Handbook of Diachronic Narratology

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Introduction: Towards a Diachronic Narratology

1 Why Diachronic Narratology?

Classical narratology from the 1950s up to the 1980s was focused on identifying the formal properties, categorial distinctions, and taxonomies peculiar to narrative. While this approach brought welcome theoretical rigor to the analysis of narrative structures in their specificity, it increasingly came to be seen as decontextualizing narratives from their cultural setting and eluding questions crucial to their historical evolution. In the late 1980s, there thus began to emerge a transformation of the structural paradigm into the pluralistic "new narratologies" that coalesced around "postclassical narratology" (Herman 1999), later apostrophized as "hyphenated narratologies" and ordered into an eight-part typology (Nünning and Nünning 2002). Among the new narratologies, postcolonial narratology and feminist or gendered narratology gained particular prominence, for they pointed the way to a more culturally and historically aware form of narratological practice. The experience of the past twenty years, however, shows that the new approaches have not lived up to the demands of more precise text analysis due to their concentration on thematic and ideological concerns. In the new narratologies, even in their less ideological cognitive and reception-oriented forms, the historical development and cultural diversity of narrative have yet to be adequately explored.

The aim of this *Handbook of Diachronic Narratology* is to take steps toward remedying this deficiency by examining the evolution of specific narrative devices within the framework of various cultures, periods, and genres.

Each of the contributions to this handbook examine two or more narrative traditions within the context of two or more epochs of a given culture. Underlying this approach is the idea that narratology adopts a *supracultural* frame of reference. In contrast to intercultural approaches that situate narratological study "between" cultures, attending to "exchanges" between cultures, a supracultural narratology occupies a position "above" national cultures, literatures, and periods. In this way, narratology is better positioned to observe transhistorical regularities and developmental tendencies peculiar to narratives in their culture-specific manifestations and evolutions.

Such a narratology, being both diachronic and supracultural, may well produce findings that will draw the attention of specialists in cultural studies (*Kulturwissenschaften*). However, this narratology will maintain a disciplinary autonomy, spec-

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ificity, and attention to detail that are lacking in the expansive concept of culture embraced by cultural studies.

Motivation is one example of a narratological concept that is of potential interest for specialists in cultural studies. An eminently culture-sensitive phenomenon such as this enables us to take stock of the mindset that prevails during a particular period and how it develops in various national and historical contexts. Thus, in periods such as the Christian Middle Ages, where expectations of divine salvation and teleological thinking are prominent, structuring techniques such as "motivation from behind" or "final motivation" tend to stand out. In modernism, which is critical of realism, the motivations of realist fiction become intertwined with elements of mythical motivation. The avant-garde after modernism, by contrast, celebrates unconventional rules of motivation that question and destabilize the norms of realist fiction.

2 The Heuristic Starting Point

Little is known as yet about the historical development of the categories and principles that modern narratology, in its synchronic bias, uncritically takes to be universal and valid for narratives throughout the ages. To be sure, narratological studies of works prior to the modern period have been undertaken, but the time now seems ripe to address questions that can be most profitably approached through a properly diachronic narratology in response to Monika Fludernik's call (2003) for the "diachronization of narratology." Starting from which period was the narrator perceived as an entity separate from the author, and how did this distinction evolve in the various national literatures? When did techniques for the representation of consciousness through the mixing of narrator voice and character voice, such as free indirect discourse, emerge, and how are these techniques conditioned over time by the grammatical and stylistic markers of one language or another? How is the gradual movement from sacred to secular worldview from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century reflected in the form and function of narrative sequence in the Romance literatures? These are but some of the questions addressed by the contributions to this handbook, and a mere taste of the many dimensions of a more comprehensive diachronic narratology that remain to be explored by future scholarship.

In contrast to historical narratology, which examines narratives and narrative devices synchronically within their specific historical and social contexts (von Contzen and Tilg 2019), diachronic narratology is interested in the historical emergence and evolution of devices and techniques in selected corpuses. While historical narratology draws attention to the unstable dividing line between author

and narrator in a tale by Chaucer or between external and internal focalization in a Homeric epic (as shown by von Contzen und Tilg in their contribution to this volume), diachronic narratology will view such cases as individual instances within a series of narratives in their historical development.

