

“Narrator Declines to Give Further Details”: The Interconnectedness
of Gender and Narration

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the interplay between gender and narration. The way a narrative is structured influences the gender presentation of the narrator and characters. One can categorise some of these influences under the concept of queer voice. To investigate how this works, this thesis aims to answer the question: how is the fictional representation of gender affected by the structural characteristics of 'queer' narratives? First, the diegetic structure and narrative roles of three case studies will be identified, as well as any examples of metalepsis (the transgressing of the boundaries between diegetic levels). The outcome of this analysis is then used to determine where each of the narrators of the case studies fit into the framework of queer voice conceptualised by Susan S. Lanser ("Queering Narrative Voice").

Keywords: gender, narratology, narrativity, metalepsis, queer narratology, feminist narratology

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Introduction

“Art makes nothing happen in a way that makes something happen.”

How to be Both, page 232.

How would *The Hound of the Baskervilles* have been different if it had been narrated by anyone other than Dr Watson? Or how would *Pride and Prejudice* have read differently without its renowned use of free indirect discourse? These questions reveal the importance of narration and, of course, the narrator, which are the subjects at the heart of this thesis. Analysing the voices that tell our most beloved stories can teach us something about the inner mechanisms of books and how we as readers conceive of these storytellers. In an ever-widening world of media, narrative exists in many different ways.

There are many ways to analyse current cultural trends, such as post-colonialism and queer studies, but one that has been paramount in the past decades is feminism. Gender is an important part of the framework through which we see the world and has long been a subject of academic interest, including literary criticism and analysis.

Narration is how authors can show gender: from simple use of pronouns like ‘he said’, ‘she said’, or ‘they said’ to more complicated structures discussed in this thesis. Although this may seem like an obvious connection, gender and narrative were only linked rather recently, in the eighties. This was an effect of the move from classical narratology to structuralist narratology, where context was considered for the first time, including gender. Susan Lanser coined feminist narratology in 1986 (“Toward a Feminist Narratology”), and the field has since become a vital part of narratology as a whole, as it has uncovered insights that have changed narratology in general, such as the rejection of universal theories of narrative in favour of context specific theories.

In this thesis, I will investigate the link between narration and gender by looking in-depth at the narrative structure of texts. Specifically, I will answer the following question: how is the fictional representation of gender affected by the structural characteristics of ‘queer’ narratives? I will answer this question by analysing three novels using two narratological concepts: diegetic (i.e. relating to narrative) levels and the narrative roles of author/narrator/narratee. Using Lanser’s framework on queer voice (“Queering Narrative Voice”), I will then link these two narratological concepts to gender.

To this end, I have chosen three novels to use as case studies, which can all be classified as ‘queer’ novels in different ways: *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*, by Natasha

Pulley, *Confessions of the Fox*, by Jordy Rosenberg, and *How to be Both*, by Ali Smith. *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* serves as a less complicated example of narration, which will in turn allow me to explain what is interesting about the narrative structure of the other two. These two books have a story-within-a-story construction that brings about unusual effects in relation to the narrators of the stories.

I expect that all three books will fit into Lanser's framework in different ways, because of their narratological structure. The way the book 'queers' narrative voice will depend on the narrative levels and roles and how these relate to each other.

The first chapter will provide the theoretical framework supporting the method outlined above, which consists of narratology, gender theory and its application to literary theory. In the second, I will apply these theories to the three case studies, *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*, *Confessions of the Fox* and *How to be Both*, using the narratological structure of the books. The third chapter will expand upon this and establish a connection to gender. Lastly, I will sketch the specific ways in which authors use these structures to shape gender representation in their novels, and present suggestions for further research.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework and Case Studies

1.1 Theoretical Framework

1.1.1 Narratology and narrativity

Narratology is a slippery term: it generally denotes the study of narrative, but the use of the term has changed over time to encompass several different meanings. Nünning distinguishes between the general meaning and the narrow meaning also referred to as ‘classical narratology’, which was a structuralist branch of narrative studies from the sixties and seventies (Nünning 240-41). The field has since developed away from structuralism and towards more diverse and holistic methods, which are called postclassical narratologies and are context-oriented, heterogenous and historical (Nünning 243-44). In other words, the field moved away from the concept of a universal narratology and towards a more varied approach that takes context (such as culture, race, gender, class, etc.) into account. This paper is mainly concerned with one of these new narratologies: feminist narratology, which presupposes that it is impossible to construct or apply narratological theory without being politically, ideologically or historically biased, and as such it is imperative to adopt a more heterogenous approach. Since the eighties, feminist narratology has grown into a legitimate discipline with unique outlooks, in contrast to some newer branches of narratology, which constitute not a new method as such, but are rather an existing method applied thematically and contextually. In other words, where most branches were simply an old method applied to different cases, feminist narratology strove to reinvent the method, because there were cases that could not be analysed accurately with the old one.

The meaning of ‘narrativity’ has changed much over the past decades, as new narratological insights were found and especially after the shift from classical narratology to post-classical narratology. Abbott uses four headings under which to categorise the different ways this term is used: “(a) as inherent or extensional; (b) as scalar or intensional; (c) as variable according to narrative type; (d) as a mode among modes” (Abbott 589). The first one, inherent or extensional refers to a kind of binary: is something a narrative or not? Yet this can be too restrictive, as it presupposes a characteristic or set of characteristics that are needed to qualify as a narrative. It is difficult to determine what these might be, as there are

increasingly different medial expressions that are not ‘narrative’ in the traditional sense and may not even use words, such as performances, music or paintings. To add my own example: would an escape room qualify as a narrative? It usually has a clear setting, i.e. ‘prevent the nuclear apocalypse’, but the actual events depend on the players. ‘Narrativehood’ has been put forward as an alternative term for this binary distinction (Abbott 588). A more useful way of defining narrativity might thus be as a scale: how ‘narrative’ is something? To return to my example: an escape room has a setting, characters, a narrator (through a letter or speaker), and sequentiality, but its actual events are collectively ‘written’ by the players. Abbott explains the last categories as follows: “the term has been deployed in modal or generic distinctions to delineate both a field of specifically narrative modes and a broader field in which narrative is one of a number of communicative and artistic modes” (Abbott 589).

For the scope of this thesis I will mainly concern myself with the narrative levels in the novel and how these impact the different characters and narrative roles. Narrative levels are often called diegetic levels, and these come in two categories: diegetic levels that contain the story being told, and metadiegetic levels, that contain the narration that tells the story. If there is a story within a story, these two can be conceptualised as an intradiegetic level with its metadiegetic level (the innermost story) and above that an extradiegetic level with its metadiegetic level (the outermost story). Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is an example of this structure. There is the outer story, narrated by Captain Walton through letters. This story is the extradiegetic level and has a corresponding metalevel that houses the narration. The inner story is told by Victor Frankenstein and housed on the intradiegetic level, with its own metalevel containing the narration. The hierarchy of levels is as follows: metadiegetic level – extradiegetic level – metadiegetic level – intradiegetic level.

