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Applying Gérard Genette's Focalization Theory to *Jinn*: A Study of Fear Construction with Implications for AI-Based Narrative Interpretation

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Abstract

This study examines the construction of fear in the Arabic television series *Jinn* through Gérard Genette's theory of focalization. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research analyzes four selected scenes using purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation and documentation, focusing on dialogue, visual narration, camera perspective, and character expressions. The analysis applies Genette's three focalization categories, zero, internal, and external focalization, to identify how narrative information is distributed and how fear is constructed through perspective. The findings reveal that zero focalization establishes anticipatory fear by providing the audience with information unavailable to the characters, internal focalization intensifies psychological fear through restricted perception, and external focalization generates suspense by limiting access to characters' inner states. These findings demonstrate that fear in *Jinn* is primarily produced through narrative information management rather than the mere presence of supernatural elements. Beyond contributing to Arabic narratology, this study offers conceptual insights for AI-based narrative interpretation by highlighting focalization as a systematic framework for detecting narrative perspective, information distribution, and emotional construction in audiovisual narratives.

Keywords: *Arabic audiovisual narrative; artificial intelligence; fear focalization; Gérard Genette; narratology*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji konstruksi rasa takut dalam serial Arab *Jinn* melalui teori focalisasi Gérard Genette. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan menganalisis empat adegan yang dipilih secara purposif. Data diperoleh melalui observasi dan dokumentasi terhadap dialog, narasi visual, perspektif kamera, dan ekspresi tokoh. Analisis dilakukan menggunakan tiga kategori focalisasi Genette, yaitu *zero*, *internal*, dan *external focalization*, untuk mengidentifikasi distribusi informasi dan mekanisme pembentukan rasa takut dalam narasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *zero focalization* membangun rasa takut antisipatif melalui keunggulan informasi yang dimiliki penonton, *internal focalization* memperkuat ketakutan psikologis melalui keterbatasan persepsi tokoh, sedangkan *external focalization* menciptakan ketegangan dengan membatasi akses terhadap keadaan batin tokoh. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa rasa takut dalam *Jinn* dikonstruksi terutama melalui pengelolaan informasi naratif, bukan semata-mata oleh kehadiran unsur supranatural. Selain memperkaya kajian narratologi Arab, penelitian ini juga memberikan implikasi konseptual bagi pengembangan interpretasi naratif berbasis kecerdasan buatan melalui identifikasi perspektif, distribusi informasi, dan konstruksi emosi dalam narasi audiovisual.

Kata Kunci: *kecerdasan buatan; konstruksi rasa takut; narratologi; narasi audiovisual Arab; teori focalisasi Gérard Genette*

Introduction

Over the past few decades, contemporary Arabic literature has undergone significant transformation, extending beyond written forms such as novels, short stories, and drama to encompass audiovisual narratives represented in Arabic-language films and television series. This development demonstrates that modern Arabic literary expression is no longer confined to textual media but has evolved into visual forms that continue to represent human experience, cultural identity, and the social, psychological, and religious realities of Arab societies.¹ Consequently, contemporary Arabic cinema has increasingly been recognized as a legitimate object of literary inquiry, possessing narrative complexity comparable to written literary works and therefore suitable for analysis through literary approaches.²

¹ Gutiérrez Almenara, Angelina. "Literatura Contemporánea Árabe a Través de Sus Cubiertas: Un Análisis Desde La Retórica Visual." *TRANS: Revista de Traductología*, no. 27 (December 2023): 99–119. <https://doi.org/10.24310/trt.27.2023.16196>.

² Aljuied, Fatimah. "Arabic Dubbing of Linguistic Variation in Disney Animated Films." In *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Young Audiences*, 272–92. New York: Routledge, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003291169-23>.

