

Text: characterization

Character, as one construct within the abstracted story, can be described in terms of a network of character-traits. These traits, however, may or may not appear as such in the text. How, then, is the construct arrived at? By assembling various character-indicators distributed along the text-continuum and, when necessary, inferring the traits from them. It is these indicators that I seek to define under the heading of 'characterization'.

In principle, any element in the text may serve as an indicator of character and, conversely, character-indicators may serve other purposes as well (see the point about the reversibility of hierarchies in chapter 3, p. 36). But there are elements which are most frequently, though not exclusively, associated with characterization, and these are the subject of the present chapter. In the study of particular texts, it should be remembered that the same means of characterization may be used differently by different authors or in different works by the same author and sometimes even within the same work. However, in this general presentation of characterization such differences cannot be explored.

There are two basic types of textual indicators of character: direct definition and indirect presentation (Ewen 1971; 1980, pp. 47-8).¹ The first type names the trait by an adjective (e.g. 'he was good-hearted'), an abstract noun ('his goodness knew no bounds'), or possibly some other kind of noun ('she was a real

bitch') or part of speech ('he loves only himself'). The second type, on the other hand, does not mention the trait but displays and exemplifies it in various ways, leaving to the reader the task of inferring the quality they imply.

Direct definition

'Isabel Archer was a young person of many theories; her imagination was remarkably active. . . . Her thoughts were a tangle of vague outlines . . .' - this is how Henry James's narrator defines some prominent traits of the heroine of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1966, p. 49. Orig. publ. 1881). Such naming of a character's qualities counts as direct characterization only if it proceeds from the most authoritative voice in the text (on 'voices' see chapter 7, pp. 86-9, 94-103). Had the same words been spoken by the people of Albany, for example, they would probably have carried less weight, serving reflexively to characterize them as much as (if not more than) Isabel. If narrow-minded, dull characters call someone 'a person of many theories' or consider that character's imagination 'remarkably active', their views need not be taken as a reliable affirmation of these qualities in a character whose exceptionality may be only in the eyes of mediocre beholders. The beholders' comments may thus be an indication of their own distrust of theories or paucity of imagination rather than a trustworthy definition of the character they discuss. But when these exceptional qualities are attributed to Isabel by an authoritative narrator, the reader is implicitly called upon to accept the definitions.²

Definition is akin to generalization and conceptualization. It is also both explicit and supra-temporal. Consequently, its dominance in a given text is liable to produce a rational, authoritative and static impression. This impression may be alleviated if the definitions seem to emerge gradually from concrete details, or are immediately exemplified by specific behaviour, or presented together with other means of characterization. In the early period of the novel, roughly until the end of the last century, when the human personality was grasped as a combination of qualities shared by many people, the generalizing, classificatory nature of definition was considered an asset. Its explicitness and 'closed' effect did not disturb a literature

where these qualities manifested themselves in many other ways as well. The economical character of definition and its capacity to guide the reader's response recommended it to traditional novelists. On the other hand, in an individualistic and relativistic period like our own, generalization and classification are less easily tolerated, and the economy of definition is grasped as reductive. Moreover, in the present day, when suggestiveness and indeterminacy are preferred to closure and definitiveness and when emphasis is put on the active role of the reader, the explicitness and guiding capacity of direct definition are often considered drawbacks rather than advantages. As a result, definition is less frequently used in twentieth-century fiction and indirect presentation tends to predominate (Ewen 1980, pp. 51-2).

Indirect presentation

A presentation is indirect when rather than mentioning a trait, it displays and exemplifies it in various ways. Some of these ways will be enumerated in the following discussion.

Action

A trait may be implied both by one-time (or non-routine) actions, like Meursault's murder of the Arab in Camus's *L'Étranger* (1942), and by habitual ones, like Eveline's dusting of the house in Joyce's short story bearing her name (1914). One-time actions tend to evoke the dynamic aspect of the character, often playing a part in a turning point in the narrative. By contrast, habitual actions tend to reveal the character's unchanging or static aspect, often having a comic or ironic effect, as when a character clings to old habits in a situation which renders them inadequate. Although a one-time action does not reflect *constant* qualities, it is not less characteristic of the character. On the contrary, its dramatic impact often suggests that the traits it reveals are qualitatively more crucial than the numerous habits which represent the character's routine.

Both one-time and habitual actions can belong to one of the following categories: act of commission (i.e. something performed by the character), act of omission (something which the character should, but does not do), and contemplated act (an

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unrealized plan or intention of the character).³ Meursault's (one-time) murder and Eveline's (habitual) dusting are both acts of commission. For a crucial one-time act of omission we can turn to another novel by Camus, *La Chute* (1956). In it, the failure of the character-narrator to jump into the river and save the drowning woman remains an obsession to him and a central concern in the text. Habitual omissions characterize Faulkner's Emily (1930), as when she repeatedly neglects to pay her municipal taxes. A contemplated act may both imply a latent trait and suggest possible reasons for its remaining latent, as in the following passage from Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*:

Then suddenly Sandy wanted to be kind to Mary Macgregor, and thought of possibilities of feeling nice from being nice to Mary instead of blaming her. . . . The sound of Miss Brodie's presence, just when it was on the tip of Sandy's tongue to be nice to Mary Macgregor, arrested the urge.

(1971, p. 30. Orig. publ. 1961)

Sandy's latent propensity to be kind as well as its erasure under Miss Brodie's influence can be glimpsed in this contemplated act. When contemplated acts become habitual, the character's passivity or shrinking from action may be implied. Hamlet, of course, has become the proverbial prototype of this characteristic.

