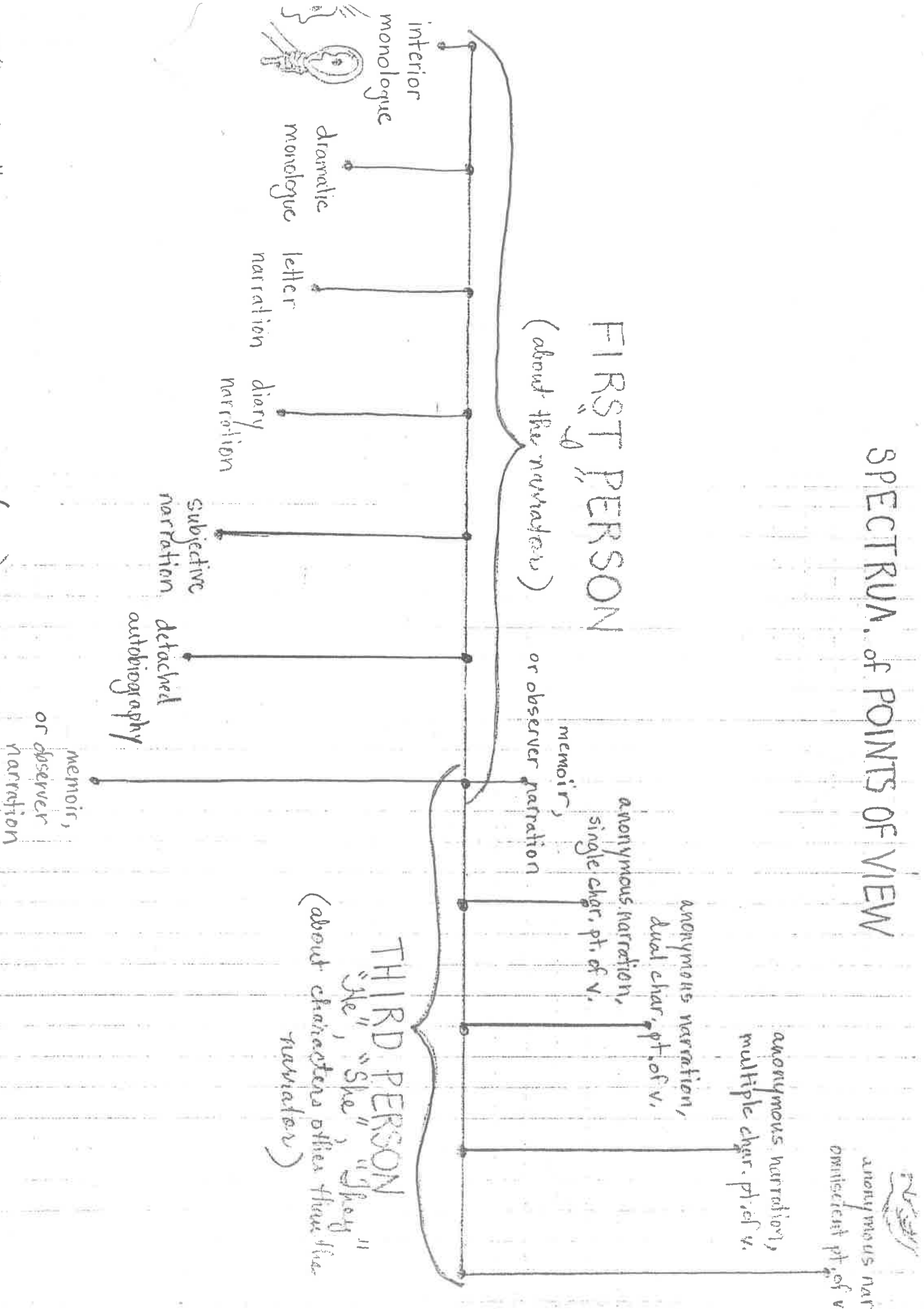


SPECTRUM OF POINTS OF VIEW



* Occasionally, second person perspective ("you") is used.

