THE FOCALISER FOCALISED

IN KING VIDOR'S *THE CROWD* (1928)

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A recurrent characteristic of classical film narration seems to be the constant tension between objective and subjective representation. Film critics have remarked, from diverse standpoints, the effect of these films on the viewer as a mixture of separation and identification (see, for example, Heath 1974, Dayan 1974 and Mulvey 1975). As I have argued elsewhere (Deleyto 1991 and 1992), this tension or simultaneity can be accounted for, at a purely narrative level, through the use of the concept of focalisation, as coined by Genette (1972) and revised by several theorists, including Genette himself (1982) and, above all, Rimmon-Kenan (1983) and Mieke Bal (1985). The activity of focalisation, in Genette, Rimmon-Kenan and Bal, replaces although it does not coincide completely with, the concept of point of view (see Deleyto 1991), and is narratologically distinct from the activity of narration. For Bal, this concept provides the answer to the question "who sees?" as opposed to the question "who speaks?" (1985: 101). The emphasis on focalisation as vision or perception makes the concept immediately relevant for the theory of film narrative, but apart from Jost's (1983) distinction between *focalisation* (what a character knows) and *ocularisation* (the relation between what the camera shows and what a character sees) and Chatman's (1986) introduction of the concepts of *filter* and *slant* in order to differentiate between activities which, according to him, are carried out at different narrative levels, little has been done in order to explore the specific possibilities of the use of the term in analyses of film narratives (see also García Mainar 1991). I would like to argue, for example, that Bal's distinction between internal or character-bound and external focalisation provides an appropriate narrative framework for psychoanalytic, feminist and other ideological discussions of the effect produced by classical films on the viewer, and it is with this premise in mind that I would like to carry out a narratological analysis of some aspects of King Vidor's *The Crowd* (1928). But first some theoretical considerations.

The almost universal existence of a textual external focaliser in classical films (see Deleyto 1991: 167-68) accounts for one of its most powerful means of fabula manipulation. Such potentially subjectivising devices as the eyeline match or the semi-subjective shot are mainly used to reinforce the smoothness and transparency of narration. Verisimilitude is strengthened when the vantage point of the spectator is brought significantly close to that of one of the characters. The impression thus obtained is not one of restriction of field, which usually goes together with subjective narration, but, in effect, the opposite: omniscience, understood as a narrative strategy which places the spectator in the position from which the development of the fabula can be best witnessed. The eyeline match becomes only one device of the "continuity system of editing," which seeks to justify the continuous shift of the spectator's vantage point on the action without him noticing the artificiality of such a change.

On the other hand, the more or less codified resorting to internal focalisation in order to secure the illusion of objective representation allows the classical film to pass as objective what in reality is not, by intensifying the subjectivity of internal focalisation in coherent patterns throughout the film. Therefore, a film in which most eyeline matches have their origin in the gaze of one single character will be presenting as objective what is, in effect, the personal vision of that particular character.

In other words, one single textual strategy may function simultaneously towards two contrasting ends without the spectator once questioning its coherence. One reason for this is the reliance of film representation on the Renaissance system of monocular or linear perspective, which identifies the origin of the production of space in the pictorial arts with the vision of the human eye (see Heath 1976: 93 ff.). Because of the similarity of visual representations with our own perception of reality, we, as spectators, feel comfortably safe and superior — omniscient — in a fictional world which depends for its creation on an origin which we recognise as closely bound with real-life experience. However, this God-like origin of creation is, like the human eye, nothing but a subject of perception, which excludes an infinite number of other subjects. The space thus created is then apparently objective because its origin is not part of the represented object, but really subjective because, by its own nature, it is attached to a particular vision.

It is, therefore, a crucial stage in the analysis of a particular film to describe and interpret the way in which this tension between internal and external focalisation affects our interpretation of the text. Or, to be more

specific, we must ask ourselves the following two questions: Do the internal gazes that appear in the film work exclusively towards intensifying the illusion of objectivity (which we could also call, with Bazin, the illusion of reality) or do they, on the other hand, function, working against the objectivising tendency of film language, as the expression of the relevant vision of one or more internal agents of the fabula? What are the consequences as to the presentation and manipulation of the fabula in front of the spectator, of the choice made by the film?

The answer to these questions is not a simple one, as, within their closed system of representation, classical films have made use of this tension in many different ways. It is my purpose to prove the relevance of this approach to the analysis of film narration by looking at the way in which focalisation works together with other story aspects and textual elements towards our understanding of the text in *The Crowd*.