All these kinds of action can (but need not) be endowed with a symbolic dimension. Two examples will suffice. Shortly before the first love scene between Connie Chatterley and the gamekeeper in Lawrence's novel, the two come across a hen and a chick:

'There!' he said, holding out his hand to her. She took the little drab thing between her hands, and there it stood. . . . But it lifted its handsome clean-shaped little head boldly, and looked sharply round, and gave a little 'peep'. 'So adorable! So cheeky!' she said softly.

The keeper, squatting beside her, was also watching with an amused face the bold little bird in her hands. Suddenly he saw a tear fall on her wrist.

. . . She was kneeling and holding her two hands slowly forward, blindly, so that the chicken should run in to the

mother-hen again. . . . He came quickly toward her and crouched beside her again, taking the chick from her hands, because she was afraid of the hen, and putting it back in the coop. . . . Her face was averted and she was crying blindly.

(1961, p. 119. Orig. publ. 1928)

Connie's behaviour in this scene symbolizes her yearning for warmth, love and maternity, all absent in her marriage.

Whereas in the passage from Lawrence the symbolism lies in acts of commission (taking the chick between the hands, gently guiding it toward the mother-hen, crying), the second example, again taken from *The Portrait of a Lady*, confers symbolic significance on an act of omission:

She [Isabel] knew that this silent, motionless portal opened into the street; if the sidelights had not been filled with green paper she might have looked out upon the little brown stoop and the well-worn brick pavement. But she had no wish to look out, for this would have interfered with her theory that there was a strange, unseen place on the other side - a place which became to the child's imagination, according to its different moods, a region of delight or of terror. . . . She had never opened the bolted door nor removed the green paper (renewed by other hands) from its sidelights; she had never assured herself that the vulgar street lay beyond.

(1966, p. 25)

Isabel's not opening the door to the street symbolically suggests her preference for illusion over reality, a characteristic which will later play an important part in her tragic career.

Speech

A character's speech, whether in conversation or as a silent activity of the mind, can be indicative of a trait or traits both through its content and through its form. It is mainly the content of Jason's statement in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* that suggests his bigotry:

I give every man his due, regardless of religion or anything else. I have nothing against Jews as an individual', I says, It's just the race.'

(1965, p. 173. Orig. publ. 1931)

But the inner contradiction (he gives people their due *regardless* of religion, yet dislikes the Jews as a race) and the underlying cliché ('some of my best friends are Jews' or some similar expression) clearly play a part in stressing the specious logic characteristic of his (or any) bigotry. Similarly, what one character says about another may characterize not only the one spoken about but also the one who speaks (see p. 60).

The form or style of speech is a common means of characterization in texts where the characters' language is individuated and distinguished from that of the narrator. Style may be indicative of origin, dwelling place, social class, or profession. Thus the stereotypic traits of a Jew and a rabbi are evoked by the Hebrew and Yiddish expressions as well as by the turn of phrases in the following passage from Bellow's *Herzog*:

'And she took hold of. . .'
 'of what? *Beged*'
 '*Beged*. A coat'
 'A garment, you little thief. *Mamzer!* I'm sorry for your father. Some heir he's got! Some *kaddish!* Ham and pork you'll be eating, before his body is in the grave. And you, Herzog, with those behemoth eyes — *V'yaizov bigdo b'yodo?*'
 'And he left it in her hands'
 'Left what?'
 '*Bigdo*, the garment'
 'You watch your step, Herzog, Moses. Your mother thinks you'll be a great *lamden* - a rabbi. But I know you, how lazy you are. Mothers' hearts are broken by *mamzeirim* like you! Eh! do I know you, Herzog? Through and through.'

(1973, pp. 137-8. Orig. publ. 1964)

In addition to the social aspect of a character revealed by his style, individual characteristics can also be suggested by it. Thus the abundance of subordinate clauses and the recurrent qualification of statements in the language of many of Henry James's characters implies their tendency to follow all the nuances of a thought or feeling as well as the painstaking quality of their intellect.

Action and speech convey character-traits through a cause and effect relation which the reader deciphers 'in reverse': X killed the dragon, 'therefore' he is brave; Y uses many foreign

words, 'therefore' she is a snob.⁴ But indirect presentation may also rely on a relation of spatial contiguity. This is the case of external appearance and environment. A causal connection may, in fact, be present, though not dominant, here too, as when a character's shabby dress or dirty room not only connote his state of depression but also result from it. Another difference between the two kinds of indirect indicators is that the first is located in time whereas the second is non-temporal. Again, the difference is not absolute, for a description of a character's external appearance or environment may refer to a specific point in time ('on that day she wore a black coat' etc.). However, such time-bound descriptions tend to characterize a transitory mood rather than a 'relatively stable or abiding personal quality' which is Chatman's definition of a character trait (1978, p. 127).

