Windows of Focalization: Deconstructing and Reconstructing a Narratological Concept

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In general, focalization theory addresses the options and ranges of orientational restrictions of narrative presentation. Gérard Genette first associated focalization with a "focal character" and the questions *who sees?* and *who perceives?* Following Mieke Bal, however, many narratologists now believe that focalization covers a much wider scope than either vision or perception and that the narrator is a potential "focalizer," too. First-generation narratologists like Genette and Seymour Chatman view this expanded scope with considerable skepticism, and despite such convincing recent applications as William Edmiston's *Hindsight and Insight*, focalization theory at present is caught in a dilemma of conflicting approaches.

My attempt to sort out these various approaches begins by reviving the original field-of-vision conception as the basis for defining a general framework and key concepts of focalization. Section 2 deconstructs the major axioms of focalization expounded by Genette. Section 3 traces the theme of "seeing" in fiction to Henry James's "house of fiction" and its million windows: drawing from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's treatment of natural metaphors, Ray Jackendoff's theory of cognitive interfaces, and Werner Wolf's concept of aesthetic illusion, I reclaim James's window metaphor as a core model of focalization, defined on the basis of cognition and reception. Finally, section 4 considers Chatman's argument against focalizing narrators and the problem of "embedded" focalization. Throughout, my aim is to argue for an interdisciplinary, integrative, and non-dichotomous approach towards focalization.
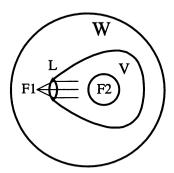
1. FOCUS-1 AND FOCUS-2

Let me begin with a few simple vision-related questions. How do we define our "field of vision?" Does it have a specific shape? Does it support the notion of an "angle of vision?" Where in this field does one place

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oneself, the observer? Does this field have a "horizon," a "point of view?" Does it allow us to "focus on" certain objects and to leave other objects "unfocused?" How does it relate to "the world?"

The answers to these questions may elicit a model that looks (more or less) like (1), below:[1]

F1 focus-1;   *L* lens, eye;
F2 focus-2, area in focus;   *V* field of vision;   *W* world

(1) A Model of Vision

In (1), the field of vision (V) is represented as having a conical shape like that of the area lit by a torch. It is taken in by an eye and its shape determined by an angle of vision. The eye, represented more technically, is a convex lens (L) that collects rays by refraction—a kind of controlled distortion—in a "burning point" or *focus* (F1), referred to hereafter as *focus-1*. Like a photographic lens, the eye is adjustable, allowing it to pick out and concentrate on a subsection of the visual field, also commonly called *focus* or *area in focus* (F2), henceforth *focus-2* or *focus of interest* or *focus of attention*. If focus-1 stands metonymically for the eye's owner, then focus-1 and focus-2 are alternate terms for what Bal, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, Marjet Berendsen, Ansgar Nünning, Edmiston, and others call, respectively, the subject and the object of focalization. Finally, the field-of-vision area in figure (1) covers a part of "the world" (W), represented simplistically as a circle.

At this point it must of course be acknowledged that (1), like all models, is an idealized and reductive abstraction; in fact, I might as well admit that it contains a number of inaccuracies.[2] But although it says little about the actual mechanisms of seeing, it will, I hope, say much about how we think we see things. And although the model depicts V, F2, and W as if they were sets in a Venn diagram—inviting one to play around with objects that are visible or invisible, seen centrally or peripherally, close up or far off, and so on—my aim is not to make a philosophical statement

either about the nature of these objects or about what philosophers call the "veridicality" of their perception. Rather, (1) is an attempt to construct a *mental model* of vision (Johnson-Laird), detailing "a set of notions about [one's] own inner structures" (Hofstadter 282).

An immediate test of the usefulness of (1) as a model is whether it lends itself to generalization. Perception, thought, recollection, and knowledge are often considered to be criterial features of focalization, and all these mental processes are closely related to *seeing*, albeit only metonymically or metaphorically. Specifically, these mental processes are dependent on a point of origin very much like F1, are bounded like V, and are directed towards an area of "focal attention" (Neisser 87-93) like F2. Typically, F1 is a point at which all perceptual stimuli come together, a zero point from which all spatio-temporal and experiential coordinates start, an *origo* (Bühler 102; Hamburger 83, 105-06); in short, a point that defines the position, the literal and figurative *point of view*, inhabited by a thinking and experiencing *I*. Considering the scale of these generalizations, the model bears up reasonably well: it captures one of Lakoff and Johnson's key "ontological metaphors" (*visual field*), establishes some useful distinctions (notably focus-1 and focus-2), and provides a coherent framework of elements and relations. As will soon become obvious, it also serves as a potent "fallacy finder" (Bonheim 23).

2. DECONSTRUCTING "WHO SEES?" AND "WHO SPEAKS?"

In narratology, the terms *focalization* and *narration* separate two processes that appear compounded—or, as Genette argues, confounded—in the prestructuralist concept of *point of view*. Many early point-of-view theorists simply lumped under this term a whole range of narrative features, including narratorial visibility, stance, knowledge, involvement, and rhetoric, as well as the absence or presence of one or several "reflector" characters. As Genette points out, such indiscriminate use of the term point of view obscures a crucial distinction, which he unravels below in (2a). Two of Genette's later modifications, (2b) and (2c), follow:

(2) a. [M]ost of the theoretical works on [point of view] . . . suffer from a regrettable confusion between what I call here *mood* and *voice*, a confusion between the question *who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective?* and the very different question *who is the narrator?*—or, more simply, the question *who sees?* and the question *who speaks?* (*Discourse* 186)

   b. [S]o obviously we must replace *who sees?* with the broader question of *who perceives?* . . . (*Revisited* 64)

   c. So, perhaps, it would be better to ask . . . *where is the focus of perception?* (*Revisited* 64)

Defining focalization as *restriction of "field"* or *selection of narrative information with respect to omniscience* (*Revisited* 74), Genette draws up the following typology comprising three basic types:

(3) Focalizations

    A. Nonfocalization/zero-focalization ("vision from behind"): events are presented from a wholly unrestricted or omniscient point of view (*Tom Jones*)

    B. *Internal focalization* ("vision with"): presentation of events restricted to the point of view of one or more *focal characters*

        1. *Fixed*: focalization restricted to a single focal character (*Portrait of the Artist*; Norman Friedman's *selective omniscience*)

        2. *Variable*: focalization alternates between several focal characters (*Madame Bovary*; Friedman's *multiple selective omniscience*)

        3. *Multiple*: presentation of the same event(s) as seen through several focal characters

    C. *External focalization* ("vision from without"): presentation restricted to behaviorist report and outside views ("The Killers"; Friedman's *neutral* or *camera-eye narration*) (*Discourse* 189-90)

Despite the fact that (2) and (3) have had an enormous narratological impact—they are widely considered to represent "a major revision of the theory of point of view" (Culler, Foreword 10)—the following points deliberately focus on problematic distinctions, overt or covert ambiguities, and paradoxes. The sole aim of this deconstructive exercise is to highlight certain problems and to pave the way towards finding more appropriate solutions.