There are two other kinds of tensions that are basic to the understanding of this film. At a textual level, there is the tension between its conscious attempt at realism — its portrayal of the lives and problems of "ordinary" people as a reaction to the remote, exotic themes of most Hollywood films of its time; the frequent location shots of the streets of New York, also unusual in the studio system of shooting prevalent at the time, etc. — and the very careful — and artificial — system of patterns, parallelisms and contrasts through which the story manipulates the fabula. At the level of the fabula, a tension is, on the other hand, established between the individual (represented by the character of John Simms) and the crowd.

The main process of the fabula concerns the change that occurs in the relationship between John and the crowd from the beginning to the end of the film. Initially, and throughout most of the film, John's only wish is to stand out from the rest and be important (a very simple version of the American Dream). The impossibility of such task is gradually realised by the spectator, then Mary, his wife, and finally John himself. At the end of this learning process John decides to forget about his dream and to be one more happy member of that crowd, which has almost destroyed his life. The apparent happy ending is put into perspective by the strong irony of the final section of the fabula (also enhanced at textual level). Unlike classical comedy, this melodrama full of comic devices does not portray the self-renewal of society through a social change brought about by the young protagonist, but the self-perpetuation of society through the destruction of individuality in its members.

The very carefully contrived structure of the film contrasts with its professed aim to portray the life of an ordinary working-class American family. The time structure of the story is dominated, throughout most of the film, by the significant use of ellipses. Whereas the time of the fabula spans over the first twenty-two or twenty-three years in John's life, the spectator is only shown some relevant moments in it: his birth, the death of his father, his twenty-first birthday, his wedding, his first Christmas with his wife, their first quarrel, the death of their daughter, etc. The ruthless passing of time is set against John's wish to stand out from the crowd. Each ellipsis, signifying a lapse of time in which nothing important has happened, is one more step towards the final destruction of his dream. After his daughter's death, as John gradually comes to realise the inevitability of his failure, chronological time virtually disappears from the story and the chronological succession of events is replaced by the logic of John's social and personal degradation, as the main cause of the order structure of the film. This division of the story in two parts works metaphorically as a sign of the overruling outside force which crushes the ordinary man's attempts at being an individual. Once John's misguided ambition has been shown as a ridiculous enterprise by the inexorable repetition of ellipses, time virtually disappears. It is, in any case, the active part that the metaphor plays in our understanding of the film that makes the consciousness of the story layout more noticeable and more distant from our interpretation of common life events.

There are other aspects of the film which point at the relevance of story manipulation of the events of the fabula. All films, like all other narratives, because they are closed systems with superimposed structures, show patterns of repetition, which also become significant for the spectator. In *The Crowd*, certain motifs appear more than once, working in themselves as alternative channels of narrative development. The most outstanding ones are probably not objects but related to the space of the film: locations in which the relevant events take place once and again.

There are, for example, the three window scenes, related with John's family. The first two offer the same pattern, with Mary speaking from the window and John in the street. During their first Christmas together, as John goes out to get some drinks, Mary warns him not to slip in the ice. He has just slipped on the doorstep but his imminent slip, as he stays out for a long time and gets drunk with a friend, is much more telling of the future of their relationship. After their first important argument, a few months later, and as John is leaving for work, Mary rushes to the window and calls him back to break the news that she is pregnant. If we compare it with the former scene,

the function of the pattern created is twofold: on the one hand, it presents the deterioration that their love undergoes because of his ill-fated attempts at fame. On the other hand, it suggests the only way out for John, which is through complying with the rules established by society: marriage, parenthood, etc. The last window scene happens when John has just won a prize for a slogan and hopes to have found a new opening. This time both he and Mary come to the window and call their two children, who are waiting in a queue with other children for the school bus. The two run back home and, as a consequence, the little girl is knocked down by a lorry. As a part of the process started by the two former scenes, John's fleeting moment of triumph proves disastrous for his family, since, by a cruel turn of fate, his daughter will die as a result of it. In this way, individual ambition, the American Dream, is opposed to family and society. At this point we know that it must be either one or the other for John. Shortly after, while the girl agonises in her bed, John's useless efforts to quieten down the noisy crowds in the street are a metaphor for the hopelessness of his struggle to defeat society. The pattern created by the repetition of the window shots, and the evolution-degradation observed through them in his individuality and family life, work in a somehow independent way to convey meaning to the spectator.