To describe narrative issues relating to texts, it is important to distinguish three terms: author, narrator, and narratee. The author of a text is the actual, real-life author, i.e. the author of *Pride and Prejudice* is Jane Austen. The narrator is the fictional storyteller, who can be clearly identified or unknown and almost invisible. Narrators can also be first-person, third-person and, rarely, second-person. Third-person narration can be omniscient, meaning the narrator knows and sees everything that is happening within a narrative, or limited, meaning the narrator only relays the thoughts and feelings of the viewpoint character. The point of view can switch between scenes or chapters (or even smaller units), allowing for different outlooks on the same narrative. In the context of diegetic levels, the narrator can be defined as: “the inner-textual (textually encoded) highest-level speech position from which the current narrative discourse as a whole originates and from which references to the entities,

actions and events that this discourse is about are being made” (Margolin 646). The narratee of a text is the fictive person the narrator addresses their story to. The narratee can be identified explicitly by use of pronouns or direct address (i.e. *dear reader, you*), or implicitly, where the narratee is not clearly defined. Narratees can be separated into two distinct categories: the addressee (the intended addressee) and the recipient (the actual addressee), think of a letter that is addressed to a specific person but that might be read by someone else (Schmid 364).

Another important contrast is between heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narration. These terms describe how the narration on the metadiegetic level occurs. Homodiegetic indicates that the story is told by the person the story is about, in other words, the narrator is a character in the story. Heterodiegetic, then, means that the narrator is not a character in the story, and may not even be any specified person at all (Pier "Narrative Levels").

One critical concept that merits further explanation is metalepsis, which was first used in its narratological sense by Genette (Genette and Lewin 234-35) and defined by Pier as “a deliberate transgression between the world of the telling and the world of the told” (Pier "Metalepsis" 326). In essence, it is a crossing of the boundaries between narrative levels. For example, the narrator of the extradiegetic level might suddenly become part of the story of the intradiegetic level, or a character might pause their story to speak to the narrator. Metalepsis is usually viewed through its two varieties: rhetorical and ontological, where rhetorical can be conceptualised as looking from one level to another, whereas ontological means there is a mixing or “mutual contamination” (Pier "Metalepsis" 331). Yet metalepsis can also be viewed not through the rhetorical/ontological divide but rather from the starting point of the transgression of boundaries. Wagner has termed this “metaleptic movements” and divides them into three categories:

- a. from a higher to a lower level;
- b. from a lower to a higher level;
- c. “‘auto-intertextuality’ between diegeses of the same level, thus confronting parallel heterogeneous fictive universes” (Pier "Metalepsis" 332).

It is important to note that there is an ongoing debate centring around the third variety and whether this is in fact a metaleptic movement, or simply intertextuality* (Pier "Metalepsis" 332).

* more on this below, in the analysis of *How to be Both*

1.1.2 Feminist and queer narratology

Feminist narratology was first coined by Susan Lanser: “Feminist narratology is [...] concerned with the ways in which various narratological concepts, categories, methods and distinctions advance or obscure the exploration of gender and sexuality as signifying aspects of narrative.” (Lanser "Gender and Narrative" 206) Feminist narratology was also the driving factor between the shift from structuralist to postclassical narratology, as it presupposed that context is not just a shaping influence on interpretation and reception, but on the conception and form of narrative (Lanser "Gender and Narrative" 207).

A queer narratology has also emerged but has yet to become as pervasive and legitimate as feminist narratology, and, according to Lanser, potentially fruitful connections have not yet been explored (Lanser "Queering Narrative Voice" 925). Lanser has developed a framework for describing the queering of narrative voice, based on the three different definitions of the verb ‘queer’, which she has related to queer voice:

1. “a voice belonging to a textual speaker who can be identified as a queer subject by virtue of sex, gender, or sexuality;
2. a voice that is textually ambiguous or subverts the conventions of sex, gender, or sexuality; and
3. a voice that confounds the rules for voice itself and thus baffles our categorical assumptions about narrators and narrative.”

(Lanser "Queering Narrative Voice" 926)

Lanser divides the first category into narrators who are ‘in’ and ‘out’, that is to say, implicitly or explicitly queer ("Queering Narrative Voice" 927-28). She also stresses the importance of gleaning these categorisations from the text itself, rather than transferring the author’s identity onto the narrator’s ("Queering Narrative Voice" 929). The second category has a similar divide, this time between gender-ambiguous narrators who are heterodiegetic or homodiegetic (Lanser "Queering Narrative Voice" 930) and is connected to ‘Lanser’s rule’: a theory stating that readers transfer the author’s gender and/or sexuality onto the narrator (Lanser "Queering Narrative Voice" 932). Lanser criticises this theory, however, because there is no empirical proof or even a theory for how readers treat narrators of anonymous texts (Lanser "Queering Narrative Voice" 932). She also criticises the thought that a narrator must be male, cisgender and straight if the author is not female or (openly) queer, or if there

is no textual evidence. The third category goes beyond gender and sexuality, to dissecting binaries of any kind, exemplified by metalepsis and free indirect discourse. Since not all narrators have a (known) gender, I am using neutral ‘they’ rather than ‘he/she’ to describe narrators of this kind throughout the thesis. It is important to note that not all books fit into Lanser’s framework, there is a category of books that are not ‘queer’ in any of the senses Lanser describes. Books that have no queer characters and a non-ambiguous narrator thus fall outside of this framework.

1.1.3 Gender

To understand the foundation of feminist narratology, it is important to briefly cover some basic concepts that have been instrumental in the development of gender studies. The first of these is the concept of gender roles. A gender role is defined as “[t]he role or behaviour learned by a person as appropriate to their gender, determined by the prevailing cultural norms” (“Gender role” “Oxford English Dictionary”). The second is ‘gender performativity’, first coined by Judith Butler, which presupposes that people are not born a certain gender, but rather that they become a gender through performing it:

“It's my view that gender is culturally formed, but it's also a domain of agency or freedom and that it is most important to resist the violence that is imposed by ideal gender norms, especially against those who are gender different, who are nonconforming in their gender presentation.”

(Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender)

The third is markedness. This refers to the (largely unconscious) tendency to see being male as the standard, or unmarked, and seeing female as marked. It means that if a certain person does not have any gender markers (described appearance, pronouns, etc.) people will likely assume they are a man. Think of the riddle of the boy and his father who were in a car accident that killed the father on impact and sent the boy to the hospital, where the doctor took one look at the patient and declared “I can’t operate on my own son”. It is assumed here that listeners would automatically assume that a doctor must be male, while in this case, it was the boy’s mother.

