3. Time structure in the story.

(Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*)

3.1. The Generation of Story Time

Literature is, like music or cinema, a sequential form of art; a literary work, just like any other linguistic product, unfolds itself in time. Language exists in time, but its mission is to represent, to signify. And among things which can be represented we find time itself. A text, unfolding itself in time, can at the same time represent time. Texts do not have to be narratives in order to do this. The tense system of any language is designed for the representation of time in any kind of text, narrative or other. We might argue that from the moment we find a represented time in a text we are identifying if not an actual narrative at least a narrative trait or structure. But we come closer to the spirit of narrative temporality proper when we define it as the use of the time of the representation as an icon of the represented time. By virtue of this mapping of one time into the other, the textual time becomes a representational time, and the fabula time becomes a represented time. Things might stop there, and the two temporal sequences would overlap in a perfectly homogeneous way. But we must remember that fabula time is also represented semantically by means of the linguistic signs of the text, not merely iconically through the linguistic chain. The mapping of fabula time into textual time is governed by the semantics of the text, to the extent that, far from coterminous homogeneity being the rule, no two texts present the same temporal formula. The interplay of iconicity and semantized time ensures that the represented temporality is distorted in a manifold of ways and degrees. What we experience in a narrative text is therefore not the fabula time as such, but a represented fabula time, what we call the story time.

In principle, therefore, narratives move forward, in an indexical way which signals
the passage of time. But this is only the general rule, and they may suddenly jump back, against the direction of temporal progression. They may also jump forward, interrupting their normal pace, or move in a variety of speeds in one direction or another, compressing or expanding the narrated time.

We are going to study presently the peculiar temporality of the story, which is the result of articulating the temporality of the fabula on the different temporal sequence of the discourse. In doing so, therefore, we shall presuppose those structures which are peculiar to fabula and discourse time, and which underpin the structure of story time. The story time is the result of the interplay of fabula time with another temporal sequence, the textual time of the linguistic chain. It is very frequent to meet descriptions of narrative time which assume only two temporal threads. Either the fabula time as a necessary referent or the duration of the enunciative act get lost somewhere in the description. We must assume on the contrary that each of the levels of analysis we distinguish can generate a temporality of its own: for instance, it makes no sense to speak of the "temporality of enunciation" as if enunciation were a simple, univocal phenomenon. The complexity of the temporality of enunciation will mirror the complexity of the enunciation itself, the interplay of the author's and the narrator's voices. If the basic scheme of fabula, story and narrative is complicated in any way, if, for instance, any of the levels duplicates itself, the temporal structure of the narrative will become proportionally more complex.

3.2. Fabula Time

Fabula time is pluridimensional, since a fabula is not a thin narrative line but a volume of relationships progressing in time. But a story presupposes the encoding of those events in a semiotic thread of signs. Simultaneity therefore will have to be rendered implicitly or through sequentiality. Study of story time can be described as study of how a pluridimensional phenomenon has been mapped on a limited semiotic system; or, conversely, of how a linear and sequential text manages to construct, to represent, the fulness of a lived temporality.

Fabula time may exist in two main forms: objective ("real" time) and subjective time. Subjective time is the representation of time in the minds of the characters in the fabula. It is therefore an element of the fictive world, just as the characters themselves, but it is already subject to distortion and patterning (let us remind here Bergson's concept of durée). Subjective time may already be considered a transitional form towards story time, which is also a represented time. Subjective time is not represented in language (at least not exclusively), but it is nonetheless a semiotic phenomenon to the extent that time and identity are subjective phenomena. It is of course this inherent semiotization of fabula time which makes it amenable to representation as a story. The characters (or
people) can be thought of as being subject to brute, shapeless temporality, but in fact they live their experience of time in a form much closer to an ordered narrative, with significant connections between the events of their lives, anticipations, memories and projects. Subjective time is in one sense a simplification and in another sense a complication of real fabula time. Subjective time, like narrative, involves to some extent a linearization of the multidimensional fabula time. Consciousness can oscillate between several threads of thought, but it can hardly encompass all aspects of reality. It is therefore only natural that subjective time, like the subjective realm of experience as a whole, should be used as a partially elaborated material in the construction of a story; it is used to motivate narrative structures at this level. But subjective time also complicates narrative temporality in that it disrupts the uniformity of its direction: flashbacks and flashforwards are a feature of memory work before they become a feature of narrative. Characters may likewise construct fictional temporal sequences through their wishes, dreams, tales, etc. A story may use all of these without giving the narrator the direct responsibility for any of them, since they are in a sense ready-made, a part of the fabula. Of course they are only significant for analysis due to the fact that they are a part of the story as well, but it is useful to distinguish these features from those which are introduced at story level, since they give rise to different narrative structures.

