

*turnalist Turn in Heidegger,*

*the Human*

# About Time

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Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time

Mark Currie

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(1983, 124)

... that obsesses postmodern novels  
... In problematizing almost every-  
... anted, historiographic metafiction  
... y and fiction. (1988: 120)

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## Chapter 3

### Prolepsis

This chapter is about the anticipation of retrospection and the extended significance that this temporal loop has acquired in our world. I am going to approach the subject through three different meanings of the word *prolepsis*, or, since the primary significance of prolepsis is anticipation, three different types of the anticipation of retrospection. The first of these I will refer to as the *narratological* meaning of prolepsis: a term used by Genette and others to describe flashforward. Prolepsis, for Genette, is a moment in a narrative in which the chronological order of story events is disturbed and the narrator narrates future events out of turn. The narrative takes an excursion into its own future to reveal later events before returning to the present of the tale to proceed with the sequence. As Genette makes clear, this is far less common in narrative fiction than its counterpart, *analepsis*, or flashback, but it will be my contention here that prolepsis is the more rewarding analytical concept. For reasons that will become apparent, I will set aside the second meaning of prolepsis, which will receive a fuller treatment in a moment. The third meaning I will refer to as *rhetorical* prolepsis, to designate a phenomenon well-known to classical orators and scholars of rhetoric: the anticipation of an objection to an argument. This is a technique used to preclude objections by articulating them, and even answering them within an oration, and it will be one of the trajectories of this discussion to analyse the extended scope of this device both in contemporary fiction and the world of discourse more generally. My question for this chapter then is how the rhetorical and the narratological senses of prolepsis can be linked.

The phrase *anticipation of retrospection* refers to a temporal structure which lies at the heart of the human experience of time, as Heidegger taught us,<sup>1</sup> but also at the heart of narrative, both in its mode of fictional storytelling and as a more general mode of making sense of the world. Narrative is generally retrospective in the sense that the teller is looking back on events and relating them in the past tense, but a reader or listener

experiences these events for the first time, as quasi-present. Even in a second reading of a novel, it can be argued, the reader decodes the past tense as a kind of present, since it is an aspect of readerly competence to understand what is not yet known. There are many studies of narrative that have emphasised this strange interaction between the temporality of the narrative and that of the reader. Peter Brooks summarises the tension neatly when he observes:

If the past is to be read as present, it is a curious present that we know to be past in relation to a future we know to be already in place, already in wait for us to reach it. Perhaps we would do best to speak of the *anticipation of retrospection* as our chief tool in making sense of narrative, the master trope of its strange logic. (1984: 23)

I argued in Chapters 1 and 2 that the fictional convention which encourages a reader to view the past as present has as its counterpart the tendency to view the present as past, or as the object of a future memory. In other words the present of a fictional narrative and the lived present outside of fiction are both experienced in a future anterior<sup>2</sup> mode: both are, in a sense, experienced in the preterite tense in relation to a future to come. When we read a novel we make present events that are in the past, and when we live life we often do the opposite: we live the present as if it were already in the past, as if it were the object of a future memory. If in reading a narrative we decode the preterite as a kind of present, the process is one of presentification,<sup>3</sup> whereas in living we use a kind of envisaged preterite to deprive the today of its character as present.<sup>4</sup> Put simply, it is possible that the reading of narrative fiction, in instructing us in the presentification of the past, also robs us of the present in the sense that it encourages us to imagine looking back on it.

Brooks's point is an observation about the tense conditions of fiction, and not about prolepsis itself. It demonstrates that anticipation is structural in that condition insofar as the present of fiction is lived in grammatical acknowledgement of the time of narration, which is a future that is already in place. In life, however, the future time of narration is not already in place in the same way. When we find the preterite encroaching on the lived present in the self-narration of an adventure or the digital recording of visual experience, we project forward to an envisaged time of narration in order to render the present as narrated time. I began this discussion with an intention to connect the devices of narratological and rhetorical prolepsis, but in this basic tense structure of classical narrative fiction we have identified a more pervasive kind of prolepsis, which can be placed between the narratological and the rhetorical as a kind of bridee: the anticipation of retrospection which is involved in all

narrative, and which offers the beginnings of a theory which connects the temporality of reading with the temporality of living. This is the second meaning of prolepsis that I set aside in the opening paragraph. The connection that it offers between reading and life can be expressed in the following preliminary proposition: that there is a hermeneutic circle between the presentification of fictional narrative and the depresentification of lived experience.

This proposition will reappear in different guises throughout this book, and I intend to leave the full exposition of the hermeneutic circle of presentification and depresentification for later. To move towards this it is necessary to be more analytical about the relation of this general anticipation of retrospect, which I will call *structural prolepsis*, to *narratological* and *rhetorical prolepsis*. Beginning with fictional narrative, it is possible to identify three time loci which structure the communication: the time locus of the narrated, the time locus of the narrator, and the time locus of the reader. This is a traditional framework which underlies much of the narratological study of fiction. In the work of Muller and Genette, the relationship between the time locus of the narrated and the time locus of the narrator is given special prominence, so that the tension of narrated time and the time of narration has become the predominant temporal framework in the study of fictional time. Ricoeur's analysis of fiction, for example, takes this distinction as its starting point and pursues it through the analysis of time experimentation in the Modernist novel. In the terms of this framework we can classify our three types of prolepsis as follows:

1. Prolepsis 1 is narratological prolepsis, and is a form of anticipation which takes place within the time locus of the narrated. It is the anticipation of, or flashforward to, future events within the universe of narrated events.
2. Prolepsis 2 is structural prolepsis, and is a form of anticipation which takes place between the time locus of the narrated and the time locus of the narrator. It is, among other things, the relation between narrated time and the time of narration which is inherent in the preterite tense of classical narration.
3. Prolepsis 3 is rhetorical prolepsis, and is a form of anticipation which takes place between the time locus of the narrator and the time locus of the reader.<sup>5</sup> The classical form of Prolepsis 3 is the anticipation of an objection and the preclusion of that objection by incorporating a counter-argument into the discourse.