Something else that is important to briefly emphasise here is the current trend in feminism towards intersectionality. The third wave of feminism is characterised by a global

approach that includes women of all races, sexualities, backgrounds, etc. This connects to rejection of universal thinking in narratology, as gender roles are partly culturally dependent, meaning that there cannot be one theory that incorporates all possible contexts.

1.2 Case studies

What follows is a short summary of each of the novels, detailing the most important characters and plot points, to accompany and elucidate the analysis below.

1.2.1 *Confessions of the Fox*

Confessions of the Fox is Jordy Rosenberg's debut novel published in 2018. The story is told by Dr R. Voth, who finds and annotates a manuscript detailing the life of Jack Sheppard, the infamous criminal from early eighteenth-century London. Although the story generally follows existing lore on Sheppard, Rosenberg reimagines him as transgender, an important theme in the novel. The manuscript covers Jack's life from early adolescence to his execution. He escapes from his indentured service under a carpenter named Kneebone, after meeting Bess Khan, a sex worker who helps him to find himself. She convinces him to free himself and turn to a life of crime, helping him with her knowledge of London's seedy underbelly. Soon, Jack is entwined in the plot of Jonathan Wild, "thief-catcher general", to produce and sell a new type of drug to London's stockbrokers. The effects of the drug appear to be similar to taking testosterone, meaning the drug becomes an obsession for Jack in his transition, which is depicted vividly. Jack barely manages to escape, with help from his friend Aurie, at the end of the novel. One of the main issues throughout the novel is the manuscript's authenticity, as it is rather different from other extant works. Most notably, the manuscript reimagines Jack as transgender and his lover, Bess Khan, as South-Asian. As Voth comes closer to solving this mystery, he is drawn into a corporate scheme from which he narrowly escapes. His footnotes compare his own life as a transgender man in 2018, to Jack's, but also show the inconsistencies in the manuscript and what questions these raise. He is forced to allow a representative from this corporate entity which has partnered with the university that employs him to access his digital notes on the document. As Voth is faced with the order to turn over his manuscript and notes to the university, he flees towards an undisclosed location. Here he learns that the manuscript that he has found has been altered

and expanded over the centuries as a political and creative act, making it impossible to ascertain how authentic it really is and who has worked on it.

1.2.2 *How to be Both*

How to be Both by Ali Smith consists of two parts: one is narrated by Francescho del Cossa, a painter in Renaissance Italy, one by George, a teenage girl in contemporary Britain. Two versions of the book were published, so readers would either encounter George's or Francescho's story first. After reading both, it becomes apparent that there is considerable overlap. As George spends time looking at Francescho's painting, Francescho is there as a disembodied entity, watching her, believing he is in purgatory. George's obsession with the artist and his paintings stems from the last trip she took with her mother, to Ferrara, Italy, where they saw the frescoes Francescho painted. George was not interested in them then, but this changes after her mother dies. The George of *After*, as she describes the mourning process, becomes engrossed in the painter and other art her mother liked. She and her best friend, H, decide to do their school project on Francescho. At the same time, she is trying to find out the circumstances of her mother's death. The mystery starts with Lisa Goliard, who was George's mother's best friend until a few months before her death. George believed that her mother was being watched by spies because of her political activism and this leads George to find out more about her friend Lisa. Through Francescho's eyes, we find out that George and Lisa meet and that they paint a motif from one of his paintings on the wall in front of Lisa's house. Some passages suggest that Francescho's story was made up by George and H for their project, although this is never explicitly confirmed.

1.2.3 *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*

Natasha Pulley's *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* opens in Victorian London, where telegraph operator Nathaniel "Thaniel" Steepleton finds a pocket watch that he cannot get rid of. Pawn shops will not accept it and when he throws it out, it finds its way back to him. London is in an uproar after Clan na Gael, an Irish nationalist group, threatens to bomb the centre like they did other cities. When the watch stops Thaniel from entering a building that is blown up seconds later, Thaniel starts to look for the owner. He finds Keita Mori, a Japanese nobleman who traded in his privileged upbringing for a watch shop on Filigree Street. Thaniel quickly learns that there is more to Mori than meets the eye, as he had made

not only a great number of incredibly delicate and intricate watches, but a whole work shop full of extraordinary clockwork pieces, including an octopus that is so lifelike it appears to be sentient and move with purpose. Between the watch seemingly knowing when the bomb would detonate and Mori's nationality, he is suspected of helping the Irish terrorists make their bomb. The story also follows Grace, a student who wishes she could do her work without the constraints of being a woman in science. She is drawn into the plot when it is revealed that Mori has the supernatural power to envision different futures and their likeliness, a power that might be explained by Grace's research. However, her interference changes the future Mori has worked hard to rearrange, causing friction between the three protagonists of the novel.

Chapter Two: Narration and Narrative Structure

2.1 Narrative Levels and Metalepsis

As mentioned above, each of the case studies can be divided into narrative levels. *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* has the most straightforward approach. There is an intradiegetic level that houses the stories of Thaniel and Grace, the two viewpoint characters of the novel, and there is a metadiegetic level which houses the heterodiegetic narration, done by an unidentified third person narrator who speaks only from the viewpoint character's thoughts and feelings. This is perhaps the most basic and ubiquitous way of structuring narration in a novel. However, this type of narration does open up interesting possibilities when combined with Lanser's framework, which I will explore in the next chapter.

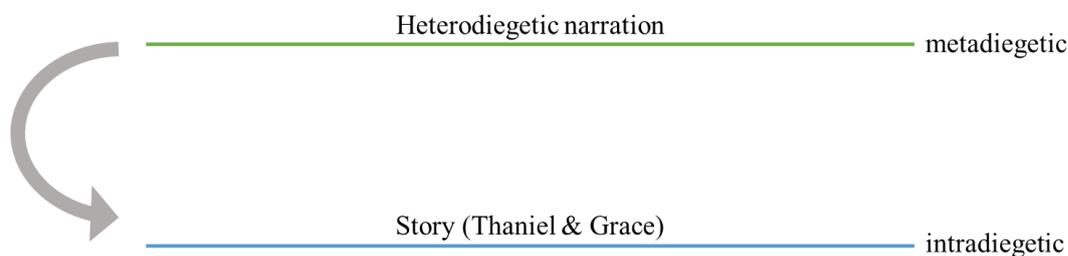


Figure 1 *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*

Confessions of the Fox has a more unusual structure: it is a story-in-a-story of the found manuscript type, meaning that the innermost story is the literal transcription of a fictional manuscript. The outermost story is formed by footnotes and an editor's foreword (not to be confused with the actual metatextual elements or the epigraph which is part of the manuscript). This means there are four levels: an intradiegetic level with its corresponding metadiegetic level, and an extradiegetic level also with a metalevel. A contrast exists between the two: the extra level has homodiegetic narration by Voth himself, in first person, the intra level has heterodiegetic narration by an unspecified third person narrator who switches between the limited viewpoints of Jack, Bess and Wilde, though with some overlap (e.g. p. 42, see next section).