1. According to Genette (and many of his commentators), one of the specific virtues of the term focalization is that it avoids the visual connotations of *point of view*. For the same reason, Genette eventually replaced *who sees?* with the "broader" question *who perceives?* (2b). On reflection, however, *who perceives?* is still not broad enough to cover all facets of focalization. According to the definition inherited from Tzvetan Todorov, internal focalization concerns "what the character *knows*" (Genette, *Discourse* 189; my emphasis);[3] in Genette's amplification, internal focalization includes the character's "*thoughts* or perceptions" (*Discourse* 192; my emphasis). Other narratologists go further, including not only all kinds of mentation, but also attitude as well as cultural, moral, and ideological orientation (Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction* 71). Clearly, the concept of *perception* cannot possibly be stretched to subsume so much.

2. One question not addressed in (2a) is whether focalization (or, for that matter, narration) is a necessary or an optional feature of narrative texts. The key issue is whether the questions *who speaks?* or *who sees?* ever admit of the answer "no one." Many authors (Bal, Berendsen, Patrick O'Neill) assume that, just as there is always one who speaks, there is always one who sees. Typically, these theorists advocate a "narrator-focalizer" position

that invests narrators with the power of seeing; as a consequence, speaker
and seer may even, in certain cases, coincide. Against this, Chatman has
forcefully argued that the notion of a seeing narrator is a fatal misconcep-
tion. It is worth pointing out that Genette does not consider focalization a
necessary feature; his typology includes a category of nonfocalization (3A),
and he is careful to qualify himself when speaking of a "focal position,
when there is one" (*Revisited* 64; my emphasis). In other words, according
to Genette, passages or even whole texts may be designated as not focalized
(see also item 12, below).

     3. Identifying the subject of *who sees?* as "the *character* whose point
of view orients the narrative perspective" (my emphasis), Genette strongly
aligns focalization with a story existent, specifically a *focal character*.
Although the study of a narrator's functions "merges with everything that
preceded" (*Revisited* 130)—that is, tense and mood—focalization has no
place in Genette's five functions of the narrator (*Discourse* 255-59). On the
other hand, many theorists now prefer to build on a more explicit hierarchy
such as the one encapsulated in Bal's formula "X tells that Y sees that Z
does" ("Notes" 45). These theorists usually employ the term *focalizer* for
the subject of *who sees?* and allow for the fact that X and Y may coincide
in the person of a narrator-focalizer. This formula also paves the way toward
treating zero and external focalization—types (3A) and (3C)—as genuine
narratorial points of view rather than as nonfocalization and focalization
through a "hypothetical observer" without power of inside views, respec-
tively (Rimmon-Kenan, "Comprehensive Theory" 59; Cordesse 488; Ed-
miston, "Focalization" 743n15). Refuting Bal's modifications and to some
extent clarifying his own position, however, Genette avers that "for me there
is no focalizing or focalized character" and that "if *focalizer* applied to
anyone, it could only be the person who *focalizes the narrative*—that is,
the narrator" (*Revisited* 73; see also Nelles 368). At this point, focalization
seems to subdivide into *two* questions: *who sees (if anyone)?* (a focal
character or a hypothetical observer) and *who focalizes?* (the narrator or
speaker). Furthermore, since narrative discourse has been exhaustively mapped
out as narrative of words, narrative of events, and "commentatorial dis-
course" (*Discourse* 164-69; *Revisited* 130), no *prima facie* need exists for
assuming a seeing, perceiving, or recording narrator. The "novelist . . . has
no camera," Genette says, nor, presumably, a tape-recorder or psychoscope
(*Revisited* 73). Radicalizing this position, Chatman has since argued that
narrators are by definition incapable of seeing, a point to which I will return
in section 4.

     4. A notorious difficulty is usually encountered when the *speak/see*
distinction is applied to epistolary and homodiegetic narratives, in which
narrator and "hero" are, in a sense, the "same person." Discussing ho-
modiegetic narratives in *Narrative Discourse*, Genette variously says that
focalization channels "through the narrator" *or* "through the hero" (198,

199, 205, 218); occasionally, "the focal character himself is the narrator" (187). In *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, Genette acknowledges the latter statement to be "heterodox with respect to my own definitions" (77). Clearly, only an *experiencing I* can be a proper focal character, constituting a case of internal focalization through hero or witness. The confusion potential of homodiegetic narrative lies in the fact that the *narrating I* with his or her partial knowledge of the story world and lack of access to other minds may also be considered to have, and thus to narrate from, a restricted field. According to Genette's revised account, this type of restriction is focalization "by extension" only (*Revisited* 77); and a more suitable term for such focalization, he suggests, would be "prefocalization" (78).

    5. *Who speaks?* initially seems unproblematic if, following common convention, *speaking* is used in a generic sense to cover both speaking and writing. But, the conflation plainly buries a narratologically relevant distinction. Marcel, for instance, is not a speaker but a "writer" (*Revisited* 19) while a *skaz* narrator like Holden Caulfield is not a writer but a speaker. A number of stylistic and modal contrasts follow from this distinction: it is crucial for theorists naturalizing the narratological system on the pattern of oral narration (see Fludernik, *Fictions* ch. 8) as well as for stylisticians approaching a "linguistics of writing" (Culler, *Framing* ch. 13). Moreover, *speaking* is an ill-advised generic term considering both the number of readily available alternatives, such as *telling*, *relating*, *recounting*, and *narrating*, and that Genette wants it to include some discourses that are "neither oral nor written" (*Discourse* 231), such as interior monologue, which Genette, significantly, prefers to call "immediate speech." An interior monologue's basic activity, however, is thinking, and thinking—unlike narrating—is imperceptible and therefore nonpragmatic and noncommunicative (not to mention the fact that thinking is one of the defining activities not of narration but of focalization). Adding to the oddity of nonoral speech, the merging of speaking and thinking opens the door to many kinds of paradox. For instance, at one point Genette (rightly) chides Norman Friedman and Wayne Booth for "christening 'narrator' a focal character," but he then inadvertently adds, "who never opens his mouth" (*Revisited* 65). Focal characters open their mouths pretty often, of course, while their narrators, if they are writing narrators, keep theirs firmly shut. In fact, narrators of "reflector mode" narratives are usually so covert that it seems speculative to suppose they are either speakers or writers (or, for that matter, thinkers). Molly in "Penelope" is a reflector who does not open her mouth and therefore does not speak; but if interior monologue is "immediate speech," then Molly speaks (internally) and does not speak (only narrators speak [2a]), and she sees (that is what focal characters do [2a]) and does not see (because her eyes are closed).

