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Towards an Experimental Narratology for Graphic Narrative

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von

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Abstract

Fakultät für Kulturwissenschaften
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Doctor of Philosophy

Towards an Experimental Narratology for Graphic Narrative

by Oliver Moisich

Focalization is concerned with perspective-taking and the representation of subjectivity in narrative. The narratological discourse surrounding focalization provides an extensive conceptualization and reconfiguration of the term. Ever since its inception as a concept around fifty years ago, focalization has been applied to various media, among them graphic narrative. The multimodal nature of graphic narrative presents a particular challenge to focalization in terms of how subjectivity relates to visual representation of fictional minds.

This thesis reviews focalization as a cognitive concept and introduces an annotation system that makes the term viable for empirical analysis. In addition, statistical tests and data interpretation – with the help of a graphic narrative corpus – investigate the applicability of the term as far as reading processes are concerned. The results are compared to the existing theory, thereby consolidating narratology with empirical methodology.

The analysis of focalization as a cognitive concept serves as a case study for an experimental narratology in which the steps taken in this thesis may be applied to other narratological constituents in graphic narrative. The research argues for a new approach to narrative theory that develops insights from established terminology and reader assessment.

Acknowledgements

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The variety of topics that merge in this dissertation cultivated my perspective of what a literary scholar can and should strive to know today. Throughout the writing process, I am glad to have been introduced to scholars who shared not only my passion for these topics but also their experience, advice, and mindfulness over the course of many conferences, calls, emails, and appointments. I would like to give my heartfelt gratitude to Joe Magliano and Lester Loschky, for their guidance in cognitive psychology; to Moniek Kuijpers, for her invaluable training on statistics and experiment design at the Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics in the summer of 2016; to Neil Cohn, for his wide-ranging support and for guiding me through empirical and cognitive approaches towards graphic narrative; to Dirk Vanderbeke, who has supported me from my first day as a student of English and American literature, and for ceaselessly supporting me ever since.

Many more colleagues, friends, and family members encouraged me to carry on. I am indebted to every single one of them but in particular to those who accompanied me throughout the writing of this dissertation. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to my friends: Benjamin M. Dexel, who has supplied me with many comics artists that have since become my favorites; Marcus Gerhold, who endured my many questions on writing with LaTex; Matthias Gründig, who also proofread the German summary of this dissertation; Sven Spannagel, who offered his home as a writing retreat in the spring of 2019; Amanda Halter and Hannah Alexa Geller, who also proofread the entire body of work; Olena Tykhostup, for spending many evenings unraveling the intricacies and pitfalls of being a PhD student. You are all a major inspiration for the existence of this work, and I am deeply grateful for having you in my life.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Comics, Narratology, and the Empirical Approach

> The visual provides expression where words fail. What have we been missing? And what can be made visible when we work in a form that is not only *about*, but *is* also the thing itself. [...] Perhaps in comics, this amphibious language of juxtaposition and fragments – we have such a form. A means to capture and convey our thoughts, in all their tangled complexity. And a vehicle well-suited for explorations to come.
>
> — Nick Sousanis, *Unflattening*

> In an ocean of ashes, islands of order. Patterns making themselves out of nothing. [...] Each picture is a detail of the previous one, blown up. And so on. For ever. Pretty nice, eh?
>
> — Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia*

In the cultural battlegrounds that surrounded the 2016 US presidential election, internet memes became rhetorical ammunition for both sides of US politics. One particularly complex meme among the many shared, altered, contested, and eventually picked up by the media, started, as memes often do, completely devoid of any kind of agenda. The cartoon character Pepe the Frog, created by webcomics artist Matt Furie, made its first appearance in a 2005 comic called "Boy's Club." Online users, especially those on the imageboard 4chan, were quick to adopt the character and transform it for all kinds of purposes, and the meme diversified into many sub-genres of hivemind expression. In 2015, this relatively harmless practice changed when alt-right groups on 4chan used the character as a symbol for the support of then-presidential candidate Donald Trump. Pepe the Frog thus became an icon for conservatism and right-wing ideology, at first among the internet's subculture, and shortly after, in more mainstream social media.

In a surprising turn of events, Trump himself picked up on the meme when he posted an amalgamation of himself and the frog on his Twitter account in October 2015 (fig. 1.1) – much to the delight of his 4chan followers, and to the chagrin of Pepe's original creator. What started as an innocuous cartoon character ended up as ideological code; an identification card for supporters of one particular political persuasion, and an image to be avoided by the supporters of another.

FIGURE 1.1: Screenshot of a tweet from Donald Trump's Twitter account, 13 October 2015.
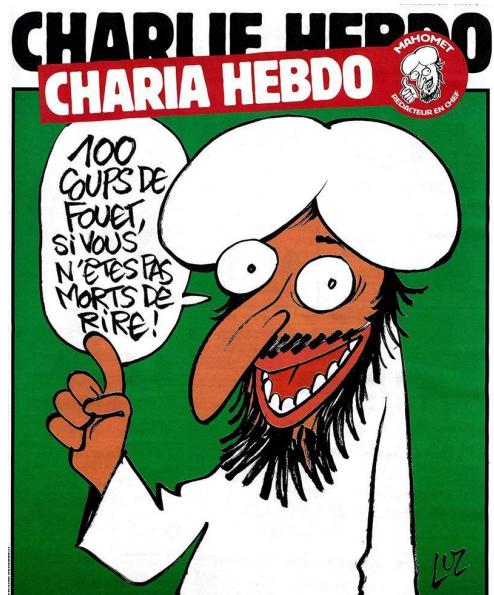
FIGURE 1.2: Cover page of a November 2012 *Charlie Hebdo* issue: "100 lashes if you don't die of laughter."

On the morning of 7 January, 2015, twelve people were killed and a further eleven were injured in a terrorist attack in France's capital Paris. The attack was directed towards the editors of French left-wing satire magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, whose cartoonists had become infamous among Muslim extremists because of their caricatures of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. The depiction of the prophet is forbidden in most Islamic countries; his illustration in a satirical and sardonic manner incited the perceived transgression even more so. *Charlie Hebdo* had published twelve caricatures of Muhammad in the years before the attack (see fig. 1.2), which sparked all manners of repercussions, such as France having to close embassies in countries with predominantly Muslim faith. The magazine's office has been attacked three times, in 2012,

2015, and 2020, with 2015 being the deadliest attack. Among the victims were cartoonists, journalists, police officers, and a maintenance worker. In the week of the trial over the attack, the magazine republished all twelve caricatures under the headline "Tout ça pour ça" ("All of that for this").

These two examples reveal the power of images, especially drawn images, to persuade, alienate, and relate. Images or, to be more specific, graphic images, carry with them the ability to deliver a message because they operate in their own semiotic system. Images themselves are a language without letters and, as such, are able to convey complex ideas with relative ease – hence the old saying, "a picture says more than a thousand words." Yet, if we add text to image, we allow two different modes of communication to enter into a dynamic relationship of meaning-making systems, with potentially significant results for their recipient. The two images above, a caricature and a meme, are only two examples of such image-text-interaction; a third, and arguably the most productive type of this interaction, is the comic book. All three media use images and text to convey an idea, or narrative, all three are relatively easy to reproduce and share, and all three enjoy an enduring popularity in modern culture. This position in popular culture is mostly due to their mass appeal; comics, caricatures, and memes are easy and fast to read, a valuable benefit in a time when humans consume more and more information in less and less time. We can summarily define a reader's relationship with this medium as substantial and private: The narratives in such graphic representations contain value for the individual reader, not least of all because of their accessibility.

Several scholars have come to the same conclusion. In his seminal essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin attributes to media in the modern age the loss of an aura, which in turn changes the uniqueness of an artwork and opens up art to a more private engagement with its recipients. Paradoxically, the mass medium becomes a conversational partner for the individual, which ultimately enhances its power of influence over the masses. An adjacent account of this relationship can be found in Elias Canetti's *Masse und Macht* (English title *Crowds and Power*), in which the author does not specifically address the influence of mass media but explores how cultural, religious, and social phenomena gain power over society. According to Canetti, the individual loses its individuality in the crowd's consensus, forever looking for safety in numbers. This assessment is reflective of the mass appeal I addressed above – one needs look no further than the ongoing popularity of superheroes in order to see how these graphic icons provide meaning and comfort to the crowd. The same can be said in the opposite direction: Fear and hate towards images that some masses consider taboo manifests in violence against the perceived perpetrators, as we can see with the *Charlie Hebdo* caricature.

Likewise, Roland Barthes attests to an inherent subjectivity in images, in this particular case "Political Photography," as the essay's title suggests (91-93). He posits that a politician's photograph offers us "a type of social setting, the spectacular comfort of family, legal and religious norms, the suggestion of innately owning such items of bourgeois property as Sunday Mass, xenophobia, steak and chips, cuckold jokes, in short, what we call an ideology" (91). As before, this ideology can refer to both ends of confirmation bias, either validating our beliefs or, much more effectively, our anxieties. The example above is a clear case of the latter: Political memes can cause damage to the portrayed public figure without anyone taking responsibility for it since the image is without authorial attribution or publication. As such, images in modern reception are also an inception of ideology, or in Barthes' words, mythology.

With that in mind, I find it necessary to turn this conversation not towards phenomenology, as the authors mentioned above do, or towards a study of images as ideology or mythology. Instead, it is vital today to recognize how these images construct narrative and with it, subjective representation. Narrative, a series of events that we often colloquially refer to as a "story," is multiplied in its meaning-making strategies when used in images – hence the proverb "A picture is worth a thousand words." In the context of the two examples above, modern vernacular might interchangeably use the terms mythology, ideology, and narrative. To be more precise, it is narrative that shapes ideology and, over an extended timeframe, calcifies into myth, or: "myth [is] ideology in narrative form" (Lincoln xii). Narratology uses the term *focalization* to explain this phenomenon. Focalization analyzes the perceptual quality of narrative; it determines if and how a narrative transfers the perceptual, cognitive, or ideological inclinations of a subject. The term has been discussed for close to half a century now, with little consensus on the matter, as I will show in chapter 2.3.1. To add to this problem, focalization uses a mostly structuralist framework, and many scholars have applied it to literary fiction but have modified it (cf. chapter 2.3.2) or disregarded the term altogether for media such as comic books or other image-related narratives (chapter 2.3.3). However, to come to any meaningful conclusions as to a narrative's influence on its readers, it seems adequate to probe for readers' assessment of such narratives. The narratological framework for such terminology is clearly of utmost importance, but scholars rarely apply this theory to the actual reading process. If we want to analyze the importance of subjectivity in narrative, a conceptual framework can only be the first step – we need to also find evidence for this framework in the reading process. Otherwise, such frameworks, and their potential insights, will only reproduce the individual interpretation of their progenitors. I am more interested in using these interpretations as a starting point to investigate (referring back to Canetti) the crowd's consensus.

Thus, the guiding hypotheses for this study: ***Existing concepts about focalization can be organized into empirical descriptors. These empirical descriptors are observable in individual reading processes. Readers of graphic narratives process visual information in accordance with these empirical descriptors.***

To unpack these hypotheses, it is at first vital to define their constituents. I first discuss the term *graphic narrative*. Although most of the case studies and samples in this study could be easily filed under comic book or graphic novel, the term graphic narrative is a more robust narratological label for such narratives as it relies on the modality of the medium and not on commercial descriptors. This definition is followed by a short introduction to quantitative and computational methods in literary scholarship. The analysis of cognitive processes in readers' minds requires an empirical methodology, that has found a home in the humanities under the moniker digital humanities, or DH for short. After an overview of the history of the term focalization, a methodology chapter outlines the fields of cognition, statistical methods, and corpus annotation as they relate to the empirical study of focalization. More precisely, I limit this study to the analysis of visual focalization rather than verbal focalization, which is usually understood as its dominant or even exclusive mode. The underlying conceptual framework and methodological considerations then lead me to an empirical framework.

After these preliminaries, I set out to test this framework and look for so-called statistical *effects*. As concerns focalization, these effects take the form of visual information on the page that we might call *markers* of focalization. Such markers, and their statistical significance, will be imperative to this study's last, and most significant, step: Creating an annotational system for visual focalization. An annotation system in a narratological framework may corroborate but also challenge existing theories. With its storied and manifold discourse, focalization should benefit from an empirically charged system and annotation dataset. As such, the remainder of this study will analyze data on focalization in a small pilot corpus and compare the results to more traditional hermeneutical interpretations of graphic narratives included in this pilot corpus.

To summarize, the overall structure of my study follows these directions: theoretical conceptualization (defining visual focalization) $\rightarrow$ conceptual guideline (empirical scrutiny for a quantifiable framework) $\rightarrow$ annotation and interpretation. This structure is not accidental; Gius et al. establish an annotation guideline with a major focus on evaluative reflection in "A Shared Task for the Digital Humanities" (reproduced in fig. 1.3). Their reasoning for this guideline stems mostly from annotation for literary narratives, which necessarily requires some theoretical background in order to create (the first evaluative step) a dependable system of variables. These guidelines are then

tested to evaluate their applicability in an annotation system. Lastly, annotations with this system reveal their usefulness if we apply/understand, in short, interpret them. A provisional outline of this guide for my purposes would hence look as such:

- Theory $\rightarrow$ Chapter 2.3 ("Focalization") and 3.1 to 3.3 ("Literary Theory and Cognition," "Empiricism and Statistical Analysis," "Corpus Analysis")

- Guidelines $\rightarrow$ Chapter 4 ("Visual Focalization: Two Empirical Experiments")

- Annotated Text and Understanding $\rightarrow$ The presentation of my annotational process and subsequent analyses in chapter 5 ("Focalization and Annotation: Surveying a Comics Corpus")
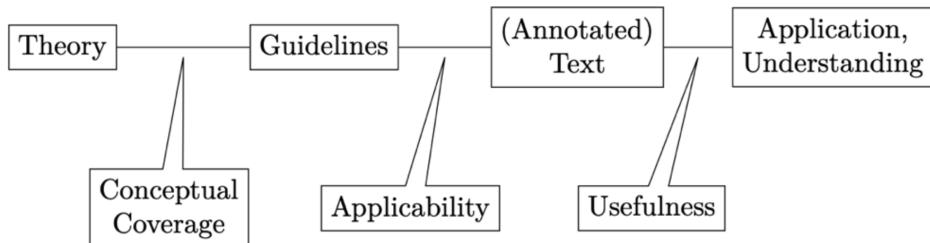
FIGURE 1.3: Three evaluation dimensions in DH research areas according to Gius et al.

An example may help illustrate my methodology: When we consider a comic book, we most likely imagine several panels on the page, possibly ordered in some discernible chronology. Frequently, these panels have people in it, typically also words that these people think or utter. We assess the panels in sequence and understand that they tell a story. Consider the following page from Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's *Signal to Noise* in figure 1.4. The prototypical constituents of a comic book story are still there but difficult to assess. The layout is chaotic, panels merge, and characters are difficult to discern. The text encapsulates this disorder: "Inanna talking, saying things, she's sorry, doctors make mistakes, she's so sorry, new treatments every day, if there's anything she can do, so very sorry, on and on, saying nothing at all. Just noise." The protagonist in *Signal to Noise* has terminal cancer and his coping strategy is to submit to the disorder of the universe, or from his perspective, to noise. With this background in mind, the visual aesthetics represent his state of mind. The entire page seems to carry no observable story, at least visually, but it does represent the state of mind of its main character.

FIGURE 1.4: *Signal to Noise*, p. 40.

Accordingly, the reading process functions almost in reverse of how the protagonist copes with his disease: A reader needs to process information in order to make meaningful assessments about it. Before doing so, any set of information is just noise. This process happens in the mind and theories on how media tell stories often disregard this process in favor of concepts that are based on what we often assume to be intrinsic textual features. The page shown here is, of course, an extreme example of not following these assumed intrinsic features. A reader may thus invest a comparatively high amount of effort into creating meaning from all the noise. In turn, I hope to show that this process can become a democratic enterprise – an evaluative negotiation between prescriptive theoretical concept and the descriptive experience of individual readers. With the help of actual readers' assessments of such theoretical concepts, we may understand how we draw matters of subjectivity out of narrative.

Chapter 2

Graphic Narrative and Focalization

2.1 Defining Graphic Narrative

Academic research on comics has made numerous attempts to define the medium through its basic principles, syntagms, and surroundings. Throughout this study, I will use the term *graphic narrative* as it seems the most appropriate descriptor for narratological analysis. It appears to be vital to emphasize the inherent medial properties of a narrative and, less so, its historical development. As such, I intend to compare graphic narrative as a term with alternative terminology in the following subchapter. This comparison will be helpful to characterize what precisely graphic narrative is, what it entails, and how we can use the term to analyze focalization in the medium.

Graphic narrative is often used interchangeably with "comics" or "graphic novels" since the discussed material falls into these two specific categories. One might distinguish between "comics" or "graphic novels" as widely accepted terms, whereas "graphic narrative" is the more theoretical denomination (cf. Stein and Thon 4) of a medium that does not restrict itself to comics but extends to all pieces of work within that domain. Even though the majority of the discussion about graphic narrative relies on comics, some outliers exist, for example "On the Comics-Nature of the Codex Seraphinianus" by Paul Fisher Davies (2015).

Owing to their popularity, comics and graphic novels have been subject to many attempts at defining the medium. In addition, we also find the use of similar names such as "bande dessinée" or "comic strip." Scott McCloud's definition of comics is perhaps best known and most widely discussed: "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence" (9), which appropriates Will Eisner's earlier term *sequential art* (ibid., also Eisner). Ann Miller uses the Francophone equivalent: "As a visual and narrative art, bande dessinée produce meaning out of images which are in a sequential relationship, and which co-exist with each other spatially, with or without text" (75). Lastly, two other, much earlier approaches use "comic strip" to reflect the formal evolution and experimentation with the medium that began from the 1980s and onwards:

> I would propose a definition in which a "comic strip" of any period, in any country, fulfils the following conditions: 1/ There must be a sequence of separate images; 2/ There must be a preponderance of image over text; 3/ The medium in which the strip appears and for which it was originally intended must be reproductive, that is, in printed form, a mass medium; 4/ The sequence must tell a story which is both moral and topical. (Kunzle 2)

> A serially published, episodic, open-ended dramatic narrative or series of linked anecdotes about recurrent identified characters, told in successive drawings regularly enclosing ballooned dialogue or its equivalent and generally minimal narrative text. (Blackbeard 41, both definitions qtd. in Groensteen 13)

The inability of these definitions to succinctly describe the medium is apparent. The historical arc in McCloud's construction extends all the way back to the Stone Age, which provides him with the opportunity to include comics (as they are produced from the late 19th century onwards) in a larger cultural tradition. However, this reasoning is a recurring problem of any attempt at defining comics, and Holbo poignantly sums this up:

> I am looking at panels, separated by gutters, populated by active, attractive, albeit implausibly well-muscled, precariously clad persons of human and superhuman nature. The eye is invited to take in the whole page while the panels, in sequence, are read as narrating an origin story. I am gazing at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. (6)

If Holbo's description of a Renaissance fresco fits the description (both formally and thematically) of an ordinary superhero comic book, it seems legitimate to ask whether the problem lies with the restrictions inherent in the term "comics" rather than individual definitions. The phenomenon of mass-produced narratives that use a sequence of images to tell a story – regardless of whether this sequence is a four-panel newspaper strip or a dense 600-page novel – is a contemporary one. Renaissance frescoes, Medieval illuminated manuscripts, and prehistoric cave paintings all use images to tell a story, but they do not do so in the same way that comics, or comic strips, or bande dessinées tell a story. Therefore, it is reasonable to attribute a level of historicity to all of these terms.

Even if we ignore the apparent historical boundaries, the definitions mentioned above are also restrictive in a formalist sense. McCloud is convinced that comics require at least two images in succession (20). Several critics have argued that this

restriction is not the case. For instance, John Holbo points out that narrative does not require at least two images to create sequentiality; a single image – Holbo uses paintings as an example – also guides readers from one focal point to another (6-9). Miller implicitly admits in her definition that visual and narrative art is closer to a wider definition of the medium. Blackbeard's and Kunzle's accounts predate the increased popularity of digitally available comics as well as graphic novels, which are neither serially published nor necessarily open-ended, and often contain large amounts of narrative text.

A closer inspection of the term "graphic novel" is similarly restrictive. The term has been hotly debated for over 35 years after it was first mentioned (cf. the discussion in Santiago Garcia's *On the Graphic Novel*) and the same as before applies to this term. Most examples given in this paper could be accurately described as a graphic novel, that is, a book-length pictorial narrative, either previously serialized or published as a whole. But the label is misleading because many popular graphic novels are not actually novels: *Maus* by Art Spiegelman is a biography of his father and part of the genre of Holocaust literature; *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel is a memoir; *Palestine* by Joe Sacco is a piece of journalism (also cf. Chute, "Comics as Literature?" 453). Graphic novel is a useful term as part of an ontology of comics and it might stand next to comic strips, comic books, webcomics, et cetera, but it is not a substitute for the entire medium.

With these criticisms in mind *graphic narrative*, is entirely different in its typological approach. A phrase that can be found in several titles of academic papers about the medium (cf. Chute and DeKoven; Rabkin; Horstkotte and Pedri; Kukkonen, "Space, Time, and Causality in Graphic Narratives"; Rippl and Etter; Dittmer), it avoids associations with any genre, as a graphic narrative can be a novel as much as it can be a short story, a memoir, a diary, and so on. It also limits itself to (or at the least leans towards) any narrative piece that is drawn or in static pictorial form, thus omitting other visual media like film and video games. Hillary Chute and Marianne DeKoven, two early adopters of the term, write that "'graphic narrative' is the term we prefer to 'graphic novel'" (767).

Since it is a valid description for graphic novels, comics, and for the aforementioned historical artefacts, the term graphic narrative seems viable for further discussion in narratological discourse. Of course, the emphasis on narrative minimizes other qualities of the medium; anything unrelated to narrative, such as the medium's historical evolution, is not represented. However, for the purposes of this study, I find it essential to address that the relationship between "graphic" and "narrative" is of higher

relevance than the medium's historicity. If we determine that graphic images can accommodate narrative, we may in turn also analyze graphic narrative's capabalities to bring about representations of subjectivity, or focalization.

Whereas the exact definition of "comics" and comparable terminology lies undetected somewhere between its formal skeleton and its historical circumstances, the term "graphic narrative" is not only fitting for a narratological discourse – it also separates multimodal narratives into graphic and other visual narratives. For this reason, the following observations will pertain to graphic narratives in general and comics as well as graphic novels in particular.

2.2   Empirical and Quantitative Approaches to Graphic Narratives

In his book *Literary Reading*, David Miall defends the empirical branch of literary scholarship against the criticism that readers are too idiosyncratic to seriously consider their readings valid and that a text's implied or ideal reader is the only reader that delivers viable results. For Miall, this makes two unfounded assumptions: that readers are idiosyncratic and that what is and is not literary is to be decided by literary critics (11). More recent research – which has been developed in great parts from early reader-response theorists like Stanley Fish or Wolfgang Iser – shows a more productive collaboration between scholars of literature, cognitive scientists, and computer linguists. Digital humanities (DH for short) has adopted this approach of analysis and, as such, attaches scientific research methods to the subject of literary scholarship. New methods that emerge from DH "prioritize empirical data, either in the form of automatically extracted stylistic features, or as encoded thematic units that are then quantified, mapped, and interpreted" (Rommel 116). Said empirical data do not have to be restricted to textual features but can be extended to readers' impressions, interpretations, and reading habits, both qualitatively and quantitatively, as some of the projects listed below will show. Several global DH conferences, organized by the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO), as well as the activities of the International Society for the Empirical Study of Literature (IGEL) show that interest in empirical and quantitative studies in literature remains high, and graphic narrative research is no exception.

This section will summarize the recent landscape of empirical and quantitative research that concerns itself with graphic narrative as a literary medium insofar as they influence my approach. As such, I will also point out the importance of these projects for this study. A more thorough analysis of empirical and quantitative methodology will follow in chapter 3, "Empirical and Quantitative Approaches to Focalization in Graphic Narratives," in which I highlight the potential synthesis of cognitive studies in literature, empirical analysis, and corpus studies. For now, this section serves as an introduction to the general DH field and how it investigates the graphic narrative medium.

The annotation of graphic narrative is an important first step before studying a larger body of work. John A. Walsh developed the xml extension "Comic Book Markup Language" (2012) or CBML to annotate semantically pertinent constituents of comics. CBML is based on TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) guidelines to ensure synchronicity and comparability with other digitization projects while enabling the annotation of semantic units that do not exist in other media – such as panels or speech

bubbles – or do not similarly contribute to the overall piece of work – such as the distribution of information on the page. Walsh's markup language provides tags and elements that cover the entire semantic vocabulary of comics – different shapes, fonts, or colors of speech balloons – and arranges them as they present themselves in a text. One of the problems that Walsh addresses is that his annotation system provides no solution for the distribution of panels, their size on the page, the size of the gutter in between, and so on. For these reasons, Alexander Dunst et al. developed the Graphic Narrative Markup Language, or GNML – another markup system that is based on Walsh's CBML in a Java-based application, the Multimodal Markup Editor, or M3. This application's graphic user interface allows for the annotation of elements' dimensions and positions on a page. As such, annotation data contain pertinent information for narrative constituents and their topography on the page. I will provide a more detailed introduction to M3 in chapter 5.1.2, "Software and Annotation Method."

Another more recent project by Walsh is the Comic Book Readership Archive Project (CoBRA).[1] The project is less empirical and more quantitative, as it collects fan mail published in Marvel comic books from 1961 to 1973 and related texts such as fan club publications, fanzines, etc.: "CoBRA will allow scholars to visualize and analyze networks of related comic creators, readers, titles, and publishers as well as study demographics of comic book readership." (MacDonald). Although the project primarily concerns itself with creating a database, the idea behind it recognizes that comics as a medium are closely connected to fan culture and readership, and the completed database may provide an opportunity for examining contemporary readers' psychology and relationship with comic books.

"What Were Comics" is a project aiming at cataloging a random two percent of the entirety of US-published comics per year from 1934 to 2014.[2] By randomizing its samples, the database is comprised without the help of a canon, best-of-lists, or bestseller catalogs, thus providing a diachronic overview of the medium. One of the main intentions of this project is to lead comics discourse away from canonized works and towards a distant reading approach that shows a quantitative representation and, by extension, developments in genre, style, and the publication patterns of US comics. The project's intention shows the importance of a representative corpus for the medium. We will see later in my chapter on corpus analysis (chapter 3.3.) that this goal is not possible within the boundaries of this analysis for several reasons. However, "What Were Comics" presents clear guidelines for the general approach of how to build a graphic narrative corpus according to specific criteria that deliberately serve the corpus' primary goal.

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[1] http://comics.indiana.edu/cobra
[2] www.whatwerecomics.com

Neil Cohn's research centers around readers' cognition in the context of graphic narrative. One of Cohn's theses is that the narrative of comics works much in the same way as a language does and that the idea of a story grammar of graphic narrative can be backed up with empirical evidence:

> We show that the constituent structure in our proposed narrative grammar is not just an interesting theoretical construct: it can be detected experimentally. The paradigm we developed is modelled on classic psycholinguistic experiments that demonstrated that word-by-word comprehension engages grammatical constituent structure. (N. Cohn et al., "The Grammar of Visual Narrative" 64)

Cohn has published numerous papers dealing with "Visual Narrative Grammar" (VNG) in comic strips (cf., for example, "You're a Good Structure, Charlie Brown"). He also uses quantifiable elements of graphic narrative as a basis for comparative research across comics cultures in the US and Japan (for example, "Framing Attention in Japanese and American Comics"). Both Cohn's empirical approach to narratological conceptualization and the treatment of narrative as a linguistic system comprise a major influence on the methods of this study. Towards the end of chapter 2.3, "Focalization in Review," as well as in my two empirical experiments in chapter 4, "Visual Focalization: Two Experiments," I will show that certain instances of focalization are indicated by specific visual markers, which recalls markers in discourse linguistics. In this respect, Cohn's VNG approach sets the foundation for many of my further considerations, even though his approach focuses more on narrative as a linguistic system and less so (as is the case here) on the methodological benefit of empirical studies for narratology.

Janina Wildfeuer and John A. Bateman's studies of intersemiosis also come from linguistics but lean more towards pragmatics than psycholinguistics (cf. "Intersemiosis in Film," "Trompeten, Fanfaren und orangefarbene Tage," Wildfeuer and Bateman). It should be noted that Wildfeuer and Bateman are proposing a transmedial approach, including studies of film alongside graphic narrative. The linguistic study of graphic narrative has been attracted to the idea of a "comics grammar" ever since some of the very first contributions to the field emerged (cf. Krafft). However, it is a comparatively recent development in linguistics to reject a fixed set of units that make up the meaning of graphic narratives. Therefore Bateman and Wildfeuer take a constructionist approach ("Defining Units of Analysis for the Systematic Analysis of Comics" 375) that, in turn, deals primarily with the reader's meaning-making process: "Viewing and interpreting visual material such as comics, graphic novels, film or other designed images thus involves the mechanisms both of natural perception and of discourse interpretation." ("A Multimodal Discourse Theory of Visual Narrative" 194). I will further

explore these mechanisms in two subsequent chapters, respectively: the natural perception of graphic narrative (i.e., the decoding of visual and verbal information into analytical units) in chapter 3.1, "Literary Theory and Cognition," and discourse interpretation (i.e. the process of continually adding information into a growing system of "understanding" narrative) in my analysis of annotation data in chapter 5, "Focalization and Annotation: Surveying a Comics Corpus."

Accordingly, most of what I attempt here is not a revolutionary new direction – the methodology is well established, perhaps not in this arrangement, but precedents exist. Instead, what I determine as untapped potential in this set of approaches relates to the study of narratology, which as a field, is highly indebted to formalism and structuralism, but as of yet still primarily unfamiliar with empiricism and DH methods. As such, I hope to provide a new angle to the narratological discussion. However, I also find it necessary to provide an overview, or rather review, of this discussion as it relates to my central subject, focalization. The following section will cover this review and in so doing, serves as the foundation for further empirical analysis.

2.3 Focalization in Review

> Beyond any knowledge which I can have, I am this self whom another knows.
> And this self which I am – this I am in a world which the Other has made alien
> to me, for the Other's look embraces my being and correlatively the walls, the
> door, the keyhole.

— Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*

> I'm sure of one thing: this narrative will deal with something delicate: the
> creation of a whole person who surely is as alive as I am. Take care of her
> because all I can do is show her so you recognize her on the street [. . .]

— Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*

In her novel *To the Lighthouse*, Virginia Woolf tells the story of the Ramsay family in their holiday home on the Isle of Skye. In a modernist style that was quite experimental at the time of its publishing, Woolf writes as if she was inside her characters' minds – the reader experiences, unfiltered and seemingly uncoordinated, the thoughts, sensations, and feelings of the Ramsays and their friends, without any hint from the narrator as to what is "actually" going on around them in their home. In addition, Woolf wildly changes between these minds, sometimes within a sentence, to further disorient her readers. This style, which has since become known as "stream-of-consciousness," reveals the complexity of the human thought process: Minutes or seconds pass while characters' thoughts go on and on for many pages. In stark contrast, the novel's middle section contains no characters at all. Instead, we read about the unoccupied holiday home and how it slowly gives in to the harsh island weather throughout the years. Characters whose thoughts filled pages before now die somewhere else, in a throwaway half-sentence. Without anyone there, the house stands alone.

The novel uses means of distance and proximity to characters to establish their presence (or absence) of consciousness in the storyworld and, in so doing, delivers what Sartre calls "the Other's look" in order to "create" not only fictional minds but also "the walls, the door, the keyhole" of the Ramsay's holiday home. Narratology calls this narrative technique *focalization*. A focalized character is laid bare to readers from the inside: We read about what they see, feel, imagine, think, dream, fear, and so on. On focalization's other end of the spectrum, narrative may also be restricted to a seemingly "objective" viewpoint in which no such information comes across at all. As such, focalization enables readers to empathize with fictional people or to

antagonize them; to create the illusion that they could actually exist in the real world. It is among the many powerful facilities which occupy narrative that readers can immerse themselves in a mind that is not theirs. Marie Laure-Ryan raises this point in her book *Narrative as Virtual Reality* (2001): "Whether or not we like to admit it, voyeurism has a lot to do with the pleasures we take in narrative fiction: where else but in a novel can we penetrate into the most guarded and the most fascinating of realms, the inner workings of a foreign consciousness?" (150). In this sense, focalization allows us as readers to establish intimate relationships with characters we will never meet in person – the "delicate" aspect of narrative that Lispector describes in the quote above.

Focalization as a narratological concept can look back to a decades-long discussion as to its scope and structure. In this chapter, I revisit the existing theory before focusing on focalization in graphic narrative. I would like to explore whether focalization, or the representation of fictional minds, operates much differently in a visual medium than in traditional (verbal) literary fiction. Instinctively, it may seem difficult to grasp how images in a narrative may convey the "inner workings of a foreign consciousness," but my arguments will arrive at the conclusion that, at least in theory, focalization is exactly as useful a narratological concept for graphic narrative as it is for any other medium. Jan-Noël Thon reminds us that "there is no common understanding of the term in film studies and comics studies any more than in literary narratology" (233). As such, a proper discussion of the term requires a broad overview of competing interpretations before they may be utilized for empirical investigations. This chapter will first outline the traditional understanding of focalization before describing a cognitive turn in the debate, which will lead us to medium-specific reflections on the term in graphic narrative. At the end of this chapter, I will review my findings and propose the implementation of the terminology into an empirical framework.

2.3.1 Early Concepts of Focalization in Narratology

Focalization as a narratological phenomenon is indebted to early formalist authors such as Tzvetan Todorov, Jean Pouillon, and Wayne Booth, among others (predecessors and contemporaries include, for example, Lubbock; Uspensky; Bakhtin; Fowler provides a comprehensive overview before focalization entered common usage in the field). These authors recognized that all works of fiction communicate certain degrees of subjectivity to their readers through linguistic features. Todorov acknowledged early on that "the phenomena which compose the fictive universe are never presented to us 'in themselves' but from a certain perspective, a certain point of view" (32). He goes on to state a list of criteria by which fiction utilizes narrative perspective, including the degree of knowledge and its "extent" and "depth" (35), which Gérard Genette later repurposed in his introduction to focalization. Todorov's contemporaries applied

similar considerations on narrative perspective to the terms *point of view* and *vision* (cf. Pouillon; Booth), and they used these terms interchangeably to describe the idea that narration can restrict its field of perception or, to stay with the visual metaphors, scope. Although the argument had yet to fully develop at that point in time, it is indeed impossible to narrate the entirety of a storyworld completely unfiltered. Narrative always relates from a certain point of reference, external or internal.

Gérard Genette introduced focalization as a term when he separated the narrator from the relation between narrator and narrated world (diegesis), leading to the question: "Who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective[?]" (*Narrative Discourse* 186). Focalization is thus tied to characters within a storyworld, but, in contrast to Todorov et al., divorced from the narrator. Genette famously introduced the question "Who sees?" for focalization, and "Who speaks?" for the narrator (186). Borrowing from Todorov's extent and depth of knowledge, this first model for focalization seeks to define the relationship between narrator and focalization through mathematical precision: How much does the narrator know in relation to a character's knowledge? The answer to this question results in three types of focalization, according to Genette:

1. $N > C$ (narrator says more than what the character knows): **Zero focalization**. This type ties the narrative to no perspectival filter in particular. The narrative contains no indication of a point of view, making the narration seem removed from the storyworld.

2. $N = C$ (narrator says only what the character knows): **Internal focalization**. This type is narrative from the point of view of an identifiable subject. This can be the protagonist of the story, or any other character(s).

3. $N < C$ (narrator says less than what the character knows): **External focalization**. This type relates only to externally observable facts and omits subjective knowledge. Anything that characters know, believe, feel, observe, etc., can only be revealed directly by them.

In today's narratological discourse, especially as it relates to graphic narratives, a few problems become immediately apparent. Focalization as a continuation from "point of view" and "perspective" makes the term indebted to visual metaphors and, as such, is constrictive in its scope. "Who sees" disregards every other aspect of perception such as smell, touch, hearing, along with broader perceptional attributes, such as cognitive schemata, ideology, or individuals' prior knowledge – all of these can dictate how a character in a narrative may interpret their surroundings. The limitations of focalization, and with it perspective, vision, and point of view, as a visual metaphor

are acknowledged even before Genette: "This visual vocabulary is metaphorical, or rather synecdochic: 'vision' here replaces total perception" (Todorov 32). Indeed, many narratologists after Genette sought to incorporate a broader, cognitive description of focalization into the discourse, as will become clear later in this discussion. Additionally, Kablitz ("Erzählperspektive — Point of View — Focalisation") points out that Genette combines two inconsistent models. The extent and depth of knowledge derived from Todorov is one model, and the metaphorical vision or point of view adapted from (among others) Pouillon is another. So what exactly does focalization describe: What one knows (Todorov) or what one sees (Pouillon)? Genette's famous question pair "Who sees / Who speaks?" implies that the latter, although his three-tier model derives from knowledge. This criticism leads back to the problem mentioned above: Focalization in a narrative is never simply just "seeing."

Moreover, one would be tempted to apply Genette's introduction of the term to graphic narratives; after all, could we not easily transfer these visual metaphors, perspective and point of view, to an inherently visual medium? Graphic narratives present visual information, so any "vision" or "point of view" should be immediately apparent to readers. The example below will illustrate that the opposite is true. With that in mind, Genette's early focalization theory is not without merit for the analysis of graphic narratives if we apply it to an example where text and image are relatively separate from each other. Early narratology, such as Genette's, did not have visual modes in mind, so it may be helpful to test his three-tier focalization model on a graphic novel in which the verbal and visual modes are relatively independent from each other. Genette's concept might be sufficient for analysis of the visual mode, but other models of focalization I discuss below will provide a more comprehensive analysis.

Looking at *Gemma Bovery*, we can see an example of internally focalized text in graphic narrative (fig. 2.1). With its use of the first person pronoun, the initial paragraph's narrative hints at an internally focalized character; the narrator is homodiegetic. The second paragraph reveals the homodiegetic narrator to be French baker Raymond Joubert. The image on the page thus becomes interlinked with the text – loaves of bread feature prominently in the background and the foreground, and a person who is most likely the focalized character stands in between. The text then reveals the character's internal struggle more specifically: General expressions of sadness turn into expressions of self-loathing. Essentially, these paragraphs describe only what Joubert, a character in the storyworld, knows, nothing more – hence, N = C, internal focalization. Still, some limitations of Genette's model become apparent even in this short example. If focalization describes perspective or vision, then none of Joubert's monologue matches the criteria for internal focalization. After all, the knowledge that Joubert is he himself ("My name is Raymond Joubert [. . .] I've been content to run the family

Gemma Bovery has been in the ground three weeks. People have begun to forget – or anyway I don't hear talk in the shop any more. But I – I never stop thinking of her. The nights are worst. If I sleep, I dream of her dead eyes which are the blue of stained glass.
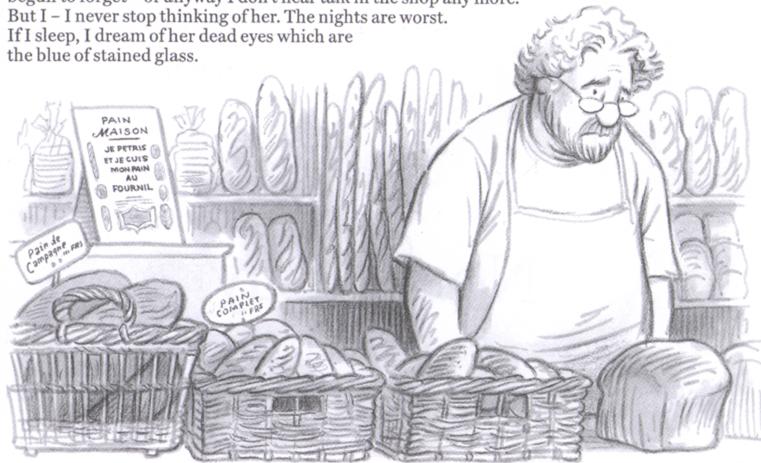
My name is Raymond Joubert. I have done several things in life, but for the past seven years I've been content to run the family bakery here in Bailleville. I am a Norman, the son of a baker. In spite of my sojournings abroad, my writing, my interest in the history of communications, I think I remain a simple man.
    What I am now compelled to write – of the recent tragedy in our small town – is no more than an attempt to make some sense of what happened: an attempt to discover the facts and thereby the extent (or the limit) of my own culpability. Because – and this is difficult – in all this sorry business, I do not know how much to blame myself. My head tells me I am merely at fault, but my guts condemn me. How I suffer – my colonic agony, it's not just *à cause d'une colite*. I feel myself profoundly guilty.
    However, I do not examine these events to soothe my digestion. I do it for my conscience, for the sake of my sanity.

FIGURE 2.1: Posy Simmonds: *Gemma Bovery*, p. 2 (detail).

bakery") is self-knowledge and not any kind of observation. In addition, "How I suffer – my colonic agony" has nothing to do with "vision" but rather with feeling, a bodily function, or malfunction. Instead of Joubert's "perspective," the reader learns about Joubert's feelings, both bodily and emotionally. According to Genette's focalization, would these feelings still belong to a "perspective," a "vision," or are they rather only one of many individual types of cognition? Narratives such as Joubert's on this page are probably why Genette includes knowledge in his equations, but this addition only obfuscates the terminology further, as I have pointed out above. Lastly, the visual mode in this short example depicts Joubert from the outside – there is no indication that we see Joubert's "perspective." We see Joubert himself, standing behind his counter, from what we can assume is a disembodied perspective, in order to present us with a portrait of the figure whose discourse we read in the verbal mode. This distinction between the verbal mode's focalization and the visual mode's "perspective" is our first indicator that these two modes can be at odds with each other when it comes to focalization.

Genette's concept is immediately useful to the study of narrative and taught in schools and universities – it is also, as numerous narratologists after him have pointed out, flawed. It accomplishes an understanding of narrative agency and subjective limitation, and the argument that those two need not be identical. Genette draws from

Todorov's relationship between knowledge of the narrator and knowledge of the character – zero focalization means that the narrator knows more than the character, and external focalization works the other way around; with internal focalization, there is an equilibrium (Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 188 f.). The relation between the narrator's knowledge and the character's knowledge in narrative is a fundamental prerequisite for the understanding of focalization. With that in mind, even this distinction has been challenged. One of the arguments against the narrator/character divide in knowledge points out that a narrator still chooses which information to relate to and which to obscure. As such, the amount of knowledge in a narrative, even if it springs from an individual character, emerges only when the narrator chooses to do so (cf. Broman 61). Although Genette later acknowledged this problem in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (1988), the first major revision of focalization as a narratological phenomenon came from narratologist Mieke Bal.

One of Bal's major criticisms is the lack of agency in focalization as Genette described it. Where Genette (and others before him) considered point of view, vision, and focalization as a practice of narratorial restriction, Bal and her contemporaries view focalization as a narrative choice, in other ways, a selection of information, an "activity that results in the always to some extent selective and subjective view of the fictional world that reaches the reader via the narrative text" (Broman 70). From this argument, we must assume that focalization as an "act" requires an "actor." Bal is of the opinion that Genette confuses the focalizing subject with the focalized object: "the relations between the elements presented and the vision through which they are presented" (Bal 145).

Thus, focalization moves away from the act of focalizing towards the relationship between *agens* and *patiens*: "Focalization is the relationship between the 'vision,' the agent that sees, and that which is seen [. . .] The subject of focalization, the focalizer, is the point from which the elements are viewed. That point can lie with a character (i.e., an element of the fabula), or outside it" (149). While Bal still recognizes that a character's "vision" and a character's speech act should not be conflated (ibid.), the differences between external focalization and zero focalization are not apparent enough to warrant distinction (cf. Jahn 100 f.) within Bal's framework. She develops two sets of concepts that disambiguate focalization: external versus internal focalization (of the focalizing subject) and perceptible versus non-perceptible (as in appearances and things versus feelings and ideas of the focalized object). It is important to point out that, by this distinction, an individual focalizer can never perceive a non-perceptible object unless that focalizer is part of the same object, "is the same person" (Bal 161). In more colloquial terms, a character can never perceive something that is not the direct result of their senses. This observation implicitly points us toward the connection

between focalization and questions of embodiment and cognition, a relationship which I will return to throughout this study. Bal also adds other terms to her model, such as ambiguous focalization, which refers to instances of focalization where a character does not speak directly, but the narrator relates feelings and observations as if they were a character's – in more traditional terms, free indirect speech (162).

If we apply Bal's model to the above example from *Gemma Bovery* (fig. 2.1), nothing substantial changes at first. Verbal focalization is still internal; we can now determine that the focalizer is Raymond Joubert. A vital addition for our purposes is the distinction between perceptible and non-perceptible focalization: In Joubert's case, most of his internal focalization concerns non-perceptibles – his emotional state, his body, and his dreams. Close analysis also finds one example of a perceptible in the first paragraph: "I don't hear talk in the shop anymore." As for the visual mode on this page, we can not identify a specific focalizer for the image in which Joubert is standing behind the counter; no indicators (verbal or visual) point the reader towards assuming that the visual information represents the point of view of another character. The visual mode is thus external focalization. Still, it shows objects and people that can be perceived visually – a character in the storyworld, a shop counter, baskets filled with loaves of bread, and so on. As for Bal's other categories and how they apply to verbal focalization in graphic narratives, many popular mainstream serial comics rarely use an unspecified narrator figure that would qualify as an external focalizer. The setting or characters introduced in this way will most likely be perceptible. With that in mind, one of graphic narratives' tropes is the use of concise captions that indicate the passing of time. Captions such as "Meanwhile:" or "And then. . . " have no focalizer whatsoever within the narrated storyworld and therefore belong to Bal's external focalizing agent.

In Bal's framework, two changes to Genette's conceptualization warrant emphasis. First, it appears justified in light of the discussion so far to conflate Genette's three-tier model into a simple dichotomy between internal and external focalization. Second, whether a focalized object is perceptible or not requires further observation. This question marks a shift in focalization as a term, from a relation of knowledge towards a question of awareness, which is subjective, and thus not comparable, at least in Genette's terms (on Bal's centering on the visual, cf. Horstkotte and Pedri 333 f.). The question also arises whether the narrator as entity remains conceptually necessary once we establish a focalizing agent, as the latter has been cause for considerable controversy upon its introduction (cf., for example, Nelles; Phelan; Prince). I will return to the problem of focalizer/focalized when I introduce visual focalization because the images in graphic narrative demonstrate the usefulness of such a distinction more vividly. For now, I would argue that instead of assuming that there must be a focalizing agent behind all instances of focalization, it is more productive to think of

internal focalization as always being bound to a focalizing agent. In contrast, external focalization is unbound from any such entity and, therefore, a kind of "disembodied" focalization, or, as will become apparent in my later experiments, an unmarked case of focalization.

To summarize: Even though Bal's re-examination of Genette's initial concept sparked controversy about hierarchical structures between narrator and focalizer, the practicability of an internal/external focalizer cannot be denied (cf. Horstkotte and Pedri 335: they use the terms "character-bound focalization" and "narratorial focalization," equally adapted from Bal). Furthermore, Bal moves the perceptibility argument towards a cognitive turn in narratology. Is focalization concerned with perspective and point of view, as Genette and those before him call it, or must focalization also include other means of cognitive representation, however a narrative illustrates this? Focalization, as restricted to perspective, or knowledge, does not cover these latter elements. An analysis of focalization in graphic narrative can only make sense of the medium's narrative potential if we include notions of awareness, emotion, and cognition in focalization – restricting focalization to knowledge means to ignore other instances of subjectivity that contribute to focalization.

2.3.2 The Cognitive Turn in the Debate on Focalization

One major criticism of the term focalization so far has been that it does not necessarily encompass all perceptive and cognitive abilities that a narrative might use (and vice versa, that not all instances of perception need necessarily relate to acts of focalization). This circumstance is most likely due to narratology's origin in formalism; narrative theory, up until relatively recently, had been concerned with the identification of linguistic features. While these observations are still foundational to narratology, we cannot explain the full spectrum of meaning-making devices in narrative if we exclude certain extra-linguistic features. Consequently, narratology has moved towards more holistic principles that encompass a broader spectrum of human experience, or rather, experientiality. Monika Fludernik proposed a new kind of narratology in her book *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology* (1996). She explains her decision to call her approach "natural" as such:

> What does this model "do" in comparison to the standard paradigms of Genette and Stanzel? [...] "natural" narratology bases itself on a very specific definition of narrative which is thematically identified as the presentation of experientiality. Formally [...] one can now claim that all narrative is built on the mediating function of consciousness. This consciousness can surface on several levels and in different shapes. Consciousness

comprises both lived experientiality and intellectual attempts to deal with experience, and it includes the comprehension of actancy just as it necessarily embraces an understanding of mental processes. Narrative modes are therefore all resolved or mediated on the basis of cognitive categories which can be identified as categories of human consciousness. (49 f.)

I want to consider a few keywords from Fludernik's quote: experientiality, consciousness, mental processes, and cognitive categories. We can see that Fludernik shifts the discourse from a purely linguistic perspective on narrative to one that includes extralinguistic features such as cognition, psychology, and consciousness. However, the fictional representation of human experience is still a mimetic act, not an actual human experience. It is no surprise, then, that Fludernik bases her model on Paul Ricoeuer's theory of mimesis (cf. 43). Dorrit Cohn described the shortcomings of treating narration as purely linguistic as early as 1978 in *Transparent Minds*, in which she came to the conclusion that: "One of the drawbacks of this linguistic approach is therefore that it tends to leave out of account the entire nonverbal realm of consciousness, as well as the entire problematic relationship between thought and speech" (13). In the same volume, Cohn introduces the term psycho-narration to approach narration from this consciousness-focused analytic standpoint.

Others have developed psycho-narration further. For example, Marisa Bortolussi and Peter Dixon dedicated an entire narrative theory to the term in their book *Psychonarratology* (2003), in which they extend cognitive processes in narrative to the understanding of cognitive processes in readers – this approach will be crucial to the foundations for my methodology further below. Cohn, at certain points, consolidates her psycho-narration with existing narratological terminology – for example, she acknowledges that her distinctions between dissonant and consonant narrators "correspond" to Franz Stanzel's terms authorial and figural narrators (D. Cohn 275; Stanzel 70-82). In comparison, Fludernik revises the existing discussion more radically – hence her chapter title for reconceptualizing narratological terminology: "Throwing out the baby and preserving the bath water" (341) – which rethinks large parts of narratology from this consciousness-based understanding of narrative. Many of these new considerations will prove productive for the analysis of focalization in graphic narratives that follows.

Writing about focalization, Fludernik first criticizes Bal's inclusion of focalizer, or focalizing agency, and suggests that Stanzel's term figural narrative situation describes the same phenomenon more aptly, all the while reminding us that this field of narrative theory has not much to do with focalization (344 f.) because it relates to questions about the narrator, and thus diegesis. In addition, she points out that, qua

experientiality, a narrative with internal focalization can only access its frame of reference. That is to say, external focalization in first-person narration should be impossible (346). Attempts to refute this claim are largely unconvincing; Genette proposed that the first-person narrator in Albert Camus' *The Stranger* utilizes a homodiegetic narrator with external focalization because the novel's protagonist is devoid of affect and impervious to emotional insight throughout the narrative (cf. Broman 65). In my opinion, Genette's argument puts forward a highly idiosyncratic interpretation of the novel's discourse level, and *The Stranger*'s protagonist remains an example of internal focalization, however guarded his interior thoughts may be. However, as rare as external focalization in first-person narration may be, David Mazzuchelli's *Asterios Polyp* could be said to form a counterexample. In its verbal mode, this graphic novel employs the unborn brother of the protagonist as a narrator while letting that unborn brother describe the plot, character actions, and individual focalizations through other characters to which he should not have access to. As such, I would argue that this particular narrative configuration is indeed possible, if only in supernatural or otherwise fantastic storyworlds.

Returning to Fludernik's remodeling of focalization, in which she posits that the term should retain the distinction between internal and external focalization, even though she relabels them *telling* for external focalization and *experiencing/viewing* for internal focalization – the relabeling accommodates her intention to rethink narrative as a representation of experientiality. Moreover, she introduces a scale of access to internality, by which analysis would be able to measure the narration's intrusion into a character's consciousness – "the two poles of the scale are complete access to another's consciousness and no access at all" (Fludernik 346). A crucial comment for the purposes of this study comes from Fludernik when she adds that external focalization "relates to a refusal of inside views rather than connecting with the simple perceptional fact of observation" (345 f.). We can understand this comment in terms of hierarchy between the external and internal terms, or, as I will later call it, by borrowing from morphology, the markedness of focalization. For example, suppose internal focalization is the choice to narrate with a particular subjective filter, and external focalization is the refusal to do so. In that case, it stands to reason that certain markers accompany internal focalization to denote such subjectivity, whereas external focalization is evident by the absence of such markers. The focus on categorizing internal focalization by degrees of cognition in papers that follow Fludernik's consciousness-based narratology (cf. Margolin 67-76) supports this claim. However, they will find more extensive coverage in my discussion on the methodology for this study. For now, let

us practice Fludernik's model on an example from graphic narrative. In his book *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind* (2013), David Herman uses a double page from the superhero comic book *The Incredible Hulk* to show that multimodal systems create complex interactions between contrasting subjectivities (130 f. and 177 ff.).

FIGURE 2.2: Goodwin et al.: *The Incredible Hulk* vol. 2, issue 155, p.
27 (detail).

Herman analyzes focalization as well as the construction of storyworlds in this comic book. While he is chiefly concerned with an analysis of his own term *construal*, he assigns to the bottom left panel a kind of focalization that he deems external in Genettian terms or "ambient" focalization in Manfred Jahn's conceptualization from his essay "More Aspects of Focalization" (ambient here is analogous to a multiperspecitval hypothetical spectator outside of space and time). In cases such as this, Fludernik's introduction of non-verbal information to the study of narrative becomes highly useful. When we view the bottom-left panel in the context of its surrounding panels, the vantage point indicates external focalization: Both characters are clearly visible, no other characters are present to witness the spectacle, and the caption at the panel's top provides no indication of internal focalization either. Yet, the background seems unusual compared to the book's actual setting – the issue takes place in an alternate New York in which American soldiers are at war with Nazi invaders. Both figures are shrouded in a yellow halo amidst explosive colors; strong lines emanate from the

center of the panel. Nonetheless, we are not made to believe that this is an actual explosion, or some ostensible change in the storyworld. Instead, the background appears to shift according to the inner state of either character (most likely the Hulk's as he is the superhero, but it might as well be his enemy's inner turmoil). Essentially, the comic book utilizes non-verbal aesthetic means to mark this panel as the representation of a character's consciousness, however abstract it appears on the page. It may be relevant to regard the issue's convoluted plot: The Hulk finds himself in a micro-universe that turns out to be a dream, conjured up by one of his arch nemeses, The Shaper of Worlds. The dream's fragility becomes evident in the bottom right panel as Hulk comments: "Streets, buildings seem to disappear!" The comic book's complex world-building could possibly impede closer scrutiny of focalization in this passage. But the same focalization technique – abstract aesthetics in the background to illustrate an inner state of mind – is quite common among graphic narratives, and another example from the same issue (not included in Herman's study) strengthens this argument:

FIGURE 2.3: Goodwin et al.: *The Incredible Hulk* vol. 2, issue 155, p. 5 (detail).

The same aesthetics accompany Bruce Banner's transformation into the Hulk in the first panel. The other three panels, however, show his actual surroundings within the storyworld. Again, we experience the first panel sharing Banner's consciousness: "A reaction that produces first pain – –", represented with a similar halo, similar colors, and the same strong lines leaving the panel's center. In Fludernik's conceptualization, this panel shows internal focalization. However, the panel is not centered on a specific point of view but on experientiality: cognition, emotion, feeling, in short, consciousness.

Fludernik's "natural" narratology is, of course, not without precedent. As mentioned earlier, Dorrit Cohn investigated the misconception that focalization can only provide for narrative instances of point of view. Another narratological branch developed similar ideas about focalization as cognition. For these purposes, we return to Uspensky's *A Poetics of Composition* (1973). Although Uspensky stands by the "point of view" moniker, he develops a typology that includes other dimensions of mind in a four-tier model, or planes: the ideological plane, the phraseological plane, the spatial and temporal plane, and the psychological plane. It is of note that Uspensky makes no use of the term focalization, as his book was published years prior to Genette's. As a consequence, he refers to any representation of, for example, a character's ideology to an "ideological point of view." Uspensky addressed multiple facets of subjectivity in narrative, an achievement that Wolf Schmid called "a decisive advance insofar as it portrayed perspective as a phenomenon on multiple planes" (98). Schlomith Rimmon-Kenan later adapted Uspensky's typology in her 1983 book *Narrative Fiction* with specific "facets" such as: the perceptual facet, the psychological facet, and the ideological facet. Again, perception or vision is only one facet to be considered according to this structure. Still, as per Rimmon-Kenan's actual discussion of the term focalization, she appears to be closer in thought to Bal than Fludernik because she expands on Bal's focalizer discussion. More specifically, she distinguishes two types of focalization in "position relative to the story" and "degree of persistence" (75). She ultimately arrives at terms such as "narrator-focalizer" (ibid.) or "perceptual focalizer" (83). As I have argued above, the agency in focalization appears to be counter-productive for the conceptualization of visual focalization in graphic narrative. Regardless, Uspensky's and Rimmon-Kenan's models advance the point that focalization is tied up with multiple cognitive dimensions.