3.3. Story time: Order

Genette divides the temporal relationships between fabula and story into three types:

we will study relations between the time of the story and the (pseudo-) time of the narrative according to what seem to me to be three essential determinations: connections between the temporal order of succession of the events in the story and the pseudo-temporal order of their arrangement in the narrative . . . ; connections between the variable duration of these events or story sections and the pseudo-duration (in fact, length of text) of their telling in the narrative--connections, thus, of speed . . . ; finally, connections of frequency, that is . . . relations between the repetitive capacities of the story and those of the narrative. (Narrative Discourse 35)

Let's concentrate for the moment on order. The natural order of events in the fabula is chronological. The story can distort the order of the events in various ways. Those distortions are called anachronies. Anachronies have always been common in literature. In fact, Aristotle seems to have been the first one to make a remark on this phenomenon, when he compares the temporal structure of the tragedy and the epic:

In tragedy we cannot imitate several lines of actions carried on at one and the same time; we must confine ourselves to the action on the stage and the part taken by the players. But in epic poetry, owing to the narrative form, many events simultaneously transacted can be presented (Poetics 63, XXIV.4)
Of course this feature is not a necessity, but a convention of the Greek stage. However, it does suggest that linguistic narrative easily yields to temporal distortions, and that the time scheme of a novel will usually be more complex than that of a play (or a film).

The most famous classical reference to this issue, however, is usually assumed to be Horace's differentiation between narration in medias res and narration ab ovo. These terms are introduced in a paragraph discussing the problem of how to give a well-known subject a brilliant treatment, or, more to the point, of how to turn a traditional fabula into an artistic story. Horace, following Aristotelian suggestions, sets Homer's practice as an example:

He does not begin a "Return of Diomede" from the death of Meleager, nor the war of Troy from the twin eggs [gemino ab ovo]. He ever hastens to the issue, and hurries his hearers into the midst of the story [in medias res], just as if they knew it before; and what he thinks his touch will not turn to gold, that he lets alone. (Art of Poetry 70, lines 146-50)

Usually these terms are used in a different way nowadays. While Horace seems to imply that preliminaries can be dispensed with, we usually understand that a story begun in medias res will retake the lost expositional events by means of an anachrony, a flashback.

So, there are two basic story orders: the simple, unmarked order of chronological succession of events, and the complex order that includes some kind of temporal distortion. This was also the assumption of medieval rhetoric.

Pushed to the extreme, the first variety of narrative order keeps the reader completely informed of the progress of the fabula: there is no need of coming back to retake some unexplained event; everything has been told and therefore the attention of the reader is riveted on the future, not on the past. The peculiar emotion produced by this kind of straightforward narrative is suspense: the reader wonders what will happen, and the whole of his interpretive attention is projected to the future. The model for this kind of narrative is perhaps the adventure story: war tales, westerns, science-fiction, children's tales...

If we push the second variety of narrative ordering to its logical conclusion, we find that here the logic is double: as in straightforward narrative, we wonder what will happen next, but, since important facts are being concealed from us for the moment, we also wonder what has happened. That is, curiosity is the reader's main passion here, or curiosity combined with suspense. We wonder about the nature of the past in order to explain the present, but we also wonder about the way in which the past will be revealed, the revelation of its full hold on the present. The prototype for this kind of story is the detective story, which unfolds simultaneously toward the origin and toward the conclusion of the fabula.