As a form of literary narrative, film conveys meaning not only through dialogue but also through the integration of visual composition, cinematography, editing, lighting, sound, and other cinematic techniques. Together, these elements construct a narrative structure through which audiences interpret meaning in much the same way readers engage with novels. Watching a film, therefore, can be understood as reading a narrative through a different medium. Consequently, literary theories, particularly narratology, remain highly relevant for explaining how meaning is constructed in cinematic works, including the rapidly expanding corpus of Arabic audiovisual productions.³

A fundamental aspect of narrative construction concerns the distribution of information. Narrative events derive meaning not only from what happens but also from how they are presented, who possesses particular knowledge, and the extent to which audiences gain access to the characters' perspectives. Variations in information distribution shape how audiences interpret conflict, anticipate future events, and develop emotional engagement throughout the narrative. Narrative perspective, therefore, constitutes a fundamental mechanism through which literary and cinematic works generate both aesthetic and emotional experiences.⁴

A comprehensive theoretical framework for examining narrative perspective is provided by Gérard Genette's narratology, particularly his concept of focalization. Unlike traditional notions of point of view, which often conflate narration with perception, Genette distinguishes between who speaks and who sees (Genette, 1980). Based on the relationship between the narrator's knowledge and that of the characters, he identifies three principal forms of focalization: *zero focalization*, *internal focalization*, and *external focalization*.⁵ These categories explain how narrative information is selected, restricted, or expanded, thereby shaping readers' and viewers' interpretations of unfolding events.

In film, focalization is realized not only through language but also through cinematic techniques such as camera angle, visual

³ Berov, Leonid. *From Narratology to Computational Story Composition and Back*. Vol. 353. IOS Press, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.3233/DAI353>.

⁴ Seçmen, Emre Ahmet, ed. *Analyzing Ideology and Narratology in Film Series, Sequels, and Trilogies*. IGI Global, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-7416-0>.

⁵ Souki, Jihen. "Rhétorique Préfacielle de Gérard Genette Ou l'art Du Palimpseste." *Études Françaises* 58, no. 1 (2022): 159. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1089746ar>.

composition, camera movement, editing, and sound design. Through these devices, filmmakers regulate what audiences are allowed to know and what remains concealed until particular moments in the narrative.⁶ Such management of information constitutes a central mechanism for creating narrative tension, particularly in films that rely on mystery, psychological conflict, or supernatural elements. Accordingly, focalization analysis not only explains narrative structure but also reveals how audiences' emotional experiences are constructed through the organization of perspective.

Among the emotions most strongly influenced by focalization is fear. In cinematic narratives, fear does not arise solely from the presence of supernatural beings or violent imagery but also from uncertainty regarding narrative information. Fear emerges when audiences know less than the characters, more than the characters, or share the same uncertainty about impending threats.⁷ From this perspective, fear can be understood as a narrative effect produced through the management of perspective and information distribution rather than through supernatural content alone. Genette's theory of focalization therefore provides an appropriate framework for explaining how fear is constructed within film narratives.

This phenomenon is clearly illustrated in *Jinn*, directed by Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya. Combining Middle Eastern mythology with the lives of contemporary adolescents, the Arabic-language series constructs its narrative through restricted information, shifting character perspectives, and the gradual revelation of mystery. The resulting tension stems not merely from supernatural entities but from narrative strategies that regulate the relationship between audience knowledge and character knowledge. These characteristics make *Jinn* an appropriate case for investigating how focalization constructs fear in contemporary Arabic audiovisual narratives.

Research on Gérard Genette's narratology continues to expand across diverse literary and narrative contexts. Müller (2024) examined *zero focalization* in Adalbert Stifter's *Turmalin*, demonstrating its role in

⁶ VALHONDO-CREGO, José Luis. "Focalización Fílmica Clásica y Moderna: Estructuras de Información En La Historia Del Cine de Ficción." *Transinformação* 32 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1590/1678-9865202032e190076>.

⁷ Kiss, Botond László, Anita Deak, Martina Dominika Veszprémi, Albert Blénessy, and Andras Norbert Zsido. "The Role of Excitement and Enjoyment through Subjective Evaluation of Horror Film Scenes." *Scientific Reports* 14, no. 1 (February 2024): 2987. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-53533-y>.

creating narrative ambiguity and guiding readers' interpretation.⁸ Akimoto (2019) translated Genette's *Narrative Discourse* into a cognitive framework, adapting narratological concepts into a model of story representation within human memory.⁹ His findings suggest that Genette's theory extends beyond literary criticism and offers potential applications in artificial intelligence (AI)-based narrative analysis. Likewise, Shen (2023) reexamined the relationship between focalization and point of view through an interdisciplinary approach integrating stylistics and narratology, arguing that both concepts are complementary and essential for understanding narrative perspective.¹⁰ Collectively, these studies confirm the continuing relevance of Genette's theory in contemporary narratology, cognitive narrative studies, and computational narrative research.