The line of children in the street is in itself a repetition of a former line of which John, as a child, formed part, when his father died. The scenes of both deaths are paralleled at story level by the selection of this motif and the staircase shots that follow on both occasions. The similarity is here intensified by textual devices: a similar framing from the top of the stairs, setting John, as he climbs the stairs, against the silent crowd which looks threateningly from the bottom; also the expressionistic quality of the setting, with a geometrical design in the walls and contrastive lighting which suggest the disturbance provoked in John's mind by the events. The two scenes are further connected because it was John's father that put the dream of being different in his mind when he was a child and it is his daughter's death that finally crushes it.

Time manipulation and repetition are, therefore, two outstanding characteristics of *The Crowd*. They have been discussed at some length because they are basic for our approach to the text, not only as an introduction to the tension symmetry/disymmetry which is at the core of the film's structure, but because they play an important part in the overall impression that the viewer receives from the particular scenes that we propose to analyse.

Undoubtedly the most spectacular scene of the film is its final one, with John, Mary and their son laughing at the performance of the clowns in the show that they are attending as a mark of their reconciliation. At the end of the scene, the external focaliser visibly moves away from the three characters by means of a quick ascending movement of the camera and two almost unnoticed dissolves. The rapidly increasing distance at which the focaliser places itself discloses the vastness and uniformity of the crowd of which John finally forms part. Happiness and harmony have finally been achieved in a world in which everybody is content with their lot.[1] The external focaliser is underlined as such by the described textual devices which give it a God-like quality, shared by the focalisers in many "realist" texts (in film and novel), but, at the same time, betrays the presence of the narrative device and, therefore, the artificiality of the text.

The effect of the scene on the spectator is achieved through this very tension: it does not only consist of the opportunity that is granted us of overlooking the whole audience space at the theatre in which John and Mary are just two undistinguished members of the crowd. The swiftness and span of the camera movement, combined with the dissolves, cruelly sets into perspective the apparent happiness of the protagonists. The movement of the camera, which in a narrative sense betrays the powerful presence of the focaliser, is, therefore, necessary for our understanding of the scene.

A further consequence of the textual realisation of this final scene is the timelessness at which the events are placed by the great distance that separates the viewer from them. The whole movement of the film, of a time that progresses towards its own dissolution, as a metaphor of the motionlessness of a society which represses all efforts to go forward, culminates in this final camera movement. The devastating quality of the former ellipses is now replaced by an equally devastating stillness which ironically we must take as the happy ending of the film. On the other hand, this final scene forms part of the pattern of repetition referred to above, since it parallels an earlier scene which also finishes with a combination of camera movement and dissolves.

This scene is placed in the first section of the film, immediately after its second ellipsis. John has just turned twenty-one and is approaching New York on the boat from Coney Island. He is looking at the skyscrapers in Manhattan from the deck, with an optimistic expression on his face. When another passenger joins him in the contemplation, he states that all he needs to stand out in such a town is a chance. The scene includes two textual devices mentioned at the beginning of this paper. The opening shot is a semi-

subjective shot. The external focaliser is placed behind John, in the direction of Manhattan; both the internal focaliser and the object of his gaze are included in the frame. The emphasis in this case is not only on John's perception. As in many other shots of the film, he is set against the crowd that he is trying to fight, here in the form of the huge skyscrapers. From our position, that of the external focaliser, the buildings tower above the insignificant person that contemplates them. The relationship thus stated contrasts vividly with the next shot, a reverse shot which shows John looking confidently offscreen, in the same direction as in the previous one.

Elsewhere in the film John's relationship to the crowd is shown in similar terms: isolated from it but threatened by its proximity and its power, working against the fulfillment of his objectives. Offscreen space is used, for example, twice for this purpose, with an added comic effect: when John and Mary have first moved into their flat, John is framed sitting comfortably on a chair, playing his banjo and singing a song. The next shot shows a noisy train passing through the window, and the subsequent framings disclose the ridiculously small size of the flat. Later on, on the beach in Coney Island, John is again playing the banjo, and the implication of the framing is that he is alone with his wife and children on the beach, as there is nobody else to be seen for a while. But after a cut, we discover that they are really surrounded by lots of people, who are unfriendly and irritable. From the moment we get this new information, things start going wrong for the couple.

