

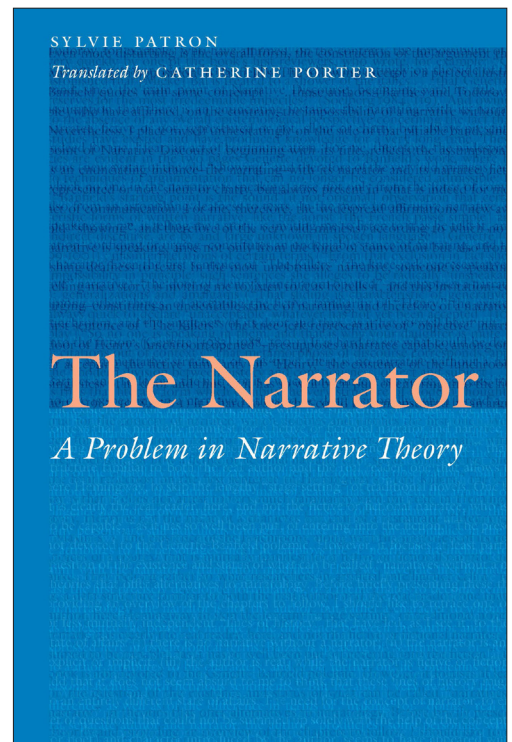
THE NARRATOR
A Problem in Narrative Theory
SYLVIE PATRON
TRANSLATED BY CATHERINE PORTER

"This ground-breaking study situates works that presume that every narrative has a narrator within communicational theories and convincingly argues instead for poetic theories, which maintain that while authors of fiction may create narrators, they are in no way compelled to do so. A major contribution to narrative theory."
—Jonathan Culler, author of *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature*

"*The Narrator* is an expansive, meticulously researched, and brilliantly argued intervention in narrative theory. Powerful and compelling, its conclusions will have to be engaged with by all future students of narration."—Brian Richardson, author of *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*

The narrator (the answer to the question "who speaks in the text?") is a commonly used notion in teaching literature and in literary criticism, even though it is the object of an ongoing debate in narrative theory. Do all fictional narratives have a narrator, or only some of them? Can narratives thus be "narratorless"? This question divides *communicational* theories (based on the communication between real or fictional narrator and narratee) and *noncommunicational* or *poetic* theories (which aim to rehabilitate the function of the author as the creator of the fictional narrative).

Clarifying the notion of the narrator requires a historical and epistemological approach focused on the opposition between communicational theories of narrative in general and noncommunicational or poetic theories of the fictional narrative in particular. *The Narrator* offers an original and critical synthesis of the problem of the narrator in the work of narratologists and other theoreticians of narrative communication from the French, Czech, German, and American traditions and in representations of the noncommunicational theories of fictional narrative. Sylvie Patron provides linguistic and pragmatic tools for interrogating the concept of the narrator based on the idea that fictional narrative has the power to signal, by specific linguistic marks, that the reader must construct a narrator; when these marks are missing, the reader is able to perceive other forms and other narrative effects, specially sought after by certain authors.



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Frontiers of Narrative

Sylvie Patron is a professor at Université Paris Cité. She is the author or editor of several books on narrative theory, including *Optional-Narrator Theory: Principles, Perspectives, Proposals* (Nebraska, 2021). Catherine Porter is a visiting scholar in the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University. She has translated more than forty books and is the coeditor of *A Companion to Translation Studies*.

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