On the Theory of Narrative Levels and Their Annotation in the Digital Context

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ABSTRACT

The article was written in the context of a Shared Task on the Analysis of Narrative levels Through Annotation ("SANTA") which was published as a first draft in 2019. This revised version is based on further discussion on the formalization of the narratological concept of 'narrative level.' We firstly discuss the theory of narrative levels in literary studies, secondly derive features for the identification of narrative levels and finally develop guidelines for their annotation. An essential finding of the theoretical work lies in connecting the concept of 'narrative level' to the narrator. By identifying different types of narrators, we are able to enumerate and categorize different scenarios for the emergence of new levels in narrative texts. Hereby, the article does not remain restricted to prototypical cases, but also deals with rare and problematic cases. Overall, our goal is to provide a theoretical reflection on narrative levels and to create accurate guidelines for its recognition. The method of approaching the phenomenon through annotation has proven to be extremely fruitful particularly in identifying the boundaries of the narrative levels.

Preliminary Remarks

Since our participation in the *Shared Task on the Analysis of Narrative Levels Through Annotation* we have reflected on several terms and concepts. More than ever, we are convinced that the significance of the narrator and his act of mediation is the key to an adequate description of narrative levels. We not only strengthened the position of the narrator in our guidelines, we also decided not to overemphasize the annotation of concepts like focalization, the narratee or other phenomena such as forms of imagination or dreams. Nevertheless, we delimited the narrative levels

from those phenomena for a better understanding. In addition, we restructured the guidelines to achieve a clearer distinction between our theoretical conception, the identification of new narrative levels and the application of the annotation guidelines. Key examples were added to enhance the understanding of our theoretical approach.

In general, our primary goal is to formalize and refine the concept of narrative levels rather than to simplify the complex phenomenon in order to achieve a high annotation agreement.

Theoretical Introduction and Use Cases

Narrative theory – or Narratology – has been one of the central concerns of international literary studies since the early nineteen-sixties.[1] Narratology deals "with the general theory and practice of narrative"[2] and focuses on a systematic description of different types, structures and functionalities of narrative phenomena. While its concepts are often used as heuristic instruments for text analysis, narratologists are still debating whether narratology is a method, a theory or a discipline.[3] The analyzed phenomena range from different characteristics of narrators – their relation to the fictional world, their focalization (or point of view) within this world, their representation and their reliability – to structural elements such as narrative levels or chronological aspects, only to name a few. More generally speaking, the narrative's order, its duration, the frequency of storytelling or the narrating voice can be of interest for a narrative text analysis. Subsequently, a fundamental interest of narratologists lies in the organization and structure of the literary plot. To describe both, the sequence of events in time and their integration into an organized plot, Gérard Genette developed a systematic terminology using the terms *discours* and *histoire*[4] to distinguish between what is narrated and how it is narrated. While *histoire* subsumes the "totality of the narrated events,"[5] the "discours du récit" is the

actual realization of the *histoire* in the narration, be it oral or written.

For the distinction of narrative levels, Genette proposes a classification of the narrator as *extradiegetic*, *intradiegetic* and *metadiegetic*. The *extradiegetic narrator* produces a "first narrative with its diegesis."[6] He is potentially followed by an *intradiegetic narrator*, oftentimes a character that appears in the first narrative, who goes on to produce a second narrative, and so on. It is common to formalize and describe the structure of these different narrative levels in metaphorical terms, e.g., the metaphor of framing and embedding, the so-called Chinese boxes or the metaphor of a stack of trays.[7]

Our guidelines follow the basic idea of Genette that a new narrative level needs a sufficiently marked "*threshold* between one diegesis and another."[8] To obtain this threshold, Genette ties a new narrative level to a new narrator. Paradigmatically, a new narrative level crosses both illocutionary and ontological boundaries, meaning that in most cases, a new speaker within the fictional world of the diegesis tells a story that is located in a new world with, e.g., a new set of characters, a new location and/or a change of time.[9] In telling that story, the speaker becomes a new *intradiegetic narrator* and thus, the narrator and the narrative level change. "One Thousand and One Nights" ("Arabian Nights"), a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales is often referred to as a striking example for this type of change in narrator.

We would like to expand on this concept as, according to our understanding, literature has produced examples that show clear signs of creating new narrative levels without having a *prototypical* exchange of narrator.[10] Still, new narrative levels need to have clearly distinguishable diegeses and are therefore distinct from anachronisms. For instance, the crossing of illocutionary boundaries, i.e., speech acts that introduce a new speaker,[11] might be an indicator, but is in our understanding not a sufficient argument for a new narrator and subsequently a change of narrative levels on its own. To induce a level change, the newly introduced

speaker would actually have to narrate a story which is not the standard case for direct character speech.

The annotation of narrative levels is a fundamental step towards understanding and interpreting a narrated literary text. In general, we assume that it is necessary to analyze the structure and the form of the text to gain insight into the interrelation between form and content (e.g., Emil Staiger's "Gehalt-Gestalt-Gefüge"). Narrative levels are furthermore of great relevance, as they reveal the construction of the text, the type of narrator and the content.

Possible research questions based on identifying narrative levels can focus on structural elements of a text, e.g., an overview of the different narrators and the stories they tell, the relationship between frame and embedded stories, or the importance of a narrative level based on its length. Research questions can also address the content of narrative levels. Since narrative levels can be functionally related to each other, it is important to interpret the character's or the narrator's distribution of information with such interdependencies in mind. Different functions of narrative levels are possible, e.g., the embedded story provides an explanation for elements of the frame story (explicative), the embedded story is constitutive for the frame story (actional) or the embedded story is thematically related in the form of analogies, correspondences, contrasts or relationships to the frame story (thematic).[12] Furthermore, a more systematic analysis of crossovers reaching from one narrative level to another seems to be a productive goal that requires the identification of narrative levels as fundamental. With the bigger picture of literary history in mind, it would also be instructive to see if there are certain patterns that emerge with regard to literary genres, literary periods, the author's gender or age for the number, length and function of narrative levels within a literary text.