Characteristics of Narrative Points of View

Interior Monologue: “I Stand Here Ironing” (Olsen)

- reader overhears the inner life and thoughts of the narrator
- reader tunes into narrator’s random, sometimes confusing, stream of consciousness train of thought (like listening to a soliloquy)
- narrator’s sense of pain, guilt, or confusion may call into question the accuracy of his thoughts & perspective
- “the telling is as much the story as the told”
- in longer fiction, interior monologue is rarely used solely; it’s usually woven in and out of other techniques
- Examples: *Ulysses*, *The Sound and the Fury*

Dramatic Monologue:

- reader overhears narrator speaking aloud to another person
- there is clearly a particular listener in conversation with the narrator; we hear only half of the conversation
- reader must interpret the other character’s dialogue within the context of narrator’s comments
- narrator often reveals, explains, and/or betrays information about himself in comments
- there is a particular reason to communicate to the listener; yet, as in real life, the speech is spontaneous and there is no outside narrator to guide the reader through what she is witnessing
- Examples: “My Last Duchess” and “Lady Lazarus”

Letter Narration:

- a written monologue whereby the text is “written,” but the narrator/writer is not face to face with the listener
- feedback to and from the writer is delayed and composed more deliberately
- *epistolary* work
- Examples: *The Color Purple*, *Fair and Tender Ladies*, *Frankenstein*

Diary Narration: “The Yellow Wallpaper”

- a writer/narrator is recounting events, almost as they happen, but is addressing no one in particular; “dear diary” is not a person
- narrator often shares information she may not tell otherwise
- this text is an intentional record, meant to preserve thoughts for posterity
- entries are chronological and sequential, often revealing a changing or evolving state of mind over time
- Examples: *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*

Subjective Narration: “A&P”

- speaker/narrator has an agenda, opinion, or issue that prejudices his narration, rendering his perspective unreliable
- narrative is told by one of the characters after the events of the story have concluded
- often uses the vernacular of adolescence
- often assumes values the reader may not share
- Examples: *Catcher in the Rye*

Detached Autobiography:

- speaker/narrator is reliable and objective, acting as a guide for readers, mediating between the readers and the characters in the story
- narrator is one of the main characters telling about what happened in the past, but the frame of mind of this speaker has changed, matured, since the experience he is relating
- speaker has an adult understanding of the childhood experience, including an understanding of his own and other characters' motivations for actions
- narrator exists as a dual character, both "I" *now* as an adult and "I" in third person *then* as a younger childhood self, distinguished by the psychological distance brought on by time
- ***bildungsroman***: maturation story, dealing with a person's formative years or spiritual education.
- Examples: *To Kill a Mockingbird*; *Jane Eyre*; *Great Expectations*

Memoir/Observer Narration:

- focus shifts onto characters other than the speaker, who becomes more observer than participant
- hinges between autobiography & biography and the 1st & 3rd person storytelling
- personal involvement diminishes and empathy emerges through adult awareness of events
- reader must consider the relationship between the speaker and the main character: whether confidant, eyewitness, or simply a member of the community (like the Greek chorus)
- Examples: Nick tells story of *Gatsby*, Mr. Lockwood in *Wuthering Heights*

Anonymous Narration, Single Character POV:

Anonymous Narration, Dual Character POV:

Anonymous Narration, Multiple Character POV:

- most commonly employed point of view (single character)
- individual narrator who does not have to account for how he knows what he tells
- narrator has the combined knowledge of an eyewitness, confidant, and chorus (gives background and interpretive comments)
- narrator presents the protagonist's inner life: thoughts, feelings, and values
- (single) narrator is limited by the fact that he can only go where one character goes and he only knows what one character knows (dual) presents the inner like of two characters (multiple) encompasses entire scope of the novel
- Examples: *The Right Stuff*, *Ethan Frome*

Anonymous Narration, No Character/Omniscient POV: "The Lottery"

- depersonalized point of view
- narrator stays outside of the mind of all characters, and relies entirely on eyewitness and chorus knowledge alone
- deeds of the characters speak for their feelings; characters are archetypal (gods, monsters, mortal heroes, and classic victims of legend, myth, and folk tale)
- readers must fill in the inner lives of characters empathically
- story rests on some assumptions the reader must make concerning the community
- Examples: *Gone With the Wind*, *Anna Karenina*