The Narrative Reconfiguration of Time beyond Ricoeur

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Abstract In *Time and Narrative*, Paul Ricoeur argues that narrative reconfigures human time. While the link between narrative and the temporal character of human experience is very plausible, Ricoeur's description of the reconfiguration of time remains rather vague and does not deal with narrative qua narrative. This article takes up Ricoeur's thesis of a narrative reconfiguration of time but tries to find it in the very structures of narrative. A brief presentation and critique of Ricoeur's approach is followed by a second section that draws on the phenomenological tradition to define human time as the tension between expectation and experience. This tension can be found at the two levels in narrative, the level of the action and the level of the reception. The double reconfiguration of time can be explored by an examination of narrative structures. In the third section the attempt to combine a phenomenological approach with structuralist narratology is illustrated by a comparison of Homeric epic with modernist novels. They reconfigure time very differently and highlight that narratives allow us both to enact and to distance the temporal structures of our lives. Whereas evolutionary literary studies have recently argued that narrative serves an adaptive function, the approach outlined here foregrounds the opportunity to have experiences without the restraints of the everyday world as a crucial factor in the prominence of narrative across ages and cultures.

1. Ricoeur's Model of the Narrative Reconfiguration of Time

In his classic study of the *Laocoōn*, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1962 [1766]) compares narrative and image as different media of mimesis: whereas the latter is static, the former is sequential. This thesis has been challenged:

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Joseph Frank (1963 [1945]), for example, has elaborated on spatial form in narrative, and such scholars as Werner Wolf (2002) make a case for quasi-sequential elements in at least some pictures.[1] Nonetheless, time has proved an essential aspect of narrative. Besides receiving much attention from narratologists, time is the starting point for what is arguably the most complex philosophical approach to narrative, Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (1984–88). In these three monumental volumes, Ricoeur tries to define time in terms of narrative.[2] He argues that a pure phenomenology of time, such as that pursued by Edmund Husserl (1928) and Martin Heidegger (1988 [1927]), is bound to fail, because it cannot reconcile phenomenological and cosmological times. There is always a gap between time as experienced by human beings and the objective time that Heidegger calls "vulgar" time (Ricoeur 1984–88, 3: 11–96). Instead, Ricoeur (ibid.: 99 ff.) suggests taking narrative as an answer to the aporia of the phenomenology of time, namely, its failure to account for both phenomenological and cosmological times, on the grounds that narrative reconfigures time and thereby creates historical time, which mediates between phenomenological and cosmological times.

Ricoeur (ibid.: 142–92) argues that the reconfiguration of time takes place in the reciprocal interweaving of historical and fictional narratives. Historical narratives contain fictional elements whereby phenomenological time is inscribed in cosmological time. Simultaneously, cosmological time is inscribed in phenomenological time through historical elements that pervade fictional narratives: "The interweaving of history and fiction in the reconfiguration of time rests, in the final analysis, upon this reciprocal overlapping, the quasi-historical moment of fiction changing places with the quasi-fictive moment of history. In this interweaving, this reciprocal overlapping, this exchange of places, originates what is commonly called human time, where the standing-for the past in history is united with the imaginative variations of fiction, against the background of the aporias of the phenomenology of time" (ibid.: 192).[3] Thus Ricoeur (ibid., 1: 52) sees a

1. For a critique of Lessing's study of the *Laocoön*, see, for example, Mitchell 1986: 95–115. See also Sternberg 1999 for a critical assessment of modern approaches to the *Laocoön* and a rereading of Lessing's study.

2. For an illuminating early formulation of the link between time and narrative established in *Time and Narrative*, see Ricoeur 1980. Here it is not yet the juxtaposition of cosmological and phenomenological times but Heidegger's threefold analysis of time that serves as Ricoeur's starting point.

