Introduction

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter provides an introduction to the book as a whole. It situates the approach undertaken here within the existing narratological debates on time, also discussing those specifically relating to works by Thomas Mann. The most significant way in which the approach differs from existing debates is by offering an analysis of works that do not self-consciously problematize the narration of time. Criticism on Mann’s works that deals with the question of temporality has typically focused on novels such as *The Magic Mountain* and *Doctor Faustus*. This introduction outlines the structure of the book, in which a wide variety of Mann’s novels, novellas, and short stories—most of which do not demonstrate an explicit engagement with narrative temporality—are compared to works in English and German by his influences, contemporaries, and literary successors.

*Keywords:* narratology, theoretical approach, Thomas Mann, time literature survey, subjective experience

When clouds are seen, wise men put on their cloaks;

When great leaves fall, then winter is at hand;
When the sun sets, who doth not look for night?

William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, II. iii. 32–4

We are all slaves to time. It commands us, measures us, acts as a parameter for success or celebration, forces us to plan, to organize, and to arrange. And yet we talk of giving it, sharing it, saving it, spending it as though it is somehow ours to control and dispense with as we wish. Despite cultural and linguistic diversity across the globe, the sense of time going by is a universal facet of human experience.¹ Talk of time is unavoidable in everyday discourse: diaries, schedules, clocks, working hours, opening times, appointments, weekdays and weekends, national holidays, religious festivals, birthdays and anniversaries. The sociologist Norbert Elias shows us that such measurements are simply social inventions, that ‘clocks are themselves sequences of physical events’, which can ‘serve as social norms’.² He suggests that ‘time can be neither seen nor felt, neither heard nor tasted nor smelt’.³ But if, as Edmund Husserl argues, time is the measurement of change, then we do sense something in the difference between memory, presence, and anticipation.⁴ Indeed, in Immanuel Kant’s epistemology, time and space are the a priori fundamental conditions for all human experience, even if (as Elias’s concept of ‘social time’ proposes) we may separate man-made attempts at measurement from experiential phenomena.
So what about the subjective, individual, unique experience of time going by? The frustrating slowness of an hour in a boring talk, time flying during an evening with a friend, the swiftness of a summer holiday, the fleetingness of childhood, the endless wait for pivotal news—these are experiences to which we all can relate and of which we all commonly speak. But how can such experiences not only be reported but also conjured in words so that we as readers may share the frustration, the excitement, the anticipation, so that we may be on tenterhooks in step with the narrator or character, or in melancholic mourning for a time long since passed, which we may never have experienced ourselves? This question has been the topic of discussion for millennia. St Augustine famously pinpointed the problem in AD 397: ‘What, then, is time? I know well enough what it is, provided that nobody asks me; but if I am asked what it is and try to explain, I am baffled.’ And this encapsulates the aim of this book: to establish how the experience of time may be evoked in words.

Narratology on time
In literature, it is easy to identify the passage of time in phrases such as ‘an hour later’, ‘the whole afternoon’, ‘the long, hot summer’, ‘many years ago’, and so on. But even when the author does not employ specific temporal markers or draw direct attention to the flow of time, it unavoidably continues to move. In the early 1950s, A. A. Mendilow noted the distinction between ‘tales of time’ and ‘tales about time’ suggested by Mann in The Magic Mountain. Paul Ricoeur adopts these terms, explaining:

All fictional narratives are ‘tales of time’ inasmuch as the structural transformations that affect the situations and characters take time. However only a few are ‘tales about time’ inasmuch as in them it is the very experience of time that is at stake in these structural transformations.
‘Tales about time’ most obviously include canonical modernist novels such as Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*, Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Later in the twentieth century, works such as Muriel Spark’s *The Driver’s Seat* and Graham Swift’s *Waterland* added to the temporal canon, and more contemporary narratives including Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow* and Ian McEwan’s *Saturday* in the Anglophone world, or W. G. Sebald’s *The Rings of Saturn* and Karen Duve’s *Rain* in German literature, indicate a continued interest in fictive presentations of time. These works all confront the question of subjective temporal movement and address ways in which it might be conveyed in narrative.

