Gottwald shows so persuasively is that the ideology of holy war *and* liberation are woven together into

the fabric of the Exodus and Conquest narratives. For Gottwald the ideological function of these narratives in the life of ancient Israel is multiple—not singular—and in their complexity they are integral parts of the overall religious system.

It is important to note that Gottwald enlarges the common definition of ideology that operates within much liberation theology to include elements of Marxist theory. For many liberationists, ideology is synonymous with "theology" (see Hardegree, 99). In reaction, Juan Luis Segundo returns to the Greek root of the word *ideology* to find *idea*. For Segundo, "Ideology, then, would be the systematization of my perception of the real" (16). Gottwald borrows this positive definition for his work. Ideology is one feature of the theological discourse, but not co-terminus with it. As Henri Mottu puts it, the discourse of ideology in the Bible is "cultural formation" and "cultural production" to be distinguished from theology (241). Ideology develops out of relationships formed in and from a particular culture.

The Exodus and Conquest stories are deeply embedded narratives in the historical memory, imagination, and social experience of the ancient Israelites. The subject who is addressed by the ideology of the Exodus and Conquest—both the individual and corporate subject—is shaped by these narratives and their ideology. Belsey argues (in agreement with Althusser): "The destination of all ideology is the subject (the individual in society) and it is the role of ideology to *construct people as subjects*" (1980:58; see Eagleton, 1990a:87). Ideology and the aesthetic are directed to the subject who is supposed to "know" and understand the inner workings and messages of the text. To translate these theoretical terms into biblical ones, the Exodus reader is confronted with an imagined group of Hebrew slaves who escaped or fought their way to freedom from the oppressive Egyptian Pharaohs. They were led by the stronger warrior god Yahweh and Yahweh's servant Moses into the wilderness and later into Canaan. Victorious, they were blessed when obedient and struck down when disobedient. On the whole, this ideology shapes and gives supports to a "centered subject" who is "reassuringly pliable." The traditional reading of the history of ancient Israel inscribes an ideology that supports a certain group of male warriors who are faithful to Yahweh. One of the ways Gottwald speaks of this imagining is in terms of the "ideological impulse" of the so-called Deuteronomic Historian. But we must remember that the ideology of Exodus is a system, which is complex and permits multiple responses. The inequities of this ideological system we have already discussed in our treatment of Robert Warrior, who

imagines an alternative ideological response to the Canaanite presence (or better, absence) in the text.

Gottwald's interdisciplinary approach makes an important appeal and contribution to ideological criticism grounded in sociological methodology. His particular combination of liberationist and materialist concerns reflects upon the complex ideological character of the biblical narrative and of the need for an ideological criticism that is subtle and flexible. What Gottwald has not concentrated on in his analysis, however, is the determinant of race. Turning to African American biblical hermeneutics we will see how the combination of liberation and race set the stage for a different ideological reading.

African American Biblical Hermeneutics Another example of liberation reading of the Exodus narrative is found in the writings and preaching of African American theologians. The Exodus is a central motif in the recent collection of the writings of African American biblical scholars entitled *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*. Clarice Martin explains: "In light of the socially restricting and often brutalizing forces to which African Americans have been subjected psychologically, socially, economically, and politically, it is not at all surprising that they could identify with the struggles and the victory of the Israelites" (1991:226; see also, Wimbush, 1991:91). The basic thrust of this volume is to recover the African-centered parts and players of the biblical text. A *politics of omission* (Martin's term) has operated in the dominant readings of the Exodus story; like Native Americans, Africans (and Africa) have been read out of the text, but for different reasons.

Charles Copher seeks to recover the African presence in the Exodus narrative (1991:155). Of the main characters—Moses, Zipporah, Aaron, and Miriam—Copher argues that "the issue was hardly one of black color, for all of them were black" (156). He bases his argument on several factors: "the three definitions of black/Negro; scholarly opinion that views Moses' family as of Nubian origin; and the existence of Cushites in Asia as well as in Africa" (1991:156, n. 23). The implications of his reading are far-reaching, for it forces into the foreground consideration of the ideological character of white Eurocentric (and sometimes white supremist) exegesis against which it stands in stark contrast.

For the most part, issues of power and control, rather than those of inclusivity and liberation, dominate reading within the academy today. The

politics of omission that characterizes much of academia takes many forms: from maps that omit North Africa and the Sudan and Ethiopia to a passing over of race and ethnicity when reading biblical characters who come from Africa. African American biblical hermeneutics makes the omission of race and ethnicity a central concern as it rereads and reconstructs the biblical narratives and its racist interpretive history.

Some womanist biblical scholars also engage in reconstructive work on the biblical text in the effort to recover the lives and voices of African women in the narrative. With respect to the Exodus, the focus is on the female characters: the Hebrew midwives, Shiprah and Puah (Exod. 1:8–22); the daughter of Pharaoh, Bithiah; the mother of Moses, Miriam; the women who danced (Exod. 15:20–21); and Zipporah. In Renita Weems's womanist ideological reading entitled "The Hebrew Women Are Not Like the Egyptian Women: The Ideology of Race, Gender, and Sexual Reproduction in Exodus 1," she locates conflict between masters and slaves in the story of the Hebrew midwives who confront Pharaoh. From her perspective, "biblical texts take sides in ideological debates, debates which usually center around issues of power where literature becomes a form of public discourse seeking either to challenge or defend the way in which people are socially constituted" (1992:25). The way women and slaves were treated—how race, gender and power interconnect in the reading of Exodus—is both a past and present concern for African American biblical hermeneutics.