3. However, Ricoeur (ibid.: 261) also notes that the narrative approach does not give a simple answer to the question of what time is: "The reply of narrativity to the aporias of time consists less in resolving these aporias than in putting them to work, in making them productive."

strong link between narrative and time: "Between the activity of narrating a story and the temporal character of human experience there exists a correlation that is not merely accidental but that presents a transcultural form of necessity. To put it another way, time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence."

While Ricoeur's project of linking narrative with the temporal character of human experience is very plausible, his description of the reconfiguration of time in narrative remains rather abstract and does not really deal with narrative qua narrative. The three forms through which phenomenological time inscribes itself into historical narratives, namely the calendar, the succession of generations, and the trace, are not specifically narrative (ibid., 3: 104–26); nor are the "imaginative variations on time," which add the historical aspect to fictional texts. In his discussion of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, Thomas Mann's *Zauberberg*, and Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Ricoeur (ibid.: 127–41) thus concentrates on discursive reflections on time and temporality. The primary focus of Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative* is time, not narrative.

In this article I would like to take up Ricoeur's argument for a link between narrative and the temporal character of human experience but try to find it in the very structures of narrative. In section 2 the narrative reconfiguration of time that remains rather vague in Ricoeur will be described with the tools of modern narratology. Such a take on narrative as a reflection on temporality yields the basis for a phenomenology of narrative, which will be illustrated by a comparative look at epic and novel in section 3.

2. The Reconfiguration of Time and Narrative Structure

While Ricoeur views time in the tension between time as objective and time as experienced, I would like to focus on the experience of time to explore the specifically narrative contribution to the reconfiguration of time. For this, I would like to turn briefly to the phenomenological tradition. In his *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (1928), Husserl observed that every perception is embedded in a field of re- and pro-tensions, in which previous perceptions continue to resonate and coming perceptions are anticipated. Distinct from this primary memory is secondary memory, *Wiedererinnerung*, which reproduces in the mode of "as if" a past perception, including its field of re- and pro-tensions. While the focus on the continuity of time prompts Husserl to concentrate on re-tensions and *Wiedererinnerung*, it is pro-tension that is foregrounded in Heidegger's

Being and Time (1988 [1927]). There the temporality of *Dasein* manifests itself in the structure of "Being-to-an-end," of "Being-to-death": "Temporality gets experienced in a phenomenally primordial way in *Dasein*'s authentic Being-a-whole, in the phenomenon of anticipatory resoluteness" (ibid.: 351).[4] The status of "anticipatory resoluteness" as an "authentic" mode of *Dasein* privileges the future over the past.

Heidegger's focus on pro-tension has been adopted and freed from the gloomy tenor of *Being and Time* by Reinhart Koselleck (1985), who defines human time as the tension between the horizon of expectations (*Erwartungshorizont*) and the space of experiences (*Erfahrungsraum*).[5] Guided by previous experiences, we direct expectations to the future: these are either fulfilled or disappointed by new experiences, which in turn not only form the background for new expectations but also retroactively transform the memory of previous expectations and experiences. While the relation between expectations and experiences differs from culture to culture, the very tension between them seems to have a transcendental character and to define human temporality.

The definition of human time as the tension between expectation and experience provides the ground on which we can explore the narrative reconfiguration of time. In narrative there is a double tension between expectations and experiences. It can first be found at the level of the action. The definition of narrative is controversial, but some kind of temporal development and human or humanlike characters seem to be taken for granted by most approaches. Characters have expectations that are disappointed or fulfilled or remain open in the plot of narratives. Monika Fludernik (1996: 12) goes so far as to make this the cornerstone of her "natural narratology," which rests on the definition of narrativity as mediated experientiality, that is, the "quasi-mimetic evocation of 'real-life experience.'"