Terminology & Concepts

In order to clarify the terminology that we use in our *Premises: How to find narrative levels* and the *Annotation Guidelines*, certain basic narratological terms are explained here in a concise way. This should help achieve a better understanding of our guidelines and the underlying literary concepts used in it.

Narrative

Although narrativity as a term has become contested, two distinct concepts are still commonly used in the study of literature:[13] While in an earlier tradition – described as classical narrative theory – narrativity "was bound to the presence of a mediating authority, the narrator," structuralism focused on "temporal structure and [...] change of state." We agree with Wolf Schmid that in "practical literary theory," narrativity is best explained through a combination of both concepts.[14] The narrative is thus linked to a speech act in terms of communication theory and it is mediated. This means that the narrator is telling the story to a narratee, whether it is explicitly mentioned or not. Our minimal definition of a narrative (story[15]) would be that an action evokes a change of state – from state A to state B –, that the change of state is motivated and causally linked and that it is mediated by a narrator.[16]

Narrator

The narrator is one of the central analytical concepts of narratology.[17,18] With regard to the distinction of different narrators and consequently the change of a narrator in a single text, it is useful to determine his position in relation to the story he tells. In principle, it must be determined whether the narrator is part of the diegetic world or not.[19]

Homodiegetic narrator

A homodiegetic narrator participates as a character in the story he tells. He is part of his own story, be it as silent observer, side character or even one of the main characters.[20] Thus, a homodiegetic narrator's "I"/self is split in a narrating and an experiencing "I"/self. On the one hand, the narrating "I"/self is located in the exegesis or on the superordinate level of the current narrative level and has an overview of the entire course of events. On the other hand, the experiencing "I"/self is located on the current narrative level as one character among others and its perspective depends on the experience just made.[21] Normally, there is a clear distinction between the narrating "I"/self and the experiencing "I"/self, e.g., regarding the time the story was experienced and the time the story is narrated. In certain cases, however, the distance between the experiencing and the narrating "I"/self is seemingly removed.[22]
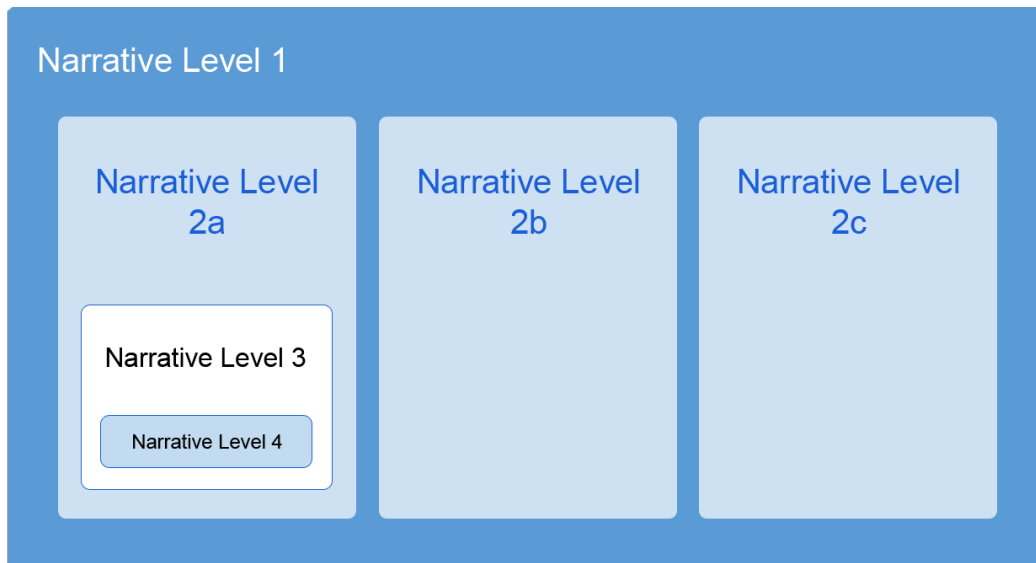
Heterodiegetic narrator

In contrast to a homodiegetic narrator, a heterodiegetic narrator is not part of the story he tells. In a story that is narrated by a heterodiegetic narrator, there is a clear distinction between the position of the narrator (exegesis) and the world of the characters (diegesis). As a heterodiegetic narrator is not part of the story he tells, there is no experiencing "I"/self present in the story.

Narrative levels

The terminology used to describe narrative levels is diverse and varies widely.[23] Our basic approach is to define any new story that occurs within a given narrative text as a new narrative level. A new story goes hand in hand with a change of the narrator. In most cases, this change is clearly visible, but there are also types of changes in narrator that are subtle and more difficult to trace (see *Cases of narrator changes* for a more detailed explanation).

Narrative levels can be interlaced (see Figure 1:1, 2, 3, 4) or arranged sequentially Figure 1:2a, 2b, 2c), or be a combination of both. Within the frame story (super-ordinate level), several embedded stories with a different degree can occur. As an embedded story can become the frame story for another embedded story, we use the terms first-, second-, third-, etc. degree narrative as an alternative to Genette's terminology in order to avoid ambiguities.[24] When narrative levels are arranged sequentially, they are located next to each other on the same narrative level. Sequentially arranged levels are usually embedded as second-, third-, etc. degree narrative. In rare cases, the first-degree narrative is itself arranged sequentially (cf. Orhan Pamuk: "My Name Is Red").