This second kind of story can't be content with a simple, one-way progression into
the future. It needs to come back on itself, and finish what was left unfinished, tell us the mystery which has been hidden all through the story. A temporal distortion is needed, the most basic one, a return to the past which will enable us to understand the present. It is now time to refine the concept of anachrony. The study anachronies was undertaken by German and Russian Formalists (Friedemann, Tomashevski). The most complete system is expounded by Genette.

We have defined an anachrony as a temporal distortion between the time pattern of the story and the time pattern of the fabula. There are two kinds of anachronies: an anachronical event may belong either to the past or to the future with respect to the events which form its immediate context. We call the first type analepsis or flashbacks; the second type is prolepsis or flashforwards. It is important to realize that these distortions have to be apprehended at some point as we move through the story. We cannot define the temporality of the story as a simple formal scheme: time must enter the description. From the moment the reader constructs a coherent series of events he has a temporal orientation and a "now" moment; any anachrony will be perceived to be a flashback or a flashforward with respect to that moving present. It is important to realize the nature of this definition: anachronies are not measured with respect to the time of the enunciation (as, for instance, verbal tenses) but with respect to a narrative reference point created by the ordered unfolding of events. Genette calls that unfolding of events the "first narrative". His definition is "the temporal level of narrative with respect to which anachrony is defined as such" (ND 48). It goes without saying that the relative coherence of the first narrative will reinforce the subordinate character of the anachronies. If no coherent first narrative is formed (as in Molly Bloom's monologue) there results a temporal constellation in which every element is defined and defines the others in equal measure.

Most elements in the fabula have a simple temporality, being merely signified events. But some of the fabula elements (objects or events) are signs, and as such may have a double temporality: the temporality of the signifier and the temporality of the signified. Therefore, the temporal status of these elements will have to be described at two levels of signification: the standard semiotic level of the story and the signified semiotic level of their referent. For instance, an epic narrative may suddenly give way to a description of past events which are depicted in a present work of art portrayed by the narrator (e.g. Aeneas looking at paintings of the destruction of Troy in Dido's castle). Or a character may reminisce through a story: the telling of the story, the story-as-sign, is located in the present; but the events depicted in the story take us to the past. There is no anachrony in one sense, since the present goes unfolding itself. But there is an anachrony in a sense, since we learn about the past or the future.

That is, "real" anachronies can be introduced by the narrator, but they are not the only possible ones. There are also anachronies present in fabula elements (speeches, stories, works of art, memories) which are capable of signifying a temporal moment. Genette speaks of objective versus subjective anachronies (47), but the opposition
remains undeveloped. Moreover, the terms seem to refer only to anachronies introduced by speech or psychical processes. Maybe it is better to speak of fabula anachronies as opposed to story anachronies. In the last chapter of Ulysses, which contains Molly Bloom's interior monologue, there are no story anachronies: the rhythm and sequence of the mode of presentation, a sequence of thoughts, are uninterrupted. But there is a complex anachronical structure in the contents of those thoughts. This ability anachronies have to contain other anachronies inside them can greatly complicate the temporal articulations of the story. A prolepsis can contain a second-degree analepsis which contains a third-degree prolepsis, and so on.

Both prolepses and analepses can be external or internal (with respect to the beginning and end points of the main story) and have two relevant dimensions: reach and extent. They may also be homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, that is, dealing or not dealing with a fabula line which is narrated earlier or later in the main story. Internal homodiegetic analepses are used to recapture previous fabula material. They may add something new or just repeat previous information. Repeating analepses, or recalls, tie the narrative to its own past and, if they do not add to the narrative information, can be an important principle of stylistic construction. Completive analepses, or returns, "fill in, after the event, an earlier gap in the narrative" (ND 51). This play of creation and filling in of gaps contributes to create a specific kind of narrative interest.

We have mentioned two prototypical kinds of story, depending on whether they follow the logic of succession or the logic of retrieval and completion of information; the adventure story and the mystery story. Since we define these two kinds of story with respect to the kind of expectation they arouse in the reader, it is obvious that a formal description of a story has to take into account the temporal development of the story: a story is not only what it 'really' is, but also what the reader thinks it is when it is being read. A suspense story might reveal itself in the end as a mystery story, and it is this succession of expectations in the reader which provides an adequate account of its form.