External appearance

Ever since the beginning of narrative fiction, external appearance was used to imply character-traits, but only under the influence of Lavater, a Swiss philosopher and theologian (1741–1801), and his theory of physiognomy has the connection between the two acquired a pseudo-scientific status. Lavater analysed portraits of various historical figures as well as people of his own time (see example in Ewen 1980, pp. 57–8) in order to demonstrate the necessary and direct connection between facial features and personality traits. The impact of his theory on Balzac and other nineteenth-century authors was great indeed. But even in our century, when the scientific validity of Lavater's theory has been completely discredited, the metonymic relation between external appearance and character-traits has remained a powerful resource in the hand of many writers. One should distinguish in this connection between those external features which are grasped as beyond the character's control, such as height, colour of eyes, length of nose (features which get scarcer with the advancement of modern cosmetics and plastic surgery) and those which at least partly depend on him, like hair-style and clothes. While the first group characterizes through contiguity alone, the second has additional causal overtones (Ewen 1980, p. 59). Both kinds can be found in the

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description of Laura, the heroine of Porter's 'Flowering Judas', and both suggest her repression of warmth, sexuality and *joie de vivre*:

- (a) ... but all praise her gray eyes, and the soft, round under lip which promises gayety, yet is always grave, nearly always firmly closed.

(1971, p. 389. Orig. publ. 1930)

- (b) ... this simple girl who covers her great round breasts with thick dark cloth, and who hides long, invaluable beautiful legs under a heavy skirt. She is almost thin except for the incomprehensible fullness of her breasts, like a nursing mother's

(1971, p. 392)

At times the external description speaks for itself; at other times its relation to a trait is explicated by the narrator, e.g. 'his brown eyes expressed sadness and innocence'. Such explanations may function as disguised definitions rather than as indirect characterization. This happens when a non-visual quality is attributed - as in a synecdoche - to one part of the character's physique rather than to the character as a whole (e.g.) 'her intelligent eyes' instead of 'she is intelligent'). Ewen calls these 'seeming descriptions' and distinguishes them from the kind of external appearance discussed so far (1980, p. 61).

Environment

A character's physical surrounding (room, house, street, town) as well as his human environment (family, social class) are also often used as trait-connoting metonymies. As with external appearance, the relation of contiguity is frequently supplemented by that of causality. Miss Emily's dilapidated house, with its clouds of dust and its dank smell, is a metonymy of her decadence, but its decay is also a result of her poverty and her morbid temperament. Again as with external appearance, a pseudo-scientific connection between character and environment was established in the nineteenth century. The doctrine of race, moment and *milieu*, expounded by the French historian and philosopher Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) had a decisive influence on the use of environment in the writing of Balzac and

Zola. However, the causality postulated by this doctrine is less marked in Balzac's use of spatial metonymies than in Zola's. This difference may be illustrated by a detailed comparison (which I cannot undertake here) of, say, the description of the Maison Vauquer and its inhabitants in *Le Père Goriot* (1834) and that of the mine and its workers in *Germinal* (1885).

Reinforcement by analogy

I treat analogy as a reinforcement of characterization rather than as a separate type of character-indicator (equivalent to direct definition and indirect presentation) because its characterizing capacity depends on the prior establishment, by other means, of the traits on which it is based. A grey and dreary landscape, for example, is not likely to imply itself a character's pessimism, but it may enhance the reader's perception of this trait once it has been revealed through the character's action, speech or external appearance.⁵

The differentiation between analogy and other indicators of character should be carried a bit further. Since metaphoric (analogous) elements tend to be implicit in metonymies, one may question the distinction between what I call analogy and such forms of metonymic presentation as external appearance and environment. Does not the rigidity of Laura's dress parallel that of her personality, and is not the decay of Miss Emily's house analogous to her own decline? The answer to both questions is Yes, and yet these indirect presentations are based mainly on contiguity, a relation either absent from or much less dominant in the analogies discussed here. Moreover, as we have seen above, indirect presentation often involves an implicit story-causality. Analogy, on the other hand, is a purely textual link, independent of story-causality. As Ewen points out, many — though not all — analogies may have developed out of conceptions involving causality, like the medieval belief in the cause and effect relations between disorder in the human world and upheaval in nature, but they are grasped as purely analogous characterization when the causal connection is no longer strongly operative (1980, p. 100). Although the transition from one type to the other is neither abrupt nor neat and the two may

often overlap in practice, the distinction is still valid in principle.

Three ways in which analogy can reinforce characterization will be discussed below, without presuming that they are exhaustive. In all three, the analogy may emphasize either the similarity or the contrast between the two elements compared, and it may be either explicitly stated in the text or implicitly left for the reader to discover.

Analogous names

According to Hamon (1977, pp. 147-50. Orig. publ. 1972), names can parallel character-traits in four ways: (1) Visual, as when the letter O is associated with a round and fat character and the letter I with a tall thin one (his example). (2) Acoustic, whether in onomatopoeia, like the buzz of flies in the name 'Beelzebub', or in less strictly onomatopoeic form, like 'Akaky Akakievitch' in Gogol's 'The Overcoat' (1842), ridiculed by the very sound of his name. (3) Articulatory, like Dickens's 'Gradgrind' in *Hard Times* (1854), suggesting the main quality of the character by the mouthing of the name and the muscle activity it requires. (4) Morphological, like the presence of 'boeuf' (bull) in 'Bov/ary' or the combination of 'hors' + 'la' (out + there) in the name of Maupassant's mysterious creature, le Horla (1887).

Close to Hamon's last category, though not necessarily based on morphological *combinations* are the semantic connections which Ewen discusses (1980, pp. 102-7). allegories, the name represents the main trait(s) of a character: Pride, Lust, Goodman. An interesting contemporary usage of this is to be found in Zinoviev's *The Yawning Heights* (1976) which castigates Soviet society in a flood of brief sketches of such stereotypes as 'Careersit', 'Slanderer', 'Chatterer', 'Sociologist' and at last 'Truth-teller'. But even non-allegorical texts often have recourse to a semantic parallelism between name and trait. Mrs Newsome in James's *The Ambassadors* (1903) represents the new world, the betrayer in Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is called 'Sandy Stranger', and the self-effacing beauty who gave her name to Maupassant's story is named 'Mademoiselle Perle' (1886). Sometimes the analogy is based on literary or mythological allusions, as in the name 'Daedalus' in Joyce's *A Portrait*

of the Artist (1916), transferring to Stephen the creativity, pride and possibility of fall associated with his Greek ancestor.