Weems reads Exodus with an Eagletonian-Althusserian understanding of ideology as material production. Her goal is to identify the codes of race and gender embedded in the text and rooted in the matrices of social and political production. A power struggle is taking place in the text: "the story pivots around the threat that Israel's religious heritage (e.g., 'be fruitful and multiply') presents to Egyptian hegemony. Here, obedience to the Hebrew god stands in sharp opposition to obedience to Egyptian power" (29). And the women stand in opposition to male power. Weems notes that the concept of difference is at the heart of the Exodus 1 narrative—difference of gender, race, and social class. The ideology and rhetoric of the text are linked for Weems (as for Sternberg) in that the text exhorts and pushes the reader-audience to act. She calls for careful consideration in applying the gender ideology of the Exodus to women in particular, since women do not benefit in terms of rank as a result of liberation from slavery. Weems's reading demonstrates the weakness of an ideological criticism that ignores or isolates issues of gender, race, ethnicity, or class from one another. To do so

would be to deny the complex nature of social identity and relationships both with respect to the persons in the narrative and the readers of the biblical narrative.

Contemporary Jewish Biblical Hermeneutics Almost by default liberation theology is regarded as a Christian interpretive issue. Contemporary Jewish voices, in particular, are virtually absent from the discussion of the Exodus as a liberating paradigm. Why that is so is an interesting interpretive issue. One important exception is Michael Walzer, who is involved in the hermeneutics of Exodus: "The study of the Bible leads to a view of political action as a kind of communal performance: what happened in Egypt and at Sinai provides a precedent for early modern (and present-day) efforts to mobilize men and women for a politics without precedent in their own experience" (1985:90). In his political study of the Exodus, Walzer holds these presuppositions: (1) that wherever you live, it is probably Egypt; (2) that there is a better place, a world more attractive, a promised land; and (3) that "the way to the land is through the wilderness." There is no way to get from here to there except by joining together and marching (149). In short, the Exodus event is about revolution. And any serious consideration of the story, any committed retelling is also about revolution and positive social change.

Walzer's reading brings us to ask, who and where are contemporary Jews in the discussion about Exodus theology? Bringing the text to the present day, Conservative Jewish theologian Marc Ellis notes this gap in the conversation and also the great irony in the Israeli government's failure to draw on its ancient memory, texts, and responsibility to do the right thing in relation to the "Palestinian problem." For Ellis, the modern Canaanites are the Palestinians, especially those living in the Occupied Territories in the land of Israel. And Ellis claims that the Israeli government (not the Jewish people) has become, paradoxically, the modern equivalent of Egypt. Jewish theology of liberation is grounded on the stories of the Exodus and Conquest, along with the prophetic exhortations. But what does remembering and acting on these stories entail? Ellis summarizes: "A new Jewish theology speaks of a renaissance of Jewish life as well as its cost: Israel as an occupying power, expropriator of land, torturer of prisoners, and arms exporter. The return to Israel may be our ideology; a new Jewish theology faces the fact that 75 percent of the Jewish people do not and will not live in Israel and that now more Israelis leave Israel each year than emigrate to it" (1989:379).

According to Ellis, the narrative roles have been reversed: the oppressed

have become the oppressor. The ideology of the Exodus means for Ellis and others freedom for all the ancient Israelites but at the same time the destruction of the Canaanites who dwell in the promised land. This ideology and its implications over the last thirty years have been deadly, literally, to the Palestinians. The recent peace accord signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, however, suggests that neither ideology or the ideology of a text may be enough to stand in the way of peace. The ideological voices of the biblical text must be allowed to speak their liberating message. At the same time it must be remembered that this message may not be liberating for everyone.

MARK AND MATERIALISM: READINGS IN TENSION

> When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachtani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" . . . Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.
>
> —Mark 15:33–37

Like the Exodus and Conquest texts, the narratives of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth also function as central stories for liberation theology and for other ideological readings of the New Testament. And like Exodus, the death and resurrection stories raise a number of questions: What is the sociopolitical significance of Jesus's transforming life and ignominious death? What was Jesus's political stance? Was Jesus a radical, a Zealot who advocated the violent overthrow of the Roman imperial government? Was he made a scapegoat for teaching against the dominant ideology? Or was Jesus an advocate of nonviolence toward the imperial power and others along the lines of Gandhi's *satyagraha,* truth or soul force? What is the ideology of Jesus as presented in the Gospels? And how has the story of Jesus's crucifixion been a dominant force in the institutional church and the lives of believers? In liberation theology, in particular, has the story of the cross and resurrection ever been oppressive?

A number of liberation theologians identify a fundamental class conflict in the gospel narratives about Jesus: Jesus is the one who heals and teaches the poor and is always clearly in tension with Jewish and Roman authorities. It is the dichotomy of poor and nonpoor that is brought to the surface in the

teaching of Jesus. In addressing the role of ideology in the pedagogy of the poor and the nonpoor, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire says: "Education involves power. . . . And there is the question of ideology, the ideology of power which seeks to reproduce and emphasize the interests of the dominant class, as well as ideology understood as a possible confrontation with the dominant interests" (221). Political readings of the Jesus of the New Testament that lift up the indigenous voices of the poor and oppressed (for example, the community at Solentiname [Cardinal]) find in the stories and life of Jesus and in the theology of the cross a symbol of hope for the revolutionary overthrow of the dominant powers (economical, political, cultural). Liberationist (and we can also say *materialist*) readings are intentionally in conflict with the interests of the dominant class, sex, and race.