    6. As the exchange of letters between Dorrit Cohn and Genette (originally published as "Nouveaux nouveaux discours du récit") shows, the

narratological status of interior monologues remains puzzling and contro-
versial. The interior monologue is a crucial test case because, according to
Genette, "[i]nternal focalization is fully realized only in the narrative of
'interior monologue'" (*Discourse* 193). Thus Benjy in *The Sound and the
Fury*, Molly in *Ulysses*, and Daniel in *Les Lauriers sont coupés* are focal
characters *par excellence*. Genette further remarks that monologues "happen
. . . without the intermediary of a narrating instance which is reduced to
silence and whose function the monologue takes on. . . . [I]n immediate
speech, the narrator is obliterated and the character *substitutes* for him"
(*Discourse* 172). In other words, the only speaker in an interior monologue
is the monologist, who is also the focal character and who should be the
one who sees. Genette goes on to distinguish two types of interior mono-
logues: "isolated" (or "quoted") monologues such as Molly's and Benjy's
in which a "narrating instance is maintained (but in the background)"
(*Discourse* 175), and independently published monologues like *Lauriers*
that are "unquoted and unintroduced" (Cohn and Genette, "Exchange" 265).[4]
In both cases, the monologues are "cast in first-person/present tense" ("Ex-
change" 265), and the monologists become "substitute" narrators. In *Revis-
ited*, Genette calls Benjy's monologue a narrative "taken on by an 'idiot'"
(123n14) and categorizes it as a piece of homodiegetic narration (122); in
contrast, the status of *Lauriers* remains that of a "narrative in the present
tense and 'in the first person'" (*Discourse* 175; "Exchange" 265). Genette
in fact stresses that "[m]y point is not that [the interior monologue] belongs
to hetero- rather than homodiegesis; I simply refuse to 'assign' it to either,
i.e., to say that it belongs to one form rather than to the other" ("Exchange"
264). Of course, it is true that an interior monologue contains no clues as
to the nature of its *superordinate* (quoting) narrator, if any. If interior
monologues are "narratives in the first person," however, we might also ask
whether the monologues themselves are homodiegetic or heterodiegetic,
unlikely though the latter sounds. (But recall that Genette argues that the
incidence of first person pronouns is wholly irrelevant in making such a
determination.) Perhaps they are all homodiegetic, like Benjy's monologue.
Then again, if monologic narratives cannot be assigned to one or the other,
then homodiegesis and heterodiegesis do not exhaustively map the narrative
forms, and we are facing an uncharted "relation." Conversely, it is also
tempting to say that something that is neither homo- nor heterodiegetic is
not diegetic at all.

    The foregoing aporias are all directly related to Genette's overloading
of the term *speaking* and his insistence that interior monologues are "im-
mediate speech." In fact, once the ordinary meaning of *speaking* is restored,
most of these problems tend to disappear. Interior monologues may indeed
have a quality of "voice," but this is only because thought has a quality of
voice, and not because thought equals voice or is a kind of voice, let alone
a narrative voice. Monologuing focal characters do not literally speak, and

they certainly do not narrate. Hence, interior monologues are neither first narratives (*Lauriers*) nor metadiegetic narratives ("Penelope," "Benjy")— neither homodiegetic nor heterodiegetic; rather, they are nonnarratives: they presume no narrators and no narratees (this is also Cohn's view; cf. "Exchange" 260). At the same time, it is evident that interior monologues can be (i) quoted by a superordinate narrator, be s/he hetero- or homodiegetic, and (ii) used *in* narrative "to serve a narrative purpose," as Chatman very convincingly argues about description and other nonnarrative text types (*Terms* ch. 1-2).

7. Genette's treatment of *subjective analepses* closely resembles his handling of interior monologues and basically involves the same problems. A subjective analepsis is "any kind of recollection that a character has," and, like an interior monologue, constitutes "an inward narrative, a second narrative, neither oral nor written" (*Discourse* 231). So who narrates this narrative? If it is the extradiegetic narrator, then the narrative is not a "second" narrative. If a subjective analepsis is a nonnarrated metadiegetic narrative, then we have a contradiction in terms. If the analeptic "inward narrative" has a narrator-speaker at all, it must be intradiegetic, which would suggest the recollecting character. This, of course, commits the very same category error of which Friedman and Booth stand accused: "christening 'narrator' a focal character" (*Revisited* 65). Pointing out these pitfalls, Jiwei Ci has persuasively argued that Genette's concept of subjective analepsis is basically incompatible with the story-discourse distinction. In a rejoinder to Ci's article, Genette congratulates Ci on his acuity but cautions narratologists in general not to disregard the whole for the fault of one part.

8. Genette's term *focal character* ignores its traditional competitors— reflector (James), figural medium (Stanzel), and filter (Chatman)—and at the same time represents a questionable improvement. To begin with, *focal* derives from *focus* and inherits the focus-1/focus-2 ambiguity. Obviously, a focal character (reflector) need not be the central character. Moreover, the term *focal character* plays no role in the definition of (3A) and (3C). This is Genette's reason for falling back, in (2c), on a depersonalized *focus of perception*. A focus of perception (that is, a focus-1) denotes a perspectival position that does not necessarily coincide with that of a character or of the narrator; it is a reflector's position within internal focalization, but it can also refer to the position of an "impersonal," "floating" (*Discourse* 192), or "hypothetical" (Vitoux 360) observer in external focalization, and the same may be said of the panoramic and omniscient point of view of zero focalization. Since a "focal position is not always identified with a person" Genette admits that the symmetry of *who speaks?* and *who sees?* "is perhaps slightly factitious" (*Revisited* 64). Of course, the term focus of perception also risks the focus-1/focus-2 ambiguity (see Chatman's comment on F *foyer* ["Characters" 199]), and it does not *per se* exclude the possibility that it could refer to the narrator's focus or to a focus assumed by the narrator,

which may or may not amount to the same thing. Rimmon-Kenan is in fact
quick to identify the "floating observer"—"[s]urely this 'witness' is once
more the narrator"—as well as the focus of omniscience: "Whose omnis-
cience? . . . The narrator creeps in through the back door" ("Comprehen-
sive" 59). In an uncharacteristically indifferent (or possibly ironic) response,
Genette proposes to redefine omniscience as "the well-known 'viewpoint
of God,' or of Sirius, about which people periodically wonder whether it is
indeed a point of view" (*Revisited* 73).

9. As Bal has pointed out ("Narrating" 241; cf. also trans. n18),
Genette uses the phrase *focalisation sur X* in two senses: (i) X refers to the
focal character, that is, focus-1, Bal's subject of focalization and (ii) X refers
to the existent currently focused on, that is, focus-2, Bal's *focalized*. In
Narrative Discourse, translator Jane Lewin renders (i) as *focalization
through X* and (ii) as *focalization on X*. This distinction helps, but only a
little since the preposition *through*, particularly when collocated with *see-
ing*, is itself ambiguous. Ultimately, no amount of fiddling with prepositions
saves a puzzling statement like "[e]xternal focalization with respect to one
character could sometimes just as well be defined as internal focalization
through another" (*Discourse* 191; *Revisited* 76), to which Bal has responded
that "the nonchalant use of a preposition is enough to overturn a theory"
("Narrating" 241), a comment Genette understandably resents (*Revisited*
75).

10. Basically, types 3A, 3B, and 3C are arranged on a scale of nar-
rowing "fields" or decreasing narrative "information" (*Revisited* 74). Per-
haps unavoidably, the categories are not watertight, and exclusivity, always
salutary in principle, cannot be guaranteed. Specifically, Genette is aware
of the problem that a high incidence of variable internal focalization amounts
to an index of omniscience; and omniscience, according to (3A), in turn
amounts to nonfocalization. Genette therefore proposes to redefine zero
focalization as "*variable, and sometimes zero, focalization*" (*Revisited* 74).
Unfortunately, the infinite regress thus introduced presents rather an un-
comfortable heuristic overhead. In addition, the same reasoning that per-
suades Genette to revise his definition also holds for multiple-internal
focalization and, less obviously, for heterodiegetic fixed-internal focaliza-
tion (after all, the latter is acknowledged to be the equivalent of Friedman's
selective *omniscience*). So should not zero focalization be redefined as *fixed,
variable, multiple, and sometimes zero focalization*? Well, I suppose not.