Second, the recipients of narratives have expectations as to the development of the plot and have experiences depending on whether these expectations are fulfilled or disappointed. These experiences in reception, however, are to be distinguished from the experiences undergone in the story world. The process of listening and reading only involves the senses of seeing and hearing but not the haptic sense, which has the strongest pathic force (cf. Waldenfels 2002: 90). In addition, reception experiences are directed toward the experiences of the characters. They are indirect in being experiences of experiences. Nonetheless, Husserl is right in calling

4. "Phänomenal ursprünglich wird die Zeitlichkeit erfahren am eigentlichen Ganzsein des Daseins, am Phänomen der vorlaufenden Entschlossenheit" (Heidegger 1993 [1927]: 304).
5. See, however, the critique by Schinkel 2005, who argues that Koselleck mixes up the historical and meta-historical meanings of *expectation* and *experience*.

them experiences, for they trigger the same chain of re- and pro-tensions as story world experiences.

The nature of reception experience has been elucidated by Hans Robert Jauss (1982: 226), who compares the "aesthetic attitude" with role-playing in the everyday world as analyzed by Helmut Plessner: "Both modes of experience require that human beings double themselves in adopting a given role." Just as in the everyday world the subject remains itself while playing roles, the recipient of fiction becomes double in simultaneously being part of the real world and being absorbed by the fictional universe. There is, however, also a difference: aesthetic role-playing "creates awareness of the doubling that is inherent in all role-playing and allows one to enjoy oneself in the experience of the role" (ibid.: 226–27).[6] The aesthetic distance, the "as if" of fiction, is fundamental: "Aesthetic pleasure, which takes place in the balance between disinterested contemplation and testing participation, is a way of experiencing oneself in the experience of the other" (ibid.: 85).[7]

Jauss does not pay much attention to the temporal structure of reception experiences, but the above claims suggest that their temporality is also shaped by the "balance between disinterested contemplation and testing participation." As I have pointed out, reception experience is an experience which, on the one hand, has a field of re- and pro-tensions, but, on the other, is indirect and involves only seeing and hearing. I would even argue that it is the tension between expectations and experiences in the frame of the "as if" that renders narrative significant. Narrative allows its recipients to experience the tension between expectation and experience that underlies our lives without the constraints of the everyday world. In other words, the duplication of experiences in the frame of the "as if" enables us to reflect on experience in the form of an experience.

According to this phenomenological approach, narrative offers a way of coming to grips with our temporality by letting us reenact the tension between expectation and experience. Such reconfiguration of time can be elucidated by a formal examination of narrative. A founding idea for classical narratology is the Russian Formalists' distinction between "fabula" and "sjuzhet," between the story in simple chronological and causal sequence,

6. This and the following translations from the German are my own. "Für beide Erfahrungsweisen wird vom Menschen erfordert, sich mit der Aufnahme einer vorgegebenen Rolle zu verdoppeln. . . . [Das ästhetische Rollenverhältnis] macht nurmehr die Verdoppelung, die allem Rollenverhalten inhärent ist, kontrastiv bewusst und ermöglicht es, sich selbst in der Erfahrung der Rolle zu genießen."

7. "Ästhetischer Genuß, der sich derart in der Schwebe zwischen uninteressierter Kontemplation und erprobender Teilhabe vollzieht, ist eine Weise der Erfahrung seiner selbst in der Erfahrung des anderen."

on the one hand, and its artistic presentation in narrative, on the other.[8] Needless to say, the "fabula" is only a construct, and yet it is a heuristically most valuable category for alerting us to the fact that the same events can be presented in rather different ways.[9] In what has proved to be a, if not the, most influential taxonomy of classical narratology, Gérard Genette (1980) identifies three categories in which a "fabula" is transformed into a "sjuzhet": "tense," the shaping of time through order, duration, and frequency; "mood," the selection of information and its focalized presentation; and "voice," the narratorial instance.

Genette's categories of tense, mood, and voice enable us to examine the nature of the experiences of characters and readers. Shifts in perspective and focalization give the readers insights into the expectations at the level of the action, as when speeches or representations of the characters' interior lives inform the readers about the formers' plans. The handling of narrative time shapes the expectations of the readers themselves. Particularly prolepses, which can range from explicit statements to vague references and even implicit patterns, arouse in us readers expectations about the future development of the plot. Taken together, perspective, focalization, and time determine the relation between the characters' and the readers' experiences. For example, prolepses directly imparted to the readers by the narrator privilege them over the characters. In this case, the readers are saved the disappointment of expectations that often awaits the characters. On the other hand, a narrator can conceal something that is known at the level of the action and thereby put the readers in a less informed position than the characters. In yet another way, a consistent focalization of a plot through a character and the absence of narratorial prolepses align the experience of a reader with that of the character.