A mystery story necessitates that the reader ignore part of the fabula. This can be achieved in various ways. The story can begin in medias res, and the delayed exposition appears gradually later on. These stories are born with a mystery in them. However, the mystery may develop during the unfolding of the story. It consists then in a control of the information available to the reader. A mystery can be described as a gap in our knowledge of the story (Sternberg 238 ss). A mystery story is therefore a system of creation and resolution of informational gaps. Gaps can be divided into permanent (unsolved mysteries) or provisional. The nature of gaps can usually be determined objectively, but the analyst must take into account the impression of the reader: a gap which normally belongs to the class of provisional gaps can sometimes be left open forever (cf. John Fowles's story "The Enigma", in The Ebony Tower). So, we can establish an opposition between provisional and permanent gaps. On the other hand, we can take into account the reader's perspective in order to distinguish (with Sternberg 244f) between curiosity gaps, those which are recognized immediately, and surprise
gaps, informational restrictions which only reveal themselves in their full extent from a later perspective. These may be related to Genette's paralipsis, an information which suddenly reveals itself to have been skipped while it should have been available under the existing mode of presentation (ND 52).

Actually, the two kinds of narrative are extremes, and most narratives combine both kinds of interest. And that is because, from its very definition, narrative has two main movements; it looks both to the immediate future, following the logic of succession, and towards some point in the past, following the logic of repetition--any narrative is in a sense a repetition of the events it tells.

Prolepses are less frequent than analepses, although they are perfectly coherent while we remain in retrospective narrative. But when they are present they also contribute to the structure of expectation, curiosity and suspense, to the activity of gap-filling and construction of coherence which is the task of the reader of narrative. Sometimes an otherwise straightforward narrative may include prolepses which accentuate the feeling of curiosity: how shall we reach the stage adumbrated by the prolepsis? A novel with a complex temporality such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* makes a constant use of this kind of curiosity-goading prolepsis.

Narrative is a transformation not only of the fabula material, but also of the reader's impressions; both returns and recalls help effect this transformation. It is important to note that the difference between recall and return is not a clear-cut one. New aspects of a phenomenon may appear in a later recall; the same event may be modulated in a different way through the attitudes of the narrator or the characters (this is clear from Genette's examples, e.g. ND 58). Here as elsewhere, the concepts we introduced should be used as measuring rods rather than pigeon-holes.

1.3.4. Story Time: Duration

Narrative duration or speed is defined by Genette as "the connections between the variable duration of these events or story sections and the pseudo-duration (in fact, length of text) of their telling in the narrative" (ND 35). This definition disregards, as Genette's model does as a rule, the complexity of discourse structures. At textual level, time may be fictionalised; the telling of the story may be a story in itself, and the time of the fabula may be measured with respect to this fictional time which surrounds the act of narration. Genette's "narrative time" is ambiguous: it may refer both to the idealised reading time or to the represented time in which the narrative discourse unfolds. As this fictional time may have its variations of order, duration and aspect, the formula for story duration may be extremely complex. This only means that time can be subjected in narrative to an
infinite modulation. But while a small amount of experimental narratives seek to explore the complexities which underlie the representation of time, most narratives yield themselves to analysis using Genette's system of story durations.

The speed of the narrative consists in the relationship between equivalences between the duration of the fabula and the idealized duration of the reading process. The ideal coincidence at all points between the speed of the fabula and that of the narrative is what Genette calls an isochronous narrative, and then declares to be a chimaera. But isochronous narrative, narrative without variations of rhythm, is perfectly possible. Simultaneous reporting of sports is a non-literary instance; the interior monologue is a literary one. But it is more usual to find narratives with variations of speed or anisochronies. Anisochronies will involve a passage from summary to ellipsis, from scene to description. These are the four basic movements described by Genette: We could schematize the temporal values of these four movements fairly well with the following formulas, with ST designating story [fabula] time and NT the pseudo-time, or conventional time, of the narrative:

- **pause**: $NT = n, ST = 0$. Thus: $NT > ST$
- **scene**: $NT = ST$
- **summary**: $NT < ST$
- **ellipsis**: $NT = 0, ST = n$. Thus: $NT < ST$.