11. Many objections have been raised against (3), mainly dealing with
problems of scope, hierarchy ("a word I don't much care for" [*Revisited*
91]) and completeness. As Wilhelm Füger points out, scope is not at all
systematically integrated into (3). Consider, for instance, chapters 1-3 and
4-6 of *Ulysses*: these textual segments are each, taken in isolation, instances
of (B.1), fixed-internal focalization; however, taken together, they are vari-
able-internal focalization (B.2). In a worst-case scenario, it may be impos-

sible to determine a text's type of internal focalization until the last page (fixed-internal so far); on the other hand, it may be possible to determine the focalization from page one (for example, variable-internal). Gordon Collier argues that "it is clearer to speak of a series of fixed focalizations than of variable focalization" (123). Ansgar Nünning notes that variable internal focalization depends on the number of focal characters in the text, whereas multiple internal focalization depends on the number of focal characters who see an identical object or event (57). Chatman sensibly suggests that multiple focalization is just a special case of variable focalization ("Characters" 201). As for completeness, (3) does not account for collective focalization (itself possibly a subtype of multiple focalization), which is based on collective reflectors (Stanzel ch. 6.3) or a "plural SELF" (Banfield 96).

12. Easily the most obvious logical crux of (3) is whether type A—non- or zero focalization—is a type of focalization at all. As part of the typology, it must be, yet the term *nonfocalization* suggests that it cannot be. As indicated above (item 2), Genette expressly intends only the latter reading: nonfocalization is no focalization, a point on which he is often misunderstood mainly because omniscient or "authorial" narration (Franz K. Stanzel's term) can hardly be called wholly unrestricted or "omnicommunicative." In addition, non- or zero focalization clearly contradicts one's natural intuition that omniscience and panoramic views present tangible modal presences rather than absences. For these reasons, *free focalization*, the alternate term suggested by William Nelles (369), may be more appropriate. Since free focalization is exclusively defined by purely narratorial perception and knowledge, however, it must be as "heterodox" with respect to Genette's understanding of focalization as a homodiegetic narrator doubling as a focal character (item 4 above).

Where does one go from here? One could go forward, as many narratologists have done, and attempt to implement various local revisions and modifications. On the other hand, the flaws and hurdles identified in the preceding list not only detract from the generally admirable transparency of narratology, they also require increasingly complex patches. Ultimately, if it comes to living in a logical flybottle, one might just as well follow Wittgenstein's advice: retrace one's steps and get out (*Philosophische Untersuchungen* 131 [para 309]). As Genette himself says, many of his divisions rip "apart a tight web of connections," and this is a fact of life to be accepted as a consequence of the "unavoidable violence" of analytic exposition (*Discourse* 215). And indeed, in so far as generalization and contrast intensification create order from chaos, they are elementary and indispensable tools of structuralist system-building. Even if one embraces the view that there is no (structuralist) alternative to narratology's "deletional logic"

and "filtration" processes (Stampfl 388), however, the constructs emerging from the application of these precepts are still subject to testing and validation. One is free to judge whether Genette's use of the term speaking is a permissible and insightful extension or, say, a "bald inaccuracy" (Lanser 4). Moreover, no structuralist maxim requires us to filter out correlations or dependencies; as I have argued elsewhere, investigating these is a challenge that must be accepted, the sooner the better ("Narratologie" 40-46). Conversely, if what gets lost in the process is the ideal of an independent-feature and combinatorial narratology, strongly advocated and defended by Genette (*Revisited* 129), then that risk must be taken. In fact, that loss may turn out to be a gain.

3. FOCALIZATION AND THE WINDOW METAPHOR

3.1. JAMES'S "HOUSE OF FICTION"

Surveying the possible denotations of *who sees?*, one is reminded of what was once a natural, if wholly pre-narratological, answer. Just as Genette takes his inspiration on focalization from Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's theory of focus and point of view, Brooks and Warren took theirs from Jamesian poetics. It is in James's metaphor of a "house of fiction," put forward in his preface to *The Portrait of A Lady*, that *who sees?* takes on both a different grammatical subject and a different interpretation:

> (4) The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million—a number of possible windows not to be reckoned; every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will. These apertures . . . are but windows at the best, mere holes in a dead wall, disconnected, perched aloft; they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life. But they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. He and his neighbours are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing coarse where the other sees fine. . . . The spreading field, the human scene, is the "choice of subject," the pierced aperture, either broad or balconied or slit-like and low-browed, is the "literary form"; but they are, singly or together, as nothing without the posted presence of the watcher—without in other words, the consciousness of the artist.   (*The Portrait of A Lady* ix)

Rereading this from a narratological point of view, it seems sensible to assume that the "watchers" standing at the windows of the "house of fiction" are narrators. Their primary activity, apart from the piercing of walls, is the contemplation of the "spreading field, the human scene"—the story world, or diegesis. Standing at their windows, they are "perched aloft" and at a distance from the ground—in other words, they are extradiegetic, as op-

posed to the characters, who are intradiegetic. The house of fiction has a
million windows of all sizes and shapes, but not a single exit (no "hinged
doors opening straight upon life") for the narrators to get out or for the
characters to get in; again, this is exactly what is to be expected from spheres
as impermeable as story and discourse. What the narrators actually see is
determined by a number of factors: the shape of the window (which may
only be a "hole in the wall"), the view afforded by it (the narrator's focus-1),
the "instrument" used ("a pair of eyes," a "field-glass"), but above all, the
viewer's "consciousness" and its construction of reality. It is for this reason
that narrators see things differently even when they are ostensibly watching
the "same show": if one sees "black where the other sees white," it is because
they either focus on different things or see an identical thing differently.

Before this backdrop enters a special story-internal character—a "cen-
tre" (James, *Art* 305), "register" (142), "mirror" (70), or "reflector" (299,
300, 305)—who sees the story events not, like a narrator, from a window
"perched aloft," but from within the "human scene" itself. Wholly unaware
of both his/her own intradiegetic status and the part s/he plays in the
extradiegetic universe comprising narrator and narratee, the reflector's con-
sciousness nonetheless *mirrors* the world *for* these higher-level agents and
thus metaphorically functions as a window him- or herself. This functional
transfer or relay is made plain in James's characterization of Christopher
Newman, the reflector in *The American*:

> (5) [A]t the window of his wide, quite sufficiently wide consciousness we are seated,
> from that admirable position we "assist."   (*Art* 37)

Here the narrator-author is a passively "seated" observer, not, as in (4), busy
piercing walls or standing at a window contemplating the human scene.
Even the conspicuous term "assist" emphasizes the word's meaning of "be
present as a spectator"; actually, the plural *we* unites narrator and reader,
both adopting the reflector's point of view (focus-1), both observing the
story as it impinges on and unfolds in the reflector's consciousness. Thus,
at a metaphorical remove, the reflector's consciousness becomes a screen,
an intermediate window opening onto the narrative world. Narrator and
reader become joint and collective viewers not because the reader is in any
way like the narrator, but because "[t]he teller of a story is primarily, none
the less, the listener to it, the reader of it, too" (James, *Art* 63; qtd. in Stanzel
141).