The narrative reconfiguration of expectations and experiences can be further specified by the three "master strategies" of narration introduced by Meir Sternberg (1992): suspense, curiosity, and surprise.[10] Suspense is based on expectations about the future (prospection), curiosity directs expectations to a past yet unknown experience (retrospection), and surprise is triggered by the disappointment of an expectation or of an assumption (recognition). "The play of suspense/curiosity/surprise between represented and communicative time (in whatever combination, whatever medium, what-

8. Compare the distinction "story/plot" coined by Forster (1927: 93 ff.), who attributes causality to the level of "plot" (see Sternberg 1978: 10–13).

9. See Chatman 1978: 37; Culler 1980; and more recently Shen 2002.

10. See also the defense of the three master strategies against the concept of "estrangement," central to Russian Formalism and many subsequent approaches in literary theory, in Sternberg 2006.

ever manifest or latent form)" (ibid.: 529) can be seen as three different manifestations of the tension between expectations and experiences. Thus my phenomenological model, which envisages narrative as a special mode of engaging with temporality, ties in nicely with Sternberg's definition of narrativity by the three master strategies.

3. The Reconfiguration of Time in Epic and Novel

Recently, Sternberg's model has been taken up by Raphaël Baroni (2007), who notes that narrative tension has received much attention from plot-oriented narratologists, such as Algirdas J. Greimas and Claude Bremond, whereas discourse-oriented narratologists, including Genette, have failed to treat it appropriately.[11] He demonstrates that narrative tension is generated to a great extent by the *mise-en-intrigue*, or, in the terminology of the Russian Formalists, the transformation of the "fabula" into a "sjuzhet." Moreover, he draws on cognitivist approaches to elucidate the contribution of readers to the construction of narrative tension. Baroni (ibid.: 296–97) distinguishes between curiosity and suspense, which create narrative tension through anticipation, on the one hand, and, on the other, moments of surprise that challenge such expectations. He further argues that even readers who are informed about the plot can feel suspense: first, through the contradiction between "knowing" and "wanting" and, second, through the waiting for the occurrence of expected elements (ibid.: 279–95).[12]

These two kinds of suspense and suspense that is triggered by the development of plots unknown beforehand can help us elaborate on narrative's function as a reconfiguration of time. As a starting point, I take Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981) comparison of the novel with the epic, in which temporality is very prominent. While the epic deals with an absolute past distant from contemporary reality, "the novel comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present" (ibid.: 27). The closedness of the epic past allows the poets to focus only on parts of the story, as does the *Iliad*, which "is a random excerpt from the Trojan cycle" (ibid.: 32). In the novel, on the other hand, "the absence of internal conclusiveness and exhaustiveness creates a sharp increase in demands for an external and formal completedness and exhaustiveness, especially in regard to plot-line" (ibid.: 31). Bakhtin (ibid.: 32) briefly touches upon the impact that these different relations to time have on the process of reception: "In distanced images [i.e., in

11. However, as Kafalenos (2008: 382–84) points out, Baroni misunderstands some points in Sternberg's model.

12. See also Sternberg (1978: 87–89, 159–82), who distinguishes between genuine suspense ("what") and suspense based on retardation ("how").

the epic] we have the whole event, and plot interest (that is, the condition of not knowing) is impossible. The novel, however, speculates in what is unknown. The novel devises various forms and methods for employing the surplus knowledge that the author has, that which the hero does not know or does not see."