In this section, I hope to have shown that focalization remains as a contested phenomenon in narrative. Many competing models and interpretations that surround the term indicate its relative malleability – critics would say "inconclusiveness." At the same time, the ongoing discussion also proves the term's importance to narratology. Fludernik (and other critics after her, as we will see in the next section) even arrives at the proposal that, due to its inconsistencies, "it may be well to scrap the concept of focalization in its traditional configurations" (346). Against this proposal, the present study argues that narratology would be better served to integrate empirical evidence into its theorization of focalization and thus work to refute or support existing claims. Before we can do this, it will be necessary to focus on focalization in graphic narratives, and to discuss why we should separate verbal focalization from visual focalization in this particular medium. Therefore, I turn to recent debates in transmedial narratology.

2.3.3 Double Focalization in Graphic Narrative and the Move towards Transmedial Narratology

Although the merits of a narratological model should be separate from the time in which they first emerged and independent from the specific media that their authors analyzed, it is evident that almost every author mentioned so far used examples from literary fiction for their conceptualizations. Two notable exceptions are David Herman in his analysis of *The Incredible Hulk* and Boris Uspensky, who considered various media beyond the verbal mode in *A Poetics of Composition* (cf. Schmid 95). Regarding graphic narratives, it remains to be seen if (and how) we may utilize focalization as a narratological category. So far, we have seen that Fludernik's model proves all the more valuable in cases of multimodal narratives, where internal focalization can occur in a non-verbal manner. Essentially, this cognitive turn in focalization makes the term viable for the analysis of graphic narratives, which Fludernik implies herself when she points out that: "The person who 'sees' is the reader, but *à travers* the linguistic medium, and not in terms of *visual perception*. (Film, naturally, is a different matter, altogether, but outside the visual medium readers *visualize* and *construct* the scene; they do not 'see' it)" (345). Transmedial narratology engages this question by applying focalization not only to graphic narratives but to all types of media.

Transmedial narratology seeks to achieve this reconciliation by moving further away from the structuralist, language-based approach, an innovation that Cohn, Fludernik et al. had foreshadowed. According to Fussilo, narratology requires reinvention in order to accommodate non-verbal storytelling modes: "The goal is to build a media-conscious narratology, which can handle every act of storytelling, every kind of storyworld" (51). Crucially, Marie-Laure Ryan introduces the notion that to engage in a narrative means to immerse oneself in another world. She discusses immersion extensively in *Narrative as Virtual Reality* (2001), in which she focuses on the relationship between reader and narrative – a relationship that I will investigate in detail in the methodology chapter. In an analogy to Rimmon-Kenan's earlier suggestion about categories such as "narrator-focalizer," Ryan writes about the distance between narrator and focalized character. Yet, Ryan is more concerned with the distance between narrator and reader: "One of the most variable parameters of narrative art is the imaginative distance between the position of narrator and addressee and the time and place of the narrated events. Spatio-temporal immersion takes place when this distance is reduced to near zero" (130). As a comprehensive study of the field, *Narrative as Virtual Reality* pursues more wide-ranging questions regarding narrativity, and an inquiry into focalization is notably absent. When Ryan uses the term, she seems to follow Bal's model by assigning focalizers and focalized (cf., for example, her analysis of Michael

Joyce's hypertext fiction "Twelve Blue" on p. 230). As regards visual focalization in graphic narrative, it should be sufficient to repeat that agency is only of interest when we find evidence for internal focalization.

Building on Ryan's transmedial foundation, Jan-Noël Thon provides a focused discussion of focalization in *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture* (2016). He structures his book around three media types that are particularly interesting to this study, as they all use the visual mode in one way or another: graphic narratives, film, and ludic narratives (or video games). Thon is very critical of the term focalization for some of the reasons I have outlined above (cf. 226). Even though he makes use of focalization for his analysis, Thon's preferred term is *subjective representation*, which he proposes given that focalization as a term comes, evidently, with a loaded history. From Edward Branigan's focalization model for film studies (*Narrative Comprehension and Film*) – another three-tier distinction between non-focalization / external focalization / internal focalization – Thon adapts degrees of subjectivity that fit his terminology: objective, intersubjective, and subjective modes of representation. In addition, he emphasizes the possibility in narrative of both narratorial and nonnarratorial modes of representation. This distinction appears to be reasonably necessary for transmedial narratology since the narrator as a concept becomes problematic in visual narratives such as comic books, films, or video games – that is, media that can tell a story without a narrator present as is the case in literary fiction. Lastly and most importantly for my methodology, Thon conceptualizes four subcategories of subjective representation – "spatial point-of-view," "quasi-perceptual point-of-view," "quasi-perceptual overlay," and "internal world representation" – which offer representations of subjectivity that become gradually more pronounced. These four categories bring to mind Bal's distinction between perceptible (in that "spatial point of view" describes everything the character sees in the storyworld) and non-perceptible (in that "internal world representation" describes dreams, hallucinations, and so on). I will reserve a more comprehensive discussion of these terms for my analysis chapter further below.

Thon is justified in criticizing the use of focalization in narratological analysis, which has grown into a "terminological thicket" (238). But his decision to "employ more neutral (and, arguably, more precise) expressions such as the representation of subjectivity or, more specifically, the subjective representation of a character's consciousness or mind" (ibid.) instead removes a term that Genette intended to disconnect from more colloquial terms such as "vision" or "perspective." It supplants it with terms that are themselves comparatively colloquial. It is certainly a convincing argument to determine subjective representation in fiction instead of focalization when we consider it a phenomenon in narrative across all media, especially with the previous discussion on representations of cognitive processes. However, we may also hypothesize

that focalization as a term retains some conceptual consistency in a medium-specific analysis of graphic narrative if, but only if, the term is consistent – the history of various interpretations of the term would certainly lead us to believe otherwise. With that in mind, it seems all the more appropriate to probe the term focalization for any empirical usefulness as to its functional place in narratology. If anything, it might be worthwhile to hypothesize that focalization and subjective representation describe similar consciousness-based phenomena in narratives, and the terms are hence interchangeable, much like "vision," "perspective," and "point of view" had been before Genette introduced his own concept. Be that as it may, Thon's four subcategories are helpful in the study of visual focalization in graphic narrative. If one were to adapt this classification while keeping focalization as a term, the four modes would fall into subcategories for internal focalization. Keeping in mind that Ryan and Thon seek to map out a narratology across media, it stands to reason that the medium-specific analysis of visual focalization in graphic narratives benefits from this repurposing without losing any of the authors' valuable contributions.

This leaves us with some thoughts on incorporating focalization into discussions of graphic narrative. So far, I have provided an overview of focalization as it is generally understood. Now, I focus on how we can formulate focalization in a medium-specific way for graphic narratives. In my examples so far, I have avoided the terms "visual focalization" and "verbal focalization," but it seems reasonable to point out why the distinction between the two is justified. Within the discourse on focalization in graphic narratives, there is a tendency to separate focalization in the verbal domain from focalization in the visual domain, although this tendency does not encompass all of the available literature (cf., for example, Horstkotte and Pedri as they altogether avoid the distinction between visual and verbal). If we consider graphic narrative's medium-specific multimodality – the interaction between text and image – it seems obvious to argue that, while the two modes can interact in numerous ways, they can also contain a type of focalization that is separate from the other mode. In turn, these two types of focalization, one present in the verbal mode and one in the visual mode, can also interact with each other in numerous ways. Kai Mikkonen ("Graphic Narratives as a Challenge to Transmedial Narratology" 639; "Focalisation in Comics" 71) develops a model for the analysis of graphic narrative, as part of which he lists constituents such as narrative voice, a verbal focalizer, a visual focalizer, and a visual focalized. Interestingly, he follows Bal's theory here, but with an uneven distribution: two focalizers and only one focalized, with a narrative voice to seemingly replace a verbal focalizer. The lack of a verbal focalizer may result from the criticism made of Bal's model, but if we follow this approach, graphic narrative is certainly able to employ verbal focalizers.

While not present in many early comic books, in recent decades, graphic novels have regularly made use of such verbal focalizers, or narrative voice (Alan Moore is likely the most popular proponent of this narrative technique).

Martin Schüwer developed a comprehensive German account of the medium in *Wie Comics erzählen* (2008). He locates the interaction between two focalizations among three more types of interaction between text and image (338). Reviewed in total, Schüwer seems relatively uninterested in a further conceptualization of the term for graphic narrative, which he places among an abundance of other narratological phenomena. However, he does indeed acknowledge some interplay between the verbal and visual mode: "In comics, we are met with a most peculiar phenomenon from the perspective of traditional narrative theory: There is the possibility of external focalization which is not carried by a heterodiegetic narrator, since the narrator remains tied to language and therefore to the verbal part of a comic." (404, translation by the author). Schüwer also theorizes that this "problem" within the boundaries of traditional narratology presents an opportunity for cognitive narratology to "work out [...] which impulses it needs to invoke such frames of perception" (389, translation by the author), which is exactly what Thon later rebrands as four subcategories of subjective representation, and which will be the foundation for all of my subsequent analyses in chapter 5, "Focalization and Annotation: Surveying a Comics Corpus."

By contrast, Silke Horstkotte and Nancy Pedri are not concerned with distinguishing between two focalization modes. Instead, they show how information from characters in the storyworld can alter the visual appearances of other characters (339-343). However, they reject the cognitive understanding of focalization in favor of the traditional "focalization as perspective" interpretation (Horstkotte and Pedri 335; cf. Thon 232). I have already discussed the importance of a multitude of consciousness-based mimetic elements that go beyond perspective to the debates on focalization. With this in mind, it appears that Horstkotte and Pedri provide evidence for complex interactions between diverse cognitive components as well as between verbal information and visual representation. Specifically, the authors discuss a passage from Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in which one character's visual representation as an anthropomorphic mouse is updated to an anthropomorphic cat in the next panel. This change in appearance is prompted by another character's speech bubble in the same panel. Horstkotte and Pedri thus ask:

> How do we account for instances of focalization when the subjective filtering of the story's raw material may come from two distinct sources operating on multiple temporal levels and, in addition, is mediated by verbal as well as visual narrators who are actively engaged with the story's telling within the storyworld? (341)

They ultimately distinguish between narratorial focalization and character-bound focalization, although this solution seems to confine the issue to a narrative theory intended for literary fiction instead of opening it up to a transmedial framework, in which two narrative modes are able to influence each other's representation of subjectivity.

In addition to putting forward conflicting accounts of focalization in graphic narrative, some critics suggest alternative terms for the analysis of visually subjective filtering. Some popular terms include "ocularization" and "perspectivation" (cf., for example, Miller; Horstkotte and Pedri). "Monstration" is another term, although monstration as put forward by Badman ("Talking, Thinking, and Seeing in Pictures") represents more or less a counterpart to narration, in the sense that narration is solely verbal and monstration limited to visual storytelling. Although Badman believes that some text, like thought bubbles and diegetic text, belongs to monstration, the split between narration and monstration does not provide him with any clear advantage in his analysis of focalization. Similarly, "ocularization," a term borrowed from film theorist Francois Jost's "Narration(s)" (1983), can be separated into internal and external ocularization. In other words, readers may perceive a character either from the outside or see the storyworld from this character's point of view. In this sense, then, "ocularization" functions more or less as a re-branding of focalization that emphasizes the visual mode. "Perspectivation" as a term is informed by a similar background, and "is only one dimension within a broader category of focalization that also includes aspects of cognition, ideological orientation, and judgment" (Horstkotte and Pedri 331). As such, I can see no immediate benefit to relabelling focalization, unless one is inclined to dwell on the visual disposition of graphic narratives and their adjacency to other visual media such as film or video games.

An example from Adrian Tomine's *Killing and Dying* (2015) reveals the separation and interplay between verbal and visual focalization. Tomine's *Killing and Dying* is a collection of short graphic narratives, and the short story "Translated, From the Japanese" is unusual in that readers never see its protagonist ("see" in the colloquial term; there is no visual representation of the character throughout the story). The story presumably presents a letter – in Japanese, but, as per the story's title, translated into English – from a mother to her child and their return from Japan to California to see the child's father. The story indicates that the parents' relationship is strained: "Your grandmother, aunt, and uncle did not agree with this choice, and we left on unhappy terms" (75) and "It was hurtful to him, and I acted surprised, as if that had not been my intention at all" (80). Figures 2.4 and 2.5 reproduce two pages from the short story. The first two panels in fig. 2.4 imply internal visual focalization by drawing attention to the vantage point; both panels portray the action amidst a crowd of passengers, very close to the presumed character who tells her story in the verbal mode.

FIGURE 2.4: Tomine: *Killing and Dying*, n. p.

We can conclude that the visual mode, therefore, shows (in Bal's terms) the focalizer's actual point of view – these panels also serve as an example of what Thon calls "spatial point-of-view." This arguably shifts in fig. 2.5; after the first panel, which implies a similar vantage point, visual focalization becomes external. Views of the car
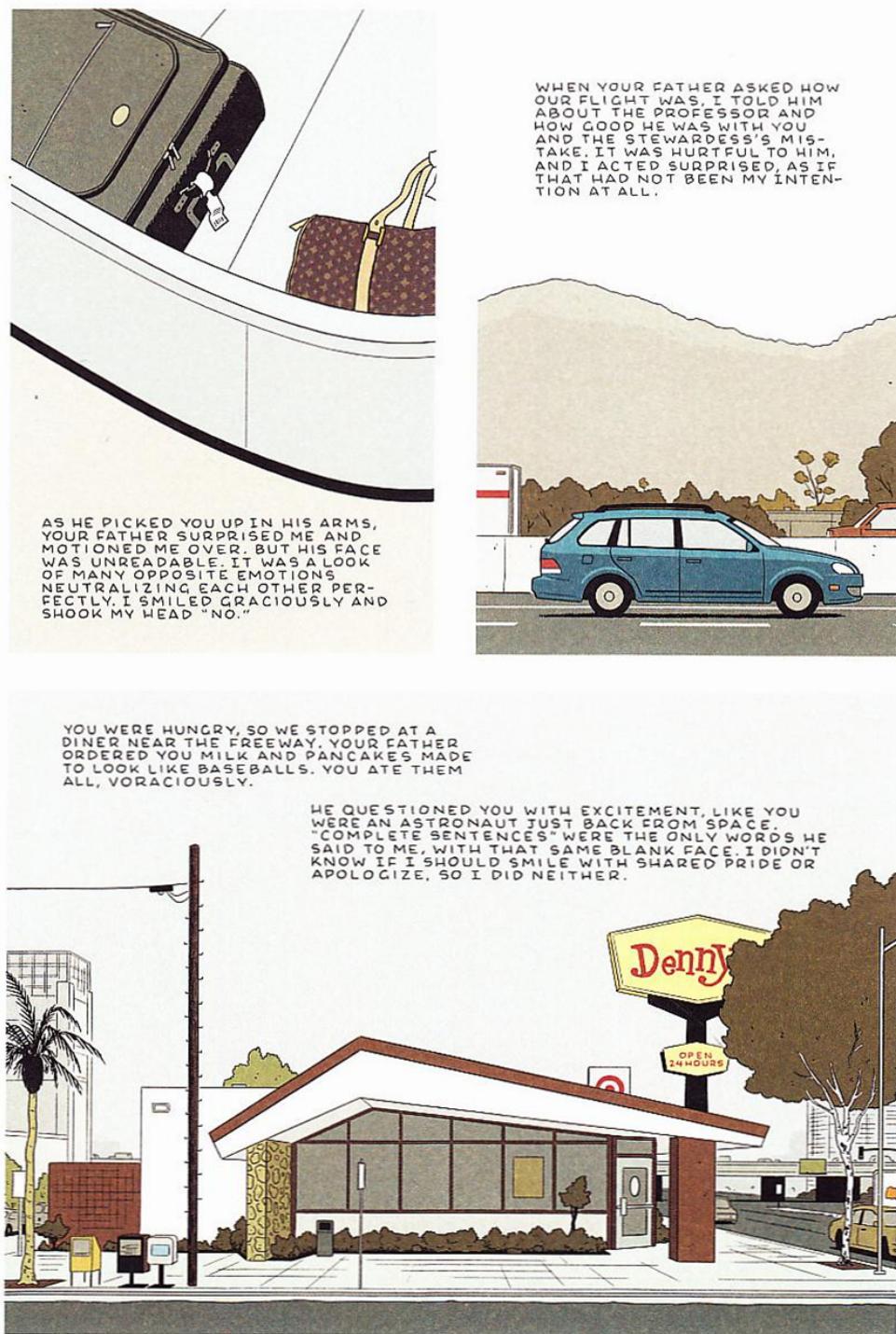
FIGURE 2.5: Tomine: *Killing and Dying*, n. p.

and the diner indicate that the narrating character, who up to this point also served as the focalizing character for preceding panels, is now sitting in the car and the diner in respective panels. This suggestion emerges not from any visual information but from the verbal mode. The narration throughout fig. 2.4 and 2.5 recalls what readers see

in the visual mode, for example: "You were hungry, so we stopped at a diner near the freeway." This narration directs us towards localizing the focalized character (in the verbal mode) as being inside the diner. Notably, visual focalization, or more formally, the visual vantage point, shifts from being very close to the character to being very distant – all the while, verbal focalization is internal throughout. As such, the interplay between text and image also shifts. Both verbal and visual focalization are internal for as long as mother and child are alone, but when the father joins them, external visual focalization contrasts with continuing internal verbal focalization. Thus, the verbal and the visual modes employ focalization techniques independently from each other. Taken together in a sort of double focalization, however, they create meaningful inferences for story, world, character, voice, etc.

The two sample pages of Tomine's "Translated, from the Japanese" point towards the usefulness of conceptualizing two separate modes of focalization in graphic narrative. Proceeding with this assumption, it is compelling to explore more complex forms of interaction between the modes. Mikkonen provides an example from the comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes* by Bill Watterson: "What Calvin and Hobbes shows to us is that in visual narratives such as comics internal and external focalizers can appear simultaneously, in a literal sense, at different points inside and outside the image frame" ("Graphic Narratives as a Challenge to Transmedial Narratology" 645). Mikkonen refers here to a core aspect in the comic strip's aesthetics. Calvin's trusted companion Hobbes is really a stuffed animal – several panels focalized from "outside" Calvin's frame confirm this – but the lion's share of panels in *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strips portray him as a living, sentient tiger, which reinforces the strip's ongoing theme surrounding Calvin's vibrant imagination. Suppose we apply an analysis of focalization to this aesthetic exercise. In that case, we can conclude that visual focalization can show the visual focalizer from the outside while retaining the focalizer's understanding of the world – within Thon's typology, such instances would refer to "quasi-perceptual overlay." Hence double focalization is at play between the verbal and the visual and within the visual itself. Graphic narratives can establish an internal visual focalizer that is simultaneously externally focalized, that is to say, presented from the outside within his own frame of cognition.

A vivid example of this can be found in the comic strip in fig. 2.6. The first and second panels depict things as usual in the *Calvin and Hobbes* world, as both protagonists are watching TV late at night and eating snacks. In the third panel, a few notable stylistic markers for a shift in visual focalization present themselves. Firstly, Hobbes is suddenly immobile, smaller, and just a plush toy. Secondly, Calvin's speech loses its framing – it is only in this panel that his speech appears to be free-floating and lacks the framed borders of a speech balloon. Thirdly, the panel frame is lost as well. The fourth

FIGURE 2.6: Watterson: *The Complete Calvin and Hobbes*, October 5, 1989.

panel returns these frames but does not show Hobbes. It is the third panel, however, which supports Mikkonen's earlier proposal: Although Calvin is clearly visible in all four panels, we must assume that all panels but the third show us the world as he interprets it. Admittedly, it is difficult to find any such representation of subjectivity in literary fiction, the medium which traditional narratologists had in mind when they conceptualized focalization. Nevertheless, the concept still applies to analyses such as the one above provides evidence of the usefulness of the term for graphic narrative.

The two examples above should be sufficient to argue for double focalization in graphic narrative. I will return to other pertinent cases with various interplays between the visual and verbal modes in my corpus selection. For now, let us review the debate surrounding focalization and summarize key components that we might investigate from an empirical standpoint.

2.3.4   Focalization in Review – Probing for Empirical Evidence

Across the many proposals in this chapter as to how narrative employs focalization, only a few aspects are agreed upon by most scholars. Barring some criticism from Manfred Jahn or Schlomith Rimmon-Kennan, focalization is said to be either external or internal at the most fundamental level. In theory, a narrative text thus chooses to represent its storyworld from some subjective representation (to reiterate Thon's term) or it lacks such subjective representation. Moreover, we need to take consider how the debate surrounding the term has shifted from perspectival filters in the narrow sense, that is, "vision" or "point of view" to a form of experientiality, or perspectival filters in a broader sense, that is, cognition. Monika Fludernik, Manfred Jahn, and researchers working in transmedial narratology have pursued this argument. David Herman further entangles cognition and experientiality by positing that narrative perspective is constructed via a "reflex of mind or minds conceptualizing scenes represented in narrative texts" (*Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind* 123). As such, the cognitive dimension

of focalization extends to readers' meaning-making strategies. Focalization, external or internal – or, as graphic narratives reveal, multiplicities of both – cannot be assumed to be an inherent quality of the narrative but must instead be constructed by the reader on the basis of textual information. Cognition is not only the circumference of focalization within a narrative, it is also required by readers in real-life mental processes to understand focalization.

In this theoretical chapter, I hope to have shown how the cognitive conception of focalization is a persuasive, analytical method within the narratological toolbox for graphic narratives. In what follows, I will investigate focalization's usefulness for the empirical analysis of the medium. Statistical analysis can lend significance to salient aspects of focalization in graphic narrative, strengthening certain positions in the complex and ongoing debate that surrounds the term. In order to accomplish this goal, the next chapter will provide details of the cognitive meaning-making processes that take place inside readers' minds. Some of these processes were already introduced during the discussion of cognitive narratology in the present chapter. The next step will transform focalization from an inherently textual quality to an empirically observable phenomenon of the reading process. In short, the next chapter will establish the empirical methodology that we need to probe visual focalization as a narratological concept. Finally, I will present a survey which focuses on the term's most foundational understanding: the distinction between internal and external focalization.

Chapter 3

Empirical and Quantitative Approaches to Focalization

Literary criticism has traditionally occupied itself with interpreting text (regardless whether this text is a book, a film, an oral tradition, or a comic book) in any given context – history, economics, society, psychoanalysis, an author's life, etc. Until the cognitive turn of the 1970s, literary critics did not entertain the idea to study reader responses to texts because it had been agreed that the meaning of a text lay either in the author's intention or, more popularly, was inherent to the text (structuralism, formalism, hermeneutics). Starting with reader-response criticism (*Rezeptionsästhetik*), a concept developed by German and US literary theorists such as Stanley Fish, Hans-Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, and others, the localization of meaning in literature started shifting from being inherent in a text to fluid formation during the reading process (seminal texts included further below are, for example, Fish, *Surprised by Sin*; *Self-Consuming Artefacts*; Jauss and Benzinger; Iser, *The Implied Reader*; *The Act of Reading*). As such, the reader imposes his mental capacities upon text and derives meaning by constantly updating a mental model of narrative (What story does a text tell me?), message (What is the point that the text is trying to make?), value (Is this text literature?), and so on. This final relationship between reader and text, in particular, transforms our understanding of literature, or rather literariness. If Ezra Pound is right that "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree" (36) and if we assume that it is up to readers to recognize and process this charge, then it is also up to a sufficiently large number of individual reading processes as well as broader societal and historical interpretations to recognize great literature as such.

The consideration of individual reading processes and cognition as the center of relationship between text and meaning is thus an idea approximately half a century old. Yet only recently have empirical measurements shed light on what kind of cognitive processes take place during reading. The first section of this chapter will discuss

reader-response criticism, which has mostly been concerned with the theory of the implied reader and the "ideal" reader. Actual readers were not involved in this process beyond the scholars establishing these theories. When taking into account the reader as part of the meaning-making process, the problem surfaces that individual readings also require individual evaluation: No two individuals share the same reading experience. Cognitive literary theory and its generalizations about reading processes are hence only conjectures based on the number of readers that one asks. In other words: To create a cognitive theory of literature, we require as many responses from readers as possible. The method to achieve this goal lies in empirical research and statistical analysis. Not unlike the idea of readers as makers of meaning, empiricism had long been absent from literary theory. Historically, cultural theory had been concerned with close reading – the interpretation of texts based on theoretical concepts that structure a discourse (again, historical, economic, social, psychoanalytical, etc.). Relatively speaking, empirical analysis is a late addition to literary theory. These methods, and the statistical terminology that accompanies them, seem, at least to traditional theorists of literature, far removed from literary analysis. Yet, in order to concatenate and condense readers' responses to texts, empiricism and statistics are invaluable approaches that may contribute greatly to existing theory, and will as such comprise the second section of this chapter.

The interpretation of a single text via qualitative methods may often lead, by abstraction or extrapolation, to larger assumptions about literature as a whole. Quantitative analysis ought to avoid this degree of speculation; test results need validity and reliability. If an experimental theory of narratology is to have any merit, it requires a representative corpus of analysis to support its claims. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to compile a corpus of texts that serves as a repository for tests, hypothesis reliability, comparison of results, and, eventually, a level of abstraction and extrapolation that is familiar to scholars of literature without compromising evidence-based data. Working with corpora in the humanities has been a domain of linguistics for quite some time – in literary scholarship, corpus analysis has found a place only recently alongside digital humanities (distant reading as opposed to the more traditional close reading, cf. Franco Moretti's eponymous book *Distant Reading*).

The following chapter introduces a number of approaches as foundational theories for this thesis. Cognitive studies, empirical and statistical approaches, as well as corpus analysis share the status that they have been fringe approaches to the study of literature, much less the study of graphic narrative. In what follows, I would like to describe the central characteristics of cognitive studies in order to lay the groundwork for my hypothesis that visual focalization in graphic narrative is a cognitive concept. I will then discuss empiricism in literary analysis and provide an overview of statistical terms

and methods that are germane to the surveys I conducted and the data I collected. Lastly, I provide an overview about how narratology might benefit from corpus analysis and present the corpus sample that I used for this study.

3.1 Literary Theory and Cognition

3.1.1 Concepts of Cognition

As an early precursor of cognitive science in literary analysis, reader-response criticism was the first theory to consider readers as parts of the meaning-making process of literature rather than mere observers. Before the late 1960s / early 1970s, structuralist literary analysis put the reader in a passive position. Still, scholars such as F. R. Leavis (perhaps unwillingly) acknowledged the role of the individual reader as he pioneered the close reading technique with his students, which put the "classics" and "masterpieces" as proposed by the likes of Matthew Arnold under scrutiny to see if their reputation held up to his students' opinions (Barry 29). Later, Stanley Fish took the engagement of readers with a text to a theoretical extreme in two early proposals for reader-response criticism: *Surprised by Sin* (1967) and *Self-Consuming Artefacts* (1972). Instead of an objective "truth" inside the pages of a book that was to be discovered by readers, the readers' subjectivity helped construct the meaning of a text. What matters during the reading process is not the authoritative message of the text but conjoining the subjective interpretation of a reader with that text in order to render subjective interpretation and objective message indistinguishable from each other. This last argument reveals what kind of readers Fish had in mind – those readers who draw all available information from a text and assemble it with the most complete analytic scrutiny possible. His theory might move readers more towards the center of the meaning-making process, but it is still far away from assessing empirical readers' actual experience.

Similarly, Wolfgang Iser developed the term *implied reader* in the eponymous *The Implied Reader* (1995, German original 1972) and *The Act of Reading* (1994, German original 1976). To Iser, the author of a text has a specific reader in mind while writing. It is up to readers of that text, then, to fulfill that reader image. The implied reader is always present in the text and, although readers have individual backgrounds, the activation of their imagination while reading results in an eventual acceptance of the role as reader. To Iser, there is a tension between readers' individuality and this acceptance. Readers thus subject themselves to a text and not vice versa. Still, Iser acknowledges that meaning is not simply inherent in a text but created by the reader – even though

the author creates an implied image of that reader beforehand. The "horizon of expectation" (German *Erwartungshorizont*), developed by Hans Robert Jauss and Elizabeth Benzinger, represents a more liberating view of readers' individuality. According to Jauss, readers approach reading prepared with experiences and knowledge from other texts (which may include genre, story tropes, style, and so on) and thus form an individual image of what to expect from a text. These expectations may not be fulfilled; Jauss calls that the "horizon of change" – the distance between horizon of expectation and horizon of change is in his words an "aesthetic distance" (14). Whenever readers experience something new in a text or twists and turns that take them by surprise, expectations may be updated. Hence, readers' expectation and their knowledge of certain genres, authors, styles, etc. may change over the years. The horizon of expectation exists fluidly between the familiar (previously acquired frame of reference) and the strange (new information). It is of particular interest to the present study that Jauss' concept exists in similar (although more experiential than knowledge-driven) form in the psychological concept of *situation models*, which I will describe further below.

As regards reader-response criticism and reader agency, the theories I recounted above are just that: theories. There is no effort to ask readers about their reading processes (although one might suspect that Jauss, Iser et al. had a sufficient supply of literature students at university to survey and test their theories with their students). Instead the reader remains a passive voice in the reader-text-author triangle. Readers, although part of the meaning-making process, should conclude what author and text prescribe. However, what alternatives are to be considered when we attempt to locate the origin of literary meaning? If there is no central authority on the meaning of texts, then literary analysis becomes a plethora of competing opinions. Umberto Eco criticizes this sentiment at the beginning of *The Role of the Reader*:

> The very existence of texts that can not only be freely interpreted but also cooperatively generated by the addressee (the 'original' text constituting a flexible type of which many tokens can be legitimately realized) posits the problem of a rather peculiar strategy of communication based upon a flexible system of signification. (3)

If we assume this free interpretation and cooperative generation to be true within reader-response criticism, the "flexible system of signification" leads to a relativism of meaning-making and interpretation. It would follow that Jauss' aesthetic distance becomes an association game between the ideal reader and the text, which would necessarily lead to a delimitation that factors out actual reader responses.

As a theory of literature that grounds itself upon the reader's mental processes before, during, and after reading, reader-response criticism enters a predicament. If interpretation of a text originates in the mind of the reader and reading experiences

are subjective and dependent on individual backgrounds, then 1) how can we make any general assumptions about the meaning of a particular text; and 2) how can we operationalize readers' responses? A major criticism of reader-response theory points toward a chaotic relationship between text and meaning. If all subjective readings of a text have merit, then there are as many interpretations of a text as there are readers. At the same time, the implied reader becomes a hypothetical construct that no real reader can ever hope to emulate. While this argument may point towards a major disadvantage of reader-response criticism, it is perhaps somewhat bold and optimistic to expect two readers to come up with completely different impressions of the same text. One may be tempted to overestimate cultural, individual, and societal influences on the reading process. Realistically, most readers learn to read in similar institutions, taught by a comparatively homogenous group of teachers, and, at least in one larger connected cultural region, with a canon of literature that is often imposed on the classroom. As a hypothetical conclusion, the general understanding of a text among readers should come with the same interpretation in broad strokes where societal and educational knowledge informs the horizon of expectation, and only granular differences in interpretation where readers are influenced by their own individual cognitive schemata.

Then again, who can prove that meaning-making processes are not subject to highly heterogenous influences? Maybe readers are as diverse as opponents of reader-response criticism dread that they are. A satisfying answer can only come from readers themselves. Surveys, measurements, and interviews before, during, and after reading processes shed light on whether readers truly create the meaning of texts in their minds. For that reason, reader-response criticism has extended into psychological and empirical fields; measurement of cognitive activity connected to reading has since become an interdisciplinary subject of interest.

Several authors have undertaken steps to summarize the role of cognition in literature in the past few decades (for example Duchan et al.; Turner, *The Literary Mind*; Gross; Bortolussi and Dixon; Stockwell; Herman, *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind*). The title of Duchan, Bruder, and Hewitt's edited collection, *Deixis in Narrative*, along with its contributions, shows that the roots of the cognitive study of literature lie mostly within psycholinguistics and discourse linguistics. Terminology used therein, in connection with literary analysis, include *anaphora* – a standard term in text and discourse linguistics; the reference to an expression in a text that had been introduced earlier (*antecedent*) in the text – or *schema(ta)* – the organization of knowledge into (procedural) units. The authors bring these concepts into the study of literature, a mode of communication that they still mostly see as separated from everyday conversation. Turner (*Reading Minds*, 1991), on the other hand, argues that there is no degree of separation between literature and everyday conversation, as it is all communication

and telling stories and, as such, an essential part of human thought. In his own words, it is "a misconception I hope to correct, that the everyday mind has little to do with literature" (7). The same fallacy from earlier reader-response criticism befalls Turner's subsequent endeavors to approach literature from the mind of the reader. Only at one point in his entire book (*The Literary Mind* 22-25) does he provide empirical support to his claim that the human mind is a literary mind. While he may be right (he may also be wrong), Turner's exaltation of the human mind as a literature-making machine reveals two larger problems in the cognitive study of literature, each one from different academic aisles. In literary analysis, scholars rarely put effort into supporting hypotheses and arguments with empirical data; in cognitive studies, scientists underestimate literature's scope and depth. Sabine Gross remarks upon the latter in her review of Turner's 1996 book *The Literary Mind*: "Turner conflates the study of literature and of language, neglecting the scholarly knowledge about genres, styles, periods, and authors required for literary studies and the teaching of literature" (Gross 274). This statement is not only symptomatic of Turner but of cognitive science in the study of literature as a whole. Teun A. van Dijk, in his 1985 work *Discourse and Literature*, presents the (until then mostly unchallenged) three Genettian categories of focalization as prescriptive items (99 f.). The cognitive analysis of literature would have to inquire: Are these items adequate for describing mental representations of the reading process? In much the same way, cognitive approaches (and scientific approaches as a whole) have trickled into literary studies very slowly over the last few decades.

In what follows, the communication model prevalent in cognitive methodologies (via linguistics) serves as a foundation for all further considerations that concern the interaction between reader and text. The communication model consists of, essentially (cf. Bortolussi and Dixon 20):

1. mental (often recursive) representation of conversation participants
    It is important for conversational participants to have knowledge about the other participants' intentions, knowledge, background, and perceptual capabilities in order to form a successful conversation as well as detect and correct misunderstandings.

2. conversational postulates of Grice (1975)
    Postulates that govern expectations prior to engaging in a conversation:

    -   Expectation that conversational partners should only provide necessary and sufficient information (maxim of quantity),

    -   Expectation that they should only state what they have evidence for (maxim of quality),

- Expectation that they should only provide relevant information (maxim of relation), and

- Expectation that they should avoid ambiguity and obscurity (maxim of manner).

3. conversational implicature

An implicature in the sense that Bortolussi and Dixon use is an inference based on the assumption that conversational partners are cooperative throughout the conversation.

Bortolussi's and Dixon's argument that "[r]eaders treat their representation of the narrator much as they would a representation of a conversational participant" (16) imagines the narrator as conversational partner opposite the reader. This assumption might pose no problems for traditional plain-text literature but becomes problematic for graphic narrative. Since the authors of *Psychonarratology* deal exclusively with single-mode text literature, it bears emphasizing that multimodal literature, such as graphic narrative, needs further scrutiny in terms of the system that underlies the reader/narrator conversation proposed by Bortolussi and Dixon. While graphic narrative, without a doubt, possesses the capacity to converse with a reader, I would argue that text-image interaction initiates conversational strategies that are unique to the medium. It should also be of note that Bortolussi and Dixon use the specific term *conversation*, not *communication*, as the latter implies some kind of narratorial intention (or authorial meaning-making agency) – narrators as conversational partners do not actually exist, but readers tend to engage with literary narrative as if they did.

Visual narration does not necessarily require a narrator figure, not even an implied one, or monstration (as I have argued in the previous chapter, cf. Badman), or similar theoretical concepts that concern that which is depicted. In addition, narrators may still be present in the verbal mode of graphic narrative but only as part of a multimodal narrative unit. As such, I would like to rephrase the above quote by Bortolussi and Dixon, in order to prepare it for transmedial use, from "Readers treat their representation of the narrator much as they would a representation of a conversational participant" to: "Readers treat their representation of the text much as they would a representation of a conversational partner." To be sure, the implied conversational partner in this case seems quite abstract, but it is only slightly more abstract than an imaginary, faceless, shapeless narrator figure. Hence, if the text functions as a conversation partner and possesses the qualities stated above, what does that mean for readers? Readers must expect that texts come to them with some sort of potentiality for meaning ("intention"). A reader's knowledge, background, and perceptual capabilities, as they concern a text to be read, fall under the condition that the reader ought to engage with the text in a

manner that produces meaning. Readers may expect that an author has produced a text under the assumption that someone will read it; that the text has an author and historical, biographical, political, societal context; lastly, that the text may be decipherable. The conversational postulates by Grice only make sense, at least in the context of reading processes, in combination with conversational implicature. A text may fail to fulfil any of the postulates – a defining quality of great literature for many readers is the fact that it is ambiguous and that influential experimentation in literature is often obscure. This failure may result in two outcomes. Either, the reader stops reading and puts the book on the shelf, or, worst-case, in the bin; or, the reader starts wondering as they continue engaging with the text: Why does the text fail to fulfill these postulates? A text of this kind thus challenges readers to consider more complex meanings. Ambiguity (manner), seeming irrelevance (relation), unreliable narrators (quality), or gaps of important information (quantity) can thus lead to a deeper understanding of the "true" (i.e. individual to the reader) meaning of a text. The linguistic term *implicature* might translate into the more informal question: What is the text about, for me personally, as a reader?

Again, in order to answer this question, reading processes call out for measurement: Higher quantity and heterogeneity of measurements imply a more generalized impression of reading processes. Empirical methods for the cognitive study of literature fall into two categories: 1) Measuring affects of reading, more precisely: measuring perceptual and sensory/motor coordination processes while reading, and 2) Measuring effects of reading, more precisely: measuring mental representation and interpretation of reading (cf. for example Segal 4). This study is primarily concerned with the latter: mental representation of narratological categories and the interpretation of graphic narrative after the reading process. Fundamentally, the question is whether focalization as a narratological concept is sufficient to describe mental processes of readers who engage in reading graphic narratives that contain some kind of representational subjectivity. Affective methods of research, such as eyetracking experiments or EEG (electroencephalography) experiments, might yield similar results but are not the focus of this study. Segal also sets out a few main goals for the cognitive study of narrative, which are:

(a) Identifying the knowledge that a reader must bring to a text in order to understand it;

(b) Identifying the knowledge that a writer must bring to a text in order to have produced it;

(c) Describing the abstract structure of the knowledge needed for (a) and (b);

(d) Characterizing the processes by which a representation in memory is modified as a text is being read;

(e) Characterizing the processes by which a representation in memory is accessed as a text is being produced;

(f) Describing the new representations;

(g) Constructing a (computational) model of this process and representation;

(h) Showing that the model understands the text by having it pass a Turing test by answering questions about it. (4).

From this list of goals, the two experiments conducted for this study in chapter 4 fall under a) and d), with the theoretical framework on focalization in the previous chapter as a hypothetical "abstract structure." Following these two experiments, the terminological validation and survey of visual focalization in a graphic narrative corpus with an annotation system (chapter 5) falls under category f) and g) and will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

For the purposes of this chapter, embodiment is the final concept that is central to the cognitive study of literature. Embodiment assumes that the human body is the reference point of all linguistic expressions. Peter Stockwell gives us the following example: Humans chop trees down because they are higher than we are; but we lay them on the ground when we finished chopping; we chop wood up in order to make it useful and "good" for further processing, for example as firewood (cf. 4). Expressions of direction in language, idiomatic or otherwise, are connected to the human body: above is good, below is bad, a set of events is a journey i.e. something that one may traverse by foot. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980) pioneered embodiment in linguistics with the term *conceptual metaphor*. Conceptual metaphors permeate everyday language and shape the way we perceive things outside of our body – in that sense, language is an extension of body and mind. Lakoff and Johnson highlight numerous examples of how conceptual metaphors operate, from ontological metaphors ("THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT " as in "He cracked under pressure," 28) to structural metaphors ("IDEAS ARE MONEY" as in "Let me put in my two cents' worth," 48) to the omnipresent container metaphor. A container can contain myself, material objects, a substance, abstract concepts, experiential limits, etc., and it keeps these things from a certain "outside of the container." A container can thus be a house, a room, an argument, activities, one's own personal surroundings, and so on. The central argument in the idea of conceptual metaphor posits that the human body and its cognitive capabilities govern all of our perceptions, views, and ideologies; the body shapes the way the mind works (embodiment is thus in many ways the

antithesis to Cartesian dualism). Based on his conviction that literature is just as much communication as everyday conversation, Turner extends the conceptual metaphor to literary works. As an example, he states that "EVENTS ARE ACTIONS," i.e. narratives portray states as locations, such as Hades as a place of death (*The Literary Mind* 31). While this view, again, sets up cognitive studies to diminish the complexities of literature, the extension of embodiment to tropes of narrative opens up compelling lines of thought. For example, if mythical narratives represent certain states (such as death) as places, or realms, along with the fact that nearly every myth has its own variation (Hades, the Afterlife, Rebirth/Nirvana, Valhalla, Hell, etc.), then it makes sense to assume that these states-as-locations are important projections of everyday human life (or in this case, death). If these locations are necessary metaphors for narratives across all cultures, then they must tap into a basic human experience, and consequentially a basic human relationship with one's own body.

Conversation principles and embodiment theory are general concepts of the cognitive study of literature. A reader engages with a text as if it were a conversation partner and creates meaning out of it through conceptual metaphors and embodiment. The next step – at least for the purposes of focalization analysis – is to ask how, or if, readers are able to project their own embodied experiences on characters that reside within narratives. To that end, cognitive science has developed the Deictic Shift Theory and it has tested such issues as perspective-taking and subjectivity.

3.1.2 Focalization and Cognitive Science

The previous theory chapter has demonstrated how visual focalization extends traditional focalization concepts from the last few decades in narratology to graphic narrative. Similarly, focalization as a narratological category may extend to other fields of inquiry that analyze degrees of subjective representation in narrative. The term focalization as such is tied to narratology; cognitive scientists explore comparable phenomena under different names. Since cognition (and with it, psychology) mostly concerns itself with mental processes, the prevalent terms in cognitive discourse are: Deixis, subjectivity, and perspective-taking. As I have outlined in my first chapter, the term focalization has seen a gradual change from traditional structuralism to cognitive narratology. Therefore, it is not far-fetched to look further into cognitive science and bring together narratological discourse with cognitive science. Focalization and its implications are no foreigner to the cognitive study of narrative; terminology tied to concepts that I discuss below sometimes involve "focal WHO's," "focalizing WHO's," and "focal characters" (Rapaport et al. 4). I will first give an overview of Deictic Shift Theory and then move on to a number of studies that tested perspective-taking and subjectivity as cognitive meaning-making strategies.

Deictic Shift Theory (DST) deals with the ability of the reader to assume a *deictic center* and imagine perspectives within the storyworld; "The notion of the shifted deictic center is a major explanatory concept to account for the perception and creation of coherence across a literary text" (Herman, *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind* 46 f.). The deictic center (or *origo*) is the source in a text from which all points of reference emerge; a homodiegetic narrator, for example. From the deictic center, the *deictic field* emerges – it entails the surroundings of the deictic center, both temporal and spatial. Karl Bühler is a major contributor to the phenomenon of narrative deixis in his book *Sprachtheorie* (2011, English title *Theory of Language*). To Bühler, a deictic center is composed of three elements: temporal, spatial, and personal, thus forming now, here, and I (11). Bühler also identifies three modes of operation in the deictic field:

1. *ad oculos*: speaker's sensible environment, speaker points at "this;" receivers with the same sensible environment perceive speaker's indication;

2. *anaphora*: referring back to what was uttered before, deixis at discourse level;

3. *deixis at phantasma*: imagination via narration of absent places, things, and characters.

While narrative and literary context clearly evoke notions of the third mode, the other two are still present in narrative and readers use both to immerse themselves in narrative. In particular, oculos becomes interesting in the context of graphic narrative, since "viewing" narrative with the eyes is more of a metaphor when it comes to plain-text narrative but a very real (or at least less abstract) practice as it concerns graphic narrative. To Bühler, the imaginative shift is tied to bodily sensation: the ability of a receiver/reader to imagine the body not in the here/now/I but rather in the there/then/them; the construction of an origo (a deictic center) in a storyworld (cf. Galbraith 24). Again, embodiment plays an important role for the processing of narrative: Readers require an origo, a narrative anchor, in order to explore storyworlds. Turner emphasizes the importance of the origo as a specific entity in space and its implications for focalization: "Our sensory apparatus is located in space. We necessarily recognize a small spatial story from a particular spatial location. [. . .] To recognize a small spatial story – a baby shaking a rattle – is always to do so with a single focus and from a single viewpoint" (Turner, *The Literary Mind* 117). In more radical words: It is impossible to read a narrative without a particular viewpoint. This viewpoint might be as covert and non-individual as possible (external focalization) or as overt and individual as possible (internal focalization), with degrees in between. Still, graphic narrative makes it necessary to extend Turner's argument: Focalization in graphic narrative is two-fold, as it is feasible to have two (sometimes competing) modes of focalization

in the verbal and visual mode. If verbal foci and viewpoints of captions are different from visual foci and viewpoints in panels, then readers need to decode and combine two foci and viewpoints and place them in relation with each other.

Deictic shift may then occur on both narrative and reading level. If the narrative switches from one deictic center to another (for example, from the viewpoint of one character to another, or from a character to no character), the deictic shift occurs on a narrative level. In narratological terminology, this shift is easily explained by the framework in which focalization operates. There is no reason for a narrative to stick to one particular kind of focalization; changes may occur from chapter to chapter, from sentence to sentence, or even within a single sentence with no specific context (although it is certainly easier for readers to recognize such changes if the text provides context). The deictic shift at the reading level is more interesting for the cognitive study of focalization. According to DST, readers are capable of transferring their own deictic center to a fictitious deictic center in the narrative. Readers' "here, now, and I" becomes a "there, then, and you" as they read a text. We may call this process immersion in colloquial terms. By engaging in reading a certain text, readers transport their own cognitive frame of reference (their deictic field) to a frame of reference that they discover while reading. Immersion in a narrative is thus the transportation of one's own self into another self, represented in narrative. Herman calls the deictic shift towards a deictic center in fiction *push*, whereas he uses *pop* for moving away from that deictic center back to reality (*Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind* 47).

DST (and the assumption that readers are able to constitute deictic shifts without conscious effort) is a central concept for cognitive studies and focalization. DST shows clear connections to matters of subjectivity and perspective-taking. Whether or not readers use focalization as a cognitive meaning-making tool during reading seems to depend on whether they are able to organize fictional deictic fields and decode triggers of deictic shift while reading. How may narratives thus prompt deictic shifts in readers' minds? Readers need context in order to assume that narrative has shifted towards a subjective viewpoint and in order to assume the perspectives of fictional characters. I mentioned above that changes in focalization may occur on varying levels of magnitude in discourse and that readers decode subjectivity in narrative more readily when the narrative provides them with clues. Janyce M. Wiebe and William J. Rapaport comment on this requirement for deictic shift:

> Subjective sentences that are not marked as such, or that do not indicate who the subjective character is, usually appear in the midst of other subjective sentences attributed to the same subjective character. That is, once a clearly marked subjective sentence appears for which the subjective character can be determined, unmarked subjective sentences attributed to the

same subjective character often follow. Thus, to recognize subjective sentences in general, we need to consider subjectivity at the level of the discourse. For this reason, we extend the notions of subjective and objective sentences to the notions of subjective and objective contexts, which consist of one or more subjective sentences attributed to the same subjective character, or one or more objective sentences, respectively. (131)

Wiebe and Rapaport mention subjective and objective sentences, a distinction comparable to internal and external focalization. I would disagree that specific contexts need to be comprised of at least one sentence when change in subjectivity may easily occur in "less than one sentence," that is to say a change in subjectivity in the middle of a sentence. Their point still stands: Markers are necessary in order to decode degrees (or lack) of subjectivity. Interestingly, they assume that subjective markers exist as much as objective markers. A text should thus provide readers with clues as to whether a given point in the text filters narrative through some entity's viewpoint or filtered through some objective "viewpoint." I would like to hypothesize that narratorial strategies of subjectivity do not distinguish themselves via two competing sets of markers but by presence or absence of subjective markers. If a text contains markers that point towards subjectivity, readers might decode these markers as such; if no markers are present, readers might decode the narrative situation as lacking of subjectivity and therefore being an objective (in terms of focalization, an external) narrative situation. It remains to be seen in my later analytical chapters as to whether actual data can support this hypothesis.

A primarily cognitive construct, DST supports approaches towards focalization as being part of readers' mental capacities to immerse themselves into reading and, more specifically, assume fictional positions, empathize with particular characters (and develop apathy for others), and take over subjective viewpoints that are not actually their own. Cognitive science, and reader-response criticism before it, has done much to empower readers' positions as a meaning-making agent in the literary process. By activating the mental capacities that come with reading texts, literary analysis becomes less a discipline that explains the aesthetic, structural, historical, philosophical, etc., richness of a text to its audience but is more concerned with what individual readers do with that text. That is to say, literary studies, thus understood, is interested in what an audience reads into and draws from texts. A cognitive science approach to literary studies is therefore a somewhat radical approach, one that combines psychology and linguistics with empirical evidence in order to uncover the complex relationship between reader and text. As a methodological background for the study of literature, it is

thus rather removed from traditional hermeneutical practices and runs the risk of be-
ing criticized for its perceived self-reliant practice, a practice that disregards adjacent
approaches:

> An alternative view would suggest that the process of engaging in cogni-
> tive poetic analysis offers a raised awareness of certain patterns that might
> have been subconscious or not even noticed at all. Cognitive poetics in this
> perspective is more attractively radical, but its challenge is that it seems to
> suggest that some interpretations are only available to analysts who have a
> knowledge of cognitive poetics. This has the unfortunate consequence of
> implying that prior interpretations were faulty, and only cognitively aware
> analyses are valid. (Stockwell 7)

The aim towards which I would like to use cognitive science is not isolationist. In-
stead, a properly modelled cognitive concept of visual focalization in graphic narrative
should extend (and possibly amend) the existing, complex discourse on focalization in
narratology. Furthermore, the goal is to move from "Cognitive THEORY" to "COG-
NITIVE Theory," by which I mean to put into practice the empirical scrutiny that
such theories demand. Even the earliest concepts posited by Fish, Iser, Jauss, and
other reader response critics, lend themselves to statistical analysis; if the ideal reader
should behave according to theory, establishing a horizon of expectations, constantly
remodeling mental representations, and so on, it should be comparatively easy to in-
vestigate how close actual readers come to that ideal. To that end, it is imperative to
look at literature as a set of quantifiable items. Without features to put into numbers, it
is impossible to make any quantitative claims. Gross points out that

> [t]he sheer complexity of literary texts, the deliberate and programmatic
> use of ambiguity, the corresponding complexity of readers' responses, and
> the difficulty of factoring in individual, affective, and subjective reactions
> would seem to defy adequate representation within the narrowly defined
> scope of objective, quantifiable, testable data assembled by reading re-
> search so far. (Gross 282)

The gap that quantitative methods ought to fill here is one between the historical as-
sumption that literature is artistically ethereal – that literary analysis must not dissect
the elements of a text that together are said to form more than the sum of its parts –
and the central tenet of empirical analysis that data need to be reliable, falsifiable, and
accurate. If literature becomes the subject of such research, literary analysis needs very
carefully formulated variables that sufficiently describe literary features – all without
disregarding the most recent hermeneutic scholarship. It seems indeed impossible to

pursue empirical studies in literary analysis without some qualitative theoretical aspect as foundational theory; rather, such theories stand to benefit from empirical scrutiny. As concerns focalization, we have seen how a mostly structuralist conceptualization has percolated into cognitive reconfiguration. This study intends to contribute to the discourse in comparable fashion by moving established cognitive conceptualizations into empirical reconfigurations.

3.2 Empiricism, Statistical Analysis, and Focalization

This section will 1) reflect on a number of papers that have undertaken cognitive testing of subjectivity during the reading process and 2) introduce basic terminology of statistical testing that is relevant to the subsequent analysis. To reiterate: Bringing together empirical research methods and literary analysis is an interdisciplinary walk on a tightrope. Good empirical research should contain clearly defined variables, whereas literature is ambiguous and allows for gaps in its fabric (for example, violation of Grice's conversational maxims). In her review of Mark Turner's book *Reading Minds*, Sabine Gross touches on the danger that this method invites: "It is argued here that this imposition of cognitive discourse will in fact abolish or reduce the distinguishing features of literary discourse. In other words, tailoring the object of inquiry to the mode of inquiry entails refashioning the former in ways that fail to do it justice" (282). In fact, such an approach would fail both sides: literary discourse because it unduly simplifies the intricacies of literature, empirical science because "tailoring the object of inquiry to the mode of inquiry" is the inverse of how statistics work. Good empirical research makes assumptions based on observations. If these observations concern an intricate and contentious topic in literature (such as focalization), then it is up to the research to formulate the topic in such a way that it may suit experiments without betraying said intricacy and contention. To this end, I would like to present premonitory cognitive research on matters of subjectivity and narrative by two research groups. Both groups were mainly concerned with the fields of language, discourse, and psychology, and they evaluate their balance between cognitive science and narratology. In addition, both studies will reveal the point that Gross makes in the quote above as concerns the balance between cognitive discourse and literary discourse.

A research team around Daniel Morrow, Gordon Bower, Steven Greenspan, Mike Rinck et al. investigated situation models in three papers. They understand "situation model" as the mental representation of a storyworld. Readers update situation models with information that they gain during the reading process – which, so far, recalls Jauss' reader-response theory for the horizon of change. The authors hypothesize that readers focus on information which is relevant to the protagonist by implication even if said information is not made explicit in a sentence. Readers also focus more on the protagonist's mental than their spatial location within the storyworld. In their experiments, the authors handed out maps of a building to participants, which they memorized as best they could. The map contained information on certain items that were located in a room. They then read a short narrative of about twenty sentences about a protagonist who walks through the building, enters and exits specific rooms, and mentions details of these rooms and the protagonist's intentions throughout the

story. Researchers interrupted the reading at predetermined points in the narrative and asked about the location of specific items. In their 1987 paper, Morrow et al. showed that "the narrative Here/Now" (172, i.e. the deictic center) moves alongside the protagonist's position; that readers perceive distance in a storyworld from the viewpoint of the protagonist; that accessibility (i.e. the ability to recall details of the storyworld) is determined by narrative situations and not by recency of mention; and that accessibility is not only tied to the protagonist's location but also to their intention. Their 1989 study was comprised of a similar setup, but this time participants assessed the accessibility of objects in the room. Morrow et al. concluded from their data that readers access storyworld information (protagonist's location and objects in rooms) from the protagonist's perspective even if the narrative does not explicitly mention such information. They also found that participants can access information about the protagonist's location just as well as locations that are relevant to the protagonist's thoughts. This finding suggests that the relevance of information is not only tied to physical location but also to the internal representation of focalized characters. They concluded that "relevance is more important than mention for determining accessibility, at least for those narratives" (308). In the 1996 paper, Rinck et al. looked for the conditions that affect such accessibility. They found no difference in reaction times between participants who memorized the building's layout by reading a text and participants who memorized the layout by looking at a map. This result is especially interesting with regard to graphic narrative. An extension of these results might hypothesize that readers of graphic narratives have no advantage in constructing situation models based on both visual and verbal information in comparison to verbal information only.