And this is where the interest in narrative time has been firmly situated to date. In his monumental *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur brings together philosophical treatises on time and discussions of time in narrative, founding his exploration on Augustine’s *Confessions* and Aristotle’s *Poetics*. His theory of threefold mimesis seeks to combine Augustine’s and Aristotle’s approaches, proposing that ‘time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal experience’.8 When turning to fictional narratives, however, Ricoeur focuses on *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Magic Mountain*, and *In Search of Lost Time* precisely because these three works illustrate the distinction proposed by Mendilow between ‘tales of time’ and ‘tales about time’ […] Moreover, each of these works explores, in its own way, uncharted modes of discordant concordance […] Finally, these three works have in common their exploration […] of the relation of time to eternity.9

Similarly, Gérard Genette builds his narratological analysis of time almost exclusively around *In Search of Lost Time*. Although he recognizes ‘that by seeking the specific I find the universal’, he also admits that it is impossible to treat the *Recherche du temps perdu (In Search of Lost Time)* as a mere example of what is supposedly narrative in general, or novelistic narrative, or narrative in autobiographical form, or narrative of God knows what other class, species, or variety.10
More recently, Mark Currie’s book *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* has a principal aim: ‘that it is important to see all novels as novels about time, and perhaps most important in the case of novels for which time does not seem to be what is principally at stake’. 11 But, having said this, Currie then proceeds to analyse Swift’s *Waterland*, Amis’s *Time’s Arrow*, Ali Smith’s *The Accidental*, and McEwan’s *Saturday*, prioritizing modern examples of narratives not only ‘of’ but also ‘about time’. Indeed, (p.4) he remarks of *Waterland* that the ‘explicit theorising, or philosophising, about time [...] is typical of a certain kind of contemporary novel’, thereby indicating the limited applicability of this temporal analysis to this kind of novel. 12 By taking novels explicitly ‘about time’ and aiming to construct more generally employable observations about narrative time, Currie echoes Genette’s starting point. Craig Bourne and Emily Caddick Bourne’s recent philosophical dissection of narrative time, *Time in Fiction*, then seeks to avoid repetition of Currie’s approach and they say explicitly:

> Had we engaged with [what some take to be seminal works relating time to fiction], it is unlikely that we would have had much more to say about them than Currie, who is sceptical about the conclusions one may draw from such works concerning the nature of time itself and its representation. 13

The focus of their discussion may not be the apparently ‘seminal works relating to time’, but Bourne and Caddick Bourne do proceed to the analysis of films and narratives that explicitly and self-consciously depict temporal games, such as the time machine in *Back to the Future*, or the never-ending repetition of *Groundhog Day*.

Günther Müller provided the terms ‘discourse time’ (‘Erzählzeit’) and ‘story time’ (‘erzählte Zeit’) to distinguish between the time taken to tell the story and the intradiegetic time the story consumes, on which much discussion of narrative time has since been based. 14 In this essay, he considers Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*, Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*, and Galsworthy’s *Forsyte Saga*, all of which are further examples of tales ‘about’ as well as ‘of time’. But Ricoeur suggests that, rather than talking only of the distinction between discourse time and story time, we instead need
a three-tiered scheme: utterance-statement-world of the text, to which correspond a time of narrating, a narrated time, and a fictive experience of time projected by the conjunction/disjunction between the time it takes to narrate and narrated time.¹⁵