The application of narratology to audiovisual media has likewise attracted growing scholarly attention. Aja Sánchez (2026) employed Genette's concept of cultural palimpsest to investigate mythological transformation in Luchino Visconti's *Vaghe stelle dell'Orsa*, demonstrating the applicability of Genette's narratological concepts to cinematic meaning-making.¹¹ Similarly, Wijaya et al. (2025) analyzed narrative construction in Indonesian horror films and found that narrative strategies reproduce cultural anxiety and gender representation, although their study did not employ Genette's focalization theory.¹² Despite these contributions, previous research has largely concentrated on literary texts, narratological theory, intertextuality, or general narrative construction. Studies applying Genette's three focalization categories

⁸ Müller, Dominik. "Strange Fates, Strange Storytelling. Adalbert Stifter's Novella 'Turmalin' and Gérard Genette's Concept of 'Zero Focalization.'" *Colloquia Germanica Stetinensia* 33 (2024): 5–22. <https://doi.org/10.18276/cgs.2024.33-01>.

⁹ Akimoto, Taisuke. "Narrative Structure in the Mind: Translating Genette's Narrative Discourse Theory into a Cognitive System." *Cognitive Systems Research* 58 (December 2019): 342–50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogsys.2019.08.007>.

¹⁰ Shen, Dan. "Stylistics, Narratology, and Point of View: Partiality, Complementarity, and a New Definition." *Style* 57, no. 4 (November 2023): 415–39. <https://doi.org/10.5325/style.57.4.0415>.

¹¹ Aja Sánchez, José Luis. "Mythological Tale and Intertextuality in *Vaghe Stelle Dell'Orsa* (Luchino Visconti, 1965) According to Gérard Genette's Theory of Cultural Palimpsest." *Classical Receptions Journal* 18, no. 1 (January 2026). <https://doi.org/10.1093/crj/clag017>.

¹² Wijaya, Filzah Ramadhani, Virienia Puspita, Kenny Kenny, and Benedict Owen Sedharta. "Haunting Narratives: Female Entities and Gender Inequality in Indonesian Horror Films." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12, no. 1 (July 2025): 1200. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-04815-x>.

(*zero*, *internal*, and *external focalization*) to explain the construction of fear in Arabic audiovisual narratives remain scarce. Furthermore, the relationship between focalization theory and AI-based narrative interpretation has received limited scholarly attention, despite the central role of information distribution and perspective shifts in narrative comprehension.

Recent advances in artificial intelligence, particularly Large Language Models (LLMs), have substantially enhanced computational approaches to narrative processing and interpretation. Nevertheless, AI systems continue to encounter challenges in identifying narrative perspective, focalization shifts, and patterns of information distribution that shape emotional experience. In this regard, Genette's focalization theory provides a valuable conceptual framework for AI-based narrative interpretation. Accordingly, this study addresses two research questions: (1) How are the three forms of focalization (*zero*, *internal*, and *external focalization*) constructed in the Arabic television series *Jinn*? (2) How does each type of focalization contribute to the construction of fear as a narrative effect? In addition, the study discusses the conceptual implications of its findings for the development of AI-based narrative interpretation.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a narrative analysis design to examine the construction of *fear focalization* in the Arabic television series *Jinn* based on Gérard Genette's theory of focalization.¹³ A qualitative approach was adopted because the study focuses on interpreting narrative structure, information distribution, and the relationship between narrative perspective and audiences' emotional experience. Rather than quantifying phenomena, the research seeks to explain the narrative mechanisms through which fear is constructed by means of textual analysis.

The object of the study is *Jinn*, an Arabic-language television series directed by Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya that combines Middle Eastern mythology with the lives of contemporary adolescents. The series was analyzed as a unified narrative because plot development, shifts in perspective, and the construction of fear evolve continuously across episodes. The units of analysis include scenes, dialogue, visual narration,

¹³ Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Jossey-Bass, 2009.

shifts in character perspective, and cinematic techniques that regulate the distribution of information to the audience.

