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**Between Story and Narrated World: Reflections on the Difference
between Homo- and Heterodiegesis
(Abstract)**

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In describing the position of the narrator, research in literary studies generally follows Gérard Genette's pioneering theory of narrative in distinguishing between the homo- and heterodiegetic type of narrator. This categorization is not sufficient to allow the position of the narrator to be described properly. The different ways in which the terms are used in literary studies reveal a shortcoming in the distinction behind them. Even in Genette's work, there is a contradiction between the definition and the names of the two categories: Genette defines homo- and heterodiegesis with reference to the narrator's presence in the narrated story, whereas he elsewhere states that the diegesis (in the sense of French *diégèse*) is »a universe rather than a train of events (a story)«: it »is therefore not the story but the universe in which the story takes place« (Genette 1988, 17; italics in original). The definition and the names do not match up in Genette's theory of narrative; the expressions ›homo-‹ and ›heterodiegesis‹ would appear to rest on an understanding that is different from what Genette sets out explicitly. Once Genette has described ›diegesis‹ in terms of the universe of the story, the only possible interpretation of the terms ›homo-‹ and ›heterodiegetic‹ is that they are to be understood in relation to the narrated world. This in turn means that a homodiegetic narrator does not, as in Genette's original definition, have to be part of the story: what is now essential is belonging to »the universe in which the story takes place«. Distinguishing between diegesis as universe and as story is significant because it reveals two different criteria for describing the position of the narrator: (i) the ontological status of the narratorial instance, which depends on whether it is part of the spatio-temporal universe of the narrative (the narrated world), and (ii) the degree to which the narratorial instance is involved in the story. The former criterion is clearly a question of ontology; the latter alternates between ontological and thematic criteria. As these two possible definitions of homo- and heterodiegesis are often not distinguished, the various writers who use the terms do so to refer to aspects of narrative that are not necessarily the same. Analytic practice in narrative theory would benefit considerably from keeping them apart. There is therefore a case to be made for using both possible aspects in the analysis of narrative texts while also keeping them separate by definition.

The present article aims to do just that, starting from a theoretical standpoint. Thus, the different types of narrator that are possible are sketched in outline, and then explained with the help of examples.

I begin by exposing the problems that result from using the terms in Genette's manner (1), in order then to develop a list of possible narratorial standpoints based on the one hand on the involvement of the narratorial instance in the narrated world and on the other on its involvement in the story. By establishing separation of the two aspects as a ground rule in this way, a number of misunderstandings that are due to the varied ways in which the terminology has been used to date can be overcome.

There follows a description of those cases that are unambiguously hetero- and homodiegetic (2), after which the problematic cases are considered (3), yielding the different types of

homodiegetic narration that are possible. This latter set of distinctions will, like the others, shed light on the contours of the different narratorial positions and thus be capable of being put profitably into practice in textual interpretation. Accordingly, what is suggested is a way of using the terms that is first unambiguous and second beneficial to the interpretation of works, thus doing justice to the heuristic importance of narratology (see Kindt/Müller 2003; Stanzel 2002, 19).

Thus, whereas the concept of diegesis provides the foundation for a distinction based on an ontological criterion that divides homo- and heterodiegesis from each other, the relationship between story and narrator is used to describe various types of homodiegetic narration. In the process, there come to light two types that are distinguished from each other by involvement in events (›homodiegetic, in the story‹ and ›homodiegetic, not in the story‹ narrators). If the narrator is not involved in events, the question arises of whether it would in principle have been possible for him to be involved in events, which is the norm with ›homodiegetic, not in the story‹ narrators, or whether a physical impossibility is the reason for his lack of involvement in the story. A special case of the ›homodiegetic, not in the story‹ narrator can be derived from this: peridiegetic narration: whereas narratorial instances of the ›homodiegetic, in the story‹ and ›homodiegetic, not in the story‹ types could in principle have been involved in the action and those of the ›homodiegetic, in the story‹ type actually were, peridiegetic narrators are marked by the fact that they cannot have been involved in the events.

In summary, it will be shown that the concept of homodiegesis – in particular in the form in which it has previously been used, where links with the action and appearance in the story were not kept distinct – is in effect an umbrella term that brings together a number of possible forms. There is a prominent distinction between the ›homodiegetic, in the story‹ and the ›homodiegetic, not in the story‹ types of narrator (these types are represented in the present article by the old lawyer in Leo Perutz's »The Beaming Moon« and the narrator who is a friend of Nathanael in E. T. A. Hoffmann's »Sandman« respectively). The different degrees of homodiegetic narrator, which have often been mentioned in previous research and are defined by the strength of the character's presence in the narrated world (from an uninvolved witness to an autodiegetic protagonist), are also to be situated between these two poles.

It will also be shown in the process that the case of the narrator who is, for reasons of physical difference, not involved in events (the peridiegetic narrator) should be treated as a form of homodiegesis (for instance the schoolmaster in Theodor Storm's *Rider on the White Horse* and the first-person narrator in Uwe Timm's *The Discovery of the Currywurst*). What results from these assumptions is, in particular, the crucial idea that narrators who belong to the universe of the story, but cannot claim any temporal or spatial simultaneity with its events, are no different from homodiegetic narrators where the logic of fiction is concerned. It is all the more remarkable that narrators of this kind have often been classed as heterodiegetic in the past. Distinguishing between ontological difference and involvement in events provides a foundation for a more refined description of the narrator, one that is particularly significant in the case of narration that is unreliable or concerned with the unreal.

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