The handbook contains no entries that are devoted entirely to genres such as the Greek novel or the Renaissance novella. The emphasis remains on narrative techniques and devices in their historical evolution, referring to genre only when textual phenomena can be adequately examined in the light of generic considerations.

3 The Design of the Handbook

When in early 2018 the editors of this handbook sent invitations to narratologists to participate in the undertaking, not everyone accepted. One reason for this was that some had never before worked on diachronic aspects of narrative. The difficulty of the task, which was new to many, was also evident in the fact that about one third of the contributions originally proposed were never submitted. To complicate things further, a number of withdrawals were brought about by the public health crisis that swept across the globe while the book was under preparation, leaving little time for finding suitable replacements.

These circumstances lie behind a number of the gaps that readers are sure to find in this handbook. On the other hand, it was never the aim of the editors to achieve a comprehensive coverage of a subject so vast as diachronic narratology. Nevertheless, the handbook offers a wide spectrum of exploratory studies bearing on specific and clearly defined narrative techniques and devices as they have developed in various national traditions across different periods. This, it is hoped, will provide an attractive framework for further research in the burgeoning field of diachronic narratology.

4 The Structure of the Entries

In exploring the diachronic dimension of narrative techniques, the individual entries proceed in the following manner. Each entry focuses on one particular narratological category, offers a succinct working definition, and applies this definition to the practical analysis of concrete examples from one particular culture and language and from two different periods. In accordance with the explorative design of the handbook, the individual entries refrain from entering into extensive discussions of the conceptual history of the narratological terms in question,

and they also refrain from presenting an overview of previous research on the literary examples drawn on. The particular definition of the respective category is always the author's own and may differ partly from other approaches. For reasons of space, primary sources are generally cited by author and/or title only. Quotations from literary works in languages other than English are translated into English. The original is quoted in addition to the English translation only if the wording itself is relevant for the argumentation. Own translations are marked by an asterisk.

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Eva von Contzen and Stefan Tilg

Two Handbooks – Two Concepts? On "Diachronic" and "Historical" Narratology

In this short addition to the introduction, we take the opportunity, kindly provided to us by the editors, to reflect on the relation of the *Handbook of Diachronic Narratology* (*HDN*) to our own recent *Handbuch Historische Narratologie* (*HHN*). The titles of the two handbooks bear a clear resemblance. Nonetheless, the respective adjectives, "diachronic" vs. "historical," also suggest a difference. Although the two words may be used synonymously in some cases, "diachronic" puts emphasis on the idea of a *development* in time, while "historical" foregrounds the idea of a *setting* in the past. Starting from this observation and from a review of the research field, we distinguished in our introduction to *HHN* two major strands of narrative theory with an interest in older texts: "diachronic" and "historical" narratology.

Diachronic narratologists would typically examine the development of narratological categories such as "narrator" or "focalization" through time, from antiquity to postmodernism, for example. Moreover, the diachronic approach would usually see these categories as universals: their cultural framing and their historical manifestation may differ, but as elementary principles of narrative they work in all historical contexts. Monika Fludernik's well-known manifesto (2003a) about the "Diachronization of Narratology" is a good example of this approach.

Historical narratologists, by contrast, would typically be interested in how the historical and cultural setting of a given narrative relates to its principles of construction. The historical approach would not a priori posit that modern narratological categories are applicable to premodern texts and would be more inclined to look at alternative frames of reference such as ancient rhetoric or poetics. In the general sense of explaining narrative with reference to its historical context, this approach has, of course, long been practiced before and beside narratology. The approach became more specifically narratological, however, in the early years of the twenty-first century, when scholars from the older philologies, after an initial enthusiasm for modern narratology, started to question its validity for their disciplines. Pride of place here belongs to the field of Medieval German Studies, which remains at the center of debate about historical narratology. The volume edited by Harald Haferland and Matthias Meyer, *Historische Narratologie: Mediävistische Perspektiven* (2010), was the first widely heard rallying call and is still a fine point of reference.