Though I have linked Prolepsis 2 with the hermeneutic circle of presentification in fiction and depresentification in life, it will be the burden of

this argument to show that all three forms participate in this hermeneutic circle, though not always operating within the terms of presentification and de-presentification. It should also be observed from the start that whereas Prolepsis 2 is a property of all fictional narrative, Prolepsis 1 and 3 are devices which come and go in fiction, and are often viewed as forms of experimentation, or deviation from narrative norms. This difference recalls the discussion in Chapter 1, of Ricoeur's distinction between tales *of* time and tales *about* time, since Prolepsis 2 designates a function inherent in all fiction, while Prolepsis 1 and 3 point to features of fiction which indicate a conscious concern with the temporality of narrative. When the boundaries between these three categories of anticipation are questioned, this distinction between the conscious and the unconscious concern with narrative temporality also comes into question, and it is part of the movement of this discussion to subvert this sense of the *aboutness* of fiction about time.

Prolepses 1, 2 and 3 are so arranged to respect a chronological order: narrated time is anterior to the time of narration which is in turn prior to the time of reading. Prolepsis 1 comes first because its forward projections fall within the time locus of narrated time; Prolepsis 2 is next because it spans narrated time and the time of narration; and Prolepsis 3 is chronologically third because it spans the often enormous gap between the time of narration and the time of reading. As always however, this chronology bears little resemblance to the phenomenological temporality of reading, in which a reader is not simply posterior to the text but also starts at its beginning and is duly sent forward by the projections of Prolepsis 1 and 2, and in the process, will be addressed by Prolepsis 3. Chronologically we have a line, but phenomenologically we have a loop. Though the reader may be located years, centuries or even millennia after the narrated time of a given narrative, Prolepsis 1 will project that reader forward through narrated time to a future which, in chronological terms, is located in the distant past. Or to put it another way, in the act of reading, the reader's present will have embedded in it another present which is the decoded preterite of fictional narrative.

The description of narrative temporality has a tendency, like the description of tense in general, to hurtle towards an absurd complexity. The source of much of this absurdity is the collision of what Ricoeur calls cosmological and phenomenological time, as witnessed in the preceding paragraph. Cosmological time, for Ricoeur, is clock time, objective time, linear time, and is underpinned by the philosophical tradition which views the time line as a succession of 'nows'. Phenomenological time, on the other hand, is something more like the embedding structure referred to in the previous paragraph, in which former presents exist as if

embedded inside each other as the constituent parts of a perpetual present. This is one of the problems on which the analytical value of prolepsis hinges. If words such as past, present and future, which are founded in the objective linearity of clock time come into contact with the phenomenological view of time as a structure of embedded presents, the result will be a kind of confusion. The idea of time as succession will be rendered inoperable by the idea of time as co-existence. This is particularly clear in the case of the reading of a narrative. We have already identified three presents involved in the simplest of narrations: the present of narrated time, the present of the time of narration, and the present of the time of reading. While the scheme of Prolepses 1, 2 and 3 organises these chronologically on a time line, the phenomenology of reading threatens to destroy the foundations of prolepsis altogether, drawing the notions of past and future into the present in such a way that the anteriority of the past and the posteriority of the future are questioned. The result is a mish-mash of pasts that take place in the future and futures which take place in the past, as the terminology of cosmological time strains to assert itself within the perpetual present of phenomenological time.

In the sections that follow, I will proceed from apparently straightforward instances of prolepsis to enormously complicated ones, and from instances as they occur in fiction to those that operate non-fictionally.

### Problems in the Definition of Prolepsis

Prolepsis 1 offers a rudimentary training in the anticipation of retrospect, by jumping ahead within the time locus of narrated events to a future point, which is often an outcome. This creates an effect that is sometime referred to as teleological retrospect,<sup>6</sup> that is, a looking back from an endpoint. To look back on an event is to give it a significance it did not possess at the time of its occurrence. If we think of a time line, we might say that the present is the most advanced, the latest, or the most modern existing point in that line. Though in life we might anticipate events which are posterior to the present, these anticipated events are not yet in existence, and involve the projection forward to an entirely imagined future. This is not the case in narrative fiction, where we might view the future of a narrative as a future which is already in place, one which has a spatial existence in writing, in the form of words which lie to the right of the bookmark, or those words which are not yet read. By making an excursion into a future which is already in place, fiction can therefore instruct us in the kinds of significance acquired by an event when it is looked back upon in a mode of teleological retrospect.

Various modes and levels of Prolepsis 1 operate in fictional narrative. Though we generally know it when we see it, a satisfactory definition is difficult to produce and can uncover interesting problems in the founding assumptions of narrative temporality. The most unproblematic examples are those which take place in narratives which firmly establish a chronological linear sequence, so that a disruption of that pattern is clearly discernible. Muriel Spark begins Chapter 3 of *The Driver's Seat* with the following excursion into the future of the narrative:

She will be found tomorrow morning dead from multiple stab-wounds, her wrists bound with a silk scarf and her ankles bound with a man's necktie, in the grounds of an empty villa, in a park of the foreign city to which she is travelling on the flight now boarding at Gate 14. (1974: 25)

This narrative about a woman who goes on holiday to be murdered, establishes a simple sequence of events of preparing for, travelling to and reaching an anonymous urban destination, and departs from the chronological sequence at each stage by flashing forwards to the scene of, and sometimes the subsequent newspaper reporting of, her death by murder. In this example, prolepsis is particularly marked because it is rendered in the future tense, and this is because the 'now' of the novel takes place, unusually, in the present tense: 'She stops at the bookstall, looks at her watch and starts looking at the paperback stands' (1974: 21). If the narrative were more conventional in its use of tense ('She stopped at the bookstall'), the prolepsis might be marked by a tense which indicates a future event in relative terms while remaining in the past ('She would be found dead the next morning') or not marked by tense at all ('She died the next morning'). The point here is that prolepsis is entirely relative to an established linear sequence, and therefore cannot be straightforwardly marked by a particular tense. In this regard, narrative reflects the complexity of temporal reference in language more generally. Philosophers and linguists broadly accept that temporal reference is not determined by tense alone, that any single tense, be it past, present or future, is capable of expressing past time, present time and future time, and therefore that the linguistic expression of time spreads itself throughout the whole of a sentence or a discourse.<sup>7</sup>

