The Narrator
Readings

- *Bal*, Narratology, 2.7, 3.1, 3.2, 3.5
- Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*, chapters 6 & 7
- Toolan, *Narrative*, 3.4-3.8, 4.11
Necessity?

• Is The Narrator Necessary?
  – In all narratives?
The Narrator is Not the Author

• Qn: How about autobiographies?
  – The author as s/he appears in the autobiography is the narrator?
First- and Third-Person Narrators

• The concept of narrative *person* is not a grammatical one, but refers to whether the narrator is *within* or *outside* the world of the story:

• Strictly speaking, should not be viewed in relation to the first- and third-person pronouns in language.
Within & Outside

• The *first-person narrator* is within, whereas
• The *third-person narrator* is outside the world of the story.
Third-person Narrator: ‘It’

• Strictly speaking, one should use the pronoun ‘it’ for the third-person narrator, as the third-person narrator is not a personage within the world of the story, unlike the first-person narrator, in relation to whom ‘he’ or ‘she’ can be used.
Grammatical and Narrative Persons

• The lack of correspondence between grammatical and narrative persons may result in the third-person narrator using the first person pronoun to refer to itself, and (less frequently) the first-person narrator using the third person pronoun to refer to himself or herself.
Second-Person Narrator?

• Due to the lack of correspondence between narrative and pronominal *persons*, there is no such thing (strictly speaking) as the *second-person narrator*.
‘Second-Person Narrator’ Can be Redefined

• A so-called second-person narrative can still be defined in terms of first-person and third-person narratives, as the question is really whether the narrator is within or outside the world of the story, and we do not seem to have a third alternative here.
Narrators: The Traditional Scheme

• According to one scheme in the traditional approach, there are five main types of narrators:
  
  - first person - actional participant
  - first person - observer
  - third person - objective
  - third person - omniscient
  - third person - limited
First Person (a) - Actional Participant:

• The *main character* tells his own story
First Person (b) - Observer:

- The story is told by an observer-participant (who may be a minor character).
Third Person (a) - Objective:

• The *observer* is ‘objective’, in the sense that no direct account of what it thinks or perceives is given; instead of the *objective third-person narrator*, this type of narrator is sometimes called, quite simply, the *objective narrator*.
Third Person (b) - Omniscient:

- The omniscient or omniscient third-person narrator can move from place to place and backwards and forwards in time, and does not merely concentrate on the consciousness of one character; this type of narrator is usually associated with the novel.
Third Person (c) - Limited:

• The *limited omniscient* or *limited third-person narrator* has some of the abilities of an omniscient narrator, but limits its focus, in relation to external description and to the revelation of consciousness, to only one character; this type of narrator is commonly found in the short story, as there is less room to explore the consciousness of other characters in this genre of fiction.
First-Person Narrators: Distinctive Features

- Enhancement in the immediacy and in the sense of reality when *first-person narrator* is used.
- Usually better for the study of blunted human perceptivity:
  - the narrator does not know (or is incapable of knowing) the full import of the events reported.
- May be unreliable:
  - s/he usually is – human (and hence fallible): not, like the third-person narrator, merely a technical device.
The Omniscient Narrator: Features

- The most flexible of all narrative viewpoints, as it has the widest scope.
- However, this point-of-view can destroy the illusion of reality, as no one can go from one place to another, and to read people's minds whenever the story demands it.
The Limited Omniscient Narrator: Features

• As noted earlier, this point-of-view is commonly found in short stories, for the simple technical reason that there is not much breadth in the short story to allow the author to explore other consciousnesses.

• However, there have been attempts to write whole novels with this point-of-view,
The Objective Point-of-View: Features

• The narrator is like a roving sound camera and reports only what is seen and heard.
  – Cannot comment, interpret or enter the characters' minds: like a spectator at a movie.

• Heavily reliant on external action and dialogue

• However, the narrative may become superficial and may lack psychological depth.
Narrative Reliability

• It has been claimed that the concept of reliability may be applicable only to the first-person, and not the third-person narrator (see Martin, p. 141); this is arguable (3.9).