I disagree with the idea that the play with the heroes' lack of knowledge is characteristic of the novel—as we will see in a moment, tragic irony looms large in the epic—and needless to say, such sweeping statements about genres risk false generalizations; but Bakhtin touches here upon a difference in the reception experience, one based on different forms of suspense and indeed applying to some major examples of epic as against novel. In what follows, I will illustrate the difference by taking a look at the narrative structure of the *Iliad* and by considering some modernist novels.

The Trojan War was an extremely, if not the most, prominent myth in ancient Greece and the object of many epics. While most epic treatments have, a few fragments left aside, not survived, the *Iliad* is fully preserved. The *Iliad* focuses on fifty-one days in the last year of the siege, especially Achilles' anger first at Agamemnon for taking Briseis away from him, then at Hector for killing Patroclus, but a dense network of analepses at the beginning and of prolepses at the end evokes the entire story, from the Greeks' departure from Aulis to the fall of Troy and the arduous return of the heroes. In the oral society of archaic Greece, the epic tradition must have been fluid for some time,[13] but thanks to the prominence of the *Iliad* in Greek culture as well as to other Trojan epics, the plotline, if not all the details, will have been familiar to Greek audiences. In addition, prolepses there not only bring in events that come after the end of the *Iliad*'s account—marked by Hector's burial—but also announce events that are still to come within the fifty-one days covered by the narrative. Time and again, the narrator leaps forward, often to contrast the expectations of the heroes with their future experiences. In other cases, it is the gods who predict a future still unknown to the heroes.

As an example of internal prolepses, let me discuss briefly the death of Patroclus. The first foreshadowing of this event, which will prompt the sulking Achilles to return to the ranks of the Greeks, can be found already in book 8 in a speech by Zeus:

13. The *quaestio Homerica* is still highly controversial. In the aftermath of Parry 1971 and Lord 1960, Anglo-American scholars such as Nagy 1996 emphasize the oral nature of composition and transmission, while others, mostly German scholars (e.g., Reichel 1994), believe that the intricate structures of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are evidence for the use of writing. However, even the latter do not deny that the Homeric epics are based on oral traditions.

> For Hector the huge will not sooner be stayed from his fighting
> until there stirs by the ships the swift-footed son of Peleus [i.e., Achilles]
> on that day when they shall fight by the sterns of the beached ships
> in the narrow place of necessity over fallen Patroclus.
> (8.473–76)[14]

Later, when Achilles sends Patroclus to Nestor in book 11, the narrator adds a somber remark on his future:

> At once he spoke to his own companion in arms, Patroclus,
> calling from the ship, and he heard it from inside the shelter, and came out
> like the war god, and this was the beginning of his evil.
> (11.602–4)

Later still, in book 15, the foreshadowing becomes more precise: Zeus announces to Hera that Achilles will send Patroclus into the battle, where he will be killed by Hector:

> And he [i.e., Achilles] shall rouse up Patroclus
> his companion. And glorious Hector shall cut down Patroclus
> with the spear before Ilion, after he killed many others
> of the young men. . . .
> (15.64–67)

However, it is not until book 16 that Patroclus dons Achilles' divine armor and goes to combat. Patroclus is all too sure that he will push back the Trojans, but a narratorial comment on the speech in which he asks Achilles for his weapons throws his delusion into sharp relief:

> So he spoke supplicating in his great innocence [*mega nēpios*]; this was
> his own death and evil destruction he was entreating.
> (16.46–47)

Here, as in many other passages, the word *nēpios* underscores that a hero's expectations are to be bitterly disappointed. It is used again with regard to Patroclus:

> But Patroclus, with a shout to Automedon and his horses,
> went after Trojans and Lycians in a huge blind fury,
> besotted (*nēpios*). Had he only kept the command of Peleiades
> he might have got clear away from the evil spirit of black death.
> (16.684–87)

14. This and the following translations are taken from Lattimore 1951.

While Patroclus, unaware of his fate, is routing the ranks of the Trojans, Zeus ponders his imminent death:

> So they swarmed over the dead man [i.e., Sarpedon], nor did Zeus ever
> turn the glaring of his eyes from the strong encounter,
> but kept gazing forever upon them, in spirit reflective,
> and pondered hard over many ways for the death of Patroclus:
> whether this was now the time, in this strong encounter,
> when there over godlike Sarpedon glorious Hector
> should kill him with the bronze, and strip the armour away from his shoulders,
> or whether to increase the steep work of fighting for more men.
> In the division of his heart this way seemed best to him.
> (16.644–52)

The adumbration of Patroclus' death gains particular force in two metaleptic addresses of the narrator:

> Then who was it you slaughtered first, who was the last one,
> Patroclus, as the gods called you to your death?
> . . . . . .
> There, Patroclus, the end of your life was shown forth.
> (16.692–93, 787)

I have quoted Homer at some length in order to illustrate the dense network of prolepses which adds to the familiarity of the mythical plot and reinforces the gap between recipients and characters. While the expectations of the characters are disappointed time and again—one could say, the *conditio heroica* is an exacerbated version of the *conditio humana*—the recipients are well prepared for the development of the plot thanks to the foreshadowings provided by the narrator and, embedded in the level of the action, by the gods. The experience of the recipients is distinguished from those of the characters not only by the frame of the "as if," so that the former are not directly affected by what the latter do and suffer. In addition, the narrative use of time, voice, and focalization renders the reception by and large a contingency-free experience of the heroes' experiences of contingency.

For all this, listening to or reading the *Iliad* does not come without narrative tension.[15] Suspense is directed not so much toward the *what* as toward

15. On suspense in the *Iliad*, see Morrison 1992, who, however, overestimates the prominence of false predictions. None of the misdirections analyzed by him actually deceives the recipients; they rather retard the action and thereby sharpen the expectations.

the *how*. While foreshadowing allays suspense as to the what, it can trigger suspense as to the how. As we have seen in the case of Patroclus, prolepses in the *Iliad* tend to be vague: the references in books 8 and 11 reveal nothing about the exact time and circumstances of Patroclus' death. The ancient scholiasts already recognized this as a means of creating narrative tension by arousing the audience's interest in how the predicted events will come about (cf. Duckworth 1931). What is more, the narrative tension can be heightened by an increasing preciseness of the foreshadowing: after the first vague references, we learn in book 15 that Patroclus will be killed by Hector, and in book 16 the narrator draws attention to the imminence of his death.

The gradual revelation of information is also illustrated by the death of Achilles. As early as the first book, the hero himself and Thetis already mention his short-livedness (1.352, 415–18). Later Achilles points out that he will gain glory only at the price of a *mors immatura* (9.410–16). In 16.709 and 17.404–11 Apollo and Achilles remark that Troy will fall without Achilles. Only in 18.95–96 and 19.416–17 are we given more detailed information: Thetis says that Achilles will die soon after Hector, and the horse Xanthus reveals to Achilles that he will find his death at the hands of a mortal and a god. In 21.110–13 Achilles predicts that he will be killed either by a spear or by an arrow. The most precise foreshadowing is finally given by the dying Hector:

> Be careful now; for I might be made into the gods' curse
> upon you, on that day when Paris and Phoibos Apollo
> destroy you in the Scaian gates, for all your valor.
> (22.358–60)

The gradual revelation of details concerning the deaths of Patroclus and Achilles increases the narrative tension created by the initial vagueness of prolepses. In many cases, the narrator plays with the expectations of the audience, in particular through retardations and so-called "*Beinahe*-episodes," developments of the action which go against the plot (cf. Nesselrath 1992; Grethlein 2006: 269–83). The entire third book, for example, is devoted to a duel between Menelaus and Paris that is supposed to decide the conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans. If Menelaus wins, the Trojans are to return Helen and all the stolen goods; in the case of Paris' victory, the Greeks will go back to their homes. Here, close to the beginning of the narrative, an ending is in sight, but only by means of a denouement that would go against the mythical plot. And indeed, before Menelaus can kill Paris, Aphrodite carries away the Trojan, who is better suited to the works of love than war, bringing him to his wife, Helen, and the gods

decide that the war should continue. Book 3 thus retards the beginning of combat and unfolds the possibility of another course of events. The audience's expectations are sharpened but not disappointed.