Another set of papers by Tad T. Brunyé et al. observed complementary data, with a heavier focus on embodiment. Their experiments are based on evidence that suggests that "readers embody described actions while incorporating them into a developing model; that is, readers mentally simulate a story's perceptual and motoric elements" ("When you and I share perspectives" 27). In their 2009 paper, they conducted two experiments related to the use of pronouns in narrative. Participants read isolated sentences with a simple Subject-Verb-Direct Object syntax and then matched pictures to those sentences. The sentences used a variety of pronouns, and the pictures showed various angles of two arms who acted out the action in the sentence. The second experiment used a similar method but added contextual knowledge pertaining to the agents in the sentence, such as gender, occupation, age, etc. Brunyé et al. found that readers embody characters related to with the pronoun "I," whereas "he" related to an external perspective. Interestingly, the effect decreases if the text provides context for the protagonist in a text that uses first-person narration. In their 2011 study, a similar setup studied the effects of the pronoun "you." They found that readers' mental

representations of space and emotions are relatively vivid when the narrative that they read uses a second-person narrative perspective. Readers also develop emotional states congruent with emotions evoked in the narrative. The authors argue that this degree of absorption comes from readers imagining themselves as protagonists (at least for second-person narratives) and that one might extrapolate from these findings that readers are similarly skilled in adapting viewpoints as well as spatial, affective, and internal states of fictional protagonists. The 2012 paper describes an approach with a medium other than text. Participants watched a video of a virtual urban map; the camera was either first-person or a bird's-eye view. Participants navigated the map themselves by reaching previously specified points. The results showed that participants who were exposed to the bird's-eye view prior to navigating were much more effective at finding these points. In contrast, participants who were exposed to the first-person view were initially significantly less efficient at finding these points, but they gained a much more flexible knowledge of their virtual surroundings after a while. These results suggest that first-person view is only efficient if 1) participants traverse a storyworld themselves and at their leisure, and subsequently embody the first-person perspective – in opposition to viewing a first-person-perspective video that does not match their own experience; and 2) participants are given the opportunity to update their situation model of a storyworld (i.e. repeated exposure). In other words, a perspective that lacks any individual involvement in the storyworld (bird's-eye view) serves as summary or conceptual overview for readers but cannot move beyond a static perspective. Meanwhile, a perspective that puts readers on a relatable human level (embodiment) and an individual level (first-person) lacks overview but has potential for readers to develop storyworld knowledge and orientation.

These studies highlight how focalization plays into cognitive concepts such as situation models and embodiment. As I explained in the previous section, deixis and embodiment are models for how readers decode representations of subjectivity in narrative; focalization serves as the very same model for narratology. Morrow et al. and Rinck et al. show that reader involvement is tied to the establishment of a deictic center and a deictic field – readers need an anchor in the storyworld to immerse themselves into fiction. The research conducted by Brunyé et al. reveals the potency of first-person narration for subjectivity in narration and absorption of storyworld: Readers assume or embody positions in storyworlds that are sufficiently experiential in order to acquire and update high levels of knowledge about the storyworld. A deictic center at street level is more efficient at establishing subjectivity than a deictic center up in the sky, looking down. This observation recalls the "conceptual metaphor" proposition by Lakoff and Johnson and associated embodiment theory. Most importantly, Brunyé et al. also found that readers succeed at deictic shifts more readily when the fictional

character is a blank slate, an entity with just enough qualities to let readers identify with them, but without context (gender, age, background), which would remove them from being able to relate to them. Yet, there are problems with these studies as far as literary analysis is concerned. A glaring oversight from the viewpoint of a literary scholar seems to be that none of the studies used literature (in the narrow sense). Participants read a story that consisted of a small number of sentences and the researchers wrote the story themselves. What's more, the story was about a man wandering through a laboratory (possibly modeled after the researchers' laboratory). Surely, it would have posed a daunting feat to find a story by a literary author that fit their experiment design criteria – still, Gross' skepticism mentioned above comes to mind, specifically that "this imposition of cognitive discourse will in fact abolish or reduce the distinguishing features of literary discourse" (Gross 282). It might be that these studies succeeded in explaining the inner workings of the reading mind regarding situation models and embodiment from a cognitive perspective but failed to do so from the perspective of literary analysis. Research that strives to combine the two disciplines should also use established, canonical, or otherwise broadly accepted forms of literature (cognitive scientists would probably use a term such as "natural texts"). Furthermore, at least one of the experimental designs required researchers to interrupt participants while reading, which is not an ideal requirement if one is to survey reading habits. This problem goes back to the seeming gap between empirical research and literary analysis. It is imperative, if admittedly a difficult task, to keep the balance between both. Fully satisfying either is impossible – experimental conditions dictate an isolated environment with as few confounding variables as possible, whereas reading and interpretation require highly individual contexts such as reading habits, reading preferences, literacy, and so on. Keeping in mind that these papers were not written by literary scholars (nor did the authors have any literary agenda in mind), they confirm what Gross warned against – they disregard the distinguishing features of literary discourse.

3.2.1 Statistics Primer

This section surveys statistical methods and terminology in order to provide context for the experimental research presented in the chapters that follow. These concepts and values are imperative to statistical research but may not be familiar to traditional literary criticism. Therefore, it may be helpful to discuss them here briefly.[1]

Hypothesis and Null Hypothesis

As a crucial characteristic of statistical testing, the hypothesis should always have a null hypothesis. The null hypothesis (H_0) is the opposite of one's hypothesis. Being aware of the null hypothesis is important because statistical tests do not try to prove a hypothesis but to disprove the possibility that the opposite might be evident. For example, if one were to test whether "stress levels have an effect on work efficiency," then researchers should design their experiment in such a way that it disproves the statement "stress levels do not have an effect on work efficiency." It is a logical fallacy to assume that finding evidence for a hypothesis must make it sufficiently true; the assumption that the opposite of a hypothesis must be rejected (based on gathered data) builds a stronger case for the possibility that the hypothesis is sufficiently true. This standard practice becomes important for understanding p-value (see below).

Dependent Variable and Independent Variable

Hypotheses for most small-to-mid-scale tests may be broken down into the formula "x affects y." Researchers try to assess if manipulation of one phenomenon has any significant effect on another, fixed phenomenon. A dependent variable (DV) is the former, while an independent variable (IV) is the latter. In other words, researchers have no influence over the independent variable, but they do have influence over the dependent variable. In essence, the dependent variable is what researchers measure during testing, whereas the independent variable is a set of fixed parameters. It can sometimes seem confusing what kinds of data are what kinds of variables as nearly anything can be either – which is why it is important to arrive at a precise formulation of the hypothesis and null hypothesis. Numerous other, and more specific, types of variables exist. The two that are the most pertinent to a basic understanding of statistical testing

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[1] There is a multitude of literature on introductory statistics for every kind of discipline, be that psychology, sociology, or economics; the books used in preparation for this paper are Matthew Jockers' *Text Analysis with R for Students of Literature* (2014) and Stefan Thomas Gries' *Quantitative Corpus Linguistics with R* (2017). General introductions to statistics that I consulted prior to the experiments below are Adam Field's *How to Design and Report Experiments* (2013, in collaboration with Graham Hole), *Discovering Statistics Using R* (2013, in collaboration with Jeremy Miles and Zoë Field), and *An Adventure in Statistics: The Reality Enigma* (2016, in collaboration with James Iles), as well as *An Introduction to Statistical Learning: With Applications in R* (2017) by James Gareth et al. and *Introducing Statistics: A Graphic Guide* (2009) by Eileen Magnello and Borin Van Loon.

are: Control variable – a variable that needs constant controlling, i.e. a variable that, if changed, might affect either DV or IV; Confounding variable – a variable that does change the outcome of a test but was not accounted for, and therefore invalidates one's assumptions of relationship between DV and IV.

Correlation

The correlation coefficient r simply measures the relationship between two variables. Correlation answers questions such as: Does one variable increase its value if the other increases its value? The correlation coefficient can have a value between -1 and $+1$; $r = +1$ means perfect positive correlation, $r = -1$ means perfect negative correlation, $r = 0$ means no correlation at all. Values inbetween may be deemed "high degree of correlation" ($r = \pm 1$ to ± 0.5), "moderate degree of correlation" ($r = \pm 0.49$ to ± 0.30), or "low degree of correlation" ($r \pm 0.29$). Two safe examples of two variables with a high degree of positive correlation are 1) human population on Earth and amount of consumption of food; 2) alcohol intake and degree of intoxication. Two safe examples of two variables with a high degree of negative correlation are 1) degree of urban expansion in an area and amount of wildlife in that area; 2) temperature outside and cost of heating. It is important to note that the correlation coefficient is not in itself indicative of statistical significance (see below). Two variables may have a high degree of correlation but do not stand in any meaningful (or at least measurable) context at all. We know this phenomenon as "spurious correlation." Examples of spurious correlations include people who drowned after falling out of a fishing boat and the marriage rate in Kentucky ($r = +0.95$), or the per capita consumption of chicken and total US crude oil exports ($r = +0.89$) (these data are from Vigen). Still, a high degree of correlation points towards some potential significance that one may explore further by forming a hypothesis and by statistical testing.

Statistical Significance and p value

Statistical significance determines whether sets of data have a meaningful relationship with each other. It follows that if they do, and if that relationship appears as a factor in the hypothesis, that there is evidence to support the hypothesis. The influence of one set of data over another is called an *effect*. Standard statistical procedure does not test if the results show evidence for the hypothesis, as I mentioned above. A test reaches statistical significance when the results show that one must reject the null hypothesis. We come to that conclusion via two values, the significance level α and the probability value p. Typically, α is set to 5%, which means that there is a 5% probability that the null hypothesis must be rejected after testing. If calculation of the data shows that the p-value is at least 5% or below, then the null hypothesis must be rejected. Notation

of these values usually only consists of decimal places instead of percentages, for example, $p \leq .05$ instead of $p \leq 5\%$. Other common significance levels are $\alpha = .01$ (that is, 1%) and $\alpha = .001$.

Logit scale ratio

A ratio on a logarithmic scale, or logit scale ratio for short, presents data in a way that makes them easier to read. The values of the data are not changed – rather, the presentation emphasizes differences in value that are possibly significant. Possible patterns are easier to recognize on a logarithmic scale as the scale is compressed at higher values and expanded at lower values. In addition, a logarithmic scale makes it easier to assess proportional changes in value.

ANOVA and F value

An *Analysis of Variance* (in short, ANOVA) is a specific type of test to see whether data have statistical significance. In this test setup, the independent variable contains at least two different categories. An ANOVA observes whether these two (or more) groups are related to the dependent variable in a way that is meaningful, i.e. if one such category is related to a certain category or degree of the dependent variable and not related to other categories or degrees of the dependent variable. ANOVA tests can be either "one-way," with a single independent variable, or "two-way," with two independent variables to be tested. To give an example for a survey that would fit one-way ANOVA testing: If researchers want to evaluate level of education (school education, Bachelor/Master, PhD, Professor) and who their participants picked in recent elections, the independent variable would be the level of education (in this example, four categories), and the dependent variable would be the participants' choice.

A statistical measurement in specific relation to an ANOVA is F or the F value, which is a measurement of whether the dependent variable differs among a certain number of pre-determined groups. In other words, F represents the result of the ANOVA in numbers. A high F value points towards some significance in the data but does not lead to any meaningful conclusions without considering the p-value. In a test for statistical significance, it can also be helpful to analyze *marginal means* within each ANOVA group's data distribution. Marginal means are the means of the dependent variable of each respective group; visualizations of these marginal means also include the *standard deviation* (SD) of each mean, which shows how much the DV differs from the mean in that particular group. In a graph, these standard deviations are often visualized as lines that emerge on two sides (horizontally or vertically) from a mean point.

A two-way ANOVA might add other factors (age, gender, home state, etc.) to the level of education. Other common types of ANOVA include ANCOVA (Analysis of Covariance – testing for whether the population of DV across IV's categories is regressive, i.e. trending in some fashion) and MANOVA (an ANOVA with more than one dependent variable).

3.3   Corpus Analysis

Although not as pertinent to this paper as cognitive science and empirical research, corpus studies do play a vital role in the following chapters. Corpus analysis in the humanities has become closely tied to linguistics in the past decades; literary history had not concerned itself with establishing a corpus of literature until the emergence of the digital humanities. The following section will present a brief overview of how to construct corpora for literary analysis and what its benefits and challenges are in comparison to traditional qualitative analysis. I will then introduce the mini-corpus that I used for this paper, which I derived from the Graphic Novel Corpus (GNC), the first corpus for English-speaking long-form graphic narratives (Dunst et al.).

3.3.1   Corpus Analysis in the Humanities

Contrasting traditional literary analysis, corpus analysis focuses on "distant reading" instead of "close reading." Rather than analyzing a single text, a corpus enables researchers to search for effects over a large quantity of texts. In practice, insights from corpus analysis should give evidence of a particular phenomenon over an array of texts that humans would not be able to assess by themselves. With that in mind, corpus analysis for the study of literature would ideally enable research to move between the two reading modes. A purposeful movement between distant and close reading not only reveals effects over a large quantity of texts but makes such effects insightful for the study of individual literary works. Corpus linguistics characterizes corpus-based analysis as: 1) empirical, searching for patterns in texts; 2) utilizing a "large and principled" collection of texts; 3) making use of computers for analyses and for both automatic and interactive techniques; 4) depending on both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques (Biber et al. 5). A "large and principled" collection of texts is certainly dependent on intent and personal opinion of a researcher, but the point stands that a corpus should generally consist of enough texts and items to warrant computational analysis. A corpus should be "representative," that is to say; a corpus should represent a phenomenon holistically. As easy as that sounds, achieving (or even measuring) representativeness of corpora is a complex issue that is rarely resolved (cf. McEnery and Hardie 10). Elena Tognini Bonelli (20-24) lists several types of corpora:

- sample corpora: a collection of texts from a fixed point or short interval in time

- corpora for comparison: two or more corpora that are based on the same design criteria and are of similar size

- special corpora: corpora with narrow criteria, such as a corpus that consists solely of texts of a single orator

- corpora along the time dimension: a collection of texts over longer intervals in time, either from an interval in the past ("diachronic corpora") or beginning in the past and ongoing ("monitor corpora")

- bilingual and multilingual corpora

A corpus that collects literary texts (and specifically, graphic narrative) can fall under any of these categories. As regards a corpus' purpose, two schools exist: A corpus-based approach aims to answer a specific research question, whereas a corpus-driven approach is explorative and searches for patterns without prior formulation of a research question (9 f.). Corpus studies in literature have a rich pool of methods to tap into from corpus linguistics. Standard methods of analysis include: KWIC (keyword in context), a method that shows contextual surroundings of a keyword, which makes possible word use comparisons; searching for collocates, which is a search query of a string of at least two words in order to find out whether words appear together more often than stochastics would predict (a standard practice in construction grammar); n-grams, which show the frequency of a (string of) word(s) across a corpus – more specifically, unigrams indicate frequency and variation, bigrams indicate collocation, and tri/fourgrams indicate lexical bundles or prefabs; POS (part of speech) tags, which allow perusing the frequency and location of only nouns, only verbs, only adjectives, et cetera.

This list of analytic methods exposes a challenge for analyses of literary corpora – analysis rarely goes beyond the scale of short phrases. What seems a roadblock for cognitive science as much as for empirical research also affects corpus analysis; the richness and complexity of literature does not end at the level of single words or even sentences. If narratological inquiries into literary corpora wish to have any merit, categories will require a priori definition as well as a test for reliability, validity, and objectivity. Qualitative theory requires reformulation in empirical hypotheses. In ways that are similar to POS tagging, narratologically relevant structures may occur at the word-level, sentence-level, or beyond, and ought to be tagged as such. The same goes for graphic narrative, where we may observe these phenomena at the panel level, the page level, or beyond.

A well-known example that highlights the potential, but also limitations, of literary corpus analysis is Franco Moretti's essay "Style, Inc. Reflections on Seven Thousand Titles (British Novels, 1740–1850)" (2013). Rather than focusing on techniques such as counting the most frequent words (another standard practice in corpus studies) in a text, Moretti focuses on meta- and paratextual data. He compares the median and

mean lengths of titles, the number of publications per year, and the syntax of titles. For instance, *The x of y* proved to be a popular choice for Gothic novels at the time (207 f.), as well as article and noun constructions for exotic characters such as *The Fakeer*, *The Vampyr*, *The Sabbath-Breaker*, and so on (195). Observing these data reveals trends, which Moretti interprets through the lens of literary history. For example, title lengths decrease more and more across the century, which he explains as the effect of a book market that slowly starts to realize the marketability of genres, genres that easily reveal themselves to potential readers by a short and concise title (207). In another instance, he describes what amounts to deixis in narrative, only on a more evolutionary level of tropes in contemporary literature:

> the simplest way to alert the reader's attention is—articles: the definite article announcing a noun as something that we already know (thus directing our attention backwards); and the indefinite suggesting the opposite: Take heed, here comes something that you haven't encountered yet. The first time the wolf appears in *Little Red Riding Hood* it is 'a' wolf; afterwards, 'the' wolf, forever. So: *A Girton Girl*, *A Hard Woman*, *A Mummer's Wife*, *A Domestic Experiment*. (205 f.)

His argument here is that women slowly assume center stage in literature at that point in history; they turn from passive secondary characters to emancipated agents of their own stories. A new trend at the time; and an emerging trope, or (deictic!) antecedent, that, in Moretti's interpretation, readers eased into more readily with the indefinite article.

Moretti draws conclusions from the available data in his corpus, but these conclusions are informed by historical knowledge of the literary and societal state at that point in time. In other words, interpretations of the data require some familiarity with the subject. This lesson from Moretti's paper applies to all of corpus analysis in general, and to corpus analysis for the purposes of narratology in particular. Empirical data bring little value to the discourse without knowledge of that discourse, as David Herman points out: "Past a certain threshold, the formulation and refinement of narratological taxonomies in the absence of empirical, quantitatively based testing may prove to be empty. But the empirical study of stories without qualitatively anchored – phenomenologically grounded – investigative hypotheses is blind" ("Quantitative Methods in Narratology" 146). The same holds true for the narratology of graphic narrative. In my section on focalization in graphic narrative, I showed that the concept of multimodal focalization in multimodal narrative is relatively recent. Visual focalization in graphic narrative does not have the same history as focalization in literature, much less as a cognitive concept. Similarly, graphic narrative corpora have only become of interest to researchers in recent years, who are now beginning to chart graphic

narratives across the world – two current examples are the Japanese "Manga109" corpus by Azuma Fujimoto et al. ("Manga109 Dataset and Creation of Metadata," 2016) and the US "What Were Comics" corpus project by Bart Beaty et al. ("Two Per Cent of What?" 2018). In the following section, I will introduce the Graphic Narrative Corpus and my sample of nine graphic narratives from that corpus for my quantitative analyses.

3.3.2   Graphic Narrative Corpus: Annotation and Samples

"The Graphic Narrative Corpus (GNC)" (2017) by Alexander Dunst et al. is a growing corpus of over (at the time of this writing) 200 graphic narratives, an equivalent of over 40,000 pages, of at least 64 pages in length, aimed at adults, that tell one continuous story. The corpus was sampled using both academic and non-academic resources such as library collections, databases, annual comics awards, bestseller lists, and news coverage. The GNC is therefore a corpus-driven sample of graphic novels covering a timeframe from its rising popularity in the 1970s to today. Samples are also not randomized since popularity among readers played a large role in GNC's creation. The GNC sample is hence a reflection of readers' and critics' preferences – for example, almost a third (31.9%) of the corpus belongs to the graphic fantasy genre (which includes superhero comics). GNC texts are digitized and subsequently annotated in XML via the graphic user-interface editor "Multimodal Markup-Editor," which utilizes Graphic Novel Markup Language (GNML), an extension of John A. Walsh's Comic Book Markup Language (CBML) (2012). Annotation of digital files is partly automated (such as locating panels, speech bubbles, or captions) and partly manual. The annotation of narratological categories falls under the latter category.

The results of my subsequent data analysis may contribute to the establishment of semi-automatic annotation for visual focalization if these data show a significant relationship between visual focalization typology and visual representations on the comic book page. I will return to questions of annotation schemata in chapter 5, "Focalization and Annotation." At first, it is necessary to find empirical evidence for visual focalization as an adequate descriptor of mental representations in the minds of readers during and after the reading process. Categorization and operationalization of visual focalization as a cognitive concept and as a quantifiable corpus feature must conform to readers' cognition, not vice versa. For that reason, a preliminary survey of visual focalization as a cognitive concept precedes the study of focalization across the GNC. Additionally, the manual annotation of over 200 book-length graphic narratives is a daunting and laborious task for annotators – for that reason, I selected a sample of texts from the GNC and established a group of annotators to work on that sample in

order to estimate in what way visual focalization might play out across the entire corpus. Finally, to assess the reliability of mark-up, some of these texts were annotated by independent groups. I will return to the specifics of the annotation process and data analysis in chapter 5, "Focalization and Annotation." The sample texts are:

- *From Hell* (Alan Moore, Eddie Campbell);

- *Batman: The Killing Joke* (Alan Moore, Brian Bolland);

- *Watchmen* (Alan Moore, Dave S. Gibbons);

- *Gemma Bovery* (Posy Simmonds);

- *City of Glass* (David Mazzuchelli, Paul Karasik, based on the novel by Paul Auster)

- *Maus* (Art Spiegelman);

- *Persepolis* (Marjane Satrapi);

- *Jimmy Corrigan* (Chris Ware);

- *Signal to Noise* (Neil Gaiman, Dave McKean).

To anticipate one major point of criticism, I selected these texts on purpose rather than randomly. They represent popular literary texts that have been studied by academics and were well-received by critics. The choice to select these nine comics in particular was made for two reasons. First, their selection serves as a "stress test" for visual focalization as a cognitive concept. Each of these comics contains complex narrative situations and intricate variations on subjectivity and has been analyzed as such in comics studies. Their popularity also adds the benefit that I will be able to refer to select papers throughout my data interpretation for every graphic novel and compare my data analysis to those papers. If a close reading exercise of these narratives concludes that their use of focalization is diverse and creative, a quantitative survey on focalization should plausibly come to similar results. The second reason is pragmaticism: Participants were required to read these comics as part of a course on graphic narrative. Selecting random entries from the GNC could have potentially jeopardized important insights into narrative theory and might eventually have brought the study to a halt due to less variety of focalization in the samples. Nevertheless, the argument still stands that this sample may show how focalization can add to literary corpus analysis on a grander scale – and gesture towards the quantitative analysis of narratology.

3.4 Empirical and Quantitative Approaches: Concluding Remarks

Empiricism's entry into literary analysis faces two major points of contention – that results of quantitative studies in literature only come to trivial conclusions and that the humanities already know what these results show. Sabine Gross reacts to the first objection:

> [A]s a researcher and teacher of literature, I devised and conducted an experiment that presented readers with several short poems and monitored and recorded their eye movements during reading in order to analyze their comprehension and response to one type of literary text [. . .] This experiment would have been impossible without the generous help of a colleague in cognitive psychology, who offered the use of her laboratory and equipment and helped me to set up the experiment. I was delighted with the "hard data" that took me considerably beyond mere speculation and the reliance on fictitious "model readers" that are the rule in reader-response theory, but my collaborator, though intrigued by what I had done, seemed vaguely uneasy. The reason, it turned out, was the scope of my experiment and the theoretical assumptions for which I was collecting evidence, which for her manifested an unacceptable degree of speculation. One day she blurted out: "You know, what you are testing is so intangible; we [i.e., cognitive psychologists] spend months working on a single sentence, testing and verifying a hypothesis; and here you go with a theory about how entire texts are read!" (Gross 281n7)

The punchline to her and her colleague's story: Empirical evidence moves at a much slower pace than literary theory. Hypotheses of statistical testing are not highly specialized because of some unreasonable need for pedantry; they need such a design to bear scrutiny (such as replication of the experiment). In light of this study's intent, it might seem trivial to traditional literary analysis to find out whether readers make a distinction in their minds between internal and external focalization and how they select the two while reading. From a statistical perspective, however, the implications are anything but trivial. They would show that readers' cognitive capabilities of deictic shift are congruent with the focalization concept as discussed in narratology; that cognition psychology and literary theory have evidently come to a similar conclusion about a part of the human mind and a part of the process of reading stories (which, to reiterate Turner, is an essential part of human thought; cf. *The Literary Mind* 12). To that end, cognitive science, empiricism, and corpus analysis do not challenge hermeneutics, but

(just as readers should learn from focalization techniques in narrative) add another viewpoint to complex issues. The second point of criticism reveals a long-standing hubris of humanities disciplines. In a best-case-scenario, empirical research will of course reveal or expand on what literary scholarship "already knew." Yet, to know of a thing and to have evidence of a thing is the difference between belief and fact:

> Great chance, great challenge (what will knowledge indeed mean, if our archive becomes ten times larger, or a hundred), which calls for a maximum of methodological boldness: since no one knows what knowledge will mean in literary studies ten years from now, our best chance lies in the radical diversity of intellectual positions, and in their completely candid, outspoken competition. Anarchy. (Moretti 89)

Chapter 4

Visual Focalization: Two Empirical Experiments

In my chapter on focalization as a narratological term, I reviewed focalization and its development over time from structuralism to diverse understandings in both cognitive and transmedial narrative theory. While the term has become standard reference for discussions about subjectivity in narrative, it seems difficult to agree on an interpretation of focalization which unifies the many diverse opinions of the past decades. Additionally, focalization in the visual mode of narrative competes against other terminology that seeks a broader scope throughout all media; Thon's "subjective representation" comes to mind, a term he outlines in *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture* and which I have discussed in chapter 2.3.3. An experimental-cognitive study of visual focalization in graphic narrative must thus consider two problems: 1) Which theoretical models should frame an experiment? 2) Is the concept of focalization as cognitive strategy useful for the narratological study of comics? I have reviewed the first question in my chapter on the theory behind focalization and came to the conclusion that the discourse about focalization broadly distinguishes between (at least) external and internal focalization. Thus, the two studies in this chapter attempt to answer the second question by investigating this understanding of focalization, internal versus external focalization, and present data to support evidence for these two types of focalization as a meaning-making process in a reader's cognitive engagement with the text. Of course the substantial amount of opinions on the concept behind focalization invites numerous other investigations, but they will not be the focus of these two studies for reasons I have explained in my methodology chapter: In order to yield results that are as reliable and valid as possible, the experimental design ought to exclude other variables. For example, Bal's separation of perceptibles and non-perceptibles, while fascinating to examine in light of graphic narrative's various methods of subjective representation, were not the center of attention in these studies – although it is possible to draw conclusions on both in the context of the studies' results. Essentially, to account for focalization as a sufficient descriptor for cognitive processes means to

exclude more complex typology at first in order to a) avoid possible confounding variables; and b) settle on verifying one, more wide-ranging hypothesis first before we inquire about more granular details.

With that in mind, the first study presents an answer to the question whether there is any empirical evidence to suggest that visual focalization is a useful category for describing readers' cognitive strategies while reading comics; the second study presents further investigations into insights gathered from the first study.

4.1 Experiment I: Visual Focalization as a Cognitive Concept

4.1.1 Experiment Preparation

This study was mainly conducted to determine if the concept of visual focalization has any merit as far as readers' cognitive processes are concerned. A simplified division of focalization into external and internal focalization made it possible to conduct this preliminary study and to avoid confusion among participants who might not be familiar with a highly theoretical, narratological concept. As such, if we follow Mieke Bal's understanding of focalization, we once again encounter the problem other narratologists have pointed out: Who is the focalizing agent in the agens-patiens relationship; who is the "focalizer" of the "focalized?" In the framework of this study, the answers to these questions are up to the actual readers. Even though visual focalization can, in some way, filter narrative a priori through the subjectivity of some fictional story entity, readers must discover this "subjective filter" strategy and use it to advance their understanding of the narrative. In other words, if there is no empirical evidence that readers of graphic narratives detect strategies of visual focalization (and afterward use them to update their cognitive schemata), then the concept of visual focalization is of little use to experimental narratology, however obvious its existence might be in a comic's narrative structure. It is precisely this relationship between reader as creator of meaning and text as potential that may seem misguided to traditional literary theory (where any meaningful structure is always *inside* the text) and which I hope to provide evidence for with the empirical data in the following.

I based panel semantics in this study on two sets of categorizations established in N. Cohn et al., "Framing Attention in Japanese and American Comics." The authors' paper presents evidence that the direction of attention in single panels can vary depending on cultural background. The paper's two categorization systems are based on cognitive psychology and film theory, respectively. One system focuses on the agency

of a figure or entity within a panel, or what they call an "attention unit." This approach divides the constituents of an attention unit into active entities and inactive entities, which results in four types of attentional categories:

1. Macro (depicts multiple active entities)

2. Mono (depicts a single active entity)

3. Micro (depicts less than one active entity)

4. Amorphic (depicts no active entity)

The other system borrows filmmaking terminology for framing a figure in relation to the background, which results in five types of "shot":

1. Long shot (background dominates, but figure(s) still visible)

2. Full shot (frames entire figure's body)

3. Medium shot (frames part of figure's body, usually from knees or waist up)

4. Close shot (frames specific part and surroundings of figure)

5. Close up shot (frames only a specific part of figure, e.g. head, hand, shoes)

With these types in mind, it is rather easy to organize most panels into groups. There is an overlap to some degree between both sets of categorization, but I used both in order to compare possible differences in effects for visual focalization. Even though they overlap, both sets are difficult to compare, as one focuses on the agency of a specific entity (necessitating "amorphic panels") and the other focuses on perspectival relation between focal entity and background. Figure 4.1 shows an overview of both sets with examples and similarities.

In addition, I grouped panels according to formal features that I suspected to be possible markers which communicate a change in focalization. These formal features are:

- Is the protagonist visible in the panel?

- Does the panel depict a detail of the protagonist?

- Does the panel contain a caption?

- Is there a change in lettering?

- Is the panel part of a regular panel grid (in which all panels are the same size)?

Attentional Categories (cognition)

| Macro: >1 active entities | Mono: 1 active entity | Micro: <1 active entity | Amorphic: 0 active entities |
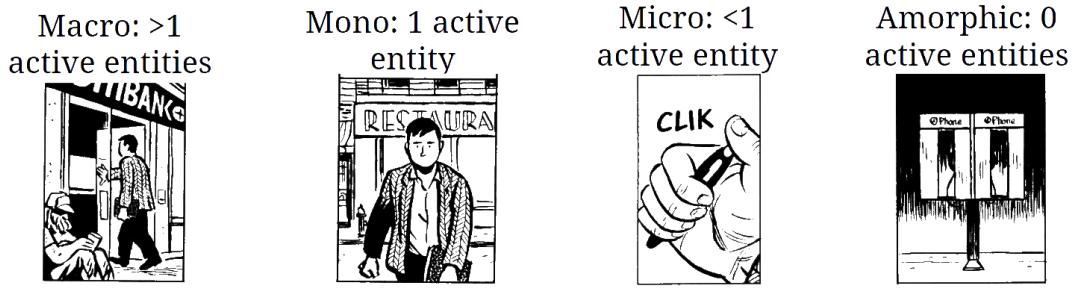
Film Shot Type (film theory)

| long shot | full shot | medium shot | close shot | close up shot |
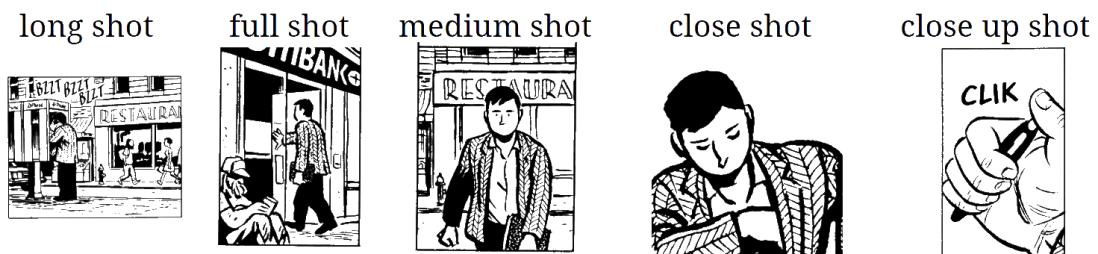
FIGURE 4.1: Attentional Categories and Film Shot Types.

- Is the panel part of a series of related perspectives (e.g. zooming in, splitting up one perspective into several panels)?

Having determined specific characteristics of visual focalization and a number of visual variables within the panel, the hypothesis of this study is twofold:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): *Readers tend to assign external focalization to certain panels and internal focalization to other panels during the reading process.*

Hypothesis 2 (H2): *These panels have distinct formal features that are mutually exclusive to either external focalization or internal focalization.*

4.1.2 Method

4.1.2.1 Design and Material

This study has a within-subjects design; participants were all in the same group and all fulfilled the same tasks.[1] The material used for this study is an excerpt from the graphic novel *City of Glass* by Mazzuchelli et al., specifically pages 101-109 in unedited form

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[1] A within-subjects study asks a single group of participants a large number of items. The opposite would be a between-subjects study, which asks several groups a (usually) smaller number of items. As the present hypothesis focuses on focalization assessment without regarding participants' characteristics (for example, according to reading behavior, age, or educational degree), a within-subjects study seemed the more fitting approach.
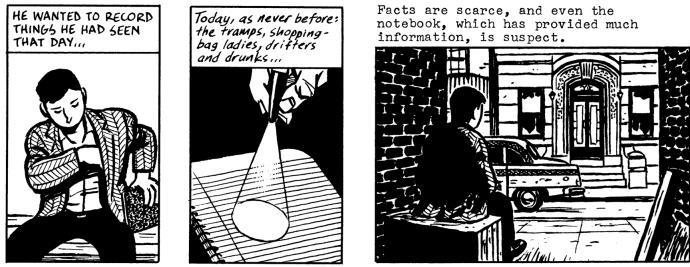
FIGURE 4.2: Three different types of lettering in *City of Glass*.

FIGURE 4.3: Two different drawing styles in *City of Glass*.

and arranged so that copies resemble the original graphic novel format as closely as possible. These nine pages have 58 panels in total and a summary of previous events attached to them so as to ensure that participants have a basic understanding of the plot before reading the excerpt.

These pages were chosen because they show a variety of visual features that are potentially relevant to visual focalization. Across nine pages, there are three different styles of lettering (figure 4.2; 51 panels with captions, of which 27 have standard lettering, 20 have handwritten diary lettering, and four have typewriter lettering), one change in drawing style (figure 4.3), one instance of a page with a regular 3×3 panel grid, two instances of a series of panels with a zoom-in on a particular object (figure 4.4), and one instance of a series of panels with one continuous perspective (figure 4.5). In addition, the excerpt contains six panels with details of protagonist Quinn and eighteen panels showing Quinn in general. The excerpt also follows protagonist Daniel Quinn and no other character that is essential to the plot, which limits possible occurrences of internal focalization to one character. This focus on one possible contender for internal focalization further simplifies the internal/external dichotomy discussed above.

Classifying every panel according to attentional categories and film shots reveals the following numbers (figure 4.6): seven macro panels, 32 mono panels, six micro panels, 13 amorphic panels; 21 long shots, ten full shots, six medium shots, four close shots, 17 close-ups. Distribution of attentional categories is lopsided with mono panels
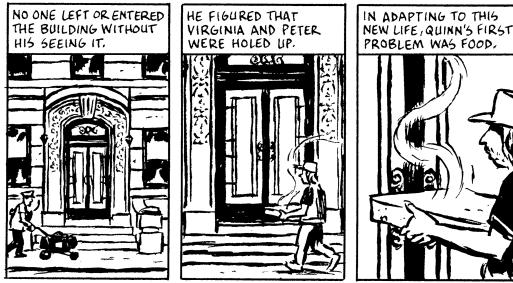
FIGURE 4.4: Zoom-in across three consecutive panels in *City of Glass*.
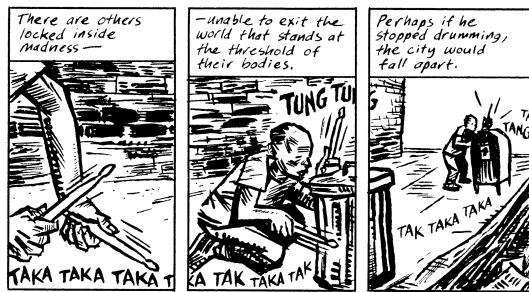
FIGURE 4.5: Series of three panels with one continuous perspective in
City of Glass.

as the most represented category. This lopsidedness is partly due to the protagonist-centric episode in the excerpt; many panels focus on a certain action (or notable lack thereof) by Quinn. Film shot types are slightly more evenly spread, although long shots and close-ups are much more present than other shots. As mentioned above, both sets are difficult to compare, because they differ in their approach. Although one would assume that mono panels are similar to close shots and close-ups, factors such as agency and perspectival relation can differ wildly in a single panel. For example, one page in the excerpt has three panels showing an orange in various states of being peeled; these panels are amorphic panels in the attentional category set, but close-ups in the film shot set. For this reason, this study tests for effects on both sets of categories.

Having established the datasets, the independent variables are data for each panel based on the two sets of categories by N. Cohn et al. in addition to my own contextual markers. The dependent variable is participants' cumulative assessment of individual panels.

4.1.2.2 Participants

The study was conducted after a lecture with 92 students of English and American Literature. They were aged 19 to 35 with a median age of 23 years; 66 participants identified as female, 25 identified as male; one participant identified as neither. With the exception of a single student, no participant had read either the novel *City of Glass*
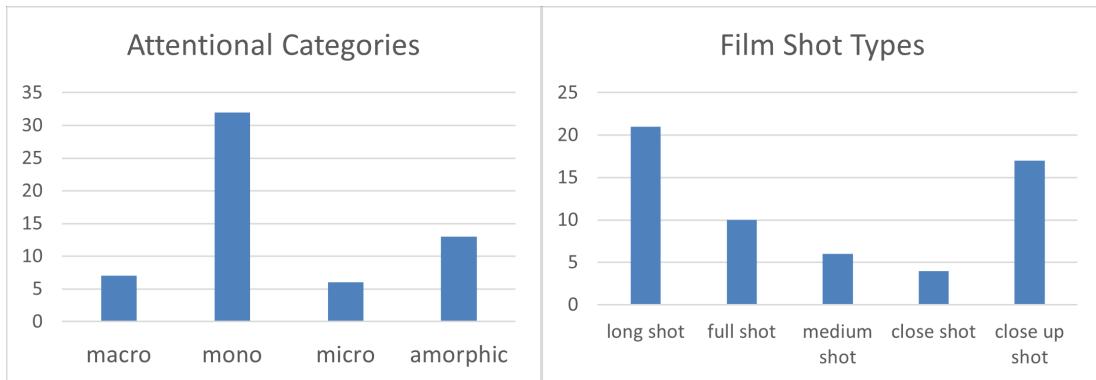
FIGURE 4.6: Distribution of Attentional Categories and Film Shot Types.
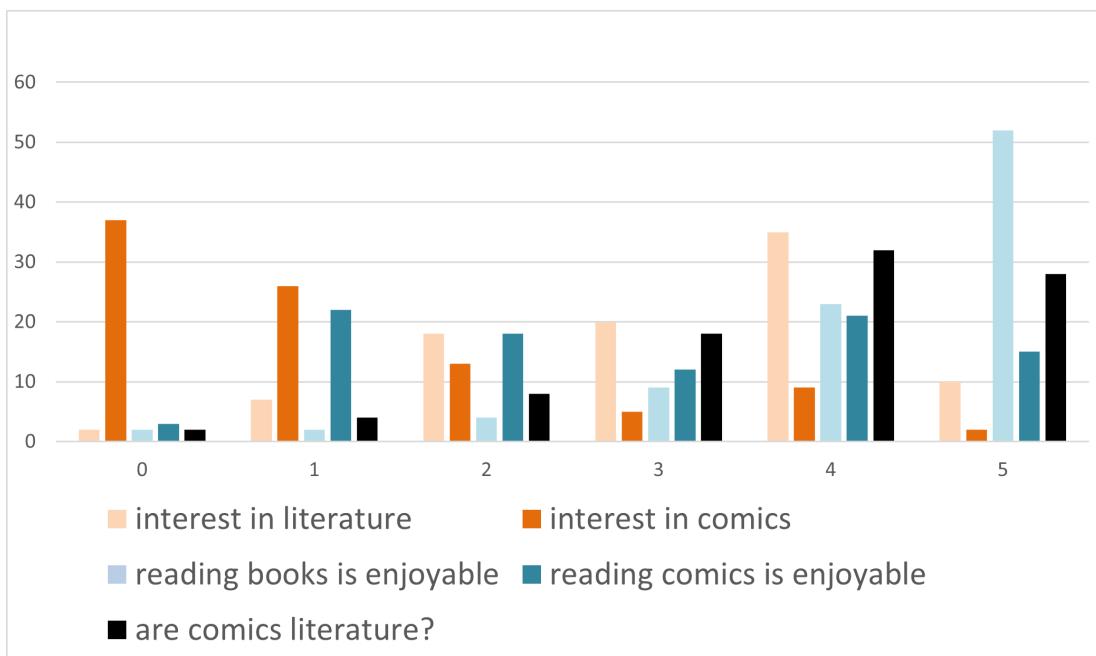
FIGURE 4.7: Participants Reading Habits Overview.

nor its comic adaptation. Participants also assessed their general interest in both literature in general and in comics specifically on a scale from 0 (very uninterested) to 5 (very interested). This assessment shows that the group has a generally moderate interest in literature (mean 3.18, median 3) and general disinterest in comics (mean 1.23, median 1). However, upon being asked whether they think that comics are a form of literature, participants generally agreed with the statement (mean 3.72, median 4) and that reading both literature in general and comics specifically are enjoyable activities (literature: mean 4.23, median 4; comics: mean, 2.78, median 3).

4.1.2.3 Procedure

Participants received a printed questionnaire that explained the experiment they were about to take part in. The questionnaire also gave a summary of the comic's plot. The participants were then asked to read the nine-page excerpt of the comic and to return to previous pages as they saw fit. Afterwards, they were asked to complete three tasks:

Task 1: Please draw a circle around ten panels that could be from the point of view of an individual character.

Task 2: Please draw a large X in ten panels that could not possibly be from the point of view of an individual character.

Task 3: Where would you place the style of this comic on a scale from "very abstract" to "very realistic"? (scale from 1 to 7)

The fact that tasks 1 and 2 equate point of view with focalization may be debatable from a narratological standpoint. However, the study was designed to be as accessible as possible. As I mentioned earlier, focalization as a narratological concept has been a point of contention and several scholars have described it by using point of view as a surrogate term (see, for example: Genette, *Narrative Discourse*; Herman, "Beyond Voice and Vision"; Mikkonen, "Graphic Narratives as a Challenge to Transmedial Narratology"). The choice to use one term instead of the other was a compromise of accessibility over terminological precision – the results clearly indicate that "point of view" is indeed a reasonable substitute for "focalization" in a number of ways. Task 3 is of negligible relevance for this study and part of another long-term study across several graphic narratives.

44 participants assessed every task correctly and marked 20 out of the 58 panels accordingly. 48 participants responded with either too few or too many panel choices on either task 1 or task 2. If participants chose too many panels, every chosen panel of each respective participant was weighed as if they had chosen ten; this calculation ensured use of their assessments without skewing statistics too much (towards their assessment and away from participants who only chose ten for each task). For the same reason, participants' choices were added without weighing if they chose less than ten panels for a task. For example, a participant who chose exactly ten panels for a task added the value 1 to each of the ten panels they chose. A participant who chose sixteen panels for a task added the value $10 \div 16 = 0.625$ to each of the sixteen panels that they chose. A participant who chose five panels for a task added the value 1 to each of the five panels they chose. Said values were added up for every panel. The sums for task 1 and task 2 were put in a ratio and scaled to their natural logarithm, which resulted in a value for each panel that represented participants' cumulative assessment

of each panel's visual focalization. This logarithmic scale reveals a tendency towards external focalization if the value is negative and towards internal focalization if the value is positive.

4.1.3 Results

The hypothesis of this study was to find out if readers tend to assign external focalization to certain panels and internal focalization to other panels during the reading process and if these panels are characterized by distinct formal features that are exclusive to either external focalization or internal focalization.

External/Internal Focalization Ratio

A first look at raw assessment data of all participants seems to confirm that certain panels trend more towards external focalization than internal focalization and vice versa. All 58 panels were selected at least once for each category. A boxplot diagram of all 58 logit ratios (figure 4.8) reveals that the quartile for external focalization ranges from -1.3 to -0.4 and the quartile for internal focalization ranges from 0.37 to 1.39, with one external focalization outlier (-2.28) and two internal focalization outliers ($1.77, 1.86$). A selection of panels with the most extreme external/internal ratio can be found in figure 4.9. Figure 4.10 presents a scatterplot graph showing all sums for all panels and a trendline that depicts logit scale ratios. All 58 panels are distributed across the x-axis. Peaks > 0 (above the x-axis) represent panels trending strongly towards internal focalization, whereas peaks < 0 (below the x-axis) represent panels trending strongly towards external focalization.[2] Linear regression of internal focalization sum values and external focalization sum values shows significant distribution effects ($t = 4.458, p < .001$). Therefore, we can assume that participants did not select panels for either task at random but made deliberate choices based on visual input and/or narrative comprehension.
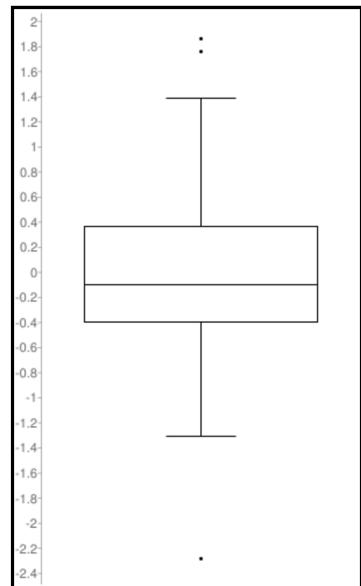
FIGURE 4.8: Visual Focalization Assessment Boxplot

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[2]Changing participants' assessment ratios into logarithmic values is merely done to simplify discussion and visualization. That does not change the values' relationship, only their scale.

| External Visual Focalization | | | | |
| Logit scale ratio: | −2.28 | −1.3 | −0.78 | −0.74 |

| Internal Visual Focalization | | | | |
| Logit scale ratio: | 1.86 | 1.77 | 1.21 | 1.39 | 1.01 |
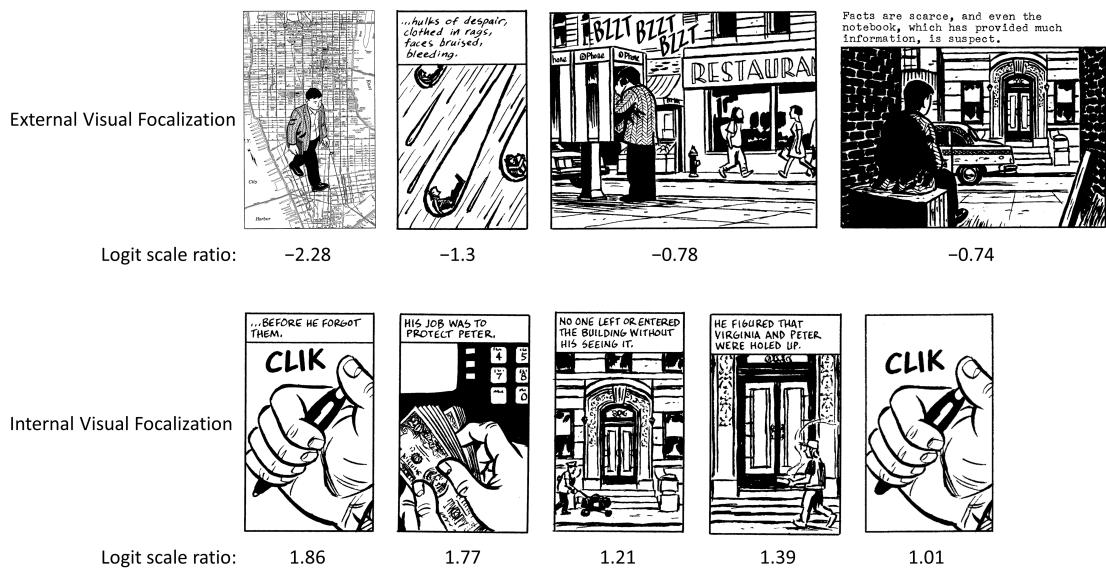
FIGURE 4.9: Visual Focalization Assessment Outliers and Extremes.
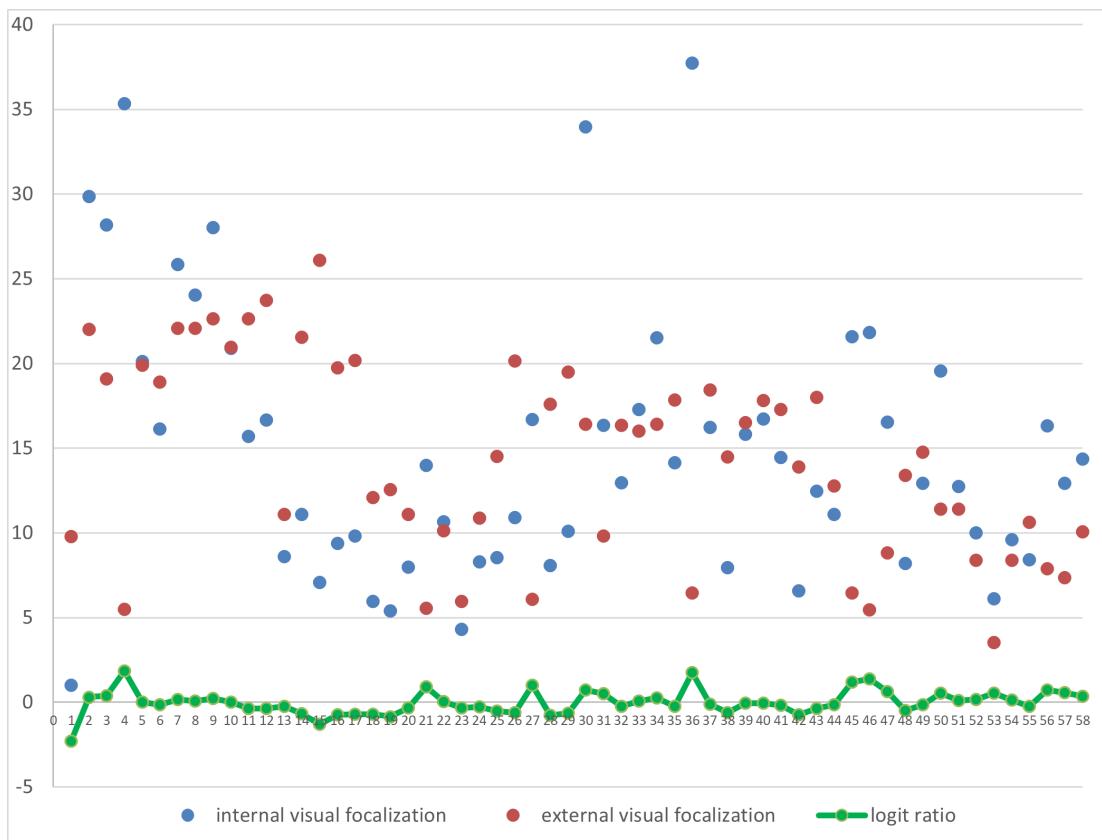
FIGURE 4.10: Visual Focalization Assessment Outliers and Extremes.

Attentional Categories

An ANOVA test of attentional category and logit ratios found main effects for attentional categories ($F = 6.984$, $p < .001$). An analysis of marginal means for each attentional category shows that means for both macro and micro panels are significant (macro: $t = -2.587$, $p = 0.012$; micro: $t = 3.607$, $p < .001$), whereas means for amorphic panels and mono panels are not (amorphic: $t = 0.607$, $p = 0.546$; mono: $t = -0.953$; $p = .0345$). The same tests for isolated internal/external focalization assessment sums yield quite different results. Testing for internal focalization revealed a main effect for attentional categories ($F = 9.058$, $p < .001$) and significant marginal means across all categories (amorphic: $t = 6.952$, $p < .001$; macro: $t = 3.398$, $p = .001$; micro: $t = 9.905$, $p < .001$; mono: $t = 12.711$, $p < .001$). Testing for external focalization revealed no significance for attentional categories ($F = 1.560$, $p = .210$), although marginal means are significant here as well (amorphic: $t = 7.761$, $p < .001$; macro: $t = 7.568$, $p < .001$; micro: $t = 5.061$, $p < .001$; mono: $t = 15.192$, $p < .001$). A visualization of all three tests show that, in comparison, internal focalization has clear distinctions across all four attentional categories (with micro panels as an exception) and lower standard errors (micro panels, again, as an exception) than logit ratios and external focalization:
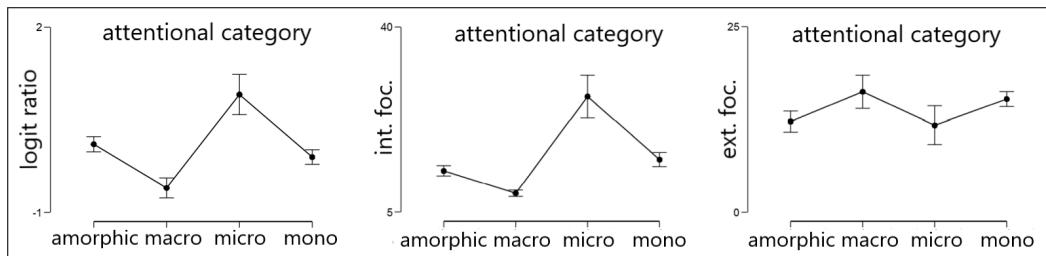
FIGURE 4.11: Marginal means and standard error of logit ratios, internal focalization, and external focalization for attentional categories.

Film Shots

In contrast to attentional categories, relationship between internal/external focalization assessment and film shot types yielded no statistically significant results (logit ratios: $F = 1.89$, $p = .126$; internal focalization sums: $F = 1.911$, $p = .122$; external focalization sums: $F = 1.639$, $p = .178$). Although a visualization of marginal means of logit ratios tested for film shots displays a slight trend towards internal focalization the closer the shot is to the focal figure (figure 4.12), correlation between the gathered data and film shot types show no reason to suspect any meaningful relationship between participants' assessment of focalization and film shot types (logit ratios: $r = 0.255$;

internal focalization: $r = 0.239$; external focalization: $r = 0.100$). We can thus conclude that film shot types seem to be an insignificant marker for internal or external focalization.
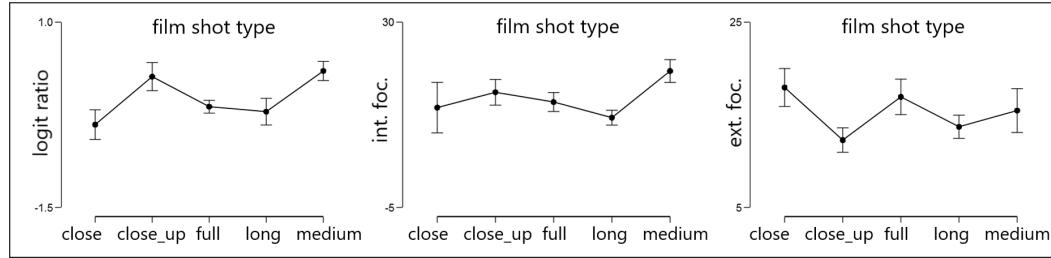
FIGURE 4.12: Marginal means and standard error of logit ratios, internal focalization, and external focalization for film shot types.

Formal Features

Individual testing for effects of formal features on visual focalization assessment led to various results. The most noteworthy effect was found for panels that show details (most often hands) of the protagonist; these panels have a strong trend towards internal focalization (logit ratio: $F = 13.92$, $p < .001$; internal focalization: $F = 20.36$, $p < .001$; external focalization: $F = 1.37$, $p = .274$, see also 4.13). In contrast to panels with details such as protagonist Daniel Quinn's hands, there were no significant effects for panels that show Quinn in general (logit ratio: $F = 3.60$, $p = .063$; internal focalization: $F = 0.694$, $p = .408$; external focalization: $F = 0.691$, $p = .409$).
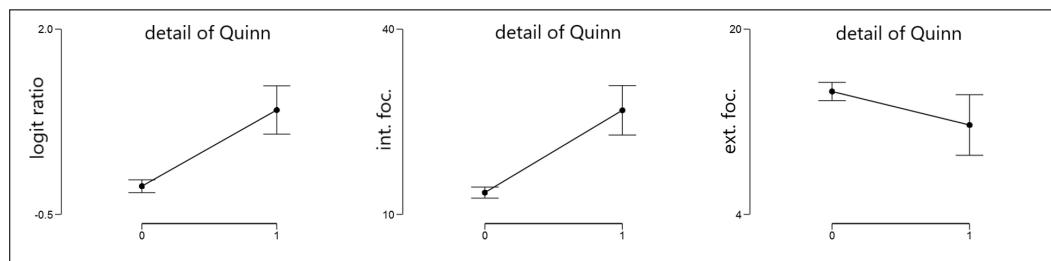
FIGURE 4.13: Marginal means and standard error of logit ratios, internal focalization, and external focalization for panels that show a detail of the protagonist.

Similar (but less definitive) results were found for panels that have standard narrator captions (in contrast to captions with different lettering in the excerpt such as "handwriting" and typewriter lettering). It seems that participants tend to assign internal focalization to panels with this type of caption more than to panels without them (logit ratio: $F = 5.20$, $p = .026$; internal focalization: $F = 5.37$, $p = .024$; external focalization: $F = 0.545$, $p = .463$).
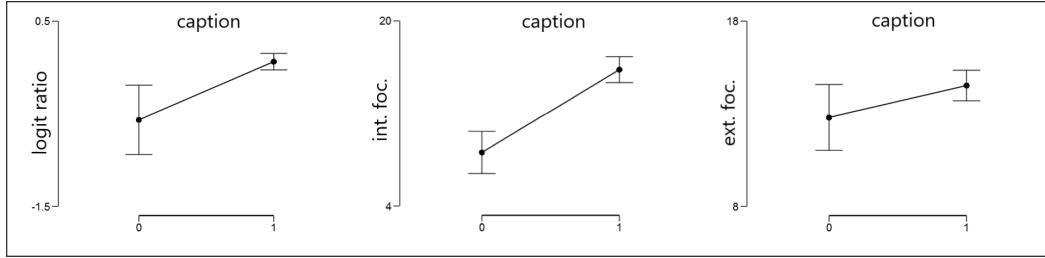
FIGURE 4.14: Marginal means and standard error of logit ratios, internal focalization, and external focalization for panels with a standard lettering caption.