The rallying cry for a materialist reading of the Jesus's narratives is offered by Kuno Füssel: "A materialist reading of the Bible means: to awaken the sense of the text as the liberating praxis of life" (1987:27). This statement echoes quite deliberately the apocalyptic call of Jesus in Mark's Gospel when he says to the disciples: "And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake" (13:37). Ideological criticism of Mark's Gospel reissues Jesus's wake-up call, although this time directed to today's readership. Notwithstanding the identification with Jesus's apocalyptic call, we must remember that the textual ideology is not singular but multiple: there is not an exclusive reading of the text, nor a single, definitive portrait of Jesus (as the Old and New Quests for the so-called historical Jesus have demonstrated; see Crossan, 1991). The ideology of the myth resists all monological readings.

The Political Hermeneutic of Ched Myers In a very focused and compelling way, Ched Myers utilizes contemporary social and political theory for a reading of the Markan narrative. Myers's interests arise from his work with the American Friends Service Committee and his commitment to peace and justice issues. He is one of several North American white male Christians attempting to translate liberation theology for first world readers in a first world context. Daniel Berrigan, Robert McAfee Brown, and Frederick Herzog are Myers's predecessors in this effort to use the privilege and position of their social location to promote the causes of the oppressed. Myers quite explicitly applies his own political interests to the reading of Mark. He admits up front the nature of his own personal, invested reading and the specific ideological agenda he wishes to pursue. It is an agenda that seeks to

uncover the effect the Markan text and our critical readings of the Gospel have on the lives of the poor.

Myers's ideological method is grounded in a Marxist reading of the problem of class struggle. For Myers, class distinctions in the Gospel of Mark are political (Roman occupation of Palestine), social (class conflict), economic (conflict over ownership of the land between the rich and the poor), and religious (the authorities and the disciples). Myers is not particularly concerned with gender oppression, although he finds models for women's leadership in Mark and even goes so far as to note that "Mark has offered critiques of three systems of power: political domination, patriarchy, and the family system" (280). Myers's main concern, however, is not to expose Mark's ambiguous portrayal of women (especially at the tomb), but to immerse himself in a political reading of the Gospel that reveals the Markan Gospel to be a radical political writing, which subverted and continues to subvert the dominant ideology, whether of the first or the latest Markan readers.

The line of ideological criticism Myers follows is one filtered through Marxist definitions, one he also shares with Eagleton, Jameson, and Gottwald. Myers locates himself squarely on the side of semiotic and materialist definitions of ideology, which allows him to speak of his preference for an eclectic approach he calls a "literary sociology" (26ff.): "I . . . am content to adopt definition 3a in *Webster's Third International Dictionary:* ideology is 'a systematic scheme or coordinated body of ideas or concepts about human life or culture.' I also hasten to affirm, with the Marxist tradition, that the study of ideology is for purposes of determining not only how symbolic discourse functions socially, but also on *whose behalf*" (18). Although his take on ideology is a broad one, Myers's aim is quite specific: to shake up North American churches by means of a revolutionary reading of Mark.

Myers's preference for the mainline dictionary definition of ideology is telling because the critique of his ideological reading is provided by other parts of the definition. Webster's *Third* also defines ideology as "visionary speculation: idle theorizing; often an impractical theory or system of theories"; "an extremist sociopolitical program or philosophy constructed wholly or in part on factitious or hypothetical ideational bases." The negative assessment reflects the negative reaction to early Marxist philosophy and stems from the view that ideology is idealistic, nonpragmatic, that is, the very opposite of common sense.

One of the most frequent criticisms of liberation readings encountered is that they are merely giving voice to utopian desires for a society that we know can never be implemented. Common sense tells us we must be realists; we know what human nature is all about—the poor will always be with us, as Jesus himself said. By this view ideology is something reserved for political extremists on the right or left, not ordinary people who find themselves outside the realms of power. It is this very commonsense view of the poor that Myers criticizes and exposes. He maintains the focus of his ideological reading on the ideology of the poor (and how the nonpoor are to respond) over against the ideology of the ruling class.

Myers's subversive reading of Mark corresponds to Mark's own ideology: here is a case where the ideology of the text and the ideology of the critical reader overlap. His reading of Mark is influenced by the need for a nonviolent but revolutionary Jesus who ironically suffered a violent death on the cross. Myers sees in first-century Palestine a situation of social unrest and tension, and Mark's ideological response is delivered by way of a story about Jesus that labors to unmask class relations and the ideology of the oppressive systems of domination that rule the lives of the vast majority of people in the Mediterranean world. By Myers's reading, the Jesus of Mark made oppression of people the central concern of his teaching and ministry. The logical hermeneutical implication is that contemporary readers should also make the poor their central concern. As to why readers are either so antagonistic or disinterested in the Gospel's poor, Myers would likely have to agree with James Kavanagh who suggests that "the depoliticization of the social subject is one of the major political effects that the work of American ideology as a whole helps to reinforce" (313). There is no better place to see this gesture of depoliticization than in the ways mainstream biblical scholarship and Protestant theology do their business. The Gospel of Mark, however, aggressively pushes a very different ideology.