Returning to the two handbooks, their titles are not coincidental. *HHN*, leaning toward historical narratology, was a project by scholars from the premodern phi-

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lologies promoting a reassessment of narratology with a view to their historical material. *HDN*, leaning toward diachronic narratology, is a project by scholars with a background mainly in modern literature and theory and promoting an expansion of narratology back in time.

That being said, the difference should not be exaggerated. Ultimately, convergence and complementarity prevail. Historical narratologists, even if they end up rejecting concepts from modern narratology, cannot but take their cue from these concepts at the outset. Conversely, classical narratologists will be more ready to rethink narratological categories when they start to consider their historical situatedness. On a practical level, it should also be noted that there is no such thing as a "purely historical" and a "purely diachronic" approach. The core section of *HHN*, after all, relies on the established narratological categories (e.g., perspective, time, plot) in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern period. A chapter on perspective in antiquity, for instance, is followed by chapters on perspective in the Middle Ages and perspective in the early modern period. While we do not focus on developments across these periods, this chapter structure invites comparison and diachronic observations. In addition, we could not, and did not wish to, avoid the inclusion in *HHN* of contributions that, rather than fundamentally challenging modern narratological categories, happily worked with them to tease out particular historical configurations. Some categories also offer themselves more readily for historical re-evaluation than others. The presence or absence of a narrator in antiquity, for instance, is much more contested than the functions of temporal categories. *HDN*, by (mostly) dealing with at least two periods in the same chapter, follows a different rationale, but nonetheless arrives at a host of results relating to the situatedness of texts in a given historical context.

Apart from these inherent relations between "historical" and "diachronical" viewpoints, the terms themselves are also often mixed in scholarship. Monika Fludernik, in "The Diachronization of Narratology," for instance, speaks of "the historical approach to narrative" (2003a, 332), by which she means tracing the development of genres and narrative forms, such as the development from the verse epic to the novel or the history of the genre of romance in its different manifestations over time. In another much-quoted early call to historicizing narratology, Ansgar Nünning uses the term "historical narratology" when he outlines an approach that is diachronic (2000). Recently, Lukas Werner has suggested differentiating between three foci within what he calls "historical narratology": a focus on context and contextualization, a focus on the history of form, and a focus on the history of theory. Nünning's agenda, with its emphasis on the cultural embedding of any historicizing narratological approach, would be an example of the first kind. Werner adduces Fludernik's approach as an example of the second kind, since she is interested in tracing individual narrative features such

as metanarrative commentary. Approaches that describe the history of narrative theory, that is, metatheoretical approaches, exemplify the third focus. Werner further opens up a distinction between "revisionist," "affirmative," and "complementary" approaches, depending on their relationship to narratology and its established categories. While these categories are helpful in discerning someone's stance toward narratology, they complicate the terms "historical" and "diachronic" narratology by opening up yet another framework for describing what narratological approaches to premodern texts do. Once again, it is within Medieval German Studies that we find the greatest consistency. Here, historical narratology has become established as the term of choice for describing approaches that highlight period-specific parameters of narrative.

With its distinctive research interests, both *HDN* and *HHN* will hopefully contribute to establishing a general sensitivity toward the respective research interests that distinguish historical narratological from diachronic narratological ones. This would certainly help to avoid misconceptions and lead to greater clarity in mapping out the aims of narratological research – especially since the two foci are closely linked and can undoubtedly profit from each other. Even more importantly, we hope that both diachronic and historical narratology will acquire greater importance and visibility in mainstream narratology, which to date remains predominantly modern or postmodern in its choice of material (see von Contzen 2018a). What is of paramount importance to us in this context is our firm understanding to retain the core terminology of narratology. Of course, a nuanced historical approach to narrative in premodern contexts may result in adapting the terminology. Yet it seems to counter the very idea of narratology to replace its established terminology with something else entirely (see Bleumer 2015 for an attempt in this direction). The shared set of concepts, including narrator, perspective, plot, character, and so forth, are the heart of narratology and have contributed immensely to the fact that narrative theorists can communicate their ideas on very different texts and contexts. The terminology of narratology is its lingua franca: even if historical narratologists may adjust or discard certain terms for certain contexts, the benchmark for our ongoing debate remains the terminology that classical and postclassical narratology have established.