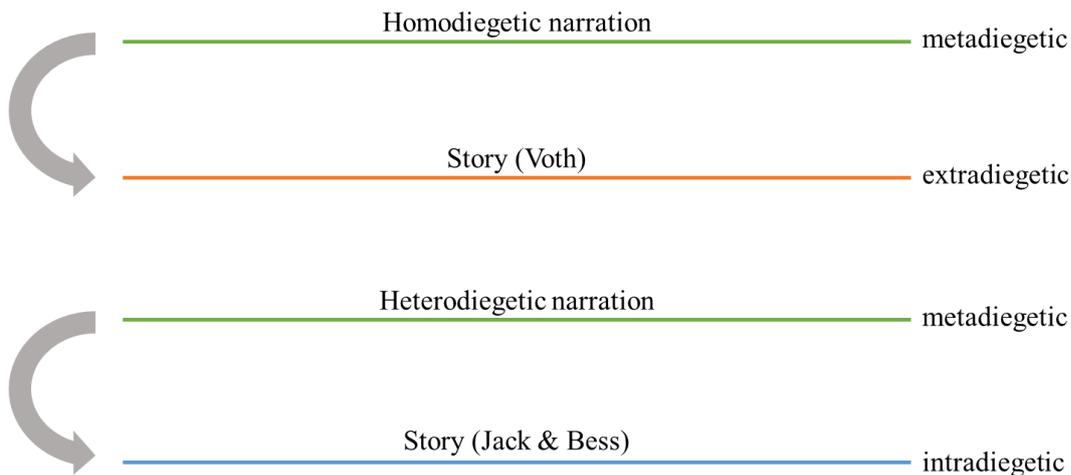


Figure 2 *Confessions of the Fox*

Confessions also has an example of metalepsis, Wagner's first variety to be precise. Some characters on an extradiegetic level are passive observers, when a play is performed or a story told, for example. Voth, however, is annotating the manuscript. This by itself is perhaps not enough to claim that this is metalepsis, but at the very end of the manuscript, he edits the manuscript to add in a last sentence. This *is* metalepsis, because, through this act, Voth becomes (for a moment) the narrator of the intradiegetic level, meaning he must be on the metadiegetic level and thus crossed from the extradiegetic to the metadiegetic level below.

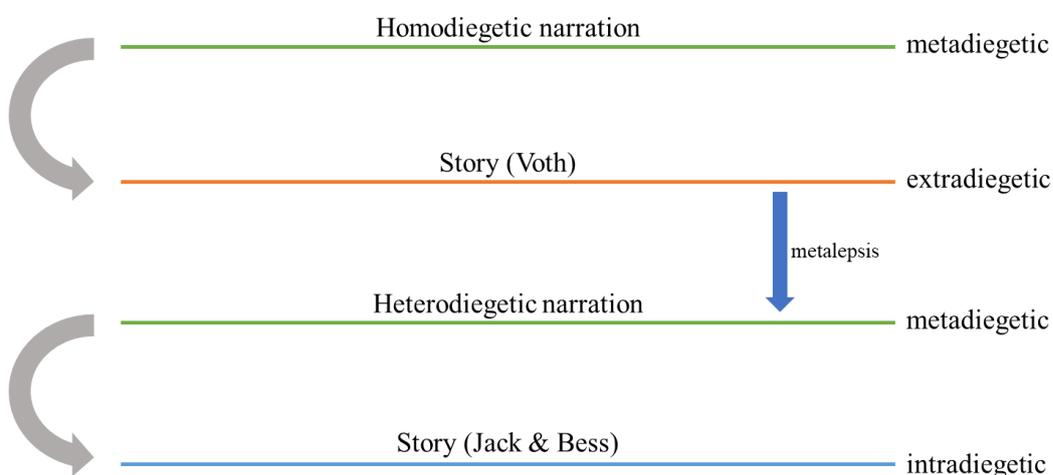


Figure 3 *Confessions of the Fox, including metalepsis*

How to be Both has by far the most complicated structure and also possible metalepsis. Firstly, there are two separate stories, those of George and Francescho, each with

their corresponding metadiegetic level. These could be conceptualised similarly to *Watchmaker*, as outlined above, but with two stories on the intradiegetic level. Secondly, there are two different types of narration, Francescho's first person stream of consciousness/free indirect speech narration, and the third person narration from George's viewpoint. The different types of narration (heterodiegetic and homodiegetic) and the fact that there are an intradiegetic level and an extradiegetic level make it impossible to have just one metalevel. This leads me to categorise the two stories as being on two separate side-by-side levels. Lastly, part of George's story (intradiegetic level) is told by Francescho in his part of the novel, as he sees George in her time. This could mean that Francescho's story exists on an extradiegetic level and that the two metalevels overlap. Francescho narrating a story that is not his own could be seen as metalepsis, like the example of Voth and the manuscript above. Although the way the novel is set up means that this is not just a simple story-in-a-story. For one, there is no clear explanation of why both these stories exist in one novel (such as one is a play or book from the other), meaning it is not clear which story is higher in the hierarchy, which is complicated further by the two editions of the novel. It could be Francescho's story, as it clearly contains part of George's. However, there is also the fact that George may have written Francescho's entire story, which begs the question who is really the narrator here. There is no easy intertextual solution, as the characters all inhabit the same book. This is unlike David Mitchell's characters, for example, who commonly figure in several books, even if these books are not part of a series. Could this issue be solved by looking at the structure not as extra- and intradiegetic levels, but rather equal levels that overlap? In other words, does Wagner's third variety, auto-intertextuality, explain how these two stories relate to each other? As explained above, it is currently uncertain whether auto-intertextuality is a metaleptic movement or whether it is, in fact, simply intertextuality. Yet I would argue for metalepsis in this case, as the transgression of boundaries is contained within one book, crosses diegetic levels, and goes further than simple referencing of characters or themes.