The formulae seem to fit neatly. Only, according to our definition, these movements would be movements of the narrative text and not of the story proper, and this brings along a number of conceptual modifications.

First of all, concerning pauses. The story is the transmission of the fabula; when there is no fabula being constructed, as in a digressive pause, there is no story, while there is still a narrative text--narrative, because the materials woven into it, story and digression, are organically linked into a communicative act which is mainly narrative. There are, of course, descriptive pauses which are narrative insofar as the elements described are a part of the narrated world. There are also narrative pauses, which are caused by the interruption of one story line by another.

With respect to scenes, we should note that the identity between the time of reception and the fabula time rendered in the scene is hypothetical, a constructed convention. The two temporalities are rarely to be measured by the clock. This would seem to contradict the very definition of scene. In a scene, the duration of the time of reception should in principle be used iconically to signify the duration of fabula time. And it is so, with the proviso that iconicity is also a constructed relationship of signification. It may use more "natural" elements of the signified, but it articulates them in an arbitrary structure, just like symbolism. This is why we usually get so many "accelerated" scenes, most noticeably in dramatic or filmic narrative, without any breach of verisimilitude. Generic conventions determine the latitude which can be given to this
supposed identity between represented time and representational time.

Be as it may, scenic narrative requires a presentation without noticeable gaps, one which provides a kind of immersion into the fictive world, at maximum distance from narrative mediation (and, therefore, from both authorial digressions and from omniscient summary). This maximum distance from the narrative presence can be effected mainly by two means: immersion in the characters' verbal world and immersion in the character's unspoken perception of the narrated world. In the first case, we get a dramatized dialogue with a minimum of narrative indications, which usually involves external presentation of the characters. In the second, the scene is filtered through the consciousness of a character, a focalizer, and the impression of scenic time is created through the sequence of his narrated perceptions, thoughts and emotions.

Scene is one of the basic movements of novelistic narrative. This consists most frequently in an alternance of scene and summary, with the first scene marking the beginning of the first narrative and creating a reference point for the reader (Sternberg 8). Summary was used traditionally as a starter (for instance, in Jane Austen) but its place is more and more restricted in more recent narrative, which tends to do away with transitions between scenes.

Summary is used whenever happenings are filtered through an interpretive mind, be it the narrator's or the character's (for instance, in a subjective analepsis). Summary is usually the "marginal" element of narrative, the necessary scaffolding which will set the stage for the subsequent scene. Therefore, it will rarely contain the bound motifs of a fabula; its function is orientative with respect to the reader.

Ellipsis would seem to be a problematic concept, since the fabula only exists through its rendering in the story, and ellipsis is defined as that part of the fabula which is omitted in the story. The definition of ellipsis needs, therefore, a different kind of knowledge to justify its presence, and this is usually the result of the literary competence of the reader and the predictability of fabula patterns, apart from the more general scenarios which govern our everyday behaviour. Our concept of ellipsis should take these phenomena into account. Story schemata both organize the pattern of presence and ellipsis and guide the reader in determining which ellipses are significant and which are caused by redundant information. Ellipsis is therefore connected to the driving principle of the narrative, the narrative design which shapes relevance and interest, the plot. So many ellipses are mere time gaps which are used to give shape to this plot, to emphasize causal over temporal connection by modelling the temporal sequence on the model of the causal one. A relevant ellipsis, on the other hand, is a narrative gap which is flaunted in some way as significant, through explicit comment or through the break it causes in fabula sequence which we interpret through a well-known intertextual model. Usually the gap will be filled later on through the use of anachrony.

Genette divides ellipses from a formal point of view into explicit, implicit, and hypothetical. According to a temporal criterion into definite and indefinite. Usually the
3.5. Story Time: Aspect

The order of events is not only temporal, but also causal. That is, temporality by itself is not the only explanation for the effects of sequentiality and order which a story provokes in the reader. Sequences of events can form wholes which are temporally disrupted but causally connected.