However, Myers is not uncritical of materialist and Marxist hermeneutics in their appropriation of the cross event. Myers observes, "Here is where problems arise for the otherwise most promising advances in political hermeneutics: the disconcerting tendency shared by virtually all Marxist-oriented reading strategies to avoid or suppress the ideological and narrative fulcrum of Mark's Jesus story: his 'strategy' of the cross" (469). Ideological critics must be very careful to attend to the narrative and ideological strategy of the Markan text lest their own agenda—which wants to celebrate and is tied to an "imperial ideology of triumph"—dominate the text. Against the imperial ideology of triumph found in a number of traditional readings of the Markan cross event, Myers counters, "Mark . . . has given us narrative clues that identify all the apocalyptic moments with the one event of the cross" (391). The Markan ideology of the cross can be summarized in this way: "the world order has been overthrown, the powers have fallen (13:24ff.)" (392). Jesus's crucifixion is the central metaphor for a political hermeneutic of nonviolence—both past and present.

The Materialist Method of Fernando Belo Materialist readings of the Bible on the whole focus on the social class distinctions created by economic and political forces. For Portuguese scholar Fernando Belo (and Michel Clevenot in his summary book), a materialist reading of Mark is the type of subversive reading needed to uncover the social class conflict in the Gospel and to reveal Mark's Gospel as a politically subversive text. Belo's pathbreaking reading of Mark underscores the class struggle through an examination of Palestine in the first century C.E. The realities of slavery and social and economic inequities then and now influence, indeed dominate, his materialist reading of the text.

Belo's materialist reading is an amalgam of several methods combined for ideological purpose: semiotics, structuralism, sociological exegesis, and Marxist political philosophy. Relying on the structuralist Barthes, Belo re-reads Mark for its various codes (hermeneutic, cultural, proairetic, semic, referential, symbolic; see Barthes, 1974b), which structure the message of the text (91). These codes shape the political identity of the text with its powerless classes pitted against the elite and the Roman government. Jesus is the messianic liberator of the poor and oppressed masses. Mark tips off the reader at the very beginning about the messianic identity of Jesus: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the son of God" (Mk. 1:1). Mark associates Jesus with the early church (*ekklēsia*) and against the dominant state ideology of Rome.

Concerning the crucifixion of Jesus, in Belo's analysis the scene of Jesus' murder is central to the formation of Markan theology. Jesus' murder becomes a *death* in the Markan presentation; the cross is a predestined event that Jesus must go through with in order to fulfill the will of God and bring on salvation for the believers (277ff.). Jesus' scream from the cross (Mk. 15:37), which is frequently represented in Latin American art, signifies the oppression of the Roman system on the body.

Mark's theological discourse takes place on the political site of the *ekklē-*

sia. For Belo, the priesthood replaces the apostles in the second generation of Christianity, creating an *episcopal* site (282–83) in the powerless Roman church. Belo calls for the return to the kerygma, the message that is present in the text before the layers of institutionalized Christianity covered it over (288). Yet even this Markan kerygma is already tainted by issues such as predestination and messianism. In this way Belo shows that the Markan text is already from the beginning the result of conflicting readings and interpretations about the death and resurrection of Jesus. The effort to deal with these conflicts produced a softening of the radical praxis of Jesus' message and altered it to fit institutional needs.

For Belo the resurrection of Jesus is also subversive. "The resurrection can only be the fruit of insurrection.... It is when we accept the supremely materialist site of the daily violence exercised against the bodies of the poor, that we cannot fail to posit the affirmation-question of the resurrection" (295). The resurrection of Jesus provides subversive hope for the reader in the face of political oppression. In other words, the hope of resurrection lies in the practice of insurrection, namely, political involvement directed against oppressive state power.[8] This action is not a utopian dream, but a concrete act that links the believer to the realm of God and God's promise to the believers through Jesus. "The resurrection," Myers proposes, "represents the apocalyptic hope that the blood of the martyrs will be vindicated and the pain of the world healed, and conforms the call to historical insomnia" (408).

Although there are a number of places of overlapping interests and critique of Mark, Myers criticizes Belo on the issue of determining layers of theological discourse in the Cross-Resurrection narratives.[9] He accuses Belo of "avoiding the cross" by focusing instead upon the "theological overlay" of the narratives. Myers argues that this emphasis drains away the power of the martyrdom of Jesus on the cross. Once again, for Myers the heart of the Jesus story remains the cross event, which needs to remain central and connected to the whole Jesus story.

Myers also differs with Belo on methodological grounds. Myers is very suspicious of structuralism and deconstruction because he wants to posit a

[8] David Batstone also states this concern for the results of positive social change in reading the Cross-Resurrection narrative: "Though liberationists believe that the redemption effected by Jesus Christ has these transcendent and universal dimensions, they emphasize that these truths must nonetheless be mediated and rendered visible in concrete acts of salvation" (122).

[9] Compare the critique of materialist readings by Kuno Füssel (1984).

specific sociohistorical context to the Markan narrative. In relying on both the earlier and the later Barthes, Belo is viewed as being overly concerned with the sequence of codes in the text at the expense of the sociohistorical context. In spite of those differences, Myers and Belo are both convinced that they have discovered Mark's political ideology. Both methods offer sociohistorical-socioliterary approaches to reading. And both Myers and Belo are subject to their own ideological interests in promoting a nonviolent ethic (in Myers's case, Gandhian *satyagraha*).