Panels with captions that have handwritten caption lettering showed effects towards the other end of the scale. These panels, which show the protagonist's diary entries, surprisingly trend towards external focalization (logit ratio: $F = 5.597$, $p = .021$; internal focalization: $F = 0.789$, $p = .378$; external focalization: $F = 11.91$, $p = .001$, see also figure 4.15). The same can be said for change in drawing style, since panels with diary caption lettering are also the only panels with a different drawing style. There are no significant effects for panels with typewriter font captions (logit ratio: $F = 1.02$, $p = .316$; internal focalization: $F = 0.971$, $p = .329$; external focalization: $F = 0.173$, $p = .679$).
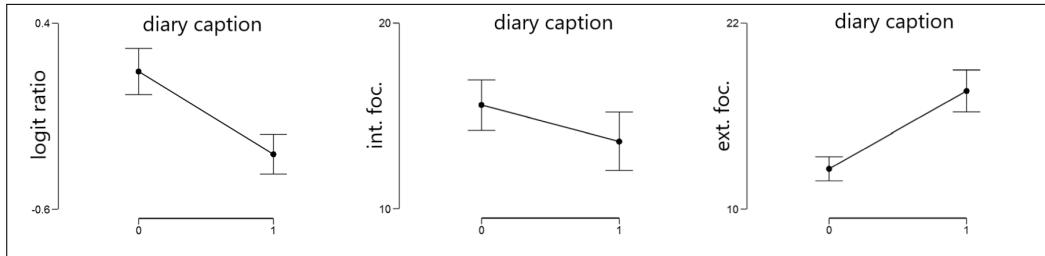

FIGURE 4.15: Marginal means and standard error of logit ratios, internal focalization, and external focalization, for panels with diary entry caption.

Testing panels which are part of a regular panel grid found surprisingly strong effects for external focalization (logit ratio: $F = 7.29$, $p = .009$; internal focalization: $F = 1.79$, $p = .186$; external focalization: $F = 11.35$, $p = .001$). This result is surprising because the excerpt contained only one instance of a regular panel grid with nine panels in total. A replication of the same questionnaire with other graphic narratives and a variety of pages that meet the regular grid requirement might be necessary to put the result into context. Likewise, testing series of panels that retain the same visual perspective found no significant effects (logit ratio: $F = 1.20$, $p = .731$; internal focalization: $F = 1.57$, $p = .215$; external focalization: $F = 6.07^{e-4}$, $p = .99$), but results might differ when testing for more than just one instance of this visual feature with three panels involved.

Judging from these data, I can confirm my initial hypothesis H1 that readers do indeed assign external focalization to certain panels and internal focalization to other panels during the reading process based on visual aspects and narrative comprehension. While a few features and categorizations do not seem to have significant importance for this cognitive process, there were other findings that confirm the relevance of both attentional categories and formal visual features for visual focalization. As such, test results partially confirm my second hypothesis H2.

4.1.4   Discussion

The study showed that visual focalization is a valid concept for the study of experimental narratology. Although film shot types are reasonably adequate for describing panels' perspectives, they seem to have no impact on readers' cognitive process while reading comics. Attentional categories and formal features such as character's hands seem to be more important for cognitive processes of that kind.

Though many panels showed inconclusive data as to where exactly they fall on the internal/external focalization scale, almost all of the panels at either end of the scale share either formal (visual) features or a certain narrative contextual marker. It is reasonable to conclude from these data that readers partake in the reading process of comics with focalization as one among many cognitive strategies. Although this cognitive process is not necessarily conscious, results from the survey suggest that there is at least some kind of perceptual identification with visual representations on a panel-to-panel basis and in between panels. From panel to panel, results imply that readers assume internal focalization the closer they are to an entity with agency or the closer they are to a character that has a crucial role in the narrative. This observation is most obvious for micro panels, i.e. panels that show less than one entire active agent. Several panels in the excerpt show Quinn's hands clicking a pen, tapping a cup of coffee, or holding money in front of a cash machine, and all of these panels were consistently assessed as evoking internal focalization. On first glance, it might be tempting to conclude that readers put themselves into the position and situation of the protagonist and assume his visual perspective. However, readers made no distinction between perspectives that show Quinn's hands and simulate his visual perception and perspectives that are impossible from Quinn's position, but still show Quinn's hands.

Macro panels, i.e. panels showing more than one active entity, are hence on the other end of the spectrum. Although results here (and in the two remaining categories) are less remarkable than results for micro panels, macro panels are more likely to be externally focalized. Mono panels scored higher than both macro panels and amorphic panels, which reinforces the interpretation that participants are more likely to assess

FIGURE 4.16: Readers assessed details of the protagonist's hand as internally focalized, regardless of the protagonist's ability to assume the perspective (left) or lack thereof (right).

internal focalization when they are closer to Quinn and his actions. As a general summary of this survey's results, there is much more evidence for participants assessing panels as evoking internal focalization than evidence for participants assessing panels as evoking external focalization. This tendency towards internal focalization is possibly due to the excerpt's narrative; as mentioned before, the excerpt was chosen to exclude as many confounding narrative elements as possible and as such contains only one character readers might identify with. Due to the protagonist-centric narrative, external focalization might be underrepresented in the excerpt used in this survey, at least as far as readers' assessments are concerned.

Narrative context beyond single-panel comprehension is a somewhat complex cognitive process that cannot be contained in attentional categories. Panels that were assessed as evoking internal focalization but did not fall into the micro category have no apparent formal denominator (for example, protagonist's hands). However, by reviewing these instances, it becomes clear that, at certain points throughout the excerpt, readers contextualized the perspective of certain panels with knowledge from preceding panels about Quinn's vantage point. As a consequence, internal focalization can occur without any link to attentional categories (or formal features) at all. There lies a problem in this observation that exposes the limits of quantifiable data. After all, comprehension of comics' continuity and contextualization of panel information is a cognitive-semantic reading strategy that cannot be quantified so easily. Readers might reveal such strategies when interviewed after reading, but the scope of this survey did not leave any space for individual qualitative evaluations after the reading process. In general, any experimental narratology must be aware of its own restrictions; some narratological processes are too complex to put them on a scale. Consequently, it must be stressed that panels are not necessarily fixed units for the assessment of visual focalization. From the results of this study, it is reasonable to assume that readers assess visual

focalization based on specific narrative constituents within the panel or across complex plot developments and contextual markers throughout the graphic narrative. That said, panels remain the most easily quantifiable narrative unit within comics, comparable to sentences in textual narrative. Empiricism and cognition, both disciplines that deal with quantitative data, will remain challenging approaches to narratology, a decidedly qualitative discipline.
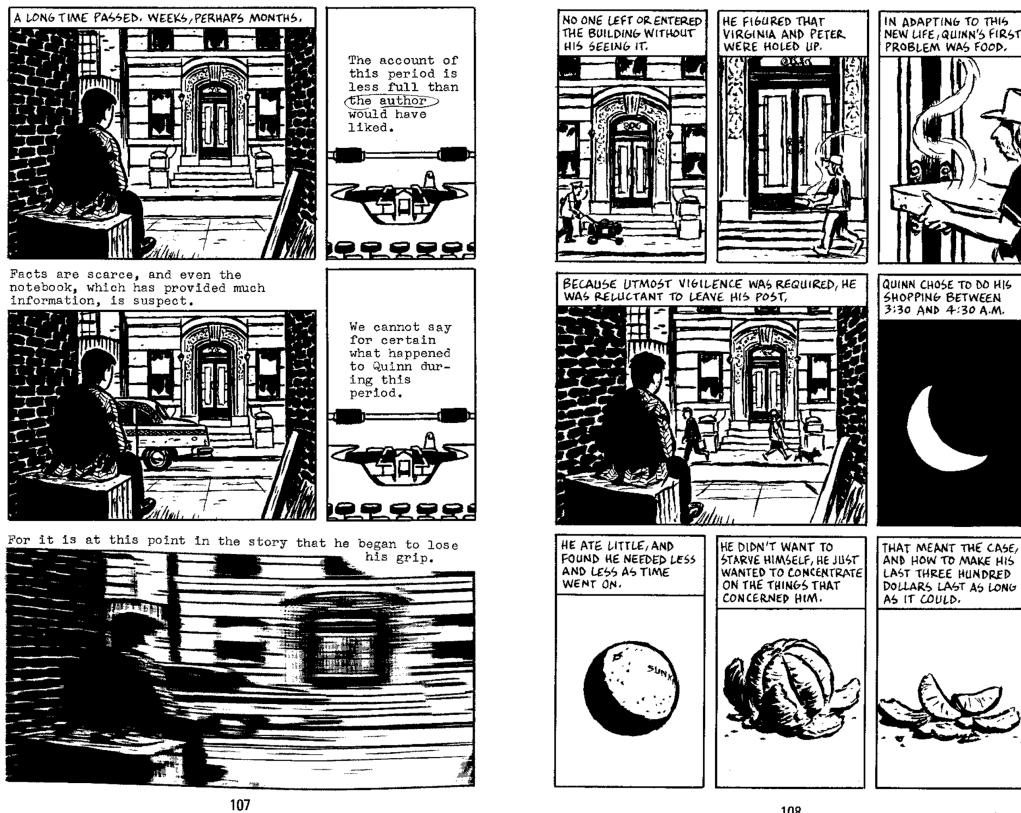
FIGURE 4.17: Readers assessed the first three panels on page 108 as evoking internal focalization; although nothing in these panels suggested this assessment based on earlier results, readers most likely concluded that these panels' perspective show the protagonist's vantage point from page 107.

Captions also seem to affect reader assessment of visual focalization. Throughout the excerpt used in this study, participants were more likely to lean towards internal focalization if the panel had a standard caption as opposed to captions with handwritten or typewriter lettering. Although this study focuses on visual focalization, there is evidence here that visual and verbal focalization influence each other. In the case of *City of Glass*, narration in captions is a crucial part of the story and much more noticeable than captions in the traditional comic book. The excerpt that was chosen for this

experiment gives no reason to believe that the narrator is intradiegetic or homodiegetic (although the end of *City of Glass* confirms that he is, in fact, both), so readers tend to identify with the central character of the story.

This interpretation of the data is supported by the inverse relationship between visual focalization and change in drawing style and lettering, which is mostly prevalent in panels with protagonist Quinn's diary entries. Quinn clicks his pen and starts writing, while the semi-realistic drawing style turns into a jagged and surreal urban landscape of barely recognizable figures. Readers assessed this passage as externally focalized, which seems puzzling at first, since the change in style and lettering marks a change in narrative agency. There is a possibility that readers simply did not decode said markers to come to that conclusion, or would have needed more obvious markers such as Quinn's hands or contextual vantage point information, but there is also reason to believe that readers did not identify with representational markers that evidently suggest some form of agency (in this case, Quinn's decline into madness). As before, assessing visual focalization across other graphic narratives will shed more light on this phenomenon.

One instance of a regular panel grid seemed to suggest external focalization to readers. Two features might have caused this impression: on the one hand, a highly formalized layout such as a 3×3 panel grid might distract from the story content within these panels. On the other hand, this regular panel grid was part of Quinn's diary entries which were discussed in the previous paragraph, and as such might have been assessed by readers judging only from content and not layout. In any case, this study was not conducted with a clear separation of content and layout and further investigations might take into account that either can have cognitive effects on the other.

A serious limitation of these results lies in participants' relative homogeneity in certain respects. The group consisted solely of students of literature and an evaluation of their reading behavior showed a notable disinterest in comics. The lack of diverse levels of education, academic backgrounds, and comics literacy could potentially prove to be confounding variables for the results of this study. Although the data and subsequent analysis point toward the importance of visual focalization as a cognitive concept, some doubt remains as to the data's reliability in light of potential influence from these factors. For this reason, I conducted a follow-up study that compared panels that scored very highly in the first survey with panels that didn't and with panels that were manipulated to exhibit the same formal features as panels that did. This pre-selected pool of panels, along with some other changes in the experiment's design, led to a partial re-evaluation of initial results.

4.2 Experiment II: Cognition and Contextualization

4.2.1 Experiment Preparation

The first study's results required additional investigation into two major questions: First, would a more diverse group of participants assess visual focalization differently from the first, more homogenous, group of participants? And second: would it be possible to confirm the conclusions drawn from the first experiment's results? The main topic, visual focalization, and hence the theoretical framework, remained the same, along with the initial hypothesis.

4.2.2 Method

4.2.2.1 Design and Material

As before, this experiment used a within-subjects design; all participants were exposed to the same introductory text, excerpt, task, selection of panels and reading behavior questionnaire. The second experiment also used the same nine-page excerpt from *City of Glass* as the first. The previous experiment used an exploratory approach – participants were able to choose 20 panels from a total of 58 panels for two tasks, which was done primarily to find out whether participants would select certain panels more for either internal or external focalization than other panels. Results clearly showed that preferences exist for both, depending on participants' cognition and awareness of formal features. In the present experiment, in contrast, the choice of panels was predetermined by two factors from the previous experiment: 1) panels that have outlier status on both ends of the scale; 2) panels that are easy to manipulate, i.e. panels that can be zoomed and reframed without unintentionally disclosing manipulation to the participants. We observed earlier that readers were more likely to attribute internal focalization to panels that show the protagonist's hands in detail and when readers obtain contextual knowledge about the protagonist's vantage point matching the panel's perspective. Panels that did not score highly on either end of the focalization scale were manipulated to show these features (cf. figure 4.18). Instead of allowing participants to choose from 58 panels, the second experiment featured a selection of outlier panels from the earlier experiment, plus a selection of manipulated panels. Therefore, every panel required participants to observe whether a panel displayed features of internal or external focalization. In order to evaluate the comics comprehension skills of participants more consistently, this experiment included diagnostics for Neil Cohn's VLFI ("The Visual Language Fluency Index").

FIGURE 4.18: Two examples that show the original panel (left) and a
manipulated panel (right) to determine visual focalization assessment.

At the end of the selection process, the questionnaire consisted of 32 panels: eleven panels which participants had assessed previously as internal focalization, four panels which participants had interpreted as cases of external focalization, ten panels which ended up around the mean of the logit ratio scale, and seven manipulated panels that either contained zoomed-in features and/or lacked a vantage point or continuity information. Of these panels, three were macro panels, thirteen mono panels, ten micro panels, and six amorphic panels. Nine panels showed the protagonist's hands and 17 panels resembled the protagonist's vantage point from a nearby panel. As in the earlier experiment, the independent variables were data for each panel based on the two sets of categories by N. Cohn et al. as well as formal features. The dependent variable was participants' cumulative assessment of individual panels.

4.2.2.2 Participants

The experiment was conducted online over the course of five weeks with a total of 60 participants. Half of the participants were students; 26 were employed, others were self-employed or unemployed. Participants also reported their highest current educational degree: 22 have a school degree with certification for university entrance; one has a school degree without certification for university entrance; eight have a Bachelor's degree or comparable degree; 19 have a Master's degree or comparable degree; nine have a Doctorate degree; and one finished Habilitation. They were aged 19 to 58
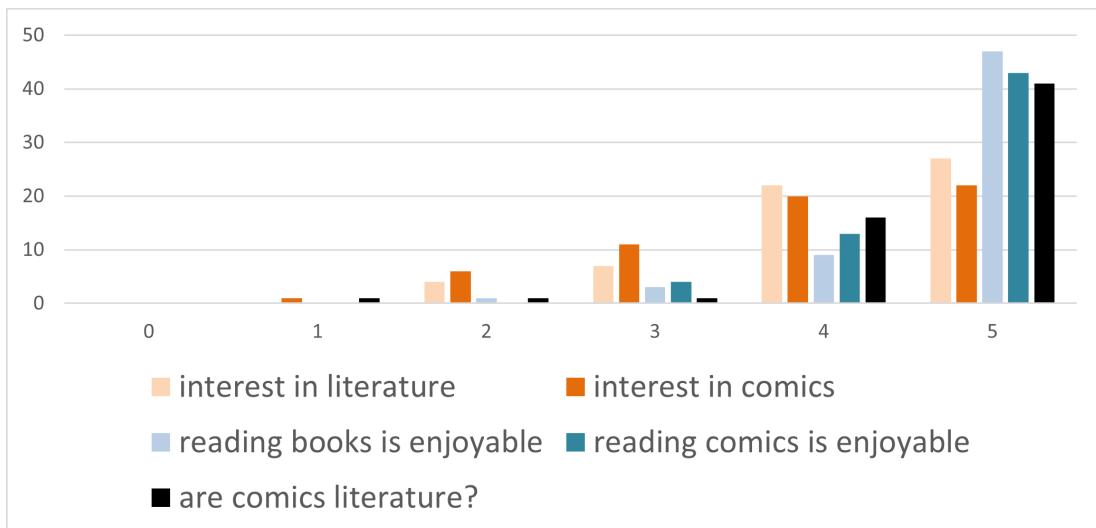
FIGURE 4.19: Participants Reading Habits Overview.

with a median age of 27. 29 participants identified as female, 30 identified as male; one participant identified as neither. In stark contrast to the previous study, ten participants claimed to have read the novel *City of Glass* and 15 claimed to have read *City of Glass*. As before, participants assessed their general interest in both literature in general and in comics on a scale from 0 (very uninterested) to 5 (very interested). Reading behavior assessment reveals that this group showed greater interest both in literature (mean: 4.2, median 4) and comics (mean: 3.9, median 4). Participants almost unanimously agree that comics are a form of literature (mean: 4.5, median 5) and that reading both literature and comics are enjoyable activities (literature: mean 4.7, median 5). Measuring VLFI scores for every participant shows a wide variety, even though their interest in comics is much higher on average than the first group's, with scores between 2.4 and 31.6 (mean 13.3, median 11.9). A VLFI score below 8 indicates low fluency, 10 to 19 indicates average fluency; a score above 20 indicates high fluency (N. Cohn, The Visual Language Fluency Index). On average, participants are on the lower end of average fluency, with nineteen participants below 8, twenty-three participants between 10 and 19, and thirteen participants above 20 (five participants fall between categories). All in all, participants present more diverse age and educational levels in comparison to the earlier study. Although they show a rather one-sided interest in the topic, they have diverse comics comprehension skills. There are weak positive correlations between VLFI scores and participants' enjoyment of comics ($r = 0.39$), age ($r = 0.41$), and gender ($r = 0.32$).

4.2.2.3 Procedure

In order to assure diversity among participants, this experiment was conducted online whereas the first experiment was presented to participants as a printed questionnaire. Everyone with a link to the questionnaire could participate. The questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and settings guaranteed that every participant filled out the questionnaire completely. Participants received the same introductory text and plot summary as participants in the previous study. It was crucial to the experiment's comparability that participants were able to return to previous pages. The system allowed this only if no additional input was required by the participant. Therefore, participants were able to return to earlier pages as long as they were reading but not after they started filling in the questionnaire. After the excerpt, participants were asked to complete the following task:

> In this part, please look at the panels below and pay close attention to the visual perspective.
>
> Does the visual part imply an internal point of view or an external point of view?
>
> Tick "Internal" if you think the panel implies a point of view from an individual perspective.
>
> Tick "External" if you think the panel implies a point of view not from an individual perspective.

The phrasing of this task and deliberate exclusion of any reference to focalization follows the same reasoning as the phrasing of task 1 and 2 in the previous study. Due to the nature of the online questionnaire, every participant responded to every panel without exceptions. Google Forms collected responses automatically, after which I included them in a spreadsheet for further analysis.

4.2.3 Results

This follow-up experiment examined whether it is possible to reproduce the results of the first study with a more diverse group of participants and whether we would be able to confirm the conclusions drawn from the first study's results.

The initial assessment of the data reiterates the first impressions from the previous study. As before, all thirty-two panels were selected for each category at least once. A boxplot (figure 4.20) shows that no outliers are present in these results. Instead, internal focalization peaks at 1.49, whereas external focalization peaks at -2.02. The mid-range of logit ratios is wider than in the previous study: The quartile for internal

focalization begins at 0.77 and the quartile for external focalization begins at -0.62, which indicates less clearly-defined boundaries between internal and external focalization. Figure 4.21 presents an overview of panels at the extreme end of both quartiles. Figure 4.22 shows a scatterplot of assessments with a logit ratio for all thirty-two panels along the x-axis. Peaks are clearly visible for both internal and external focalization. A t-test for internal focalization sum values and external focalization sum values shows significant distribution ($t = 9.022e + 15, p < .001$).

Comparison with previous survey data

A direct comparison of the data for visual focalization confirms the importance of a diverse group with a wide range of comics literacy skills. Although most assessment ratios can be found on the same side of the scale, results for panels used in the previous experiment differ critically from results in this experiment. There is no statistically significant relationship between the two data sets (paired sample t-test $p = .284$), but most of the results still confirm the discussion of relationships between formal features and visual focalization in the previous study. While the results also confirm the initial experiment´s results for film shot types, the data shows a much different conclusion for attentional categories.
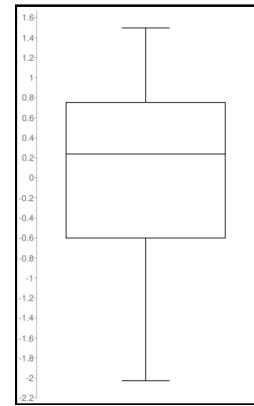
FIGURE 4.20: Visual Focalization Assessment Boxplot.
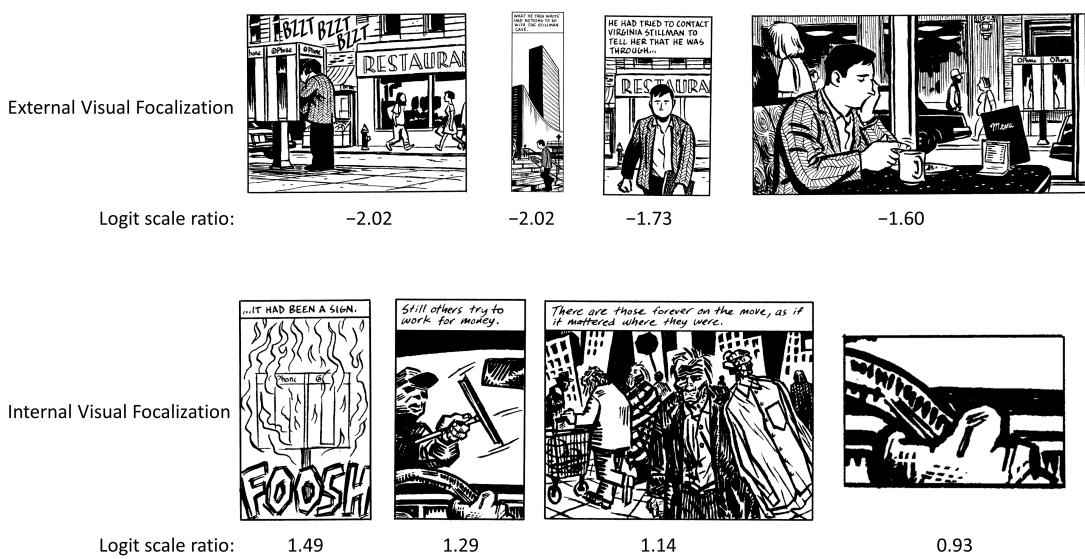
FIGURE 4.21: Visual Focalization Assessment Outliers.
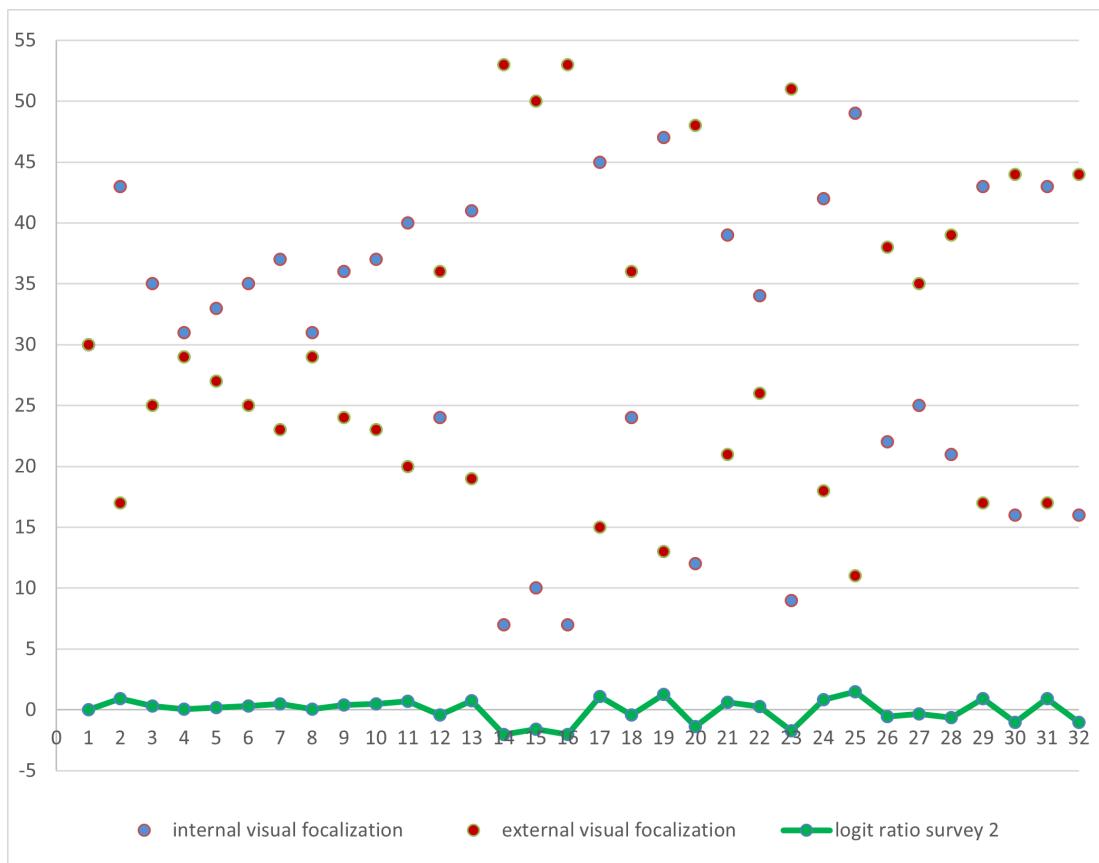
FIGURE 4.22: Visual Focalization Assessment Scatterplot and Logit Ratio.
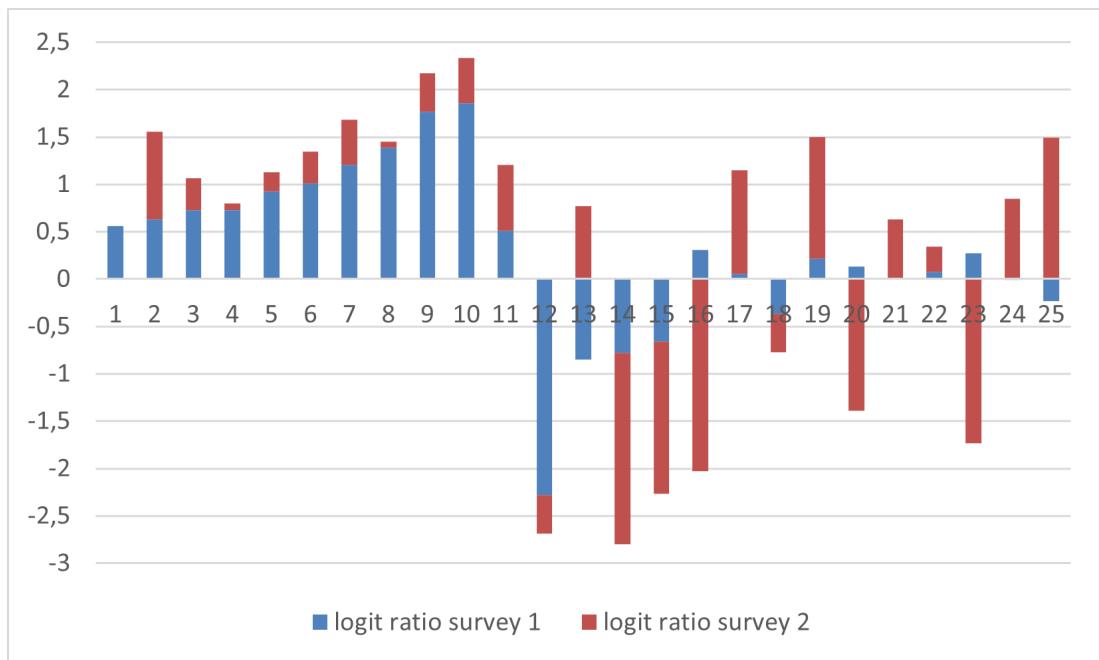
FIGURE 4.23: Focalization Two assessment data for individual panels that are present in both studies.

Attentional Categories

In contrast to the previous study, no effects were found for attentional categories. Keeping in mind that this experiment features a smaller variety of panels, fewer participants, and therefore less data, ANOVA tests for effects between visual focalization assessment and attentional categories showed no significant results (logit ratio: $F = 1.12$, $p = .359$; internal focalization: $F = 0.945$, $p = .432$; external focalization: $F = 0.945$, $p = .432$). The visualization of marginal means reflects the fact that there are no discernible edges for panels that showed effects in the previous study, such as micro or macro panels.
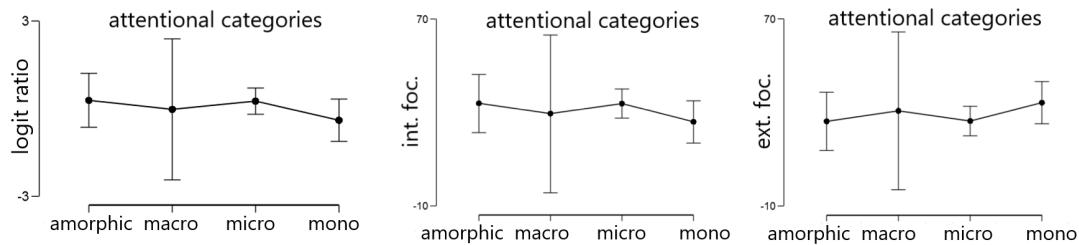
FIGURE 4.24: Marginal means and standard error of logit ratios, internal focalization, and external focalization for attentional categories.

Formal features

The analysis of formal features found effects for panels that show the protagonist's hands as well as panels that were assumed to have internal focalization due to the protagonist's relative position in surrounding panels. Taking into account that this survey also contained panels that were manipulated in order to resemble these features and/or imitate perspectives of other panels in the excerpt, these results show that both features are significant for the assessment of visual focalization. Panels that showed details of protagonist Quinn were more likely to be seen as examples of internal focalization (logit ratio: $F = 4.23$, $p = .049$; internal focalization: $F = 4.28$, $p = .047$; external focalization: $F = 4.28$, $p = .047$). Participants also tended to rate panels as cases of internal focalization in which the visual perspective suggests congruence with Quinn's perspective due to his relative position (logit ratio: $F = 37.09$, $p < .001$; internal focalization: $F = 42.03$, $p < .001$; external focalization: $F = 42.03$, $p < .001$).

In light of these results, I can confirm my initial hypothesis only to a certain extent. While participants still assess visual focalization differently based on certain visual information, this experiment was not able to replicate the significant relationship between attentional categories and visual focalization. The second experiment did,
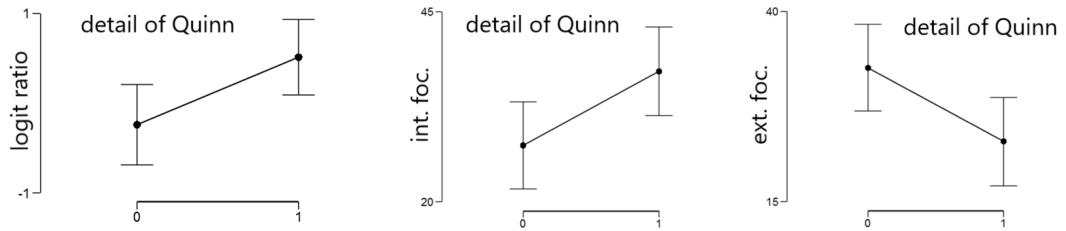
FIGURE 4.25: Marginal means and standard error of logit ratios, internal focalization, and external focalization for panels that show a detail of the protagonist.
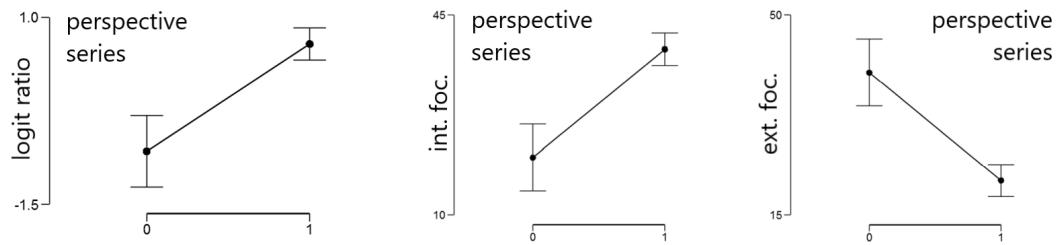
FIGURE 4.26: Marginal means and standard error of logit ratios, internal focalization, and external focalization for panels that present a series of similar perspectives.

however, replicate results for formal features and/or contextual knowledge of perspective and vantage point. The survey also showed that such features are more consistent with internal and external focalization as opposed to a less consistent (yet significant) relationship in the first experiment.

4.2.4   Discussion

The influence of attentional categories on visual focalization could not be replicated in this experiment, which may be due to two factors. On the one hand, this study removed freedom of choice from participants and they were asked to report on a pre-selected sample; in the first study, participants were free to assess the panels that they deemed best for the given task. On the other hand, there was a vast diversity of comics literacy among the sixty participants in the present study, as reflected by their VLFI scores. That being said, it is surprising that many panels which participants assessed as evoking internal focalization would be considered mono panels (i.e. less than one active entity) if it didn't show very minor characters. These characters and their relative positions to Quinn actually reinforce subjective representation.

For an example, see the first panel in figure 4.27: a macro panel with two active entities – one person sitting in the driver's seat, another cleaning the car's windshield – this image clearly represents an internal view. Participants in this experiment were

generally more interested in comics, which resulted from the voluntary nature of the questionnaire, as opposed to the first study's lecture hall context. Figure 4.27 shows some of the differences of logit scales for certain panels between studies. These panels portray contextual markers such as protagonist Quinn's hands and contain perspectives that invoke Quinn's point of view. Logit scale ratios from the first study show that readers' focalization assessment is much more inconclusive. Almost all panels scored around 0, in other words: There were about as many participants assessing external focalization as there were participants assessing internal focalization.

Logit scale ratios from the second study paint a much clearer picture and are in accord with data discussion. The panel that shows a public phone booth in flames represents a hallucination that Quinn is having while in a diner. Readers have all the information that they need in adjacent panels (in that order: Quinn is sitting in a diner with a public phone in the background, public phone not on fire, public phone on fire, Quinn's eyes with flames in them) to conclude that this panel shows something that is happening in Quinn's head – in other words, an internally focalized visual representation.

Protagonist Detail			Hallucinations
Logit scale ratio survey 1:	0.21	0.01	−0.23
Logit scale ratio survey 2:	1.29	0.62	1.50

Protagonist Vantage Point / Relative Position to Perspective			
Logit scale ratio survey 1:	−0.85	0.31	0.13	0.27
Logit scale ratio survey 2:	0.77	−2.02	−1.39	−1.73
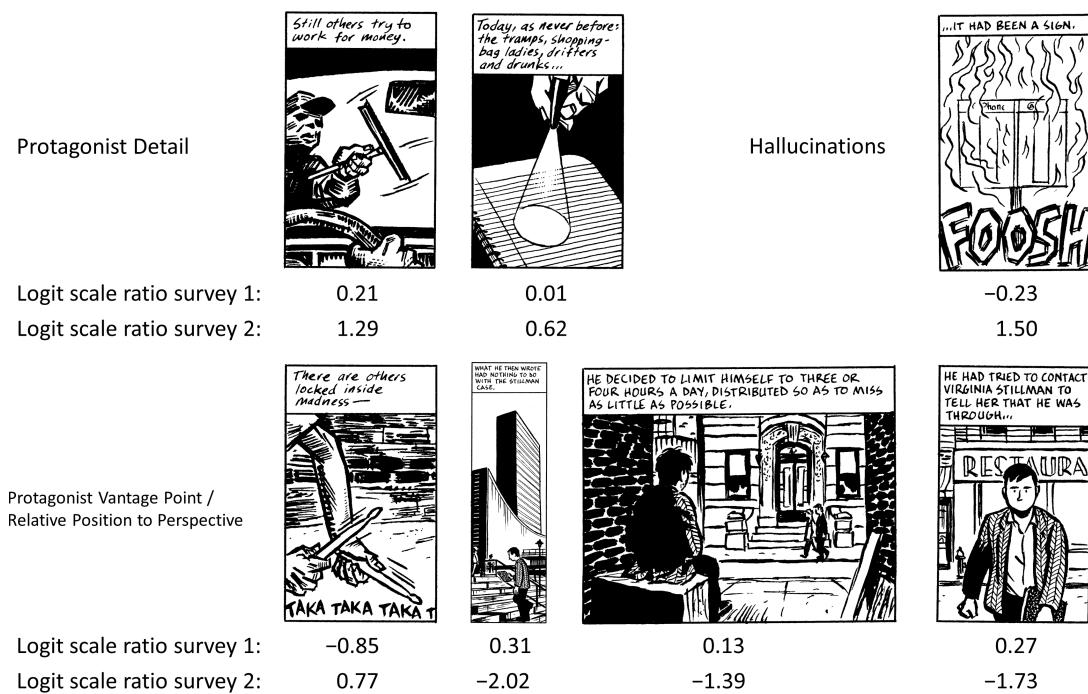
FIGURE 4.27: Formal features and contextual markers that influence readers' focalization cognition.

My previous argument about the relation between internal focalization and visual proximity to narrative agents still holds true in every panel depicted above. When readers are closer to protagonist Quinn, they tend to assess panels as internally focalized. When readers see Quinn in a panel that shows him among his surroundings, they tend

to interpret panels as externally focalized. What is more, the earlier interpretation that participants (actively or unconsciously) fail to identify with Quinn's diary passage must be rejected as well. Participants in the second study scored panels from that passage consistently higher on the internal focalization scale than in the previous study. Again, this could be caused by a higher level of interest in comics or by higher comics literacy.

This re-evaluation of the data is supported by the significant relationship between internal focalization and formal features such as the protagonist's hands and contextual markers. As I wrote earlier, markers of this kind are difficult to quantify, but the results of the present experiment make a strong point against superficial categorizations such as amount of visible narrative agents (attentional categories) and figure-background relationship (film shot types) as singular prompts for readers to assess visual focalization. Amorphic panels, such as the one that depicts a public phone on fire, scored very highly on the scale for internal focalization despite showing no narrative agents. Similarly, participants were less likely to assess panels as cases of external focalization if the panel was manipulated so as to resemble other panels with a perspective that suggests the protagonist's subjective point of view. Manipulated panels would thus fall into the long shot category instead of the full shot category and still be assessed as less externally focalized than their non-edited counterpart. These results show that panels must not necessarily fall into any particular category to activate internal or external focalization. Rather, contextual markers and understanding of plot trigger these cognitive processes.

It is difficult to identify specific elements of graphic narrative that signify internal and external focalization. In these two experiments and in *City of Glass*, specifically, readers tend to consider panels internally focalized whenever they are close to Quinn as an entity of agency (or notable lack of agency) and/or when they are exposed to Quinn's hallucinations. Other contextual markers include Quinn clicking his pen, or vantage points from surrounding panels. As for graphic narrative as a medium, contextual markers can take a variety of shapes and forms and would depend on the particular work and on the group of readers engaged with it. However, these two studies showed that visual focalization clearly belongs to the many cognitive processes of graphic narrative readers, and that these readers are capable of decoding contextual markers to come to consistent conclusions as far as visual focalization is concerned. Further investigations into visual focalization as a cognitive concept are thus not only verifiably practical, but structurally necessary.

4.3 Empirical Evidence for Visual Focalization as Annotation Category

The results of these two experiments yield appropriate denominators for the annotational system that determines the following chapter. We have seen significant effects for an internal/external focalization dichotomy. A subcategorization of panels into specific, potential markers also showed that instances of internal focalization are sometimes guided by markers such as the depiction of hands, whereas external focalization is notable for an absence of such markers. Other markers are hard to quantify as they require a degree of narrative comprehension from the reader. I conclude that an annotational system for visual focalization should thus take into consideration that: a) external focalization is a default value of focalization in the visual mode; b) internal visual focalization operates on both story and discourse level with a variety of markers and effects.

It remains to be seen now how exactly these conceptual determiners prove themselves against the annotation process of actual, complete graphic narratives. The following chapter will introduce the specifics of this annotation process, as well as guide through the graphic narratives that I chose for this corpus. The annotation data will then have to compare to close readings of these graphic narratives in order to explore similarities and differences across qualitative and quantitative methods.

Chapter 5

Focalization and Annotation: Surveying a Comics Corpus

This chapter serves as a quantitative case study for the empirical evidence that I determined in the preceding chapter. If comic book readers perform cognitive tasks that we can sufficiently describe with a narratological term such as focalization, then we may want to test how exactly readers perform this task in practice and what the results may look like for a select number of graphic narratives. The first step towards an experimental narratology was to find empirical evidence that points towards internal and external focalization as the result of cognitive processes; testing these processes under real reading conditions will be the next step.

As I have laid out before, distant reading of graphic narrative requires reliable close reading data as ground truth for machines to learn the intricacies of narrative devices. Computers need to be supplied with information as to what implies the existence of certain narratological constituents, in this case specifically: internal visual focalization in graphic narrative. The experiments that comprised the preceding chapter pointed towards such data and also established that external visual focalization equates to a default status, that is, an unmarked instance of visual focalization. The portrayal of hands from a specific viewpoint is one such piece of evidence that machines ought to be able to identify in a neural network environment. Context information, such as focalized characters' relative position in the storyworld, is a more complex endeavor, but not impossible to quantify. First, it seems necessary to build a case study as to what this collection of data might look like. This chapter presents such a case study with nine long-form graphic narratives and a total of thirteen full annotations, including focalization as annotational category. Results indicate that focalization has some merit as a quantifiable narratological category. Yet, the process towards these results should be subject to some degree of evaluation.

This chapter will demonstrate how quantitative data methods might arrive at conclusions similar to traditional close reading attempts. I will present the results from my case study and discuss whether both approaches are in agreement or whether considerable differences might emerge. After a presentation on how I conducted this case study and some preliminaries on tools and methods, I examine each graphic narrative's focalization situation separately, drawing from both my empirical data and existing readings from secondary sources.

5.1 Data Presentation

5.1.1 Method and Course Evaluation

32 students enrolled in a seminar titled "Annotating Comics" during winter term 2017/18 at the University of Paderborn. The seminar consisted of four sessions over the course of two weekends instead of short weekly meetings in order to allow for consistent and focused work on annotations. The course syllabus contained reading that introduced theory on both quantitative studies as well as narratology. Students also learned to use an annotation software with an implemented narratological annotation scheme which was in part based on findings from the preceding chapter. A separate section further below explains the editor's design and functions in detail. Groups of three to five then worked on complete annotations for two comics each, one short work and one long-form graphic novel. Students learned graphic narrative structure by annotating panel order, text transcription, and character interactions. In addition, the teaching environment promoted critical thinking about details in these comics that implied specific narrative situations such as storyworlds and metalepses, narrators, and focalization. In contrast to traditional lectures on narratology, students engaged in these matters with an open-ended mindset; instead of preset questions and answers, they had to actively participate in a discussion that revolved around minute narrative details. The approach towards narratological analysis was thus less prescriptive and revolved more around discussion and cooperative reading. At certain points throughout the annotation process, students encountered problematic or ambiguous narrative situations that warranted extended scrutiny by the entire class (a selection of these problems are part of the individual comics' analysis further below).

Upon course evaluation, a number of students realized the critical potential of narratological terminology. The course's annotation setup provided them with an original approach towards reading that included theoretical concepts which they previously found to be cumbersome or secondary to seminar discussion. Rather than individual sentiment and the application of cultural knowledge — historical or otherwise —

students discovered that application and appropriation of narratological terminology provided their readings with a refined interpretation of the texts that they had read. Regardless of whether these assignments are tied to quantitative and empirical projects, this seminar revealed that students probed existing narratological models and that they considered smaller units of narrative just as important as the whole. The practice of annotation and discussions on existing narratological models via close-reading both reflect one of the main arguments in favor of experimental narratology. I hope to show the productive effects of this practice as it relates to revising the concept of focalization in individual discussions of the data further below.

5.1.2   Software and Annotation Method

5.1.2.1   XML, TEI, CBML, and GNML Languages

The annotation data are stored in a specialized XML format. XML (Extensible Markup Language) is a markup language that promotes a wide variety of customization and extension. Therefore, XML enables a large variety of formats, one of which is text annotation. The TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) is one such format. TEI's goal is to conserve analogue text in digital environments beyond mere transcription of text. As such, TEI uses an exhaustive pool of tags that denote paratextual items such as author (`docAuthor`), text type (`type`), bibliographical information (`bibliogr`), specific qualities of the text such as font or typographical emphasis (rendition tag along with individual selectors), and more. John Walsh created a markup language for graphic narrative, Comic Book Markup Language (CBML), that added tags which are necessary for graphic narrative annotation, such as `cbml:panel`, `cbml:balloon`, `cbml:caption`, and so on (cf. "Comic Book Markup Language"). The annotation software that students used for this case study, Graphic Novel Markup Language (GNML), is itself based on CBML and added a graphical user interface (GUI) to enable annotation of visual information's appearance on the page. Users are thus able to qualify item placement on comic book pages with coordinates that users may determine on the GUI but which will then save to the XML file. GNML also establishes a hierarchy of items, for example characters and their speech balloons that belong to a certain panel.

Throughout the seminar, students tested the latest addition to GNML, a narratological annotation scheme that enabled annotation of focalization, storyworlds and storyworld hierarchies, as well as narrators and diegetic narrative situation. It remains to be seen whether the typology that our research group designed for storyworlds and diegetic narrative situation has any empirical merit; it is certainly possible, yet too far-reaching for this study, to conduct experiments similar to the one that I conducted for

focalization. For this paper's purposes, and as per preceding results, focalization annotation uses external visual focalization as a default value due to its unmarked status. We decided to expand upon internal visual focalization with a subset of four types of subjectivity that Jan-Noël Thon determined in his 2016 book *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture* and which I have briefly mentioned in my review on the discussion surrounding focalization. To be more specific, Thon identifies four transmedial strategies of (what he calls) strategies of subjective representation (259 ff., 292 ff. for comics in particular):

1) spatial point-of-view: a "(primarily) pictorial strategy of subjective representation [that] usually still represents an intersubjectively valid version of the storyworld," (259) i.e. a version of the storyworld that readers have no indication to assume to be any different than what other characters might subjectively experience;

2) (quasi-)perceptual point-of-view sequence: "the pictorial representation not only approximates the spatial position of a character but also represents more clearly subjective (quasi-)perceptual aspects of his or her consciousness," (ibid.) i.e. readers decode information that a character's subjective point of view differs from other characters' subjective experiences;

3) (quasi-)perceptual overlay: "the representation of (quasi-)perceptual aspects of a character's consciousness beyond his or her spatial position does not necessitate the pictorial representation's approximation of that character's spatial position," (261) i.e. readers identify visual storyworld representation as marked by a character's subjectivity;

4) internal world representation: "a change of "diegetic level" within the storyworld as a whole," which "is intended to be comprehended as being neither the 'factual domain' of the storyworld nor a character's (quasi-)perception of it, but rather a character's memories, dreams, or fantasies" (262).

It should be noted once more that Thon brings forth some well-deserved critical remarks about focalization (as much as about "point of view" and "perspective") because according to transmedial narratology study, all three terms are loaded with various readings from many theorists and are thus liable to misunderstandings (238). His preferred terminology, "representation of subjectivity," encompasses a broader understanding of subjectivity in narrative throughout all media. However, the central inquiry of this study is to find quantitative merit in established narratological terminology. We have seen earlier that focalization is a loaded and contentious concept; I would argue that such traditional concepts might arrive at a more refined and agreeable form if they

come under quantitative scrutiny. Still, as what we have found to be a marked case of (in Thon's words) subjective representation, it might be useful to consider his four types as subtypes of internal visual focalization, which is why GNML contains these four additional qualifiers. It is no doubt of great interest to find empirical evidence in order to justify their implementation and it should be the subject of other surveys. Regrettably, the volume of these data would exceed the scope of this paper or a seminar on annotation. If one were to design a test — for example, an ANOVA that is similar to the tests in the preceding chapter — on these four subtypes even for a single long-form graphic novel, the number of full, individually completed annotations should at least be between thirty to sixty in order to yield statistically viable results.

```
        <gl:x-coord>28</gl:x-coord>
        <gl:y-coord>149</gl:y-coord>
      </gl:point>
      <gl:point>
        <gl:x-coord>43</gl:x-coord>
        <gl:y-coord>147</gl:y-coord>
      </gl:point>
      <gl:point>
        <gl:x-coord>57</gl:x-coord>
        <gl:y-coord>142</gl:y-coord>
      </gl:point>
      <gl:point>
        <gl:x-coord>70</gl:x-coord>
        <gl:y-coord>136</gl:y-coord>
      </gl:point>
      <gl:point>
        <gl:x-coord>75</gl:x-coord>
        <gl:y-coord>130</gl:y-coord>
      </gl:point>
      <gl:point>
        <gl:x-coord>79</gl:x-coord>
        <gl:y-coord>119</gl:y-coord>
      </gl:point>
      <gl:point>
        <gl:x-coord>63</gl:x-coord>
        <gl:y-coord>121</gl:y-coord>
      </gl:point>
    </gl:area>
    <p>I HATE
KETCHUP</p>
      </balloon>
    </panel>
```

FIGURE 5.1: Sample from annotation file for *Jimmy Corrigan*, p.44.

To illustrate what a finished XML annotation file might look like, fig. 5.1 shows a sample file from the case study. The sample is part of the annotation file for *Jimmy Corrigan*, page 44. A major part of this image shows the coordinates that students annotated as frames for a speech bubble (transcribed below the coordinates as "I HATE KETCHUP"). Students did not actually write these lines in XML but used the software GUI to annotate comics pages.

5.1.2.2   Multimodal Markup (M3) Editor

Fig. 5.2 shows the user interface of the annotation software, *Multimodal Markup Editor*, or M3 for short (Dunst et al.). M3 uses three main workspaces: a window that shows a comics page that users currently work on, a window that contains annotation tools for panel annotation etc., and a window with additional information for the object that users currently annotate. On the left side, additional tools help with selecting and creating objects as well as zooming in and out of the comics page.

Students used the M3 software for graphic narrative annotation after a brief introduction to its features and with the help of a step-by-step guide created during the seminar. When users load a comics page, the editor automatically identifies panels; students annotated other items such as speech balloons, captions, and so on, by clicking on items on the page and outlining their frames. M3 shows these frames as colored polygons in a layer on top of the comics page. The tools on the left side of the software help simplifying the process with a wand tool, which identifies flat textures such as mono-color speech balloons enclosed with a black frame from all sides. Items such as characters were more difficult to annotate since M3 did not yet include character recognition software at the time of the seminar. Students thus drew character outlines by hand. The item's outlines are stored in XML as the coordinates that can be seen in fig. 5.1. Students also transcribed all text (speech acts, captions, onomatopoeia, and diegetic text) and determined character relationships with a pre-defined set of interactions. The ability to identify diegetic narrative situation had at the time been restricted to captions. Lastly, students selected individual panels and annotated storyworld and visual focalization. External visual focalization is the default value here; design-wise,
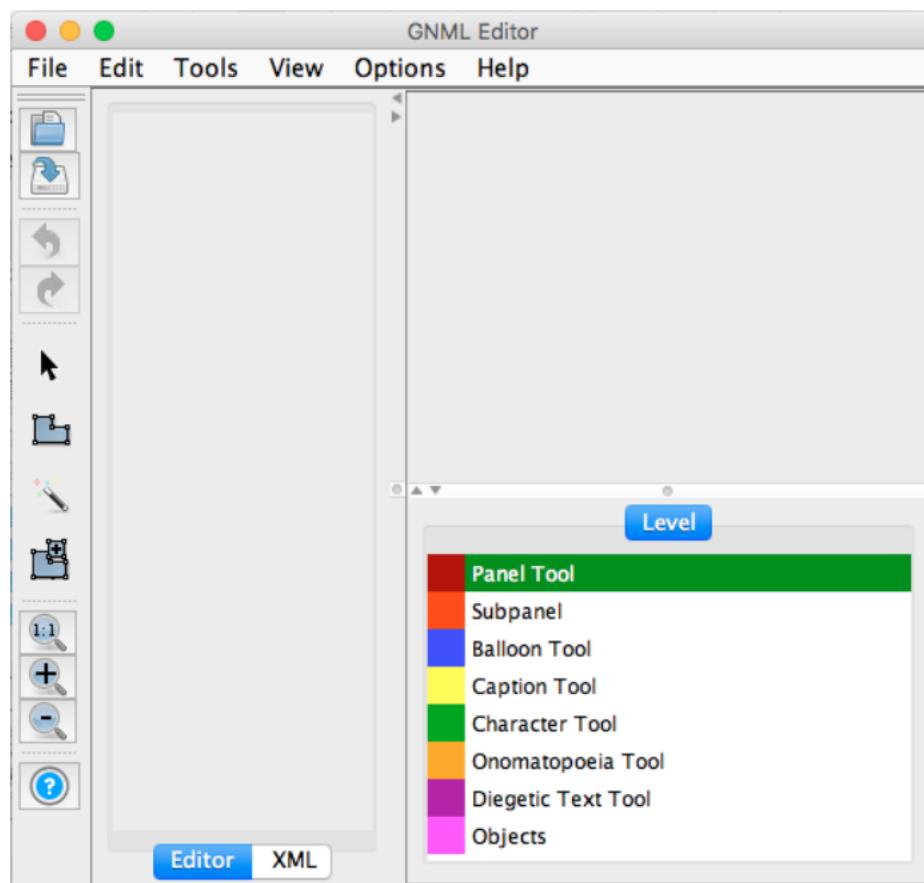
FIGURE 5.2: M3 user interface.

it seemed obvious to make external focalization the default as the two previous experiments suggested that external focalization is an unmarked instance of visual focalization. Throughout the seminar, we restricted the feature to annotate objects solely to items that were pertinent to a change in narrative situation (such as simultaneous markers as per previous survey results).

Fig. 5.3 shows an example of a finished annotation, again, *Jimmy Corrigan*, page 44, but this time within the user interface instead of the raw XML file. The annotation process sometimes required students to correct automated annotations by the software. For example, automatic panel frame and speech balloon recognition were prone to errors if the contrast between panel/balloon frame and its surroundings was not high enough. M3 also automatically ordered panels by height and position from left to right. This method was occasionally faulty due to specific panel layouts or measurements that differed by a few pixels. To add to these corrections, transcription of text and character interactions proved to be a time-consuming endeavor. In time, automatic processes may lessen the workload for human annotation. Examples of this include optical character recognition (OCR) for automatic transcription of text, improving upon panel and speech bubble recognition, and possibly (semi-)automatic identification of narrative situations such as focalization.
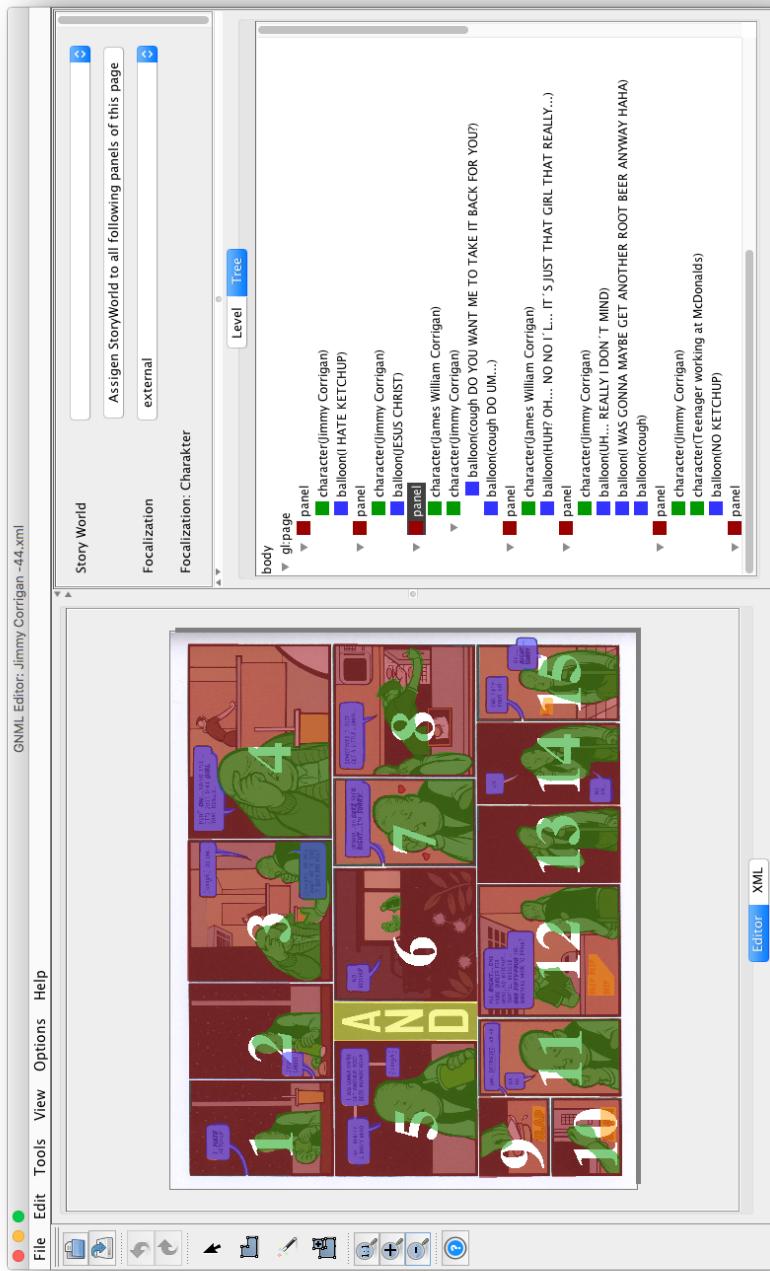
FIGURE 5.3: M3 user interface with finished sample annotation.