Figure 1: Interlaced and sequential arrangement of narrative levels within a literary text.

Exegesis and diegesis

Since the "diegesis designates the level of the narrated world, and exegesis the level of the narrating,"[25] a homodiegetic narrator (of a first-degree narrative) belongs to both levels: In his function as narrator, he belongs to the exegesis, but since he tells a story with himself as a character in it, he is also part of the diegesis.[26] A heterodiegetic narrator, however, only belongs to the exegesis; he is not part of the narrated world (diegesis).

The location of the narrator (exegesis) in a first-degree narrative is not an independent narrative level. Aphorisms, mottos, comments, judgments, forms of address (fictitious recipient) and thoughts expressed by the narrator[27] do not form a new narrative level. They are part of the instantaneous narrative level. This is also true for expressions of narrators in a second-, third-, … degree narrative, as long as they do not address an element of the superordinate level (see *Interruption of narrative levels*). Nevertheless, we believe it is still possible to annotate such expressions (for further details see *Non-Narrative Passages*).

Illocutionary and ontological boundaries

Discussing narrative levels, Marie-Laure Ryan proposed to focus on narrative boundaries. She distinguished between illocutionary and ontological boundaries and, according to her, both can be crossed actually as well as virtually.[28,29] In our understanding, neither a change of the speaker (illocutionary boundary), nor the presentation of the speech act through the narrator is sufficient for a change of the narrative level. First of all, speech acts can only in clearly defined circumstances (see *New narrative level through new story* and *Cases of narrator changes*) lead to a change of the narrator and, thus, a change of narrative levels. Ontological boundaries only lead to a new narrative level, when a change of the narrator occurs. Therefore, Harry Potter trespassing the worlds at King's Cross Station is, in

our view, not introducing a new narrative level.

Premises: How to find narrative levels

The goal of the following premises is to find all narrative levels in a given narrative text. Our basic assumption is that each text has at least one narrative level.

New narrative level through new story

A new story within a narrative text calls for a new narrative level and is triggered by a change of the narrator. We use the terminology 'change' in a broad sense that includes, for instance, a change of the narrator's function and a change of his position in relation to the story he tells (see *Narrator*). A story is defined by the following criteria:

1. A story is a self-contained action whose events and happenings are causally linked and cause a change of state. Accordingly, headlines are usually not part of the narrated world.

2. Stories are mediated by the narrator and presented as "the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events."[30]

3. Stories are mostly narrated in past tense. Rather rare exceptions are novels such as Christian Kracht's "Faserland" (homodiegetic narrator, present tense).

Cases of narrator changes

A *change* of the narrator results in a new story and therefore in a change of the narrative level. The complexity of literary texts, however, forces us to widen the concept of the changing narrator that Genette uses to distinguish between narrative

levels. In the following, we define the exact scenarios that make use of a changing narrator and thus result in a new narrative level. The scenarios explain in detail what is needed for a change of narrative levels.

The prototypical case: a new narrator as a character of the fictional world

Typically, the change of the narrator results in a new narrator – oftentimes a character of the fictional world – that goes on to tell a (or his own) story. The new narrator is part of the diegesis that is told by a superordinate narrator. In a new story that changes its narrator in this way, there is a new narrating "I"/self.

This is the scheme that Gérard Genette outlines to illustrate his understanding of narrative levels.[31] In his example, Antoine-François Prévost's novel "Histoire du Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut," a prototypical change of the narrator becomes visible. The novel starts with the memoirs of Monsieur de Renoncour. He is the first-degree narrator and thus, as he tells his memoirs, he is part of his own story (homodiegetic). This is the beginning of the novel:

> *Just about six months before my departure for Spain, I first met the Chevalier des Grieux. Though I rarely quitted my retreat, still the interest I felt in my child's welfare induced me occasionally to undertake short journeys, which, however, I took good care to abridge as much as possible.* (Antoine-François Prévost: "Histoire de Chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut")

De Renoncour's description of how he first met des Grieux – narrated as an analepsis (flashback) – goes on for a few pages. Following that, two years of narrated time are skipped. One day, de Renoncour and des Grieux both meet again in Calais, where des Grieux goes on to tell about his recent voyage to America, his misfortunes and his failures. De Renoncour introduces the story as follows:

"I was seventeen years old, and was finishing my studies at Amiens, whither my parents, who belonged to one of the first families in Picardy, had sent me. I led a life so studious and well regulated, that my masters pointed to me as a model of conduct for the other scholars. Not that I made any extraordinary efforts to acquire this reputation, but my disposition was naturally tractable and tranquil; my inclinations led me to apply to study; and even the natural dislike I felt for vice was placed to my credit as positive proof of virtue. The successful progress of my studies, my birth, and some external advantages of person, made me a general favourite with the inhabitants of the town [...]."*I should here inform the reader that I wrote down the story almost immediately after hearing it; and he may, therefore, be assured of the correctness and fidelity of the narrative. I use the word fidelity with reference to the substance of reflections and sentiments, which the young man conveyed in the most graceful language. Here, then, is his story, which in its progress I shall not encumber with a single observation that was not his own.*

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As a character of the first-degree narrative within his speech act des Grieux becomes the intradiegetic narrator of a second-degree narrative, where he himself is one of the protagonists: there is a new narrating "I"/self. The direct speech clearly indicates a changing speaker and thus, an illocutionary boundary that is actually crossed. This, however, is not the reason for the change of the narrative level. In telling his story (with self-contained actions whose events and happenings are causally linked and cause a change of state) des Grieux is not only the new speaker (crossing of illocutionary boundary), but the new narrator. His story also crosses ontological boundaries: the voyage to America describes a world distinct to the

world of Monsieur de Renoncour.