The analysis was grounded in Gérard Genette's theory of focalization, which distinguishes the relationship between the narrator and the center of perception through three principal categories: *zero focalization*, *internal focalization*, and *external focalization*.¹⁴ These categories served as the analytical framework for identifying how narrative information is presented, restricted, and concealed throughout the story. In this study, *fear focalization* is conceptualized as the construction of fear through the organization of narrative perspective and information distribution rather than through the mere presence of horror or supernatural elements.

Data were collected through documentation and repeated observation of the entire *Jinn* series. Each episode was viewed multiple times to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the narrative development. Scenes involving shifts in perspective, information restriction, and moments generating tension and fear were identified and documented. The collected data were subsequently classified according to the dominant type of focalization and its narrative function in constructing the audience's emotional experience.

Data analysis was conducted in four stages. The first stage involved data reduction by selecting scenes that directly represented focalization mechanisms within the narrative. The second stage consisted of coding, in which each finding was categorized as *zero*, *internal*, or *external focalization*. The third stage involved interpreting the relationship between focalization, information distribution, and the construction of fear using Genette's narratological framework. The final stage comprised a conceptual synthesis linking the findings to recent developments in AI-based narrative interpretation. In this context, artificial intelligence was not treated as either the research object or the analytical method but rather as a conceptual framework highlighting the broader relevance of the findings for technology-assisted narrative interpretation.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, interpretations were conducted consistently with the core principles of Genette's focalization theory and were cross-referenced with relevant narratological literature. This procedure ensured coherence between the empirical data, the

¹⁴ Gérard Genette. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1980.

theoretical framework, and the resulting interpretations, thereby strengthening the conceptual validity of the study.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of *Jinn*, directed by Mir-Jean Bou Chaaya, demonstrates that fear is constructed through the organization of narrative perspective as conceptualized in Gérard Genette's theory of focalization. Three forms of focalization were identified: *zero focalization*, *internal focalization*, and *external focalization*. Each operates through a distinct pattern of information distribution, producing different emotional responses from the audience. *Zero focalization* introduces the supernatural threat through the narrator's superior knowledge. *Internal focalization* restricts information to the subjective experience of individual characters, thereby intensifying emotional engagement. *External focalization*, in contrast, creates suspense by presenting observable actions while withholding access to the characters' inner thoughts and emotions. These findings indicate that fear in *Jinn* is generated not merely by supernatural entities but by the narrative management of information throughout the story.

The analysis identifies *zero focalization* in the opening sequence of Episode 1 (03:16). This scene establishes the narrative world while introducing the supernatural threat that underlies the entire series. Unlike subsequent scenes, which are filtered through individual characters, the opening provides comprehensive information unavailable to any character. This reflects the narrator's superior knowledge, a defining characteristic of *zero focalization* in Genette's narratological framework.

Table 1. Zero Focalization in Episode 1 (03:16)

Aspect	Data
Episode	Episode 1
Time	03:16
Arabic Dialogue	على ما الزمن الكثير من الجن اتحدوا مع البشر وتواصلوا معهم. ولكن في نفس الوقت، مازال هناك الكثير من الجن يحاولون تدمير البشر وكل طرق حياتهم
English Translation	"Over time, many jinn have lived alongside humans and interacted with them. At the same time, however, many others continue to seek the destruction of humanity and its way of life."
Visual Representation	Panoramic views of the desert, the ancient city of Petra, and everyday life depicting a world in which humans and jinn coexist.

Source: Author's analysis of Jinn, Episode 1 (03:16).

Table 1 demonstrates that the narrative is not presented from the perspective of any individual character but through an omniscient exposition describing the historical relationship between humans and jinn. The dialogue functions as a general narrative explanation rather than expressing the knowledge or experience of a particular character. Likewise, the panoramic imagery of the desert landscape, Petra, and human settlements serves to establish the narrative setting instead of reflecting a character's perception. The combination of verbal narration and visual imagery positions the narrator as possessing broader knowledge than any character within the story.

According to Genette (1980), this configuration exemplifies *zero focalization*, in which the narrator knows more than the characters (*narrator > character*). The audience learns about the existence of hostile jinn long before the protagonists become aware of the supernatural threat. As a result, an asymmetrical distribution of knowledge is established between the narrator, the characters, and the audience. Viewers possess privileged information, causing subsequent narrative events to be interpreted within the context of a danger already revealed at the outset.