Rather than stressing similarity, analogy can also emphasize contrast between name and trait, frequently creating an ironic effect. This is the case when Razumov, son of reason (from a Polish root), is shown in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1911) to be governed by unconscious motives much more frequently than by reason, often precisely when he prides himself on his rationality. Like similarities, contrasts can also be underscored by literary allusions. When the name Laura, borrowed from the glorified beloved of Petrarch's sonnets, is bestowed on a love-denying revolutionist in Porter's 'Flowering Judas', the result is a clash which ironically underscores the perversion involved in Laura's asceticism. Although 'Ulysses' is not the name of the main character in Joyce's novel (1922), its title-position suggests an analogy with the main character, Bloom, and the contrast between the mythological hero and his modern counterpart sheds ironic light on the latter.

Analogous landscape

As we have seen (pp. 66-7), the physical or social environment of a character does not only present a trait or traits indirectly but, being man-made, may also cause it or be caused by it (x lives in a very poor neighbourhood, therefore he is cheerless, or - the other way round - Y is depressed, therefore his house is neglected). Landscape, on the other hand, is independent of man, and hence does not normally entertain a relation of story-causality with the characters (although a character's choice to live or pass his time in a certain natural location may suggest a cause-and-effect relation). The analogy established by the text between a certain landscape and a character-trait may be either 'straight' (based on similarity) or 'inverse' (emphasizing contrast). Catherine and Heathcliff in Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) are similar to the wilderness in which they live, just as the nature of the Linton family parallels the peacefulness of their dwelling place. On the other hand, in Bialik's narrative poem, 'In the City of Slaughter' (1904), the cruelty of the killers {as well as the indifference of God) is emphasized by the sharp contrast between the *pogrom* and the idyllic landscape in which it

takes place: 'The sun shone, the acacia bloomed, and the slaughterer hacked' (my own literal translation). Landscape can be analogous not only to a character-trait but also to a passing mood; however in this capacity it is not strictly a character-indicator.

Analogy between characters

When two characters are presented in similar circumstances, the similarity or contrast between their behaviour emphasizes traits characteristic of both. Thus there is reciprocal characterization in the contrasted behaviour of Dostoevsky's four brothers Karamazov toward their father (1880). Similarly, in Shakespeare's *King Lear* the sisters' cruelty underscores Cordelia's goodness (and vice-versa) by way of contrast, but the analogy also suggests a similarity between the evil and the good sisters: while, in the opening scene, Regan and Goneril disguise the truth by overstatement, Cordelia disguises it by understatement.

Having mapped the main general categories pertaining to characterization, it seems appropriate to conclude with a few considerations deriving from the study of individual texts. First, a character indicator does not always suggest one trait to the exclusion of others; it may imply the co-presence of several traits, or cause the reader to hesitate among various labels. Second, an enumeration of means of characterization used in individual texts is insufficient. It may be instructive, for example, to establish which type of characterization predominates in a given text or for a given character. This can then be related, according to the interests of the critic, to the kind of character in question, the thematic concern(s) of the work, the genre to which it belongs, the preferences of the author, the norms of the period, and the like. Equally interesting is an examination of the interaction among the various means of characterization. The result, as well as the reading process, will be different according to whether the indicators repeat the same trait in different ways, complement each other, partially overlap, or conflict with each other (Ewen 1971, p. 24). Such an analysis is bound to yield complexities and nuances far beyond what could be presented here.

Text: focalization

Focalization and/versus narration

The story is presented in the text through the mediation of some 'prism', 'perspective', 'angle of vision', verbalized by the narrator though not necessarily his. Following Genette (1972), I call this mediation 'focalization'. However, since Anglo-American readers are likely to associate 'prism', 'perspective', or 'angle of vision' with the more common term 'point of view', I shall begin by explaining why I substitute 'focalization' for it.

Genette considers 'focalization' to have a degree of abstractness which avoids the specifically visual connotations of 'point of view' as well as of the equivalent French terms, 'vision' (Pouillon 1946) or 'champ' (as in Blin's 'restrictions de champ', 1954) (Genette 1972, p. 206).¹ It seems to me, however, that the term 'focalization' is not free of optical-photographic connotations, and - like 'point of view' - its purely visual sense has to be broadened to include cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation (see pp. 79-82). My own reason for choosing 'focalization' is different from Genette's, although it resides precisely in his treatment of it as a technical term. Genette's treatment has the great advantage of dispelling the confusion between perspective and narration which often occurs when 'point of view' or similar terms are used.

As Genette has shown, most studies of point of view (e.g. Brooks and Warren 1959. Orig. publ. 1943; Stanzel 1955;

Friedman 1955; Booth 1961; Romberg 1962) treat two related but different questions as if they were interchangeable. Briefly formulated, these questions are 'who sees?' v. 'who speaks?' Obviously, a person (and, by analogy, a narrative agent)² 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. Moreover, it is almost impossible to speak without betraying some personal 'point of view', if only through the very language used. But a person (and, by analogy, a narrative agent) is also capable of undertaking to tell what another person sees or has seen. Thus, speaking and seeing, narration and focalization, may, but need not, be attributed to the same agent. The distinction between the two activities is a theoretical necessity, and only on its basis can the interrelations between them be studied with precision.