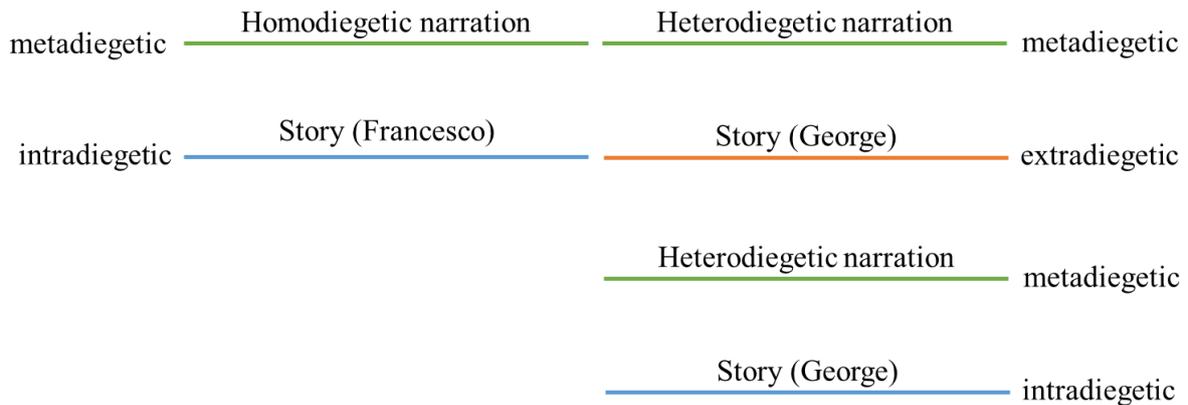


Figure 4 How to be Both

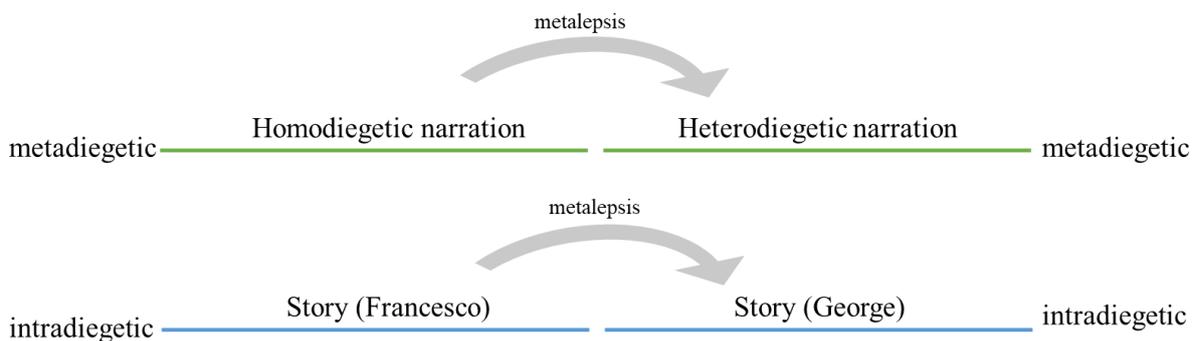


Figure 5 How to be Both, alternate

2.2 Narrator

The narrator structure of *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* is deceptively simple: there is an unidentified third person heterodiegetic narrator, who does not have an explicit narratee. This lack of information does mean that there is room for interpretation and speculation, which I will get to in chapter three.

As explained in the above section, *Confessions* has two different kinds of narrators: there is the unspecified limited third person narrator and Voth, the first-person narrator. These both have a different effect: the third person narrator is almost invisible, and only becomes visible when Voth points something out; the first-person narrator is very conscious of his role as a narrator, as Voth needs to be careful about how much he reveals. Voth is very open about his gender and sexuality, partly because he believes himself to be unobserved for most of the novel, which creates a foil for Jack. The third person narration seems to be

nothing special at first glance, but gradually reveals more about the origins of the manuscript, through clues such as anachronisms or intertextual elements relating to works that were written much later, pointed out by Voth (see, for example, Rosenberg 284-5, for Voth's speculation that Oscar Wilde read the manuscript while in prison).

Accurately pinpointing the narrator in *How to be Both* is rather more complicated. Francescho is the homodiegetic narrator of his own story, but arguably also the heterodiegetic narrator of the part of George's story that is included in his half of the novel. It is clear from the text that a person from the Renaissance is seeing the modern world through his perspective, as Francescho calls smartphones and iPads 'votive tablets' and is clearly bewildered by George's ability to perfectly reproduce images. In George's half of the story, none of these details are present, leading me to argue that the heterodiegetic author of this part cannot be Francescho. So who is the narrator? The whole story is told through one viewpoint – George's – and the narrator has limited knowledge, although they are able to make jumps in time, meaning that they are either telling a story they already know the ending of, or have some kind of temporal omniscience that pertains only to George. No one in the narrative matches this description, which means the narrator must be some unidentified entity. These distinctions between narrator and character, and heterodiegesis and homodiegesis can be troubled further through the notion that George has written Francesco's story, which will be explored further below.

2.3 Narratee

Out of the three case studies, *Confessions of the Fox* is the only one with an explicit addressee. In Voth's footnotes, he regularly addresses the reader directly (e.g. Rosenberg 166, 258, 62) and also strongly identifies with them, by directly contrasting "us" with "them". "Them" in this case refers to Voth's superiors and those who would take the manuscript from him, but also those who do not understand its meaning and significance. Although he starts writing his notes without any clear audience in mind, the end of the novel suggests that the manuscript with the notes will be included in the secret archive Voth finds: "Dear Reader, if you are *you* – the one I edited this for, the one I stole this for – and if you cry a certain kind of tears – the ones I told you about, remember? – you will find your way to us. / *You will not need a map.*" (Rosenberg 316). This addressee is clearly intentional, even though partway through the novel, Voth finds out that his superiors had access to his home computer. This means there is a portion where Voth thinks he is speaking only to his audience, while in

actuality an unknown number of people were able to view the entire document. This means there is a recipient narratee as well as two separate addressees, Voth's preferred audience and the person monitoring him.

Although *Confessions of the Fox* is the only novel with an explicit narratee, there is an implicit narratee in *How to be Both*. As mentioned above, assuming that George wrote Francescho's story changes many things, including the story's narratee. The reason for thinking Francescho's story was invented is that George and H contemplate doing just that for a school project. This would mean that the narratee is their teacher (and perhaps their classmates), but they decided to hand in a different project. Instead, I would argue that George has written Francescho's story with a different goal in mind: as some sort of thought experiment/diary. In a way, this makes George the narratee of the story, as she is the intended reader. H could also be a narratee, assuming that George would share her story. If we read Francescho's story this way, the rapid switching between times and places and the stream of consciousness structure also makes sense. George can simply incorporate whatever is happening to her as she writes.

The Watchmaker of Filigree Street, in contrast to the other two novels, has no identifiable narratee, which is not surprising considering its unidentifiable narrator. There is no deeper diegetic level that would warrant an explicit narratee, such as a play or story told to the characters at the highest diegetic level.