Just as all roads lead to Rome, we think that all approaches to diachronic and historical narratology can contribute to a deeper understanding of narrative. In our view, this is of greater import than disputes over terminology and methodology, not only but especially when we are addressing a larger interdisciplinary audience. To illustrate this point, we would like to conclude with two examples, one from antiquity and one from the medieval period. In each case, we take a well-known narrative text, present both diachronically and historically oriented analyses, and consider their respective values.

1 Penelope in the *Odyssey*

The *Odyssey* is a classic text not only of world literature but also for narratologists, who frequently test their concepts on it. Rather than such a deductive approach, however, we here follow an inductive one: we take a particular passage/problem from the second half of the epic and ask how various narratological analyses help us better understand the narrative. The problem is almost as classic as the text itself: why does Penelope in book 18, although signs of Odysseus's return are increasing, suddenly announce to the suitors that she will remarry?

In her address to the suitors (18.250–280), Penelope first fondly remembers Odysseus and quotes the instructions that he allegedly gave her before departing for Troy: if he does not return before their son, Telemachus, grows his first beard, she will give up on him and remarry. The time has now come and Penelope makes this known, though vaguely and unwillingly: "So he [Odysseus] spoke, and now all this is being brought to pass. The night shall come when a hateful marriage shall fall to the lot of me accursed" (18.271–273; trans. from the Loeb edition by Murray and Dimock). In the final part of her speech, Penelope goes on to express her disappointment in the suitors who have failed to bring her presents and have even lived on her fortune:

> Those who wish to woo a lady of worth and the daughter of a rich man and vie with one another, these themselves bring cattle and fat sheep, a banquet for the friends of the bride, and give to her glorious gifts; they do not devour the livelihood of another without atonement. (18.276–280)

The suitors understand the implication perfectly well and will shower Penelope with offerings soon. Before that, however, and immediately after Penelope's speech, we hear the reaction from Odysseus, who witnessed the scene incognito: "So she spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus was glad, because she drew from them gifts, and beguiled their souls with winning words, but her mind was set on other things" (18.281–283).

Nothing in the text prepares us for Penelope's seeming change of mind, nor do we get any further information about Odysseus's interpretation. The latter implies some ruse on Penelope's part, but we know neither whether Odysseus is right nor what the exact nature of the ruse might be: does it refer to the very decision to remarry, or just to the fact that Penelope wants to sell herself to the highest bidder? The problem runs deep and will not be definitively resolved by narratology. A number of narratological approaches by classicists, however, have shed light on the passage and expanded our ideas about Homer's narrative principles.

Irene de Jong made herself a reputation for adopting structuralist narratology (mainly in the form developed by her teacher, Mieke Bal) early on and successfully

applying it to classical texts. She represents diachronic narratology in an almost pure form that easily moves back and forth in history, presenting Homer in the same way as the authors of modern novels. Her best-known area of specialization is focalization (roughly in Bal's definition). Unsurprisingly, then, she discusses our passage in related terms (1994; 2001, 449–451). De Jong analyses Odysseus's reaction to Penelope's speech as an instance of "embedded focalization": the perception of a character (Odysseus) is embedded in narrator speech ("So she spoke, and much-enduring noble Odysseus was glad, because [. . .]"). The larger assumption is that Homer, far from being a primitive narrator, is just as capable of zooming in and out of characters' minds as the authors of modern novels. Focalization is an essential part of his (modern, novel-like, masterful) narrative art; hence, he never focalizes without a reason. In our case, the fact that the phrase "her mind was set on other things" forms part of Odysseus's focalization would not only signal that Penelope really has something up her sleeve (otherwise, Homer would confuse his audience, which, as a consistent and purposeful narrator, he never does), but also that her deceit has to do with Odysseus, or more precisely with his advice that Penelope has just quoted to the suitors. De Jong's conclusion is that Penelope invented Odysseus's advice, and that this is precisely her ruse, appreciated by the ever-cunning Odysseus. Penelope, for other reasons, is still serious about remarriage, but she wants to sell herself to the highest bidder. De Jong's specific interpretation of Odysseus's focalization may be disputed, but what matters here is simply that narratological assumptions shape a larger reading. We get a modern Homer who employs focalization in a sophisticated manner.