Specific examples will, I hope, make clear both the reasons for the confusion and the implications of the distinction. It is generally agreed that in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist* almost everything is seen through Stephen's eyes. According to Booth, 'any sustained inside view, of whatever depth, temporarily turns the character whose mind is shown into a narrator' (1961, p. 164). If this is accepted, Stephen becomes not only a vehicle of focalization (a 'focalizer') but also a narrator.³ However, even in passages where the language gets as close as possible to a 'translation' of Stephen's perceptions, verbal communication and non-verbal focalization remain separate. Take, for example, the opening of the novel:

Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. . . .

His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face.

He was baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt.

(1963, p. 7. Orig. publ. 1916)

The language not only conveys the perceptions of the child, it also contains childish expressions. Yet it is not Stephen's language, nor is Stephen the narrator in this passage. For one

thing, a baby who still wets the bed (see the next paragraph in the novel) is incapable of formulating complete sentences like those quoted above. For another, in this passage Stephen is referred to in the third person ('he', 'him'), an unlikely procedure if he himself were the narrator of his story (although one could perhaps argue that children often do this).

Similarly, focalization and narration are separate in so-called first-person retrospective narratives, although this is usually ignored by studies of point of view.⁴ Pip, in Dickens's *Great Expectations*, narrates events that happened to him in the past:

'You are to wait here, you boy', said Estella and disappeared and closed the door.

I took the opportunity of being alone in the court-yard, to look at my coarse hands and my common boots. My opinion of those accessories was not favourable. They had never troubled me before, but they troubled me now, as vulgar appendages.

(1978, pp. 91-2. Orig. publ. 1860/61)

Although this is a record of things as the child saw, felt, understood them, words like 'accessories' and 'appendages' are clearly not within a child's vocabulary. The narrator is Pip, the adult, while the focalizer is Pip, the child.⁵

The implications of the foregoing discussion can now be formulated explicitly:

- 1 In principle, focalization and narration are distinct activities.
- 2 In so-called 'third-person centre of consciousness' (James's *The Ambassadors*, Joyce's *Portrait*), the centre of consciousness (or 'reflector') is the focalizer, while the user of the third person is the narrator.
- 3 Focalization and narration are also separate in first-person retrospective narratives.
- 4 As far as focalization is concerned, there is no difference between third-person centre of consciousness and first-person retrospective narration. In both, the focalizer is a character within the represented world. The only difference between the two is the identity of the narrator.
- 5 However, focalization and narration may sometimes be combined, as will be shown in the next section.

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So far I have discussed focalization and its vehicle, the focalizer. Narratives, however, are not only focalized *by* someone but also *on* someone or something (Bal 1977, p. 29). In other words, focalization has both a subject and an object. The subject (the 'focalizer') is the agent whose perception orients the presentation, whereas the object (the 'focalized') is what the focalizer perceives (Bal 1977, p. 33). Both focalizer and focalized will be taken into account in the following classification.

Types of focalization

Two criteria will be used in this section to discuss the different types of focalization: position relative to the story, and degree of persistence. The categories established here will be more fully treated in the next section, where their specific manifestations in different facets of focalization will be discussed.

Position relative to the story

Focalization can be either external or internal to the story.⁶ External focalization is felt to be close to the narrating agent, and its vehicle is therefore called 'narrator-focalizer' (Bal 1977, p. 37). This is the type of focalization predominant in Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* (1834), and Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924), to mention only a few texts. But external focalization can also occur in first person narratives, either when the temporal and psychological distance between narrator and character is minimal (as in Camus's *L'Étranger*, 1957) or when the perception through which the story is rendered is that of the narrating self rather than that of the experiencing self. An interesting, problematic example is Joyce's 'Araby' (1914) which will be discussed below (pp. 83-5).

As the term suggests, the locus of internal focalization is inside the represented events. This type generally takes the form of a character-focalizer, like little Sartoris Snopes in Faulkner's 'Barn Burning' (1939) or Pip the child in many parts of *Great Expectations*. But internal focalization is sometimes no more than a textual stance, although even such an unpersonified stance tends to be endowed by readers with the qualities of a character. Here is a classic example from Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy*:

Now A . . . has come into the bedroom by the inside door opening onto the central hallway. She does not look at the wide open window through which - from the door - she would see this corner of the terrace. Now she has turned back toward the door to close it behind her. . . .

The heavy hand-rail of the balustrade has almost no point left on top. The gray of the wood shows through, streaked with tiny longitudinal cracks. On the other side of this rail, a good six feet below the level of the veranda, the garden begins.

But from the far side of the bedroom the eye carries over the balustrade and touches ground only much further away, on the opposite slope of the little valley, among the banana trees of the plantation. The sun cannot be seen between their thick clusters of wide green leaves. However, since this sector has been under cultivation only recently, the regular criss-crossing of the rows of trees can still be clearly followed. The same is true of almost all the property visible from here. . . .

(1965, pp. 39-40. Orig. publ. in French 1957)

There is no personified focalizer here (or anywhere else in *Jealousy*), and at first sight the focalization may seem external. However, expressions like 'she would see *this* corner', 'from the far side of the bedroom *the eye* carries over the balustrade', 'the property visible from *here*' imply a position within the story from which things are observed. Morrisette (1963) was the first to conjecture - as many readers after him have done - that 'the eye' is that of the jealous husband whose vision 'colours' the information conveyed in the text.