5.1.2.3 Focalization Data: Concatenation and Visualization

The case study resulted in more than 2,000 individual XML files. The analysis thus clearly warranted computational support to concatenate all annotations of focalization rather than selecting them manually in a spreadsheet. The programming language R specializes in statistics and quantitative analysis and is therefore an ideal choice for the following procedure. An R script crawled all files for focalization annotation and organised them in a data frame, a data structure that consists of more than one column

of equal length that (other than a matrix) allows for data of all kinds, that is to say, both numerical values and characters in this instance. The R script then visualised focalization population in each graphic narrative, separated by predetermined intervals. These intervals were in some cases easier to identify than in others. In graphic novels such as *Persepolis* or *Watchmen*, intervals are equal to the books' chapters. Other graphic novels, such as *City of Glass* or *Batman: The Killing Joke*, resulted in separation by scenes, as both graphic novels have relatively congruous transitions between narrative units and scenery.

First, the script creates a list of files that stem from the assigned working directory (i.e. the directory where it locates all XML files for one book) and a data frame for page numbers and focalization annotation. R allows for the definition of variables with the characters `<-` . A variable is an individual command that users may define themselves. Hence, the following code shows a variety of variables with subsequent commands that define them:

```
files <-
  list.files(
    path = dir,
    pattern = "*.xml",
    full.names = T,
    recursive = FALSE
  )
result <- data.frame(page = vector(),
focalization = vector())
```

The variable `file` creates a list of files from the working directory (`path = dir`) and an XML pattern, uses full names, and `recursive = FALSE` rejects duplicate files. The resulting variable creates the data frame, which consists of two columns named `page` and `focalization` . Since students worked in groups, XML file names were sometimes inconsistent but at all times contained a page number that was the same as the corresponding comics page. To ensure the correct page order, the script searched file names for numericals and extracted them:

```
for (file in files) {
  matches <- regmatches(basename(file),
  gregexpr("[[:digit:]]+",basename(file)))
  page <- as.numeric(paste(unlist(matches),collapse=''))
result <- data.frame(page = vector(),
```

```
focalization = vector())
```

The command `for` creates a loop that iterates over all XML files in the directory. The variable `matches` consists of the commands `regmatches`, which extracts data, in this case from file names, and `gregexpr`, which searches for numericals within these file names. The variable `page` inside the aforementioned data frame then updates with only numericals (`as.numeric`), an important distinction in spreadsheets since the script might interpret the number 1, for example, both as the character otherwise spelled "one" (i.e. something representing letters) and as the numerical that is a real number between 0 and 2 (i.e. something representing values). Afterwards, the script crawls all XML files for panels and corresponding focalization:

```
doc = xmlTreeParse(file, useInternalNodes = TRUE)

panels <-
  getNodeSet(doc, path = "//*[name()='panel']")

for (p in panels) {
  foc <-     xmlGetAttr(p, "focalization")
  if(is.null(foc)){
    foc <- "external"
  }else if(foc=='') foc <- "external"
  if(nrow(result)==0) {
    result[1,] <- c(page, foc)
  }
  else result = rbind(result, c(page,foc))
}
}
```

Note that this entire section is still part of the loop that began in the section before. The `doc = xmlTreeParse` command "translates" the XML file into R-readable text. The variable `panels` then collects all instances of panel and focalization annotation: `getNodeSet(doc, path = „//*[name()=‚'panel']")` and a loop-within-a-loop then locates all focalization annotations within these panels and collects them in the variable `foc (xmlGetAttr (p, "focalization")`. The script identifies all empty and null values as default value, that is, external visual focalization,

```
if ( is . null ( foc ) ) {
    foc <- " external "
} else if ( foc == '') foc <- " external "
```

and fills all other entries with the respective annotation, that is, one of the four subtypes of internal visual focalization:

```
if ( nrow ( result )==0) {
    result [1 ,] <- c ( page , foc )
}
else result = rbind ( result , c ( page , foc ))
```

The commands `nrow` and `rbind` collect all instances of focalization annotation into the data frame `result` (a table of values of characters) after the script combined all instances of focalization annotation into a vector (a string of expressions) with the command `c` . Lastly, the script converts all page numbers into numerics and organizes the data into a bar plot:

```
result$page <- as . numeric ( result$page )

result$Interval <- cut ( result$page ,
                        breaks = c (0 ,5 ,10 ,15) ,
                        labels=c (" a "," b "," c "," d ") ,
                        right = FALSE)

newResult <- result\%>\% group_by ( Interval ,
                        focalization )\%>\% dplyr :: count ()

ggplot () + geom_bar ( aes ( y = n , x = Interval ,
                                fill = focalization ) ,
                                data = newResult ,
                                stat =" identity ")+
    theme_classic ( base_size = 24)+
    theme ( axis . text . x = element_text
                                ( angle = 45 ,
                                hjust = 1))
    +scale_fill_manual ( values = c (" # bfbfbf " ,
```

```
   "#cd5c5c","#6495ED","#32cd32","#debd47"))
```

`as.numeric` converts to numerics; the `$` sign specifies a column in the data frame results. The same applies to the next line, which creates intervals that split the entire graphic novel into separate bars in the resulting bar diagram with the command `cut`. `breaks` determines at which page each interval cuts off (in this example the intervals would be pages 1-4, 5-9, and 10-15), and `labels` applies a name to them in the diagram (in this example, the four intervals are named a, b, c, and d). The `right = FALSE` line determines that intervals are right-open and left-closed. The next line groups each value by focalization type and attributes a value. The `dplyr::count` command counts the number of occurrences in each group. `dplyr` is a plugin for R that contains a toolset for statistical data manipulation. The last bit of code creates the data visualization (`ggplot`). Several variables attached to `ggplot` specify a few details, for example which axis should visualize which data (`x = Interval` means that intervals line up across the x-axis), the font size for labels (`theme_classic(base_size = 24)`), the layout of the diagram (`element_text` specifies how text description attaches to each interval), and bar colors (hexadecimal color values that follow the command `scale_fill_manual`).

After customization of intervals and labels for every graphic novel, the script plots a bar diagram that shows the total population of focalization types for each scene. I will now present these visualizations for each graphic novel and discuss my results as they relate to existing qualitative analysis.

5.2 Corpus Analysis: Visual Focalization

5.2.1 Visual Focalization in *From Hell*, *Batman: The Killing Joke*, and *Watchmen*: Perspective-Takeover and Perspective-Clash

The following nine analyses of individual graphic narratives are grouped into three larger sections according to some overarching observations from the data. In this first group, the data show a general tendency towards subjective representation via the "spatial point of view" subcategory. While other instances of focalization in these three narratives will also be subject to discussion, annotators found a large number of visual focalization that presents a character's vantage point in the storyworld. However, the analysis also presents us with problems that reveal a more complex interaction between visual focalization, the storyworld's subjective representation, and the focalized characters. *From Hell*, in particular, carries many instances where the vantage point of its main antagonist veers into the unnatural and fantastical, and annotators accordingly marked these instances as "internal world representation." In direct comparison, *Batman: The Killing Joke* also applies internal focalization from the antagonist's vantage point, and both graphic novels thus portray individuals with perplexing but compelling psychological states. Lastly, *Watchmen* uses this depiction of convoluted psyches across a variety of characters to depict the same storyworld from wildly different mindsets. It is perhaps no surprise that all three graphic novels are by the same author, Alan Moore, who seems to entertain accounts of complex characters and the ideologies that they carry with them. As such, data analysis will show how focalization in these works are tied to characterization and immersion as regards the cognitive processes behind fictional individuals.

5.2.1.1 *From Hell*

Alan Moore's and Eddie Campbell's *From Hell* offered a simple solution for interval separation, that is, for splitting up the graphic novel into different segments and therefore into separate bars in the diagram. The graphic novel consists of fourteen chapters alongside a prologue and an epilogue. The vast difference in panel numbers from 63 in the prologue to 450 in chapter 9 derives from an equally large difference in chapter length. Moore and Campbell originally wrote From Hell in serialised form for the magazine *Taboo*. The increase in length in later chapters is due to a change of publication format. Moore and Campbell moved on to a stand-alone publication with Tundra Publishing and Kitchen Sink Press, which gave them more freedom in page length.
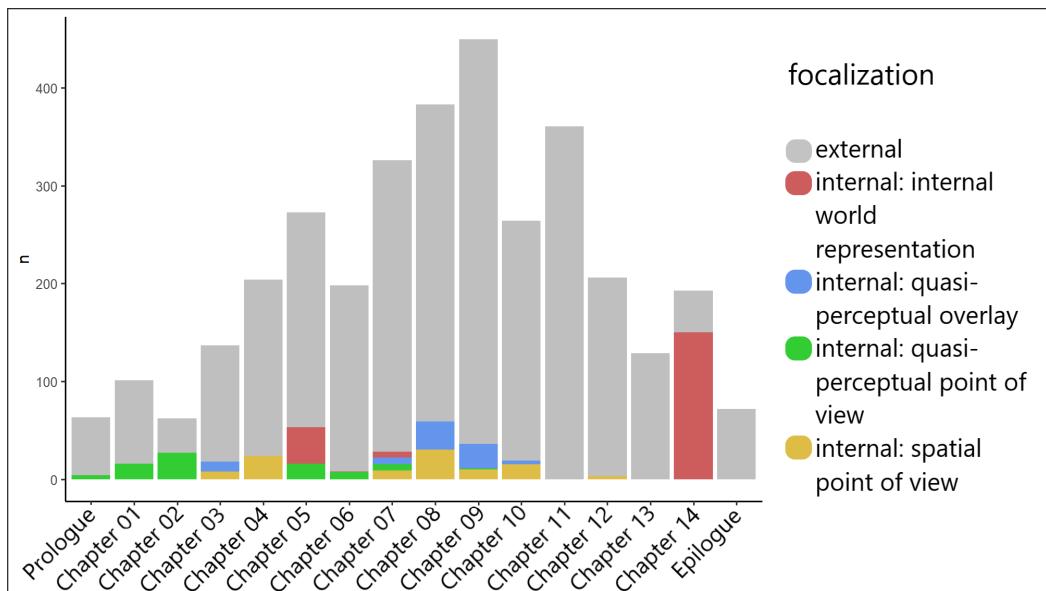
FIGURE 5.4: Focalization Visualization for *From Hell*.

Two features in the above graph immediately arrest attention: Chapter 14 almost exclusively uses internal world representation as its visual focalization mode; and chapter 7 uses every single mode of internal focalization, even though external focalization dominates. Other obvious trends include the abundance of "quasi-perceptual point of view" annotations in the first few chapters, which then swap places with "spatial point of view" annotations, and back again. These instances are simple enough to assess and students annotated them as such, although in some cases it seems that annotators used "quasi-perceptual point of view" and "spatial point of view" as interchangeable categories. The difficulty to decide which is which might also derive from *From Hell*'s prominent expressionist hatching style.

The two panels in fig. 5.5 and fig. 5.6 may serve as examples: Students annotated both panels as having "quasi-perceptual point of view." The panel on the right would leave annotators to conclude as such: While it is physically impossible that what the panel shows is the actual point of view of the character, it still implies that this vantage point is very close to the character's point of view to almost the point of congruity. The example on the left, however, leaves no reason to assume that what is shown is anything but the character's actual point of view. The angle and symmetric thumb/book placement would lead to the conclusion that this panel is a case of "spatial point of view." Still, drawing style and annotators' individual interpretation might imply otherwise. One of the main goals throughout the annotation seminar was to teach students that in some cases, there is no definitive right or wrong conclusion, that the four subtypes we used do not have immovable boundaries, and that, due to the lack of empirical evidence, these four subtypes might be in need of revision according to further studies.

FIGURE 5.5: *From Hell*, ch. One, p. 6.

FIGURE 5.6: *From Hell*, ch. Two, p.7.

Regardless, students correctly identified panels such as the two above as having some form of internal visual focalization present. One observation in relation to *From Hell*'s internal focalization is particularly interesting in terms of narrative: All chapters with "internal world representation" are chapters in which William Gull murders one of his victims (except for chapter 14, in which he himself dies).

Gull, the royal surgeon that *From Hell* identifies as being responsible for Jack the Ripper's killings, is acquainted with Freemasonry and, throughout the novel, draws from the occult and mystical as motive for his crimes. In chapter 4, Gull moves through London by horse-carriage to show his coachman and accomplice Netley that the city's architecture invokes a pentagram: "This pentacle of Sun Gods, obelisks and rational male fire, wherein unconsciousness, the Moon and womanhood are chained. Its lines of power and meaning must be reinforced, according to the ancient ways..." (Moore and Campbell ch. 4, p. 37). For an account about the accuracy of Moore's pentagram and London psychogeography, cf. *An Occult Psychogeography of Hawksmoor's London Churches* by Richter). This narrative passage emphasizes that *From Hell*'s London is essentially a magical realist place – it is Gull's London and plays by Gull's rules. As such, Gull's subjectivity and psychology roams around the entire city like his carriage in chapter 4. If read as synecdoche, *From Hell*'s Jack the Ripper represents an entire psychogeography (Ho and Powell provide two possible readings in this regard).

To Gull, his killings are a sacrifice to God. At certain points right before or after the murders, Gull experiences visions set in the late 20th century, a strange interruption of a narrative that paints a picture of Victorian-era London. Later, Gull reveals his

interpretation of these apparitions: "It is beginning, Netley. Only just beginning. For better or worse, the twentieth century. I have delivered it" (ch. 10, p. 33). His delusions unbind him from time, as he embraces his final victim — Mary Jane Kelley, although *From Hell*'s later implies it was one of Mary's lovers — with the words "I have made you safe from time, and we are wed in legend, inextricable within eternity" (ch. 10, p. 23). Just before his death in chapter 14, Gull travels through time, visits public figures such as William Blake and Robert Louis Stevenson, and supposedly ascends to the state of Godhood.

The annotations indicate that readers understood Gull's state as hallucinations. Chapter 14, more than any other part of the graphic novel, shows that most of the panels use internal visual focalization, more specifically internal world representation, to depict Gull's dying visions:

FIGURE 5.7: *From Hell*, ch. 14, p. 10.

In this chapter, Gull remains in his cell in an insane asylum, but he imagines a number of visits to places and people that he has either met in his life or that had become important to him. Fig. 5.7 shows a passage in which his travelling mind descends upon William Blake, one of his favorite poets, who is terrified of the strange apparition. Moore works one of Blake's nightmares into his narrative, a vision of a

scaly phantom which he reportedly saw once in his home (Ackroyd 185). The panels in fig. 5.7 are a striking example for "internal world representation," although the position of Gull's hands in the panel would rather indicate a spatial point of view, as per the previous chapter's findings. Instead, annotators identified that Gull's physical presence around Blake is quite impossible, which readers of the book determine by Gull's physical presence in his cell earlier in the chapter, or by deeming it impossible that Gull would actually be alive at the same time as Blake, or both.

The annotations offer a similar, but shorter, "internal world representation" in chapter 7, just before Gull murders sex worker Annie Chapman. He takes Chapman into a backyard and comes across a window in which he spots several items of twentieth-century paraphernalia such as a television set and a Marilyn Monroe poster along with a tenant in decidedly non-Victorian clothes (cf. fig. 5.8). As is the case in chapter 14, Gull's experience here is mostly isolated from the surrounding narrative. Chapman's last word „No" is a denial of Gull's question: "... did you see anything? ... through that window?" (Moore and Campbell Ch. 7, p. 25), which indicates that she either did not see what Gull saw or did not pay attention to it.

FIGURE 5.8: *From Hell*, ch. 7, p. 24.

It is an important question for focalization annotation in *From Hell* whether Gull imagines all these moments. In terms of data consistency, a curious diversion from these passages' annotations appears in chapter 10, in which Gull envisions a 1990's office (fig. 5.9). Students annotated the scene not as "internal world representation" but as "quasi-perceptual overlay." This assessment goes in the opposite direction of previous examples' discussion, since the rest of the data indicates an assessment of "internal world representation" throughout. In a way, then, the assessment in question interprets Gull's and *From Hell*'s psychogeography differently, since within the narrative, readers are left to conclude for themselves whether the time-bending effects of Gull's

occult murders really occur in the storyworld, or whether they are part of his insanity (cf. Coppin for an analysis of gaze, subjectivity, and the uncanny in Gull's portrayal and his visions' ontological indeterminacy). As an open-ended mystery that concerns the state of reality and the state of Gull's mind in these scenes, both interpretations are certainly possible. On the one hand, students who annotated these scenes as "internal world representations" conclude that Gull is insane and his ritual murders the result of his insanity. On the other hand, students who annotated these scenes as "quasi-perceptual overlay" interpret the scenario as "real" within the realms of *From Hell*'s storyworld.

As such, the former interpretation would classify occult elements in *From Hell* solely as Gull's imagination with no bearings on the "real" world. The latter interpretation, however, would essentially state that Gull succeeded in his intentions: He brought forth the twentieth century as he saw it, and prolonged a world of misogyny and patriarchy. Such disparate conclusions might not change *From Hell*'s fundamental narrative, but they certainly impinge on the question whether *From Hell* ultimately shares an optimistic or a pessimistic outlook on Jack the Ripper's aftermath. And certainly this outlook falls back on each individual reader's, or annotator's, narrative and thematic understanding. In any case, *From Hell*'s establishes an inextricable link between subjectivity as narrative technique and narrative themes such as madness and the occult. The data on focalization support this argument. Internal visual focalization coincides with pivotal plot progression (Gull's murders) and provides a gateway into a character's mind that is so far removed from most readers' experience that it would make any rendering of such a character impossible otherwise. Moreover, the interpretation of these data reveal that the cognitive understanding of focalization itself is an act of interpretation. Annotators came to conclusions about Gull and his state of mind that other readers might not share. In this sense, focalization is a kind of interpretation that is open to quantification.

FIGURE 5.9: *From Hell*, ch. 10, p. 20.

5.2.1.2   *Batman: The Killing Joke*
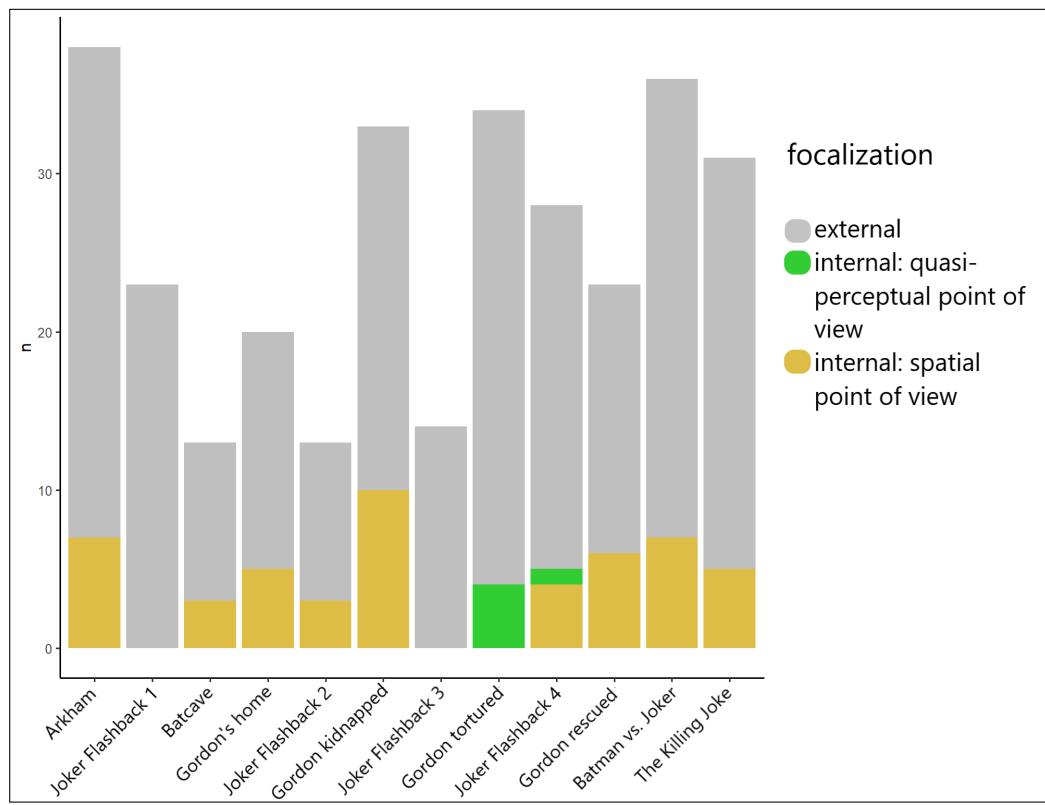
FIGURE 5.10: Focalization Visualization for *Batman: The Killing Joke*,
dataset A.

Two groups annotated *Batman: The Killing Joke* by Alan Moore and Brian Bolland separately. The comic book is thus among only two entries in this corpus with exactly two datasets, the other being *Signal to Noise* (cf. later in this chapter). Unlike *Signal to Noise*'s datasets, the two sets for *Batman: The Killing Joke* are almost completely consistent in their assessment. Firstly, the annotation data show that both groups identified exactly the same number of panels. This assessment is most likely due to a more orthodox use of panel frames and layouts in *Batman: The Killing Joke* which, in comparison to *Signal to Noise*, leaves little room for interpretation as to what exactly constitutes a panel on any given page. In contrast to Dave McKean's use of montage and collage, Bolland's page layout shows anything between four and nine clearly delineated panels per page, and is thus more comparable to Moore's other entry in this corpus, and the next analysis following this one, *Watchmen*. Secondly, both groups almost universally agree as to the specific use of focalization in the comic book. *Batman: The Killing Joke* uses a number of "spatial points of view" in all but two sequences; the only disagreement is the use of "internal world representation," which will be discussed below. As a side note, *Batman: The Killing Joke* offers no subheadings or chapters throughout
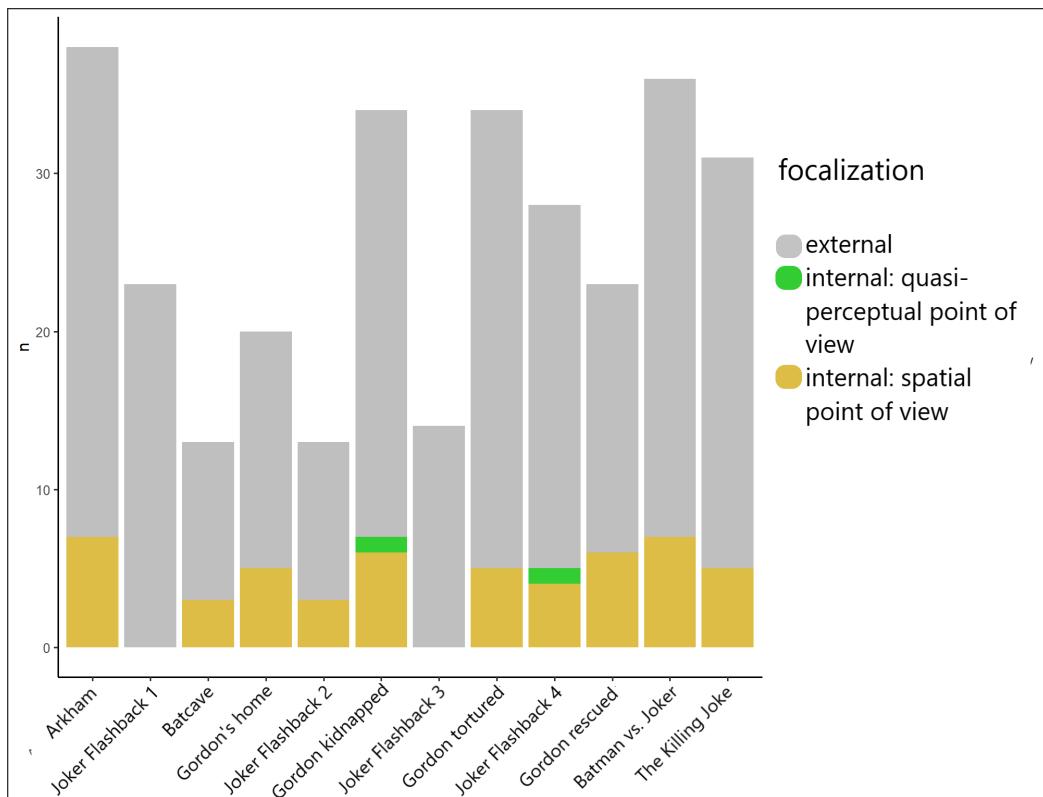
FIGURE 5.11: Focalization Visualization for *Batman: The Killing Joke*, dataset B.

its narrative, as is the case for other graphic novels discussed here, such as *Jimmy Corrigan* or *Gemma Bovery*. Compartmentalization of the narrative for this analysis stems from separating the comic into segments that are consistent with the plot's progression. As an example, the narrative contains four intermissions which tell the Joker's origin story. I separated these flashbacks into narrative "chunks" – even though they portray themes and visuals that tie back to other parts in the story, they comprise a clearly distinct narrative unit.

As the only graphic narrative in this analysis that is part of the superhero genre, the comic book perhaps calls for some contextualization as to its importance in the larger Batman mythos. *Batman: The Killing Joke* has been deemed a quintessential Batman story since its first publication in 1988 for two main reasons: 1) the Batman canon – *Batman: The Killing Joke* depicts the assault of Barbara Gordon, up until that point Batgirl, at the hands of the Joker. Barbara is hospitalized and subsequently left paraplegic. In later Batman comics, Barbara then assumes the "Oracle" identity and becomes Batman's technical support and intelligence provider throughout his adventures. The events in *Batman: The Killing Joke* are thus seminal to the decades-long overarching Batman lore. 2) Tone and themes: Moore's treatment of classic superhero characters is revisionist in the sense that he imparts psychological

depth to heroes and villains who before had been little more than pastiches of traditional good-vs-evil tropes. *Batman: The Killing Joke* falls in with other Moore works (*Miracleman*, *Swamp Thing*, *Watchmen*) and comics by other writers such as Grant Morrison and Neil Gaiman, which form the so-called "British Invasion" of the 1980s and early 1990s. Comics of the time, and in particular those by DC, saw a dramatic shift towards realist, character-driven reimaginings of both popular and forgotten superheroes. *Batman: The Killing Joke*, in particular, introduced the idea that Batman and his nemesis Joker are two sides of the same coin in terms of obsession and proclivity to violence, as well as depicting the Joker as an artist figure (Carpenter 165). Given the comic book's title, it is not surprising, then, that the narrative focuses on the Joker, whereas Batman is almost reduced to a secondary character. The psychological foundation for Joker's motivations in *Batman: The Killing Joke* has found its way into the larger Batman canon just as much as Barbara Gordon's fate, and echoes of the book's character study are to be found in other media to this day; neither Heath Ledger's Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008) nor Joaquim Phoenix' portrayal in *Joker* (2019) would be possible without Moore's and Bolland's *Batman: The Killing Joke*.

FIGURE 5.12: *Batman: The Killing Joke*, pp. 4 and 10.

With these preliminaries in mind, annotators assessed the majority of internal focalization as "spatial point of view" with some minor segments as "quasi-perceptual point of view." The data are unique to this corpus in so far as they lack any kind of "quasi-perceptual overlay" or "internal world representation." Moore and Bolland realize the "spatial point of view" internal focalization almost exclusively from the perspective of characters which readers would associate with being "good" characters. What is more, there seems to be a tendency towards using this mode of focalization whenever characters look at the Joker directly or at objects that represent his presence. Figure

5.12 shows two instances in which annotators assessed "spatial point of view" for two panels from Batman's perspective. In the first, he visits the "Joker" at Arkham Asylum only to find out that he is an impostor and that the real Joker has long escaped from imprisonment. In the second, Batman is in his cave, gathering clues as to the Joker's whereabouts, with a Joker playing card in his hand. Both instances are standard examples of simultaneous features which imply the presence of internal visual focalization: Batman's hands are visible from a perspective which suggests that what readers see and what Batman sees are equivalent. Surrounding panels also provide further context as to Batman's position in the scene, so both represent "spatial point of view." In the larger context, the first scene also provides a rare instance of "spatial point of view" from the Joker's perspective and in a similar fashion to Batman's point of view in the example above.

First-time readers would be unaware of the fact that this conversation takes place with a faux Joker, and, as mentioned above, the majority of "spatial point of view" panels relate to "good" characters' vantage points. That being said, one of Moore and Bolland's themes in *Batman: The Killing Joke* is to question notions of good and bad. Rather than merely pitting Batman and the Joker against each other in a high-stakes brawl (which they still do), the narrative concerns itself more with the psychology of their characters; and whether these characters might be similarly emotionally damaged, even though they are on opposite sides of a moral scale (cf. Zullo's study "What's Diagnosis Got to Do With it?" for an analysis of mental health in *Batman: The Killing Joke*).

On these grounds, the question presents itself if "spatial point of view" as a formal narrative feature connects with an immersive experience, or more precisely, whether readers identify with "spatial point of view" representations of subjectivity. By this assumption, we might expect some form of internal focalization to occur during the Joker's tragic backstory: both criminals and the police harass him, his pregnant wife dies, and he suffers an accident that turns him into a psychopath. Looking at the data, it seems that Moore and Bolland do not use internal focalization consistently to make readers empathize with the Joker – the rare instance of internal focalization does not appear to immerse readers in his struggle. Both annotation data show that "spatial point of view" – and generally internal focalization – is less frequent in the Joker's flashback sequences than in other sequences in the book. Figure 5.13 depicts two such panels: The left panel shows similar techniques to the examples above with the Joker's hands in the bottom middle, and the right panel uses "quasi-perceptual point of view" since the Joker is wearing a red cylinder-shaped helmet in this scene and struggles to see correctly.

FIGURE 5.13: *Batman: The Killing Joke*, pp. 16 and 29.

At first glance, these rare occurrences of internal focalization with the Joker as focalized character provide no insight as to his psychological frame of reference, few and far between as they are. But a direct comparison with the internal focalization of other characters offers a possible interpretation. Most point of view shots show the Joker directly opposite the focalized character, either actually present or represented by symbols (cf. above in fig. 5.12), but in both cases as a menace and immediate danger to the characters' own or somebody else's wellbeing. If these cases always submit particular characters to dread or present a menace, then it can be argued that the two panels in fig. 5.13 are no different. Both panels show the criminals which exhort the Joker to rob a playing card company, a crime which he, at that point, is hesitant to commit as he does not want to endanger himself or his pregnant wife. Hence, the immediate threat to the Joker in both sequences are the two criminals in front of him, an observation that is only reinforced later when the two criminals leave the Joker to confront Batman all by himself and the Joker sees Batman through his red hood, stylized in the very same manner as in the right panel in fig. 5.13.

Essentially, *Batman: The Killing Joke* uses internal focalization to represent the confrontation of its characters with immediate and insurmountable danger. In most cases, this danger is the Joker, as he threatens Barbara, Jim Gordon, and Batman – to the Joker, in his flashbacks, this danger is a duo of crooks and later Batman. This interpretation of the data takes into consideration the absence of internal focalization when the Joker functions as a focalized character later in the narrative; he has become a chaotic villain with little to worry about (Batman being the singular exception), the "Clown Prince of Crime." Yet the comic still ostensibly entertains the Joker as the protagonist and thus as a character worthy of identification. One of the comic book's most popular quotes – "All it takes is one bad day to reduce the sanest man alive to

FIGURE 5.14: *Batman: The Killing Joke*, pp. 13 and 43.

lunacy" – refers to all major characters, Barbara Gordon (shot and hospitalised), Jim Gordon (tortured), Batman (orphaned at a very young age), and also the Joker. Thus, through very minimal means of subjective representation, *Batman: The Killing Joke* suggests that superhero comic book characters may be traditionally good or evil, but most of all, they are human (West 97).

Moore and Bolland may use internal focalization as a tool to convey this danger, but they combine it with another narrative technique that Groensteen calls *diachronical braiding* (Groensteen 147): the anaphoric referencing of visual representation across pages throughout a single graphic narrative. For example, the left panel in fig. 5.13 shows the two criminals with a bowl of crayfish which they break open before eating. In the scene preceding this one, the Joker shoots Barbara Gordon, breaking her spine. All flashback scenes contain several such instances of braiding, but the example that relates most to focalization occurs in the present-day narrative. Both Barbara Gordon and Batman, at different points in the story, look into the barrel of the Joker's revolver (fig. 5.14). Although the outcome is different – the Joker shoots Barbara Gordon but while confronting Batman, he uses a toy gun that shoots a piece of paper printed with the words "Click Click Click" – the anaphoric reference not only creates suspense but also establishes a sense of omnipresent threat for the comic book's "good" characters.

In addition, by referencing each other through their representation of internal focalization, both Barbara's and Batman's facial expressions invite comparison in their fear of the Joker. Barbara looks surprised, shocked, and helpless, whereas Batman, here seen towards the end of the conflict, seems calm and unfazed. An embedded use of internal focalization thus creates both immersive identification with a given character on a narrative level but also offers a response to themes and topoi on a discourse level.

5.2.1.3 *Watchmen*
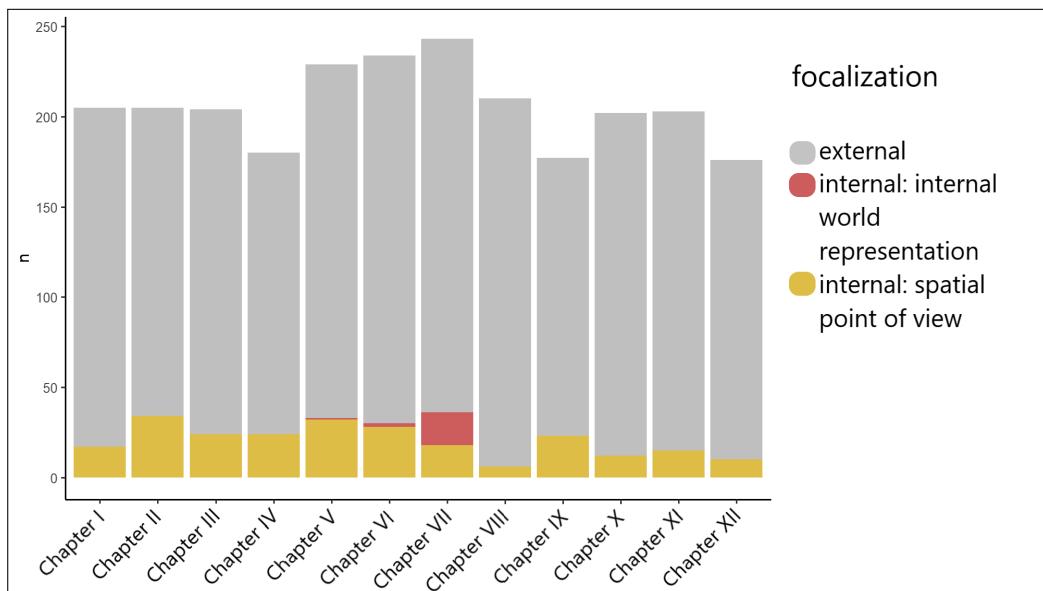
FIGURE 5.15: Focalization Visualization for *Watchmen*.

Results for *Watchmen* show remarkable consistency and lack of subtype diversity at the same time. Students annotated the majority of internal visual focalization occurrences as „spatial point of view," which implies that *Watchmen* uses a somewhat conventional narrative technique that focuses on visual perception instead of cognition. In addition, while instances of internal focalization spread across all chapters within a range of approximately ten to forty panels, focalized characters vary from chapter to chapter. Contrary to results from single character-driven graphic narratives such as memoirs (*Persepolis*) or detective novels (*City of Glass*), in which the majority of internal focalization instances traces back to the protagonist's perspective, *Watchmen*'s internal focalization instead switches between a number of characters between chapters or even over the course of a single chapter. Writer Alan Moore and artist Dave S. Gibbons created a group of characters in *Watchmen* who — like many other earlier Moore scripts — are not so much actual characters as they are stand-ins for schools of philosophy or ideologies. For example, antagonist Ozymandias largely represents ideas that are present in Randian libertarianism: Execution of both corporate and personal freedom and the free market as well as a moral relativism that leads him to sacrifice humans for „the greater Good." By contrast, Rorschach's view on the world is one of philosophical existentialism and moral dualism; to him, there is no grey between the lines, and his own mask (or, as he calls it, his „face") symbolizes this notion: „Black and white. Moving, changing shape . . . but not mixing. No gray" (Moore and Gibbons VI, 10).

Internal focalization occurs most often from Rorschach's point of view, which perhaps indicates whose perspective we are meant to take as readers. The above quote and its related panel in figure 5.16 present one such instance. Chapter VI in *Watchmen* is particularly notable for using this technique — the chapter tells of Rorschach's origin story and follows him through extended conversations with a prison psychiatrist. The latter, Dr. Malcolm Long, shares some instances of internal focalization with Rorschach during shot / reverse shot-type dialogue. While these panels are not as obviously marked as the above example, they create suspense between two characters who are, again, more or less defined by the idea that they represent. Dr. Long, motivated by the prospect of fame and respectability in his field, attempts to create a psychological profile;

FIGURE 5.16: *Watchmen* ch. VI, p. 10.

Rorschach, immovable, reflects on his life and his own motivation's origins. The choice to show both character's faces from the front, as opposed to an over-the-shoulder shot, increases a feeling of hostility between the two:

FIGURE 5.17: *Watchmen* ch. VI, p. 7.

Visual focalization in this chapter is, essentially, a clash of personalities, portrayed from the spatial point of view of each combatant (note the appearance of hands at the bottom of each panel). This clash ultimately leads to a win for Rorschach when the chapter ends, not from Rorschach's spatial point of view but from Rorschach's

ideological point of view. Dr. Long looks at the blot tests that he gives to his patients (an associative exercise; Rorschach sees only violence and the trauma it has wrought in his life) and identifies with Rorschach much more than he did before his interviews.

FIGURE 5.18: *Watchmen* ch. VI, p. 28.

This Rorschach chapter ostensibly shows how focalization in *Watchmen* is linked to ideology and to matters of obsession. Rorschach wins over Dr. Long not by force, or by cult of personality, but through ideological rigidity. The Rorschach blot test, arguably more a narrative trope in fiction than actual psychological assessment, is open to interpretation by design; not so much Rorschach's view of the world. The antihero's unwavering nihilism defeats the malleable optimism of a doctor looking for recognition, which the final panel in chapter VI (fig. 5.18) represents in text and image. Dr. Long's point of view becomes a facsimile of Rorschach's point of view, almost in congruence with the panel in fig. 5.18: "[. . .] a picture of empty meaningless blackness." The only difference is one of interpretation. While Rorschach recognizes the dualistic beauty of such an image, Dr. Long fails to contrast the meaningless blackness that he sees against the white backdrop behind it — which Moore and Gibbons emphasize by casting the card in a grey halflight, a colour that is completely absent in Rorschach's equivalent admiration of his future mask. In this sense, Rorschach is not only the ideological winner in this chapter, he is also the superior "Watchman," that is, the superior perceiver and interpreter of his surroundings.

Chapter IV employs a similar use of internal focalization for purposes of ideological relativism. The focus is on Dr. Manhattan, alone on the surface of Mars, who remembers events from his past life. Due to Dr. Manhattan's unique perception of time — he experiences past, present, and future simultaneously — the chapter is a collage of memories that he lives through as he narrates them, as is indicated by the use
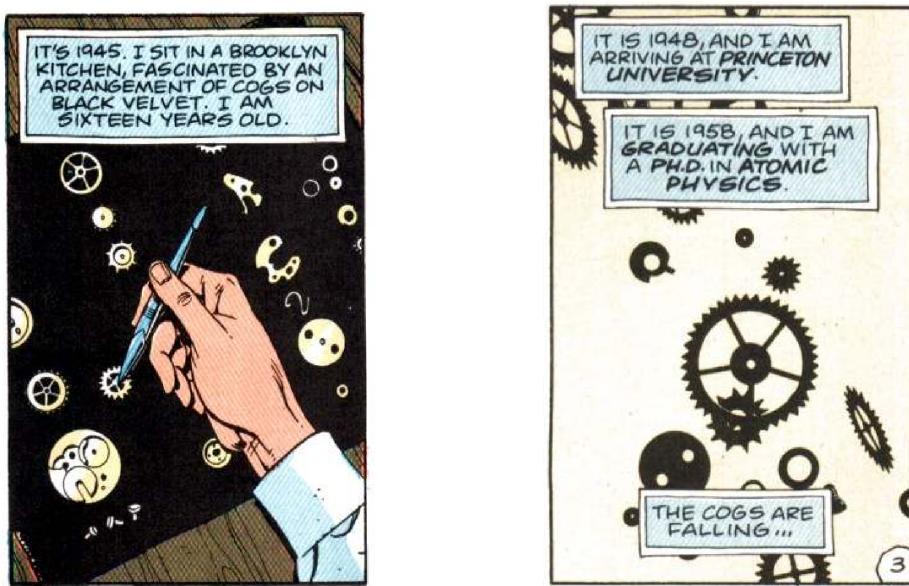
FIGURE 5.19: *Watchmen* ch. IV, pp. 2-3.

of present tense in the text. Much as in chapter VI, Moore and Gibbons use internal focalization to draw attention to objects that are central to Dr. Manhattan's view on life. The chapter focuses on teleology versus entropy as represented by two sets of objects, the cogs of a pocket watch and an old photograph. Both concepts are tied to the watchmaker analogy and the motion of falling. In turn, both of these falling motions are observed by Dr. Manhattan.

The watchmaker analogy posits that since reality has specific designs, there must be an agent creating these designs. The analogy enters *Watchmen* when Dr. Manhattan in his youth, then still Jon Osterman, tries to assemble a pocketwatch, a trade that he expects to inherit from his father. He would later become a physicist when his father tells him about the US's attack on Hiroshima and urges him to abandon watch repairments, since "Professor Einstein says that time differs from place to place. Can you imagine? If time is not true, what purpose have Watchmakers, Hein?" (Although never made explicit, "Hein" is a nickname for "Heinrich" and most likely Jon's given name before his parents emigrated from Germany).

His father throws the watch's cogs over the balcony. Years later and transformed into a quasi-omnipotent being, Dr. Manhattan stands on the surface of Mars and throws away a photograph of himself and his former lover Janey Slater. The two instances are intertwined in the chapter, both thematically and aesthetically. As to the concept of time, they relate to Dr. Manhattan's view of the world: Although he is able to look into past, present, and future all at the same time, *making sense of it seems impossible to him*. The human that remains in him is as helpless piecing together the occurrences
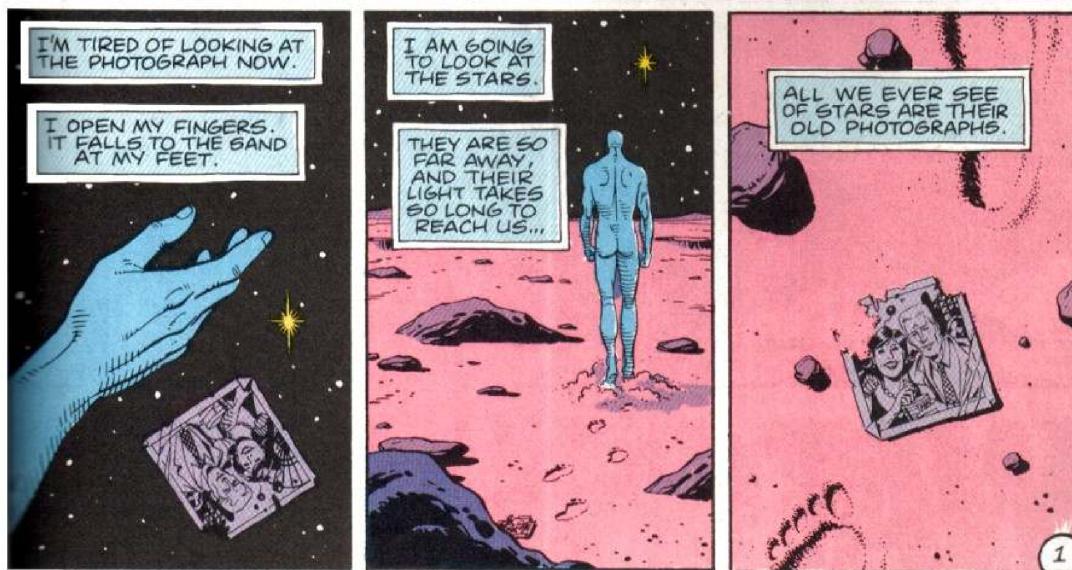
FIGURE 5.20: *Watchmen* ch. IV, p. 1.

in his life to make sense, to create causality, as his teenage self was unable to put together the pieces of a pocket watch. Similarly, his relationship with Slater came to an end when he betrayed her with Laurie Juspeczyk (Silk Spectre) and could not piece together the complex emotional toll it took on his former lover. While teleology posits a straight arrow of causal events leading up to some designer's intention, Dr. Manhattan's world is one of entropy, in which things inevitably fall apart: "I am standing on a fire escape in 1945, reaching out to stop my father, take the cogs and flywheels from him, piece them all together again ... But it is too late, always has been, always will be too late" (IV, 28). With that in mind, Dr. Manhattan's fate is all the more tragic, as his entropy is not one that eventually culminates in the heat death of the universe but in perpetual unraveling. In chapter XII, Ozymandias and Dr. Manhattan share their last scene. Ozymandias, whose plan to reunite the world under a common enemy put most of *Watchmen*'s plot into motion, asks him: "I did the right thing, didn't I? It all worked out in the end," to which Dr. Manhattan responds: "'In the end?' Nothing ends, Adrian. Nothing ever ends" (XII, 27). Ozymandias is thus Manhattan's ideological counterpart: scheming, planning, moving towards a certain goal. Dr. Manhattan, on the other side, recognizes the futility behind such goals, since he has seen his own world fall apart at least twice — the cogs of the watch and the photograph.

This woldview is realized through visual focalization. Fig. 5.19 and 5.20 show both events in Dr. Manhattan's life through his point of view. The annotation data show that the panels in question (the view of the cogs and the photograph) contain internal visual focalization alongside accompanying panels such as Osterman looking down on the cogs, as implied by the position of his hand. It is further noteworthy that the data for specific panels acknowledge the shifting between internal and external

focalization in this chapter (for example in fig. 5.20). An earlier panel in which Dr. Manhattan still holds the photograph in his hands, is marked as having internal visual focalization ("spatial point of view"), whereas panel three in fig. 5.20, for example, is marked as having external visual focalization. This decision is evident: Manhattan walks away from the photograph one panel before and the photograph is surrounded by his footprints. While these markers clearly imply external focalization on the surface, the specific choice of a vantage point as if someone was still looking at the photograph may also refer to the immediacy of past and future events in Dr. Manhattan's mind. In fact, one might apply this interpretation to Manhattan's perception of time as not unlike the pages of a comic book iself — both linear (reading panel by panel) and simultaneous (the whole page layout). Rather fittingly, Grant Morrison applied this interpretation in an allusion to *Watchmen* in his and Frank Quitely's comic book "Pax Americana #1" with a character who comments on reading comics in exactly these two ways. Under these circumstances, classification for any kind of focalization would face serious problems, since omnipotent beings might very well observe any kind of situation from any kind of vantage point (falling in line with the debate surrounding a "monstrator" in visual media, a visually narrating entity), and disambiguations between internal and external visual focalization would become a moot point for as long as any given narrative contains such an omnipotent figure.

Similar to the earlier Rorschach example, the decision to use "spatial point of view" reinforces *Watchmen*'s negotiation of clashing ideologies. The narrative in *Watchmen* thus produces certain "waypoints" of subjectivity interspersed between the seemingly objective portrayal of its storyworld. The outcome is the dissolution of such objectivity: Everything becomes relative. When the "heroes" make a pact towards the end of the graphic novel to keep the murder of millions of New Yorkers a secret so that there may be peace on Earth, Rorschach dies at the hands of Dr. Manhattan. Rorschach's dealing in absolutes has no place in a world of such moral relativism. A "tension between the suggestions of omniscience [...], on the one hand, and the curiously limited knowledge [...] of the spectator who seems to embody that perspective, on the other" (Horstkotte and Pedri 28) ends, at least thematically, in favor of the latter. Curiously, *Watchmen* does not achieve this (arguably pessimistic) outlook on subjectivity and relativism by presenting its readers with visual representations of inner worlds or delusions. The characters' points of view, focus on objects (Rorschach's fascination with the dress that would become his mask, Dr. Manhattan's obsession with cogs and clockwork), and interpretations of the observable world deviate so much from each other that anything more introspective seems unnecessary. Students only found rare

occurrences of "internal world representation" in chapters V, VI, and VII: In the first two, a few panels show subjective interpretation or memories and the latter has an extended nightmare sequence by Dan Dreiberg (Nite Owl).

As a test case for empirical focalization, *Watchmen* thus teaches us a lot more than how graphic narratives use form and structure to activate traditional cognitive-linguistic concepts such as cues, cultural context, and inferences (all of which White-Schwoch and Rapp thoroughly analyze in their article "Comprehending Comics and Graphic Novels: Watchmen as a Case for Cognition"). Presenting Rorschach's spatial point of view goes beyond being a narrative trick to maintain the mystery of Rorschach's true identity — until the end of chapter V, an unmasked Rorschach is present in some panels, but first-time readers are only able to make the connection halfway through. Beyond the narrative level, *Watchmen* is concerned with interpretation and embodiment. Events in the characters' past shape their motivations, make them who they are — there is a deterministic quality to the book's predisposition that these characters have no control over their lives, only insofar as they interpret it: Dr. Manhattan's life passes through his mind in its entirety, yet it has always been and will always be the same life with the same mistakes and grievances.

In this regard, assessing focalization techniques in *Watchmen* invites amalgamation between close reading and quantitative methods, but it also highlights the fallibility (or fluidity) of such empirical processes. In other words, a dataset such as the one presented for this graphic novel may reveal certain strategies of focalization, but such a revelation is reliant on interpretation, and thus relative. By that same notion, characters' ontologies such as Rorschach's black-and-white worldview or Dr. Manhattan's entropic struggle are relative to their observations of the same world. Individual interpretations may vary wildly, just like *Watchmen*'s characters show us, and to come to some form of mutual conclusion, it seems necessary to contest these individual interpretations. A singular and isolated point of view will never be able to tell the whole picture; many vantage points are necessary in order to establish patterns.

As such, it bears repeating that narratological annotation schemata also need several vantage points. The data used here can only showcase potential for further investigations — a comprehensive view on visual focalization in any given graphic narrative requires a much larger repository of data. With this in mind, what we can learn from this limited dataset is quite assertive: Visual elements in graphic narratives such as *Watchmen* achieve much more than simply showing the point of view of a certain character; rather, they reveal complex interdependencies of narrative, immersion, and thematic tropes.

5.2.2 Focalization and Self-Image: Visions of Oneself in *Gemma Bovery*, *City of Glass*, and *Maus*

The next set of graphic narratives share formal characteristics which, in turn, inform subjective representation. In the data, this interaction is mostly reflected in the use of "spatial point of view" and "internal world representation." *Gemma Bovery*, for example, contains multiple passages in which focalization changes based on unusual characteristics on the discourse level. Our group found many instances in which images inside a thought bubble provided readers with information as to characters' obsession with their own self-image or images of others. Likewise, *City of Glass* alters a character's appearance, ranging from a change in clothing to substituting them completely with abstract items. Some examples verge on the surreal, adding to this image of self various notions of delusion and, eventually, loss of self. Lastly, *Maus* applies this technique on a historical scale. As a passed down memoir of the Holocaust, details in the representation of events and actions rely on a single individual's recollection and on his personal strategies of coping with trauma and prejudices. As such, the data for these graphic narratives convey a compelling adjustment to Genette's original focalizing question considering that instances of internal focalization in the following do not ask "Who sees" but rather "How do I see myself and others?"

5.2.2.1 *Gemma Bovery*
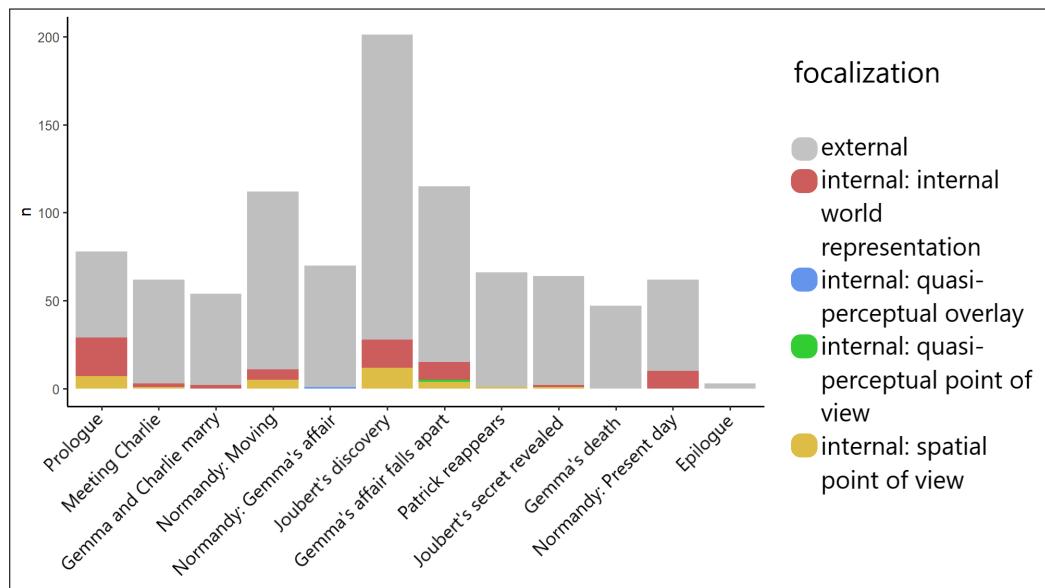
FIGURE 5.21: Focalization Visualization for *Gemma Bovery*.

Annotation data for Posy Simmonds' *Gemma Bovery* show that a majority of internal visual focalization amounts to "internal world representation." Although all four subtypes are to be found in the data, "spatial point of view" is considerably less frequent in comparison to other analyses in the corpus, and the two remaining subtypes, "quasi-perceptual point of view" and "quasi-perceptual overlay" only occur in one instance, respectively. The results thus imply that readers do not seem to regard marked cases of focalization as a major device of the visual narrative, which might relate to the novel's unique approach to multimodal storytelling. Although the book contains many pages that are conventional comic book pages, other pages combine large chunks of verbal first-person narrative with images that are more emblematic in the sense that they contribute to atmosphere but not necessarily to narrative understanding. As such, Simmonds' book might also classify as an illustrated novel, especially in light of her other works, which include illustrated children's books. More than elsewhere, the verbal mode dominates storytelling and in so doing emphasizes subjective representation for both verbal and visual modes. In contrast to other graphic narratives discussed here, this stylistic choice makes it inevitable to discuss how the visual mode implies subjectivity not in connection with but largely superimposed by the surrounding text.

The book's prologue provides one such example. *Gemma Bovery*'s main narrator, French baker Joubert, tells the reader in medias res of Gemma's tragic ending, without disclosing any narrative details as to her demise. He feels ashamed and responsible for Gemma's death as he visits her husband Charlie and discovers her diaries, a loosely-bound stack of notebooks. He removes a number of these notebooks to find out whether she wrote about any (as of yet unknown) secrets that might compromise him. Joubert then sits at home and studies Gemma's diaries with a French-English dictionary (the two languages feature prominently in the narrative) and imagines her life as she describes it: "I imagine her lying there counting her mistakes. Three bad choices: wrong husband, wrong house, wrong place. Of course she no longer wants to have a child with Charlie" (Simmonds 6).