Myers and Belo also identify ideological criticism with the theological task. It is a proper theological task to identify the ideological point of view of the text (plot, author, characters, narrator) and of the readers (see Uspensky; Moore 1989b:56–57) using a political hermeneutic, a materialist-structuralist methodology or some other critical strategy.[10] Myers states that "the proper vocation of theology is the practice of 'ideological literacy,' the critical discipline of political hermeneutics" (21). In Myers's liberation reading, Mark is "a manifesto for radical discipleship" (11) and an ideological narrative that leads to a new socioeconomic and political order brought about by nonviolence. For his part, Belo is keen to demythologize Mark's "theological discourse" in order to examine issues of class struggle and economic and political deprivation. Both readers incorporate what we could call a political christology (one shared with the El Salvadoran theologian Jon Sobrino) in their work, which attempts to arrive at the political implications of Jesus' death and resurrection for the first and the twentieth centuries.

Political christology is an aspect of a liberation reading of the life and teachings of Jesus and of the centuries of theological-ideological baggage brought forward with the institutionalized forms of Christianity. Political christology, central to most liberation theologies, has liberative power as the base communities of Latin America can attest. The suffering of Jesus on the cross represents the suffering that brings liberation from oppression. The messianic power of Jesus is revealed in the cross and resurrection, giving hope to the oppressed. While liberation readings of these narratives vary in terms of having a greater (Latin American) or lesser (Minjung) interest in Marxism and class struggle per se, liberation readings as a rule are united

[10] Boris Uspensky (8) defines the ideological plane of point of view as follows: "whose point of view does the author assume when he evaluates and perceives ideologically the world which he describes." Point of view belongs to the narrator, author, or characters in the story.

in their regard for the cross as a political event that is repeated in different ages and in different oppressive contexts.

Feminist Rereadings of the Cross Feminist liberation readings provide a different approach to the christological issue. With the tools of feminist theory Rita Brock and others move the critical focus away from the class to the gender implications associated with the death and resurrection of Jesus. They find in traditional sacrificial christology a glorification of suffering, which has served as the theological-christological basis for abuse of women. When Brock reads Mark, she sees "erotic power;" that is, the lifeforce (from Audre Lorde) that acknowledges and affirms all life forms. Brock's feminist ideological critique leads to a call for a "Christa community" (52–53), one that breaks with the patriarchal-hierarchical family-religious institution of mainstream Christianity as a way to create space where women are treated as equals. In the traditional Trinitarian understanding, which the majority of liberation readings adopt, the Father grieves over the death of the Son and through the cross knows the suffering of humanity (see Moltmann; Sobrino). Nonetheless, Jesus is a liberator because the realm of God about which he preaches is ultimately inclusive and empowering of women.

In the Gospel of Mark Brock finds the presence of people of "heart" and stories of "brokenheartedness." The miracles enacted by Jesus are described in this way: "Actions to heal brokenheartedness shatter old orientations to self and power and open fissures that birth erotic power" (74). Here we see a feminist christology at work, one that is ideologically self-focused on erotic power that will lead believers to heal the brokenheartedness of the world. The passion narrative in Mark does not tell women to be self-sacrificing like Jesus in order to be saved. Rather, Brock understands the cross to be saying: "The brokenheartedness revealed in his death is created by the political systems of patriarchal society and was neither inevitable nor necessary" (93–94). The death of Jesus on the cross is a tragic event that should not continue to be visited on the lives of women.

Still, suffering in the Markan Gospel has been read as redemptive, even with the political overtones given to the theology of suffering by certain liberation theologians who find the complete love of God in the cross event. Not every political christology glorifies suffering; in the death and resurrection of Jesus hope is seen for the future liberation from suffering (see Sobrino). But feminist scholars have pushed the issue further to examine the effects of the sacrificial theology of the cross on the lives of women. Joanne

Brown and Rebecca Parker represent one of the more radical approaches to the notion of atonement. They hold that if one accepts the view that the cross was part of the divine plan of God, then God is a sadistic deity. They conclude: "Christianity is an abusive theology that glorifies suffering. Is it any wonder that there is so much abuse in modern society when the predominant image or theology of culture is of 'divine child abuse'—God the Father demanding and carrying out the suffering and death of his own son? If Christianity is to be liberating for the oppressed it must itself be liberated from this theology." We do not need to be saved by Jesus' death from some original sin. We need to be liberated from the oppression of racism, classism, and sexism, that is, from patriarchy (26–27). The attention paid to Jesus' death diverts attention from that oppression.

In their analysis Brown and Parker move away from both traditional theories of the atonement (and the concept of atonement as viable) and specific gospel understandings of the death and resurrection of Jesus. They make a much longer hermeneutical leap than most liberation readings. The reason in part is that they do not find much that is liberating for women in mainstream liberation readings marked so heavily as they are by a Trinitarian understanding of the cross and its privileged Father-Son relationship. Oppression in patriarchal societies is to be measured in terms of the multiple systems of race, class, and gender. Although it may be true that the resurrection represents hope against death, unless gender considerations enter into the ideological fray in a direct and forceful way, the resurrection and the liberation readings of the Gospels will not speak to *all* oppressed within an unjust system. What we learn from the feminist contribution to ideological criticism through the critique of liberation theology is the central importance of gender and the need for a hermeneutics of suspicion that challenges and resists the gendered nature of past and present-day liberation and ideological readings. Like Native Americans and African Americans women ask whether the biblical text is not conflicted and at war with itself on this question of freedom from oppression. If reading is multiple, then the text can make possible a reading that omits, suppresses, even kills.