Throughout literary history similarly structured texts are quite common. Heinrich von Kleist's "Improbable Veracities" is one of the many examples that could be cited. In Kleist's short story, though, the first-degree narrator is heterodiegetic, i.e., he is not part of the story he narrates. The story starts like this:

The company in return promised him their belief in advance: they simply exhorted him to speak and listened. "On a march in the Rhine campaign," began the officer, "I noticed, after a battle we had had with the enemy, a soldier who walked erect, with gun and pack, in rank and file, although he had a shot through the middle of his chest: at least one saw the hole in front of the strap of his ammunition pocket, where the bullet had entered, and another in back, in his jacket, where it had left [...]." *"Three stories," said an old officer at a gathering, "are of the type that, although I myself completely believe them, were I to tell them, I would run the risk, nevertheless, of being taken for a windbag. For people demand of truth, as its primary requirement, that it be probable. And yet probability, as experience teaches us, is not always on the side of truth." Tell them, called several members of the gathering, tell them!–for the officer was known as a bright and esteemed man who was never guilty of lies. The officer said laughing that he wanted to oblige the company, but he explained once again beforehand that, in this particular case, he made no claim for their belief.*

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The change of the narrator is clearly noticeable as soon as the officer talks about "'a march in the Rhine campaign'." In this passage, he starts to tell a story based on his own experiences. Apart from the *verbum dicendi* "began the officer," from

then on, the officer is the new narrator and becomes the new, now homodiegetic, narrating "I"/self.

A change of the narrator's position in relation to the story he tells

While a change of the narrative level that introduces a new narrator might be the standard case for embedded stories, literature has produced instances that differ from this prototypical narrator change. We assume that there are possibilities for new stories that do not introduce new narrators, e.g., a homodiegetic narrator of the frame story telling an embedded story he is not part of. Then, the narrative "I"/self remains the same and consequently the speaker remains the same. We suppose and suggest, though, that there is still a change of the narrator, namely a change of the narrator's position in relation to the story he tells. To give an example of this change of the narrator's position, we cite Max Frisch's novel "I'm not Stiller" below. James White alias Anatol Ludwig Stiller is the homodiegetic narrator of most parts of the novel. During his imprisonment, he tells his defense counsel the fairy tale of "Rip van Winkle":

> "You don't know it?"
>
> "What?"
>
> "The story of Rip van Winkle?"
>
> Only by means of this trick — that's to say by holding the lighter, which I relit every time it went out, and with the cigar in the other hand, all the time in the point of lighting the splendid cigar, indeed once setting the cigar aglow, so that all I had to do was draw on it, but every time prevented — prevented by Rip van Winkle, whose story was obviously more acutely important than my cigar — only by means of this trick could I compel my busy defense counsel to listen at all.
>
> The story goes something like this.
>
> Rip van Winkle, a descendant of that intrepid van Winkle who opened up the country of America while serving under Hendrik Hudson, was born lazybones but at the

same time, it seems, a thoroughly good fellow, who didn't fish for the sake of the fish but in order to dream, for his head was full of so-called thoughts, which had little to do with his reality. *As I spoke (this is important) I held his silver lighter with the little flame without lighting the fragrant cigar, that one and only sensual pleasure available to me in my imprisonment on remand, no, notwithstanding my avid desire I repeated my question:*

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"What?"

"The story of Rip van Winkle?"

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(Max Frisch: "I'm not Stiller")

The above excerpt exemplifies how Stiller's position changes in relation to the stories he narrates. Once he starts telling the fairy tale of Rip van Winkle, he is no longer part of the story as a character and thus, becomes a heterodiegetic narrator. There is, however, no new speaker (and no new speech act). Accordingly, the change from a homodiegetic to a heterodiegetic narrator is, in our understanding, sufficient to form a new narrative level.

Distant narrators: chronicler, collector, editor

Some narrators have a distanced relationship to the story they tell. This is demonstrated by confessing that they have access to a story by accident, e.g., the narrator has found the manuscript or heard a well-known chronicle. Then, the purpose of telling the story has an explicitly authenticating function.

Projected teller role   As a special case of narrative texts, a projected teller role, i.e., "an agent whose sole involvement with the text is its material dissemination,"[32] always demands an additional narrative level (even if this level consists of only one sentence). The most prominent example for a projected teller role is the figure of an editor/publisher. In rare cases, the projected teller role might only become visible towards the end of a literary text. Although up to this point there are no signs of a frame story in the text, the existence of the editor/publisher figure makes it necessary to consider the rest of the text as an embedded narrative level. In this case, the inclusion scheme of a text (see *Narrative levels*) can only be recognizable after having read the whole text.

Eduard Mörike's novel "Lucie Gelmeroth" is an illustrative example of a projected teller role. The text appears to start with a homodiegetic narrator that recounts his holiday trip to Göttingen.

> *As a Göttingen student on a holiday trip, I – a German scholar tells in his still unprinted memorabilia – wanted to visit my home town again, which I had not seen for a long time […].*

Although the first sentence refers already to a possible projected teller role, namely the German scholar's memorabilia, it is the ending of the novel that clarifies the inclusion scheme:

> *This is where the narrator's handwriting breaks off. We have searched in vain among his papers to learn something of the fate of that fleeting merchant. Even with inquiries elsewhere we were not happier.* (Eduard Mörike: "Lucie Gelmeroth," translated by the authors)

The report of the found papers reveals that the student is in fact an intradiegetic homodiegetic narrator of a second-degree narrative level. The first-degree narrator, who only becomes visible at the end of the novel, turns out to be the editor.