He argues that neither Müller nor Genette ‘replies exactly to this need’. Currie in turn criticizes Ricoeur for his attempts that are ‘riddled with tautology and contradiction’ and the ‘staggeringly circular goal’ of his analysis of Mann, Woolf, and Proust.¹⁶ Time in narrative appears to be a surprisingly contentious issue and one as yet with no easy answers or theoretical consensus. Despite their differences, however, all of these theorists share the starting point of considering tales clearly ‘about time’. This unavoidably limits their reach to narratives that explicitly problematize time, without addressing the applicability or otherwise of such approaches to fiction in general, including works which are not explicitly ‘about time’. Two new edited volumes have challenged the reign of discussions solely about works of and about time: Anne Fuchs and J. J. Long’s *Time in German Literature and Culture, 1900–2015: Between Acceleration and Slowness* makes a case for the last century seeing a period of particular acceleration in the context of advances in technology, transport, and society; Dirk Göttzsche’s volume *Critical Time in Modern German Literature and Culture* brings together discussion of time’s relation to space, speed, and history.¹⁷ Both works also provide rich interdisciplinary discussion, furthering the temporal debate. But, as yet, there exists no single work that proposes an overall approach to temporal analysis in narrative that may or may not explicitly engage with questions of time. It is this wider approach to the narration of time that this book seeks to develop.

Thomas Mann on time

Thomas Mann is one of the major authors of the modern era to concern himself with the challenge of narrative temporality and this interest is reflected in critical literature. Analysis of time in Mann’s work has, however, concentrated almost entirely on *The Magic Mountain* while largely ignoring the rest of his oeuvre. With the exception of Richard Thieberger’s 1950s discussion of *The Magic Mountain* and the *Joseph* novels, and Harald Vogel’s 1971 doctoral dissertation on time in *The Magic Mountain, Joseph,* and *Doctor Faustus,* criticism has maintained a resolute emphasis on *The Magic Mountain.*¹⁸
There are a wide variety of approaches to Mann’s narration of time in *The Magic Mountain*. Thieberger appears to anticipate Müller’s temporal terminology in his suggestion of the ‘discrepancy between time as it is felt and time as it measured’ (‘Zwiespalt zwischen empfundener und gezählter Zeit’) (p.6) displayed in *The Magic Mountain*, and he also offers a tabular map of the complex structure of *Joseph* to indicate the erratic shifts in time—a visually clear technique that is useful in considering other works too. Vogel’s dissertation presents a careful deconstruction of discourse time and story time, which includes a diagrammatic representation of chronological development versus page progression in *The Magic Mountain*. He suggests that *The Magic Mountain* presents ‘a double time perspective’ (‘eine doppelte Zeitperspektive’), *Joseph* depicts ‘the epic presentification’ or ‘making present’ (‘die epische Vergegenwärtigung’), and *Doctor Faustus* exhibits a ‘polyphonic time structure’ (‘polyphone Zeitstruktur’) that combines existential temporality with musical temporality. Following a more philosophical line of enquiry, Beate Pinkerneil considers the apparent Bergsonian character of narrative temporality in *The Magic Mountain*, despite Mann’s claim that at the time of writing the novel he had not yet read Bergson. Gerhard vom Hofe proposes that the ‘secret’ behind the temporal workings of the novel is to be found in its engagement with mythology, and the temporal transformation also operates in conjunction with Hans Castorp’s spatial displacement. Christian Hick’s analysis takes as its starting point Blaise Pascal’s claim that pain in the present drives us towards the past and the future. He proceeds to suggest that part of the pathology of *The Magic Mountain* lies in its focus on the strangely painless present to the detriment of memory and anticipation, making it not only a ‘“Zeitroman in two senses” but also just as much in two senses a novel of temporal malaise’ (‘Zeitroman in doppeltem Sinn” sondern in ebenfalls doppeltem Sinne der Roman einer Zeiterkrankung’). Dorrit Cohn challenges the assumption that *The Magic Mountain*’s famous disquisition on time in the section ‘Beach walk’ (‘Strandspaziergang’) defines how time functions in the novel overall. Rather than the paradigm (p. 7) of the opium eaters—for whom time appears to expand to years or decades or even eternity in the space of a short amount of clock time—holding true also for Hans, Cohn suggests that this is ‘in fact the exact opposite of what
happens to time on the magic mountain and in *The Magic Mountain*. She offers an intricate narratological exploration for the sense of timelessness in the novel. Joshua Kavaloski suggests that *The Magic Mountain* is temporally performative because it does not simply describe but also ‘enacts temporal experience’. He employs Homi Bhabha’s conception of performativity to suggest that the novel combines ‘the external world’s historicism with the individual’s perception of time’, which he deems to represent ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ times. Most recently, Elizabeth Boa compares *The Magic Mountain* to Vicki Baum’s *Grand Hotel* (*Menschen im Hotel*). She suggests that the magic mountain location acts as ‘a spatial metaphor for an aesthetic shift from the nineteenth-century *Zeitroman* to modernist heightened realism imbued with meta-reflection on the meaning of time’ compared to the setting of *Grand Hotel*, ‘down below in the flatlands of realist fiction’. Although Fuchs and Long’s edited volume of essays *Time in German Literature and Culture* collectively avoids the limitations of works purely about time, when Mann is mentioned in Fuchs’ own chapter, the focus again is on the pathology of lateness in *The Magic Mountain* in comparison with works by other writers.