It is apparent that James's use of "windows" follows from his "pro-
pensity to think in terms of pictures and visual art" (Morrison 249). When-
ever possible, James prefers to envisage his "artist"—as he is already called
in (4)—in the guise of a "painter" (*Art* 64, 149, 306) creating a "picture of
life" on a "canvas" (*Art* 30, 83). The act of storytelling or story construction
is likewise preferably cast in such pictorial terms as coloring, fore-

shortening, and so forth (*Art* xxix, 67, 299). In *What Maisie Knew*, more-
over, the narrator alludes to his "rough method" of "overtracing" (280-81),
that is, his way of rendering a reflector's perceptions.[5]

James's "seated" narrator "watching" the "human scene" or "show"
bears more than a passing resemblance to a related scenario, that of the
theatrical stage. In the following excerpt, a homodiegetic narrator reflects
on the phenomenon of perspectival interference in retrospective narration:

> (6) However careful I am to keep these remembered kinds of boyish thinking in my
> mind, it is plain that my recollection will have to be often at fault to some degree.
> When you're able to recognize what you're looking at it will not look as it looked
> when you were unable to. What you notice when you see a thing you never saw is
> not the same as what you notice after a hundred seeings of it. Recollection never
> quite returns me to the past. Memory does no more than set a stage. On it, for me,
> a kind of playgoer, I cause to be presented scenes from an old play, the entertain-
> ment entitled: *Myself When Young*. . . .
>
> The actor who impersonates me is often, recollection can certify, wonderfully
> good. He has my features, he uses my voice, he is perfect in my part as I once
> played it; yet another is now performing, not I. I cannot be on stage. I have to
> remain in my seat alone in a figurative darkened pit while I watch across a void of
> years the footlit play unfolding.   (Cozzens, *Morning Noon and Night* 37)

For James Cozzens, too, the narrator's role is minimized: he just "causes
to be presented" and then, exactly like James's narrator, becomes a spectator,
sees himself as a "playgoer" watching "the play unfolding." Also as it is in
James, here the story-discourse divide is strongly in evidence, marked
spatially by the transition from "darkened pit" to "footlit stage" and tem-
porally by "a void of years."

In addition to these obvious correspondences, the stage and window
or picture metaphors are also connected by a number of rather subtle links.
For instance, the stage envisaged in (6) seems to be a picture-frame stage
where the action is viewed through an invisible fourth wall (that is, a
window). As the narrator in (6) alludes to areas of light and darkness, one
is reminded of the fact that a mirror can be a transmitter of light and that
one of the uses of a Jamesian reflector is to "illuminate the subject" (James,
Art xxvi). It is a fitting coincidence, too, that one of the secondary (if now
obsolete) meanings of *focus* is "the best-illuminated part of the stage" (*OED*
377). Thus, even without speculatively delving into the etymology of *win-
dow* (Icel. *vindauga*, lit. "wind-eye"—a point of origin, a center, a focus,
and a pierced hole, all in one), the window metaphor can be seen as the
heart of a semantic network that includes focus-1, focus-2, and the spot-
light-of-consciousness image of the model presented in (1).
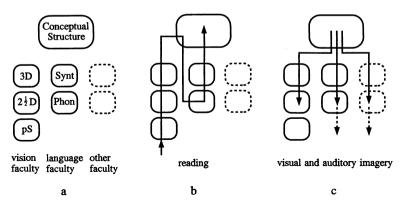
3.2. WINDOWS OF FOCALIZATION

The foregoing excursus into Jamesian poetics closes by establishing
a link between James's elaborate window metaphor and the field-of-vision

model introduced in section 1. This link now suggests a more ambitious
synthesis, namely that of marrying James's windows to the core intuitions
underlying the concept of focalization. Indeed, a new narratological con-
cept, "windows of focalization," begins to take shape as soon as one makes
an effort to reduce James's metaphor to the familiar, to bridge some of its
gaps, and to ground it on argument or known fact. For this purpose, I will
now consider some physiological and cognitive detail.

   Physiologically speaking, after the eye's visual input is collected in
the focus-1, it is projected onto and temporarily recorded in the retinal array,
a light-sensitive area at the back of the eyeball with a comfortably high
resolution of some 127 million receptors. For all practical purposes, the
retinal image is a picture (even though it is of course inverted, curvilinear,
and does not make use of true colors). Still, simplistically speaking, all that
seems to be needed for a glimpse of the story world through the window
of the reflector's eyes is for the narrator to "cut" into the reflector's retinal
image. Somewhat worryingly, this is not even a wholly outrageous idea—it
has been done with frogs (see Lindsay and Norman 158-59). One might
therefore argue that intercepting the reflector's retinal image corresponds
precisely to the type of "inside view" that is granted to a heterodiegetic
narrator by power and contract of fictional omniscience. Unfortunately, this
account remains palpably reductive. The retinal image itself (unlike James's
window or our mental model of vision) cannot be extended to include
nonvisual perception, thinking, remembering, dream visions, and so on, all
of which are central to focalization. Furthermore, the evidence of ambiguous
pictures and optical illusions indicates that seeing the reflector's retinal
image is not necessarily equivalent to seeing what the reflector sees. As
James so lucidly suggests in (4), what is relevant is the individual percipi-
ent's consciousness: it alone enables the percipient to see the figure in the
carpet (or possibly prevents it, as the case may be).[6]

   As is routinely pointed out in the cognitive literature, the retinal image
is never actually seen by the percipient; it is a stimulus that must be
processed to allow seeing to take place. Most recent cognitive approaches
locate seeing in a system of hierarchically ordered modules that interface
with other mental and motor faculties. Following the account given in Ray
Jackendoff's *Consciousness and the Computational Mind*,[7] (7a) represents
a very tentative and much simplified version of the organization of human
mental faculties:

(7) Vision in a modular framework of mental faculties

In its left column of modules, (7a) distinguishes three phases of visual interpretation that I will very briefly and reductively summarize as follows. On receiving input—the retinal image—the first visual phase produces a "primal sketch" model (pS), which isolates basic shapes. One level up, a "2$^1\!/_2$D sketch" adds perspective, orientation, and distance information. Another level up, a "3D model" identifies objects. Output from this 3D model may then flow into the central and upper level of meaning representation or "conceptual structure." Next to the three-tiered column of visual modules, (7a) presents a similar arrangement of two language modules identified as "Phon" (phonology) and "Synt" (syntax); and next to that two hypothetical modules of a catch-all "other" faculty. As a general rule, all modules are assumed to be vertically connected by "bidirectional" interfaces, allowing heuristic cycles of bottom-up and top-down exchanges of information.

Even in this trivialized sketch, (7) has obvious implications for a theory of reading. According to Jackendoff, the general flow of information in reading proceeds roughly along the route shown in (7b). It starts "at the retinal input and passes up through the visual system to conceptual structure, where the categorization of the visual inputs into letters and words is formulated. From there the information passes to the level of segmental phonology, where the forms of words are encoded, then back up through the linguistic system to conceptual structure, where the information is understood as language" (*Consciousness* 259). Processing need not stop here: the model also allows for conceptual information flowing back to the faculties as represented in (7c). For instance, our understanding of the text may trigger a response like laughing, crying, or salivating (motor actions represented by the dotted lines leaving the bottommost "other" faculty module in [7c]). Alternatively, or additionally, our understanding may filter back into the language faculty and enable us to imagine the pronunciation and intonation of the words or to produce output such as reading aloud.