The narrator as reporter

In contrast to the projected teller role, which introduces a new narrator to tell his own story, there are narrators that not only have access to a story, but also mediate the story on their own, e.g., chroniclers.[33] For instance, in Eduard Mörike's "Das Stuttgarter Hutzelmännlein," the narrator tells the story of Seppe and Vrone that took place in 1220 from the standpoint of 500 years later. While Seppe talks to a coachman, the narrator tells the "Story of Lau," a different story, which took place 100 years earlier.

> *[…] After this, hear the true and graceful **story of Lau, the beautiful water nymph.** In Swabia, on the Alb, near the little town of Blaubeuren, just beyond the old monastery, you can see beside a sheer rock face the big round basin of a wondrous spring called the Blue Pool […].* (Eduard Mörike: "Das Stuttgarter Hutzelmännlein," translated by the authors)

In this case, there is neither a new narrator, nor a change in the narrator's position in relation to the story he tells. He remains heterodiegetic. Nevertheless, another change is perceivable: the narrator noticeably signalizes that a new story will be told. This story, however, is not part of the superordinate level that deals with Seppe and Vrone. It is instead a presentation of an old chronicle to which

the narrator has access. By mediating this chronicle, he therefore introduces a new narrative level. Similar cases that one might think of could include reports of newspaper stories, letters or television coverage, but only if the report is mediated by the narrator and functions as a narrative (see *Narrative*).

Distinction from related phenomena

Anachronisms

It is important to differentiate between narrative levels and anachronisms, e.g., analepses (flashbacks) and prolepses (flashforwards). While a new narrative is initiated by a change of narrator (or his position/role), the narrator does not change in anachronistic forms of narration. Instead, anachronisms concern the chronological order of the *discours* and do not leave the present narrative level.

> *Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. [. . .] Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne.* (James Joyce: "Eveline")

The heterodiegetic narrator in James Joyce's "Eveline" tells the story of Eveline shortly before her planned emigration. There are several analepses in which Eveline reflects her childhood. In the excerpt above, she remembers a ghost story read by her father and a picnic. The narrator also denotes a clearly noticeable temporal shift. However, as there is no new narrator, no change of the narrator's position in relation to the story and no report of a distant narrator, the narrative level does not change.

Forms of imagination

In some cases, a character's thoughts, dreams, visions or fantasies are presented in such an intense way that one might assume a new narrative level occurs.[34] However, it is important to distinguish between an actual new narrative level – i.e., introduced by a change of the narrator – and a strong form of internal focalization (point of view). In Anton Pavlovich Chekhov's "The Lottery Ticket," Ivan Dmitrich, one of the main characters, imagines what his life could be like, if he won the lottery:

> *Ivan Dmitritch pictured to himself autumn with its rains, its cold evenings, and its St. Martin's summer. At that season he would have to take longer walks about the garden and beside the river, so as to get thoroughly chilled, and then drink a big glass of vodka and eat a salted mushroom or a soused cucumber, and then–drink another. . . . The children would come running from the kitchen-garden, bringing a carrot and a radish smelling of fresh earth. . . . And then, he would lie stretched full length on the sofa, and in leisurely fashion turn over the pages of some illustrated magazine, or, covering his face with it and unbuttoning his waistcoat, give himself up to slumber.* (Anton Pavlovich Chekhov "The Lottery Ticket")

This example illustrates a strong form of the expression of thoughts that are, nevertheless, still mediated by the (same) narrator. While Ryan might argue for an ontological boundary – Ivan's imaginations as a new world –, this is, in our understanding, not sufficient for a change of the narrative level. As the narrator does not change in the given example, the narrative level stays the same. Yet, in modern literature even more radical forms of expressing inner thoughts (stream of consciousness) can be observed.[35] Those forms are seemingly no more mediated by the superordinate narrator.[36] In certain cases, therefore, the narrator might change. The experiencing character could then himself become the new narrator. However, this scenario is only possible, if the experiencing character is distinct from the superordinate narrator.

Metalepses

In rare cases, a text does not allow for the annotation of narrative levels. This will be the case, e.g., if the narrative levels cannot be separated logically, a phenomenon that is called metalepsis.[37] In Italo Calvino's "If on a Winter's Night a Traveler," the world of the reader/narrator (exegesis) is so closely interwoven with the story (diegesis) that narrative levels can no longer be clearly distinguished from each other. In such cases, we do not annotate any narrative levels besides the first level.

The espresso machines in station cafés boast their kinship with the locomotives, the espresso machines of yesterday and today with the locomotives and steam engines of today and yesterday. It's all very well for me to come and go, shift and turn: I am caught in a trap, in that nontemporal trap which all stations unfailingly set. A cloud of coal dust still hovers in the air of stations all these years after the lines have been totally electrified, and a novel that talks about trains and stations cannot help conveying this odor of smoke. For a couple of pages now you have been reading on, and this would be the time to tell you clearly whether this station where I have got off is a station of the past or a station of today; instead the sentences continue to move in vagueness, grayness, in a kind of no man's land of experience reduced to the lowest common denominator. Watch out: it is surely a method of involving you gradually, capturing you in the story before you realize it's a trap [. . .].*I am the man who comes and goes between the bar and the telephone booth. Or, rather: that man is called "I" and you know nothing else about him, just as this station is called only "station" and beyond it there exists nothing except the unanswered signal of a telephone ringing in a dark room of a distant city. I hang up the receiver, I await the rattling flush, down through the metallic throat, I push the glass door again, head toward the cups piled up to dry in a cloud of steam.*