This informational asymmetry plays a crucial role in constructing fear throughout the series. Rather than relying on surprise, the narrative generates fear through anticipation. While the characters continue their ordinary lives unaware of the impending danger, the audience already understands that a supernatural threat is present. Consequently, each

decision made by the characters is perceived as bringing them closer to a conflict whose existence has already been disclosed.

Beyond introducing the central conflict, *zero focalization* also establishes the mythological legitimacy of the narrative world. The jinn are presented not as sudden supernatural intrusions but as long-standing entities embedded within the historical relationship between humans and the supernatural. This strategy provides a coherent narrative foundation that renders the subsequent conflicts credible within the fictional universe.

These findings suggest that the function of *zero focalization* in *Jinn* extends beyond providing background information. Instead, it serves as the initial mechanism regulating the distribution of knowledge among the narrator, the characters, and the audience. By granting viewers privileged access to information from the outset, the narrative produces anticipatory fear, a form of fear that arises not from witnessing the threat directly but from knowing of its existence long before the characters do. Consequently, *zero focalization* functions as the primary foundation for constructing both the horror atmosphere and the narrative tension that unfolds throughout the series.

Internal Focalization

Internal focalization was identified in two scenes where fear is constructed through the characters' limited knowledge. In both cases, the audience receives only the information available to the focal character, allowing fear to develop through a subjective perspective.

Table 2. Internal Focalization through Yasir's Perspective

Aspect	Data
Episode	1
Timestamp	07:33
Arabic Dialogue	ياسر: عمر، أخرجني طارق: ستسعد الآن، لدي شيء سيعجبك
English Translation	Yasir: "Umar, get me out of here." Thariq: "You'll be happy now. I have something you'll like."
Focalization Type	<i>Internal Focalization</i>

Table 2 shows that narrative information is restricted to Yasir's perspective. His plea for rescue reflects panic arising from circumstances understood solely through his perception. The audience receives no additional information beyond Yasir's experience, making fear a consequence of the character's subjective viewpoint rather than external knowledge.

Table 3. Internal Focalization through Hasan's Perspective

Aspect	Data
Episode	4
Timestamp	12:22
Arabic Dialogue	رجل بدوي: ماذا تفعل حسن: أقسمت عليك أن تخرج من هذا الجسد
English Translation	Bedouin Man: "What are you doing?" Hasan: "I command you to leave this body."
Focalization Type	<i>Internal Focalization</i>

As shown in Table 3, the narrative likewise follows Hasan's perspective as he confronts what he believes to be a supernatural threat. The audience is given no objective confirmation of the actual situation and is limited to Hasan's perception. Consequently, fear emerges from the restricted knowledge available to both the character and the audience.

Taken together, these findings indicate that *internal focalization* constitutes the primary strategy for constructing fear in *Jinn*. By limiting narrative information to the protagonists' subjective experiences, the series places viewers in the same state of uncertainty as the characters, thereby intensifying emotional engagement and psychological tension.

External Focalization

In addition to *zero* and *internal focalization*, *Jinn* also employs *external focalization* to construct fear. Unlike the previous forms, which provide access either to the narrator's superior knowledge or to a character's subjective experience, *external focalization* restricts information to observable actions and dialogue. The audience is denied access to the characters' thoughts and psychological states, requiring meaning to be inferred solely from visible behavior. This form was identified in Episode 1 (23:21).

Table 4. External Focalization in Episode 1 (23:21)

Aspect	Data
Episode	Episode 1
Timestamp	23:21
Arabic Dialogue	فهد: ميرا، يجب أن تأتي بالنجدة
English Translation	Fahd: "Mira, go and get help."
Visual Representation	Fahd tells Mira to seek help after witnessing Thariq fall from a cliff and suffer serious injuries.
Focalization Type	<i>External Focalization</i>

Source: Author's analysis of Jinn, Episode 1 (23:21).

Table 4 illustrates that the narrative presents only Fahd's observable actions as he urgently instructs Mira to seek help after Thariq falls from a cliff. The camera depicts the emergency through the characters' behavior without revealing Fahd's internal thoughts or emotional state. Viewers infer his panic solely from facial expressions, vocal intonation, and physical actions.