Last but not least, conceptual information may also filter back into some of the visual modules and trigger "visual imagery" or imaginative seeing in the absence of a retinal image. Thus (7b) and (7c) elucidate how a text may evoke the voices of the characters and the narrator (Fludernik, *Fictions* 463) and how the reader is enabled to "see through language," as Roger Fowler wittily, and most appropriately, puts it.

Outside cognitive research, this model is not only corroborated by theoretical literary accounts like Paul Ricoeur's notion of "mimesis 3" or the reception-orientated hypotheses propounded by Iser and Wolf, but also by many authorial and narratorial invocations of mental imagery. As to the latter, (8) and (9) are typical (and much-quoted) examples:

> (8) My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*.
> (Conrad, Preface to *The Nigger of the* Narcissus xxvi)

> (9) You shall see them, reader. Step into this neat garden-house on the skirts of Whinbury, walk forward into the little parlour—there they are at dinner. . . . You and I will join the party, see what is to be seen, and hear what is to be heard.
> (Charlotte Brontë, *Shirley* 9)

Combining James's windows, the model of vision introduced in section 1, and a reading-oriented theory of mental imagery now enables us to reconceptualize focalization in terms of "windows of focalization." Focalization theory, under this view, deals with the gradient of possibilities of a text's windows on story events and existents. A passage that presents objects and events as seen, perceived, or conceptualized from a specific focus-1 will, naturally and automatically, invoke a reader's adoption of (or transposition to) this point of view and open a window defined by the perceptual, evaluative, and affective parameters that characterize the agent providing the focus-1.[8] If the focalization window is anchored in a narratorial origo, the usual reading assumption will be that the narrator is talking about what he or she imaginatively perceives. Something like this is explicitly suggested in (8) and (9). For a reflector-based focalization window, the default naturalization will be that the text represents (or, given a perceptible narrator, that the narrator records) what the reflector perceives, either *in actu* or imaginatively. On a more global level of analysis, the sequencing and arrangement of focalization windows very likely follows the same basic patterns that Ryan has sketched for story-line windows.[9]

As regards specific textual features, it will be sufficient here to list just a few. Typically, a focalization window is anchored in a "deictic center," or Banfieldian SELF, which orients deictic expressions (verbs like *come* and *go*, spatial, temporal, and modal adverbs, denominations, expressive constructions, and so on). The compatibility of these elements is a crucial coherence factor that is continually, if semiattentively, monitored

by the reader. Narratorial focalization typically uses descriptive imagery while reflector-mode focalization is usually cast in a "mind style" comprising referentless pronouns, the familiarizing article, minimized narratorial perceptibility, *in actu* presentation, and so on (Stanzel; Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*; Nischik). For illustration, consider excerpts (10) and (11), quoted below, the former a narratorial description and the latter a passage that switches from narratorial to reflector-mode presentation.

(10) He was a rich man: banker, merchant, manufacturer, and what not. A big, loud man, with a stare, and a metallic laugh. A man made out of a coarse material, which seemed to have been stretched to make so much of him. A man with a great puffed head and forehead, swelled veins in his temples, and such a strained skin to his face that it seemed to hold his eyes open, and lift his eyebrows up. A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a balloon, and ready to start.   (Dickens, *Hard Times* 12)

(11) Forced to observe the gun he held with care—indeed with dawning anxiety—he saw on the barrel where it met the inflexible breech the engraved words "*Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre Herstal Belgique,*" which was plainly no direction for opening it. To Mr Lecky these foreign words were an unpleasant discovery, suggesting a necessarily inferior weapon, and he sat still, no longer even trying to open it. He was, in fact, holding a Browning automatic twelve-gauge shotgun, complicated by magazine cutout and double extractors. For this, naturally, none of the ammunition he had laid out would serve.   (Cozzens, *Castaway* 90)

In (10), the narrator's massed visual and auditory imagery carries the illocutionary force of an invitation to picture this character with attributes x, y, z, prompting the reader to create a mental picture of Mr. Bounderby and perhaps, from his or her knowledge and memory of fat people, to contribute some further graphic detail. Significantly, the narrator's critical slant both engenders and feeds on this imagery. Although the reader's mental image of Mr. Bounderby is likely to be more open, fuzzy, and indeterminate than one derived through the channels of ordinary perception, Iser argues that the "poor resolution" of mental images is more than compensated for by the reader's affective involvement in the imagining process ("Reading" 288; *Akt* 225). As Iser points out, this may be the reason why readers are often disappointed by actual realizations in illustrations or films.[10]

Example (11) is a more complex case because it presents both a reflector's and a narrator's view of a story existent and does so by shifting from one focalization window to another. The reader has so far followed Mr. Lecky, the novella's single reflector, on a Robinsonade through a deserted department store. Feeling threatened by unknown pursuers, Mr. Lecky has pillaged the store's sports department and picked up a gun. The passage begins by conceptualizing Mr. Lecky's view of the gun as well as his perception of the engraved words (which are quoted but apparently not fully understood by Mr. Lecky); it also presents his dejected judgment that he has selected an "inferior weapon." Then, beginning with "He was, in

fact . . .," the gun is focused on in the vastly superior conceptualization of the narrator, who virtually "sees fine where the other sees coarse," to invert James's phrase from (4). This change from a "dense" reflector to a super-perceptive narrator allows the reader to infer, and in a sense also to "see," both the true quality of the weapon and Mr. Lecky's potentially fatal misjudgement.

Mainstream focalization theory with its ready answers to *who speaks?* and *who sees?* largely denies narrators and readers their share as well as their power of imaginary perception. Post-Genettian theory's main innovation—the narrator-focalizer—is a step in the right direction in so far as it undermines, or at least softens, the strict compartmentalizations of the earlier account. Actually, although Genette is understandably reluctant to divert from his position to any significant extent, he freely recommends authors like François Jost and Pierre Vitoux (*Revisited* 73-74, 77), who, without much further ado, assume the existence of "external" focalizers. Unfortunately, the coexistence of external and internal focalizers in due course leads to the notorious crux of embedded focalization, creating another dead end. Before turning to embedded focalization, however, it is sensible to take a closer look at Chatman's wholly uncompromising objection to focalizing narrators.

4. SOME THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

4.1. CHATMAN'S ARGUMENT AGAINST FOCALIZING NARRATORS

"It is one thing to use a metaphor," Chatman writes, referring to the visual connotations of focalization, "and quite another to be used by it" ("Characters" 191). In *Coming to Terms*, he elaborates his charge as follows:

(12) The narrator can only report events: he does not literally "see" them at the moment of speaking them. The heterodiegetic narrator *never* saw the events because he/she/it never occupied the story world. The homodiegetic or first-person narrator *did* see the events and objects at an earlier moment in the story, but his recountal is after the fact and thus a matter of memory, not of perception.   (144-45)

Chatman considers the term *focalization* to be deficient because it fails to account for "the quite different mental process of characters and narrators" (*Terms* 145). He consequently proposes the term *slant* for the narrator's "attitudes and other mental manners appropriate to the report function of discourse," and the term *filter* for the reflector's mental processes, which include "perceptions, cognitions, attitudes, emotions, memories, fantasies, and the like" (*Terms* 143).