The espresso machines in station cafés boast their kinship with the locomotives, the espresso machines of yesterday and today with the locomotives and steam engines of today and yesterday. It's all very well for me to come and go, shift and turn: I am caught in a trap, in that nontemporal trap which all stations unfailingly set. A cloud of coal dust still hovers in the air of stations all these years after the lines have been totally electrified, and a novel that talks about trains and stations cannot help

conveying this odor of smoke. For a couple of pages now you have been reading on, and this would be the time to tell you clearly whether this station where I have got off is a station of the past or a station of today; instead the sentences continue to move in vagueness, grayness, in a kind of no man's land of experience reduced to the lowest common denominator. Watch out: it is surely a method of involving you gradually, capturing you in the story before you realize it's a trap […]. (Italo Calvino: "If on a Winter's Night a Traveler")

Annotation Guidelines

Before beginning the annotation process, the annotator has to read through the entire literary text. Following that, all narrative levels in the text are searched for according to the criteria defined in the *Premises: How to find narrative levels*. They are annotated according to the following points:

Labeling

All narrative levels are annotated with square brackets (opening bracket at the start and closing bracket at the end of a narrative level).[38]

Numeration

The narrative levels are annotated with numbers (1, 2, 3 etc.) as a first and letters (a, b, c etc.) as a second differentiator. Each text has at least one narrative level and a corresponding number [1]. Letters are only used to denote a sequential arrangement and therefore not always utilized.

a. The numbers indicate the degree of the narrative level (inclusion scheme). E.g., level 2 refers to a narrative level that is embedded into a superordinate level. Level 2 is a second-degree narrative or, in other words, an embedded story. Max Frisch's novel "Stiller" is one example: An embedded story (the

fairytale of Rip van Winkle) is narrated by one of the novel's characters and enclosed into the first-degree narrative or frame story (level 1).[39]

b. Stories that are on the same narrative level (sequential arrangement) are identified by letters (a, b, c). Boccaccio's "Il Decamerone" is an example of sequentially arranged stories, which contain several separate novellas on the same narrative level – a series of embedded stories (see Figure 1). The arrangement of the individual novellas that are embedded in the frame story would correspond to the numbering 2a, 2b, 2c.

Using the brackets

How to use the square brackets to separate the different narrative levels:

a. The brackets are marked with the number and, if applicable, a letter on both, the opening and closing brackets. E.g., $[_1 \ldots]_1$.

b. Inclusion scheme: The superordinate narrative level (e.g., first-degree narrative) starts before the embedded level (e.g., second-degree narrative). The brackets of the superordinate level close after the brackets of the embedded level: $[_1 \ldots [_2 \ldots]_2 \ldots]_1$.

c. Sequential arrangement: The square bracket of the first sequentially ordered narrative level (e.g., 2a) closes before opening the square bracket of the second sequentially ordered narrative level (e.g., 2b): $[_1 \ldots [_{2a} \ldots]_{2a} \ldots [_{2b} \ldots]_{2b} \ldots]_1$.

d. Punctuation – this includes dashes and semicolons – is not separated from the preceding word.

(1) $[_1 \ldots [_2$ *"On a march in the Rhine campaign,"* $]_2$ *began the officer,* $[_2$ *"I noticed, after a battle we had had with the enemy …"* $]_2]_1$ (Heinrich von Kleist: "Improbable Veracities")

Embedded narrative levels and projected teller role

As a rule, a narrative text starts with the first narrative level, level 1, and may have other narrative levels embedded (level 2 and so on).

(2) **[₁** *It is a matter most convenient (deare Ladies) that a man ought to begin whatsoever he doth, in the great and glorious name of him, who was the Creator of all thinges. Wherefore, seeing that I am the man appointed, to begin this your invention of discoursing Novelties: I intend to begin also with one of his wonderfull workes. To the end, that this beeing heard, our hope may remaine on him, as the thing onely permanent, and his name for ever to be praised by us. […] As manifestly will appeare, by the Novell which I intend to relate; manifestly (I say) not as in the judgment of God, but according to the apprehension of men.* **[₂** *There was one named, Musciatto Francesi, who from beeing a most rich and great merchant in France, was become a Knight, and preparing to go into Tuscany, with Monsieur Charles without Land, Brother to the King of France (who was desired and incited to come thither by Pope Boniface) found his affaires greatly intricated here and there (as oftentimes the matters of Merchants fall out to bee) and that very hardly hee should sodainly unintangle them, without referring the charge of them to divers persons. And for all he tooke indifferent good order, onely he remained doubtfull, whom he might sufficiently leave, to recover his debts among many Burgundians ...* **]₂** *The Novell recited by Pamphilus was highly pleasing to the company, and much commended by the Ladies: and after it had beene diligently observed among them, the Queen commanded Madam Neiphila (who was seated neerest to Pamphilus) that, in relating another of hers, she should follow on in the pastime thus begun. ...* **]₁** (Boccaccio: "Il Decamerone")

An extension to this rule is needed for narrative texts with a projected teller role that requires its own narrative level. In this case, the projected teller role is annotated as the frame story (level 1), although this special case might only become clearly visible at the end of the narrative text.

(3) DECEMBER 6.

[₁ **[₂** *… How her image haunts me! Waking or asleep, she fills my entire soul! Soon as I close my eyes, here, in my brain, where all the nerves of vision are concentrated, her dark eyes are imprinted …* **]₂** **]₁**

THE EDITOR TO THE READER.

[₁ *It is a matter of extreme regret that we want original evidence of the last remarkable days of our friend; and we are, therefore, obliged to interrupt the progress of his correspondence, and to supply the deficiency by a connected narration* …]₁ (J. W. v. Goethe: "The sorrows of young Werther")

Paratexts

As seen in the examples above, paratexts[40] such as book titles, forewords, chapter headings and genre indications must not be annotated. If the narrative level remains the same, the square bracket of the narrative level is closed before a chapter heading and reopened afterwards with the same level.