Besides the waiting for known elements, the *Iliad* also reinforces suspense through the other device of narrative tension that Baroni finds in plots already known to recipients, the tension between knowing and wanting. If we side with the Trojans, we may know that Hector has to die but, when he is chased by Achilles from gate to gate, nonetheless want him to escape and to return to Andromache, who is about to prepare a hot bath for him. Sympathy for Achilles, on the other hand, may clash with the knowledge of his death, a tension that the *Iliad* does not resolve, as both Achilles' death and the fall of Troy lie outside of its reach. This may be the major play with the expectations of the audience: in the last books, the prolepses to both events become more frequent and more detailed and generate in the recipients strong expectations that are not fulfilled by the narrative. Here, however, the tension is not directed toward the story but toward the discourse; neither the death of Achilles nor the capture of Troy is at stake, only whether or not these events form part of the *Iliad*'s narrative. Despite all these subtle plays with expectations just outlined, the Homeric epic draws a sharp line between the heroes, who are subject to bitter experiences, and the recipients, who are well informed about what is going to happen thanks to the familiarity of the myth and to intense foreshadowing.

It is not possible to generalize about the reconfiguration of time in the modern novel, which Bakhtin defines by its changeability. But it hardly needs arguing that the subjects of most novels are far less familiar to their readers than were the Homeric epics in antiquity. Nor is it easy to find novels that provide their readers with such a dense network of narratorial prolepses.[16] While Homer creates tension concerning the *how* of the discourse, novels tend to derive suspense from the *what* of the plot. The difference in the double reconfiguration of experience is particularly visible in the modernist novel, which concentrates on processes of consciousness. In presenting much of the action through the focalization of characters, authors such as Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, and James Joyce let their readers get to know the fictional worlds of their narratives through the minds of the characters (see, e.g., Kahler 1973; Cohn 1978). Whereas in Homer prolepses widen the gap between recipients and heroes, the consciousness novel rather aligns the experiences of the two.

16. See, however, *The Known World* by Edward P. Jones 2003 as an example of a recent novel that is rich in foreshadowing.

Yet even without narratorial foreshadowing, readers in modern narrative tend to be privileged over characters. Generic conventions suggest a specific development of the plot: for instance, a miraculous escape, which would be rather unlikely in a realist novel, is exactly what the readers, but not the characters, will expect in an adventure of James Bond. The reader's advantages are not limited to such generic conventions (which of course can be challenged) but extend to the temporal structure of narrative. The preterit, as the most common tense for narratives, reveals that the process of narrating is posterior to the experiences narrated. Even if a narrator does not capitalize on the advantage of hindsight in the form of tragic irony, narratives tend to be teleologically shaped. Long before the age of postmodernism, authors played with the unity of the plot, but the bulk of narratives still justifies our assumption that all elements work toward the closure of the plot. A revolver that is mentioned en passant in the second chapter may be insignificant for the characters but arouses in the reader the expectation that it will be fired before the end. Nonetheless, the guidance of our expectations through generic conventions and the narrative tendency to teleologies is far more vague than the explicit prolepses with which the Homeric narrator underscores the distance between his recipients and his heroes.

Some modern novels even try to do without a teleological *mise-en-intrigue*. For how such attempts do not marginalize contingency, Gary Saul Morson (1994) has coined the term "sideshadowing." Devices of sideshadowing restore to the narrated events their presentness, which gets easily lost in retrospect. Instead of envisaging and telling events from a later point of view, narratives with sideshadowing make the future appear to the readers as open as it is at the level of the action. A case in point is *War and Peace*. Tolstoy's novel is not only by and large free of prolepses but has an immense number of characters and story lines, which are not organized in a clear narrative design and thereby make it hard to assess the future development of the plot. The readers of *War and Peace* are exposed, more or less, to the same uncertainty regarding the future as the characters.