One test for distinguishing between external and internal focalization is the attempt to 'rewrite' the given segment in the first person. If this is feasible - the segment is internally focalized, if not - the focalization is external (Barthes 1966, p. 20; Genette 1972, p. 210). However, it is not clear whether this feasibility can be defined in strictly grammatical terms or in the much more elusive terms of verisimilitude.

Just as the focalizer can be external or internal to the represented events, so the focalized can be seen either from without or from within.⁷ However, the two parallel classifications do not necessarily coincide (which is why I choose 'external/internal' for one and 'without/within' for the other). An external focalizer

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may perceive an object either from without or from within. In the first case, only the outward manifestations of the object (person or thing) are presented, as in many Biblical narratives:

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place which God had told him.

(Genesis 22: 3)

Abraham is about to sacrifice his son, yet only his external actions are presented, his feelings and thoughts remaining opaque. In the second case, the external focalizer (narrator-focalizer) presents the focalized from within, penetrating his feelings and thoughts. This is what happens in the following passage from Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*:

She [Miriam] did not at bottom believe she ever would have him. She did not believe in herself primarily; doubted whether she could ever be what he would demand of her. Certainly she never saw herself living happily through a lifetime with him. She saw tragedy, sorrow and sacrifice ahead. And in sacrifice she was proud, in renunciation she was strong, for she did not trust herself to support everyday life. She was prepared for the big things and the deep things, like tragedy. It was the sufficiency of the small day-life she could not trust.

(1962, p. 265. Orig. publ. 1913)

Similarly, an internal focalizer may perceive the object from within, especially when she herself is both focalizer and focalized, like Molly Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), but his or her perception may also be confined to the outward manifestations of the focalized, as in the passage quoted from *Jealousy* and in many narratives by Kafka and Hemingway.

Degree of persistence

Focalization may remain fixed throughout the narrative, as in James's *What Maisie Knew* (1897), but it can also alternate between two predominant focalizers, as in White's *The Solid Mandala* (1966), or shift among several, as in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1931). This distinction between fixed, vari-

able and multiple focalization applies to the focalized no less than to the focalizer.

Facets of focalization

In the beginning of this chapter, I stated that the purely visual sense of 'focalization' is too narrow. The time has come to discuss the various facets of the phenomenon and to show how the external/internal criterion manifests itself in each. The degree of persistence will be taken up when relevant.⁸

The perceptual facet

Perception (sight, hearing, smell, etc.) is determined by two main coordinates: space and time.

SPACE

'Translated' into spatial terms the external/internal position of the focalizer takes the form of a bird's-eye view v. that of a limited observer. In the first, the focalizer is located at a point far above the object(s) of his perception. This is the classical position of a narrator-focalizer, yielding either a panoramic view or a 'simultaneous' focalization of things 'happening' in different places. Panoramic views are frequent in the beginning or end of a narrative or of one of its scenes (Uspensky 1973, p. 64).⁹ Such is the description of Sulaco in the beginning of Conrad's *Nostramo* (1904) and that of Chandrapore in the opening of Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). Simultaneous focalization can be conveniently exemplified by White's *Voss* (1960. Orig. publ. 1957). While Voss himself is struggling to cross the Australian desert, the reader is given a glimpse of the woman he left behind in Sydney (1960, p. 394). Later, the last survivor of the expedition just manages to reach a rocky outcrop, where he collapses. A simultaneous focalization suggests that the leader of the rescue party is gazing at the same 'inhospitable rocks in the near distance' (p. 427) when he announces his decision to return to the coast and abandon the search for the missing expedition.

A panoramic or simultaneous view is impossible when focalization is attached to a character or to an unpersonified position internal to the story. In such cases, if the character-focalizer is

inside a locked room, the room itself can be presented through his eyes, but not the street, unless there is a window through which he looks out (as in Joyce's 'Eveline', 1914). If the internal focalizer later goes out into the street, the reader may be brought along. This limitation explains why the inside of Miss Emily's house in Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily' (1930) is described only when focalized by the tax delegation and then again at the end, after her death. Since the whole text is internally focalized by one of the townspeople, and since nobody was given permission to enter Emily's house for years, the internal focalizer can only perceive the interior if he 'accompanies' the intruders.

Spatial focalization may change from a bird's-eye view to that of a limited observer or from the view of one limited observer to that of another. Thus in *War and Peace* (1864-69), the reader 'accompanies' Pierre to the battle of Borodino, but does not remain attached to Pierre's perceptions throughout the battle. 'Having reached the battlefield we are not necessarily bound to him; we may leave him and assume different spatial positions' (Uspensky 1973, pp. 58-9).

TIME

External focalization is panchronic in the case of an unpersonified focalizer, and retrospective in the case of a character focalizing his own past. On the other hand, internal focalization is synchronous with the information regulated by the focalizer. In other words, an external focalizer has at his disposal all the temporal dimensions of the story (past, present and future), whereas an internal focalizer is limited to the 'present' of the characters (Uspensky 1973, pp. 67, 113). 'A Rose for Emily' is again a useful example. The narrator and the focalizer in this narrative are the same 'person': an inhabitant of Emily's town. However, the temporal position of the two *vis-à-vis* the narrated events shows them to be separate agents. The narrator is temporally external to the story, knowing the end when he starts the narration. Yet he chooses not to divulge his retrospective understanding, limiting his perceptions to those of the townspeople at the time of the events. The focalizer is thus not the citizen as narrator but the townspeople (including himself) as limited observers at an earlier stage. This choice of an internal focalizer lends plausibility to the withholding of information

used to create the shock effect when the discovery of Homer's corpse is narrated.