(4) [₁ *By reason of these things, then, the whaling voyage was welcome; the great flood-gates of the wonder-world swung open, and in the wild conceits that swayed me to my purpose, two and two there floated into my inmost soul, endless processions of the whale, and, mid most of them all, one grand hooded phantom, like a snow hill in the air.*]₁

CHAPTER 2. The Carpet-Bag

[₁ *I stuffed a shirt or two into my old carpet-bag, tucked it under my arm, and started for Cape Horn and the Pacific. Quitting the good city of old Manhatto, I duly arrived in New Bedford. It was a Saturday night in December. Much was I disappointed upon learning that the little packet for Nantucket had already sailed, and that no way of reaching that place would offer, till the following Monday.*]₁ (Herman Melville: "Moby Dick")

Syntactically bound headings

Headings that belong semantically and syntactically to a narrative level are exceptions to this rule. Those are assigned to the associated narrative level (normally to the superordinate level).

(5) [₁ …[ₙ *After this, hear the true and graceful*

story of Lau, the beautiful water nymph]$_n$[41]

[$_2$ *In Swabia, on the Alb, near the little town of Blaubeuren, close behind the old monastery, you can see beside a sheer rock face the big round basin of a wondrous spring called the Blue Pool …*]$_2$]$_1$ (Eduard Mörike: "Das Stuttgarter Hutzelmännlein," translated by the authors)

Interruption of narrative levels

Narrative levels can be interrupted by other narrative levels. E.g., in a second-degree narrative, inserts from the first-degree narrative might occur. Two cases of interruption are possible:

a. interruption by *verba dicendi* that refer to the narrative situation and thus belong to the superordinate level (e.g., "the old man said"),

b. interruption by a speech act, e.g., by addressing a character of the superordinate level (e.g., "listen, ladies and gentlemen").

In case of such inserts, the embedded level is closed at the beginning of the insert and reopened after the insert with the same numbering. In example (6), three sequential embedded stories (2a, 2b, 2c) are told; the following extract contains the third story (2c) which is interrupted by short parts of the first-degree frame story, namely a *verbum dicendi* ("the officer continued") and a form of address ("gentlemen").

Both forms of interruption can occur next to each other and do not need to be annotated separately (example (7): "'well then,' he said"). The inserts can consist of single words ("well") or several phrases, as shown in example (7).

(6) [$_1$ *The country gentleman was of the opinion that he knew how to choose well those stories that would verify his proposition.* [$_{2c}$ *"The third story,"*]$_{2c}$ *the officer continued,*

[2c *"took place in the war of independence of the Netherlands, at the siege of Antwerp by the Duke of Parma. The duke had blocked the Schelde river by means of a bridge of ships and the Antwerpers were working on their side, under the leadership of a talented Italian, to explode the bridge by means of fire boats that they launched against it. In that moment,*]2c *gentlemen,* [2c in which the vessels float down the Schelde to the bridge, there stands, observe well, a cadet officer on the left bank of the Schelde right next to the Duke of Parma …"]2c *Go to the Devil! shouted the country gentleman* ...]1 (Heinrich von Kleist: "Improbable Veracities")

(7) [1 [2 *… The old man looked at me with a smile of understanding. "Well, then," he said,* [3 *"in the middle of the last century, or rather, to be more exact, before and after the middle, there was a dikegrave here who understood more about dikes, drains and sluices than peasants and farmers usually do; yet even so it seems hardly to have been enough, for he had read but little of what learned experts have written about such things, and had only thought out his own knowledge for himself from the time he was a little child.*]3 *You have probably heard, sir, that the Friesians are good at figures and undoubtedly you have heard some talk too about our Hans Mommsen of Fahretoft, who was a peasant and yet could make compasses and chronometers, telescopes and organs. Well,* [3 *the father of this dikegrave was a bit like that too; only a bit, to be sure…"*]3]2]1 (Theodor Storm: "The Rider of the White Horse")

Non-Narrative Passages

Sometimes a narrator interrupts the story in order to make a comment that is independent of the story, i.e., without addressing a character of any narrative level in the fictional world (see *Exegesis and diegesis*). Such aphorisms, mottos, comments, judgments, thoughts and forms of address to the fictional addressee[42] are annotated as parts of the current narrative level and are not regarded as an independent narrative level. Since it may be beneficial for some cases (e.g., the narrator's judgment with the plot), we nevertheless annotate those expressions as "non-narrative."

To annotate non-narrative parts we use square brackets followed by the letter n. This indicates that they do not form an independent narrative level nor belong to

the superordinate level (see *Interruption of narrative levels*). Opening brackets are used to signal the beginning and closing brackets to signal the end of the expression. The examples (8), (9) and (10) contain elements that address a fictional recipient and that are therefore considered as non-narrative parts.

(8) [₁ *That puzzled the Leopard and the Ethiopian, but they set off to look for the aboriginal Flora, and presently, after ever so many days, they saw a great, high, tall forest full of tree trunks all 'sclusively speckled and sprottled and spottled, dotted and splashed and slashed and hatched and cross-hatched with shadows.* [ₙ *(Say that quickly aloud, and you will see how very shadowy the forest must have been.)*]ₙ]₁ (Rudyard Kipling: "How the Leopard got his Spots")

(9) [₁ *That was the first long separation, for almost twelve hours.* [ₙ *Poor Effi!*]ₙ *How was she to pass the evening? To go to bed early would be inadvisable, for she would wake up and not be able to go to sleep again, and would listen for every sound. No, it would be best to wait till she was very tired and then enjoy a sound sleep. She wrote a letter to her mother and then went to see Mrs. Kruse, whose condition aroused her sympathy.*]₁ (Theodor Fontane: "Effi Briest")[43]

(10) [₁ *In the days when everybody started fair,* [ₙ *Best Beloved*]ₙ *,the Leopard lived in a place called the High Veldt.* [ₙ *'Member*]ₙ *it wasn't the Low Veldt, or the Bush Veldt, or the Sour Veldt, but ...'*]₁ (Rudyard Kipling: "How the Leopard got his Spots")

Notes

[1]Cf. Matías Martínez and Michael Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*, 7th edition (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009), 7.