Therefore, we shall use the term aspect, inspired on the verbal category, to refer to a temporal perspective grounded on the nature of the action sequence itself and of its causal connection to other elements of the fabula. Genette notes the grammatical relationship (ND 113) but disregards aspectual distinctions other than those of frequency.[2]

The triangle singulative / repetitive / iterative is only one possible asceptual structure. Grammarians have introduced other aspectual distinctions. To the dimension of frequency (singulative / repetitive / iterative aspects), we might add the dimensions of unfolding (inchoative / progressive / terminative / perfective aspects) and inherent duration (punctual / durative / permanent aspects).

3.5.1. Frequency

Genette defines frequency as the relationship between the repetitive capacities of the fabula and those of the story. As we noted in our first section, the notion of repetition depends on identity, and this is an operative concept. Repeated elements are being considered insofar as they are alike; this does not mean that there are no differences between them (cf. Genette 145f). Genette speaks of three types of frequency: singulative, which involves a one-to one relationship between fabula events and their rendering in the story; repetitive, when the same event in the fabula is narrated a number of times (for instance, from a variety of perspectives), and iterative, when the story gathers into a common mention a number of similar occurrences in the story. Proustian narrative, according to Genette, is dominated by iterativity. Bal (Narratologie 129f) notes the possibility of yet another movement, half-way between the singulative and the iterative, when the story narrates a number of times an event which is itself repetitive in the fabula.
3.5.2. Unfolding

This is an aspectual category which requires an referential point from which the degree of unfolding is measured. The moment of enunciation is a central point of deictic orientation in narrative texts. There are, however, other possible "now"-points which can act as a reference, such as the spatial/temporal position of the focalizer, and that of the characters as well. Both are logically subordinated to the enunciative now-point. Their use as reference points is therefore not a necessity but a rhetorical figure. An action which is finished from the point of view of the narrator can be presented in the course of its development if we adopt the perspective of the focalizer. An event may be perfective for the focalizer, progressive for a character.

Genette's study of snares and false snares (ND 77), based as it is on the standardized nature of fabula materials and of the causal sequence between them, could easily fall under the heading of aspectual unfolding. Also, stress may fall either on the inception or on the conclusion of action sequences, or of the fabula itself. If a narrative shows a marked preference for the suggestiveness of sequential inceptions, we may call its aspect inchoative; if it prefers to begin in medias res and place stress on endings, its aspect will be terminative.

3.5.3. Inherent Duration

As a category of verbal aspect, duration is implicit in the verb itself. Or maybe we should say it is a form of predication. We can use the classifications of forms of predication at sentence level as a reference point for the study of the inherent duration of narrative events.[3]
Each predication in the story refers to a state of affairs in the fabula. A specific segment of the story will refer to a state of affairs which will be more or less durative or transitory--a character trait, a mood, a sudden event. The representation of punctual occurrences is closest to the mimetic illusion of coincidence between action and discourse, while more durative fabula traits will require a variety of techniques if their permanence or rhythm is to be given a role in the narrative. The aspectuality of fabula events is potential and manifold, and the story may favour certain aspects, certain types of development, which will constitute the actualized aspectuality of the story.

3.6. Time and Status of the Narrating

Up to now we have been discussing the temporality of the story, which is a set of structural relationships between the fabula and its representation in a text. But a text is something which is produced, enunciated, at some moment in time. An ordinary speaker always speaks in a specific space and time, and these can leave a trace in the discourse. Spatial reference leaves its traces in the adverbs and deictics of the narrative--in general, in its way of constructing and naming location, space, distance. It would merit separate study, but here we will concentrate ourselves on discourse time.

Genette's temporal analysis of the narrative act is suggestive, but it goes a bit too fast. Before we classify the temporal situation of the narrator and the fabula, we should determine whether such a relationship exists. Everything may seem to exist in time, so the existence of a temporal relationship between the fabula and the narration would seem to be a necessary one. But as a matter of fact there is a whole realm which escapes this condition: fiction. Fiction exists in time, but in its own time, in quite another time and place whose relationship with our real world cannot be measured by the clock. Literature, narrative literature, is not all fictional, but it is mostly so. It is in fiction that literature finds the ideal conditions for its expansion and proliferation, since a fictional world is par excellence a self-contained entity which requires attention for its own sake--just as in literature the text requires attention for its intrinsic interest.
In fictional narrative not only the events may be invented: the narrating of those events may be a fiction, too. This is fine for the study of the time of the narrating. The problems begin when the narrating is not a fiction: how should we measure then the time between fiction and nonfiction? It is clear that there is an operation previous to the classification of narrative temporality: it is the determination of narrative status, that is, of the ontological relationship between the narrative and the fabula. Genette's distinction between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narratives does not really cover this question of status, since it refers only to the narrator's involvement in the action. An heterodiegetic narrator need not always tell a fictive tale (cf. the use of the term heterodiegetic in ND 50, where it clearly refers to causal connection in a line of action, not to ontological level).