2.4 Author

The authors of the three novels are simply the real-life people who wrote the books: Natasha Pulley (*The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*), Jordy Rosenberg (*Confessions of the Fox*), and Ali Smith (*How to be Both*). Yet all sorts of 'authors' can be found in the novels, and I will discuss these in this section. Firstly, there is *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*. There are no obvious narrator or narratees in the book, but there is still an interesting way that the narrative is presented to the reader. Through Mori's gift of being able to see the future, he is able to influence future events. Seeing the possibility of a life with Thaniel two decades into the future, and disliking his position as noble and diplomat, Mori arranges events so he ends up in London and opens up a watch shop. It is like he is able to write his own narrative, not just by making choices everyday (I'm not here to debate free will vs predestination), but by being able to adopt a bird's eye view of his life, the way a real-life person would never be able to.

Usually, this is something only authors are able to do for their characters, yet Mori also has this supernatural ability.

Secondly, there is George from *How to be Both*. I have already detailed how she may have written Francescho's story, which makes her an author, but the interesting thing is that, like Mori, she is not the fictional author of one 'work' in the novel (like how some novels include poems or short stories that the characters have written), but of a story that is at the same diegetic level as hers.

Lastly, there is *Confessions of the Fox*. Several 'authors' are at work here. It is implied that the very first edition of the text from the manuscript was written by Jack and Aurie: "By the next afternoon, they'd compil'd a thick stack of Confessions in the barn" (Rosenberg 310). This very first edition was then edited through the centuries, as Voth eventually uncovers, until it ended up forgotten on a shelf somewhere. Voth is of course also an author, as he writes many autobiographical anecdotes in his footnotes and he added an editor's foreword to the manuscript. But he is also an author of the manuscript itself, as he added a sentence at the very end of it. This practice of writing many stories into one is explicitly discussed by Voth, and I have analysed it in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Gender

One of the ways that gender works in these novels (among, for example, pronoun use and other kinds of gendered language) is on the highest level, where history meets fiction. All of the books (partially) take place in a realistically rendered past, except that the author plays with gender. Doing this is a way to reimagine the past and tell stories that have gone untold before, but it is also a way to reflect on current times. By contrasting the past and the present, differences and similarities become clear.

Narration has a pivotal role in this regard: although readers are presumably aware of the societal expectations in their own era and community, they may not be familiar with the expectations put forward in different historical novels, especially if these novels are set at the margins of society (such as the rogues in *Confessions of the Fox*). Narration can both showcase gender performance and comment on it, either directly or indirectly. This enables the possibility to have characters with uncommon gender presentations or behaviours and to contrast these with the present.

As noted above, each of the novels has a different narrative structure. These structures influence the ways the stories are presented to the reader. One part of this presentation is the way the characters' gender is treated. In *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*, this is done rather straightforwardly, as the names and pronouns used for each of the characters are consistent throughout the novel, as well as accepted and respected by everyone. Any and all issues related to gender occur at the level of plot and characterisation, rather than narration. For example, there is Grace's desire to be a respected scientist, regarded the same as her male peers, which is impossible in her time without at least being married. Yet the narration simply relates this, without comment or intervention.

Gender is a central theme in *Confessions of the Fox* and this is also apparent from its narration. Unlike *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*, Jack's gender is frequently questioned or policed, perhaps most explicitly by his mother, and Kneebone, the master he is indentured to. The first indication of any kind that Jack is transgender is when his mother tells him to "be a good girl" (Rosenberg 12). Yet the third person limited narration only ever refers to Jack by his chosen name and pronouns, and clearly indicates his discomfort: "Jack unheard *she* – unheard it into the swarm of the rest of the sounds Kneebone was making" (emphasis in original, Rosenberg 13). Where a different type of narration might have led to questioning Jack's gender, here it is immediately obvious who Jack is, and what the people around him think of this. As narration is only 'visible' to the audience, not the characters, this can be seen

as a specific message: although Jack's gender may be questioned throughout the novel, the narration asserts that he is a man.

There is, of course, also the higher level of narration, where Voth comments on the manuscript. Upon reading Jack's mother's admonition, he writes: "Jack was assigned female at birth? ... *this* I've never seen." (emphasis in original, Rosenberg 12), which contains the important historical fact that this is, indeed, unusual. It also reasserts Voth's position as an expert in the subject and sympathetic to Jack, because of his word choice: "assigned female at birth" rather than "born female" or anything equivalent an academic with more limited knowledge on the subject might say. Another example of the fictional writer of the manuscript being sympathetic to Jack is in their unwillingness to describe Jack's genitals or write his full given name (always written as P---, such as Rosenberg 16, among others). Throughout most of the novel, it remains uncertain whether this was done by the original writer, or was edited later. However, there are early clues suggesting the manuscript was written or edited later, such as mentioning molecules: "All of Jack's molecules were scrambled and rearranged, and something new was taking shape." (Rosenberg 44). The word 'molecule' was not used in this meaning until the late eighteenth century, but what makes this so interesting is not just the anachronism suggesting later editing of the manuscript, but where this anachronism is situated in the text. It occurs in chapter six, where Jack meets Bess and speaks his own name aloud for the first time, setting the plot of the novel in motion.

This, as well as the narration jumping erratically from Jack's to Bess' point of view, narrating their thoughts and feelings, calls into question the reliability of the narrator and whether these passages were changed later. As the manuscript is the only one containing these details, Voth rightly says: "what we have here is either the most or the least authentic Sheppard document in existence" (Rosenberg 27). It raises the question whether the manuscript was entirely written at a later date by multiple authors or whether, perhaps, certain elements of the authentic manuscript were expanded upon in following centuries. This would be the case for most of chapter six, as this is where Jack, quite literally, comes into his own as a man: "The apparition-Jack zoomed down from his watching-spot on the ceiling and sank firmly – and with a heretofore unknow warm *Pleasure* – into his body." (Rosenberg 43). Yet the experimentation with gender transition also seems to be added later, perhaps also as an example relating to the issues of capitalism Voth brings up. In this way, adding ahistorical facts is actually a way to draw continuities through history and show cause and effect.

Historical continuity also relates to *plitho-hypomnesis*: the term Voth discovers in the manuscript and that is explained by his colleague as 'collective diary-keeping'. This is what

finally makes Voth realise that the manuscript was written by multiple authors, and also its importance:

“Plitho-hypomnesis is the only explanation for the many generic irregularities and impossible references that populate this text. And it makes this manuscript not only the most valuable Sheppard document ever discovered, but something far in excess of that. Something evasive, gnomic and irreplaceable.

The diary of a trace.”

(Rosenberg 260)

The trace Voth is referring to here concerns the histories that have gotten lost or been destroyed over the centuries. The book mentions plitho-hypomnesis in connection with freedmen and slaves as well as the pirates who had built their own society on the seas. There is also Voth’s discussion of Oscar Wilde writing in jail (mentioned above). In other words, the manuscript functions as a collective diary of queer and marginalised voices throughout history, written by Jack and Aurie and added to by countless others.