This restricted access to the character's inner life exemplifies *external focalization* in Genette's framework. Rather than following Fahd's consciousness or that of any other character, the narrative adopts the position of an external observer who reports only observable events. Consequently, fear is generated not through subjective experience, as in *internal focalization*, but through the audience's interpretation of visible actions.

In this scene, suspense arises because viewers witness a critical situation without knowing how Fahd internally interprets it. Although his urgency is evident from his speech and behavior, the narrative never explicitly discloses his psychological condition. Fear therefore develops through observation rather than through access to consciousness.

These findings indicate that *external focalization* preserves narrative objectivity while encouraging audiences to construct their own interpretations of unfolding events. Fear is produced neither by privileged knowledge nor by direct access to a character's inner experience but by observable actions that imply the presence of danger.

Patterns of Fear Focalization in *Jinn*

Analysis of the four selected scenes demonstrates that fear in *Jinn* is constructed through the interaction of three forms of focalization, each serving a distinct narrative function. Rather than operating independently, these forms complement one another by regulating the distribution of knowledge among the narrator, the characters, and the audience. The findings are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Fear Focalization in *Jinn*

No.	Focalization Type	Episode	Function in Constructing Fear
1	<i>Zero Focalization</i>	Episode 1 (03:16)	Introduces the narrative world and the supernatural threat before the characters become aware of it.
2	<i>Internal Focalization</i>	Episode 1 (07:33)	Constructs fear through Yasir's subjective perspective.
3	<i>Internal Focalization</i>	Episode 4 (12:22)	Presents Hasan's perception of a supernatural threat.
4	<i>External Focalization</i>	Episode 1 (23:21)	Creates suspense through observable actions while withholding access to the character's inner state.

Source: Author's analysis.

Table 5 shows that *internal focalization* is the most prominent strategy, accounting for two of the four analyzed scenes. This predominance indicates that *Jinn* primarily constructs fear through the characters' subjective experiences rather than through the narrator's omniscience or an external observational perspective. By aligning viewers with the characters' limited knowledge, the series transforms uncertainty into a powerful source of psychological fear.

In contrast, *zero focalization* establishes the narrative foundation by revealing the existence of the supernatural threat before it is recognized by the characters. This privileged distribution of information generates anticipatory fear, as viewers expect conflicts whose existence is already known to them. Meanwhile, *external focalization* sustains suspense by restricting the narrative to observable actions, leaving the characters' psychological states open to audience interpretation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that fear in *Jinn* is shaped not simply by the presence of supernatural beings but by the narrative organization of information. The interaction of *zero*, *internal*, and *external focalization* produces distinct forms of fear, ranging from anticipation based on privileged knowledge to psychological immersion through subjective experience and interpretive suspense derived from observable behavior. Consequently, focalization functions as the principal narrative mechanism through which the series guides audiences' understanding, interpretation, and emotional engagement throughout the unfolding story.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that fear in *Jinn* is constructed not merely through the presence of supernatural beings but through narrative strategies that regulate the distribution of information. The three identified forms of focalization; *zero*, *internal*, and *external focalization*; serve distinct functions in managing the relationship of knowledge among the narrator, the characters, and the audience. These variations in information distribution generate different emotional experiences, ranging from anticipation of impending threats and psychological immersion in the characters' perspectives to interpretive engagement with observable actions. Fear in *Jinn*, therefore, is more accurately understood as the product of narrative perspective than as a direct consequence of supernatural phenomena.

These findings extend the explanatory potential of Gérard Genette's theory of focalization. In Genette's framework, focalization describes the relationship between who knows and who perceives an event through three principal categories: *zero*, *internal*, and *external focalization*. The present study demonstrates that these categories function not merely as classifications of narrative perspective but also as mechanisms for regulating information that directly shape emotional experience. Under *zero focalization*, viewers possess knowledge unavailable to the characters, allowing tension to develop through anticipation of an unseen threat. By contrast, *internal focalization* restricts information to the characters' subjective experiences, placing viewers in the same state of uncertainty. *External focalization*, meanwhile, positions viewers as observers who interpret visible actions without access to the characters' psychological states. The movement among these forms of focalization indicates that information distribution is a primary determinant of the intensity and development of fear throughout the narrative.¹⁵