There are three main relationships in this respect: fictionality, nonfictionality, and indeterminacy. The status of the narrative must be distinguished from the status of the work itself (fiction or nonfiction). A nonfictional work may use narratives of fictional status, and vice versa.

Temporal relationships proper only exist in a nonfictional narrative (caution: not in a nonfictional work). There we may rely on Genette's scheme. Nonfictional narratives are (paradoxically) those in which the narrator is clearly fictional. The narrative may then be motivated through some textual-producing device: a diary, a report, letter-writing, etc.

Indeterminate and fictional narratives may make use of the same modes and strategies, but they assume here a different role; they become a mere tool, a constructive principle whose referential structure to the narrated world may be far more complex. Usually, however, they make use of the simplest of temporal devices: verbs in the past tense. Since the indication of time is inscribed in the form of language itself, since the narrative cannot avoid using tenses, it uses a petrified form which is the most neutral one from a narrative point of view; narrative is a recreation of the past, and fictional narrative uses this general form as a convenient vehicle, a ready-made structure whose meaning is not really temporal.[4]

We can distinguish at least two temporal dimensions: situation and duration. These may remind us of the temporal distortions we have mentioned before when speaking of story time, order and duration. But there is an important difference: order and duration in story time were measured with respect to a now-point determined by the immediate context of the narrative. The temporal dimensions of the narration are measured with respect to another reference point: the moment of enunciation.

All this refers to the self-representation of the act of narration. There is of course a further temporal dimension which is far more significant from a critical point of view: the situation in time, in the interpretive tradition, of the author, the text and the reader. We disregard this dimension here because it is not a specifically narrative one: this does not
mean that a critical analysis of a narrative text should ignore it.

### 3.6.1. Situation

Situation refers in Genette's theory to the relative position in time of the narrator and his act of narration vis-à-vis the events of the fabula. Genette distinguishes four possible types: prior narrating, simultaneous narrating, subsequent narrating, and a mixed type, interpolated narrating.

Subsequent narration is the most frequent one (though we should always study to what extent the temporality of the narrative past is really functional). Just as the use of the past does not imply subsequent narrative, the use of the present tense should not be confused with simultaneous narrative. The historical present used for the sake of immediacy is quite common in subsequent narrative.

There are other significant relationships of situation, because the fabula events and the moment of narrating are not the only possible reference points. Other possible reference points can be the moment of fictional reception, the date of reading (insofar as it is foreseen by the text), the date of writing. A variety of temporal patterns are established as we measure narratives with these axes. For instance, science fiction is usually set in the future of both writing and reading time, but it rarely uses anterior narration: the fictive enunciation is therefore either neutralized or set in a more or less concrete moment in a subsequent future.

### 3.6.2. Duration

Narrating takes some time, and the narrative discourse may thematize this duration. As Genette notes, this does not happen very often. The use a narrative makes of its duration is obviously related to a great extent to the artifice it uses for its motivation: a diary, a report suggest different kinds of durative distribution.
E.g. Tomashevski, Teoría de la literatura 54; Barthes, "Introduction" 12; Kristeva, El texto de la novela 250, or Genette himself, "Discours" 77.

That Genette tends to reduce all questions of narrative aspect under the perspective of the aspectual polarity singulative / iterative becomes evident when he describes such a sentence as "water boils at one-hundred degrees" as "iterative narrative" (Narrative Discourse 212 n.).

We modify a classification by Alexander Mourelatos, "Events, Processes, and States". Inherent duration, an aspectual category, should not be confused with the temporal duration of scenes, summaries, etc.

See in this respect the theory put forward by Käte Hamburger in Die Logik der Dichtung.