The theme of continuity is also underscored by textual parallels. Voth is aware of the similarities between himself and Jack and frequently remarks on them, but there are also obvious juxtapositions at a higher level, such as pages which perfectly mirror each other in tone and content. Page 76 and 109 are good examples of this, as they show a parallel in content and tone that shows how both Voth and Jack find solace in identifying with ‘monsters’. Jack is relieved when Bess calls him the names of several mythical creatures, and Voth applies the term monster to himself, but does recognise the negative connotations and history of the term as applied to queer people: “Relax: I’m reclaiming the term. I *like* it. I mean, when uttered in certain contexts out of certain mouths. Must I justify everything?” (emphasis in original, Rosenberg 76)

All throughout *Confessions of the Fox*, Voth compares himself to Jack, but in one paragraph, he sees a larger parallel: “This particular relation between the queer/trans body and the city is strangely resonant with a contemporary sensibility; i.e. it’s hard not to relate.” (Rosenberg 69).

This is, however, a one-sided reflection. How to be Both goes one step further and has a person looking back from the present as well as a person looking forward from the past. Francescho, as an undescribed noncorporeal entity, watches George watching his painting. There is a sense of continuity, coupled with the possibility that George invented Francescho’s

story, which would explain Francescho's ability to see events from the present. This same theme of continuity vs uncertainty is visible in *Confessions of the Fox*, where it is uncertain whether the manuscript is genuine or not. What is certain, is that for both modern protagonists, George and Voth, it is important to be able to project their own identities onto the past, irrespective of the stories' authenticity. In fact, the manuscript in *Confessions* may have a longer history of doing this, as I presume that some of the 'authentic' elements Voth finds (such as the excision of a page detailing chimaera genitals, today usually referred to as intersex) were also later changes made by the multiple authors/editors of the book Voth discovers. These projections onto the past show more about gender now than they do about any historic notion of gender. The same goes for *How to be Both*. If we do presume, for a moment, that George has invented Francescho's story, how is it significant that Francescho is a woman? And how is it significant that Voth finds Jack's story so relatable and is able to easily capture it in contemporary concepts and terms?

There is one obvious reason for George to invent the life of a woman who never existed: she needed an outlet for her grief for her mother. Choosing her mother's most recent (and ultimately last) obsession is a way for George to reconstruct the last months of her mother's life and the first months of her own life without her mother.

“You'd need your own dead person to come back from the dead. You'd be waiting and waiting for that person to come back. But instead of the person you needed you'd get some dead renaissance painter going on and on about himself and his work and it'd be someone you knew nothing about and that'd be meant to teach you empathy, would it?

It's exactly the kind of stunt her mother would pull.”

(Smith 325)

This explains why Francescho is able to see George in modern times, as it is George relating her own story. Yet it does raise some questions, such as why Francescho mistakes George for a boy. Might this be George's way of incorporating her mother's nickname for her, that she used to dislike? “... George, her mother says. Ia, George says because this conversation takes place when she has started insisting that her mother and father, when they use her name, call her her full name.” (Smith 203) As for Francescho being a woman, it was something George's mother mused about, in relation to the symbols of masculinity and femininity in the frescoes: “On this alone I could make a reasonably witty argument for its originator being

female, if I had to.” (Smith 297). It was also something George wondered about first: “Male or female? she says to her mother who’s standing under these figures. I don’t know, her mother says” (Smith 237-8). Inventing a story about Francesco allows George to play with and overthink all the things her mother told her and that she wonders about as an adolescent. It is a safe way to experiment, as George (and presumably H) are the only ones to read it.

On its own, though, this is not enough evidence to assume that Francesco’s story was written by George.

As for Voth, reading and annotating this story is a way to record history. It shows in his preoccupation with the archive and his ending up at the library at the end of the novel:

“I am told there were once lively debates here about whether or not it was even worth collecting any of our histories at all. After all, what are we but the accumulation of centuries of terror? Still, they have a saying here about the past, and I am told this is what decided the matter once and for all: *All history should be the history of how we exceeded our own limits.*”

(Rosenberg 267).

Still, there is more to the manuscript than simply recording one story. Through the continuous editing over centuries, it has become a living history. When seeing the manuscript like this, questions of authorship and authenticity become irrelevant.

In the previous section I explained that the narrative structure of *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* is often used and so does not draw attention to itself. The same goes for its heterodiegetic narrator. Yet this ambivalent narration is a good example of the second meaning of ‘queer’ as Lanser defines it (section 1.2). The narrator is completely ambiguous, as there are no direct references to them. The only clue to their identity is that they narrate from three different viewpoints: Thaniel’s, Mori’s and Grace’s. It seems highly unlikely that there is one character (known or unknown) who could know enough to represent all three of these viewpoints without some form of omniscience. From this, it seems logical that the narrator is not one identifiable person, but rather some nebulous entity without an identity. This also precludes any kind of sexual or gender identity. ‘Lanser’s rule’ would suggest that readers project Pulley’s gender onto the narrator, conceptualising her as female. However, the complete ambiguity of the narrator means that the book can be read without assigning any gender, which is what I did. This means that there is no textual evidence to ‘gender’ the narrator of *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*, but this does not mean that they do not fit into

Lanser's framework. In fact, they are an example of the second meaning of 'queer', where the gender binary is broken down completely through textual ambiguity and being unable to fit the narrator neatly into either the male or female category. Many books that have similar structures to the one described above can be said to have narrators that are gender-neutral, or have no gender at all.

Although structurally different, *How to be Both* has a similar issue in George's part of the story. As nothing is known of the narrator, and considering the limitations of Lanser's rule discussed above, I can only assume that this is another narrator fitting into the second type of Lanser's framework. What is interesting here, though, is that *How to be Both* has another narrator, namely Francescho. Francescho fits best into the first category defined by Lanser, as he does not conform to gender norms, but does have a human form and identity. What his gender is, precisely, is difficult to say, partly because gender as a concept was understood differently in the Renaissance, partly because George may have invented his story (I use 'he' throughout, to avoid confusion with other narrators). Whether Francescho is a transgender man, or a woman pretending to be a man so she is able to paint, is not clear from the text. Even in passages where Francescho's gender is discussed, it is difficult to tell from the first-person narration. He argues 'passionately' that he is exactly the same as all the other painters, no less, and forgives Cosmo for calling him Francescha behind his back. Yet it is again unclear whether this is because he wishes to keep this secret for job security or because allusions to his not being a cisgender man make him uncomfortable.