If tense is not the solitary basis upon which time reference, and therefore prolepsis, can be defined, we might look to a more relativist account of the relationship between the established temporality of a narrative and its proleptic excursions. Genette refers to these as the 'first narrative' and the 'second narrative' respectively: the first narrative is 'the temporal level of narrative with respect to which an anachrony is defined as such' (1980: 48). This idea of the first and the second narrative, or the

established narrative and its anachronies will work better for some novels than for others. In *The Driver's Seat*, Spark establishes a first narrative over two chapters before taking her proleptic excursion to Lise's murder. When she does so, it is a brief excursion, with a duration of the one sentence cited above – less in fact, since the story has reverted to the now of the first narrative even before it is over, to the flight 'now boarding at Gate 14'. Genette's idea of the first narrative and the second narrative work well in the case of *The Driver's Seat* because it obeys a kind of maxim of quantity between the narrative and its anachronies: a certain quantity of narration establishes a base temporality in relation to which the prolepsis is anachronous. To put it simply, it is the first narrative because it comes first and because there is more of it.

'If events a, b, c, figure in the text in the order b, c, a then 'a' is analeptic. If, on the other hand, they appear in the order c, a, b then 'c' would be proleptic.' So claims Rimmon-Kenan in *Narrative Fiction* (1983: 46–7) as an explanation of Genette's use of the distinction. One of the interesting things about this apparently simple scheme is the temporal complication it unleashes in relation to the concept it seeks to define. If we consider the account of Genette's first narrative that I have just offered – that it comes first and there is more of it – this formula presents a problem. It suggests that analepsis requires only that the anachronous event be narrated after events which it precedes in the chronological sequence, and that prolepsis requires only that the anachronous event be narrated before events which chronologically precede it. Let me point to some of the many problems. In the first place, why should we not say of the sequence b, c, a that 'b, c' is proleptic, or of the sequence c, a, b that 'a, b' is analeptic? In other words how do we assign the priority to one section of a narrative which is required for Genette's distinction between the first and second narrative, and which views the first as *Chronos* and the other as anachronous? A second problem is that in the proleptic sequence c, a, b, the proleptic event comes first. Rimmon-Kenan no doubt intends this notation to refer to any three events in a narrative sequence, and not to the first three, but we might consider anyway the question of whether a narrative can begin in the mode of prolepsis. Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*, for example, begins as many novels do at the end, that is in the narrator's present in relation to which all the events of the novel are in the past. The anachrony comes first in the sense that the dominant pattern of the first narrative is established by the sheer quantity of the subsequent narrative, so that we can no longer claim that the first narrative comes first. If prolepsis can come first, there are several aspects of its conventional definition that have to be abandoned, such as the idea of flashforward. Taken together these first two objections

suggest that the assignment of priority to the first narrative, as I did at the end of the last paragraph, on the basis that it comes first and there is more of it, is arbitrary, and that we might just as well view the majority of *Rebecca*, the events after the first chapter, as narrated in a mode of flashback or analepsis.

I will restrict myself to three further complications for any foundational account of prolepsis. The first problem is that fictional narratives, though often taken to be linear in nature, can rarely achieve a temporal shape that can meaningfully be called linear. Todorov (2000: 137–44) points this out in relation to the genre of detective fiction, a genre normally assumed to manifest the strictest of linear forms. But for Todorov, the temporality of the detective story is a double time – a double movement which is at the same time forwards and backwards, working forwards from the crime through the events of the investigation, and in the process working backwards to reconstruct events which lead up to the crime. We might add to this a related complication, namely that a fictional event will often have a complex temporal structure in which one time locus is embedded inside another. A narrated memory has this structure. It is a mental event located in the narrative's quasi-present and yet its content, when represented in fiction, will function to narrate the past within this quasi-present: the memory holds within it the time of its happening and the time that it recalls. But the narration of a memory is not quite the same thing as the narration of the past in the sense that it is not the past itself that is the object of narration but the subjective act of recall belonging to a character. The narration of a memory is not strictly speaking an anachrony, since the event of recalling might belong in the temporal chain of the first narrative, and yet memory is normally considered to be the predominant mode of analepsis. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, for example, the events of a single day are narrated according to a rigorous linearity, but because the majority of these events are memories, the narration also entails constant flashback. Analepsis delivered in this mode is not really an anachrony at all, but the effect is anachronous because of the complex temporal structure of the events being narrated.

If the analysis of tense has illustrated the complexity of temporal reference in language, it is unsurprising that this complexity should be manifest in the structure of narration. Prolepsis is meaningful in its narratological sense only when there is a clear first narration in relation to which a flashforward can be seen as anachronous, when that first narrative is predominant. In many narratives in the first person, or which are heavily focalised through a character, the anachronies belong to the thought processes of those dramatised in the fiction. In more

experimental fiction, this distinction between the linear narration of thought processes which are not linear, and non-linear narration as such begins to disappear. Tom Crick, the narrator of Graham Swift's *Waterland*, takes the view that any account of the here and now must constantly refer back to a history which produced it, and at the same time refer forwards to events which lie in wait, as part of that history. Though the novel focuses on a single event, the murder of Freddie Parr in 1937, the narration of this event entails many thousands of years of prehistory and about forty years of posthistory which reside in this moment. But prolepsis in *Waterland* is not anachronous in relation to any first narrative because the narrator simply cannot stick with any part of the narrative long enough to establish its priority. *Waterland* is not a novel that can be clearly enough divided into past, present and future to make the idea of prolepsis meaningful, and anticipation occurs in almost every sentence of the narrative. There is an appetite for the kind of temporal complexity I described above, so that anticipation can be embedded even in acts of distant recall: 'Once upon a time there was a future history teacher's wife who, though she said to the future history teacher they should never meet again, married him three years later' (2002: 122). This structure, of prolepsis embedded within analepsis, allows the narrator to circle the event of Freddie Parr's murder, simultaneously narrating events which precede and follow it.