THE DISCOURSES OF RESISTANCE

Ideological criticism situates itself in the context of interpreting the Bible from points of view shaped by many different cultures and social and political locations. If it is anything, ideological criticism is an affirmation of dif-

ference as a principle that precludes univocal, singular readings of texts, cultures, interests, and ideologies.[11] In the contemporary context, ideological criticism is oppositional reading that calls into question, exposes, undermines, and transforms the strategies of power of mainstream white male Western readings of the Bible. One of feminist criticism's most important contributions to the debate over ideological criticism is its insistence that mainstream ideological criticism recognizes how it, too, can engage in politics of omission—in this case, *gender* omission.

Ideological criticism is a critical mediation between text and reader which contends there can never be a pure, ideology-free, uninvested meeting between text and reader. There is always bias: on the part of readers, of critical approaches, of texts. This holds true for ideological critics and ideological criticism as well: the ideological character of ideological reading is as necessary to expose and guard against as any other reading. Reading, as we have argued, is an ethical act that involves an encounter between reader and text, an encounter that is always situated within individual lives and institutional systems. This means that some readings are "better" than others. Better ideological readings are those that support and encourage positive social change that affirms difference and inclusion. There are also ethically mixed readings, such as a reading that improves the conditions of one oppressed group—for example, the status and power of heterosexual women in the church through ordination—but which at the same time ignores the specific issues and conditions surrounding the ordination of lesbians. Ideological critique lifts up the internal conflicts and exposes systems of privilege.

Ideological criticism in all its many forms is resistance reading. Resistance reading means different readings that resist the oppressive use of power in discourse. Resistance readings demonstrate the fundamental openness of texts and how meaning cannot be determined absolutely (that is, meaning cannot be decontextualized) but is itself resistant to ultimate or final interpretation. This is but another way of stating Bultmann's dictum that there are no presuppositionless readings of the New Testament. Resistant readings are always shaped by political interests. Dominant readings, by contrast, typically do not—or will not—admit to having political interests.

[11] In terms of feminist critique, the concept of *difference* works in three ways: difference between men and women; differences within woman and between women; difference as "a recognition of diversity" among women (Barrett, 1989:44). See our discussion of womanist criticism in chap. 6.

Some of the broader questions raised by these political readings of the Exodus-Conquest and Cross-Resurrection narratives include: Does the text or a particular reading of the text liberate? Does the reading bring about positive social change? Does the reading expose injustices of race, class, neo-colonialism, gender, and sexuality? Who is represented? Who is excluded? In other words, who is not there? Who is silent or silenced? We have taken the position in this chapter and throughout our volume that because there is no nonideological reading of the Bible, there is no reading of the Bible that is not political or that does not have political consequences. The tendency to see the ideological effort in neat, binary oppositional categories too often gives confidence that the political or ethical reading is to be identified without remainder with the creation of contexts of justice and equality, and unethical readings are those that support structures of oppression. This binary reduction of issues has unfortunately led to the outright rejection of ideological critical readings as too dichotomized (e.g., between the oppressed and oppressor categories of liberation hermeneutics), or it has lead to a kind of "scripturephobia" (J. Michael Clark's term) on the part of some groups left marginalized by a well-intentioned but narrowly focused liberation reading.[12]

If ideological criticism teaches us anything it is that language, categories, concepts, and contexts are not simple and single but complex and multiple, not univocal but multivocal. This is one reason why ideological criticism finds a home today in the postmodern context, which, as Lyotard points out, is a time of "many language games," many micro-narratives (versus "large" metanarrative), many micro-politics. Take, for example, the concept of oppression, which is pivotal for liberation criticism. *Oppression* is a complex term, as are the categories of "oppressed" and "oppressor."

Philosopher Iris Young offers the type of detailed and nuanced thinking about the term that ideological critics in general must be prepared to pursue. Young identifies "five faces of oppression." First is exploitation, which involves class distinctions and dominance and the unequal distribution of wealth. The second is marginalization, which means "people the system

[12] Take for example the dichotomy of "readings from above" that protect the status quo or Barthes's "essential enemy (the bourgeois norm)" (1972a:9) and "readings from below," from individuals and groups who announce their oppression. Dichotomies like this ignore the fact that a reader and context could be dominant in some aspects and marginalized in others. See, e.g., the relationship of feminist and womanist discourse (chap. 6).

of labor cannot or will not use" in work or other social structures (53). The third face is powerlessness, which has to do with people who cannot change their social situation or change the unjust system in which they find themselves suffering. The fourth face is cultural imperialism, which implies dominant and subordinate cultures. For Young, "Cultural imperialism involves the paradox of experiencing oneself as invisible at the same time that one is marked out as different" (1990:60).[13] The fifth and last face is violence, mainly systemic violence, which members of oppressed groups experience. Young's nuanced definition is sensitive to the way oppression evokes a variety of different meanings given the context and application of use. Thinking through categories in this manner helps protect against a reductionist use of language.

Ideological critics must also be prepared to acknowledge that what makes their criticism ethical is itself a complex matter not open to simple reduction. Ideological criticism is interested in examining the content and context of these various faces of oppression and their ethical significance: from modes of production in ancient Israel (Norman Gottwald) to decolonizing readings of the messianism of Jesus (Richard Horsley; Marcus Borg—Jesus as subversive sage). The power and privilege of the exegete-interpreter in part determines the ethical boundaries of reading, but the ethical is not reducible to the reading method or approach. Like meaning, the ethical exceeds the particular desire of the reader, the text, the context (see Levinas, 1969; 1990a).