In terms of text-image interaction, the narrative operates differently than one would expect from traditional graphic narratives: Joubert's thoughts fill the left side of the page and are isolated from the images on the right side (fig. 5.22). A graphic narrative that was less indebted to the formal characteristics of an illustrated novel would perhaps accompany panels with Joubert's monologue split up between captions, which in turn would allow for a more immediate interaction between text and image. Not so in *Gemma Bovery*: What the reader sees in the images is merely what Joubert mentions, no more and no less. Although this method does not render either mode unnecessary, it does seemingly reduce text-image interaction. To be more precise, the verbal mode seems to superimpose its narrative upon the images – the reading direction suggests

Several times in this diary Gemma mentions her insomnia.

I imagine her lying there counting her mistakes. Three bad choices: wrong husband, wrong house, wrong place.

Of course she no longer wants to have a child with Charlie. The image which used to entrance her in London – of blossom-scented air and tiny clothes drying in the orchard – is now appalling. She would die of boredom buried in Normandy, and so would the baby, when it grew. She knows this from her stepchildren's visits – Charlie's kids. Their holidays are her constant dread.

She writes a lot about Charlie. He looks a mess. He's clumsy, insensitive, distant. She can't talk to him. He bores her.

I would agree with the first charge. Charlie is not *soigné*. He's quite smelly, of tobacco, and the glue and varnishes he works with. His old sports shoes break every rule of hygiene.

But clumsy? I have seen him polishing in his workshop. He becomes almost graceful, his hand sweeping and looping over the surfaces. But perhaps he only loves wood. Perhaps he never caressed Gemma like that. Perhaps he never held her in the tender way he holds a Louis XVI *bergère*.

FIGURE 5.22: *Gemma Bovery*, p. 6.

that it is only after the verbal mode narrates Joubert's thoughts that the images present these same thoughts. Fittingly, annotators assessed this passage to represent "internal world representation" from Joubert's perspective.

The first panel in figure 5.22 provides no visual markers to make readers assume any sort of internal focalization. It simply shows Gemma and Charlie lying in bed, their bedroom seems to be no different from its other depictions in the book, and there are no apparent framing devices to indicate subjective representation. Yet Joubert explicitly tells the reader that he imagines this scenario. The contextual marker for internal visual focalization emerges not from surrounding panels, as analyses of other works in the corpus have shown, but from the verbal narrative that accompanies it. The next panel – Gemma Bovery is holding her infant child in her arms – reinforces this kind of narrative interaction. Again, no contextual or simultaneous marker in the visual mode implies that this panel stems from Joubert's imagination. First-time readers would most likely assume that this panel portrays the book's base reality. Further evidence that the panels' use of "internal world representation" comes from Joubert's monologue: "She would die of boredom buried in Normandy, and so would the baby, when it grew" (6). No such baby ever appears after the prologue and Joubert's monologue, although he mentions that he imagines these scenes, does not explicitly comment on the panel's veracity within the storyworld. Instead, this hypothetical – that Gemma and her baby would die in Normandy – is among a number of (at this point) new details about Gemma's life which are true: Charlie's change in personality after moving to France, or her stepchildren and their visits. In fact, the narrative marks this hypothetical ("would") but uses indicatives for other assertions. Meanwhile, the visual mode uses no such markers: The panel in question is not framed as hypotheticals conventionally are (cloudy panel frames), yet annotators still assessed the panel as "internal world representation." This finding points towards a link between verbal mode – and, consequentially, its diegetic status and focalization – and visual focalization, which has so far been neglected in the analysis. Several interpretations are possible: It might be that the longer a text passage, the more it influences visual focalization; short captions in traditional graphic narratives might not carry as much influence on a reader's assessment of subjectivity's visual representation. While this study focuses on the latter, *Gemma Bovery* provides evidence that it is impossible to separate a narrative's images from their verbal counterparts – both modes are, after all, interlinked during the reader's meaning-making process, and this applies to focalization(s) as much as it does to all narratorial phenomena in graphic narrative.

Gemma Bovery exhibits "internal world representation" without any visual markers in the above example, yet other instances show the same focalization subtype with the aforementioned conventional indicators. At a few points in the novel, Simmonds shows

FIGURE 5.23: *Gemma Bovery*, p. 34.

characters who think of characters, and both are represented visually on the page. Still, these instances veer away from traditional formal characteristics as they switch from verbal to visual in discourse markers which usually contain verbal information. When someone thinks of another character, panels conventionally contain a thought bubble with inner monologue that refers to that imagined character, but instead of text, some thought bubbles in *Gemma Bovery* contain either a portrait of that character or a mixture of portrait and text.

For example, fig. 5.23 shows Joubert who is thinking of Gemma at this moment. Whenever annotators encountered such instances, they annotated the thought bubble as a separate panel or subpanel, which invites questions as to the typology of speech/thought bubbles with images inside them. They fulfill the function of a panel but are framed as a thought bubble. The concession to this problem may be to introduce a hybrid bubble/panel category as signifier for both an act of speech/thought and for the visual representation of subjects or objects, although this idea had not been implemented at the time of the annotation process. Instead, annotators had to classify the thought bubble as a panel in order to annotate focalization and as a bubble in order to transcribe the text.

FIGURE 5.24: *Gemma Bovery*, p. 37.

While this middle path may not be conclusive, *Gemma Bovery* provides other instances to argue in favor of providing the latter annotation option. Fig. 5.24 shows Gemma thinking about the vices of life in the country and imagining what seems a poolside with two telephone boxes. Like the panel above, this "internal world representation" shows an image inside of a thought bubble but depicts very few simultaneous markers except for two small bubbles that connect the

FIGURE 5.25: *Gemma Bovery*, p. 65.

panel to Gemma. The reader might expect a cloud frame around the panel or at least a single frame around Gemma and the scenery imagined by her. Instead, the two are separated by a traditional panel frame. Therefore, annotators assessed fig. 5.23 as two separate panels and annotated the upper panel as having "internal world representation." These two instances may appear ordinary as regards focalization and its use in the narrative, but their formal features are unusual in comparison to other narratives.

Still, other examples for "internal world representation" reveal how focalization lends support to *Gemma Bovery*'s themes, most of all the romantic obsession over another person, or rather, that person's ideal which forms in other characters' minds. Joubert becomes increasingly obsessed with Gemma's affairs throughout the course of the narrative, an obsession that deepens as he likens her to Flaubert's Emma Bovary and her tragic fate. The affairs themselves are also ones of obsession over an ideal of a character instead of the characters themselves. Gemma commits to two affairs in the book: One with Frenchman Hervé, and another with her ex-boyfriend Patrick after Hervé leaves her. Neither last very long because Gemma concerns herself too much with a dream version of her lover (in Patrick's case, numerous passages show her memories with him) or a version of herself as a desirable woman who is worthy of being cherished (in Hervé's case). Accordingly, her affair with Hervé starts as she becomes fitter, loses weight, and starts wearing fashionable items, puts on make-up, wears her hair loose, in short: becomes the stereotypical idea of a woman to be desired.

In her study on *Gemma Bovery* and Barthesian meaning-making systems, Liz Constable points out that the yearning for "real" experiences which permeates the book's source text *Emma Bovary* applies to all of Simmonds' characters (74) and, paradoxically, leads them to an escapist lifestyle. The search for something real becomes an entrapment in farce. One page portrays this topic in striking fashion: Hervé and Gemma are at different parties in two different places and both think of each other. Again, the thought bubbles on this page contain portraits (fig. 5.25). The major difference is in focalization: While Hervé thinks of Gemma, Gemma thinks of Hervé thinking of herself.

Simmonds shows her readers how visual narrative can make use of standard narratorial devices to create complex psychological representations. Gemma is more in love with her self-image as a mistress than with Hervé; were it not so, her thoughts would simply mirror Hervé's and show only his portrait. What is more, Gemma's thought bubbles in particular create multi-level nested storyworlds. Since both were annotated as having "internal world representation," Gemma's panel in fig. 5.25 shows three separate storyworlds – the book's base reality, Gemma's image of Hervé, and

FIGURE 5.26: *Gemma Bovery*, p. 73.

Gemma's image of Hervé's image of Gemma. Although a seemingly simple playful variation on thought bubble semantics at first glance, both instances reveal themselves to be succint statements on the narrative potential of visual focalization on the one hand and the interplay between topical intent and formal execution.

Lastly, the second most common focalization subtype, "spatial point of view" frequently occurs when characters are reading letters or notes. These written documents often appear as objects on the page, preceded by the focalized character who looks at them in a preceding panel. Fig. 5.26 shows a notable departure in which the letter is an object on the page, but the content reflect the reader's (Gemma's) focus of attention.

The letter is Hervé's means of goodbye to Gemma; she focuses on the emotional language in it and blocks out other passages, which the letter underneath represents with large gaps. Annotators assessed the letter as a panel that uses "quasi-perceptual point of view," the only occurrence of that subtype in the entire text. As an aside, we may note that *Gemma Bovery* generally uses a mix of pseudo-handwriting and typesetting to mark the verbal text's diegesis. In this case, Hervé's letter is typeset. Joubert's extensive monologues are also typeset, whereas Gemma's diary entries are handwritten. Although this observation relates mostly to a narrator's diegetic situation, we have established that the verbal mode influences visual focalization, and as such the identities of the narratorial figures are of some relevance to subjective representation.

In addition, *Gemma Bovery* illustrates how contextual knowledge may or may not modify readers' "spatial point of view" assessment. Fig. 5.27 shows part of a page in which Gemma and Patrick meet in secret in front of a church as Joubert, by chance, spots them. Alternatively, annnotators might have identified Joubert's gaze as a contextual marker for "spatial point of view" in other panels. Here, though, annotators identified all panels as having external visual focalization. Most likely, the reason for this assessment lies in the placement of the Joubert panel after what he seems to observe, not before. In linguistic terms, it appears that such contextual markers for "spatial point of view" are only possible as pre-modifier but not as post-modifier.

To conclude the discussion, several of the points above return us to the way Simmonds tells her story. The very first sample panels showed how Joubert's narrative stems from reading Gemma's diary; additional examples provided context as to how the narrative establishes themes of obsession over other characters. In summary, it may be worthwhile to ask why the entire book is not from Joubert's perspective and why all visual representation is not his internal world. After all, annotators chose to annotate panels as such in the prologue, but they decided against it in later chapters. Why is that the case? The last example above might provide an attempt at explaining the phenomenon. As a post-modifier, Joubert's gaze does not provide sufficient information to assess preceding panels as having internal visual focalization. In other words: The distance between a hypothetical, focalized character and visual representation of what he supposedly sees becomes too great.

The decision against applying "internal world representation" to all of *Gemma Bovery* might be due to the same reason but on a global level. As readers become accustomed to the narrative voice, the distance (or proximity) between plot and perspective becomes naturalized. This assumption calls to mind two frameworks from narrative theory. In terms of structuralist narratology, Bourgeois and Patterson analyze *Gemma Bovery* through the lens of Genette's naturalization, or the process of becoming familiar with a character's viewpoint. The authors also add another term used

FIGURE 5.27: *Gemma Bovery*, p. 85.

by Genette, proximation, which they use to describe Simmonds's choice of retelling Flaubert's novel in a setting that is closer in time to today, and thus more identifiable for contemporary readers (13). Proximation is adjacent to deictic shift theory, a concept from cognitive narratology which I discussed earlier and that stipulates the necessity for a perspectival anchor inside a fictional storyworld. At some point, readers immerse themselves in a given perspective from this anchor point. Were it not so, no such thing as external focalization would exist, since all narrative is filtered to some degree. Hence, the argument is in favor of the markedness of internal focalization, and in *Gemma Bovery*'s case, this markedness seems to be quite noticeable in the book's beginning but less so afterwards.

5.2.2.2 *City of Glass*
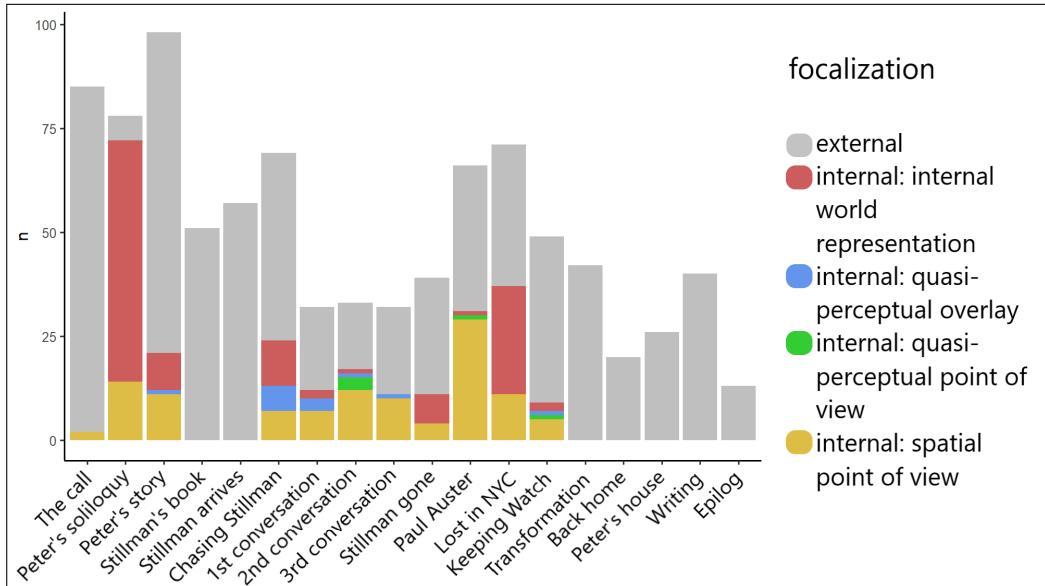
FIGURE 5.28: Focalization Visualization for *City of Glass*, dataset A.

Three groups of annotators created individual datasets for *City of Glass*. The first group's results show that internal visual focalization dominates some scenes while being absent from others. "Peter's Soliloquy" consists of almost exclusively internal focalization, while in scenes such as "2nd Conversation" and "Lost in NY," approximately half of all panels contain internal focalization. Two scenes towards the beginning and most of the graphic novel's ending contain no instances of internal focalization at all. This uneven distribution points towards some narrative units in which subjectivity is a high priority, while it is not in other narrative units. To be more specific, the focalization subtypes "internal world representation" and "spatial point of view" occur far more often than the other two subtypes, "quasi-perceptual overlay" and "quasi-perceptual point of view."

As a postmodern detective novel, it seems appropriate that *City of Glass* would show such results. The graphic novel deals with themes such as individual transformation, empty signifiers vs. over-signification, parody, and loss of meaning (Coughlan 848; Little 136). Subjective representation factors into these themes on numerous occasions. The two panels included below represent the two most frequent internal focalization subtypes. Fig. 5.29 shows a panel that annotators identified as "spatial point of view" and fig. 5.30 shows a series of panels that annotators identified as "internal world representation."

The panel in fig. 5.29 presents readers with markers that are clearly part of a character's spatial point of view — body parts which indicate that what readers see is the same as what the character sees. No other markers raise any suspicion that
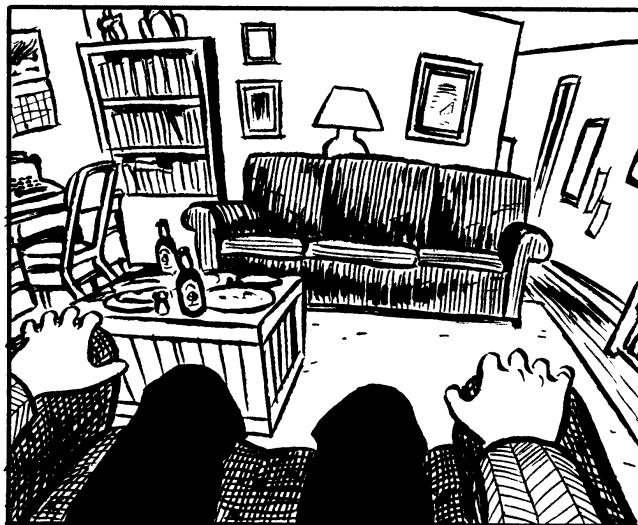
FIGURE 5.29: *City of Glass*, p. 94.
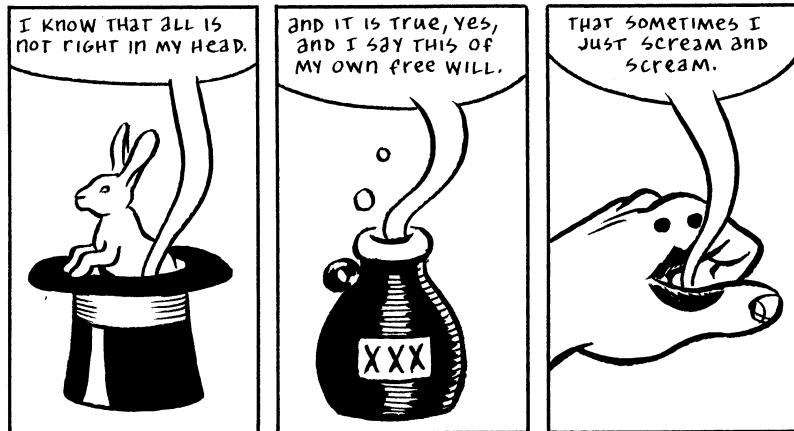
FIGURE 5.30: *City of Glass*, p. 21.

the room in which the character is sitting is anything else but the "real" world, i.e. something that other character's within the story would perceive exactly as shown. Such panels from Quinn's vantage point occur at various points in the story but stop when Quinn loses a sense of his own identity towards the end of the book. The lack of internal focalization throughout the final scenes support this interpretation. Fig. 5.30 shows a similar dissolution of another character's self. What the reader sees here has nothing to do with what other characters perceive. The only context that readers are able to draw from is the monologue that stretches itself over these three panels, and over several pages before and after. The same concept applies in surrounding panels and forms a soliloquy over numerous speech bubbles that seem to originate from wildly different subjects and objects. The aesthetics imply that the illocutor — a character named Peter Stillman, whom readers see before and after this sequence of seemingly unrelated images — imagines himself as a changeling, an empty signifier,

as something without boundaries or concept of self. His monologue is representative of the same idea: "Peter knew some words. The father thought maybe Peter would forget them. After a while" (Mazzuchelli et al. 19). As such, annotators assessed almost the entire ten-page soliloquy as "internal world representation." In contrast to the "spatial point" panel in figure 5.29, it is notable that this information is not readily available without contextual markers: The soliloquy's opening shows nine panels of Peter Jr.'s mouth in an extreme close-up. It is furthermore notable that Peter's speech bubbles have tails which lead directly into his mouth, or into the various objects in successive panels. Normally, a speech bubble's tail would end right before the illocutor to indicate who is speaking, but here they seem to have an undisclosed source somewhere inside Peter, which opens questions as to where exactly this soliloquy comes from. Are they Peter's thoughts, or part of some divine source that Peter's father strived to locate prior to the events in the book? Whatever the answer, the soliloquy's puzzling depiction reinforces the loss-of-self topos in the book and advances readers' assessment of Peter Jr. as an enigmatic character without any real agency – his wife moves him around in a wheelchair and he shows no signs of lucidity.

As concerns quasi-perceptual representations of subjectivity, annotators seem to have understood "quasi-perceptual point of view" in a different manner than previously discussed. Fig. 5.31 shows one such assessment, in which the data show "quasi-perceptual point of view." Other instances exist throughout the data and they share the over-the-shoulder shot presentation where one character talks to another. The reasoning behind this choice seems to be that although a character's vantage point and the panels visual representation are not exactly congruent, they are still very close to each other. While there are no comparable assessments elsewhere in the data to make any conclusive assumptions, the stylistic choice for an over-the-shoulder shot is arguably in favor of the intention to approximate readers' experience with the character that they are closest to in such scenes. At the same time, annotators did not identify other panels in dialogue scenes with

FIGURE 5.31: *City of Glass*, p. 73.

changes in a character's appearance – which would theoretically classify as "quasi-perceptual point of view." To use one example, fig. 5.32 shows part of the second conversation between Quinn and Peter Stillman, Sr. Other panels present the two as sitting opposite from each other, so it seems clear that the three panels in fig. 5.32 are from Stillman Sr.'s vantage point. This point of view, and thus internal focalization,

would also explain why Quinn changes appearance in the second panel. Yet annotators identified the panel as external focalization, which implies that they did not interpret the panel's visual representation as part of Stillman Sr.'s subjectivity.

FIGURE 5.32: *City of Glass*, p. 72.

It is imperative to point out that this choice is not necessarily a failure on the annotators' part but the result of what this study intends to analyze – readers' individual assessment of subjective representation. If individual readers do not come to the same conclusion that theory would suggest, then interpretations of these readers' conclusions need to be taken into account in order to make any meaningful follow-up on the theory. Regardless, I have argued before that such individual assessments are only statistically significant if we compare them to a large number of other datasets. The amount needed may not be sufficient in this case, but we can at least compare them to two more, since *City of Glass* is the only graphic narrative in this corpus for which we have three complete datasets available.

If we compare the first group's results with dataset B in figure 5.33, we immediately notice a few differences. In direct comparison, annotators did not find evidence for "quasi-perceptual point of view" throughout the entire narrative, and assessed only a fraction of one scene ("Lost in NY") as having "quasi-perceptual overlay." Other subtypes are also not as common as they are in set A, although the lack of internal visual focalization towards the end of the graphic novel remains the same. While data interpretation would arrive at similar conclusions (for example, "Peter's soliloquy" as the scene with peak internal focalization), the evaluation of the annotation process itself may point towards either a theoretical problem or a problem of experimental methodology. From both perspectives, the difference in annotations would reveal that individual decoding of internal visual focalization markers may vary according to reading comprehension skills and diligence during the annotation process. As such, it remains to be seen how a large-scale inter-annotation agreement survey might reveal the problem
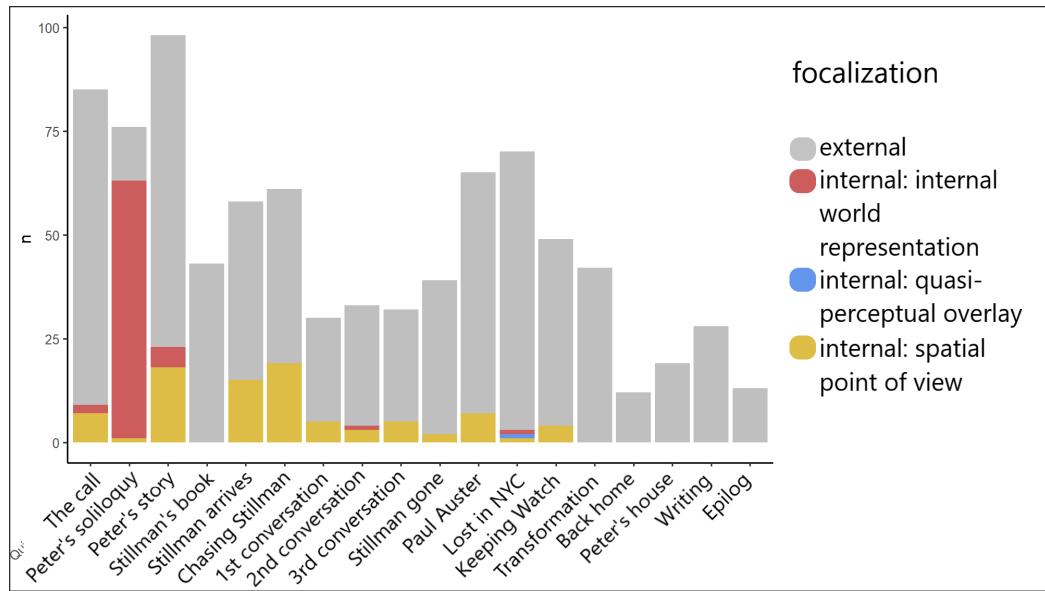
FIGURE 5.33: Focalization Visualization for *City of Glass*, dataset B.

to be one of focalization as a cognitive concept and, by extension, a problem of individual readership skills. Or it might reveal the problem to be one of method, that is, of regular evaluation with annotators about whether they are roughly at the same level of theoretical understanding. As a case study, however, it points towards a direction that an experimentally based narratology may take: Testing for quantitative merit, then annotation and sampling, then large-scale surveys with corpora.
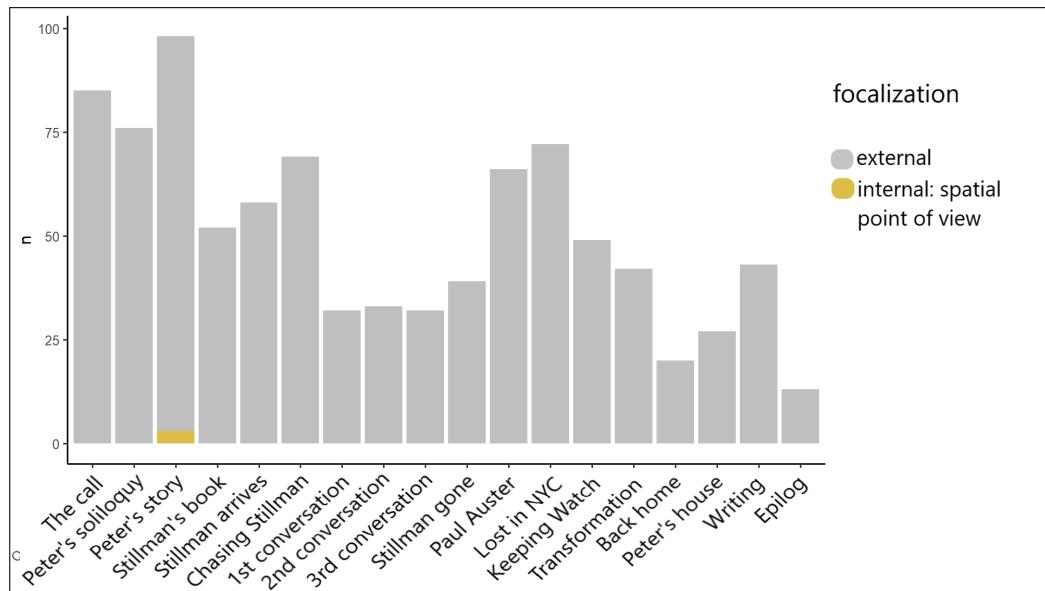
FIGURE 5.34: Focalization Visualization for *City of Glass*, dataset C.

If the argument may seem too extreme given how both groups assessed the same graphic novel scenes with roughly similar annotations, then dataset C should illustrate my point. Annotators in this group either missed the option to annotate for focalization

completely or did not understand the concept enough to make any informed decision during the annotation process, even though we discussed key narratological terms before annotation work started and although we worked on numerous exercises in due course. Although an extreme occurrence with this particular dataset, it still illustrates the debate as to what should inform readers' expectations and reading processes: a priori narratological understanding, or a posteriori empirical analysis. For an experimental narratology, the truth is of course somewhere in the middle. Narratological theory and empirical evidence may coexist and inform each other, and this last dataset for *City of Glass* shows the impact that follows when one of either is off-balance.

5.2.2.3 *Maus*
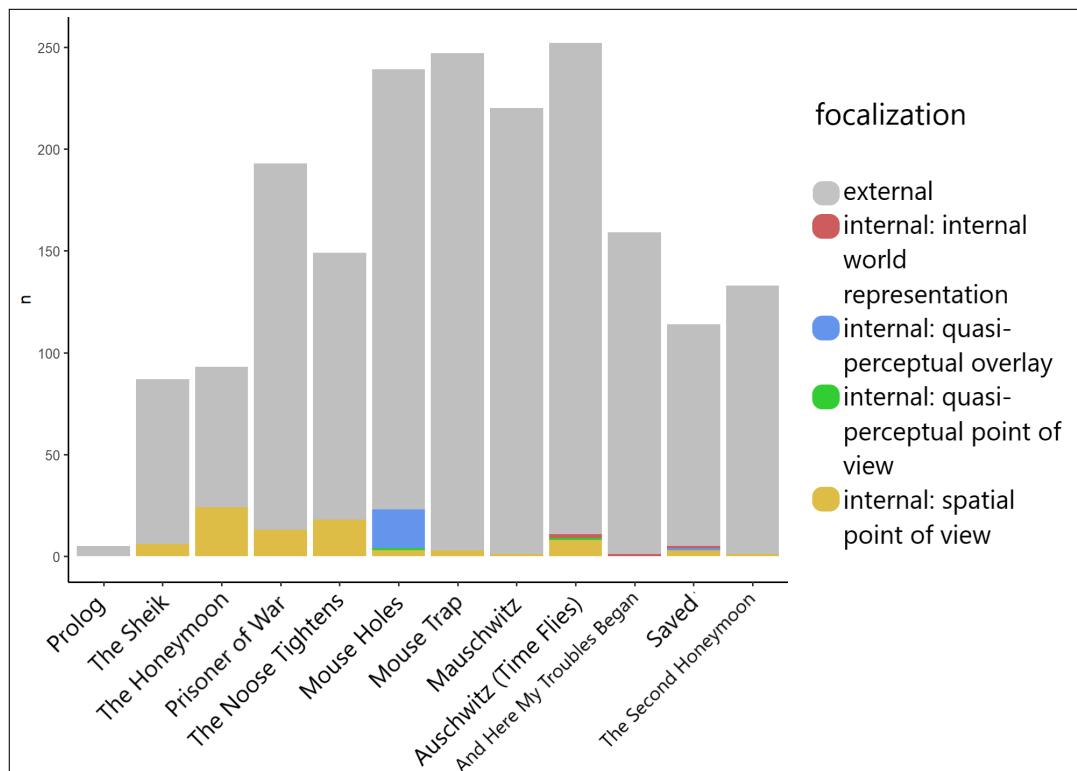
FIGURE 5.35: Focalization Visualization for *Maus*.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* uses the full array of focalization subtypes in our annotation scheme. Students assessed that "spatial point of view" is the most frequent internal visual focalization type. Other subtypes occur in very short scenes in one chapter in Part 1 ("My Father Bleeds History," published in 1986, comprises all chapters until "Mouse Trap") and in several chapters in Part 2 ("... And Here My Troubles Began," the five closing chapters, published in 1991). Except for the prologue, all chapters use internal visual focalization in at least a few panels.

Maus presents probably the best case of how narrative comprehension and interpretation can fundamentally alter the conceptualization of focalization. For this particular annotation, students apparently decided to take *Maus*' central visual metaphor (quite literally) at face value: The depiction of Jews as anthropomorphized mice is part of the nested storyworld logic. Spiegelman's father, Vladek, tells of his survival of the Jewish ghetto and his later incarceration in Auschwitz. Showing Jews as mice alludes to Nazi propaganda (that Jews were akin to vermin) and subverts the aesthetics of traditional funny animal comics such as Mickey Mouse or Krazy Kat. To accept this portrayal as part of the storyworld inside Vladek's narrative, readers must assume the visual metaphor to be true in aesthetic terms — the characters are human-sized rodents — and equalize that which is shown with that which is told.

Still, Spiegelman makes metanarrative comments on the choice to portray his father's story as such, so there is an equally viable argument to be made that the anthropomorphism is metatextual and thus separate from Vladek's actual story. The annotation data seem to be in favor of the former position — visual metaphor as internal ontological fact. If the opposite had been the case, most of Vladek's memories would have had "quasi-perceptual overlay" as subcategory, the father's stories filtered through the son's perspective, instead of unmarked "external" focalization. Other annotations might come to a different conclusion as to the interplay between the story's show and tell. Such wide-ranging decisions in readers' comprehension of theming and visualization in graphic narrative reinforce the argument to conduct comparative studies if one aims to establish an experimental narratology. Moving away from any notion of implied or ideal readers, analysis ought to compare a real reader's impression with another reader's — *Maus* is a particularly potent example to suggest that readers might conjoin style and subject to varying degrees.

Two passages in the above diagram (fig. 5.35) stand out from the rest: the use of "quasi-perceptual overlay" in "Mouse Holes" and smaller intervals of all four focalization subtypes in the three chapters "Auschwitz (Time Flies)," ". . . And Here My Troubles Began," and "Saved." In "Mouse Holes," Spiegelman reproduces a shorter four-page narrative named "Prisoner on the Hell Planet." In this story, Spiegelman tells of his mother's suicide and both his own and his father's reaction to her passing. The decision to annotate this short story as having "quasi-perceptual overlay" offers two interpretations. Spiegelman introduces "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" as a nested narrative within Maus, a comic that his father found at home during the time in which he interviewed him. Vladek's wife Mala tells Spiegelman that his father's portrayal in "Prisoner on the Hell Planet" upset him, while Spiegelman says that he never expected his father to find it as the latter does not read his son's comics. *Maus* frames this nested story as an object within its storyworld by reprinting the first page as a page that Spiegelman holds up with his hand (fig. 5.36) but then reproduces the remaining three pages without in-storyworld framing. The reader hence sees what Spiegelman sees, or more precisely, reads what Spiegelman reads, which lacks any other visual input from his surroundings at that point in the narrative; he is immersed in reading and *Maus* depicts it as such, thus "quasi-perceptual overlay."

Other focalization subtypes mostly occur in panels that depict a sudden change for Vladek during internment or escape. The data show that the first among those occurrences — when he meets a female prisoner and asks her to look for his wife — is a "spatial point of view" (fig. 5.37a). The reasoning to use that subtype is quite straightforward; the female prisoner's vantage point is the same as what the panel shows. Annotators demonstrated a more creative use for the other subtypes in panels

FIGURE 5.36: *Maus*, p. 102.

(A) Spatial pov.　　　(B) Quasi-perc. pov.　　　(C) Quasi-perc. overlay.
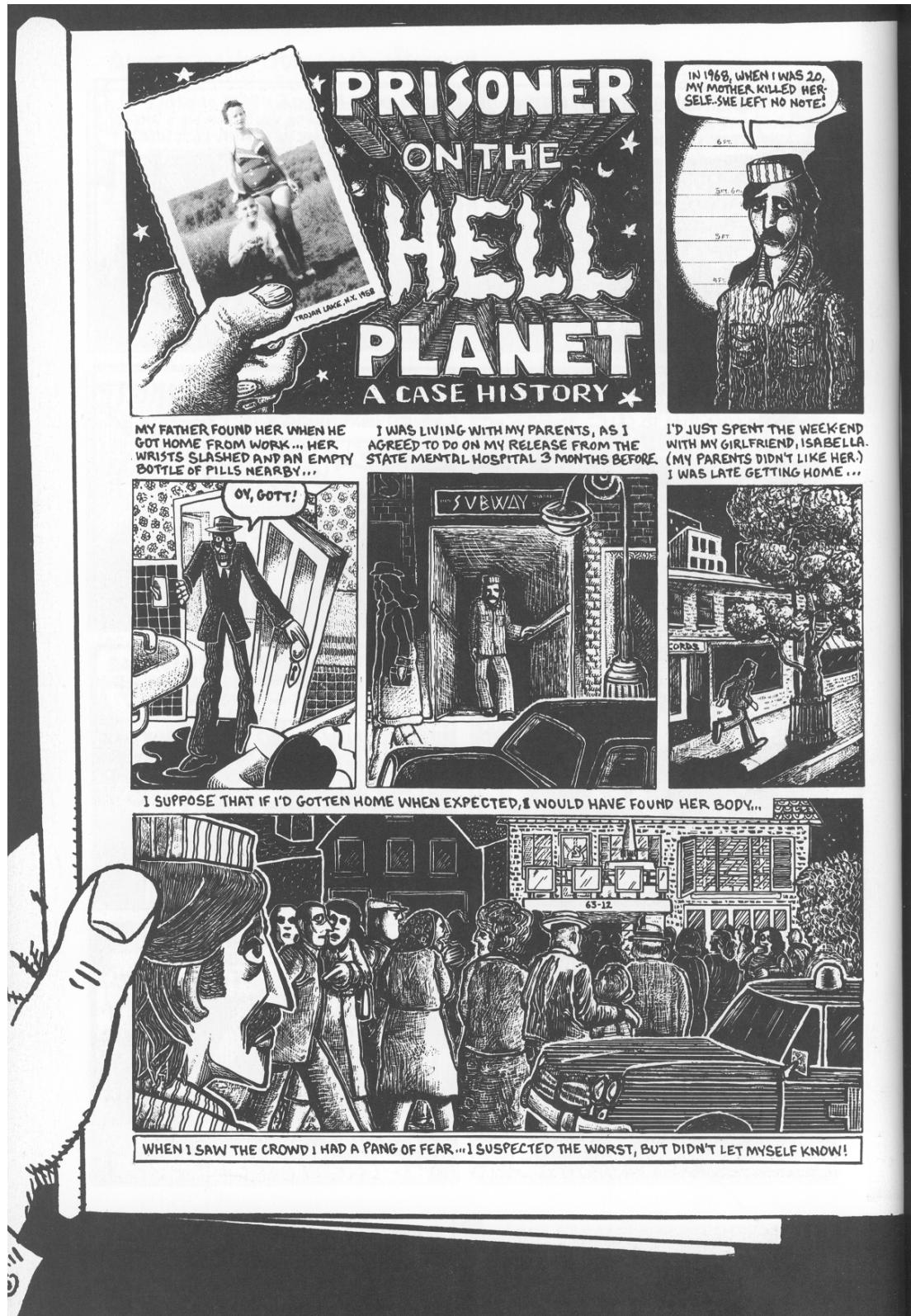
FIGURE 5.37: *Maus*, pp. 212, 217, 270.

with common visual comics tropes. For example, one panel that they annotated as having "quasi-perceptual point of view" shows a Nazi guard on alert after Vladek sees his wife again after a long separation (fig. 5.37b). The background in this panel is reduced to a roughly drawn halo on black. Comics (and especially manga) use this visualization to put emphasis on decisive moments or moments of shock and epiphany, in which the world seems reduced to the one particular subject or object within such a halo. As regards focalization, the subtype and visual trope fits here, since the guard moves Vladek to the side and, as punishment, subjects him to a harsh beating.

Annotators found a comparable instance when Vladek and a fellow fugitive hide in a barn in a village and Wehrmacht soldiers blow up a bridge to delay American troops from advancing. The explosion's sudden impact shakes up the two Jews as visually referenced by a lopsided panel, another background reduction to black and white, onomatopoiea that notify the reader of the explosion sound, the depiction of Vladek's head as if it were ringing, and a star floating between the two heads (fig. 5.37c). The main difference between the former example and this one seems to be that instead of Vladek's vantage point, the reader sees him and his friend in the panel, which is most likely why annotators decided to annotate focalization in the panel as "quasi-perceptual overlay."

The last subtype example, "internal world representation," is of particular interest for this study since annotators identified a focalization conundrum that Horstkotte and Pedri discussed in their paper "Focalization in Graphic Narrative." At one point in Maus, Spiegelman sees himself confronted with the limitations of his visual metaphor when his father tells him about a German prisoner in Auschwitz. Spiegelman depicts this German as a mouse at first, but upon hearing from Vladek that he exclaimed to the guards that he does not "belong here with all these Yids and Polacks" (Spiegelman 210), he changes this prisoner's likeness to a cat (fig. 5.38). Horstkotte and Pedri come to the conclusion that this passage is evidence for the narrative's subjective filtering of Spiegelman's impression of his father's events:

Vladek's assertion, at the bottom of the second panel, that he does not know and ultimately does not care about the prisoner's identity (because it is inconsequential) suggests that it is Artie, the visual narrator in the 1980s, who hesitates between two possibilities for visual representation. In other words, Artie openly questions how to visually narrate Vladek's embedded story in light of the old prisoner's unresolved identity. (Horstkotte and Pedri 341)

The authors examine what Spiegelman himself ponders in the novel when he is unsure how to draw his wife, a French woman who converted to Judaism: Should he draw her as a frog/French or as a mouse/Jewish (Spiegelman 171)? An ambivalence in *Maus*' form rather than in the framework of visual focalization, the passage as laid out by Horstkotte and Pedri shows that any instance of internal visual focalization is, to a certain degree, unreliable and open to various readings, and sometimes even to a focalized subject's capability for self-monitoring and self-repairment.

FIGURE 5.38: *Maus*, p. 210.

In this case, Spiegelman adjusts the visual mode according to Vladek's narrative, and also according to Vladek's focus: When his father picks up on Spiegelman's question whether the prisoner was really German, Vladek waves it off with a "Who knows..." and one panel later, the figure becomes a mouse yet again. Annotators assessed that the two panels in fig. 5.38 are instances of "internal world representation." This assessment causes issues with this dataset in terms of consistency: The decision is more or less in concordance with Horstkotte and Pedri's findings if we are to assume that *Maus* represents Spiegelman's internal world here, or rather, his subjective interpretation and imagination of his father's stories. That of course is a valid reading, especially if we regard Vladek's torment as a nested narrative within the interviews between father and son. However, annotators dismissed this particular reading of Maus' visual metaphor as "internal world representation" in favor of a surface-level, external focalization reading, as I mentioned above.

FIGURE 5.39: *Maus*, p. 201.

The issue here is not one of theoretical instability but one of data consistency: Annotators ought to be aware of their own interpretation of form and annotate accordingly, and consistently so. Granted, if this passage is understood as being focalized externally, its diegetic status seems to be unsolvable, as we are presented with two competing depictions of the same person, which makes it anything but externally focalized. This problem is perhaps a textbook instance to argue why these data should always follow multiple readings of a single graphic novel, and possibly a discussion in groups (and, as I have mentioned before, an analysis of inter-annotation agreement, the workload of which is too much within the confines of a single seminar).

Another problematic instance that illustrates this point is to be found in the passage in which Spiegelman reflects on the publication of *Maus*, Part One. Instead of drawing himself as an anthropomorphic mouse, he wears the mask of a mouse while he sits at his desk (fig. 5.39). Annotators selected external focalization for this panel, which is problematic since readers are not invited to believe that Spiegelman's desk is actually on top of a pile of corpses.

Rather, the author visualizes the resentment that he has developed for the media's focus on his story as having a message and his role as a commentator on the Holocaust. He feels isolated, misunderstood, and overwhelmed by *Maus'* success, which he also expresses by turning from an adult into a child in subsequent panels. From a qualitative standpoint, these visual metaphors are at the very least "quasi-perceptual overlays" in

terms of subjective representation; certainly they are some form of internal focalization. One of the cornerstones of experimental narratology is to illustrate when readers do not incorporate such encodings of subjectivity into their readings, but the absence of such decoding should be consistent throughout all annotation data.

That being said, I have pointed out before that groups of annotators worked on individual graphic novels, so even though annotators organized their individual annotation process within their respective groups, there may have been disagreements, oversights, or an absence of discussion, which in turn would result in such inconsistencies. I have also referred to individual meaning-making processes inside each individual reader's mind numerous times, and as such individual annotators might lack the ability to decode strategies of subjective representations or, in this case, visual metaphors, while other annotators would have been able to notice them. Therefore the methodology for this particular annotation process requires evaluation and assessment among annotators that is — to borrow from Spiegelman's own conundrum — not unlike the re-evaluation of his father's story in fig. 5.38. In order to achieve data consistency, annotators would benefit from probing for potential oversights lest they arrive at a conflict in interpretation, just like Spiegelman does when he is unsure whether to depict a German Jew as a cat or a mouse.

Expanding upon this argument, annotations for *Maus* cross the boundary from narratology into politics via the question of mimesis. As a memoir, *Maus* is an attempt at reconstructing an individual account of the horrors of the Holocaust. At the same time, "Spiegelman's efforts at historical reconstruction are self-reflexive acknowledgments of the futility of this attempt." (Berlatsky 127). This self-reflexivity becomes evident in the examples I have shown above; in Spiegelman's frustration at his mother's destroyed diaries (Spiegelman 161), and in the representation of the Jewish people in general. The annotation data show that readers identified such self-reflexivity only when it was overt but otherwise assessed visual focalization as external.

It follows that *Maus* can only work as a memoir — but not as a postmodern reflection on memory — if readers do not take into account the effects of subjectivity and representation as a necessary means to fictionalize history, a method which could ostensibly stretch out to all acts of memorization: "Spiegelman accepts that the past is visually inaccessible through realistic representation: whatever strategy he might choose, it is bound to be 'inauthentic'" (Huyssen 76). What's more, the depiction of Jews as mice is racially charged as it reminds readers of Nazi propaganda that derided Jews as vermin, which clearly invites a critical view upon Spiegelman's visual metaphors if we are to consider their history before *Maus*. In essence, Spiegelman's account of his father's life and its representational modes invite reflections on matters of history, memory, and subjectivity:

> This approach to Holocaust history takes place in an intensely *personal, experiential dimension* that finds expression in a whole variety of different media and genres. Prerequisite for any mimetic approximation (of the artist/reader/viewer) is the liberation from the rituals of mourning and of guilt. Thus it is not so much the threat of forgetting as the surfeit of memory that is the problem addressed by such newer works. *How does one get past the official memorial culture?* How does one avoid the trappings of the culture industry while operating within it? (81, emphasis mine)

In other words, personal accounts and an individual cognitive understanding of any topic are diametrically oppposed to "history" — the experiential domain of a single person versus the collective experience of all humanity. As such, subjectivity becomes all the more important to identify, not only to analyze fictional narrative but to navigate the narratives of politics, society, and ideology. We as readers are evidently able to foster our understanding of focalization. A refined cognitive capacity to understand focalized narrative eventually separates individual accounts (Vladek's story filtered through his son's subjectivity) from the collective reality of history (the Holocaust). Indeed, there is a danger in failing to identify focalization strategies: Taking Spiegelman's acts of representation at face value means to invite other, very personal accounts, told via individual and creative acts of representation, without minding the ground truths that historical scholarship has established. A slippery slope which, by the end, would have us agree upon reality not based on verifiable fact but upon who tells us the greatest story. In this sense, *Maus* and its success are almost a cautionary tale:

> While these projects are indispensable in any attempt to destabilize the discourses of bourgeois liberalism that still administer hegemonic power (patriarchy, whiteness, heteronormativity), it is also important to consider how postmodernism, if taken to its logical conclusion, can present a radical relativism that may lead to political paralysis [...] Where the localized, relativistic truths of personal memory may be championed as counterdiscursive in one context, their relativism and mutability may elsewhere be seen as oppressive. (Berlatsky 122)

The possibility to read the book without awareness of its individual historical perspective may lead to the conclusion that a lack of sufficiently marked focalization in graphic narrative leads readers to confound individual self-images with conjecture masked as fact.

5.2.3 Focalization as Individual History and Fictional Memory: *Persepolis*, *Jimmy Corrigan*, and *Signal to Noise*

The last set of graphic narratives and their use of focalization expands on the analyses presented so far; all three negotiate psychological states and individual history through focalization. Yet where graphic novels such as *Maus* dealt with the fictionalization of such histories implicitly, they become explicit thematic problems in the following works. In *Persepolis*, the data present a case where the presence (or absence) of internal visual focalization informs the representation of childhood memory and the influence that these memories have on the remainder of the protagonist's life. Rather than dwelling on the past, *Jimmy Corrigan* looks to an uncertain future: An anxious and antisocial protagonist lets his mind wander into daydreams and wishes for the future that he never actually realizes. Chris Ware's graphic novel presents unconventional instances of internal focalization that lack any kind of markers for these daydreams. Finally, *Signal to Noise* merges such reflections on past, present, and future, and examines a filmmaker who responds to a terminal cancer diagnosis with a final screenplay about an apocalypse that never comes. This last graphic novel is unique in the corpus as it is the only one in which the data are governed by a majority of internal focalization occurrences. Quite fittingly, the book and its main character also ponder a question (in its title) that will guide the concluding chapter of this thesis: Can we locate a threshold where patterns emerge out of disorder?

5.2.3.1 *Persepolis*
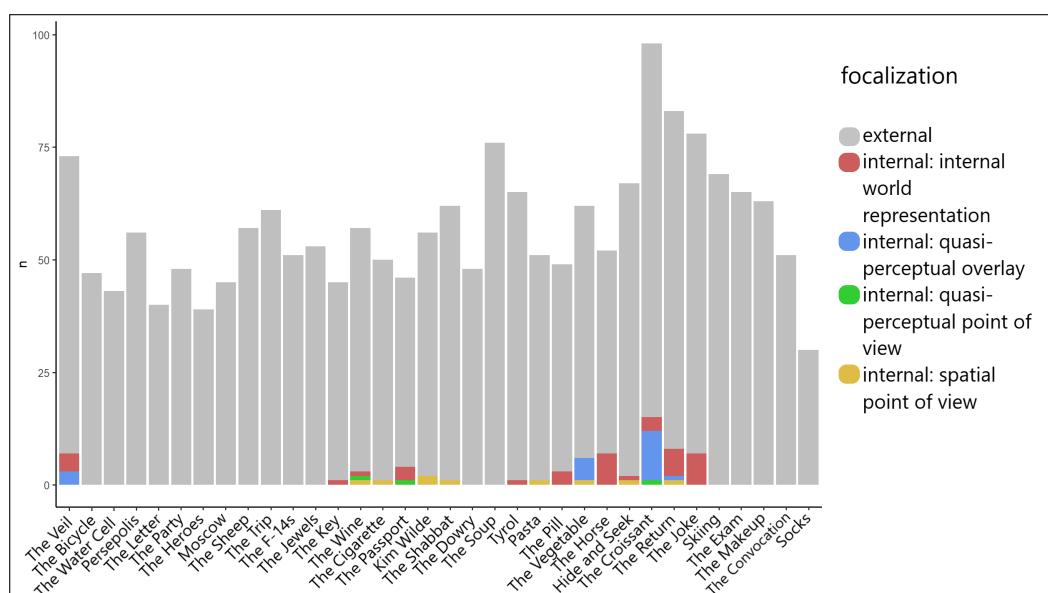
FIGURE 5.40: Focalization Visualization for *Persepolis*.

Marjane Satrapi tells her graphic memoir *Persepolis* in short, episodic vignettes. Therefore, intervals in the above graph represent chapters as they appear in the book. Values for internal visual focalization are low throughout the book, although the data show a visible increase in the latter half. Annotators assessed the majority of internal focalization as "internal world representation" and "quasi-perceptual overlay." The trend, even if tentative, goes towards more internal visual focalization as the story progresses. It is perhaps noteworthy that Satrapi orginally published *Persepolis* in two parts, one part in which Satrapi tells of her childhood in Iran during the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution, and a second part about her adolescence in Vienna and return to Iran.

This split between childhood and adolescence might explain why students annotated Satrapi's teenage years and early adulthood with a minor inclination towards internal focalization. As Satrapi grows, she becomes more opinionated. The graphic novel gradually changes its narrative from relaying context about history, culture, and religion in Iran to Satrapi's personal experiences abroad — for instance, her life as a teenager in a foreign country comes with a few intimate sexual moments. As she grows up while the novel progresses, Satrapi changes the focus from political unrest in her home country to individual rites of passage (cf. Naghibi and O'Malley 241n17). For a visual example, compare these panels from Part One and Part Two:
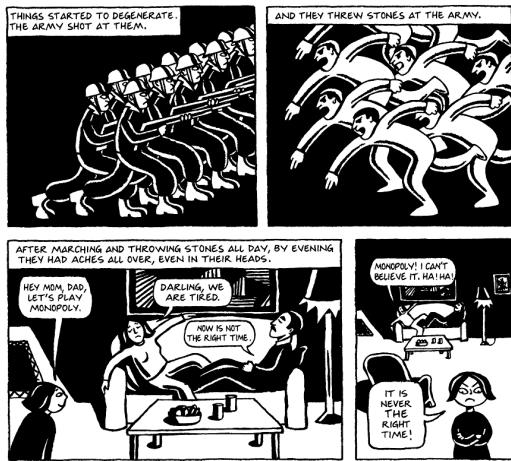
FIGURE 5.41: *Persepolis*, p. 18.

FIGURE 5.42: *Persepolis*, p. 194.

Figure 5.41 shows an early passage around the time of the 1979 Revolution, which Satrapi experienced as a child. Her parents, tired from the upheaval in their country, do not have the energy to spend time with their child, but the story also focuses on historical context such as the violent oppression that protesters faced at the time. In addition, the Satrapi family's private life shows no indication of internal focalization

and instead presents a matter-of-fact narrative style. Young Marjane's stories are undoubtedly personal but remain tied to her home country's situation. As a teenager and away from home, her narrative shifts towards personal relationships and, more importantly, the act of remembering events from her past life. Figure 5.42 presents a single panel of combined memories from Book 1 that the annotators assumed to be part of teenage Marjane's dreams, in other words, internal focalization. While *Persepolis* goes into detail about Iran's history and culture, it has almost nothing to say about Viennese history besides cultural differences that Marjane, coming from vastly different surroundings, finds quirky or confusing. As a result, *Persepolis* Book 2 centers more around Satrapi as a person. Annotations for most of the chapters that take place in Austria (from "Tyrol" to "The Return") show that the book's narrative techniques reflect this change. By extension, it would be wrong to assume that all of *Persepolis* tells a life story through the perspective of a child, as for example Hillary Chute argues ("The Texture of Retracing in Marjane Satrapi's Persepolis" 94). In fact, focalization in *Persepolis* is much more complex. Sometimes, Satrapi acts as protagonist, no matter her age; sometimes, she assumes a more Brechtian role as narrator-on-stage, in which the Satrapi-as-narrator of her memoirs speaks through Satrapi-as-character, younger and fictionalized (fig. 5.43).
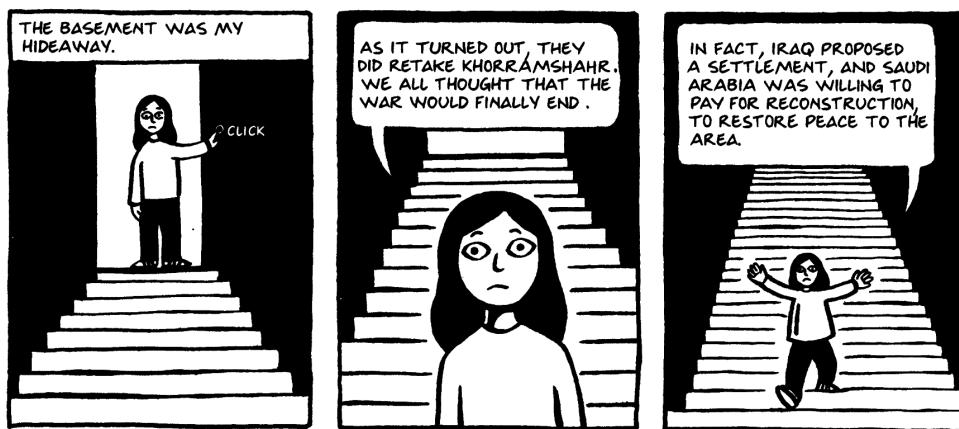
FIGURE 5.43: *Persepolis*, p. 114.

In accordance with our annotation's findings, Naghibi and O'Malley distinguish "three levels of identification: it is Marji's specific story, the story of all Iranians who lived through the revolution, and, at the same time, a universal story of childhood experience" (231). If one were to map these three levels across the study's results, Marji's specific story would be tied to instances of internal focalization, while the other two levels of identification would be tied to instances of external focalization. Students annotated the panels in fig. 5.43 as having external visual focalization, whereas they annotated the panel in fig. 5.42 as internal visual focalization. More specifically, they

assessed that panel to be an example of "internal world representation" — possibly reinforced by Satrapi's text here: "...my unconscious caught up with me" — but they then annotated her memories as separate subpanels, which use external visual focalization. The reason behind this was likely the fact that Satrapi's memories do not actually materialize in physical space as they are visualized in the panel, but they still happened at earlier stages in her life. It is also possible to argue that, as a representation of her unconscious, the storyworld shifts and therefore focalization shifts with it, from internal focalization in *Persepolis*' storyworld to external focalization inside Marjane's dream-storyworld. I posed a similar question in the analysis for *Gemma Bovery*: At which point does a sufficiently dense internal world representation become a new foundational diegetic structure for the narrative? The data here seem to imply that even minor occurences within the panel, split into dream fragments, will provoke such interpretations from readers. We will see in the discussion of Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* that follows that other graphic narratives challenge existing structures of focalization to the degree that it becomes imperative to consider the reader's own understanding of subjective representation.