*Waterland* is a novel that explicitly thematises the forward and backward movement of time, the idea of a cyclical time, and the constitution of the present as a crossed structure of protentions and retentions. But this level of explicit engagement with time is not a necessary condition for a novel to subvert Genette's notion of the first narrative. The same can be said of Robert Coover's *The Babysitter* which empties the idea of prolepsis of its narratological meaning through a kind of 'cut up' technique whereby the narrative jumps constantly in time, so that the principal hermeneutic activity of the reader is the reconstruction of a chronological sequence of events. The effect of subversion is more apparent in the case of novels narrated in backwards time, where prolepsis functions not as an excursion into as yet unknown events, but into past events which are known to the reader from general history, such as the trepidations felt by Tod Friendly in Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* as he proceeds backwards into the Second World War. The effects of backwards time will be the subject of a fuller discussion later in this book. For the moment the import of these examples is the dependency they illustrate of prolepsis on a conventional and established narrative pattern in which a basic linearity of events is assumed, or on the predominance of chronology over anachrony.

The final problem presented to the narratological meaning of prolepsis is one of knowing when to draw the line between an anachrony or excursion into the future and the kind of plot inference that narratives invite constantly as they proceed. Is a hint, for example, a prolepsis? *The Driver's Seat* opens by referring implicitly forwards to the scene of Lise's murder, and to her own careful staging of that scene, by showing Lise in the act of rejecting a dress made in a fabric which will not stain. Lise, who seeks to control in advance even the photographs of her own dead body, needs a fabric that will show blood, but as we read this opening scene, the motivation which underlies this rejection of the non-staining fabric is not apparent to us. This idea of motivation, of some psychological intent which is not apparent at first, but which unfolds with the plot, is clearly a central device in the forward motion of narrative. So common is this kind of hint, or invited inference, that we normally assume that early events are only narrated if they will acquire significance later that is not apparent at the time of their occurrence. In other words, an actual excursion into the future events of a narrative is not required for the production of teleological retrospect, and we find ourselves projecting forward in the act of reading to envisage the future significance of events as a basic process in the decoding of the narrative present. Nor is the idea of motivation necessarily a hidden psychological intent. Tomachevsky (1971) outlined a kind of technical sense of motivation, according to which the presence of a gun at the beginning of a narrative anticipates the murder or suicide of one of the characters later in the plot. This is a plot device which is followed up by Sartre (1969) and then by Barthes (1968), and again this kind of anticipation, or invited inference, is complicated in relation to prolepsis. Clearly the presence of a gun invites the inference that it is a motivated object in terms of the plot, but as Beckett's *Happy Days*, and hundreds of so-called 'red herrings' in detective fiction confirm, the inference is often mistaken. Barthes hedges his bets on this question by providing an alternative account of the presence of objects in narrative based not on motivation but on redundancy. An object such as the barometer which hangs on the wall of Mme. Aubain's room in Flaubert's 'Un Coeur Simple' may be viewed as redundant detail which works in the service of a reality effect, and whose only motivation is the claim that this is the kind of object that would be found in a house like this. Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Cask of Amontillado' puns on the word 'mason' as a foreshadowing of the fate of its character to be bricked up in a recess of the wine cellar, but the pun functions as prolepsis only because it turns out to be motivated. How then are we to distinguish between in the first place the motivated object or event and the red herring, and in the second place between motivated and redundant

details? It seems to make no sense in relation to any definition of prolepsis to say that any hint of a future event in a narrative is proleptic. Are we then to say that an event or object is proleptic only when it anticipates an event which does indeed confer significance on it, and not so when it turns out to be a red herring or an instance of redundant detail?

### Performative Prolepsis and Self-subverting Prophecy

We seem to have arrived, in this list of complications, at a rather circular account of prolepsis, namely that the anticipation of future events in a fiction counts as prolepsis only when that anticipation turns out to be true. This is to say that the narratological context of Prolepsis 1 is not properly named as anticipation at all, since anticipation itself requires no verification in relation to the future that it anticipates, but requires an actual excursion into the future of narrated events. I began this discussion with the distinction between Prolepsis 1 and Prolepsis 3, or the narratological and rhetorical meanings of the word. But if the narratological sense of prolepsis depends in some way on true prognostication, how can we then connect it with the rhetorical sense which, as I defined it at the start, seems to aim precisely at the preclusion of the event anticipated, namely the anticipation of an objection to an argument. If Prolepsis 1 is verifiable in relation to an existing fictional future, Prolepsis 3 is orientated towards the non-existence in the future of the future it anticipates. It follows that neither Prolepsis 1 nor Prolepsis 3 can have any real existence in life, since in the first case the future to which it refers can only have existence in a fictional world, in which futures are always already determined and lie in wait, whereas Prolepsis 3 prevents the future it anticipates in the act of anticipating it.

At the start of this discussion I linked Prolepsis 2 with the preterite tense of classical narration, which is to say that it is a form of anticipation which takes place between the time locus of the narrated and the time locus of the narrator. The preterite tense has this anticipation built into it in the sense that the events of narration are only narrated in the past tense at all because they are past in relation to this time locus of the narrator, or what Ricoeur calls the time of narrating. There is a sense then in which the present of a narrative is structurally retrospective, or actually structured in relation to the future present from which it is narrated. This is to be distinguished from an actual proleptic excursion from narrated time to the time of narrating, a kind of flashforward which abounds in fiction. This latter kind of excursion can be found whenever

a narrator intrudes into narrated events to remind a reader of the time locus of narrating, such as the intrusive narrators of Fielding, the excesses of self-consciousness of Tristram Shandy's self-narration, in a considerable number of novels of the nineteenth century, in Conrad's leaps forward to storytelling situations in which narrators and listeners are dramatised on ships, and in many metafictional experiments in the novels of the late-twentieth century. Many of these temporal relations in fiction between narrated time and the time of narrating will be the object of systematic analysis later in this study. For the moment I want to concentrate on the first idea, not that a narrative might flashforward by leaving the time locus of narrated events, but that the moment of the present might be structured by an anticipation of the retrospect of the time of narrating.