The psychological facet

Whereas the perceptual facet has to do with the focalizer's sensory range, the psychological facet concerns his mind and emotions.¹⁰ As the previous sentence suggests, the determining components are again two: the cognitive and the emotive orientation of the focalizer towards the focalized.

THE COGNITIVE COMPONENT

Knowledge, conjecture, belief, memory - these are some of the terms of cognition. Conceived of in these terms, the opposition between external and internal focalization becomes that between unrestricted and restricted knowledge. In principle, the external focalizer (or narrator-focalizer) knows everything about the represented world, and when he restricts his knowledge, he does so out of rhetorical considerations (like the attempt to create an effect of surprise and shock in 'A Rose for Emily'). The knowledge of an internal focalizer, on the other hand, is restricted by definition: being a part of the represented world, he cannot know everything about it.

Uspensky gives an interesting example from Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* (1868), where the same event is first seen through the eyes of Prince Myshkin who knows and suspects nothing, and then - two paragraphs later - through those of the external focalizer:

Rogozhin's eyes glittered and a frenzied smile contorted his face. He raised his right hand and something gleamed in it. The prince did not think of checking it.

(Quoted by Uspensky 1973, p. 82)

The object in Rogozhin's hand is an unspecified 'something' to the unknowing prince. To the narrator-focalizer, on the other hand, it is clearly a knife:

It must be supposed that some such feeling of sudden horror, together with the other terrible sensations of the moment, had suddenly paralysed Rogozhin and so saved the prince from

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the inevitable blow of the knife which already was coming at him.

(Quoted by Uspensky 1973, p. 82)¹¹

THE EMOTIVE COMPONENT

In its emotive transformation, the 'external/internal' opposition yields 'objective' (neutral, uninvolved) v. 'subjective' (coloured, involved) focalization. The subjectivity of an internal focalizer can be seen by comparing two occasions on which Emma Bovary looks at her garden at Tostes. The first occurs before the period of her great *ennui* and is therefore neutral in character:

The garden, longer than wide, ran between two mud walls covered with espaliered apricot trees, to a thorn hedge that separated it from the field. In the middle was a slate sundial on a brick pedestal; four flower-beds with eglantines surrounded symmetrically the more useful vegetable garden. Right at the bottom, under the spruce bushes, a plaster priest was reading his breviary.

(1965, p. 23. Orig. publ. in French 1857)

The same garden is later seen by Emma as a place of disease, ruin and death, a correlative of her desperate mood at that time:

On fine days she went down into the garden. The dew had left a silver lace on the cabbages with long transparent threads spreading from one to the other. No birds were to be heard; everything seemed asleep, the fruit tree covered with straw, and the vine, like a great sick serpent under the coping of the wall, along which, on drawing near, one saw the many-footed woodlice crawling. Under the spruce by the hedgerow, the cure in the three-cornered hat reading his breviary had lost his right foot, and the very plaster, scaling off with the frost, had left white scabs on his face.

(1965, p. 46)

Since the garden itself is inanimate, the psychological facet of focalization is relevant only to the human focalizer perceiving it. But when the focalized is also human, his own subjectivity is no less relevant than that of the focalizer. As was said above (pp. 74-5), the focalized can be perceived either from without or from

within. The first type restricts all observation to external manifestations, leaving the emotions to be inferred from them, as in Hemingway's 'The Killers' (1928) where the nervousness of the killers is implied by their frequent glances at the clock and their recurrent irritated questions. The second type reveals the 'inner life' of the focalized, either by making him his own focalizer (interior monologues are the best example) or by granting an external focalizer (a narrator-focalizer) the privilege of penetrating the consciousness of the focalized (as in most nineteenth-century novels). When the focalized is seen from within, especially by an external focalizer, indicators such as 'he thought', 'he felt', 'it seemed to him', 'he knew', 'he recognized' often appear in the text. On the other hand, when the inner states of the focalized are left to be implied by external behaviour, modal expressions - suggesting the speculative status of such implication - often occur: 'apparently', 'evidently', 'as if', 'it seemed', etc. Uspensky calls these 'words of estrangement' (1973, p. 85).

The ideological facet

This facet, often referred to as 'the norms of the text', consists of 'a general system of viewing the world conceptually', in accordance with which the events and characters of the story are evaluated (Uspensky 1973, p. 8). In the simplest case, the 'norms' are presented through a single dominant perspective, that of the narrator-focalizer. If additional ideologies emerge in such texts, they become subordinate to the dominant focalizer, thus transforming the other evaluating subjects into objects of evaluation (Uspensky 1973, pp. 8-9). Put differently, the ideology of the narrator-focalizer is usually taken as authoritative, and all other ideologies in the text are evaluated from this 'higher' position. In more complex cases, the single authoritative external focalizer gives way to a plurality of ideological positions whose validity is doubtful in principle. Some of these positions may concur in part or in whole, others may be mutually opposed, the interplay among them provoking a non-unitary, 'polyphonic' reading of the text (Bakhtin 1973. Orig. publ. in Russian 1929). Dostoevsky, of course, immediately comes to mind. In *Crime and Punishment* (1866), for example, the ideology of the text (or its questioning of ideology) emerges from a

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juxtaposition of Raskolnikov's views with his own performance, as well as with the opinions of Razumihin, Sonia, Svidrigailov, and the anonymous officer in the bar.