As we have seen, ideological criticism of the Bible is often tied to theories of ideology because of Marx and Althusser. Other more recent understandings of ideology and ideological critique have begun to move away from the totalizing systems (based on the class structure) that Marxism assumes. For example, studies that focus on the mode of production in ancient Israel or the New Testament world are being reexamined to include a broader focus on literary production in which poststructuralist methods, including deconstruction, promises to play a very energizing role.[14] In addition, class, race, and gender are no longer seen as totalizing categories or systems but are

[13] For a discursive analysis of cultural imperialism through media representations, see Tomlinson.

[14] See David Jobling, "Feminism and 'Mode of Production' in Ancient Israel: Search for a Method" (in Jobling, et al., 1991:239–51), where he calls for an interdisciplinary method of sociological, feminist, and literary theories.

themselves seen as representing more complex structures and matrices of relations.

Among biblical critics engaged in ideological criticism today, the relation to historical approaches remains a concern. Meir Sternberg and others who have succeeded in finding a singular cohesive "ideology of the text" link that to an authorial intent. To say that a text has been overlayed with ideology or that ideology is buried in the text (and that a dig into the deep structures will bring it to the surface) is to point to the presence of an author with an ideology. There is a strong temptation here to think about ideology in redaction critical terms and associate the ideology of the text with "the theology of the author," which many postmodern readings of the Bible have resisted. David Gunn and Danna Fewell warn about the dangers: "Reconstructing the ideology of a text is a delicate process due to the complicated relationship between text and reader. . . inevitably. . . readers not only bring their own ideologies to bear on the interpretations of texts, but they use texts to push their ideologies on to others" (193–94), including the text's author. It remains to be seen how biblical critics will be able to wed traditional historical interests with newly self-aware ideological concerns.

In engaging in ethical readings, the method of ideological criticism is contextual: whether history or History (Jameson's term) is intended or the play of signifiers is the central focus. As Paul de Man understands it, "literature is condemned to being the truly political mode of discourse" (1979a:157). In biblical studies ideological critics are paying more attention to issues emerging out of the postmodern debate over aesthetics, politics, epistemology, and critical strategy, especially the strategy of deconstruction. There is a concern for the margins—the margins of discourse, the marginal of society. The emphases are different, but the concern for the ethical and political is shared.

Deconstruction is an important means for critiquing ideology. Ideological criticism is confronted with postmodern concerns—of culture, of theory, of the mosaic of human existence—and all of these concerns appear to have potential ethical and political consequences. Although disputed by many, deconstructive criticism offers a different way to approach the problem of the subject of ethical discourse in ideological criticism.[15] For Marxist decon-

[15] We are incorporating the definition of discourse used by Foucault: "discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (1979:101). Discourses are unstable and are linked to the distribution of power relations.

structionist Michael Ryan, "Ideology is the political use of metaphysics in the domain of practice" (118).[16] Ryan demonstrates that ideological criticism can incorporate deconstructive concerns of the text over against itself and read "reality" against the grain. Among biblical critics, David Jobling has shown a way to bridge the interests of deconstruction, ideological critique, and feminist theory (1990).

Thus, in the final analysis, ideological criticism is a limited, reductionist term for a much larger context of cultural relations and processes. Ideological criticism is resisting, ruptured, incomplete, chaotic, yet imaginative. The interpretive conflicts that are inherent in reading biblical texts create the context for readings that can decolonize, liberate, and continually subvert. Of course, this view of the play of interpretive conflicts is an ideal one,[17] and the reality is most often turf battles and ego positioning. How does something viable happen out of conflict? The decentering of the subject that occurs with conflictual readings is never simply abstract or theoretical. For example, curriculum and pedagogy are both affected by changing the literary canon. The inescapable social location of every biblical reader does not remain static when readers are interacting and engaging with each other.

Perhaps using the term *engage* or *engagement* helps make it clearer what we mean by the transformative nature of these interpretive conflicts. As the structures of power (of theory and of institutions—in both positive and negative senses) are exposed, so too the theory of ideology or ideological critical reading is exposed. The goal of social transformation is not really a goal at all; there is no static teleology in a deconstructive ideological criticism. We are condemned and privileged to listen to the lives and voices of others, adding our own voice to the discourse, just as this book adds to the various criticism and assessments that make up today's discourse about the Bible, our discipline, and our culture. The implications of what it means not to have a telos or a universal ethic or a transcendent truth, however, have not been sufficiently worked through by biblical critics. Ideological criticism is

[16] Paul Armstrong relates: "Psychoanalysis, Marxism, phenomenology, structuralism—each has a different method of interpretation because each has a different metaphysics, a different set of convictions that makes up its point of departure and defines its position in the hermeneutic field" (4).

[17] See the comments by Paul Armstrong (150): "Unless openness to otherness includes the possibility that the encounter might change our mind, we are not really testing our beliefs but are merely disguising our dogmatic commitment to them. . . . We need to create structures that make it likely that our differences will productively confront each other and not just sit inertly side by side."

certainly one of the theoretical discourses that is playing a role as we attempt to sort through the variations, conflicts, contests, disputes, and antagonisms. Continued engagement with critical theory in literary and cultural critical circles by biblical exegetes is likely to be more not less disorienting. We have but begun to glimpse the fullness and complexity of the postmodern context, a context that frames our aspirations to understand the role of the Bible, the purposes of criticism, and the political and ethical challenges embedded within the practices of reflective and responsible reading.