It is true that the preterite tense gives the present of a fictional narrative a relation with a future present from which it will be viewed retrospectively. It was my proposition at the start of this chapter that the decoding of the preterite in the act of reading fiction was a kind of presentification, of making present, that which is in the past and that this presentification corresponds to a process of depresentification which might take place outside of fiction. This analytical model, which depends on the inside and the outside of fiction is not one that can easily be defended, as the later sections of this book will make clear, but at present it offers a hypothesis that will take me in the direction of those sections. How then might the present be structured as a future narration of the past outside of fiction? One answer to this question is simply that the present can be conceived and even lived in a mode of narration in the past. I might, for example, leave the house while saying to myself 'Mark left the house'. A more probable instance would be a less banal situation which I intended to narrate later – perhaps an event which takes place without witnesses that I know I will recount. Experiences which take place overseas, for example, are often lived in a mode of anticipation of the act of narrating them afterwards. They are recorded in the present as if recounted in the past. The present is experienced as the object of a future memory, or in anticipation of retrospection. The depresentification of this mode is well known as a kind of schizophrenia involved in the act of self-narration: when an experience becomes both the subject and the object of a narration. If my lived present is translated into the conventional preterite of fictional narrative, there is a temporal depresentification involved in the transformation of present into past. There is also a spatial self-distance, or depresentification, involved in the translation of first person pronouns into the third person, as when 'I' becomes 'Mark' in 'Mark left the house'. I see myself as somebody else, and I see myself from a temporal distance, and in this

double act of depresentification I split myself into two both spatially and temporally. Nor is this mode of depresentification confined to a mode of verbal narration. In fact the self-recording and self-archiving involved in this kind of schizophrenic self-narration may have become predominantly visual as photography and video recording have displaced verbal narration, and film and television have come to occupy the place of fiction in the hermeneutic circle between narrative and life.

Video recording and photography, like the preterite tense, structure the present as the object of a future memory. The act of recording installs in the present an anticipated future from which the present will be re-experienced as representation of the past, or an infinite sequence of future presents from which the moment can be recollected. In digital photography, the effect is one of foreshortening the present, since the image is consumed almost instantly, consigning the present of a few moments ago to the past and inaugurating an infinite sequence of future presents from which that moment will be represented as past. Similarly, digital video often involves the repetition of a sequence as recording at the moment that the recording stops, creating an instant nostalgia for the very recent past. In Derrida's writings on the archive, on archive fever and the process of archivisation, he goes further than this. As I argued in Chapter 2, the archive is not to be understood as a record of the past, but as a temporal mode in which moments exist only for the purposes of archivisation:

the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event. This is also our political experience of the so-called news media. (1996: 17)

Just as the personal present is produced by its own future, by the possibility of representing it later, so too are our most collective moments, as represented for example, by television news. The relevance of technology here, as Derrida makes clear in *Archive Fever* (Derrida 1998), is that the archiving process is accelerated to a speed of near instantaneity, through a technological modernity. It is reasonable to believe in the context of this technology that in personal and collective terms, we increasingly experience the present as the object of a future memory.

There are two ideas here that I would like to dwell on. The first is the idea that technology accelerates the sequence of present and the future from which it is to be represented to a point of near instantaneity; the second is the idea that the future actively produces the event that it purports to record, or to passively represent. I would like to use it to

illustrate what Derrida means when he says that 'Deconstruction is America' (2002: xxiv). The perplexing thing about this claim is that it seems to link a complex philosophical discourse with a complex social entity, or to claim that the identity of one is the identity of the other. The link can be made in the following way. One of the recurring logics, or rather disruptions to classical logic, at work in deconstruction as Derrida practices it, is the logic of supplementarity. This is a kind of temporal loop by which things which happen later in a sequence are understood as the origins of things from which they apparently originate. In *Speech and Phenomena*, the logic of this 'strange structure' is expressed thus: 'a possibility produces that to which it is said to be added on' (1973: 89). If we apply this logic to the case of the digital video recording, its structure becomes apparent, since the event being recorded often comes into being only as a recording, or as something to be remembered. So too in television news, the sequence of event and its representation, in which priority is assigned to the event and a secondary role to the representation of that event, cannot be maintained in the case of a soundbite, or a terrorist act. The beheading of a hostage in Iraq, for example is an event produced by the possibility that it will be represented, so that the representation cannot be viewed as secondary. The logic of supplementarity makes the anticipation of retrospection into a first cause, which precedes the event it purports to follow. Supplementarity is not the only strange structure at work in the operations of deconstruction but it is in my view the one that best explains it; and supplementarity is not the only characteristic of American society, of its individual and collective consciousnesses, but it offers a compelling image of its changing experience of time.

Might we then also say that the structure of supplementarity is the structure of prolepsis? Derrida constantly warns against the metaphysics of the 'is' in an equation such as 'Deconstruction is America': the 'is' carries no imputation of identity, and particularly not in a way that can be removed from the context of a particular discourse. In this cavalier spirit it probably is possible to claim that prolepsis is supplementarity. Though prolepsis is normally assumed, at least in its narratological context, to name an excursion forwards in a sequence, this excursion seems to be a journey to somewhere which precedes the point of departure. This is particularly clear in the case of the structural prolepsis of the preterite, since the anticipated retrospect of the time of narrating forms the grammar of the event to be narrated. The same thing happens if I go to India so that I won't regret not going, or because I want to have been, or because I envisage the stories of adventure that I might tell. A possible future produces the event to which it is said to be added on, or the archive produces the event as much as it records it.