5.2.3.2   *Jimmy Corrigan*
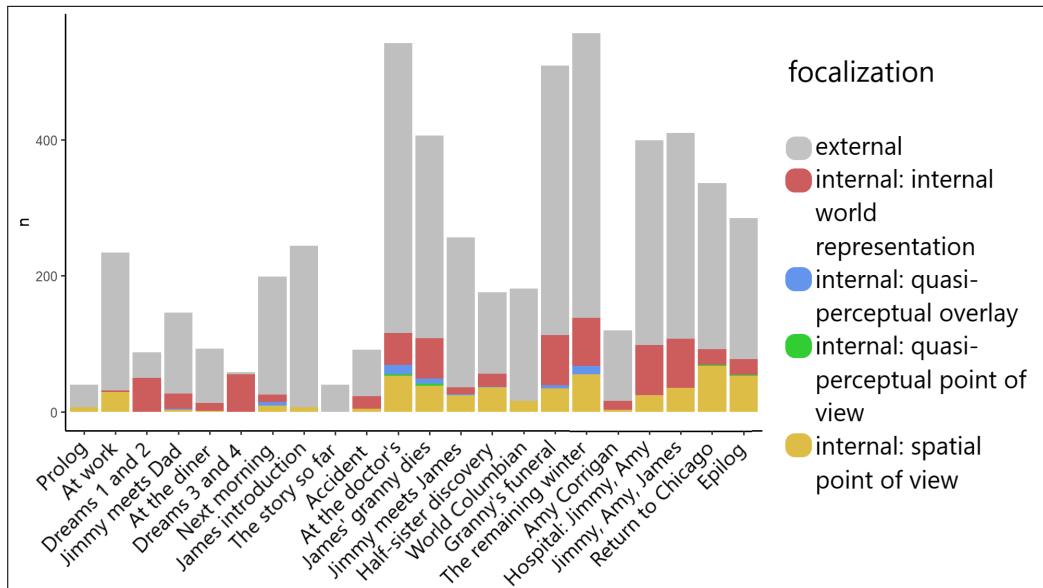
FIGURE 5.44: Focalization Visualization for *Jimmy Corrigan*.

Chris Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan* contains no overt chapter headings, but its previous serial publication in Ware's *ACME Novelty Library* allows for a sometimes more, sometimes less clear subdivision into scenes. Nearly all of these scenes display some form of "internal world representation." Often, visual representation is equal to Jimmy's or his grandfather's "subjective point of view." "Quasi-perceptual point of view" and "quasi-perceptual overlay" are less present but appear throughout the graphic novel. Taking into account the chapters' large variability in panel numbers, *Jimmy Corrigan*'s internal-to-external focalization ratio is surprisingly consistent in light of its narrative playfulness and atypical lack of framing devices for daydreams and imaginations.

The passages in which Ware utilizes "internal world representation" are almost always either a dream or a daydream by Jimmy. His mind either wanders after having received outside stimuli or while following attempts to process what he experienced during the day. As such, occurrences of "internal world representation" in *Jimmy Corrigan* not only characterize vignettes inside the main storyworld, they also characterize Jimmy as a person who internalizes relationships (or a lack thereof) with other characters – mainly his father. Fig. 5.45 provides a sample dialogue of one such dream.

Nothing in this sample contains any obvious relation to Jimmy's real world. His brother Amos is a figment of his dreams. Jimmy also did not grow up on a farm as the passage indicates (Jimmy's and Amos' bedroom is in the attic). In these farm dreams, Ware depicts Jimmy's father as a violent, cruel man, and never shows his face.

FIGURE 5.45: *Jimmy Corrigan*, p. 26.

Jimmy's actual father, the reader learns later, is far removed from this characterization, and so one might conclude that Jimmy's nocturnal father figure represents his fears and expectations about his real father, whom he has yet to meet at this point.

For their part, annotators determined that both fathers are entirely separate characters with different narrative intentions. It is unique among the graphic narratives analyzed here that Ware does not employ a transitory effect or other contextual hint as to his switching between diegetic spaces. For example, I discussed earlier how Spiegelman's *Maus* possibly employs an unreliable narrator, since readers only experience the horrors of Auschwitz from a singular perspective: Vladek's retelling of his memories, which always precede and accompany such passages. Similarly, *From Hell* portrays William Gull's hallucinatory episodes from a relatively clear starting point by framing them through his character, gaze, or point of view. *Jimmy Corrigan*'s instances of "internal world representation" do no such thing. Instead, readers have to use contextual knowledge about Jimmy's "reality" to deduce that what Ware shows has no bearing on that storyworld. None of the dream sequences are preceded by a contextual marker that signals a diegetic shift. As a consequence, Ware asks readers to refamiliarize themselves with a completely different setting compared to the rest of the novel. One of the more obvious markers is a new character such as Jimmy's dream-brother Amos.

At another point, Jimmy's personality is so far removed from what we know of him that the only possible explanation is another dream rather than other common narrative tropes (such as flashbacks). In one such dream, Jimmy attacks his father with a broken beer jar. As in most other dreams in the book, the shift in storyworld is rather rapid. The contextual markers here are a change of setting and of personalities instead of more conventional markers such as a preceding gaze, close-up of the character, or spatial point of view. In the stabbing incident, shy Jimmy Corrigan turns into a murderous Oedipus in an anonymous motel, even though the surrounding pages show him at the airport, where he meets his father for the first time. Readers who have familiarized themselves with Jimmy's situation and character may infer that these storyworld

shifts anticipate a plot point: Jimmy kills his father at some stage in the future. Yet, annotators assessed the passage as a daydream of Jimmy's, most likely because of the surrounding situation: Jimmy sees his father for the first time and, unlike in later scenes, he is simply an older version of Jimmy himself. No cruel, violent farmer, no womanizing daredevil, he is just like Jimmy, only older (which is emphasized by the fact that both wear the exact same outfit). In short, his father turns out to be rather bland, which prompts Jimmy's daydream.

Where other graphic narratives apply clear-cut simultaneous markers for imagined situations – from wavy panel borders (Charles Burns's *Black Hole* comes to mind) to contextual markers in novels such as *Maus* or *From Hell* – *Jimmy Corrigan* uses a rare type of contextual marker that relates to the psychology of a character. With that in mind, at times the novel still makes use of conventional simultaneous markers such as cloudy panel frames for imagined scenarios. Strouhal, for instance, analyses a scene in which Jimmy waits in his father's apartment and imagines his own death at his father's hands (164 f.).

The existing literature on *Jimmy Corrigan* makes corollorary observations on its depiction of the protagonist's psyche. Notably, it focuses on the comic's narrative utilization of time and incorporation of individual history. For example, Roy Bearden-White analyzes in his paper "Inheriting Trauma" how Walter Benjamin's writings on historical materialism can be compared with Jimmy's inability to reconcile the childhood trauma of an absent father with his lack of action as an adult. Bearden-White argues, with Benjamin in mind, that one's own past creates mythical time, a somewhat self-fulfilling prophecy of a distant father figure that life can only affirm but never mitigate and thus informs Jimmy's inability to interact with other humans. The inescapability of his own fate causes Jimmy to be largely inactive in his own story. How does this interpretation relate to Jimmy's outlandish daydreams? In accordance with the data, it becomes obvious that not only does the past inform Jimmy's present predicament, it also renders any viable future impossible, which is why his escape into dreams and hypotheticals is also an escape into a future in which he would show any kind of agency. Throughout virtually the entire novel, he does not; instead of living life to the fullest, life merely happens to him. Any possible future becomes forever distant, a fiction ... trauma, inertia, and angst become the foundations of his thoughts. Bearden-White, while examining the effects of the past, but not the future, recognizes Jimmy's fate as embodiment of what Benjamin calls the "legendary end of history" (*The Arcades Project* 479).

Throughout the narrative, other focalization types relate to this psychological emphasis. Annotations show that two larger passages use all four sub-types of internal focalization, one of which shows Jimmy at the doctor after he was hit by a mail car.

FIGURE 5.46: *Jimmy Corrigan*, p. 112.

Jimmy and his father are sitting in a medical office and a poster in the background that shows the female reproductive organs prompts Jimmy's father to start asking whether Jimmy has a girlfriend. The son, mortified by this personal inquiry, is mostly silent during the "conversation" that follows but stumbles through the dialogue with a few "I guess" and "Yeah..." lies. Yet, multiple panels reveal associations and emotive responses to his father's question. In one such panel, Jimmy looks outside the window and sees himself with his imaginary girlfriend in his arm (fig. 5.46). The page lays out the setting in a way that allows the reader to infer that the office's window is to Jimmy's left (first panel), so that when Jimmy looks to his left in later panels (second, fifth, and sixth), it is implied that the panels which show the window (fourth and seventh) are his subjective point of view. But while the fourth panel presents the window with nothing outside but a bird, a tree, and a hospital corner, the last panel adds Jimmy arm in arm with his imaginary girlfriend.

Annotators identified the fourth panel as "spatial point of view" and the seventh as "quasi-perceptual point of view," which is relatively easy to surmise from their juxtaposition on the page and the surrounding panel context. The first panel was annotated

FIGURE 5.47: *Jimmy Corrigan*, p. 113.

as having external focalization and presents Jimmy's relative position to the window, whereas the window panels are intercut with Jimmy's gaze towards the window and his father's continuous speech: "Was she mad about it? I mean ... What'd she say?" In contrast to the previous example, Jimmy's rich imagination infiltrates the real world instead of being separated from it. In both cases, his anxieties complement the narrative by latching onto whatever stimuli he experiences at that moment. As before, these inner struggles illuminate his character as mostly devoid of emotional or social confidence as concerns his father or, in this case, the lack of romance in his life. In the panels that immediately follow the page shown in fig. 5.46, annotators also identified an instance of "quasi-perceptual overlay." The situation is the same: His father presses Jimmy on his "girlfriend" while Jimmy makes no attempt to clear the air. When he asks what she said about Jimmmy's plan to visit his father, two panels show Jimmy's response, or rather, lack thereof (see fig. 5.47).

Again, Ware juxtaposes a panel that depicts the "real" storyworld with a panel that depicts Jimmy's imagination, this time with Jimmy himself in the third and fourth panel. The reader has no reason to assume that Jimmy suddenly turned into a child, so visual representation mirrors his inner state. The panel's subjective framing stems not only from the surrounding panel's context but also from simultaneous markers, such as a change in background (from the doctor's office to an alarming red) and large captions that surround child-Jimmy. What is more, Ware employs a prose techique here that sets him apart from more conventional graphic narratives – he plays with typography and text placement. In the fourth panel, there are at least four levels of verbal representation – Jimmy's internal monologue as caption "Uh I guess," followed immediately by his speech act "Uh, I guess" as speech bubble, followed then by further internal monologue in a separate caption, and outside of the panel frame "I guess just that it was weird that you weren't ever around when I was ..." which is never actualized but instead interrupted by his father's speech act "Oh tssht!" When put into context with the Jimmy-as-a-child visualization, this single panel exemplifies Ware's complex

narrative style. Not only are most pages in *Jimmy Corrigan* loaded with panels, details, and multiple narrative levels, they also weave such levels and details together into a rich tapestry of sardonic wit. A simple dialogue back-and-forth (in this case more of a monologue) in an almost featureless room turns into a rich examination of the relationship between father and son.

Jimmy Corrigan's narrative complexity challenged annotators at various points. One more example makes a case for the limits of the narratological typology used in this analysis.[1] To be precise, a later episode in the book presents a double page in which multiple forms of internal visual focalization seem to converge (figs. 5.48 and 5.49). Interspersed with Jimmy's "adventures" with his father, the novel tells episodes from the childhood of Jimmy's grandfather, James Corrigan. Just like Jimmy, grandfather James had a strained relationship with his father, but instead of being absent for most of the boy's life, James's father is arguably the only constant throughout his childhood. Still, James's father is as disconnected from his son as Jimmy's (who is, of course, James's son, although their relationship is curiously absent from the novel). A single father, he mostly disregards his child's whims since he is preoccupied with his own social decline.

The passage discussed here follows the death of James's grandmother, of which he was the sole witness. He runs away from the house and hides under an overpass. From his hideout, he conjures up a few memories such as his grandmother waking him up or his father beating him with a belt. The depiction of these memories is similar to Jimmy's imaginations: James lies inside his bed and his grandmother sits next to him, but the surroundings are those of the overpass: a meadow, a street, a horse carriage, and several buildings in the background. Annotators identified the panel's visual focalization as "quasi-perceptual point of view." This annotation may owe to the fact that a panel in which James looks towards this exact scenery precedes the panel in question. One page further, James retains the exact same vantage point but now sees himself as an adult in an armchair while reading a newspaper (fig. 5.48). This page introduces a heterodiegetic narration in captions, which continues on the following page:

> Maybe if this boy could briefly glimpse the life which awaited him as an adult, he might be able to set aside his fears of his father. And then rise, confidently, and walk home. And then he would explain, reasonably, why he ran out in the first place. And why, since he always did what he was told, he deserved better treatment in general and then they would arrive at a gentlemanly agreement." (Ware 160 f., punctuation added by the author)

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[1] The following points are indebted to one of the book's annotators who wished to remain anonymous and who provided an excellent discussion of the problem in essay form as part of their grade for the seminar.
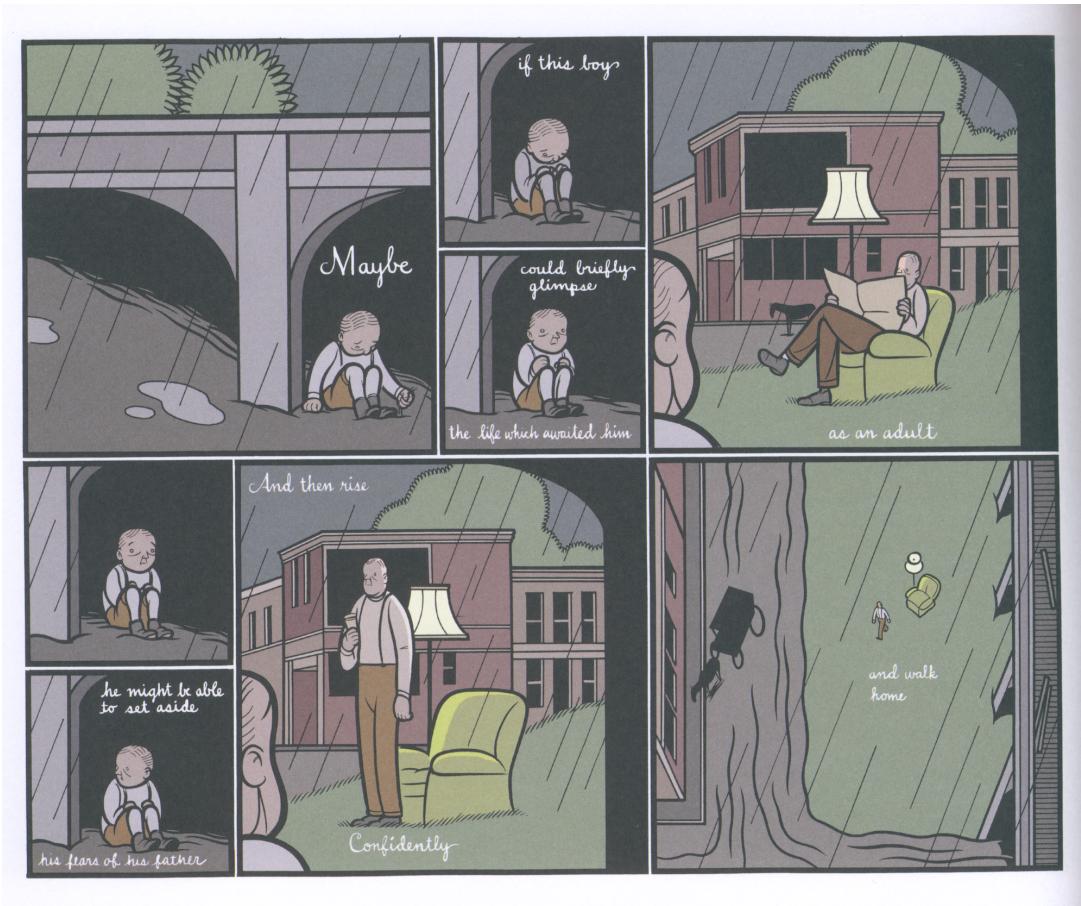
FIGURE 5.48: *Jimmy Corrigan*, p. 160.

The sequence leaves young James and follows adult James to his father's house, before it abruptly returns to young James when he is scared off by a construction worker. While discussing our data, the student who annotated these pages pointed out convincingly that focalization shifts rapidly between panels. On page 160, three panels with external visual focalization show James under the overpass, but panel four and seven clearly imitate James's vantage point within the storyworld, with part of his head visible in the bottom left corner of the panel. Thus, the first two appearances of adult James are clear-cut examples for "quasi-perceptual overlay" but the last panel indicates "internal world representation," with a bird's-eye view of the mise en scène and adult (imagined) Jimmy in the center. Then, the majority of page 161 is rather unambiguously an "internal world representation" since imagined adult James interacts with James's father on the same night that Jimmy runs away. One clear indicator of the page's status is the cast on the father's leg, which features prominently in panels prior to James's escape from his home.

Another question presents itself here: If the events represent some kind of internal world, then whose internal world is it exactly? It might be easy to simply assign James to the role of what Mieke Bal terms the focalizer, or what broader terms might

FIGURE 5.49: *Jimmy Corrigan*, p. 161.

describe as the subject through which narrative is represented. Yet, the heterodiegetic narrator at this point presents these events as a counterfactual conditional: "If this boy could briefly glimpse" and later: "they would arrive at a gentlemanly agreement." The narrator obviously detaches this hypothetical from protagonist James, which leaves no possibility to assign any kind of homodiegetic agency to the internal world represented. Subjectivity, in this particular example, is thus eerie, in the sense described by Mark Fisher's *The Weird and the Eerie*: a failure of absence, something that should not be there when it is (cf. 12). More traditional theories of focalization that focus on verbal narrative would possibly assign such episodes to external focalisation, but the addition of a visual mode complicates things and, if one were pressed to find a focalizing agent, it would have to be a heterodiegetic, extradiegetic narrator. In *Jimmy Corrigan*, this narrator is mostly absent from the narrative, or rather restricted to captions that are typical to graphic narratives such as "And so" or "Later."

Throughout the passage in question, captions represent the narrator's voice in a style which belongs to James's thoughts at other points in the novel: cursive lettering, superimposed on the visuals without any frame or caption box. This style further complicates the identification of subjectivity, since it would be easy to assume that this

voice belongs to James himself, were it not for the verbal mode's references to James in the third person. One particular panel on page 161 reinforces the argument for the eerie presence of a focalizing agency: The annotation for panel two identifies focalization as "spatial point of view" from adult James's vantage point. Within the boundaries of the storyworld, this point of view seems doubly impossible, as adult James is a figment of imagination created by a heterodiegetic narrator. Not only is there no in-storyworld subject to whom to attach the visual perspective in this passage, we also lack a diegetic entity from which we learn of this hypothetical scenario. Again, the narrative technique challenges traditional focalization theory with subjective representation without any form of feasible agency (in the sense that the storyworld fails to provide an actualized focalizer).

Graphic narratives such as *Jimmy Corrigan* transcend the boundaries of subjective representation by way of actually showing the story in the colloquial sense instead of telling a story. The two terms show versus tell in traditional narrative theory deal with the distance between narrator and narrative, with close proximity between them described as showing and a larger distance as telling (cf. Genette, *Narrative Discourse* 162-189; Booth 8). Yet the two terms mingle and fuse in visual media: The passage's panels, in structuralist terms, are show, and subjective at that, since they depict an imagined account of an imagined character (adult James), who comes to "a gentlemanly agreement" with a real character, James's father ("imagined" and "real," of course, in terms of actualization in the storyworld). But while the panels show, the verbal narrative tells from a distance, and the verbal and visual modes seem to clash in terms of closeness to the presented story. The passage invokes an eerie presence, a close proximity to events that do not actually happen in the storyworld, with a subjective point of view that is detached from any in-world agency.

Adding to this dense interplay of detached internal focalization, rapid changes of focalization subtypes as well as the superimposed interior monologue of a hitherto absent, heterodiegetic narrator make a case for graphic narrative's unique, multimodal incorporation of non-linearity and multilevel narrative. On the use of a narrator's voice that is spread over multiple panels, Gene Kannenberg oberves that:

> Readers need to "assemble" a sentence over a long series of non-contiguous panels which may be interspersed with scenes of dialogue as well. This narrative technique mandates a non-linear reading strategy that once again demonstrates Ware's use of comics to describe events from multiple points of view in the same space. (316)

The specific focalization in this passage is unique to the the corpus and warrants closer scrutiny of the narratological methodology. An analogy to this technique is perhaps best found in another visual medium: film. Similar to graphic narratives in this regard,

film uses framing devices (for example camera placement) and editing (analogous to panel-to-panel interaction in comics) to suggest internal visual focalization. The popularization of this filmic technique dates back as far as the 1910's, when Lev Kuleshov postulated the various emotional affects of camera position and editing as a man's neutral facial expression cuts to different images such as a bowl of soup (imposing hunger on the man's state) or a woman (imposing voyeurism). Studies show that this effect is empirically valid (cf. Calbi et al.) and emerges not from the images themselves but from their relationship with each other and how viewers interpret this relationship.

Famously, Alfred Hitchcock is one of the most prominent directors to have made use of this phenomenon. His work often has a voyeuristic emphasis, for instance *Psycho*'s (1960) Norman Bates, who spies on Marion Crane in her underwear through a secret peephole in one scene. The film cuts from Bates and his peephole to Marion in the bathroom and back to an extreme close-up of Bates's eye and the peephole. *Rear Window* (1954) revolves almost entirely around this technique – photographer L. B. Jefferies, whose broken leg confines him to his apartment, stalks a cornucopia of neighbours through his telephoto lens. Virtually all instances of voyeurism in the film, from watching a neighbouring musician or a young woman during her gymnastics exercises to witnessing the scene of a murder, apply the same editing technique: point of view shots intercut with Jefferies's reactions. In contrast to *Jimmy Corrigan*'s passage at the center of discussion here, *Psycho*, *Rear Window*, and other such films are always careful to assign agency to these scenes; they are not, as is the case with imagined adult James, disembodied subjective experiences. It is certainly possible to argue for other Hitchcock films that assume a voyeuristic subjectivity without agency: *Rope* (1948), for example, uses one seemingly uninterrupted shot throughout its entirety to follow the attempted coverup of a murder and focuses on salient objects (such as the murder weapon or the deceased's makeshift "coffin") to create suspense.

But the most striking comparison with *Jimmy Corrigan*'s use of disembodied subjectivity is to be found in the final shots of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). Astronaut David Bowman finds himself in a baroque room seemingly outside of time and space; the sequence uses techniques mentioned earlier such as subjective camera positioning and shot-reverse shot editing between an observer and someone or something observed. The scene's subjective recursiveness is unique in comparison to other such scenes in film and yet identical in procedure to the passage in *Jimmy Corrigan*: that the observer and the observed are one and the same character. On no less than three separate occasions, Bowman watches an older version of himself shortly before the younger version disappears, although the younger version's point of view is retained for exactly one shot on each occasion (cf. fig. 5.50). Kubrick and Ware apply

FIGURE 5.50: Still frames (2:15'05-2:16'20) from *2001: A Space Odyssey*, dir. Stanley Kubrick. Frame 1 shows Bowman, still in his spacesuit, who looks into a room where, in the next two frames, he sees himself, considerably aged. Old Bowman notices his younger self, seemingly looks at him, then stands up and walks towards him. His empty glance in frame 3 suggests that young Bowman has disappeared and frame 4 confirms this suggestion. Throughout these shots, young Bowman's subjective perception becomes disembodied, and internal focalization loses its focalizing agent.

the same narrative trick: Focalization moves from a tangible entity to an intangible one, becomes disembodied – ultimately, an extradiegetic presence serves as the agent of observation when there should be no agency within the narrative's storyworld logic.

The above digression on focalization in film should have helped clarify that Ware's narrative technique in the discussed passage is not to be confused with external focalization. Annotators for this passage argued that, in order to assume external focalization in these panels, the reader would have to disregard the more or less obvious implication of subjective representation either via "internal world representation" or, in one panel, via "spatial point of view." The same phenomenon applies to the *2001: A Space Odyssey* sequence, which suggests that internal visual focalization does not necessarily require a focalizer within the storyworld. The data for other graphic narratives in the corpus suggest that these instances are quite rare. Notwithstanding their relative obscurity, this analysis demonstrates that empirical scrutiny of subjective representation (not only for graphic narratives but for all types of media) challenges the understanding of existing models.

In *Jimmy Corrigan*'s case, we can conclude that: 1) types of internal visual focalization may not be beholden to the panel, the smallest narrative unit in graphic narratives, but can occur simultaneously (cf. panel two in fig. 5.49, which contains both "internal world representation" and "spatial point of view" at the same time); 2) internal visual focalization may occur even though there is no evidence to suggest a focalizing entity within the storyworld. Owing to the fact that these challenging narrative techniques stand next to conventional techniques, and that Ware uses this rich repository to tell a mundane, everyday-life story, it is easy to see why *Jimmy Corrigan* warrants comparison to seminal works in other media. *2001: A Space Odyssey* is only one such comparison which, at first glance, shares little with Ware's graphic novel but uses identical narrative techniques. As concerns other media, the scholarship on Chris Ware repeatedly compares *Jimmy Corrigan* to James Joyce's *Ulysses*, another complex narrative with a mundane plot (cf. Strouhal 167), and, perhaps unsurprisingly, a relatably strenuous relationship between a son and a father figure.

One last remark about the data I have discussed in this chapter should strengthen this relationship to other media's hallmark narratives: If we consider *Jimmy Corrigan*'s use of internal focalization for daydreams, interior thoughts, and other hypotheticals as being part of a stream-of-consciousness narration, then narrative time becomes a deciding factor in the discussion. Olsza Małgorzata argues in her essay "The Poetics of Modernism in the Graphic Novel" that *Jimmy Corrigan*'s narrative time operates as duration as postulated by Henri Bergson. Jimmy's inner ruminations often take place at a point in the story when he simply waits for things to happen. They are thus an escape not only from reality but also from temporal inertia (cf. 214). The

other two narratives mentioned above entail a similar relationship to time: *2001's* last sequence is obviously unstuck in time (how else would Bowman be able to see himself in an abstract/metaphorical space), and *Ulysses*, although it takes place over the course of less than a day, presents its characters' introspections throughout more than 700 pages. In essence, internal focalization makes "real" time (or narrated time) yield to whatever duration "interior" time (or narrative time) requires. All three narratives ultimately present their protagonists' exposure to what Slavoj Žižek calls drabness of time: "Time is not just a neutral, light medium within which things happen. We feel the density of time itself. Things that we see are more markers of time" (*The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* 2:19'15). The dataset for *Jimmy Corrigan* makes a case in favor of the possibility that such "markers of time" are empirically observable.

5.2.3.3 *Signal to Noise*
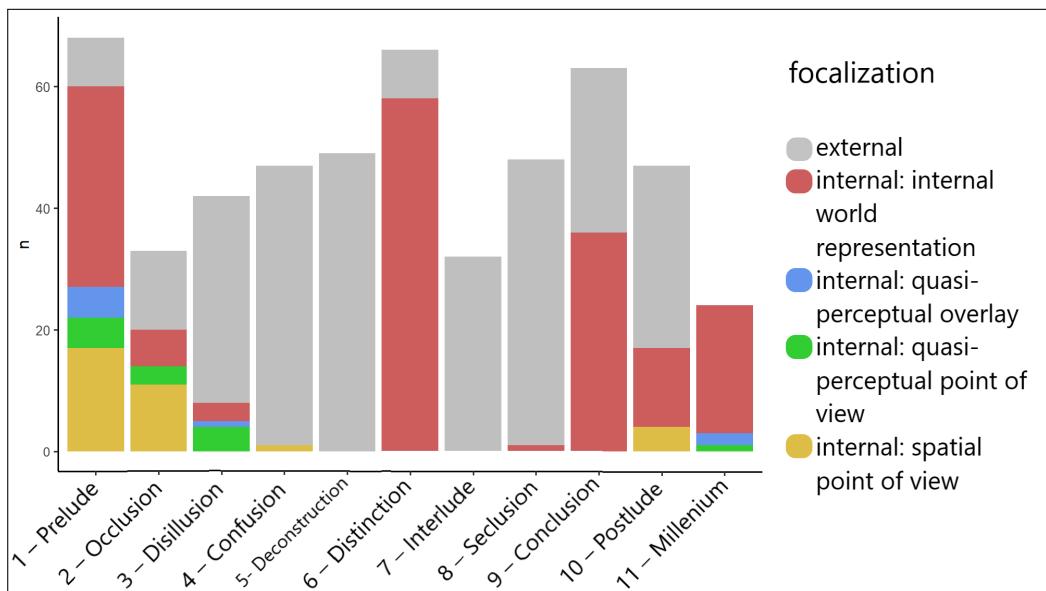
FIGURE 5.51: Focalization Visualization for *Signal to Noise*, dataset A.

Two groups annotated data for Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's *Signal to Noise* simultaneously, yet independently from each other. The results show that 1) visual focalization in *Signal to Noise* utilizes all four subtypes of internal focalization, and 2) annotators differed in their interpretation of the narrative's use of subjectivity. Dataset A (fig. 5.51) shows that the subclass „internal world representation" dominates focalization throughout most of the narrative, with a peak in chapter 6, "Distinction." By contrast, dataset B (fig. 5.52) presents "spatial point of view" as leading internal focalization technique in the first six of eleven chapters. Slight deviations in the number of panels per chapter (for example, chapter 6 contains more panels in dataset B than in dataset A) warrant a discussion on inter-annotator-agreement. What is more, both datasets suggest that *Signal to Noise* marks the only ocurrence among all annotated narratives in which internal focalization is more common than external focalization.

McKean's experimental aesthetics are one possible reason for the dominance of internal focalization. The artist incorporates photographs, sketches, technical drawings, and visual distortion into a collage of visual styles that reflect the turmoils within the narrative. The protagonist, a nameless filmmaker, has learned that he will soon die of cancer, and envisions a last film about medieval villagers who are certain that the world will end on New Year's Eve, 999 CE. McKean often visualizes the protagonist's monologues as if they were parts of a script that become images in his mind. Figure 5.53 shows eight consecutive panels with an evident example of this technique as they
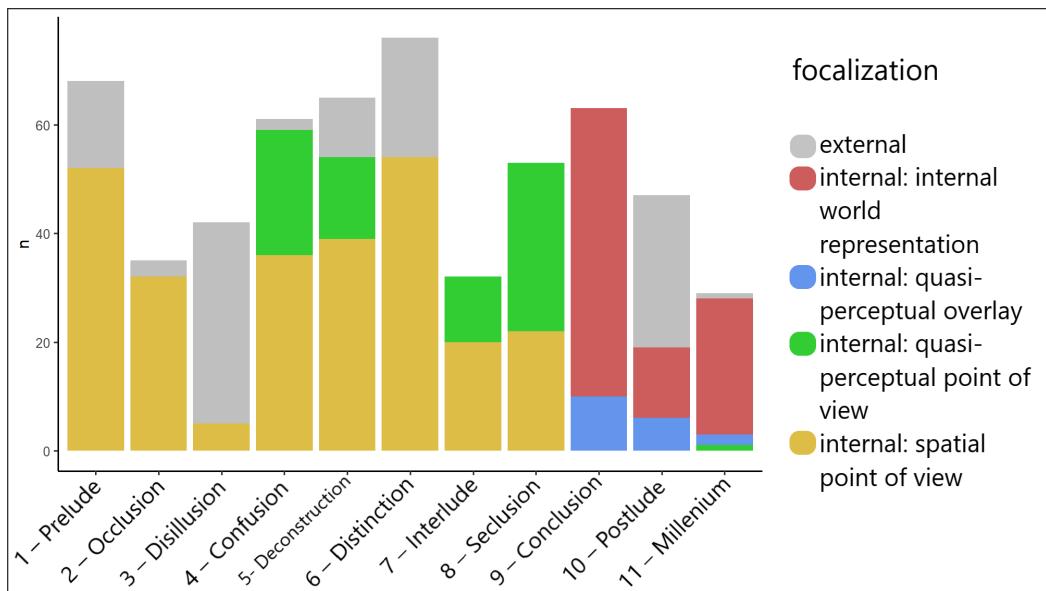
FIGURE 5.52: Focalization Visualization for *Signal to Noise*, dataset B.

start with the words "I'm making a film in my head" and go on to describe said film with technical terms such as "pan in slowly" or with descriptions: "We see their faces (rich, poor, old, fat, mad)."

FIGURE 5.53: *Signal to Noise*, p. 29.

Stylistically, this practice leads to two idiosyncratic uses of focalization. Firstly, whenever the narrative shifts to depicting these villagers, *Signal to Noise* utilizes "internal world representation," as annotated in dataset A (although dataset B interpreted

FIGURE 5.54: *Signal to Noise*, p. 46.
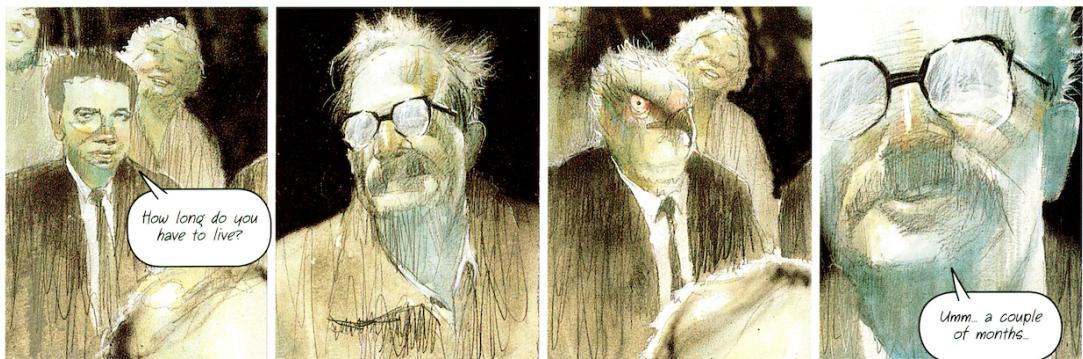
FIGURE 5.55: *Signal to Noise*, p. 25.

this section as "spatial point of view"). Perhaps annotators jumped to this conclusion because the previous page pictures the filmmaker as sitting in an armchair and reading a book, and/or they missed the indicator that this film takes shape inside the filmmaker's head). Secondly, large passages of *Signal to Noise* eschew the creative juxtaposition popularized by Alan Moore, in which the verbal mode presents one string of narrative while the visual mode presents another and thus braids the two modes into one thematic whole.

Instead, *Signal to Noise* is mainly a work of introspection. The filmmaker ruminates on his last days and works his fatalist viewpoint into the apocalyptic narrative of his last film. Round ("Apocatastasis") observes that apocalypse in the book is both global and individual but ultimately cyclical. The filmmaker ponders whether "Apocatastasis" might be a fitting title for his film, and explains the concept: "1) Restoration, re-establishment, renovation. 2) Return to a previous condition. 3) (Astronomy) Return to the same apparent position, completion of a period of revolutions" (Gaiman and McKean 73). By the same token, the narrative cycles through the filmmaker's thoughts, fears, imminent end, and philosophies. Sometimes more essay than story, *Signal to Noise* presents one particular man's obsessions and meaning-making processes.

Both datasets show a level of agreement with the use of "spatial point of view" in chapter 4, in which multiple panels depict torn-up script pages in the filmmaker's hands (fig. 5.54). In another passage, dataset A alternates between "quasi-perceptual overlay" and "quasi-perceptual point of view" when the filmmaker is at a Q&A with an audience (fig. 5.55; dataset B marked this passage as having external focalization, to which I will return in due course). The annotators furthermore decided to identify a change in the man's appearance as "internal world representation," whereas the surrounding panels are marked as having "quasi-perceptual overlay." The latter decision possibly goes back to McKean's expressionist style in this passage: Scraggly lines and yellowish colors (reminiscent of sickness) shape the filmmaker's outline. The annotators for this dataset clearly interpreted visual aesthetics as representing some form of subjectivity. In this sense, the ever-changing visual style is evocative of the protagonist's inner world, both literally (the script for his film) and metaphorically (dissolving lines, dark hues representing his sense of detachment). Annotation for chapter 1 is thus all the more exemplary, as it combines all four subtypes of internal focalization. Dataset A makes a case for the argument that experimental aesthetics in graphic narrative carry the potential to showcase the diversity of visual focalization.

Dataset B, on the other hand, presents a problem that bears repeating: Quantitative data for narratological phenomena can only ever be reliable and valid when the data can be tested for statistical significance. In the case of *Signal to Noise*, the two datasets can only offer two competing close readings of visual focalization in the narrative. The high ratio of "spatial point of view" in set B seems compelling enough to find and compare such instances in the narrative. Upon closer inspection, it becomes apparent that either: a) annotators in this group made no distinction between certain markers of subjectivity / did not identify markers of internal focalization that the group for set A did in fact identify; or b) annotators did not understand the underlying theoretical framework. As such, interpreting these two results must necessarily be a qualitative exercise; only thirty or more datasets would offer a basis for statistical testing via inter-annotation agreement. The statistical results would then present a concrete answer as to whether either of the two available datasets show specific trends, or whether they are outliers, in short: whether they are in agreement with the general data analysis.

Signal to Noise posits a compelling instance for reflecting on this problem. The title refers to the signal-to-noise ratio, a measure in engineering that compares the amount of identifiable signal in a transmission to its background noise. Gaiman and McKean use a number of metaphors and instances in order to expand this ratio into questions about the human condition. The filmmaker watches TV at night, but all he sees is white noise on a dead channel. His producer's voice on the telephone is barely recognizable among interferences. He envisions a hunchback in his film, the only

villager remaining in town, whose screams and cries are deafened and made illegible by the surrounding snowstorm. *Signal to Noise* ponders how we create meaning out of a seemingly endless input of sensory information and whether the patterns that guide us are inherent in the world or whether we conjure them from chaos. The filmmaker's neighbor Reed is convinced of such patterns: "So all this stuff you're fascinated by, the world ending, the times it hasn't ...It all means something. Even the stuff that doesn't mean anything. Like the noise you get changing channels on an old radio. It's all patterns. Or it would be if you could see the big picture. There's no such thing as noise" (64). The filmmaker is of the opposite opinion when he comments that all of the condolences and conversations which he receives are just noise. His words are accompanied by a multitude of overlapping panels on the page (fig. 5.56), which presented a problem during the annotation process.

Since annotators assessed focalization on a panel-by-panel basis, they first needed to annotate panel dimensions and panel number per page. This particular page is impossible to demarcate by panel dimensions and numbers as panels weave in and out of each other and traditional panel frames do not exist. A signal-to-noise ratio analysis might judge the page to be very noisy, at least in comparison to conventional comic book pages. In the complete annotation, both groups decided to annotate the entire page as a single panel. This solution appears pragmatic, as the hypothetical alternative would depend on what individual annotators decided to identify as panel frames, separate panels, etc. Thematically, *Signal to Noise* brings forth an interesting parallel to the annotation process: The artistic choice to favor such a chaotic layout over a degree of order reflects the process of identifying patterns through annotation. As they are, the two datasets can only hint at certain patterns and do not move beyond individual assessments. In other words: They cannot present a satisfying solution to patterns of focalization in the narrative because they deviate too much from other possible assessments. "The big picture," as the filmmaker's neighbor calls it, calls for significance that emerges from chaos; statistical testing, too, calls for significance that emerges from data. The book's conclusion – the filmmaker finishes his last film's script before he dies – mirrors a methodological conclusion for the experimental analysis of narratology: Patterns can only emerge from large enough pools of disorder.

FIGURE 5.56: *Signal to Noise*, p. 40.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Between Narrative Theory and Empirical Data

— Alan Moore and Dave S. Gibbons, *Watchmen*

Having discussed the experimental and quantitative data of the previous chapters, this section summarizes the discussion and returns to the initital discourse on focalization theory. The underlying questions will be: Can our empirical findings contribute to existing narratological theory? Do the data contest any pre-existing notions of focalization? And finally: Is it possible to outline a general understanding of focalization in which traditional (qualititative) criticism and empirical (quantitative) design are able to support each other?

6.1 Implications of Empirical and Quantitative Data for Focalization

The preceding chapters make a case for the experimental scrutiny of visual focalization specifically and for an experimental narratology in general. As regards the former, I have shown earlier that the decades-old term focalization had seen a theoretical rejuvenation as a cognitive concept before other theories introduced broader concepts, of which a considerable number decided to forego the term "focalization" altogether in favor of even more cognitively induced approaches. However, the earliest understanding of focalization did not have this congnitive impetus in mind. The term's initial function was to separate the narrator from the perceptive quality of the narration, or, to reiterate Genette's dichotomy once more: "Who speaks?" and "Who sees?" (*Narrative Discourse* 186). Other authors adapted the term and expanded it to include a fictional character's agency (cf. Bal) or domains of experientiality other than seeing (cf. Fludernik). Narratological boundaries within focalization, such as internal or external focalization, received new dichotomies by almost every author with a voice in the discourse; *telling* versus *experiencing* (Fludernik) or *narrator-focalizer* versus *perceptual focalizer* (Rimmon-Kenan) are only two examples of the terminological tug-of-war. Others still completely did away with the entire concept of focalization and deemed the concept too rigid for a transmedial approach to storytelling, all the while supplanting focalization with similar concepts such as "subjective representation" (cf. Thon). In this notably polyphonic discussion, I aimed to isolate two observations that are more or less consistent throughout the discourse:

1. Chronologically, focalization as a concept moves towards explaining the subjective reality of fictional characters by using certain cognitive processes in the narrative, which readers in turn successfully decode (or fail to do so);
2. Focalization operates between two narrative extremes that the majority of authorship calls internal and external focalization.

The next step was to find empirical evidence for these two observations. I explained the methodological background in chapter 3, but I would like to reiterate here that if we submit focalization as narrative category which operates via cognitive (or experiential) means, then it stands to reason that readers apply their own cognitive processes while reading to understand such fictional representations. As such, we can understand the reading process as an act of communication between reader and text, and multiple fields have elaborated on this relationship, from reader-response theory (among others, Fish, *Surprised by Sin*; Iser, *The Implied Reader*; Jauss and Benzinger) to psycholinguistics and discourse linguistics (among others, Turner, *Reading Minds*; Duchan et

al.; Segal). In particular, Bortolussi and Dixon sought to reconcile these disciplines in their book *Psychonarratology*. The study of cognition in these fields had effects on focalization as a cognitive concept in three ways:

1. Observation of conversation principles between reader and text (for example: Does the comic book use overt strategies to convey subjective representation of a character's mind in such a way that the reader is able to decode it?)

2. Embodiment theory (for our purposes: the hypothesis that readers use their own bodily experientiality as the reference point of all linguistic expressions)

3. Deictic Shift Theory (DST): assumes that readers establish a deictic center in a storyworld from which they create a spatiotemporal deictic field (cf., for example, Galbraith; Herman, *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind*; Bühler)

Specifically that last concept, DST, advocates for an empirical scrutiny of focalization in which readers experience deictic shifts in the narrative – or rather, in their own understanding of the narrative. As such, it was first necessary to conduct experiments in which readers assessed their own understanding of focalization in narrative, and to then look for statistically significant effects in the narrative that point towards quantifiable markers of internal or external focalization. Afterwards, the goal was to apply these effects to a mini-corpus of graphic narratives, to annotate the observations, and to compare the discussion of the data with more traditional (qualitative) interpretations of these graphic narratives. In conclusion, the data clearly show an empirical trend that supports the discussion on focalization in some places and reorganizes it in others. In addition, the findings support the argument that focalization is indeed a cognitive process and addresses certain meaning-making schemata in readers' minds.

6.1.1 Visual Focalization in Graphic Narrative and the Empirical Evidence

Most fundamentally, the two experiments conducted with an excerpt from *City of Glass* in chapter 4 provided evidence that readers tend to assign external focalization to certain panels and internal focalization to other panels during the reading process; and that these panels have distinct formal features that are mutually exclusive to either instance of focalization. Therefore, the results confirm that focalization in graphic narrative, on a basic cognitive level, operates between internal and external occurrences. I would like to summarize the other key findings of these experiments in the following.

The results show statistical effects for discourse level markers that encode panels with internal visual focalization.

Participants assessed a statistically significant number of panels as internally focalized when the panel is either very close to the focalized character, or, more precisely, when this character's hands are shown. The former qualifier is not necessarily proof of internal focalization, but the depiction of hands shows clear effects in that direction, regardless of whether the angle, or visual perspective, shows a character's actual vantage point. This observation also implies the importance of embodiment and DST for focalization: Readers, most likely on an unconscious level, adapt to a fictional character's experiential domain when they are exposed to that character's arms and hands. After all, in daily life it is impossible to attain a vantage point that does not include one's own arms and hands; the brain may block out this information similarly to one's own nose, but it remains as the deictic center for all other sensual experiences.

Internal visual focalization is tied to specific markers, whereas external visual focalization is tied to a lack of such markers

The experiments also found that such markers are invariably tied to instances of internal focalization. Accordingly, participants found external focalization in panels where such markers are absent. In other words, instances of external focalization show no shared formal features that can be distilled into a marker typology. The initial classifications in the two experiments, film shot types and attentional categories, initially showed some statistically significant effects for the relative visual proximity to the narrative's main character, but the second experiment yielded no such results that bear any empirical relevance. As such, the dichotomy between internal and external focalization is not as clear-cut as measuring proximity to active agents in a narrative. It might have been intuitive to assume that, for example, close-ups tend to imply internal focalization and wide shots tend to imply external focalization, but the experiments were not able to replicate this intuition.

Participants decoded markers (or lack thereof) with varying degrees of success

Both the homogenous group of participants in Experiment I (in terms of age and comics literacy) and the more heterogenous group in Experiment II agreed or disagreed to a certain extent over whether specific panels displayed markedness of focalization. This variety in assessment clearly shows that readers need to decode formal features in graphic narrative, at least when it comes to focalization. From a strictly reader-response theory perspective, the conclusion is more drastic: Such formal features are narrative markers for some readers but not for others. In terms of a narratology based on empirical evidence, we can thus conclude that any degree of focalization in narrative is purely descriptive, while other narratological frameworks profess prescriptive

instances. In more simple terms, studies of certain graphic narratives analyze focalization with a full typological toolkit that some readers may not have access to. It is thus all the more important to assess such markers quantitatively to come to any conclusion what readers are able to decode in a narrative; hence the implementation of a mini-corpus with an appropriate annotation scheme.

Some markers are "simultaneous" and as such quantifiable; other markers are "contextual" and require story-level decoding

I have mentioned some markers that, for the majority of readers, imply internal visual focalization; others include a change in drawing style or varying panel frames. These markers are, to borrow Thon's terminology (*Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture*), simultaneous markers. They are immediately available for decoding and point towards some form of internal focalization. However, I have speculated in the discussion of the two experiments that some instances of internal focalization emerge from a more complex interplay of preceding/succeeding panels, and an understanding of story development. Such markers are (again borrowing from Thon) contextual markers, since they are not immediately available for decoding but require an understanding of the narrative on a storylevel. Instances of contextual markers became apparent when readers assessed internal focalization for certain panels after they deduced the protagonist's relative position in the storyworld from preceding panels, or when certain images (such as a burning telephone booth in *City of Glass*) could only be explained as hallucinations by the character. It remains unclear whether contextual markers could be quantified in an automated annotation scheme for graphic narratives. Neural networks may be taught to look for simultaneous markers in a sufficiently large corpus, and based on a sufficiently large annotation database; but these networks cannot understand narratives on a story level.

Verbal and visual focalization influence each other

At the outset of this study, I outlined a theoretical framework for focalization in graphic narratives. Since graphic narratives operate in two modes, the verbal and the visual, it stands to reason that they also operate with multimodal focalization. Results from the two experiments point to a possible justification for this proposition – some panels with one type of caption (an extradiegetic narrator, implying external focalization) yielded different effects for visual focalization than other captions (an intradiegetic narrator, implying internal focalization). I have thus emphasized throughout this study that the questions pertaining to focalization are exclusively related to the visual mode. Scrutiny of verbal focalization most likely requires a typology adjusted to its narrative mode,

and would possibly arrive at a different set of simultaneous markers. With that in mind, the interplay between verbal and visual focalization is apparent in some graphic narratives, for example the works of Posy Simmonds or Alan Moore.

6.1.2   Visual Focalization in Graphic Narrative Corpora

The results from the previous two studies prompted a proposal for an annotation system for visual focalization. In a first step, the evident markedness of internal focalization enabled panel-level annotation for such cases. Future annotation systems could gather these data and, from such isolated examples, develop a marker system for simultaneous markers that informs an automated annotation process. Bearing that in mind, some contextual markers still require manual labor from annotators. In a second step, I decided to further specify internal focalization instances according to Thon's four subcategories of subjective representation. I collated these annotation data and set them against more traditional close reading exercises of the individual graphic novels in the corpus to show how they may benefit from the former. In the end, some pertinent throughlines emerged in their use of visual focalization, the meaning-making process of these graphic novels, and their themes, topics, and aesthetics.

From Hell, *Batman: The Killing Joke*, and *Watchmen* all present a treatment of internal focalization that seems in line with writer Alan Moore's major concerns: Embedding mind states into ideological representations. All three graphic novels use spatial point of views to elicit this idea, from William Gull's descent into madness under the pretense of occult catharsis, to Rorschach's and Dr. Manhattan's ideological confinement within duality and entropy. *Gemma Bovery*, *City of Glass*, and *Maus*, on the other hand, all use focalization to portray representations of self, or a loss of self. The authors present cases in which focalization helps to understand certain self-images, such as Gemma Bovery, who sees herself as seductress, or her baker Joubert, who sees himself as voyeur. By the end of his own detective story, however, Daniel Quinn does not see himself as much of anyone. Lastly, Art Spiegelman's father sees himself as someone only to have that self-image dismantled by his own son throughout the narrative. Finally, *Persepolis*, *Jimmy Corrigan*, and *Signal to Noise* all deal with the negotiation between individual and collective history. Marjane Satrapi's own biography often serves as a backdrop for the Iranian Revolution, whereas Jimmy Corrigan's miserably quiet life is set against his own grandfather's equally quiet life decades prior in American history. The unnamed director in *Signal to Noise*, however, equates his life's end with the end of all history in a final film script. Again, focalization plays a major role in the narratival structure of these graphic novels – by encapsulating an individual state of mind, the narratives infer broader statements about a historical state of mind.

As before, I will now turn to more specific insights that were gained from the analysis of these data in light of more traditional close readings. We can conclude the following:

Decisions about focalization inform interpretation

The above readings make clear that focalization is not merely a formalist exercise in narratology; pointing towards a narrative's use of focalization informs its interpretations and vice versa. Various such interpretations may add different perspectives to the narrative, as we have seen with, for example, *From Hell*'s antagonist William Gull. Annotators seemed to differ on whether Gull's murder spree results in hallucinatory madness or actual supernatural ascension. If we assume the former, then Gull's point-of-view panels show internal world representation, completely removed from the novel's ground storyworld. If we assume the latter, then Gull's point of view panels show exactly that ground storyworld, with all the magical and occult implications that they contain for that world. Verdicts on focalization such as these two carry significant weight for the understanding of a narrative, not only on the story level but for the narrative's cultural legacy as a whole.

Focalization as representation of spatio-temporal perception on the comics page

A particular relationship between focalization and narrative emerges from the data for *Watchmen*. We have seen that Dr. Manhattan's perception of time differs from our linear temporal understanding, and as such, the character can seamlessly jump from memory to memory, even into the future. I have proposed that this use of moments captured on the page as panel tableaux relates to a nonlinear understanding of time – while they are certainly to be read in linear fashion, they are also simultaneous as a grid of moments across the page. The interaction between these moments through time is what Groensteen (*The System of Comics*) calls braiding. However, this particular superhero experiences his life as a form of braiding, and internal focalization facilitates an understanding of such nonlinearity that is quite incomprehensible within the phycisal boundaries of real life. As such, focalization enables us not only to immerse ourselves into fictional moments through the experientiality of literary characters; it also enables us to consider an experientiality that is physically impossible. A layout of moments in time, in the form of panels across the page, as well as the combination of such moments and their arrangement, ties back to the experientiality inherent within focalization.

Nested focalizations

Some instances of internal focalization exhibited a nested structure. I have mentioned before how the assessment of focalization relates to a broader interpretation of the narrative, and used *From Hell*'s William Gull as example. Some annotators assessed the aftermath of his murder as hallucinations, which therefore falls under the subcategory internal world representation. However, most of these instances are also from Gull's vantage point and thus also qualify as spatial point of view. This double categorization is by no means an issue, rather, it shows that Thon's typology (and keeping in mind that he does not use it for internal focalization) is malleable, with fuzzy boundaries and the possibility for overlap. In fact, one might be tempted to categorize such panels – in which we see a character's vantage point in addition to his hallucinations – as quasi-perceptual point of view, but judging from Thon's description of the term, this category is not suitable for panels that are completely removed from any grounding in the base storyworld. To return to my initial point, visual focalization can use layered strategies to make subjective representation of a character's mind much more complex. Two examples that were discussed earlier are: *Jimmy Corrigan*'s hypothetical character's experience or *Maus*' mutual self-repairment of an anthropomorphic mouse that turns into an anthropomorphic cat, depending on additional information in Vladek's tale. In the former, the reader experiences the subjective reality of a character that does not really exist, who is only a hypothesis. In the latter, the reader notices how quickly the visual representation of certain characters may change due to additional information (another interplay between verbal and visual focalization). Focalization in the visual mode has at its disposal multiple instruments to expand on straightforward experiential representations and turn them into multiple, layered perspectives.

Experimental study of narrative requires large-scale inter-annotation-agreement

I have mentioned at length that statistically robust effects for an experimental narratology require a large number of data. One full set of annotation data for any given graphic narrative can only be exploratory as I have shown in the previous chapter. In order to find trends or correlations between data points, however, we require multiple full annotations sets for a single graphic narrative. These annotation sets could then be compared with each other via inter-annotation-agreement. A statistically viable analysis of these data would require at least thirty to sixty full annotations, which at this point is simply too large a workload for manual annotation if one takes into consideration that this would have to be repeated for every graphic narrative in a corpus. In short: An experimental narratology will most likely be exploratory unless researchers aim at actual statistical effects for narratological constituents as I have done for focalization in chapter 4.

Patterns emerge out of disorder

The titular ratio in *Signal to Noise* posits that meaningful information can only emerge from large enough pools of disorder. I suspect that this ratio is an apt metaphor for the annotation process and also for the study of narratological constituents at large. If we preface narratological experiments with a hypothesis that is grounded in existing models and then apply an annotation system, we are bound to find effects that validate or reject such a hypothesis. Similarly, if we apply this experimental narratology to existing narratological discourse, we are likewise bound to find effects between qualitative analysis and quantitative evidence. I hope to have shown that the empirical study of focalization in graphic narrative sheds some light on this matter. It is perhaps not too bold to deem the discussion that surrounds the term focalization a "pool of disorder;" many voices have contributed to the term, many disagree over the fundamentals of the concept, and most have developed their own, specialized terminology. With data analysis and corpus studies as tools, we can now recognize a typology of focalization that is not only structurally robust but also statistically evident, which helps us study both focalization as a narratological item and readers' underlying cognitive processes to understand that item. In other words, I hope to have shown that the ongoing discussion on focalization, this pool of disorder, can manifest into kernels of order.

I would like to close by addressing yet again one major criticism of empirical and quantitative methodologies. I find it important to reiterate that such methodologies are not the be-all, end-all of literary analysis. An experimental narratology can only ever be complementary to close readings, structuralist narratology, and other cultural theories – just as much as structuralist narratology was complementary to the foundations for experimental narratology. Large-scale quantitative corpora are unproductive if they merely set out to "prove" a theorem from qualitative approaches; cue numerous scholars of the humanities who counter the latest DH project results with the comment "Well, we already knew that, so what is the point?" The point, indeed, is not to prove existing theory but to enhance it, or make it more robust, or challenge it to statistical evidence. This argument is paramount should experimental narratology find any footing in future projects.

6.2 Bridging the Gap between Qualitative Criticism and Quantitative Evidence

The rise in popularity of computational methods in the Humanities has spawned as many condemnations of DH as it has spawned apologias. From accusations that digital methods aren't of any use to the humanities to a perceived financial favoritism for DH

projects, articles such as Brennan's "The Digital-Humanities Bust" lack not so much an understanding of the principles that underlie DH as much as fail to recognize the potential for mediation between quantitative and qualitative methods. John Hunter ("The Digital Humanities and 'Critical Theory'") cautions proponents of digital methods in the humanities that the field will lose its "patina of 'cool'" (188) and offers two pieces of advice – that 1) scholars must negotiate the use and implementation of digital tools on their own terms lest the corporations behind these tools "redraw the conditions of knowledge for the world," and 2) DH should advocate its potential for a democratic perspective on scholarship in which expert analysis is set against large datasets, reader annotation, and statistical effects. The author points out that this democratization effect may "break the sage-on-the-stage model of higher education" (191 f.).
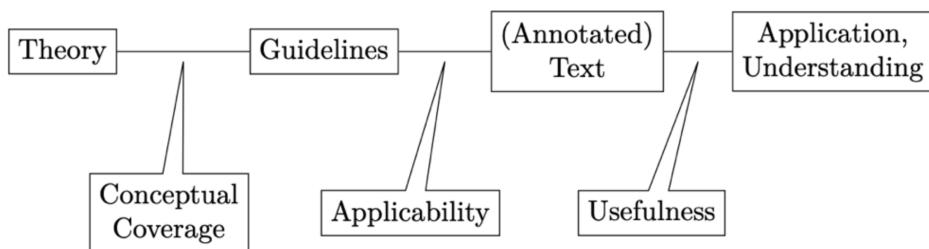
FIGURE 6.1: Three evaluation dimensions in DH research areas according to Gius et al.

