

Annotation Guidelines for Narrative Levels and Narrative Acts v1.0

1 Tagset Conception

Narrative levels as proposed by Genette (1983, pp. 227–231) aim to describe the relations between an embedded narrative and the diegesis (Pier & Coste, 2014) and indicate a clear hierarchical structure between these diegetic levels. Genette (1988, p. 84) explicitly states his intention to systemize the existing notion of *embeddings*, which, according to him, lacks “the threshold between one diegesis and another” as well as the possibility to hierarchical structure a “second diegesis [...] within the first diegesis”.

In these guidelines, the often co-occurring notion of embeddings and *framed narratives* is grouped under the term *narrative act*.¹ Since narrative acts not always can be considered in conjunction with vertical levels (e.g. Nelles [1997, p. 132] points out the possibility of horizontal embeddings), we clearly separate narrative levels and narrative acts.

1.1 Tag: Narrative Levels

Typically, narrative levels arise “when a character in a story” begins to tell a story of his or her own”, which creates a narrative act within a narrative act (Jahn, 2005). The change of a speaker is the most basic characteristic of levels and obligatory in Genette’s terminology (Lahn and Meister, 2008, p. 83), where for each narrative act on a certain level a different speaker occurs (figure 1; c.f. Jahn, 2005).² Ryan (1991, p. 176) describes the switch of speakers as an *illocutionary boundary*, which can be *crossed actually*, when a new voice like a character reports a story on the second level within a direct speech act. Additionally, utterances of characters presented by the narrator as in indirect discourse (indirect speech, character thoughts) are considered as a *virtually crossed* illocutionary boundary (Ryan, 1991, pp. 176–177).

Furthermore, Ryan (1991, p. 177) highlights that levels not only arise through the switch of speakers but also if a “new system of reality is introduced” like in *Alice in Wonderland*, where “the primary reality of an everyday world” switches to “the dream world of Wonderland [...] in a continuous speech act”. This is defined as the crossing of an *ontological boundary*. While *Alice in Wonderland* marks an actually crossed ontological boundary (the fictional characters indeed enter another form of reality), virtual crossing occurs in this case when the second reality “is anchored” in the primary one, e.g. if the plot of a movie is described from the perspective of the primary reality (Ryan, 1991, p. 177).³ Both, illocutionary and ontological boundaries, can occur combined,⁴ which leads to six

¹Conjunctions and delimitations between embeddings and frames are addressed in section 1.2.

²In Genette’s terminology, the narrating instance of a first level (speaker A in figure 1) is “extradiegetic by definition” (Genette, 1983, p. 229), therefore his story on level 1 is intradiegetic. An intradiegetic speaker (B) then tells a metadiegetic story (level 2), a metadiegetic speaker (C) a metametadiegetic narration (level 3) and so forth. Within the annotation, we only assign the level by a number, and for the speaker, we set a unique ID (c.f. section 2.2 “Speaker: Identity”)

³An ontological border is also crossed virtually, when the first level narrator cites an existing fictional narrative, like the quote of *Rip van Winkle* in Max Frisch’s *Stiller*.

⁴Ryan, 1991 determines an actual crossed illocutionary and ontological boundary (4a in figure 2) as “a fiction within a fiction” told by different speakers (e.g. the stories of the intradiegetic narrator Scheherazade

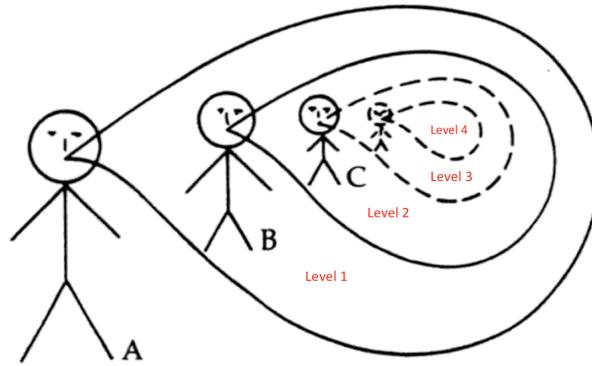


Figure 1: Narrative levels in conjunction with speech acts as proposed by Genette

possible boundaries (c.f. figure 2) that are considered as a requirement for a new narrative level in these guidelines.