This interpretation suggests that the central source of fear in *Jinn* lies not in the jinn themselves but in the narrative management of information. Although the supernatural functions as the narrative conflict, it acquires emotional significance only when access to information is selectively organized through particular focalization strategies. In other words, fear depends not only on the existence of a

¹⁵ Nünning, Ansgar, and Christine Schwanecke. "The Performative Power of Unreliable Narration and Focalisation in Drama and Theatre: Conceptualising the Specificity of Dramatic Unreliability." In *Unreliable Narration and Trustworthiness*, 189–220. DE GRUYTER, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110408263.189>.

threatening entity but also on when the threat is introduced, who is aware of it, and how much information is shared with the audience.¹⁶ These findings highlight narrative perspective as an essential component in constructing the atmosphere of horror.¹⁷

The predominance of *internal focalization* further emphasizes the psychological nature of fear in *Jinn*. Two of the four analyzed scenes employ this form, indicating that the series more frequently aligns viewers with the subjective experiences of its characters than with an omniscient narrator or an external observer. This strategy enables audiences to experience uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety alongside the protagonists. Because viewers know only what the characters know, fear develops through informational limitation rather than through complete disclosure of the supernatural threat. Consequently, the horror presented in *Jinn* is more characteristic of psychological horror than of horror driven primarily by explicit supernatural manifestations.¹⁸ Emotional engagement emerges through the audience's continuous effort to interpret situations that remain only partially understood, allowing suspense to be sustained throughout the narrative.

The findings also confirm the continued relevance of Genette's focalization theory for analyzing contemporary audiovisual narratives, including Arabic-language television series. Although originally developed for literary texts, the theory proves equally applicable to film and television, where focalization is realized not only through verbal narration but also through visual and cinematic techniques.¹⁹ Camera movement, framing, character expression, dialogue, editing rhythm, and spatial composition collectively shape the perspective available to the

¹⁶ Rahmalina, Reny, Wawan Gunawan, Aceng Ruhendi Saifullah, and Nuria Haristiani. "The Construction of Fear in Indonesian Contemporary Horror Films: A Multimodal Analysis." *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 15, no. 1 (May 2025): 131–46. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v15i1.76915>.

¹⁷ Adiprasetyo, Justito. "Deconstructing Fear in Indonesian Cinema: Diachronic Analysis of Antagonist Representations in Half a Century of Indonesian Horror Films 1970-2020." *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 10, no. 2 (December 2023). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2268396>.

¹⁸ Ney, Luke J., Maya Schenker, and Ottmar v. Lipp. "Combining the Trauma Film and Fear Conditioning Paradigms: A Theoretical Review and Meta-Analysis with Relevance to PTSD." *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 152 (May 2022): 104081. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2022.104081>.

¹⁹ Nehresku, O. M. "SEMIOTIC ARRANGEMENT: THE STRUCTURAL CODE OF DIRECTORIAL DESIGN BASED ON GÉRARD GENETTE'S FOCALIZATION." *Innovate Pedagogy*, no. 90 (December 2025): 237–49. <https://doi.org/10.32782/ip/90.46>.

audience.²⁰ In audiovisual media, focalization is therefore inherently multimodal, emerging from the interaction of multiple cinematic elements operating simultaneously. This reinforces the flexibility of Genette's framework and demonstrates its enduring applicability in contemporary narrative studies.²¹

Within the field of Arabic literary and narrative studies, this research offers a perspective that differs from prevailing scholarly trends. Studies of modern Arabic literature have generally emphasized identity, politics, religion, colonialism, gender, and social representation, while comparatively less attention has been given to the construction of emotion through narrative technique. By employing focalization as the primary analytical framework, this study demonstrates that Arabic audiovisual narratives can be examined not only through ideological themes but also through the aesthetic mechanisms that regulate perspective, information, and emotional experience. It therefore broadens the scope of Arabic literary studies by shifting attention from what stories tell to how they are narratively constructed.