• However, even if we disagree with this, we can say that as far as the truth of observation statements is concerned, the omniscient narrator is, in relative terms, usually more reliable than the first-person.
Narrative Intrusiveness

- Usually applied to the *third-person narrator*,
- Degree of *intrusiveness*: the *objective* narrator of course, is the least *intrusive*, while the *omniscient* narrator the most.
- *Intrusiveness* not always negative:
  - it may make the narrative more coherent by linking all the narrative strands together, or it may serve a comic/ironic function,
Suspense and Point-of-View

• *Suspense* may be created by the narrator's ignorance of certain ‘future’ events in a story or by the narrator's refusal to reveal these events in advance, even when he/she/it has prior knowledge of these events.
Point-of-View and *Focalization*

- It has been noted that the English term *point-of-view* is ambiguous. It does not, strictly speaking, refer only to the narrator's *perspective*, but also to the *perspective of the speaker*, or *teller* of the story (i.e., that it includes both the elements of *seeing* and *saying*).
Focalization

• For these reasons, some scholars have preferred the term *focalization* introduced by Genette in relation to *perspective*. The subject of *focalization* (i.e. the one who *focalises*), is called the *focalizer*. 
Character & Non-Character-Bound Focalization I

• In Genette’s terms, character-bound focalization is called *internal focalization*, whereas *non-character-bound focalization is called* external focalization
Another way to formulate this is to say that the focalization of the first-person narrator is internal, whereas that of the third-person narrator

– may be internal (in some stretches of an omniscient or limited third-person narrative) or
– external (almost invariably the case in an objective third-person narrative).
## Internal and External Focalization

**Table: Internal and External Focalization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Focalization</th>
<th>First-person narrative</th>
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Alternative Terms: *First- & Third-Person Narrators*: Bal

• *External narrator*, for a narrator which never explicitly refers to itself as a character (instead of *third-person narrator*) and

• *Character-bound narrator* for a narrator who does (instead of *first-person narrator*).
Alternative to *First- & Third-Person Narrators*: Genette

- *Homodiegetic*: a story in which the narrator is present in the story he tells, and
- *Heterodiegetic*: a story in which the narrator is absent from it.
Other Terms in Genette:  

*Extradiegetic*

- A narrative in which the narrator is superior, in the sense of being at least one level higher than the story itself (the narrative ‘now’ is outside the story), *and*
Other Terms in Genette:  
*Intradiegetic*

- The narrator is at the same level as the story itself (the narrative ‘now’, although occurring towards the end, is still technically within the world of the story); the *intradiegetic narrator's* knowledge is limited, as it is bound to the knowledge limitations of a particular character.
Genette’s Narrators

<table>
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<td>homodiegetic</td>
<td>a story in which the narrator is present in the story he tells</td>
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<tr>
<td>heterodiegetic</td>
<td>a story in which the narrator is absent from the story he tells</td>
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<tr>
<td>extradiegetic</td>
<td>narrative in which the narrator is superior, in the sense of being at least one level higher than the story itself (the narrative ‘now’ is outside the story), and hence having a good or virtually omniscient knowledge of the story he tells; and</td>
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<td>narrative in which the narrator is at the same level as the story itself (the narrative ‘now’, although occurring towards the end, is still technically within the world of the story); the intradiegetic narrator's knowledge is limited, as it is bound to the knowledge limitations of a particular character.</td>
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# Intermingling of Narrators

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<td><strong>first-person narrator</strong></td>
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</tr>
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The Implied Author

• The implied author is not the same as the ‘real’ author.

• The implied author is the ‘author’ presumed by the narrative, but he/she/it does not actually exist in the real world.
  – As such, the implied author may not share the views of the real author.
The Narratee

• The narratee is the personage the narrator relates the story to.
  – In first-person narratives, the narratee is the character the narrator tells the story to.
  – In third-person narratives, the narratee exists when there is a narrator telling the story to another imaginary personage.
    • In this regard, it can be argued that the narratee can be equated to the implied reader,
Sympathy between Levels

• For example: there may be a sympathetic bond between the reader and narrators, between the narrator and characters, between the implied author and the reader and so on.
Irony

• Irony may arise if there is a discrepancy (as perceived by the real reader) between
  – the ‘messages’ sent by the various personages
  – the ‘messages’ received by them, or,
  – the ‘messages’ sent and received between them.