Ryan (1991, pp. 175–176) also indicates that each utterance of a new voice may create “its own semantic universe”, which potentially deviates from the primary reality of the narrative and therefore may establish a new narrative level. Even though the theoretical assumption of a level switch through each crossing of an illocutionary boundary seems considerable, these guidelines only focus at levels, in which indeed a new narrative act is realized.⁵

		Illocutionary boundary	
		—	+
Ontological boundary	—	1	2a: Actually crossed 2b: Virtually crossed
	+	3a: Actually crossed 3b: Virtually crossed	4a: Actually crossed 4b: Virtually crossed

Figure 2: Boundaries between narrative levels following Ryan

1.2 Tag: Narrative Acts

As proposed above, narrative acts cover both, embedded and framed narratives. Framing is more a “presentational technique”, where the rather short frame narration encloses a more ample inner tale⁶ like a painting (Pier & Coste, 2014). An example is Joseph Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness*, in which an extradiegetic narrator only introduces the character of Marlow that tells the story of his voyage up the Congo River on a second level (figure 3). In contrast, embeddings can be thought of as smaller insertings “within a larger unit” (Pier & Coste, 2014), e.g. in Kleist’s short story *Improbable Veracities* an

in *The Arabian Nights*. Instead, virtual crossing for both boundaries (4b) would refer to a description of a metafictional story from the perspective of the first level speaker but including the mention of a second level speaker (Ryan, 1991, p. 177). This rare constellation occurs in *Theme of the Traitor and the Hero* by Jorge Luis Borges, where the primary narrator tells his plan to write a story, whose narrator will be “Ryan”, but the first level narrator “never speaks as Ryan himself” (Ryan, 1991, p. 177).

⁵If only the boundaries for potential narrative levels are of interest, this may lead to tasks like the detection of direct and indirect speech acts that has been done separately, c.f. Brunner (2013).

⁶*Binnenerzählung* in German literary discours (Lahn & Meister, 2008, p. 79).



Figure 3: Framing in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*

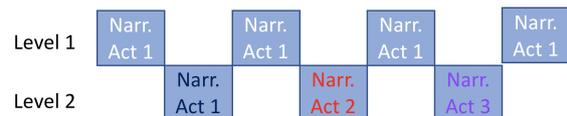


Figure 4: Multiple embeddings of independent narrative acts in Kleist’s *Improbable Veracities*

officer tells three stories that appear as independent narrative acts on the second level (figure 4).⁷ Practically, the border between the dominance of an inner tale and a frame narrative is fluent, and this annotation does not aim to identify framing or embedding techniques, their specific function (c.f. Rimmon-Kenan, 2005, p. 95; Lahn and Meister, 2008, pp. 87–90) or a certain “main narrative” within several stacked narrative acts (Gius, 2015, p. 164).

As opposed to the “vertical” arrangement of narrative acts within levels, Nelles (1997, p. 132) describes “horizontal” embedded narrative acts, which appear at the same level.⁸ This happens, when texts by different narrators are presented next to each other without an upper frame narrator. For example, in J. M. R. Lenz epistolary novel *Der Waldbruder* several letters by alternating characters are presented on the same diegetic level (figure 5).

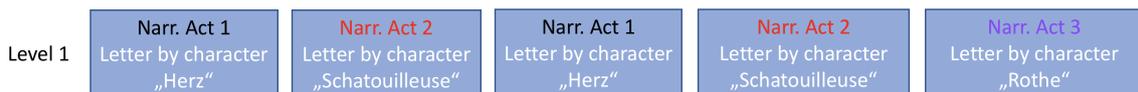


Figure 5: First five letters of the epistolary novel *Der Waldbruder*

Moreover, Pier and Coste (2014) describe *digression* as a form of embedding without the switch of levels. This includes excursus, e.g. if the narrator directly addresses the reader, which correspond with metanarration or metafiction,⁹ and occurs, for example, in Houellebecq’s novel *Extension du domaine de la lutte*, where the narrator states:

The pages that follow constitute a novel; I mean, a succession of anecdotes in which I am the hero. [...] There are some authors who employ their talent in the delicate description of varying states of soul, character traits, etc. I shall not be counted among these.

Additionally, Duyfhuizen (2005, p. 187) describes intercalation as a form of digression. This includes intercalated apologues (Duyfhuizen, 2005, p. 187) like Aesop’s fable *The Wolf and the Lamb* that closes with a moral statement:

The tyrant can always find an excuse for his tyranny. The unjust will not listen to the reasoning of the innocent.