Wolfgang Kullmann's study of "hidden thoughts" in ancient literature (2002) includes a direct response to de Jong in a historical-narratological spirit. Kullmann argues that modern structuralist narratology, developed on the basis of the modern novel, is not always suitable for the analysis of ancient narrative because it neglects historical and cognitive anthropological dimensions. All in all, Kullmann paints a more "primitive" Homer who did not regularly make psychological and narratological distinctions dear to later periods. Regarding de Jong's focalization, for instance, Kullmann is skeptical as to whether Homer clearly distinguishes "embedded" perspectives of a character from the perspective of the author/narrator. Taking the example of the recognition of Odysseus by his wet nurse Eurykleia in 19.399–466, he shows that what has been termed Eurykleia's "mental flashback" by de Jong is rather an entangled composite of narrator and character perspective in the sense that the narrator partly focuses on facts with particular relevance to the character. Focalization, Kullmann concludes, does not always seem to work in modern ways, and perhaps the term should be avoided entirely. As far as our Penelope passage is concerned, Kullmann accounts for the curious lack of motivation by the – from a modern viewpoint "limited," but we could also say "different" – narrative means at

Homer's disposal: the only extensive way he had of representing "hidden thoughts" was silent monologues (e.g., speaking "to one's heart"). Two other options, indirect speech and "embedded focalization," are typically short and simple, with the latter usually comprising a single word or a sentence. The only way of showing more of Penelope's (or Odysseus's) thoughts, then, would have been Homer's variant of the interior monologue, which, according to Kullmann, would have been too cumbersome at this moment of suspense. And it is precisely suspense that Homer gains by the lack of motivation. The audience is referred to the continuation of the plot, from which it may gather Penelope's real intentions (which, in Kullmann's reading, never were to remarry).

In a way, Kullmann's reading could be paraphrased as "plot beats psychology." Jonas Grethlein's paper (2018) on the Penelope problem works with the same idea but gives it a different twist and a more programmatic frame. If Kullmann argues at least in part that Homer *could* not represent Penelope's thoughts, Grethlein emphasizes that he *would* not. While he would have been perfectly able to do so, he chose not to because he followed a narrative protocol very different from that of the modern novel. Not only does Homer privilege plot over characters and their minds, but plot itself is constructed radically differently. Spelling out his argument, Grethlein embraces the basic ideas of Clemens Lugowski's monograph *Die Form der Individualität im Roman* (1932) and adapts them for Homer and antiquity. Lugowski explores the narrative logic of medieval and early modern storytelling and details a number of stark contrasts with modern ideals about the motivation of plot. Most important is the concept of "retroactive motivation" (*Motivation von hinten*), according to which the plot is motivated by its known or desired ending rather than by a coherent series of causes and effects. Mapped onto Homer, this means that Homer simply does not care about a consistent motivation of our scene. He needs it to drive the plot, leading up to the contest of the bow in which a suitor should be picked, and ultimately to the recognition of Odysseus. Homer's audience would have regarded this not as a problem or a narrative weakness (in fact, we do not know of any such complaint in antiquity) but as a valid device for bringing plots to an end. In fact, the apparent lack of motivation would even have generated suspense in an otherwise well-known mythological story (again, this accords with Kullmann's reading). People knew how the story of Odysseus and Penelope ends, but they could have been surprised with retardations and unexpected turns such as Penelope's change of mind: how is she going to be reunited with Odysseus if she now wants to marry one of the suitors? Thus, Homer may be seen as part of a larger tradition of premodern narrative, the plots of which are either known from mythology or stereotypical enough to anticipate the eventual outcome. On these conditions, *how* a story is told matters more than *what* is told. Penelope's mysterious move would be a striking instance of that *how*.