Yet it would be nonsensical to say that the future precedes the present. The temporal structure involved here needs to be given a clearer definition. In terms of cause and effect, what might we identify from the future as a cause of an event in the present? I think the answer to this question lies in the phrasing of Derrida's account of the strange structure of the supplement as a possibility which produces that to which it is said to be added on. The cause in this temporal chain is not an actual future, but a possibility, or an envisaged future. As an envisaged future, it is not properly thought of as future at all, and conforms more closely to what Husserl (1964) terms a protention: a part of the present which is future orientated. Whereas it might be an affront to the tidy mind to think that a future event can precede or cause an event in the present, the idea that a protention, or the projection forward to a possible future, might do so ought to be perfectly acceptable. In the case of a soundbite, for example, a speaker might imagine a form of words irresistible to the news editor, might envisage the repeated events of their actual broadcast, or the contexts of their reception. But these are imagined futures, not future events. The logic of supplementarity, as it operates in Derrida's work, and in deconstruction more widely, often borrows some melodrama from the obfuscation of this difference, implying that the linearity of time is somehow denied by this most mundane of mind operations, the protention.

But there is more to be said on the subject of the causal protention than this, which will help us to characterise prolepsis more generally. Derrida reminds us constantly that in this situation, and in language more generally, we post things out into the future on the basis of a kind of promise, but amid the possibility that things will go wrong, that our messages may not be received, or that the futures that we have envisaged may not come about. Put simply, there are two futures, the future that we envisage correctly, and the future that comes out of nowhere. But whereas in fiction, the future may be lying in wait for us, in life it is not, so that the idea of futures correctly or incorrectly envisaged cannot be meaningful. It might be better to say that there are those that we successfully bring into being and those that we unsuccessfully bring into being. In the case of a soundbite, the future event which shapes the form of words of the attention-seeking politician may or may not take place. If the soundbite is reported, its formulation has successfully produced the event of its representation, and this might be thought of more accurately as the successful production of, rather than the correct anticipation of, an event. To use the language of speech act theory, the soundbite is a performative, in the sense that it constitutes, or brings into existence a state of affairs.

A performative prolepsis takes an excursion into the future to envisage an event which produces the present in such a way that the envisaged

future actually comes about. Philosophy has known this loop as the self-fulfilling prophecy, but has not analysed it in any detail. The self-fulfilling prophecy tends to be viewed as an exceptional or deviant case, which applies only to the most explicitly prophetic statements. One of the possible consequences of my argument is that the idea of prophecy will require to be extended to encompass many more language situations than the prophetic statement, just as the performative of speech act theory has acquired an infinitely extended scope.<sup>8</sup> It is possible to view Derrida's treatment of Husserl's notion of protention, or the concept of *différance* as a claim that all language exists in a condition of waiting to find out if its prophecies are fulfilled or not. A performative prolepsis involves an imagined future which produces the present, and a present which, thus produced, produces the future. As such it is the most common relation of the present to the future, the one which pertains in repetition, automatic perception, and self-narration, in which the future turns out as expected. It is what Derrida calls the Messianic future, the unpredicted, unforeseeable future,<sup>9</sup> which is more properly thought of as the exception, the deviant case of the performative prolepsis that goes wrong.

Performative prolepsis produces the future in the act of envisaging it, so that the possible transforms itself into the actual. It does so in a range of modes and moods which can be placed somewhere on a scale between fear and hope. These two modes of protention, fear and hope, clearly operate as much in the reading of a fictional narrative as they do in the everyday projections we make into the future, in our realisations and evasions of fearful outcomes, or our fulfilled and dashed hopes. But what does this tell us about the distinction that we started from in this discussion – the link between narratological and rhetorical prolepsis? One approach to this question is to explore the way that the performative prolepsis operates when it produces or fails to produce the future by preempting an objection, in other words to look at the successes and failures of rhetorical prolepsis. Something must be said first of the difference between this device in the context of a spoken oration and that of a written discourse, if only to establish the different temporalities involved in speech and writing. The speaker of an oration who anticipates an objection ('You may say that I am unpatriotic, but I say to you . . .') addresses someone who is present, who may or may not have formulated such an objection, and who is interpellated into the position of the objector. The potentially objectionable argument, the attempt to preclude the objection, and (if this is successful) its actual preclusion take place in the same time and space. There may be anticipation involved, but it is not anticipation on quite the same temporal scale as would be the case in

written discourse, where the act of anticipation must traverse the gap between the time of writing and the time of reading. This is significant for two reasons: that the gap between the time of writing and reading is in theory almost infinitely large, making the act of anticipation less certain and the interpellation of unknown readers less guaranteed; and because the formulation of a response to writing takes place in a more considered context, in which the time of responding lies in the control of the reader and not the writer. For these reasons it is reasonable to think that the interpellation of a reader into the position of the objector and the subsequent preclusion of that objection ought to be considerably less manageable in writing than in speech, and the performative of the prolepsis involved (the preclusion of objection) therefore less likely to succeed.