The difficulties of a first reading are illustrated by the reactions of the first critics who commented upon the novel while it was being published serially. Following the installments, they found their expectations thwarted time and again and complained that *War and Peace* lacked a plot (Morson 1987: 49–60). Not only the introduction of numerous minor characters who surface and then disappear from view but also the identities of the principal characters are confusing: knowing the story, we may agree on Pierre, Andrei, and Natasha as being at the core of the action, but this becomes clear only many hundred pages into the novel. For a long time it

is possible to consider Dolokhov and Anatole Kuragin as the main heroes, as one of the first reviewers actually did (ibid.: 58).

There are numerous "misdirections," that is, passages triggering expectations which are never fulfilled. To give an example, Andrei calls Prince Adam Czartoryski "one of the most remarkable, but to me distasteful of men" (Tolstoy 1968: 310). The following comment—"It is such men as he who decide the fate of nations" (ibid.)—gives readers the impression that Czartoryski will play a role at a decisive turn of the plot, but he will not. The destabilizing force of contingency is the object of several reflections at the level of the action, particularly in the context of battles. At Borodino, for example, Andrei points out to Pierre: "What are we facing tomorrow? A hundred million diverse chances, which will be decided on the instant by whether we run or they run, whether this man or that man is killed" (ibid.: 930). In accordance with the emphasis on openness and presentness, *War and Peace* does not have a closure either but ends at a pretty arbitrary point, an "aperture" as Morson (1994: 169 ff.) calls it. Tolstoy even claimed that he chose the beginning and ending of his novel arbitrarily. Sideshadowing, as illustrated in his writing, heightens the novel's tendency to build up suspense directed to the story.

This cursory juxtaposition of epic and novel is of course far from doing justice to the complexities of the narrative reconfiguration of time, but it highlights two poles. We have seen that Homeric epic creates a wide gap between its characters and its recipients; while the former are fully exposed to contingency, the latter tend to be well informed about the development of the plot. The recipients' expectations concerning the disappointment of the characters' expectations may be sharpened through retardations but are ultimately fulfilled, as when the duel in book 3 does not end the Trojan War ahead of time. In the modern novel, on the other hand, the gap between characters and readers is less pronounced or is treated very differently from that in Homer. Particularly consciousness novels align the reading experience with the experiences of the characters. Sideshadowing devices, as used by Tolstoy, even serve to minimize the teleological shape of narratives and make readers experience the contingency to which the characters are exposed. This difference between Homer and modern novels marks a tension that is characteristic of the narrative reconfiguration of time in general. On the one hand, the reception of narratives is also an experience; just as in real life, our consciousness is filled with re- and pro-tensions. On the other hand, these experiences take place in the frame of "as if," are limited to the senses of seeing and hearing, and are directed toward the experiences of others. Narrative allows us at the same time to

enact and to distance the temporal structure of our lives. Epic and novel embrace both aspects, but whereas the first stresses the distancing, the second tends to give more weight to the enactment.

Recently, evolutionary literary studies have paid much attention to the question of why humans engage in the activity of narrating.[17] Building upon Charles Darwin's evolutionary model, scholars such as Joseph Carroll argue that narrative, like art in general, serves adaptive functions. While the literary Darwinists disagree on the exact functions of narrative, they share the conviction that narrative helped humans cope with their environment and thereby raised the chances of survival. In this article I have offered an alternative approach, which does not explain narrative in the functionalist terms of Darwinism but, in drawing on the phenomenology of time, rather stresses narrative's freedom from pragmatic concerns. I suggest that the opportunity to experience, without the restraints of the everyday world, the tension between expectation and experience that underlies our lives is a crucial factor in the prominence of narrative across ages and cultures.

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17. Pioneering works of this approach are Carroll 1995; Storey 1996. For a recent survey, see Gottschall and Wilson 2005 and the special issue of *Style* (2008).

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