Both, the moral of the fable and the excursus in the novel, are supposed to be annotated as separated narrative acts without a switch of the narrative level (c.f. figure 6).

In summary, a new narrative act is indicated by a level switch (illocutionary or ontological boundary) or by horizontal insertings (letters without framing instance; apologues). Be-

⁷In our terminology, we count narrative acts separately on each level. Narrative act 1 to 3 on the second level represent the embedded stories, while narrative act 1 on the first level marks the gathering, in which the officer tells these stories.

⁸Nelles (2010) also defines the term *modal embedding* for dream worlds. In contrast to Ryan (1991), he doesn’t see a level switch here, even though he states a shift in the ‘reality’ of the fictional world. Still, for our guidelines the assumption of a subordinate level for crossing ontological boundaries seems more accurate (Ryan, 1991).

⁹We aim to capture metanarration and metafiction as properties in caption 2.2, where also differences are explained.



Figure 6: Attached apologue in Aesop's fable *The Wolf and the Lamb*

sides such formal criteria for narrative acts, Lämmert (1955) indicates that a new narrative act at least diverges in time, setting or the corresponding characters from the previous one.

2 Annotation Scheme

2.1 Inclusion and Stacking of Narrative Acts

The main focus of the annotation is to determine the relationship between vertical stacked or horizontal structured narrative acts, which happens by associating the narrative level. Therefore, no limits of inclusion exist, narrative acts can have multiple embeddings and on each level several independent narrative acts can occur. Therefore, embedded narrative acts can frame stories and vice versa. Ryan (1991 and 2002) illustrates this by means of *The Arabian Nights*, where the framing narrative act of Scheherazade and the Sultan directly includes the stories of "Ali Baba" and "The Three Ladies of Baghdad" told by Scheherazade on level 2. Moreover, the latter story includes several independent narrative acts on level 3 like Amina's tale (stories 4, 5, 7, 8 in figure 7), which also includes "The young Man's Tale" on level 4 (figure 8).

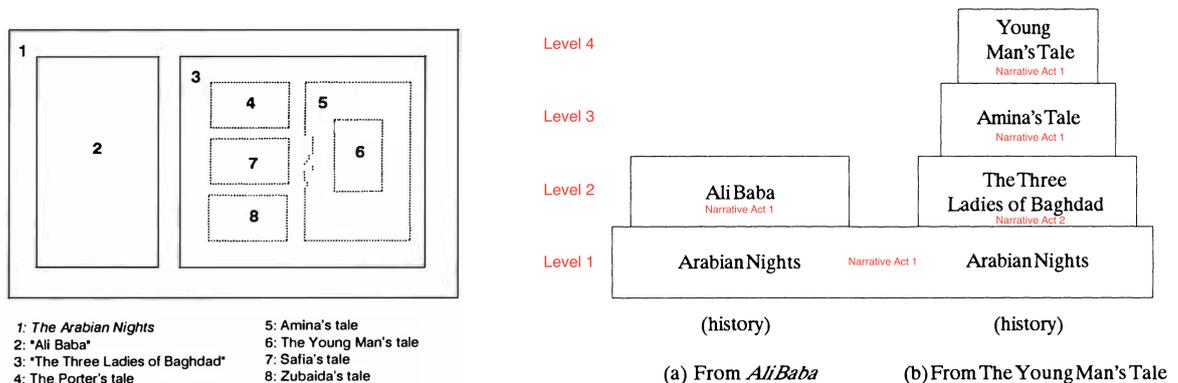


Figure 7: Inclusion scheme for the *Arabian Nights* by Ryan

Figure 8: Stacking of narrative levels in the *Arabian Nights* (adapted from Ryan)

To represent the vertical structure of narrative levels, which each can include a limitless amount of narrative acts, we use the following nested structure of tags:

- level 1
 - narrative act 1
 - narrative act 2
 - narrative act 3
 - ...
 - narrative act n
- level 2
 - narrative act 1
 - narrative act 2
 - narrative act 3

- ...
- narrative act n
- ...
- level n

The span of the annotation can cover whole chapters but also single paragraphs, complete sentences or clauses. In CATMA, three narrative levels with three narrative acts are predefined. If the annotation requires a deeper structure of tags, please create them along the existing structure.