[2]M. H. Abrams, "Narrative and Narratology," in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Orlando, 1999), 173.

[3]Cf. Jan Christoph Meister, "Narratology," in *Handbook of Narratology*, 2nd, fully revised and expanded edition, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 623, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110316469.623.

[4]Cf. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 13–15.

[5]Genette, 13.

[6]Genette, 84.

[7]Cf. Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 178–82; cf. John Pier, "Narrative Levels," in *Handbook of Narratology*, 2nd, fully revised and expanded edition, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 547, https://doi.org/10.1515/978311031646 9.547.

[8]Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 84; cf. Pier, "Narrative Levels," 547–49.

[9]Cf. Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*, 175–77.

[10]Cf. Silke Lahn and Jan Christoph Meister, *Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse*, 2nd, revised edition (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 2013), 83.

[11]Cf. Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*, 175–77.

[12]Cf. Lahn and Meister, *Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse*, 83–84.

[13]Cf. H. Porter Abbott, "Narrativity," in *Handbook of Narratology*, 2nd, fully revised and expanded edition, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 587–90, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110316469.587; cf. Wolf Schmid, *Elemente der Narratologie* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 17.

[14]Cf. Schmid, *Elemente der Narratologie*, 17–18.

[15]Genette's term *histoire* is oftentimes translated as *story*. Our concept of *story* is not delimited to the whole literary text but rather used for single narrative levels.

[16]Cf. Martínez and Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*, 109–10; cf. Wolf Schmid, "Ereignis," in *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Erzählen*, ed. Martin Huber and Wolf Schmid (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 312–13, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110410747-015.

[17]Cf. Natalia Igl, "Erzähler und Erzählstimme," in *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Erzählen*, ed. Martin Huber and Wolf Schmid (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 127, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110410747-006.

[18]Within narratology there are different positions regarding the importance of the narrator: it is still debated whether the narrator "designates the highest-level speech position" in a literary text and is, therefore, a "strictly textual category" that "should be clearly distinguished from the author" Uri Margolin, "Narrator," in *the living handbook of narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2014), or whether narrative texts are conceivable without a narrator. Cf. Igl, "Erzähler und Erzählstimme," 128–29.

[19]Cf. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 244–45.

[20]The term "autodiegetic narrator" has prevailed in the case of a homodiegetic narrator that is the main character. In our use, however, this further distinction is not necessary.

[21]Cf. Lahn and Meister, *Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse*, 70; cf. Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 90.

[22]Cf. Lahn and Meister, *Einführung in die Erzähltextanalyse*, 72.

[23]Cf. Pier, "Narrative Levels," 549–58.

[24]Cf. Manfred Jahn, *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative* (Cologne: University of Cologne, 2017).

[25]Didier Coste and John Pier, "Narrative Levels," in *Handbook of Narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 301, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110217445.295.

[26]Cf. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 84.

[27]Cf. Schmid, *Elemente der Narratologie*, 7.

[28]Cf. Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*, 175–77.

[29]Ryan states that "[i]llocutionary boundaries delimit speech acts within a text or a conversation, and their crossing introduces a new speaker or a new narrator" Ryan, 175. An actually crossed illocutionary boundary would introduce a new speaker. This is "illustrated by directly quoted dialogues" on the micro-level and, e.g., by "narratives of personal experience" on the macro-level Ryan, 176. Virtually crossed illocutionary boundaries, however, are presented through the narrator. The character's speech act is mediated by the narrator, e.g., as in indirect speech cf. Ryan, 177. An onto-logical boundary "transports the reader to a new system of reality" Ryan, 177. If the boundary is actually crossed, the new system will be described as location of the fictional reality – at least temporarily. Hence, the new system of reality is de-scribed from within its own boundaries cf. Ryan, 177. On the contrary, if the boundary is virtually crossed, the new sys-tem will be anchored in "an external perspective", the system will be described "with repeated reminders of its [...] sta-tus in the primary reality" Ryan, 177.

[30]Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, 24.

[31]Cf. Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 84–95.

[32]Marie-Laure Ryan, "The Narratorial Functions," *Contemporary Narratology* 9, no. 2 (2001): 151.

[33]A chronicler, "like every good historian, must at least attest to the truthfulness of his sources" Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 131. Regarding those narrators it is not always easy to decide whether they are homodiegetic or het-erodiegetic narrators . Although they are part of the diegetic world, there is a temporal distance between them and the

narrated world.

[34]Cf. Pier, "Narrative Levels," 550.

[35]Cf. Martínez and Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*, 61–63.

[36]Cf. Igl, "Erzähler und Erzählstimme," 127.

[37]Cf. John Pier, "Metalepsis," in *the living handbook of narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2016).

[38]The annotation may be done in another way, too (e.g., with different colors marking the belonging to a certain narrative level), depending on the annotation tool that is used.

[39]Cf. Jahn, *Narratology: A Guide to the Theory of Narrative*.

[40]Cf. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts. Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[41]The abbreviation n stands for "non-narrative" and is explained in section Non-Narrative Passages below.

[42]Cf. Schmid, *Elemente der Narratologie*, 7.

[43]Just to be clear, the sentences *"How was she to pass the evening? To go to bed early would be inadvisable, for she would wake up and not be able to go to sleep again, and would listen for every sound"* are free indirect discourse and therefore not an evaluative commentary by the narrator as *"Poor Effi!"* is.