The semi-subjective shot in the boat is, therefore, a part of a new, larger pattern of repetition, which had already started with the scene referred to above, of John's father's death. When the viewer interprets this particular shot, s/he will be influenced by the *mise en scène* and framing of the previous ones and by many other instances to come. The impracticability of his words is already felt by the audience and only needs to be confirmed by subsequent events.

The second device used at the beginning of the scene is the eyeline match: an external focaliser presents John and the other passenger looking offscreen right. In this shot the emphasis is on the contrast between the two gazes: John's, optimistic, and that of the other one, sceptical. When, in the next series of shots we are shown what they are looking at, the quality of both gazes will influence our perception. The next shot, again of Manhattan but now without including any internal focalisers, is cued as subjective by the movement of the camera, which represents the movement of the boat on whose deck the two characters stand.

We must remember that, up to here, the scene is clearly narrative: a ship is approaching a port and two passengers are looking at the townscape from the deck. But this shot, apart from being shot B in the eyeline match, serves also a sort of establishing shot for a description of New York which will be the main topic of the next series of shots. After what could be understood as a general view of the city (from a particular perspective, but all general views are from a particular perspective), we get a number of shots of several aspects of the city: by means of straight cuts, dissolves and superimpositions, we are shown the crowded streets of Manhattan, railway stations, views of the port, more skyscrapers... At one point, the camera concentrates on a particular building, framed from an extreme low angle, which exaggerates its size. Then the camera starts to move. First it tracks up, going past rows of windows which are all the same, then a spectacular tilt places us at eye-level with one of the rows of windows. A track forward concentrates on one specific window and, after a dissolve, we are placed at the other side of it, inside a huge office room. From a high angle, the camera starts moving again, past dozens of desks, all identical, at which similar looking clerks seem to be all doing the same thing. Then a gradual track down isolates one of the desks at which John Simms, our protagonist, sits carrying out his office work like everybody else in the room. After a cut, a detail shot shows a sign on his desk with his name and number.

This spectacular sequence is remarkable for several reasons, but its main interest for my purposes lies in the presence of John at its beginning and end, bracketing a series of documentary shots, mainly directed at presenting the grandiosity and vitality of New York. The last movement of the camera, inside the office, is a clear antecedent of the final scene, already analysed. In a way, both movements, in opposite directions, contain the whole of the film within them. The first one, towards John, presents him as one more indistinguishable member of the crowd. The last one, away from him, leaves him exactly in the same position and in the same relationship with his surroundings.[2] The implication is that everything that has happened between them has been to no effect whatsoever. The omniscience (omnipresence) of the external focaliser is here as remarkable as it is at the end of the film. After moving at will from one part of the city to the other, it is capable of picking one particular building, one particular floor, one particular window and one particular desk, among many exactly equal. At this desk sits the person that the story is about. I will not go over the "visibility" of this focaliser again, but the feeling of superiority that it transmits to us is obvious (and comforting for the audience of a classical film). If we consider both

shots together, the omniscience of this focaliser appears outstanding. From a huge mass of people it selects one specific person, with no remarkable characteristics in him except a foolish dream, narrates his ordinary, frustrated existence, and leaves him where it found him, returning to its initial position up high, from which the city is shown as a homogeneous group of people, all of whom lead lives exactly the same as John's.

From a narrative point of view, there is, however, one little problem with the external focaliser of the initial scene. Although its presence has been constant and active from the semi-subjective shot of John looking at Manhattan, it is not clear at what exact point the internal focalisers (John and the other passenger) of the eyeline match disappear. One characteristic of the eyeline match is that the internal focaliser is only in the frame during the shot before the cut (shot A). In shot B, his presence is only implied, as a point offscreen (not necessarily that occupied by the camera) from which the contents of the frame can also be seen. In this case, as we have said, the subjectivity of the subsequent shot of Manhattan is clear as emphasised by the movement of the camera. The establishing shot for the description of New York is, therefore, subjective. What we see is what John is looking at. Our perception of the film space is thus clearly influenced, at this point, by John's gaze. However, it is obviously impossible that John can be present somewhere offscreen in the rest of the shots: the focaliser here has to be exclusively external. But it is equally true that, in receiving the information provided by these shots, the viewer is still influenced by the fact that it was originally John that was looking at the city.[3]

I have said that the simultaneity of external and internal focalisation is a feature of classical film narration. The external focaliser can, within the conventions of this cinema, interrupt internal focalisation in order to ensure a clearer perception for the viewer than that of the character. This happens even in all forms of subjectivity, except in the purely subjective shot (when the camera is placed exactly in the same position from which the internal focaliser is supposed to be looking). Semi-subjective shots and eyeline matches, for example, usually provide us with more, or better, information than the character has. But in all of these cases, the internal gaze is crucial and narration is articulated around it. The tension between external and internal focalisation cannot break the implicit laws of the code.