Even though these are valid points, I would suggest that DH's responsibility lies not in redefining the relationship between culture and analysis, and certainly not in supplanting established critical theory or hermeneutical approaches. There are several reasons for this. At the outset of this study I modelled my structure after an evaluative process for literary corpus annotation by Gius et al. (cf. chapter 1, reproduced here in fig. 6.1). This process begins with theory, from which guidelines for annotation emerge that researchers then apply to a text before gathering understanding from these data. This theory is decidedly not computational, or empirical, or statistical – it is, in more cases than not (and again, has been here) formalist. In other words, digital humanities cannot operate without input from established theory. I would like to point out one critical feature in this model that is not immediately apparent from its visualization in fig. 6.1): The relationship between theory and annotation is recursive. I have shown in this conclusion that the results from empirical and annotation processes carry weight with regards to the theory that shaped them. These empirical results produce a more rigid typology of focalization, a typology which theory is open to challenge, or which educators are open to apply to seminars on graphic narrative. In this sense, any

DH project that applies quantifiable annotation categories necessarily stems from formalist/structuralist predecessors, and these predecessors are therefore always refined and supported with evidence by computational processes.

It is indeed misguided to view digital methods and hermeneutics as warring parties on a kind of academic battleground when they complement each other so well. And yet, on this imaginary battleground, Kopec ("The Digital Humanities, Inc.") argues that poetry rejects a language for information's sake, while scientific language is as precise as possible, and thus "useful for accumulating capital" (327). This argument seems to dwell on the oft-repeated notion that literature is almost transcendent, or impossible to grasp on a human scale, although it is created by humans – incidentally, it shares that origin with computation. Consequently, the precision of scientific language (I presume Kopec means analytical language) is not contradictory to poetic language if we use the former for analysis of the latter. But such misgivings lead authors such as Kopec to attribute to DH a "fetishization of accumulation" of data in which researchers start "privileging data over judgment" (328). While it may be a valid point of criticism for some projects that they overemphasize their corpus' amount of data in comparison to the relative brevity of conclusions – Moretti comes to mind, with his thousands of book titles that I mentioned in chapter 3.3.1 – it is unclear to me how data and judgment are mutually exclusive. Data without judgment lack interpretation, and judgment without data is always trivial, even more so in traditional criticism. The sentiment perhaps refers to the traditional mode of operations in literary criticism, where evidence as a term is not used in the same way as it is in the natural or social sciences. Good evidence in the latter should be reproducible, reliable, and support or reject a hypothesis. Evidence in the former is a more fluid term, and today often equal to reasoning. In his essay "There Will Be Numbers," Andrew Piper comments on this conflict:

> Humanists have traditionally been opaque about their methods – about what evidence has been considered and what is considered as evidence. Mediating knowledge through computation is not a dehumanization of the "humanities" or "culture." It is an act of mirroring, one where we show ourselves the cognitive steps we are taking to arrive at an argument about culture. Computation in this sense isn't fast – it slows us down and forces us to be more self-reflective. (7)

Reminders such as Piper's reinforce the conviction that DH methods are not popular because they make us rethink the way we analyze culture; they are popular because they yield practical results of very theoretical concepts. It is therefore only sensible that these methods slow us down and make us reflect on our practice as scholars. The results of this study are not groundbreaking in scope or entirely revolutionary, but they

do indeed deliver dependable results and a predictive model of a terminology that has become burdened by multiple, dispersed perspectives. As such, a deceleration of fundamental theoretical concepts seems an apt field where digital humanities can support the existing scholarship.

6.3   Towards an Experimental Narratology for Graphic Narrative

With reference to this relationship between computational and analytical methodology, Dunst and Mischke ("The Challenge and Promise of Digital American Studies") believe that "automated computation alone is unlikely to rewrite our literary and cultural histories. Rather, the value of computation arguably lies in the differential corroboration or revision of chronologies and conceptual distinctions" (136). This way forward appears particularly suited to experimental narratology. My focus lay on the focalization issue, in particular the question if the term has any quantifiable merit, and whether we can transform existing theory with the help of empirical data and a cognitivist framework. To a certain degree, this process was successful. Certainly, other narratological conceptualizations that pertain to graphic narrative may benefit from such a process. I would like to offer, as a final suggestion, a few ways in which I could see this field move forward, so that experimental narratology might develop its own structural foundation and analytical system to the benefit of narratological discourse.

Reading Sequence

In order to discuss reading direction, we should once more acknowledge the interaction between text and image. Reading a comic book means to interpret a succession of images, with accompanying text, and how these images relate to each other in terms of plot. Many concepualizations for these relationships between text and image exist (for example, McCloud; Harvey; Schüwer). Researchers who follow experimental narratology might be tempted to develop a framework from such conceptualization, for example McCloud's six classes of text-image interaction, and apply them to an empirical annotation system to see how such a system holds up to actual graphic narrative corpus analysis (in McCloud's case, probably not very well). However, the empirical study of text-image interaction can only go so far in terms of meaningful insight into reading direction. If we assume that readers of graphic narrative follow the information on the page just like they do in literary fiction, then sequential reading in graphic narrative should follow a Z-path along the page; from one panel to another, down to the next line, and so on. And yet, this is not necessarily the case – page layouts might differ, to the point where the reading path could resemble an N, or an L, or any other

directions that become too complex to resemble a letter of the alphabet. An annotation system for text-image interaction may be helpful if possibly skewed towards an evaluation of one's own reading. By contrast, it might be useful to develop an approach that gathers readers' data as it relates to their individual reading.

What is more, readers may take different paths while reading the same comic, even when we assume an intended reading direction. Interactions between text and image have certain consequences for certain reader clusters. Some readers may linger on the image and look for certain details, while other readers may jump from speech bubble to speech bubble and disregard most of the information that the image provides. In fact, Jochen Laubrock et al. found that eyetracking experiments reveal different effects of reading time and reading path in terms of comics literacy ("Attention to Comics: Cognitive Processing During Reading of Graphic Literature"). This observation is in line with the underlying theoretical framwork: Hillary Chute comments on the temporal flow in reading graphic narrative when she writes that "a comics page, unlike film or traditional prose narrative, is able to hold this contradictory flow in tension, as narrative development is delayed, retracked, or rendered recursive by the depth and volume of graphic texture" ("Comics as Literature?" 460). A tracking and subsequent concatenation of readers' eye movements across the page for one specific graphic narrative may reveal when exactly delays, retrackings, or recursions, occur and what exactly prompts them. Again, we find here the same methodology that I applied to focalization: 1) the practicability of an existing typological system, 2) tested by empirical merit and 3) annotated for in a representative corpus. I would hypothesize that discoveries surrounding reading direction involve markers of what Kai Mikkonen identifies as "strong cohesion devices" ("Focalisation in Comics" 76) such as recurring characters, objects, or places.

Sequence Reading and Simultaneous Reading

Semantics on the page level are part of a narratological phenomenon that is entirely unique to graphic narrative. The spatio-topical arrangement of panels on the page carries with it meaning that opposes linear reading. As such, we can infer two modes of reading graphic narrative that complement each other: The sequential reading that I addressed in the previous paragraph, and the simultaneous reading of the page as a whole. Several established tropes exist for this mode of storytelling. From *Watchmen*'s 3×3 panel layout to the ubiquitous splash page in which one single image fills the entire page, artists use a rich repository of layout options for narrative effect. Judging by this distinction, the sequential reading of graphic narrative is not unlike other vector narratives such as film or music, whereas graphic narratives are both vector and matrix narratives. The question presents itself here as to what degree readers utilize either

during the reading process. Benoît Peeters offers a typology of page layout that lends itself to quantitative scrutiny in his article "Four Conceptions of the Page" (Transl. Jesse Cohn):

	narrative-composition autonomy	narrative-composition interdependence
narrative dominance	CONVENTIONAL use	RHETORICAL use
compositional dominance	DECORATIVE use	PRODUCTIVE use

TABLE 6.1: Four conceptions of the page (Peeters).

Peeters applies his typology on a number of page layouts and assigns various effects to the narrative in relation to whether these panels are dominated by their use in narrative or by their aesthetic composition. The specific effects are perhaps not relevant at this point for my argument, which is: Just as with focalization, the methodology here would be to find out if readers are able to assign these types of layout to a selection of items in an empirical test. Possible statistical significance for these types of layout would then lead to further refinement and an annotation system. I would predict that this typology may lead to similar conclusions as we have seen with focalization: that such types are open to individual interpretation and cognitive processes; and that annotation for these types will possibly illustrate complex interdependencies between each other, replete with fuzzy boundaries and an overlay of multiple markers. It is very likely that, as has been the case with focalization, these categories are at the same time very useful for the description of a narratological phenomenon and too restrictive for actual corpus analysis, where, for example, a page may fall into more than one category at the same time (cf. Groensteen 93 f.). An experimental narratology may find practical effects within this theoretical concept and refine the conceptualization of the comcis page into an empirically rigid system.

Storyworlds

Finally, a narratological phenomenon that is both adjacent to the study of focalization and to the ontological playfulness of mainstream comics: storyworlds. We have seen that storyworlds play a major part in the analysis of focalization with regards to "ground truths" of a narrative's ontology. If such ontological rules are broken, readers may suspect the representation of a character's internal world. Likewise, many graphic narratives, and superhero comics in particular, use metalepsis in order to create nested

storyworlds, where one reality exists in another, or where characters "jump" out of the comics page to meet their creators. Analysis of storyworlds is a vital part of transmedial narratology because it is adjacent to other narratological concerns such as, again, focalization, or the phenomenon of worldbuilding and with it a reader's immersion into fiction.

Theories for this narratological constituent exist on both large-scale transmedial studies (M.-L. Ryan and Thon; J. Ryan) as well as specifically for ontological phenomena in graphic narrative such as metalepsis (Kukkonen, "Metalepsis in Comics and Graphic Novels"). An inquiry into the hierarchy of these storyworlds from the perspective of experimental narratology might easily create exactly that, a quantifiable hierarchy. Specifically, such hierarchies may reveal how and when narratives use metalepsis, what markers constitute metalepsis, and whether readers are able to assess such markers. The study of focalization would be a major contribution to such questions. What's more, an annotated hierarchy of this sort may also produce compelling results, or at least overviews, of narratives in which ontological boundaries are purposefully obscure. One such example is Grant Morrison et al.'s psychedelic miniseries *Flex Mentallo*, in which multiple superhero realities seem to converge upon one another, with the titular superhero's fictional creator also living in more than one reality. Contrary to the usual trope, these storyworlds are highly irregular, non-hierarchical, and barely explained within the narrative, thus creating a feeling of an ontological vertigo (cf. Moisich). A quantitative study of something as narratively opaque as *Flex Mentallo* surely would put existing theories to the test as far as their practicality is concerned.

Neil Cohn sets up the hypothesis that "the study of sequential image comprehension becomes less about analyzing what is 'out there' in the sequence or our conscious experience of it, but more what is inside of our own minds" ("The Limits of Time and Transitions" 144). With this quote, I return to my initial proposal about the day-to-day merit of experimental narratology for graphic narrative. If we understand narratives as not only the stage of literary fiction but also a human necessity for structuring the world that surrounds us; and if we further understand that images constitute a large part of this structuring process – then we may infer the importance of images for the narratives that determine our thought processes. In turn, it may be helpful to know how these narratives are shaped by other perspectives which are not our own. Politics, economics, religion, culture, ethics, and to no small degree science, are all shaped by some degree of subjectivity with regards to who represents or creates in these fields. In a world where mass opinion of a politician may change due to the dissemination of

memes on Twitter, or where journalists lose their life because they drew a caricature of a prophet, we must understand that graphic narratives carry conceptual meaning whose global interpretation may differ between its producer and its receiver.

It is not purely out of pragmatism that this exercise in caution becomes useful. The narrative practice to imbue stories with the workings of another mind teach us that our own consciousness is not singular. In fact, the idea of a self is created in this process. We set our experientiality against that of another person, fictional or nonfictional. We become, to reiterate Sartre, a person because we are seen (*Being and Nothingness*). In turn, others become people because we see them. This phenomenon is without ethical value; it is a cognitive process. It is also, to reiterate Lispector, a delicate thing, to create a whole person out of narrative (*The Hour of the Star*). Seen that way, focalization is a necessary human process to ensure both individualism and community.

Certainly, reading comic books is much less a dangerous affair than unconsciously (mis-)interpreting religious caricatures or political tribalism on social media. And yet, at the time of writing the medium's only indigenous genre, superhero comics, has enjoyed a comprehensive inauguration into every part of our cultural life for over a decade. It is certainly not difficult to understand why such savior figures stay popular – and relevant – in times of global distress. Indeed, what Cohn refers to as "what is inside of our own minds" is exactly this: heroic archetypes in the form of superheroes, political caricature in the form of graphic journalism, vitriol in the form of a virulent meme. I see great benefit in understanding how such narratives shape their subjectivity, so that we may separate our own convictions from those impressed upon us. I hope to have shown that an empirical, qualitative approach to this end is by no means ironic, as detractors would refer to it as some form of clinical, data-driven fact that claims superiority over other approaches. Far from it: Experimental narratology is a novel angle in the discourse. Experimental narratology will hopefully contribute a veritable, and singular, prospect to the rich perspectives that determine how exactly we imagine minds out of matter.

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Deutsche Zusammenfassung

1 – Einleitung: Comics, Narratologie und Empirik

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht bestehende erzähltheoretische Konzepte zur Fokalisierung in graphischen Narrativen mit empirischen und statistischen Mitteln. Ziel der Arbeit ist die Rückführung und Einarbeitung empirischer Erkenntnisse in den bestehenden Theoriekomplex.

Graphische Narrative, zu denen etwa Comics und Graphic Novels zählen, weisen erzählerische Mittel auf, die medienspezifisch narrative Effekte erzielen, gleichzeitig aber mit Mitteln der Narratologie erforscht werden können, die ursprünglich für andere Medien wie etwa für Film oder für die Literatur im engeren Sinne entwickelt wurden. Gleichzeitig entwickelt die Bildhaftigkeit graphischer Narrative ein Maß an Mehrdeutigkeit, das die Nutzung ihrer Bilder massenwirksam ideologisch nutzbar macht. Eine solche Nutzung ist in den letzten Jahrzehnten vor allem spürbar geworden in den Bereichen politischer Karikatur und der Verbreitung von Memes im Internet, aber auch in der Popularität von Superhelden, die in ihrer Medienwirksameit Archetypen repräsentieren und ideologisch wirksam sind. Graphische Narrative stellen somit einen zentralen Bestandteil des gesellschaftlichen Lebens dar, die gemäß des weitverbreiteten Sprichworts „Ein Bild sagt mehr als tausend Worte" die Masse der Leser*innenschaft ansprechen und sowohl Diskurse als auch Überzeugungen beeinflussen können.

Die Hauptthese dieser Arbeit beschäftigt sich jedoch nicht mit diesem mythologisierenden bzw. ideologisierenden Einfluss, sondern vielmehr mit der Art und Weise, wie das Medium Narrative entwickelt und wie Leser*innen diese verarbeiten. Als Grundlage dienen dafür die eingangs genannten Konzepte zur Fokalisierung, also die Repräsentation subjektiver Wahrnehmungen, die auch auf der Bildebene graphischer Narrative Anwendung finden. Diese etablierten Konzepte dienen als Fundament für eine empirisch orientierte Studie zur Fokalisierung, die im Rahmen verschiedener kognitiver Modelle und Methodologien untersucht werden sollen. Im Fokus steht die hypothetische leser*innenseitige Verarbeitung kognitiver Kodierungen im Bildanteil graphischer Narrative, die in der Folge Grundlage für ein Annotationssystem für visuelle Fokalisierung bilden.

Demnach dienen die folgenden Hypothesen als Leitlinie dieser Arbeit: *Existierende Konzepte der Fokalisierung können in empirischen Deskriptoren organisiert werden. Diese Deskriptoren sind in individuellen Leseprozessen zu beobachten. Leser*innen graphischer Narrative verarbeiten visuelle Information auf Grundlage dieser Deskriptoren.*

Um diese Hypothesen zu belegen, umreißt die vorliegende Arbeit zunächst den Begriff „graphische Narrative", bettet das der Arbeit zugrundeliegende empirische Projekt in den Bereich der digitalen Geisteswissenschaften ein und stellt einen Überblick über die bestehenden Konzepte zur Fokalisierung bereit. In der Folge präsentiert ein Kapitel die methodologischen Grundlagen der Arbeit mit besonderem Fokus auf Rezeptionsästhetik und Kognition, statistischen Methoden sowie Korpusstudien. Das Folgekapitel stellt zwei empirische Studien vor, in denen der Begriff der Fokalisierung empirisch untersucht wird, was in der Diskussion beider Studien in Form quantitativ nutzbarer Konstituenten zusammengefasst wird. Diese Konstituenten bilden das Gerüst für ein Annotationssystem, das im nächsten Kapitel der Arbeit anhand eines Pilotkorpus getestet und analysiert wird. Dieses Kapitel vergleicht eine jeweils vollständige Annotation von insgesamt neun graphischen Narrativen hinsichtlich ihrer Verwendung von Fokalisierung mit existierenden Analysen zum gleichen narratologischen Phänomen. Ein abschließendes Kapitel fasst die diese Vergleiche zusammen und vereinbart die gewonnenen Erkenntnisse mit der eingangs erwähnten Übersicht zum Begriff der Fokalisierung.

Diese Zusammenfassung in deutscher Sprache verwendet zur Übersichtlichkeit und Vergleichbarkeit Zwischenüberschriften, die die jeweiligen Oberkapitel übersetzen und die Inhalte der Arbeit in Kurzform wiedergeben.

2 – Graphische Narrative und Fokalisierung

2.1 – Definition „Graphische Narrative"

Im existierenden Diskurs finden sich zahlreiche Annäherungen an eine Definition des Mediums, das im alltäglichen Gebrauch häufig als „Comics" oder „Graphic Novel" bezeichnet wird. Da die zwei genannten Begriffe nur verschiedene Ausläufer des Mediums umfassen, erscheint es für diese Arbeit notwendig, einen Begriff zu finden, der das narrative Spektrum des Mediums ganzheitlicher umfassen kann. Einige Vorschläge sind hierbei bekannter als andere, beispielsweise der Begriff „sequential art" im

englischsprachigen Raum,[1] während französischsprachige Publikationen „bande dessinée" verwenden.[2] Vor allem amerikanische Publikationen hingegen nutzen oft den Begriff „comic strips".[3] Diese Beispiele sind alle historisch gewachsen, wobei „sequential art" erste Ansätze einer theoretischen Umrahmung unternimmt.

Ähnlich verhält es sich mit den beiden eingangs erwähnten Begriffen „Comics" und „Graphic Novels", die teils als Hyperonym für das ganze Medium eingesetzt werden, obwohl sie einige spezifische Voraussetzungen besitzen, die nicht alle Vertreter des Mediums erfüllen können. Ein „Comic", oder im englischen „comic book" ist ein regelmäßig erscheinendes Magazin mit meist fortgeführter, also serieller, Geschichte, während „Graphic Novel" eine in sich abgeschlossene Handlung in Buchform beschreibt.

Das Hauptproblem dieser Begriffe ist also ihre Historizität beziehungsweise Verwendung im weiteren Sinne, wo sie theoretisch im engeren Sinne zu verstehen sind. Der Begriff „graphische Narrative" hingegen beschreibt das Medium nicht aus historischer, sondern aus semantischer Perspektive und setzt den Fokus auf die Narrativität, also die Möglichkeit des Mediums, zu erzählen.[4] Aus diesem Grund erscheint es angebracht, in der Folge dieser Arbeit, die erzähltheoretische Konzepte untersucht, von „graphischer Narrative" zu sprechen, womit Comics, Graphic Novels, graphische Memoiren, Comic Strips, etc. gemeint sein können.

2.2 – Empirische und quantitative Zugänge graphischer Narrative

Die Sekundärliteratur, im Zusammenhang mit verschiedenen existierenden Projekten, welche graphische Narrative empirisch und quantitativ erschließen, zeigt, dass mein vorliegender Ansatz keinen Präzedenzfall darstellt. Anders als in traditionell hermeneutischen Analysen von Literatur steht die empirische Untersuchung literarischer Werke im Zeichen der digitalen Geisteswissenschaften (engl. „digital humanities" oder DH). Die Auslegung und Interpretation von unter anderem stilistischen und narrativen Konstituenten auf Grundlage empirischer Erhebungen nimmt daher auch einen Platz

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[1] McCloud, Scott: *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art, William Morrow Paperbacks*, 1994, S. 9.

[2] Miller, Ann: *Reading Bande Dessinée: Critical Approaches to French-Language Comic Strip*, Intellect Books, 2007, S. 75.

[3] Kunzle, David: *The Early Comic Strip*, University of California Press, 1973, S. 2; Blackbeard, Bill: *Mislabeled Books*, in: *Funny World* 16, 1974, S. 41.

[4] Vgl. u.a. Chute, Hillary und Marianne DeKoven: *Introduction: Graphic Narrative*, in: *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 52/4, 2006, S. 767–82; Rabkin, Eric: *Reading Time in Graphic Narrative*, in: *Teaching the Graphic Novel*, Hrsg. Stephen Tabachnik, Modern Language Association of American, 2009, S. 36–49.

in der Nachfolge der Rezeptionsästhetik ein[5] und misst damit der individuellen Leseerfahrung ebenso viel Wert bei wie der wissenschaftlichen Analyse der literarischen Forschung.

Mehrere Projekte setzen dabei den Fokus auf graphische Narrative, jedoch mit unterschiedlichen Zielsetzungen. So können wir heute auf Annotationssysteme zurückgreifen, die medienspezifische Elemente graphischer Narrative bestimmen;[6] Korpora, welche beispielsweise abseits des etablierten Kanons entweder einen Querschnitt aller Gesamtpublikationen eines Landes darstellt[7] oder Paratexte aus einem Ausschnitt der Veröffentlichungsgeschichte katalogisiert;[8] oder die Entwicklung eines „visual narrative grammar" (VNG), also einer visuellen Grammatik der Narrative, wie sie in den Publikationen von Neil Cohn Anwendung findet[9] und welche durch ihre Methodologie und ihren empirischen Ansatz die vorliegende Arbeit maßgeblich beeinflusst.

All diesen Projekten ist gemeinsam, dass sie eine datengestützte Herangehensweise an graphische Narrative unternehmen, so wie es auch die vorliegende Arbeit versucht. Neu im Falle meiner Untersuchungen ist allerdings, dass diese datengestützte Analyse im Rahmen der Erzähltheorie geschieht, genauer: den Begriff der Fokalisierung für graphische Narrative erforscht. Als Grundlage für alle weiteren Betrachtungen dient der nun folgende Überblick über die Begriffsgeschichte der Fokalisierung.

2.3 – Fokalisierung

Der Begriff der Fokalisierung entstand aus Vorüberlegungen des Formalismus zur Erzählperspektive.[10] Bereits in diesen frühen Überlegungen steht die Repräsentation subjektiver Wahrnehmungen von fiktionalen oder fiktionalisierten Figuren im Vordergrund, ohne jedoch eine eigens für dieses Phänomen bestimmte Terminologie zu entwickeln.

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[5]Vgl. u.a. Fish, Stanley: *Self-Consuming Artefacts: The Experience of 17th Century Literature*, University of California Press, 1972; Iser, Wolfgang; *The Act of Reading: A Theory of an Aesthetic Response*, John Hopkins University Press, 1994.

[6]Vgl. u.a. Walsh, John: *Comic Book Markup Language: An Introduction and Rationale*, in: *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 6/1, 2012; Dunst, Alexander et al.: *The Graphic Narrative Corpus (GNC): Design, Annotation, and Analysis for the Digital Humanities*, in: *14th IAPR International Conference on Document Analysis and Recognition (ICDAR)*, IEEE, 2017, S. 15–20.

[7]Vgl. hier etwa das Projekt „What Were Comics": www.whatwerecomics.com.

[8]Vgl. hier etwa das Projekt „CoBRA", welches publizierte Leser*innenbriefe in Marvel-Comics zwischen 1961 und 1973 sammelt: https://comics.indiana.edu/cobra, letzter Zugriff 23. Okt. 2022.

[9]U.a. Cohn, Neil: *The Grammar of Visual Narrative: Neural Evidence for Constituent Structure in Sequential Image Comprehension*, in: *Neuropsychologia* 64, 2014, S. 63–70; ders.: *The Visual Language Fluency Index: A Measure of Comic Reading Expertise*, in: *Visual Language Lab*, 2014, www.visuallanguagelab.com/resources.html, letzter Zugriff 21. Aug. 2021.

[10]Vgl. u.a. Fowler, Roger: *How to See Through Language: Perspective in Fiction*, in: *Poetics* 11/3, 1982, S. 213–35.

Dies änderte sich, als Gérard Genette verschiedene Dimensionen der Fokalisierung einführte, die – ebenfalls in der Tradition des Formalismus – das Verhältnis zwischen Erzähler*in und Figur in der Dimension des Umfangs an Wissen und Wahrnehmung innerhalb der Erzählwelt misst.[11] Genette etabliert hierfür drei Kategorien der Fokalisierung: Nullfokalisierung (Erzähler*in drückt mehr aus als Charakter*in weiß), interne Fokalisierung (Erzähler*in drückt nur das aus, was Charakter*in weiß) und externe Fokalisierung (Erzähler*in drückt weniger aus als Charakter*in weiß).

Ein Anschlusspunkt für die Übertragung der Fokalisierung, wie sie Genette konzipiert, auf graphische Narrative ist Genettes Frage „Wer sieht?", die sich somit auf die visuelle Wahrnehmung zu beschränken scheint.[12] Hinzu kommt, dass diese Frage inkonsequenterweise die visuelle Wahrnehmung mit dem Wissensstand des Erzählers/Charakters wie oben beschrieben vermischt.[13] Hier wäre allerdings anzunehmen, dass diese visuelle Wahrnehmung prädestiniert ist für ein Medium, dass unter anderem in einem visuellen Modus erzählt. Versuche im Volltext, die eine Graphic Novel, analysieren, zeigen hier auch Erfolge. Dennoch: Genettes Konzept ist seit jeher verschiedener Kritik ausgesetzt.

Zu einem der Kritikpunkte zählt dabei, dass Genette Fokalisierung als ein Phänomen erzählerischer Restriktion betrachtet, während Mieke Bal, und der Diskurs in ihrer Nachfolge, herausstellt, dass Fokalisierung mehr eine narrative Selektion bestimmter Sinneseindrücke konstituiert. Demnach ist Fokalisierung als Wechselwirkung zwischen dargestellten Elementen und der Vision, durch die sie dargestellt werden, zu verstehen.[14] Bals Konzept schließt demzufolge Nullfokalisierung aus und entwickelt eine doppelte Dichotomie zwischen externer/interner Fokalisierung und „perceptible/nonperceptible", also wahrnehmbar und nicht wahrnehmbar. Zusätzlich etabliert Bal den Begriff des Fokalisierers, also der Figur, durch welche die dargestellten Elemente wahrgenommen werden.

Diese Neuinterpretation des Begriffs bringt wiederum einige Probleme mit sich: In der Kritik steht vor allem der Begriff Fokalisierer*in, der in einer externen Fokalisierung, also einer im Rahmen der Handlungswelt möglichst objektiven Darstellung, eine

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[11]Genette, Gérard: *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Cornell University Press, 1980, S. 186.
[12]Ebd.

[13]Vgl. Kablitz, Andreas: *Erzählperspektive – Point of View – Focalisation: Überlegungen zu einem Konzept der Erzähltheorie*, in: *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 3/98, 1988, S. 237–55.

[14]Bal, Mieke: *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, University of Toronto Press, 2009, S. 145.

fast schon gespenstische Rolle einnimmt, was zu zahlreichen Diskussionen führt, in-wiefern Fokalisierer*in und Erzähler*in zueinander stehen.[15] Interessanter für die vor-liegende Arbeit ist aber der Wechsel des Fokalisierungsbegriffs von einer Dimension des Wissens zu einer Dimension des Bewusstseins, die den Begriff für eine kognitive Betrachtung öffnet.

Fokalisierung als Konzept der Kognition ist vor allem Monika Fludernik zu verdan-ken, die in ihrem Buch *Towards a Natural Narratology* über die Kategorisierung des Begriffs als linguistisches Phänomen hinausgeht und extralinguistische Merkmale wie Kognition, Psychologie und Bewusstsein integriert.[16] Dieser Schritt in die psychologi-sche Domäne des Erzählens wird teilweise als „Psychonarratologie" betitelt[17] und be-trachtet Fokalisierung als den Grad der Subjektivität, den die Erzählung offenlegt. Die Extreme dieser Skala sind demnach eine vollständige Offenlegung eines Bewusstseins (interne Fokalisierung) oder das absolute Fehlen eines solchen Bewusstseins (externe Fokalisierung).[18] Mit dieser Idee der Fokalisierung als Gradienten können erzähle-rische Konstituenten theoretisch skalier- und messbar gemacht werden, was für die weiteren Überlegungen zu einer empirischen Untersuchung des Phänomens wichtig werden wird.

Die Vorüberlegungen zur Fokalisierung abschließend stellt sich die Frage, inwie-fern diese Konzepte auch auf graphische Narrative zutreffen, da die genannten Theore-tiker*innen diesem Medium keine Beachtung schenkten. Die transmediale Erzähltheo-rie hingegen hat zur Aufgabe, derlei Konzepte medienübergreifend geltbar zu machen. Zu erwähnen ist hierfür vor allem Marie-Laure Ryan, die mit ihrem Begriff der „Im-mersion" die Distanz zwischen Narrative und Leser*in ins Zentrum rückt.[19] Dabei ist es unerheblich, mit welchem Medium erzählt wird; folgerichtig kann auch für einen vi-suellen Erzählmodus ein Grad an Immersion angenommen werden, was nicht zuletzt an die kognitive Dimension von Narrativen im Sinne Fluderniks erinnert, hier aber Leser*innen in den Fokus rückt. Des Weiteren kritisiert Jan-Noël Thon den Begriff Fokalisierung als solchen, untersucht aber kongruente Erzählphänomene unter dem

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[15]Vgl. u.a. Nelles, William: *Getting Focalization into Focus*, in: *Poetics Today* 2/11, 1990, S. 365–382; Phelan, James: *Why Narrators Can Be Focalizers—and Why It Matters*, in: *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*, Hrsg. Willie van Peer und Seymour Chatman, University of New York Press, 2001, S. 51–64.

[16]Fludernik, Monika: *Towards a Natural Narratology*, Routledge, 1996.

[17]Bortolussi, Marisa und Peter Dixon: *Psychonarratology. Foundations for the Empirical Study of Literary Response*, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[18]Fludernik, 1996, S. 346.

[19]Laure-Ryan, Marie: *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Narrative Media*, John Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Begriff „subjektive Repräsentation" auf der Basis von Ryan in den drei Medien graphische Narrative, Film und Videospiele (oder ludische Narrative).[20] Thon nimmt hierbei Kategorisierungen vor, die hier erwähnt werden, aber in der späteren Analyse des Pilotkorpus genauer beschrieben werden sollen: „spatial point of view" (räumlicher Blickwinkel), „quasi-perceptual point of view" (wahrnehmungsäquivalenter Blickwinkel), „quasi-perceptual overlay" (wahrnehmungsäquivalente Überlagerung) und „internal world representation" (Darstellung interner Welten).[21]

Als zentrales Argument für diese Arbeit steht aus, dass die beiden narrative Modi graphischer Narrative, also der verbale und der visuelle Modus, jeweils gleichfalls verbale und visuelle Fokalisierung anwenden. Eine solche Doppelfokalisierung wird von einigen Veröffentlichungen implizit angedeutet,[22] während beispielsweise Kai Mikkonen einräumt, dass multiple Fokalisierungen gleichzeitig auftreten können.[23] Im Volltext argumentiere ich anhand eines Beispiels aus Bill Wattersons *Calvin and Hobbes*, dass eine Doppelfokalisierung in graphischer Narrative, vor dem Hintergrund des Zwischenspiels verbaler und visueller Fokalisierung, eine hinreichende Konzeptualisierung darstellt, die mediumspezifisch ist, aber auch potenziell übertragbar auf andere multimodale Medien sein könnte.

Mit dieser Übersicht zur Fokalisierung, und im Weiteren speziell zur visuellen Fokalisierung, stellt sich nun die Frage, inwiefern die etablierten Konzepte empirisch nachweisbar sind. Hierfür ist es erforderlich, eine Methodologie vorzustellen, die in der Hauptsache sowohl kognitiv, statistisch als auch korpusbasiert ist.

3 – Empirische Zugänge zur Fokalisierung

3.1 – Literaturtheorie und Kognition

Für die Bedeutung der bereits oben genannten Rezeptionsästhetik für die empirische Analyse graphischer Narrative sollen hier stellvertretend Wolfgang Isers Entwürfe zum impliziten Leser stehen. Für Iser wie für andere Vertreter*innen der Rezeptionsästhetik ist es entscheidend, die Sinngebung eines Textes weder bei Urheber*innen eines

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[20]Thon, Jan-Noël: *Transmedial Narratology and Contemporary Media Culture*, University of Nebraska Press, 2016.

[21]Ebd. S. 259 ff. Die deutschen Übersetzungen sind meine eigenen.

[22]Vgl. Horstkotte, Silke und Nancy Pedri: *Focalization in Graphic Narrative*, in: *Narrative* 3/19, 2011, S. 341

[23]Mikkonen, Kai: *Graphic Narratives as a Challenge to Transmedial Narratology: The Question of Focalization*, in: *Amerikastudien / American Studies* 4/56, 2011, S. 645.

Textes noch beim Text selber zu verorten, sondern bei den Leser*innen und beim Leseprozess selbst.[24] Iser postuliert, dass der implizite Leser im Schaffensprozess des Texts selbst angelegt ist, und tatsächliche Leser*innen sich diesem impliziten Leser während des Lesens annähern. Ob sie diese Implikation erfüllen, hängt von der Fähigkeit der Leser*innen ab, die textimmanenten Zusammenhänge zu dekodieren, was letztendlich im Begriff des Erwartungshorizonts verankert ist.[25]

Es scheint nun für eine experimentelle Narratologie von besonderem Interesse zu sein, inwiefern diese Distanz zwischen implizitem Leser und tatsächlichen Leser*innen ausfällt. Hypothesen, die in darauf abzielen, inwiefern Leser*innen eines Texts heterogene Lesarten entwickeln, oder aber ob die Sinnstiftung von Leser*innen sich nicht etwa durch bestehende Erwartungshorizonte, institutionelle Bildungswege und auch vergleichbare Leseerfahrungen ähnelt, können mittels experimenteller Anordnungen und genauen Messinstrumenten erforscht werden. Für einen solchen Ansatz ist es maßgeblich, dass die Kognition von Leser*innen während des Leseprozesses, für die Zwecke dieser Arbeit unter dem Aspekt der Verarbeitung subjektiver Repräsentation in Narrativen – Fokalisierung – genau erfasst wird.

Die vorhandene Forschung an der Schnittstelle zwischen Kognitionswissenschaft und Literaturwissenschaft liefert ein weiteres Argument dafür, narratologische Konzepte experimentell zu erforschen. Einige der Veröffentlichungen untersuchen zwar kognitive Vorgänge während des Lesens mit Theorien des Erzählens als Grundlage, nutzen diese aber präskriptiv[26] oder vermengen Linguistik mit Literaturwissenschaft.[27] Unter diesen Gegebenheiten ist es zunächst wichtig, genau zu bestimmen, welche Prozesse während des Lesens genau gemessen werden sollen.

Als Ausgangspunkt dient hier Erwin Segals Überlegungen zur Messung von Effekten des Lesens, die die gedankliche Repräsentation und Interpretation betreffen.[28] An gleicher Stelle nennt Segal acht Ziele der kognitiven Untersuchung von Literatur, von denen zwei diese Arbeit betreffen – das Identifizieren von Vorwissen, das Leser*innen mitbringen müssen, um einen Text zu verstehen auf der einen Seite; die Charakterisierung der Prozesse, mit denen eine Darstellung im Gedächtnis während des Lesens modifiziert wird auf der anderen Seite. Eine zusätzliche wichtige Position nimmt für

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[24]Vgl. u.a. Fish, Stanley: *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*, Macmillan, 1967; ders.: *Self-Consuming Artefacts: The Experience of 17th Century Literature*, University of California Press, 1972.

[25]Jauss, Hans Robert und Elizabeth Benzinger: *Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory*, in: *New Literary History* 1/2, S. 7–37.

[26]Bspw. van Dijk, Teun A.: *Discourse and Literature*, Benjamins, 1985.

[27]Dieser Umstand wird u.a. kritisiert in: Gross, Sabine: *Cognitive Readings; or, the Disappearance of Literature in the Mind*, in: *Poetics Today* 2/18, 1997, S. 274.

[28]Segal, Erwin: *Narrative Comprehension and the Role of Deictic Shift Theory*, in: *Deixis in Narrative. A Cognitive Science Perspective*, Hrsg. Judith Duchan et al., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995, S. 4.

alle weiteren Vorgänge die Idee des „Embodiment" ein, auf deutsch die Verkörperlichung. Gemeint ist damit die Annahme, dass der eigene Körper der Referenzpunkt für jedweden sprachlichen Ausdruck ist.[29] Diese Annahme umfasst einfachste metaphorische Ausdrücke wie etwa das Assoziieren von oben und unten mit gut und schlecht bis hin zur Verkörperung von Geistes- oder Wesenszuständen fiktionaler Orte – als Beispiel sei hier in aller Kürze die Totenreiche verschiedener Mythologien genannt (Hades, Valhalla, Himmel und Hölle, etc.).[30]

Diese Konzepte kognitiver Verarbeitung von literarischen Texten finden Eingang in die späteren Analysen. Hinzu kommt, dass die Kognitionswissenschaft einige Theorien entwickelt hat, die insbesondere Fokalisierung betreffen. Deixis ist hier als erstes zu erwähnen, also die Bezugnahme auf Dinge ausgehend von der eigenen Gesprächssituation. Beim Lesen fiktionaler Texte findet Deixis Anwendung in Form der „Deictic Shift Theory" (DST), die davon ausgeht, dass Leser*innen ihr deiktisches Zentrum innerhalb der Handlungswelt gleich eines Ankerpunkts etablieren, und alle weiteren fiktionalen Vorgänge von da aus kontextualisieren.[31] DST zeigt somit deutliche Parallelen zu zentralen Fragen der Fokalisierung: Perspektivübernahme und Subjektivität, die durch Leser*innen beim Leseprozess dekodiert werden. Als solches unterstützt DST die Hypothese, dass literarische Fokalisierung einen kognitiven Prozess darstellt.

3.2 – Statistische Analyse und Fokalisierung

Der folgende Abschnitt und die anschließenden zwei Experimente sollen an dieser Stelle in aller Kürze hinsichtlich ihrer Ergebnisse zusammengefasst werden. Wichtig für das grundlegende Verständnis der kommenden Experimente ist die Art der Analyse, die ich für die Datenauswertung vornahm. Der statistische ANOVA-Test („Analysis of Variance") versucht, statistische Signifikanz (also bedeutungsvolle Zusammenhänge, die nicht vom Zufall abhängen) zu bestimmen, indem Datensätze mittels zwei oder mehr Gruppen geclustert werden. Sind diese Cluster anhand bestimmter Variablen eindeutig zu unterscheiden, so sind sie signifikant. Als Beispiel dient hier etwa der Bildungsabschluss von Proband*innen, die in vier Gruppen aufgeteilt werden können: Schulabschluss, Hauptschulabschluss, Doktorwürde und Professur. Im Anschluss könnte ein ANOVA-Test herausfinden, ob diese vier Gruppen statistisch signifikante Unterschiede bei ihrem Wahlverhalten aufweisen, also welche politischen Parteien sie wählen.

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[29] Vgl. Lakoff, George und Mark Johnson: *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 1980.

[30] Vgl. Turner, Mark: *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language*, Oxford University Press, 1996, S. 31.

[31] Vgl. u.a. Herman, David: *Storytelling and the Sciences of Mind*, MIT Press, 2013, S. 46 f.; Bühler, Karl: *Theory of Language: The Representational Function of Language*, John Benjamins Publishing, 2011, S. 11.

3.3 – Korpusstudien

Die Analyse eines Korpus ist in der Geisteswissenschaft vor allem in der Linguistik weit verbreitet; in der Literaturwissenschaft gewinnt diese Praxis erst vergleichsweise seit kurzem Popularität. Ein Korpus zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass er durch Auswahl und Menge der Texte möglichst repräsentativ und maschinell analysierbar sein soll.[32] Der Pilotkorpus der vorliegenden Arbeit ist gemäß Bonelli ein zweckgebundener, korpusgesteuerter („corpus-driven"), und damit explorativer Ansatz.[33] In den vergangenen Jahren etablierten sich verschiedene literarische Korpora, so beispielsweise Franco Morettis Korpus des britischen Romans zwischen 1740 und 1850.[34] Besonders für graphische Narrative ist der Graphic Narrative Corpus (GNC)[35] zu erwähnen, der über 200 graphische Narrative mit insgesamt über 40.000 Einzelseiten in sich vereint und aus dem der Pilotkorpus für die vorliegende Arbeit entnommen wurde.

4 – Visuelle Fokalisierung: Zwei Experimente

An dieser Stelle sollen lediglich die Resultate der beiden vorgenommenen Experimente zusammenfassend besprochen werden. An geeigneter Stelle verweise ich auf die entsprechende Abbildung im Originaltext.

Proband*innen beider Experimente gaben den Grad der Fokalisierung für einen Auszug (Experiment 1) oder für ausgewählte Panels aus dem gleichen Auszug (Experiment 2) aus der Graphic Novel *City of Glass* an.[36] Aus der Summe aller Datenpunkte ergibt sich eine Skala zwischen externer und interner Fokalisierung, bei der zunächst festgestellt werden kann, dass beide Arten der Fokalisierung signifikante und teils auch konsistente Merkmale in der visuellen Darstellung von subjektiver Repräsentation aufweisen. Daraus ergibt sich, dass externe und interne Fokalisierung als Quantifikatoren für anschließende Annotation nützlich sind.

Weiterhin stellt sich heraus, dass einige der Panels im Auszug gewisse Marker enthalten, die interne Fokalisierung andeuten, während externe Fokalisierung durch das Fehlen solcher Marker gekennzeichnet ist. Der oben beschriebene ANOVA-Test lässt darauf schließen, dass diese Marker signifikant der internen Fokalisierung zuzuordnen sind. Ein eindeutiges Beispiel ist die Darstellung der Hände des Protagonisten. Zum einen fällt die Zuordnung hier leicht, da im Auszug der Protagonist der Graphic Novel

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[32]Vgl. McEnery, Tony und Andrew Hardie: *Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[33]Bonelli, Elena Tognini: *Theoretical Overview of the Evolution of Corpus Linguistics*, in: *The Routledge Handbook of Corpus Linguistics*, Hrsg. Anne O'Keeffe und Michael McCarthy, Routledge, 2010, S. 9 f.

[34]Moretti, Franco: *Distant Reading*, Verso, 2013.

[35]Dunst, 2017.

[36]Mazzuchelli, David et al.: *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel*, Picador, 2004.

die einzige handelnde Person ist, die von Anfang bis Ende des Auszugs zu sehen ist. Zum anderen implizieren sowohl Positionierung als auch Betrachtungswinkel der Hände eine Perspektive, wie sie der Protagonist innerhalb der Handlungswelt wahrnehmen würde.

Dieser Umstand stellt eine Tendenz dar, die sich für interne Fokalisierung dahingehend generalisieren lässt, als dass Leser*innen eher interne Fokalisierung annehmen, je näher sie sich visuell beim Protagonisten befinden. Proportional dazu nehmen Leser*innen eher externe Fokalisierung an, wenn sie den Protagonisten visuell distanziert betrachten. Eine weitere Erwähnung verdient hierbei, dass auch dann interne Fokalisierung angenommen wird, wenn der Betrachtungswinkel (beispielsweise von Händen) es unmöglich macht, dass der Protagonist den gleichen Betrachtungswinkel einnimmt (vgl. Abb. 4.16). Diese Marker sind panel-spezifisch und somit für ein mögliches Annotationssystem vergleichsweise einfach zu kategorisieren.

Problematisch gestalten sich hingegen Diskursmarker für interne Fokalisierung, die narrative Kontextualisierung benötigen. Ein Beispiel ist hier ein Panel aus dem Auszug, in dem der Protagonist eine brennende Telefonzelle erblickt (vgl. Teil „Hallucinations" in Abb. 4.27.) Die Daten zeigen, dass dieses Panel deutlich als intern fokalisiert gekennzeichnet wurde. Die Begründung hierfür ist jedoch in den umliegenden Panels zu finden, in denen gezeigt wird, dass der Protagonist in einem Diner sitzt und diese Telefonzelle im Hintergrund zu sehen ist. Zudem zeigt dieses Panel und zwei weitere Panels auf der gleichen Seite, dass die Telefonzelle eindeutig nicht brennt. Die Annahme, dass das fragliche Panel mit brennender Telefonzelle intern fokalisiert ist – und somit eine Halluzination des Protagonisten zeigt – fußt also auf Zusammenhängen zwischen Panels; man kann dieses Phänomen als Kontextmarker bezeichnen.

Derlei Kontextmarker benötigen einen Grad an Leseverständnis, der vermutlich nicht kategorisierbar ist. Hier ist es wichtig, erneut zu erwähnen, dass Leser*innen ein deiktisches Zentrum, einen Ankerpunkt innerhalb der Narrative aufstellen, mit dem scheinbare Inkosistenzen wie etwa Halluzinationen eines Charakters erklärbar gemacht werden. Obwohl Kontextmarker eine Herausforderung für den Annotationsprozess aufweisen, ist es dennoch ersichtlich, dass diese Erkenntnisse ein robustes Fundament für weitere Annotation graphischer Narrative hinsichtlich ihrer visuellen Fokalisierung darbieten. Diese Annotationen sollen im nächsten Abschnitt zusammengefasst werden.

5 – Fokalisierung und Annotation: Überblick über einen Comics-Korpus

Der Pilotkorpus dieser Arbeit besteht aus neun graphischen Narrativen,[37] für die jeweils eine bis drei vollständige Annotationen im Rahmen eines Universitätsseminars angelegt wurden. Die Annotierenden erhielten während des Seminars eine Revision erzähltheoretischer Grundlagen und annotierten in Kleingruppen. Die so erstellten Daten wurden im Seminar diskutiert und werden von mir in der vorliegenden Arbeit mit hermeneutischen Analysen der individuellen Werke verglichen. Da dieser Pilotkorpus durch seine vergleichsweise gerine Größe keinen Anspruch auf statistische Signifikanz erhebt und damit explorativ ist, enthalten die Daten auch Angaben zu verschiedenen Formen interner Fokalisierung, die zuvor nicht empirisch belegt worden. Ich greife hierbei auf Thons Kategorisierung subjektiver Repräsentation zurück,[38] die ich im Rahmen meiner Analyse als Modell für interne Fokalisierung verwende. Von diesen Kategorien sind zwei für diese Zusammenfassung von Relevanz:

- räumlicher Blickwinkel (im Original „spatial point of view") – visuelle Darstellung, die den Betrachtungswinkel eines Charakters innerhalb der Handlungswelt abbildet;
- Darstellung interner Welt (orig. „internal world representation") – bildet Zustände, Empfindungen etc. eines Charakters ab, die von der Realität der Handlungswelt entkoppelt sind.

Das verwendete Annotationsprogramm ist der „Multimodal Markup"-Editor (M3), der im Rahmen des übergreifenden Forschungsprojektes erstellt wurde, zu dem auch diese Arbeit zählt. Die Daten wurden mit einem R-Skript ausgewertet. Für diese Zusammenfassung sollen nicht alle neun Analysen der graphischen Narrative herangezogen werden; stattdessen stelle ich stellvertretend die Analyse zur Graphic Novel *Watchmen* vor. Die Zusammenfassung aller der aus den Analysen gewonnenen Rückschlüsse findet sich im abschließenden Fazit.

Alan Moores und David S. Gibbons *Watchmen* steht im Zeichen eines Superhelden-Revisionismus, der die Frage stellt, wie kostümierte Vertreter*innen der Selbstjustiz in Zeiten des Kalten Krieges agieren würden. Moore zeigt seine Hauptfiguren als Vertreter gewisser Ideologien; die Figur Rorschach beispielsweise folgt einem moralistischen

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[37]Diese neun Werke sind: Moore, Alan und Eddie Campbell: *From Hell*, Top Shelf Productions, 2004; Moore, Alan und Brian Bolland: *Batman: The Killing Joke*, DC Comics, 2008; Moore, Alan und Dave S. Gibbons: *Watchmen*, DC Comics, 2014; Simmonds, Posy: *Gemma Bovery*, Pantheon, 2001; Mazzuchelli, 2004; Spiegelman, Art: *The Complete Maus*, Pantheon, 1995; Satrapi, Marjane: *Persepolis*, Pantheon, 2007; Ware, Chris: *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*, Pantheon, 2000; Gaiman, Neil und Dave McKean: *Signal to Noise*, Bloomsbury, 2007.

[38]Thon, 2016, S. 259 ff.

[38]Vgl. Dunst et al., 2017.

Nihilismus, in dem trennscharf zwischen Gut und Böse unterschieden wird, während die Figur Ozymandias ein Vertreter des Ultraliberalismus darstellt. Die Auswertung der Annotationsdaten (vgl. Abb. 5.15 im Originaltext) zu *Watchmen* ergibt, dass die Ideologien dieser Figuren mittels interner Fokalisierung wiedergegeben werden, wobei Moore und Gibbons dafür ausschließlich auf räumliche Blickwinkel und die Darstellung interner Welten zurückgreifen.

Die Daten zeigen, dass die beiden Autoren diese Strategie vor allem in Kapiteln anwenden, in denen die eingangs erwähnte Figur Rorschach im Zentrum der Handlung steht. So zeigt sich Rorschachs Maske, eine dem Rorschach-Test ähnelnde Sammlung schwarzer Flecke auf weißem Stoff, die zugleich Symbol für das Schwarz-und-Weiß-Denken der Figur ist, an einer Stelle aus dem Blickwinkel des Charakters selbst (vgl. Abb. 5.16). An anderer Stelle ist der zu diesem Zeitpunkt in Polizeigewahrsam gebrachte Rorschach im Gespräch mit dem Psychologen Dr. Malcolm Long (vgl. Abb. 5.17). Auch diese Sequenz wendet visuell die Betrachtungswinkel beider teilhabenden Figuren an, die sich von Panel zu Panel abwechseln und in denen sich beide einen ideologischen Schlagabtausch liefern. Dr. Long wird hier zunächst als optimistischer Therapeut gezeigt, der mit seinem neuen Patienten Karrierechancen wittert. Dieser Optimismus wird im Laufe des Kapitels durch Rorschach zerschlagen und gegen Ende vollends unterwandert. So sehen wir Dr. Long gegen Ende des Kapitels eine Karte seines eigenen Rorschach-Tests betrachten (vgl. Abb. 5.18), welches sich in der Perspektive aber eher dem Charakter Rorschachs aus Abb. 5.16 annähert. Der ideologische Schlagabtausch fällt hier zugunsten der Figur Rorschach aus, was nicht zuletzt durch den verbalen Anteil im Panel unterstützt wird: „The horror is this: In the end, it is simply a picture of empty meaningless blackness.“[39]

Die Nutzbarmachung der Fokalisierung für die Darstellung der Ideologie eines Charakters ist auch bei der Figur Dr. Manhattan vorzufinden. Dr. Manhattan ist innerhalb der Handlungswelt von *Watchmen* die einzige Person mit übernatürlichen Fähigkeiten. Er nimmt die Zeit holistisch wahr, kann also gleichzeitig Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft sehen. Dies ist visuell derart dargestellt, dass Panels Objekte zeigen, denen er hohen persönlichen Wert beimisst. Zum einen sind das Zahnräder aus einem Uhrwerk, da sein Vater Uhrenmacher war, zum anderen eine Fotografie von ihm selbst und seiner ersten Ehefrau. Beide Objekte verbindet eine thematische Linie, in der Dr. Manhattans Leben vor seinen Augen zerfällt – entsprechend sind auch beide Objekte in der Bewegung des Fallens dargestellt (vgl. Abb. 5.19 und 5.20).

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[39] „Das ist das Grauen: Am Ende ist es nur ein Bild der leeren, bedeutungslosen Schwärze.“ Meine Übers.

Dr. Manhattan bewegt sich hiermit, abhängig vom Fortschritt der Handlung, zwischen Entropie und Teleologie und der Darstellung beider Objekte fällt entsprechend einige Bedeutung zu, indem sie aus seinem Blickwinkel gezeigt werden.

6 – Fazit: Zwischen Erzähltheorie und Empirik

Abschließend lassen sich einige Rückschlüsse auf die Fokalisierung aus der Perspektive empirischer und quantitativer Analyse ziehen. Hierfür greife ich zunächst auf die diskutierten Experimente und Annotationsanalysen zurück, bevor ich einen Ausblick auf weitere mögliche Anwendungsfelder einer experimentellen Narratologie für graphische Narrative eingehe.

Eine grundlegende Annahme für Fokalisierung aus experimentell-narratologischer Perspektive bildet die Erkenntnis, dass externe und interne Fokalisierung kognitive Prozesse während des Lesens graphischer Narrative abbilden. Der Spielraum zwischen beiden Extremen lässt sich auf Marker auf visueller Diskursebene zurückführen, die interne visuelle Fokalisierung andeuten, während deren Fehlen externe visuelle Fokalisierung andeutet. Eine zentrale Rolle nimmt dabei die Darstellung von Händen ein, die agierende Charaktere innerhalb der Handlungswelt zeigen. Ich konnte außerdem zeigen, dass diese Schlussfolgerungen im Rahmen der „Deictic Shift Theory" sowie der „Verkörperlichung" (*Embodiment*) schlüssig sind. Im Sinne dieser Prinzipien ist es wichtig zu erwähnen, dass eine empirisch fundierte Narratologie keine Aussagen darüber macht, inwiefern ein Text narrativ interpretiert werden sollte, sondern inwiefern reale, messbare Leseprozesse Interpretationen tatsächlich vornehmen. Daher ist diese Disziplin der Narrotologie darauf bedacht, welche möglicherweise vorhandenen narrativen Marker tatsächlich von Leser*innen dekodiert werden und demnach weitestgehend nicht nur deskriptiv, sondern auch vergleichsweise demokratisierend im Sinne eines Fokus auf individuelle Leseprozesse und nicht etwa auf präskriptive hermeneutische Auslegungen.

Die Analysen einzelner graphischer Narrative im Hinblick auf die Annotation ihrer visuellen Fokalisierung zeigte zudem, dass Fokalisierung verschiedene Handlungselemente verstärken kann, zu denen beispielsweise Thema, Stimmung oder Charakterisierung zählen. Sie kann außerdem Wahrnehmungen von Zeit, Ort oder Geisteszustand beeinflussen. Einige Beispielanalysen offenbarten auch, dass Fokalisierung auf visueller Ebene insofern verschachtelt sein kann, als dass ein komplexes Gebäude verschiedener Fokalisierungstypen entsteht, deren Konstituenten sich gegenseitig beeinflussen.

Eine solche empirische Untersuchung narratologischer Phänomene setzt eine gewisse Anzahl von Daten voraus, die miteinander verglichen werden können. In der vorliegenden Arbeit stellt der analysierte Pilotkorpus lediglich einen Versuch dar, der

die Möglichkeiten dieser Methodologie offenlegen soll. Eine größer angelegte empirische Studie, die mehrere vollständige Annotation verschiedener Proband*innen des gleichen Werkes statistisch auswertet, könnte hierbei verlässlicher Effekte ausfindig machen. Der Umfang einer solchen Studie würde allerdings den Rahmen der vorliegenden Arbeit übersteigen und wäre damit ein angemessenes Thema für eine anschließende Folgestudie.

Die Methodologie, wie ich sie hier vorgestellt habe, fußt auf verschiedenen Modellen, die in der digitalen Geisteswissenschaft Anwendung finden.[40] Zusammenfassend dient die bestehende Theorie als Grundlage für eine messbare Konzeptualisierung des zentralen Phänomens, welche zunächst empirisch belegt und danach in ein Annotationssystem eingebettet wird. Der Prozess des Annotierens und die anschließende Auswertung der Daten führt dann zu einem Vergleich mit der Theorie zurück, die Ausgangspunkt der Studie war. Ich sehe für eine experimentelle Narratologie graphischer Narrative weiteres Potential für narratologische Phänomene, die über Fokalisierung hinaus gehen. Beispielsweise könnten Folgestudien untersuchen, inwiefern Leseprozesse die Text-Bild-Interaktion, die Leserichtung einer Comicseite, oder etwa die mentale Repräsentation von Handlungswelten steuern.

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[40]Vgl. Gius Evelyn et al.: *A Shared Task for the Digital Humanities: Evaluating Annotation Guidelines*, in: *Journal of Cultural Analytics* 4/3, 2019.