2.2 Properties

Properties aim to reflect on the annotation decision and give further information about the relation of narrative acts and levels.¹⁰

Upper Level: Boundary

This property indicates the boundary between narrative levels following Ryan (c.f. figure 2). As mentioned above, illocutionary and ontological boundaries can be combined.

- illocutionary boundary (actual)
- illocutionary boundary (virtual)
- ontological (actual crossed)
- ontological (virtual crossed)

Upper Level: head of former level

The annotator should indicate the narrative act of the former level, in which the current narrative act is embedded. For example, the head of “Amina’s Tale” is “The Three Ladies of Baghdad” that is narrative act 2 on level 2 (c.f. figure 8; see also the example in section 3 figure 12b).

Speaker: Identity

Since stacked narrative levels can have multiple narrators, we capture the identity of each speaker. This is done by alphabetic ID’s for each speaker identity:¹¹

- speaker entity a
- speaker entity b
- ...
- speaker entity n

For example, in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* on each level a different narrator occurs: Robert Walton writes in his journal about the meeting with Victor Frankenstein and quotes the oral narration of Frankenstein, who cites the metadiegetic narration of his creature (c.f. Duyfhuizen, 2005, p. 187).¹²

¹⁰The properties that describe the upper level, have to be set only from the second level upwards.

¹¹We don’t use Genette’s terminology for speakers (extradiegetic, intradiegetic, metadiegetic) since they only capture the level of a speaker, not his identity.

¹²Another example would be Theodor Storm’s *Der Schimmelreiter*, c.f. Lahn and Meister (2008, pp. 85–87))

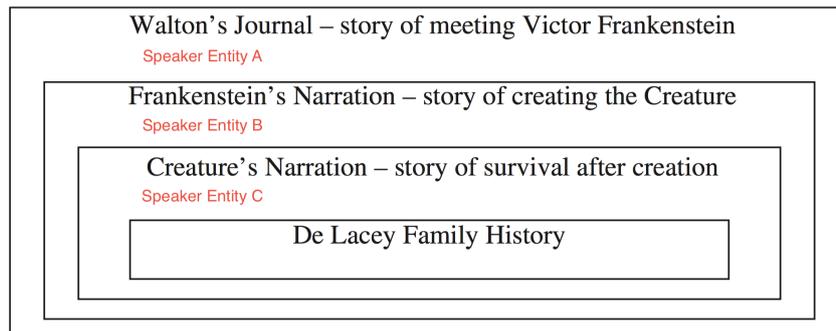


Figure 9: Different narrators for each level in *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*

In contrast, when the reporting voice stays constant between level 1 and 2 (e.g. if the same narrator reports a dream, which corresponds with the crossing of an ontological border), it should be annotated as the same speaker entity.

Speaker: Story Presence

This property captures if a speaker is present in the story or not. We use the terms defined by Genette:

- homodiegetic (Speaker is part of the diegesis)
- heterodiegetic (Speaker isn't part of the diegesis)

Narrative: Type

To record the type of narrative or speech act of an intradiegetic character, we annotate the textual type of a narrative act. Predefined are:

- undefined (This applies to the most extradiegetic narrators on level 1.)
- direct speech act (c.f. *Heart of Darkness* in figure 3)
- indirect speech act (c.f. the example of Chekhov's *An Avenger* below)
- quotation of a literary work (e.g. the quote of *Rip van Winkle* in Max Frisch's *Stiller*; see also the example of Kipling's *Beyond the Pale* in section 3)
- letter (for example, the letters in *Waldbruder* [figure 5] or *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* [figure 9]).
- transcribed speech (This also occurs in *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, since Walton transcribes Frankenstein's narration in his letters.)

If a specific type of narrative seems missing in the predefined property values, feel free to set an "ad hoc value" in CATMA.

Example: Speaker switch within one narrative act in Chekhov's *An Avenger*

Following (Ryan, 1991, pp. 176–177), we consider indirect utterances or thoughts of characters presented by the narrator as an implication for a switch of levels (c.f. above: virtually crossed illocutionary boundary in section 1.2). Therefore, it happens that two speakers occur within a single narrative act like in *An Avenger*. First, the thoughts of Fyodor Fyodorovitch Sigaev are uttered within direct speech and secondly expressed by the frame narrator:

[“Shouldn’t I challenge him to a duel?” flashed through Sigaev’s mind. “It’s doing him too much honour, though. . . . Beasts like that are killed like dogs. . . .”]_{LEVEL 2; NARRATIVE ACT 1; SPEAKER ENTITY 2}

...