It could be argued that the correct interpretation of the textual strategies at work in this passage is that the film uses the eyeline match, not primarily as a subjective cue, but as the most efficient way of objectively presenting the scene. As I said above, the eyeline match is a basic component of the

classical continuity system. This interpretation, however, undercuts the narrative importance of John's gaze and consequently eliminates from the scene an element which is constantly at work elsewhere in the film. What is more, the shot of New York seems to come chronologically after John's gaze. In the Classical Hollywood code, a dissolve usually stands for a short ellipsis. One sense of the various dissolves and quick cuts of this scene is the smoothness of presentation, the impression that there are no abrupt changes, chronological or otherwise, from one shot to the next. From her/his experience with other classical films, the viewer who sees this film for the first time probably expects to rejoin John, a little nearer to the port, when the shots of New York have ended.[4] It is clear that, at the point in which we rejoin John in the office, some time has passed from the time of his gaze, but, because of the nature of the eyeline match and because of the very few definite temporal clues that we are given in the subsequent shots, we expect this time to be approximately similar to the textual time that has elapsed. It is uncertain whether at the beginning of the scene John has already got his job at the office. But even if he has, not enough time has passed for him to have left the boat and got to the office, since no markers of significant ellipses (that the spectator of a classical film could understand as such) have been provided by the text.

What I am trying to suggest is that when the camera is moving along the office inside the huge building, the viewer does not expect to see John sitting at one of the desks because we think he is still on the boat, probably talking to the other passenger. External focalisation can interrupt internal focalisation but it does not usually "unlawfully" suffocate it. The shot of the office is somehow still under the influence of the eyeline match. It is a part of the same syntagma as shot B. Therefore, we are faced with a situation in which the subject of the eyeline match in shot A is also the main object in shot B. The focaliser focalises himself, without any particular time indicators.[5]

There are two important laws manipulated here: the logic of time and the logic of the simultaneity of internal and external focalisation. From the point of view of the spectator, two things have happened which we, from our viewing competence, did not expect: a much longer fabula time has elapsed than we thought during the textual block of the description of New York and, when the office shot is taking place, John is not, as we thought, looking at Manhattan from a boat.

I may be giving the impression that the film is being criticised here for its inconsistency and imperfections. This is not my aim. There are two important

events that are being narrated in the scene: John's physical and metaphorical approach to Manhattan when we first see him as an adult, and his starting point in professional life as a clerk in an enormous office. These two fabula events can be manipulated in various ways at story level, and presented through a number of devices in the text. From all the alternatives, the film chooses a particular one: one in which the two events are joined together by using some strategies of the classical code of representation but not in the classical way. It is obvious that, as the scene stands, everything is perfectly understandable. The clarity of exposition which classical cinema seeks is only minimally undermined here. At the very most, our expectations are cheated, although we might not even be conscious of it. I am interested, therefore, in finding out how the mode of presentation chosen works on the viewer's understanding of the narrative. One obvious consequence of the irregularity is that, as in the case of the camera movement in the final shot, the mechanisms of narration and the arbitrariness of film signification move to the front, at least for a short while. By noticing the unexplained change in focalisation, the viewer draws his/her attention to the textual elements at work rather than to the contents of the fabula. Our interest in the narrative, in what is going to happen next, is arrested and replaced by an interest in how the narrative is being conveyed.

I have said that the whole of the film may be seen as included within the two movements of the camera inside the office and at the show. The scene that we have just considered could also be interpreted metaphorically as a summary of the film. Elsewhere the passage of unimportant time is conveyed through ellipses. Then the scenes between the ellipses emphasise the impression that, in spite of the passage of time, the protagonist is not progressing towards his goal. Here time — textual time — is playing a trick on us and, indirectly (metaphorically), also on John. When we still think that he is getting prepared to face the great city, time has hurried on unnoticed to show him already defeated, already crushed like the rest of his fellow citizens. We have not even been given the chance to savour the exhilaration of the immediacy of the fight. Before we realise it, the thing is done. Time, like in the ellipses, has once again defeated John. This is, at any rate, something that the character is not conscious of yet. The manipulation of the time structure is not dependent on an internal psychological attitude towards it on his part. It is artificially imposed on the fabula, metaphorically anticipating its outcome.