The written version of this kind of anticipation has become one of the most prominent characteristics of contemporary writing.<sup>10</sup> But it has not always been adequately understood or analysed. In relation to contemporary fiction, for example, a discourse which anticipates an objection has been understood in recent years under the rubric of the term 'metafiction', that is as self-conscious fiction. In the discussion so far we have already made the connection between time and self-consciousness in several ways, particularly in relation to the kind of prolepsis which involves an experience of the present as the object of a future memory, in the digital video camera, for example, but also in *Prolepsis 2*, where a narration travels forwards from narrated time to the time of the narrative as a mode of fictional self-consciousness. One of the weaknesses of academic criticism is that, though it has been preoccupied with the issue of self-consciousness, it has never dealt with the issue of self-consciousness in relation to time, or with the help of the philosophy of time, which has always held these topics together in a productive relationship. The need for a philosophy of time became more obvious after the arrival of the concepts of postmodernism in criticism and philosophy. It is now commonplace, for example, to hear the postmodern novel defined as 'historiographic metafiction', which is to say self-conscious fiction which raises questions about the knowability of the past and its representation in fictional form. Metafiction is normally understood as Patricia Waugh describes it, as 'writing which consistently displays its conventionality, which explicitly and overtly lays bare its condition of artifice, and which thereby explores the problematic relationship between life and fiction' (1984: 4). It belongs to an era in which readers are distrustful of fiction, it acknowledges that its productions are not true and incorporates the anticipated resistance to the referential illusion into the fiction itself. It is *postmodernist*, in this respect, because it assumes a reader conditioned by the experiments of Modernist fiction to notice and

resist the conventions at work in the production of fictional reference. If a prolepsis is performative when it brings about the future that it anticipates, the metafiction is one of its instances, incorporating an anticipated critical response into the discourse being responded to. When John Fowles's authorial interventions remind the reader of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* that the novel's characters are figments of his imagination, it seems to try to preclude and appropriate such a response in a reader: the knowing distanced response which refuses to yield to the referential illusion. The reader, like the members of an orator's audience addressed by the rhetorical prolepsis, is interpellated into a position of suspicious distrust, or of uncooperation, or resistance to fictional protocols. Should the reader oblige and adopt such a position, a certain rhetorical aim will have been achieved, namely agreement. In the act of siding with the resistant reader, the fictional discourse has dissociated itself from the fiction which is the object of suspicion, and secured agreement between the discourse and the reader.

Of course this may not work. The reader accustomed to such a ploy (perhaps after more than three decades of fiction which appropriates and uses the reader's suspicion towards fiction as a reliable medium for historical knowledge against him) may well resist the interpellation, and therefore resist the resistance. But what does it mean to resist the resistance, or rather to refuse the position of dissent into which a discourse such as a metafiction interpellates us? The effects of this are clearest in commercial advertising, where the rhetorical designs of the reader are most base and palpable, but where the act of persuasion often entails the advertisement's self-distance, or distance from itself and the act of persuasion that it advances. A clear example of this kind of anti-advertising is French Connection's FCUK campaign which has been running in Britain for several years. The slogan FCUK ADVERTISING, for example, offers as its primary meaning and as its alibi, the name of the company and therefore names the publicity wing of that company. Even before we decode FCUK as 'fuck', this is a self-referential advert: it names the advert rather than the product. It is equivalent not to a slogan that says 'Drink Coca-Cola', but one that says 'Coca-Cola Promotions'. It therefore does not seek to hide its function as a promotion, but to highlight it. It is like a sign which says 'sign' or a novel called 'A Novel'. At this level it is tempting to view the advert as a peculiarly literal message, though strictly speaking I think it is not literal: the literal act of self-designation would be 'FCUK ADVERT', whereas 'FCUK Advertising' is a metonymy insofar as it names the larger entity, the advertising campaign, of which this is an instance or a part. The slogan therefore has the kind of doubleness that the word 'language' shares, namely the double

designation of itself and the larger whole to which it belongs. But this primary meaning or alibi as Barthes would have it, is a thin layer, and it could be argued, not really primary at all, since the most immediate impact of the slogan is the transposition of two letters to produce the most feeble of anagrams. Taken together, the message which names itself and the advertising campaign to which it belongs interact with a message which directs verbal abuse towards the whole activity of advertising, finding its humour in the feeble transparency of its alibi – the message which establishes its legitimacy in literal and metonymic self-naming. This, at least is one way of reading the other side of the visual pun: the rude rejection of advertising. There is possibly another interpretation which would see a corporation declaring that it has no need to advertise. Either way, the message produces a contradiction between the act of advertising and either the wholesale rejection of advertising or the declaration that it is unnecessary. The question then becomes, how can an advertisement operate as persuasion and at the same time claim this kind of aggressive opposition to the act of persuasion that it advances?

A minimal survey of the terrain of contemporary advertising will show that this question is framed the wrong way round. The performative contradiction involved in 'FCUK ADVERTISING' is not a deviant example but a paradigm for the way that this mode of persuasion operates. It does so attempting to preclude an objection to the rhetoric of advertising by anticipating it, or through the device of rhetorical prolepsis. As in the case of the metafiction, the anti-advertisement works by interpellating the reader into a position of suspicious distrust and using that distrust as a way of selling something. In this case the distrust is of a general kind, directed towards the entire culture of advertising. Whereas the resistance to advertising traditionally entails the rejection of its forms of persuasion, in the case of the FCUK slogan, that resistance has been appropriated by the advertisement itself. The suspicious reader, therefore, finds that resistance is not something which separates him from the rhetoric of the advertisement, but actually places him in agreement with its message. If one of the messages of this advertisement is 'fuck advertising', to disagree will be to embrace advertising. The association that this establishes is clear: it unites FCUK and the resistant reader against advertising, and while the former continues to be an instance of advertising, the latter continues to be duped by it. Speaking of metafiction's attempts to appropriate the critical response of a reader, Gerald Prince insists that the metanarrative sign succeeds only in specifying the distance between a narrative's attempts at critical self-commentary and the actual response of a given reader (Prince 1982). In other words, the narrative may attempt to anticipate, articulate and pre-empt an objection but this does

not pre-empt the objection to that strategy itself. The streetwise reader who has read Naomi Klein's *No Logo* will not be taken in by the anti-advertisement and will see it as another instance of ideological interpellation operating under the disguise of irony or self-distance. It may be in this ultimate powerlessness over the actual response of a given reader that this kind of prolepsis finds its most subtle forms of manipulation. In this case that manipulation works through a structure in which the secondary message 'fuck advertising' seems to contradict the aims of the first 'fuck advertising', but in which resistance to the self-resistance of the message will result in an embrace of the advertising industry.