2 Chaucer and the Author/Narrator Debate

Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343–1400), author of *The Canterbury Tales*, is clearly the most famous poet of the later medieval period writing in Middle English. A contested issue in Chaucer criticism has been the question of how to distinguish between Chaucer the poet and the characters he creates, who in turn tell their stories – including, possibly, the fiction of Chaucer's own participation in the pilgrimage. All medieval and early modern readers of Chaucer unequivocally talk about Chaucer as the (only) instance responsible for the works. This does not mean that they did not discuss the various characters and tellers he created, yet for centuries, Chaucer criticism could do without the concept of a narrator. Only in the mid-twentieth century, spurred by trends in literary studies, was the narrator introduced. The Chaucer scholar E. Talbot Donaldson marked the turning point: he made a distinction between the historical Chaucer, who, as the surviving records tell us, was a civil servant and political figure; Chaucer the poet, who emerges as a poet only through his works; and Chaucer the pilgrim, the fictional character of the *Canterbury Tales*. According to Donaldson, Chaucer is all of these: using the device of the *persona* or mask, "the several Chaucers must have inhabited one body, and in that sense the fictional first person is no fiction at all. In an oral tradition of literature, the first person probably always shared the personality of his creator" (1954, 935). Donaldson maintains that in a setting of oral delivery by Chaucer himself, the audience would obviously have attributed everything that was being read to Chaucer himself, who impersonated the different roles.

Later scholars, however, changed Donaldson's terminology silently so that the author putting on a mask became an entity in its own right: the narrator. Thus, R. M. Lumiansky distinguished sharply between the author Chaucer and his pilgrim-persona, the narrator, who is "a separate person from Chaucer the author of the *Tales*" (1955, 53). From the mid-twentieth century on, then, Chaucer criticism has been governed by the principle of keeping author and narrator(s) separate. Historical narratology, by focusing on the realities of the production and reception of medieval literature, not only draws attention to this issue but also provides further evidence against the narrator-thesis and, in doing so, offers a fresh perspective on metalepsis.

Looking more closely at Chaucer's works, we can see that for him, as for his audience, the distinction between the different levels of the narrative we, as a modern audience, are accustomed to does not hold. "Levels" refers to the distinction commonly made in narratological models of narrative communication: the "real-world" audience on the outside which is addressed through the narrator(s), who in turn communicate the characters' discourse. In medieval literature, this elaborate model of communication does not apply. "Chaucer says X" is frequently used in con-

texts where we would expect a character to be the speaker, or rather the ascription of a passage to a character. For instance, several marginalia in manuscripts of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* mark what is clearly a character's direct speech as the author's, using the Latin term *auctor*. In her discussion of these marginalia, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton notes that "the *auctor* is often conflated with the narrator wherever a vocative (or an apostrophe, rhetorically speaking) appears" (2012, 212). However, it is questionable whether these cases are indeed "conflations." Rather, they point to a literary practice that is predicated on a different idea of authorship and textual authority. Across medieval literature, we oftentimes find passages where narrative levels are transgressed, forming metalepses. There are at least two prominent kinds of such conflations of narrative levels: sometimes the author may interfere in the narrative, even though he is not part of the narrated world; and sometimes a character may break out of his or her narrative situation and address the audience. The "conflation" of levels in the first sense is especially strong in those parts of narrative texts that do not contribute significantly to the development of the plot, such as in ekphrastic passages. In the extended description of images and engravings, the author enters the intradiegetic world by means of the first person.

A striking example can be found in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" (see von Contzen 2018b). The "Knight's Tale" (KnT) opens the *Canterbury Tales*: befitting the nobility of its teller, it is a story of epic and tragic scope centered on the two knights Arcite and Palamon, who have both desperately fallen in love with Emely, Theseus's beautiful sister-in-law. In order to determine who is worthy of marrying Emely, Theseus has a grand amphitheater built in which the two knights and their men assemble for the decisive fight. This theater features three temples, devoted to Mars, Diana, and Venus, respectively (KnT 1902–1913). Each of them is described in great detail. The descriptions are characterized by an increasing sense of immersion on the teller's part. The teller – the Knight, one would assume – is quite overt throughout the tale, frequently coming to the fore in brief interjections and comments that punctuate his telling. Yet in the extended ekphrasis of the temples, the teller's involvement in the narrative intensifies to the extent that he imagines himself being present *in* the temples. For instance, in the temple of Mars: "There saugh I first the derke ymaginyng / Of Felony" (There I saw first the malicious plotting / of Felony; KnT 995–1996); "The sleere of hymself yet saugh I ther" (*The slayer of himself yet saw I there; KnT 2005); "Yet saugh I Woodnesse, laughynge in his rage" (*Yet I saw Madness, laughing in his rage; KnT 2011). The frequency of these authorial intrusions becomes even greater in the description of the third and last temple, that of Diana. In the end, it has become almost impossible to keep track of who is talking now on what narrative level. Are we hearing the Knight's voice, and do we imagine him standing in the temple? Or is it Chaucer the pilgrim who is responsible for recounting the frame in which the "Knight's Tale" is embedded?