A character may represent an ideological position through his way of seeing the world or his behaviour in it, but also - like Raskolnikov - through explicit discussion of his ideology. Similarly, the norms of a narrator-focalizer may be implicit in the orientation he gives to the story, but they can also be formulated explicitly. Thus, in addition to its contribution to focalization, ideology also plays a part in the story (characters), on the one hand, and in narration, on the other. That this may be true of all facets of focalization will be suggested in the concluding paragraph of this chapter.

The interrelations among the various facets

The perceptual, psychological and ideological facets may concur but they may also belong to different, even clashing, focalizers. Thus, in *Great Expectations*, the perceptual focalizer is usually the young, experiencing Pip, whereas the ideology tends to be focalized by the older, narrating Pip (Chatman 1978, p. 158). A similar discrepancy between the psychological and the ideological facets can be found in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880): the psychology of Fyodor Pavlovich Karamazov is often revealed from within, although he is presented as an unsympathetic character from the ideological point of view (Uspensky 1973, p. 105).

Verbal indicators of focalization

To say that focalization is conveyed by various verbal indicators is not to cancel the distinction between focalization and narration with which I began. In itself, focalization is non-verbal; however, like everything else in the text, it is expressed by language. The overall language of a text is that of the narrator, but focalization can 'colour' it in a way which makes it appear as a transposition of the perceptions of a separate agent. Thus both the presence of a focalizer other than the narrator and the shift from one focalizer to another may be signalled by language.

An interesting example of such signalling is naming. As

Uspensky shows (1973, pp. 20-43), the use of the various names of Napoleon in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* betrays differences as well as changes of attitude toward him. In the early stages, the Russians call him 'Bonaparte', emphasizing his nationality, or even 'Buonaparte', doubling his foreignness by stressing that he is not even French. The French, on the other hand, call him 'Napoleon' and later 'L'empereur Napoleon'. With the progress of his conquests, most Russians switch to 'Napoleon' and those who do not, thereby make a strong national point. Shifts in naming can indicate a change of focalizer within the same paragraph or sentence. Here is an example from the encounter between Napoleon and Prince Andrey who lies wounded on the field of Austerlitz:

He [Andrey] did not turn his head and did not see the men who, judging from the voices and the thud of hoofs, had ridden up to him and stopped.

They were Napoleon and two adjutants escorting him. Bonaparte, making a tour of the field of battle . . . was inspecting the dead and wounded. . . .

(1971, p. 310. Orig. publ. in Russian 1864-9)

As Uspensky says, 'We may suspect a transition from the point of view of a detached observer (who uses the name 'Napoleon') to the point of view of Prince Andrey (who would use the name 'Bonaparte' because it corresponds to his changed attitude toward Napoleon at this moment of the narrative)' (1973, p. 31).¹²

But names are not the only verbal means of indicating focalization. The whole gamut of stylistic possibilities has not yet been established, nor is it specific to narrative. I shall therefore limit myself to a few examples from Joyce's 'Araby' (1961. Orig. publ. 1914).¹³ In this narrative, an adult narrator tells about himself as a child (of an unspecified age). His language is sometimes 'coloured' by his perceptions at the time of narration (external focalization), sometimes by those of his younger self (internal focalization), and sometimes remains ambiguous between the two. A sentence like 'I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood' (p. 28) betrays the adult narrator as focalizer through the evaluative adjective

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'foolish'. Similarly, although the lexis and syntax of 'I forgot whether I answered yes or no' (p. 29) could easily be attributed to a child by virtue of its simplicity, forgetting can only be recognized in retrospect. The words 'I forgot' thus point to an external focalizer by signalling temporal and cognitive distance from the event. On the other hand, the comparison of the silence of the deserted bazaar to that of a church - 'I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service' (p. 32) - reflects the child's association between the world of religion within which he was brought up with the world of the bazaar which he endowed with a quasi-religious dimension. For the child, the disappointment is similar when both rituals are over. Another indicator of an internal child-focalizer is the emotive, non-sequitur sounding formulation of the causal explanation in the following passage:

I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot* by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant*, and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow.

(p.27)

Perhaps most interesting are those cases where choice between an external and an internal focalizer is problematic or impossible. Take, for example, 'I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes' (p. 29). The language is that of the narrator, but the focalizer can be either the narrator or the child. As the vision of the child, the stress is on the world of religious ceremonies in which the child imagines himself a hero. As the vision of the narrator, the stress is on the cliché-nature of the child's imagination, and the tone is ironic. Or consider the last sentence: 'Gazing up into darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger' (p. 33). The alliteration in 'driven and derided', 'anguish and anger' is obviously that of the narrator, as is the choice of 'gazing' which echoes the description of the houses in the opening paragraph ('gazed at one another') and the link established between the 'blindness' of the child and the 'blind street' of the beginning. But is the self-awareness ('I saw myself') that of the child in the time of the

experience or that of the adult years later? The sentence offers no definitive clue.

In this chapter, focalization was treated as a textual factor relating to both story and narration. This view can be challenged by the suggestion that focalization is not only related to these aspects of narrative but actually subsumed within them, thus disappearing from the analysis of 'text' altogether (Ron, unpublished). If the focalizer is a character, the argument goes, then his acts of perception are part of the story. If he is the narrator, focalization is just one of many rhetorical strategies at his disposal. This hypothesis is not yet developed enough to carry full conviction, but in the future it may modify the post-Genettian theory presented here.