Beyond its contribution to Arabic narratology, this study also has implications for AI-based narrative interpretation. The patterns of information distribution identified through focalization theory suggest that shifts in narrative perspective can be recognized through relatively systematic linguistic and visual indicators. This creates opportunities for developing artificial intelligence models capable of detecting focalization types, tracking perspective shifts across narrative sequences, and analyzing the relationship between information distribution and emotional construction in audiovisual narratives. Focalization theory is therefore relevant not only as a literary analytical framework but also as a conceptual foundation for AI-assisted narrative analysis of Arabic audiovisual works. Since AI fundamentally operates by identifying patterns in data,²² narrative perspective represents a conceptual pattern

²⁰ Clapper, Jordan. "The Perhaps Player: Hypothetical Focalization, 'The Whole Narrative-Communication Situation,' and Queer Experientiality." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Feminist, Queer and Trans* Narrative Studies*, 491–506. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75864-5_29.

²¹ Löhnert, Anne. "Focalization and 'Story Time': Techniques of Sumerian Narrative." In *Contemporary Approaches to Mesopotamian Literature*, 101–16. BRILL, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004697577_004.

²² Humairoh, Sitti Wardatul, Nurul Hadi, and Umi Hanifah. "The AI Revolution in Arabic Language Learning: An Analysis of ChatGPT's Role in Autonomous Learning." *Alibbaa': Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab* 7, no. 1 (January 2026): 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.19105/ajpba.v7i1.22479>.

that governs how information is organized, revealed, and withheld within a story. Although contemporary AI models have become increasingly capable of understanding narrative content, they continue to face challenges in recognizing focalization shifts, character-specific knowledge limitations, and the relationship between narrative perspective and emotional effects.²³ Integrating Genette's focalization theory into AI research may therefore contribute to the development of narrative interpretation models capable of understanding not only what a story tells but also how it constructs readers' and viewers' emotional experiences.

Overall, this study demonstrates that fear in *Jinn* emerges from the interaction between narrative perspective and information distribution. The three forms of focalization operate complementarily to regulate how audiences acquire, interpret, and are denied narrative information throughout the story. These findings confirm that Genette's focalization theory is effective not only for identifying narrative perspective but also for explaining the mechanisms through which emotional experience is constructed in audiovisual narratives. Accordingly, this study offers a theoretical contribution by demonstrating that, in horror narratives, fear is generated not simply by the presence of supernatural threats but, more fundamentally, by the narrative organization of perspective and information.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the representation of fear in *Jinn* is constructed through three forms of Gérard Genette's focalization: *zero focalization*, *internal focalization*, and *external focalization*. Each form performs a distinct narrative function in regulating the distribution of information between the narrator, characters, and audience. *Zero focalization* establishes anticipatory fear by providing the audience with broader knowledge than the characters, *internal focalization* intensifies psychological engagement by restricting information to the characters' subjective experiences, and *external focalization* sustains tension through observable actions without revealing the characters' internal states. These findings answer the research question by demonstrating that

²³ König, Caroline, Pedro Copado, Alfredo Vellido, Àngela Nebot, Cecilio Angulo, Maria Lamarca, Vanessa Acuña, et al. "An Artificial Intelligence-Based Platform for Personalized Predictions of Metacognitive Training Effectiveness." *Computational and Structural Biotechnology Journal* 28 (January 2025): 281–93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.csbj.2025.07.051>.

fear in *Jinn* is not generated solely by the presence of supernatural beings, but primarily through narrative strategies that control perspective and information. Accordingly, this study extends the application of Genette's focalization theory to contemporary Arabic audiovisual narratives and highlights its relevance for explaining the emotional construction of fear beyond conventional literary texts.

Despite these contributions, this study is limited to four focalization data drawn from a single Arabic television series, which restricts the broader generalization of its findings across different genres and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the analysis focuses exclusively on Genette's narratological framework without incorporating complementary perspectives from film studies, cognitive narratology, or audience reception research. Future studies are therefore encouraged to examine a wider corpus of Arabic audiovisual narratives, compare focalization strategies across genres, and integrate interdisciplinary approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of emotional narrative construction. In addition, the systematic patterns of information distribution identified in this study offer promising implications for the development of AI-based narrative interpretation, particularly in detecting focalization shifts, modeling narrative perspective, and analyzing emotional structures in Arabic audiovisual storytelling.

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