[His imagination pictured how he would blow out their brains, how blood would flow in streams over the rug and the parquet, how the traitress’s legs would twitch in her last agony. . . . But that was not enough for his indignant soul. The picture of blood, wailing, and horror did not satisfy him. He must think of something more terrible.]_{LEVEL 2; NARRATIVE ACT 1; SPEAKER ENTITY 1}

This passage is embedded within the narration of the extradiegetic narrator of level 1. This is why, the direct speech get’s “speaker entity 2”, while “speaker entity 1” in the second paragraph refers back to the narrator of the first level.¹³

Metanarration & Metafiction

Both, metanarration and metafiction, address self-reflexive utterances. While metanarration covers “the narrator’s reflections on the act or process of narration” (like in the example of Houellebecq’s novel in section 1.2), metafiction rather concerns “comments on the fictionality and/or constructedness of the narrative” (Neumann & Nünning, 2015). Metafiction occurs in Italo Calvino’s *If on a winter’s night a traveler*, where narrator describes the reading process in second person. Each chapter contains another version of how the novel could be written (each is a separate narrative act), but none of these stories get’s finished.

As mentioned in section 1.2, metanarration and metafiction are supposed to be annotated on the same level, in which they occur, but they create a new narrative act. These narrative acts can be marked by the property values “metanarration” or “metafiction”.

Metalepsis

We capture metaleptic intrusions of the upper or the lower level (c.f. Lahn and Meister, 2008, p. 90). For example, if a metafictional character from level 2 appears in a narrative act on level 1 (by violating ontological boundaries), we add the property value “intrusion by level 2” to the annotation of the narrative act on level 1.¹⁴

3 Workflow in CATMA

The short story *Beyond the Pale* by Rudyard Kipling begins with an apologue that is supposed to be annotated as first independent narrative act on level 1. To do so, select the text (c.f. figure 10a), open the dropdown menu of level 1 in the sidebar of CATMA and choose “1st narrative act (level 1)” by clicking on the corresponding color (10b).¹⁵ Then, select the property values: The narrative type is an apologue, and since this is the first speaker it gets “speaker identity a” (10c).

In the next narrative act, the speaker switches to the main extradiegetic narrator (“speaker identity b”) that introduces the character of Trejago. Since the first part was only an

¹³Another possibility for two speakers within one narrative act is shown in section 3 figure 13a.

¹⁴Originally, Genette’s concept of metalepsis includes “any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator into the diegetic world” (Genette, 1983, pp. 234–235). For example, if two intradiegetic characters on level 1 speak about the narrator, who writes the story (like in Flann O’Brians *At Swim-Two-Birds*), this refers to the extradiegetic point of view of the narrator and is captured within our guidelines by setting the property value “metanarration” (see above).

¹⁵In CATMA, it is only necessary to annotate the corresponding narrative, since the layer is already captured through the nested tag structure.

Rudyard Kipling
 BEYOND THE PALE.
 in: Plain Tales from the Hill

“Love heeds not caste nor sleep a broken bed. I went in search of love and lost myself.”
 Hindu Proverb.
 A man should, whatever happens, keep to his own caste, race and breed. Let the White go to the White and the Black to the Black. Then, whatever trouble falls is in the ordinary course of things — neither sudden, alien, nor unexpected.
 This is the story of a man who wilfully stepped beyond the safe limits of decent every-day society, and paid for it heavily.

(a)

Tagsets	Tag Color
▼ SANTA_final	
▶ level 1	Blue
▶ 1st narrative act (level 1)	Blue
▶ 2nd narrative act (level 1)	Blue
▶ 3rd narrative act (level 1)	Blue
▶ level 2	Green
▶ level 3	Red

(b)

Property	Value	Assigned
▼ speaker: identity		
	speaker entity a	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	speaker entity b	<input type="checkbox"/>
	speaker entity c	<input type="checkbox"/>
▼ narrative: type		
	transcribed speech	<input type="checkbox"/>
	direct speech act	<input type="checkbox"/>
	letter	<input type="checkbox"/>
	undefined	<input type="checkbox"/>
	literary work (cite)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	apologue	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
▼ speaker: story relationship		
	heterodiegetic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	homodiegetic	<input type="checkbox"/>

(c)

Figure 10

apologue, there is no level switch here and it is supposed to be annotated as “2nd narrative act” on level 1 (figure 11b).