FCUK is a kind of algebra for narratological prolepsis (like Rimmon-Kenan's c, a, b) in which 'c' is proleptic: it involves a kind of flashforward to the letter 'c'. But its function as an anti-advertisement, like the metafiction, should be understood in the context of rhetorical prolepsis, as a device which anticipates a general climate of resistance in its readership. Its attempts to appropriate that resistance have become a predominant mode of ideological interpellation. In place of the question of how an advertisement can simultaneously operate as persuasion and oppose that act of persuasion, we might ask how it could do otherwise: is it possible for an advertisement to be effective in this climate of resistance without some gesture towards that resistance? The contradiction, far from being a form of self-subversion, is a special kind of performative. The performative contradiction, in this case and in general, can be viewed in two ways. On one hand it can be viewed as an utterance which says one thing and does another. This is the meaning given to the idea by Habermas when he uses the phrase to suggest that deconstruction cannot advance a position that language cannot convey truth and at the same time expect a reader to take this position to be true. From this point of view the performative contradiction is a kind of inconsistency or fault. On the other hand, it might be viewed as an utterance which is performative in the sense that it brings something, a state of affairs, into being, and in this case that state of affairs is a contradiction. The anti-advertisement, for example, does not make a statement which, like a constative utterance, could be judged true or false, but brings a contradiction into being. This means that it is not a performative in the same way as a video recording, which in the act of anticipating the retrospective view of the present, constructs the present as the memory it will become. The performative of Prolepsis 3 – the anticipation of an objection on the part of a reader – is subject to the vicissitudes of any discourse which is to be interpreted, and its attempts to preclude objection may fall foul to, for example, the misrecognition of the audience, as when *Tristram Shandy* is read a thousand years after its writing, or the FCUK advert is

decoded in Bhutan. There is a sense in which the metafiction and the anti-advertisement implant an objection in the mind of a reader, and perhaps with the motive of diverting attention from the most feared objections, and this implantation will therefore work in a performative way. But as Prince's account of the metanarrative sign reminds us, this is never performative in the sense of being a straightforward determination of the response of a given reader. The excursion that Prolepsis 3 takes into the future is an excursion into the unforeseeable.

Here, it is necessary to return to the principal argumentative project of this chapter, which is to articulate the connection between the narratological and the rhetorical meanings of the word prolepsis. In the case of Prolepsis 1, in which the time travel takes place within the boundaries of narrated time, the future is predetermined, literally already written, and lying in wait. In the case of Prolepsis 2, the future is successfully brought into being by the act of anticipation, because the archive produces the event it purports to record. In the case of Prolepsis 3, the performativity of an anticipation is an attempt, mostly doomed to fail, to preclude objection, and the actual future time locus involved is indeterminate and unforeseeable. In relation to time, this is how the hermeneutic circle of presentification and depresentification works: Prolepsis 1, with its Godlike power to visit the future, instructs us in teleological retrospect, with the effect that it encourages us to narrate our lives in the preterite, looking back on the present from envisaged future moments, in the manner of Prolepsis 2. This mode of experience, with all of its technological support, installs in the present a temporal self-distance which operates in a mode of storytelling. This temporal self-distance also operates in Prolepsis 3, in which the message contains within it protentions towards an imagined objection of the other, with a view to forestalling that objection. Seen from the point of view of rhetorical manipulation or as ideological interpellation, Prolepsis 3 borrows something of the apparent neutrality of Prolepsis 1 and 2, confusing the boundary between the sender and the receiver of a message with the neutrality of that between the present and the future. The relationship of Prolepsis 1 and Prolepsis 3 is therefore the axis between time and self-consciousness, since storytelling is not just self-distance but temporal self-distance, and on this subject, narratology has much to learn from the philosophy of time.

## Notes

1. See, for example, *Being and Time* sections 53 and 64 (pp. 304–11; 352–8). Heidegger's account of anticipation is the subject of fuller discussion in Chapter 4 below.

2. 'Future anterior' is a phrase borrowed from Derrida's *Of Grammatology* p. 5 to indicate a future which comes before as well as a past which will exist in the future.
3. This is a term used by Ricoeur in *Time and Narrative*, but which he borrows from Muller. See Ricoeur, Vol. 2, p. 78. Compare Heidegger's term 'presencing' which is used to mean something like Augustine's notion of distension: the inclusion of the past and future within the present. For a discussion see Simms (2003: 82).
4. The phrasing here is taken from Heidegger's discussion of anticipation in *Being and Time*, p. 444.
5. Genette uses the distinction between internal prolepsis and external prolepsis in *Narrative Discourse* but it is also worth pointing out here that the crossing of diegetic levels in fiction of this kind is also designated by the term 'metalepsis'. Also Heise's *Chronoschisms* p. 24 uses 'metalepsis' to identify this crossing as one of the characteristics of temporality in the postmodern novel.
6. See for example Derrida, *Positions*.
7. For an accessible discussion of the complexity of tense and time reference see Crystal 2002. For a more complex discussion see McGilvray 1991.
8. For a discussion of the extended scope of the performative in literary studies, see Culler 1997: 95–109.
9. See Derrida 1995: 54.
10. The discussion that follows of rhetorical prolepsis in writing focuses on fiction, but it is clearly a recurrent feature of academic writing. Peggy Kamuf highlights this in a negative assessment of the strategy in *Without Alibi*, p. 7: 'But why anticipate, why call up resistance? It's a familiar tactic; we've all used it many times – to respond in advance to imagined or anticipated objections, as if one could conquer the other's resistance before it has even had a chance to manifest itself. Many books are written almost entirely in this mode of pre-conquered resistance, which usually makes them quite unreadable' (Derrida 2002: 7).

One of the things proper sense of the times already that retrospect and the potential to address of the notions, they refer to possible futures. With attention to narrative of narrative a

In Heidegger's important tense. I understood as second so it is with the (Zeitlichkeit) in Being mind-independent consciousness, or be assumed that Heidegger, there is shared by ordinary. These philosophical mental terminology from which the human the other way around concept of time is exists in the world thing which arises