Unfortunately, *filter* and *slant* are ill-suited to capture the distinction between literal and nonliteral seeing. Chatman frankly admits that slant "is

one sense of 'point of view' which narrators and characters do share"
("Characters" 197), an admission that immediately divests *slant* of its dis-
criminative power. Continuing in this self-deconstructive vein, Chatman
also admits that narrators can perceive the "sights and sounds" (*Terms* 144)
of their discourse environment, now conceding that narrators are *not* con-
stitutionally incapable of literal seeing. Having memories is yet another
mental process shared by narrators and reflectors, again as exemplified by
Chatman in (12). Thus far, apart from asserting the hardly contestable fact
that narrators narrate and reflectors (usually) do not, Chatman's argument
merely elicits a number of exceptions.

However, the fundamental misconception of (12) is its suggestion that
perception can be divorced from memory and that a crucial difference exists
between literal and nonliteral seeing. Narrators, according to Chatman, are
free to remember and imagine things, but they can never perceive the story
events directly. Characters, on the other hand, can do both, and therefore
engage in "quite different" mental processes. This distinction is hardly
persuasive; but Chatman's argument is even more basically flawed because
it ignores the cognitive commonplace that seeing "is a matter of visual
memory" (Neisser 146). Ulric Neisser convincingly shows that what divides
literal and nonliteral perception is an extremely fine line indeed:

(14) Even without any stimuli at all, dreams and hallucinations result in experiences
which are phenomenally just like other perceptions. . . . It will not suffice to define
hallucinations as experiences which use no stimulus information, because many
do: an automobile horn outside may make me dream of Gabriel's trumpet. Nor is
it satisfactory to define perceptions as experiences which are faithful to the
stimulus input: in general they are not.   (120)

At best, Jackendoff argues, literal and nonliteral perception may be distin-
guished as different "conceptual attributes" of mental representations. Ac-
cording to Jackendoff, ordinary (literal) perception carries the attribute "out
there" or simply "real" (*Semantics* 26), dreams *in actu* have "out-thereness
temporarily ascribed" to them, and dreams in retrospect are tagged as
"imagined" (*Semantics* 143), and so on. Apparently, phenomenological at-
tributes of this type also play a role in the process of reading, specifically,
of course, when the scene constructed in the reader's mind is understood to
be "fictional." Wolf convincingly argues that it is essential to the aesthetic
illusion that the reader engages in various processes of mental imagery and
yet remains aware of where s/he is and that s/he is reading a book.

Returning to the subject of narrators and reflectors, there is obviously
very little ground for assigning to these agents categorically different mental
processes. As Rimmon-Kenan puts it:

(14) Obviously, a person (and, by analogy, a narrative agent) is capable of both
     speaking and seeing, and even of doing both things at the same time—a state of
     affairs which facilitates the confusion between the two activities.

                                                          (*Narrative Fiction* 72)
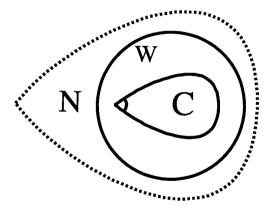
Interestingly, Rimmon-Kenan has palpable misgivings about (14). For one
thing, she is aware of the fact that (14) subtly subverts Genette's distinction
between who sees and who speaks. Further, as she explains in a footnote,
she has "grave doubts about the validity of the personification of narrative
agents (i.e. treating them as if they were real people)" (138). Indeed, the
narratological instinct to depersonalize the narrator is widespread though
few go as far as Banfield, who simply refines heterodiegetic narrators out
of existence. This tendency is most clearly exemplified by terms such as
narrative function, persona, instance, agency, it, voice, and so forth. No
doubt such terms have been appropriated with good reason; however, as
Elrud Ibsch has pointed out in anticipation of a "cognitive turn" in narra-
tology, the strict depersonification of narrative instances may be as naive
and counterproductive as was the habit of investing them with a life of their
own. Even though the narrator is obviously the insubstantial invention of
the author, pragmatic meaning construction remains very firmly predicated
on the assumption of an addresser observing the maxims of cooperation in
human communication.[11]

4.2. "EMBEDDED" FOCALIZATION

Bal first develops her notion of embedded focalization in her analysis
of Colette's *La Chatte*, where she singles out situations like "the external
focalizer watches Camille watching Alain" or "the first focalizer sees Alain
who sees the monsters who . . . see Alain" ("Narrating" 257). In "Notes on
Narrative Embedding," she cites further examples in the context of dis-
course situations: "Lockwood relates that Lockwood remembers . . . that
Lockwood heard in a dream . . ." (46). In *Narratology*, she proposes a
formulaic notation distinguishing focalizers, levels, and perceptibility of
focalized objects. Although similar notations have been devised by Vitoux
and O'Neill, none of these formalizations are particularly manageable or
insightful, and many narratologists now believe that the subject is not worth
pursuing.[12]

The problems raised by Bal's treatment of embedded focalization can
be traced to two questionable premises. One is that, according to Bal, any
act of perception (brief or extended; real, hypothetical, or fantasized) pre-
sented in whatever form (narrated, reported, quoted, or scenically repre-
sented) counts as a case of focalization. The other is that embedded
focalization works on the analogy of embedded texts. For embedded focali-
zation to occur, however, it is clearly not enough for the narrator to write
that character A watches character B watch object C.[13] Arguably, unless

these acts of perception open distinct windows of focalization, unless A and
B turn into genuine reflectors, no internal focalization, let alone an embed-
ded one, takes place. As to the analogy of embedded texts, one must proceed
circumspectly. While a narrative can easily iterate the pattern of *A tells that
B tells that C tells* and achieve considerable depths of embedding, mental
processes do not embed in a comparable fashion. Obviously, one can re-
member a dream, remember a vision in a dream, or even remember remem-
bering remembering. These cases involve a single mind's unique mentation,
however, and thus constitute particular states of consciousness (or accumu-
lations of phenomenological attributes, in Jackendoff's sense) rather than
the Chinese-boxes structure of embedded narratives. Embedded focalization
is only plausible if it includes a narratorial level, that is, if a narrator (Bal's
external or "first" focalizer) sees that a character sees something. Indeed,
it is tempting to represent this type of embedding using the field-of-vision
model as in (15):

(15) Embedded Focalization

In (15), the outer field of vision (N) is the narrator's, and the embedded
field of vision (C) is the reflector's. The narrator in (15) not only sees what
the character sees and how the character sees it, but surveys the whole story
world (W). The narrator's focus-2 may light on the reflector's field of vision
or on the reflector's focus-2 or on a peripheral area or on something beyond
the character's conscious awareness. Given the scope and variability of this
basic scheme, Nünning and I have since used it for a modeling of Stanzel's
narrative situations (Jahn and Nünning 289). In fact, (15) is our repre-
sentation of a standard figural narrative situation with a foregrounded re-
flector and a backgrounded narrator, the latter indicated in this case by
dotting the narrator's field of vision. Backgrounding and foregrounding the
different fields is the model's way of accounting for Genette's persuasive

remark that the "focus" (focus-1) of the narrative cannot be "at two points *simultaneously*" (*Revisited* 76-77). It must be stressed again, however, that (15) really only represents the principal scenario envisioned by James: a narrator who sees and records ("overtraces") what a reflector sees. What remains very doubtful is whether a schema like (15) could serve as a representation of a single mind's complex imaginary perception.

5. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

I began by resurrecting the concept of visual field, which narratologists originally considered to be a defining feature of focalization and then discarded as being too narrow. I proposed a mental model of visual field that capitalizes on the metaphor's underlying semantic network and provides much of the generalizability needed for a more powerful phenomenology of focalization. Deconstructing Genette's categories and definitions, I then focused on the aporias that make Genette's theory of focalization operate less than smoothly. While acknowledging that narratology is predicated on an "unavoidable violence" of analytic exposition (*Discourse* 215), I find that many of the contrast enhancements employed by Genette are nonetheless unintuitive in their conception and counterproductive in their consequences. Above all, it is not necessary to construe speaking and seeing as a binary opposition, nor is it necessary to let the term *speak* stand for speaking, writing, narrating, and thinking, or to make a categorical distinction between literal and imaginary perception.

The deconstruction of Genette's theory of focalization opened the door to a reconsideration of the watching narrators in James's "house of fiction." Although Jamesian poetics and structuralist narratology share a vestige of common ground, they are antithetical in their treatment of narration and focalization. James's narrators see before they speak and they speak in order to make us, the readers, see. The Genettian narrator speaks and, in doing so, produces the narrative discourse, which "can only *inform*— that is, transmit meanings" (*Revisited* 42-43). For Chatman, a focalizing narrator is a blunt contradiction in terms. Historically, the progression from James to Genette is one from vision-centered poetics to "textocentred" narratology (Prince 545). In the upheaval of the structuralist paradigm shift, James's vision of narrators, reflectors, and windows was discarded as being too metaphorical, as was his insight about the shared roles of narrators and readers. Genettian narratology tends to marginalize the reading process, usually on the ground that readers—like their counterparts, authors—are extranarrative players (*Discourse* 213). Nevertheless, as Daniel Frank Chamberlain notes, in narratology too it is always the narratologist-as-reader who constitutes the ultimate textual authority (83). For instance, arguing against the concept of narratorless narratives as proposed by Ban-

field, Genette complains that such theories can only arise from an "astonishing *deafness* to texts" (my emphasis). "In the most unobtrusive narrative," he continues, "someone is speaking to me, is telling me a story, is inviting me to listen to it as he tells it" (*Revisited* 101). These remarks do invoke a common reading experience, and, in a sense, the reader's mind's ear is accounted for in Genette's system by giving the narrator a "voice." What the system lacks is a place and a concept for a text's appeal to the reader's mind's eye. I argue here that, if Jackendoff's system of communicating mental faculties has any merit, the same principle that allows us to hear what the narrator says will also allow us to see (if only imaginatively) what the narrator describes and what the reflector perceives. Under this view, the difference between auditory and visual (and other perceptional) imagery is a specific one that links as much as it divides.

It is this foregrounding of the role of imaginary perception that may prove to be the cornerstone for a revised, and revitalized, theory of focalization, one that accepts narrating and focalizing as mutually dependent activities and that accords the reader a place in its framework. Specifically, such a new theory would allow narrators to talk about what they (imaginatively) perceive or about what a reflector (imaginatively) perceives. These precepts may finally enable focalization analysis to find a more coherent approach towards the specificity and characteristics of the agent providing the focus-1, the angle of perception, the extent of the "field" of focalization, as well as the nature, selection, and filtering of centrally or peripherally seen objects. Finally, the concept of focalization windows could be employed to investigate patterns of coherence, scope, and arrangement and to analyze textual and narratorial strategies of deploying isolated or global windows as well as the many alternating, stacking, or grouping patterns that are felt to exist intuitively but have yet to be mapped out systematically.

Notes

[1] The field-of-vision shape represented in figure (1) can be found, either graphically or descriptively, in a wide variety of sources, for instance Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (5.633), Claudio Guillén's "On the Concept and Metaphor of Perspective" (322), Peter H. Lindsay and Donald A. Norman's *Human Information Processing* (168), and Franz K. Stanzel's *A Theory of Narrative* (155).

[2] For instance, humans have pairs of eyes and binocular vision; the field of vision is three-dimensional; the eye's lens is really only one cog in a complicated machine. The world is not like a circle. Wittgenstein devises a similar field-of-vision shape in his *Tractatus* (5.633) only to reject it both because the eye cannot see itself and the field of vision is not delimited by a boundary line—more precisely, because the boundary is not only invisible but unknowable.

[3] See Andreas Kablitz for an extensive and well-argued critique of the defining of focalization in terms of a knowledge differential.

⁴ This is not quite the same as Cohn's pair quoted versus autonomous monologues; for Cohn, "Benjy," "Penelope" and *Lauriers* are all identically autonomous.

⁵ On James and telling as painting, see Sonja Bašić (204). See Gene M. Moore for a narratological analysis of *What Maisie Knew*.

⁶ Since Wolfgang Iser's discussion of James's novella in *Der Akt des Lesens*, "the figure in the carpet" has become a key concept in reception theory. See Bašić (202-03) for an assessment of the narratological impact of James's story.

⁷ The following is a summary sketch of the model presented by Jackendoff (*Consciousness* ch. 12). The specifics of the visual levels are largely based on David Marr's *Vision*.

⁸ Bühler's concept of transposing to the *Phantasma* (138-39) has recently been elaborated in the framework of a cognitively orientated "deictic shift theory" (see Galbraith for further references).

⁹ According to Marie-Laure Ryan, a story-line window is defined as the continuous "take" of an imaginary camera. A window-shift occurs when "the camera goes off-line, and control is transferred to another camera" (62). Differentiating between "new," "old," "virtual," and "actual" windows, as well as "lateral" and "embedding" window shifts, Ryan provides the basic tools for an analysis of a text's "window structures" and its "strategies of window management" (77). In an excursus on "windows and focalizations," Ryan initially stresses a number of promising correspondences (76). Then, noting that story-line shifts and "change in focalizer" do not always go hand in hand, the analogy is dropped—prematurely, it seems.

¹⁰ Interestingly, although James was a most enthusiastic appreciator of the visual arts (see *The Painter's Eye*), he strongly objected to illustrations in fiction: "Anything that relieves responsible prose of the duty of being, while placed before us, good enough, interesting enough and, if the question be of picture, pictorial enough, above all *in itself*, does it the worst of services" (*Art* xxvi, 332).

¹¹ On the question of personification-based naturalizations of the narrative situation see Culler (*Framing* 214), Nünning (59), and Fludernik (*"Natural" Narratology* ch. 8).

¹² See the discussion of embedded focalizations in Genette (*Revisited* 76), Vitoux (366-68), Chatman ("Characters" 200), Jost (128), Nelles (374), and Edmiston (*Hindsight* 152-53).

¹³ This statement quotes a remark made by one of *Style*'s readers.

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