This is the story of a man who wilfully stepped beyond the safe limits of decent every-day society, and paid for it heavily.
 He knew too much in the first instance; and he saw too much in the second. He took too deep an interest in native life; but he will never do so again.
 Deep away in the heart of the City, behind Jitha Megji's bustee, lies Amir Nath's Gully, which ends in a dead-wall pierced by one grated window. At the head of the Gully is a big cow-byre, and the walls on either side of the Gully are without windows. Neither Suchet Singh nor Gaur Chand approved of their women-folk looking into the world. If Durga Charan had been of their opinion, he would have been a happier man today, and little Biessa would have been able to knead her own bread. Her room looked out through the grated window into the narrow dark Gully where the sun never came and where the buffaloes wallowed in the blue slime. She was a widow, about fifteen years old, and she prayed the Gods, day and night, to send her a lover; for she did not approve of living alone.
 One day the man — Trejago his name was — came into Amir Nath's Gully on an aimless wandering; and, after he had passed the buffaloes, stumbled over a big heap of cattle food.
 Then he saw that the Gully ended in a trap, and heard a little laugh from behind the grated window. It was a pretty little laugh, and Trejago, knowing that, for all practical purposes, the old Arabian Nights are good guides, went forward to the window, and whispered that verse of “The Love Song of Har Dyal” which begins:
 Can a man stand upright in the face of the naked Sun;
 or a Lover in the Presence of his Beloved?

(a)

Annotation	Colr
▼ 2nd narrative act (level 1)	Blue
▼ narrative: type	
undefined	
▼ speaker: identity	
speaker entity b	
▼ speaker: story relationship	
heterodiegetic	

(b)

Figure 11

The first level switch arises when Trejago quotes “The Love Song of Har Dyal” from

The Arabian Nights. The narrative type addresses this by setting it as a “direct speech act” (Trejago is “speaker identity c”) as well as a “literary work (quotation)”. Here, we additionally have to set the kind of level boundary, which is illocutionary (actual crossed) and ontological (virtual crossed, because it is only a quote of another fictional world). Moreover, it is necessary to select the corresponding narrative act of the former level, in which the current annotation is embedded (“level 1 narrative act 2”; c.f. figure 12b).

Nights are good guides, went forward to the window, and whispered that verse of “The Love Song of Har Dyal” which begins:

Can a man stand upright in the face of the naked Sun;
 or a Lover in the Presence of his Beloved?
 If my feet fail me, O Heart of my Heart, am I to blame,
 being blinded by the glimpse of your beauty?

There came the faint tchinks of a woman’s bracelets from behind the grating, and a little voice went on with the song at the fifth verse:

(a)

1st narrative (level 2)	
narrative: type	
direct speech act	
literary work (quotation)	
speaker: identity	
speaker entity c	
speaker: story relationship	
homodiegetic	
upper level: crossed boundary	
illocutionary (actual crossed)	
ontological (virtual crossed)	
upper level: head	
level 1 narrative act 2	

(b)

Figure 12

Trejago stops his recitation but “The Love Song of Har Dyal” is continued by the voice of Bisesa. The quotation continues (narrative act 1 on level 2) but the voice is changing to “speaker entity d”.

Can a man stand upright in the face of the naked Sun;
 or a Lover in the Presence of his Beloved?
 If my feet fail me, O Heart of my Heart, am I to blame,
 being blinded by the glimpse of your beauty?

There came the faint tchinks of a woman’s bracelets from behind the grating, and a little voice went on with the song at the fifth verse:

Alas! alas! Can the Moon tell the Lotus of her love when the
 Gate of Heaven is shut and the clouds gather for the rains?
 They have taken my Beloved, and driven her with the pack-horses
 to the North.
 There are iron chains on the feet that were set on my heart.
 Call to the bowman to make ready —

(a)

1st narrative (level 2)	
narrative: type	
direct speech act	
literary work (quotation)	
speaker: identity	
speaker entity d	
speaker: story relationship	
homodiegetic	
upper level: crossed boundary	
illocutionary (actual crossed)	
ontological (virtual crossed)	
upper level: head	
level 1 narrative act 2	

(b)

Figure 13

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