While modern narrative theory prompts us to posit a narrator and assume the existence of different narrative layers and levels, it is possible from a historical narratological perspective to challenge this approach and argue that it is both unnecessarily complex and an imposition on the actual narrative practice medieval authors and their audiences were engaged in. To claim that in the example of Chaucer, the Knight-as-narrator, who tells the story, steps into his (heterodiegetic) narrative, while the Knight is part of Chaucer-the-pilgrim's narrative, who in turn is a narrator figure deliberately set up by Chaucer the real man, runs counter to Ockham's razor. Following the lead of the marginalia, for a medieval audience, we can argue that it was Chaucer's voice all the way through: he impersonates the Knight and imagines the images he describes as if he were standing right in front of them. What counts is that the immersive effect is heightened, not that a presumed idea of neatly separate narrative levels applies.

The historical narratological approach thus highlights a distinctive feature of medieval narrative and thereby challenges our understanding of both metalepsis and the author/narrator distinction. Evidence from the Middle Ages suggests that narratives do not require the stance of a narrator that "communicates" between text and audience. Also, switches between different levels of the narration, since they can be ascribed to the author, do not break the illusion of the narrative, but heighten it. From a diachronic narratological perspective, the non-transgressive, non-illusion-breaking function of metalepsis and its links to the author are relevant primarily because they shed new light on the development of metalepsis.

For a long time, metaleptic transgressions were seen as a feature of modern and especially postmodern literature. Narratologists have challenged this view. Monika Fludernik, for instance, has demonstrated that metalepses occurred in earlier periods of literary history (in her corpus, mainly in connection with scene shifts) and that they are not necessarily anti-illusionistic (2003b). Cases such as the ones we have found in the "Knight's Tale" (which also occur elsewhere, not only in Chaucer but also in other medieval narratives) may thus provide further evidence of a change in the uses and functions of metalepsis: from an unmarked feature that creates illusion to a marked feature of breaking it. The fact that a very similar argument has also been made with respect to ancient literature (see de Jong 2009) further demonstrates the validity of the argument and stresses once again the need for a historically sensitive narratological approach.

The readings presented above would merit further discussion, especially if we were to enter into a debate about whether they are "right" or "wrong." But this is not our concern here. Our aim is to show on a more general level that both diachronic and historical approaches have their value. It is fair to apply modern concepts of focalization and mind-reading to Homer because they add interpretative options

and establish a basic level of comparability. At the same time, historical contextualization helps us understand that this cannot be the full story and that narratological principles outside our established system may be at work. Chaucer may speak directly to his audience and not require the concept of a narrator. But it is only the idea of a narrator which, combined with a historical-narratological analysis, throws Chaucer's characteristic authorial metalepsis into relief and leads to a better understanding of metalepsis as a feature of narrative texts. Having both perspectives enables us to ponder individual passages and the general narrative make-up in novel ways. One could object that we must take a stance at some point, and we certainly will in more specific contexts. In general, however, we think that tensions between the approaches (of which the diachronic and the historical as described above are just extremes in a broad gamut) are not only inevitable but also welcome and productive. They stimulate reflection on narratological concepts and eventually lead to a richer understanding of narrative. We hope that the present *Handbook* will be the next step in carving out a shared research field, and we look forward to further narratological work on both modern and historical Homers and Chaucers.

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