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

Barrett, Michèle. 1991. *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Barrett employs the thought of Michel Foucault to critique traditional Marxist definitions of ideology. She calls for a post-Marxist critique of ideology by exposing the truth claims of traditional Marxist theories. Barrett incorporates literary studies, sociological theory, and psychoanalysis in her examining the power claims of ideological criticism.

Belo, Fernando. 1981. *A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis. Belo utilizes a detailed structuralist approach to reading the Gospel of Mark. He formulates a "materialist ecclesiology" based on Latin American liberation theology.

Belsey, Catherine. 1980. *Critical Practice*. New York: Methuen. This book is a concise discussion of recent poststructuralist theories of reading. Beginning with Saussure, Belsey traces critical theories of reading for the "subject" or "the subject in ideology." For Belsey, ideological criticism is about discourses, ruptures, and representations of the subject in a text.

Coward, Rosalind, and John Ellis. 1977. *Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Self*. Boston: Routledge. Coward and Ellis trace the development of semiological studies in its philosophical, literary, and psychoanalytic contexts. From their theoretically Marxist base, the authors discuss ideology as representative of the practical action of a subject.

Eagleton, Terry. 1976. *Criticism and Ideology*. London: New Left Books. This book is a summary of Marxist literary criticism drawing mainly from the works of Raymond Williams and theories on the literary mode of production or the social and economic production of literary texts. Eagleton connects the concepts of ideology and the aesthetic and moves beyond the Marxist theories of Louis Althusser and Pierre Macherey in his detailed evaluation of literary texts.

———. 1991. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso. Eagleton outlines the development of ideological criticism in Marxist thought from Marx to postmodern theories of ideology. He lists many definitions of ideology and then shows how ideological strategies work in text, discourse, and society.

Goldstein, Philip. 1990. *The Politics of Literary Theory: An Introduction to Marxist Criticism*. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press. A summary of the "politics of reading" from structuralist to poststructuralist Marxist literary critics. Different reading strategies (including feminist and deconstructionist) are included. Goldstein argues for a poststructuralist approach.

Jameson, Fredric. 1981. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Jameson's Marxist theory of reading is a main resource for ideological criticism. Jameson traces the interpretive process from formalism to poststructuralism. Central to his reading strategy is a model of four levels (literal, allegorical, moral, anagogical), which are applicable to ancient and modern texts.

Jobling, David, and Tina Pippin, eds. 1992. "Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts." *Semeia* 59. Atlanta: Scholars. This volume of essays comes out of a Society for Biblical Literature consultation on ideological criticism. Articles on both Hebrew Bible and New Testament texts are included, along with a conversation with Fredric Jameson and a bibliography.

Keohane, Nannerl O., Michelle Z. Rosaldo, and Barbara C. Gelpi, eds. 1983. *Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. In this collection of essays ideology critique is read against the lived experiences of women and of different feminist theories. They point to the creation of new ideologies out of critiques of old ideologies and the need to be in a constant process of ideology critique.

Myers, Ched. 1988. *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis. Myers uses liberation hermeneutics and Marxist theories to reread Mark. Myers has certain liberal, church-political concerns in mind as he reads through Mark in commentary form. For Myers ideology is synonymous with theology.

Ryan, Michael. 1982. *Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. In a move from Althusser to Derrida, Ryan relates Marxist and deconstructive theories. Ryan's move is also from metaphysics to practice, and he shows how ideology in a text both stabilizes and ruptures meanings.

Sternberg, Meir. 1985. *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Sternberg's literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible is based on narratological models of time, repetition, point of view, characterization, and so on. His view of the Bible is that it is "ideologically singular." Poststructuralist approaches to the study of ideology (or narrative) are omitted.

Thompson, John B. 1984. *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Thompson uses history, philosophy, and sociology to examine theories of ideology. He includes discourse analysis and studies in hermeneutics (Ricoeur and Habermas) to reveal the function of ideology in narratives.

———. 1990. *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Thompson explores theories of ideology through an analysis of mass communication. Mass communication is one of the "symbolic forms" of power relationships, and ideology is a part of the struggle for power. Thompson looks at modern culture and societies and how humans interact through structures and discourse.

Warrior, Robert Allen. 1989. "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today." *Christianity and Crisis* 49:261–65. Warrior offers a Native American reading of the Exodus and Conquest narratives and reveals that texts that are liberating for some groups can be oppressive narratives for others. Warrior critiques Gottwald's liberation reading. For Native Americans the traditional reading of these texts for concepts of liberation, land, and God taking sides is problematic.

Postscript

The Postmodern Bible emerges in a world of competing discourses and global conflicts and connections. Readers of literary and cultural critical theory on the Bible will continue to face a multitude of methodologies and readings that give no promise of a coherent picture. When we first began to imagine writing this book, we thought we could provide a guide to the terrain of contemporary culture and criticism. What we now better understand is that the ideological gesture of providing such a map communicates the notion that somehow we know everything that is going on and can assess and communicate it meaningfully for someone else. The sense of distanciation and omniscience that the map metaphor suggests is the last thing we would want to communicate; it also is the farthest thing from the truth about what we are able to do. We do not have a totalizing vision of the field; it is changing so rapidly that we don't think anyone knows the where, when, why, who, and hows of its energizing forces. What we offer here is something much more modest and truthful, and we hope helpful: a text that reflects and reflects upon aspects of the world of biblical scholarship by ten women and men whose individual and now collective voices have entered into that cacophony (or heteroglossia) that is postmodern culture.

The voices of biblical scholarship in this book represent many possible