The irregularity of the focalising agents is perhaps more clearly metaphorical. The importance of focalisation lies in the fact that the

focaliser, internal or external, has the power to present the film space to the viewer from its own perspective. What we interpret as reality is only the focaliser's perception of it. In this case, John's internal focalisation in the eyeline match runs parallel to his conviction that he can stand out, above everybody else in New York, above the tall skyscrapers and the crowded streets. He looks at Manhattan and his vision of it is presented to us as if he seemed capable of emcompassing it with his view, of framing it within his perception. The trick is played again on John from above, from outside the fabula. From one side to the other of the cut in the eyeline match, the focaliser becomes focalised, threateningly focalised. All the power that had been conferred him by granting him focalisation is "unjustifiably" taken away from him. By the end of the scene it is not within his possibilities to frame anything, because he has been cruelly framed, picked out as the illustration for the viewer of the crowd to which he felt so superior. The narrative inversion of focalisation, which, at a superficial level, works just as a textual strategy to join two elements together, becomes an image of the process suffered by the hero throughout the film.

Subjectivity is not always the function of an eyeline match. Objective narration usually profits from it in classical films. This is not the case of this scene from *The Crowd*. The eyeline match is here subjective, but the subsequent dissolves and camera movements snatch this subjectivity away from the development of the narrative in such a way that the subject becomes object. It is not, as in *2001,* that he is looking at himself. What has really happened is that the narrative has disavowed his gaze. The classical code is meant to trick the spectator into believing that the fabula is narrating itself. Here the trick becomes perceptible and we are no longer its object, as we are made conscious that the subject has been made into an object, by an arbitrary choice of the narrating agents. In a similar way, within the world of the fabula, Time and Fate have played a trick on John and, as the camera sweeps away from him at the end of the film, the spectator might wonder what he is laughing at or, perhaps, who is laughing at whom.

NOTES

1. I am aware that I am giving a rather partial interpretation of the scene, which somehow ignores its most positive aspects: the healing powers of laughter and the indestructible quality of the comic spirit in the human being, which makes her/him

forget her/his unhappy lot in this world. A similar scene from a later film which makes this point much more plainly is the jail scene in *Sullivan's Travels* (1941), in which the black prisoners in a remote Southern jail in America find temporary relief from their unpleasant routine in an old film cartoon.

2. In a much more recent film, *Working Girl* (1988), the closing shot is an interesting mixture of these two, and curiously, with a similar, if updated, meaning. After the main character Tess McGill (another "victim," like Thomas Hardy's character, played by Melanie Griffith) has been promoted to a managerial post, she is framed in her new office from outside the window. Then the camera starts zooming back and we find that the office is one among many, in a huge block in the centre of Manhattan. The "happy ending" (Tess, unlike John, seems to have fulfilled her dream) is undermined here in a similar way to that of *The Crowd.* Another shot in this film, with Tess on board a boat approaching Manhattan, as she sets to "conquer" it, suggests further textual connections with King Vidor's film.

3. A comparable shot occurs in *King Kong* (1933), when the film crew arrive on the island and, from behind some bushes situated at a considerable distance, watch the native tribe performing the ritualistic dance that precedes the sacrifice. After an eyeline match, shot B of which also works as an establishing shot, we get an analytical breakdown which shows several details of the ceremony that the internal focalisers cannot possibly see from their position. After this sequence, we see the main characters still looking from the same point and discussing their plan of action. This shot respects the laws of classical film narration. It would have been more similar to our example if in one of the shots that describe the dance, the character played by Fay Wray had become the sacrificial victim.

4. The nature of film narrative is such that descriptions, like the one of New York here, are interpreted as occupying story time by the viewer. Breaches of this narrative law are not expected to occur by the spectator of a classical film. The length of fabula time that this story time represents depends, of course, on the temporal clues provided by the text.

5. An internal focaliser can focalise himself in the past in a flashback, but we can probably say that the focaliser and focalised are here two different agents. A more obvious example of a focaliser who focalises himself in the present is the final scene of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), in which a series of eyeline matches and shot/reverse shots show the astronaut looking at himself as an older man, then as a dying man. But this is not a classical film, and the text is playing here with the arbitrariness of film representation.

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