All of this only applies to one of the narrators, though. Taking both narrators together, as well the case I made in chapter two for *How to be Both* being an example of metalepsis, I would argue that the book as a whole is an example of Lanser's third meaning of 'queer', where entire boundaries are broken down outside of the realm of gender and sexuality. The very barrier between the different diegetic levels becomes hazy, as do notions of narrator and character, leaving us with Genette's question: who speaks?

This question is also of vital importance when analysing the narrators of *Confessions of the Fox* using Lanser's framework. Voth neatly fits into the first category, as he openly tells the narratee he is transgender: "I am a guy by design, not birth" (Rosenberg xii). The narrator of the manuscript is harder to pin down. First of all, they are able to speak from multiple viewpoint characters, precluding any character in the story from being the narrator, similarly to *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street*. Second of all, Voth finds proof that there are multiple authors of the manuscript, opening up the possibility of multiple, indistinguishable narrators. Third of all, there is a metaleptic movement from the extradiegetic level downward,

as Voth adds to the story. Last of all, it is impossible to assign any kind of identity to this narrator, because of the third-person heterodiegetic narration 'hiding' the narrator. In short, it is impossible to specify any narrator, beyond an omniscient entity or even entities. This leads me to conclude that the narrator of the intradiegetic level corresponds to Lanser's third category: it transcends categories.

Conclusion

The two narrative concepts used in my analysis are diegetic levels (including metalepsis) and the narrative roles of author/narrator/narratee. I have shown how each of the narratives of the different novels can be divided into levels, and how the different narrative roles fit into this. These two concepts are used to show (or hide) gender. I have used Lanser's framework to conceptualise how this showing works and put the results in the matrix below.

	Identified	Non-identified
Gendered	<i>Confessions of the Fox</i> (Voth) <i>How to be Both</i> (Francescho)	*
Non-gendered	†	<i>The Watchmaker of Filigree Street</i> <i>How to be Both</i> (George's story)

Table 1 Matrix showing the two most important criteria of Lanser's framework

The two most important criteria for identifying the category to which a narrator belongs, are identified/non-identified, i.e. whether the narrator is a specified person or an unknown entity, and gendered/non-gendered, i.e. whether the narrator has a specified gender or not. Specified gender, in this case, does not necessarily mean one certain gender identity, but rather whether a character has any kind of gender. I have chosen to specify gendered/non-gendered over queer or not queer, another category Lanser used, as it is more suited to the gender-based analysis I have done. It is still relevant whether the narrator is queer or not (the framework is about queer voice, after all), but I have already concluded in my earlier analysis that all narrators fit into Lanser's framework. The three categories of queer voice fit into the matrix as follows: category 1 (for narrators that can be identified as queer) contains the narrators from the 'gendered, identified' cell. These narrators are Voth and Francescho, both identified characters, both explicitly gendered. Category 2 (for narrators who are ambiguous or subversive) contains narrators from the 'non-gendered, non-identified' cell. These include

the narrator from *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* and the narrator of George’s story from *How to be Both*. Category 2 narrators could also be found in the ‘non-gendered, identified’ cell, marked by †. The case studies did not have any narrators that fit into this category, but it is definitely possible, e.g. through first-person narration where gender is never revealed.

Narrators belonging to the third category do not fit neatly into any one cell, like the narrator from Jack’s story in *Confessions of the Fox*. Firstly, there are multiple narrators, most of them of unknown gender and identity, but there is also Voth, known and gendered. Secondly, the diffuse nature of the narration (such as the rapid viewpoint switching) makes it impossible to tell who is speaking. This narration fits into the matrix as shown in the table below:

	Identified	Non-identified
Gendered	<i>Confessions of the Fox</i> (Jack’s story)	
Non-gendered		

Table 2 Matrix showing the third category

This leaves one cell: the ‘non-identified, gendered’ one, marked by *. Like †, none of the case studies fit into this cell. Unlike †, I would argue that it is impossible, or at least very difficult, to have a novel with this type of narration. If a narrator is gendered, they also have some type of identity. However, possible examples of non-identified gendered narrators might be found by looking at different media. For example, if a novel like *The Watchmaker of Filigree Street* has an audiobook version read by a feminine or masculine voice, would that mean the narration is gendered? Questions like these open up possibilities for future research, which I will discuss further below.

Another result from my analysis is that *How to be Both* can be seen as an example of auto-intertextuality. This is not necessarily relevant for its classification as a type of queer voice, as it was a definite example of metalepsis, but it does open up exciting prospects for

analysing narration, such as how auto-intertextuality affects different gender presentations. Multiple examples would be needed to compare and contrast with *How to be Both*.

Possibilities for further research can essentially be divided into two categories: different media and different subjects. Media can change the way gender is perceived, as explained in the example above. How do gender and narration work in film, comics, podcasts, etc., and does Lanser's framework need to be expanded to incorporate these media? The only way that books can show gender outside of text is through paratext, but many other media show gender through physical bodies. Does this limit the possibility of genderless narrators?

The framework only looks at gender and sexuality, but Lanser already named race as one of the factors that could also be included: how is the narrator's race evident (or not) from the text? How does race influence the interaction between narrator and narratee?

A more specific question relating to Lanser's framework might be how identified narrators with a non-binary gender fit into the categories. Singular 'they' can be used in the absence of a gender identity, but also to denote people who identify themselves as being outside of the gender binary. Does this count as gendered or non-gendered, if it cannot be gleaned from the text which use of 'they' is meant?

These are all intersections between gender and narration that have gone unexplored, or that could benefit from being compared and contrasted with other components of identity, or media other than novels. Opening up to these topics also allows for a more intersectional approach that would embrace a more global corpus. Challenging seemingly universal concepts and binaries in narratology, 'queering' different concepts, as I have done using Lanser's framework in this thesis, contributes to the development of a specific queer narratology.

Glossary

Author	the real-life person writing the text (not to be confused with the narrator)
Diegetic level*	(also narrative level), a way of categorising the different hierarchies of narrative within a single work
Extradiegetic level*	a diegetic level that exists above another diegetic level and its metadiegetic level
Intradiegetic level*	a diegetic level that exists underneath another diegetic level, the bottom level
Heterodiegetic*	narrator and narratee are not the same person
Homodiegetic*	narrator and narratee are the same person
Metadiegetic level*	a diegetic level that contains the narration of the directly underlying diegetic level
Narratee[†]	the fictive person the narrator addresses their story to, usually identified by use of pronouns or direct address (i.e. <i>dear reader, you</i>) and often separated into two distinct categories: the addressee (the intended addressee) and the recipient (the actual addressee).
Narrator[‡]	“the inner-textual (textually encoded) highest-level speech position from which the current narrative discourse as a whole originates and from which references to the entities, actions and events that this discourse is about are being made”

* (Pier "Narrative Levels")

† (Schmid)

‡ (Margolin 646)

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