These critics all take Mann’s explicit discussion and innovative presentation of time in *The Magic Mountain* as the main stimulus for their analysis. When considering this particular novel, time is an obvious aspect to explore, but when considering narrative time more broadly, *The Magic Mountain*’s idiosyncratic temporal display may not offer the most fruitful focus. In their steadfast emphasis on one of the most obvious novels about time, Mann critics may add to Mann criticism but they do not lengthen the branches of temporal theory in general.
So where does this leave us? Genette and Currie are quite right to suggest that their theories may have wider applicability, and the same can be said of many of the critics and theorists listed above. Narratologists in general have also provided a whole armoury of terminology and concepts that we may employ in discussions of narrative time. Although Müller’s observations about discourse time and story time are crucial, temporal analysis in literature all too often considers only this distinction without taking into account the myriad of other factors at work, such as variation in subjective experiences of time among different characters, the role of the narrator, and the distinctive effect of literary devices. In this vein, Wayne Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction* and Franz K. Stanzel’s *A Theory of Narrative (Theorie des Erzählens)* offer terms integral to modern narratological approaches. But there exists no comprehensive approach to narrative time that can be applied simply to *anything*, to tales not ‘about time’ but purely ‘of time’, to works that do not play with temporality, that do not chop it up, spin it round, jump forwards or back in time-machine style, but that tell just any old story.

To broaden the scope, therefore, it is important that Mann’s works are set in a far wider context of other literary works, including those that are not specifically ‘about time’. The primary works I use in this book are written in German or English, and languages around the world obviously vary in their use of tense or verb conjugation, so the approach I propose here is far from being comprehensively and universally applicable. But it does raise and address new questions about how the experience of time operates in words in general rather than in temporally self-conscious narratives in particular.

**Theoretical approach**

In this book, I aim to unify discourse-oriented and structurally-focused approaches to narrative. Narratologists are often defined as belonging either to one camp or the other, but these labels are rarely straightforward so I deliberately avoid categorizing these theorists here and instead draw on their approaches where useful for my analysis.
Despite his focus on one of the major works about time—Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*—in *Narrative Discourse*, Genette nevertheless highlights devices and provides terminology with wider applicability that is fundamental to my approach. His discussion of narrative manoeuvres, for example, is unavoidable in any close linguistic consideration of literary time and I make repeated recourse to it over the course of this book. Second, narratologists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Algirdas-Julien Greimas offer a broader consideration of narrative structure and the links between events. In terms of Mann criticism, Thieberger’s tabular breakdown of chronology versus narrative order in *Joseph* offers a useful structural approach to time. Greimas defines structure as the perception of the relation between differences:

1. To perceive differences means to grasp at least two object-terms as simultaneously present.
2. To perceive differences means to grasp the relationship between the terms, to link them together somehow.\(^{33}\)

This builds on Lévi-Strauss’s analysis of myth, of which one of the main contributions is the proposal of a ‘synchro-diachronic’ reading, whereby we may read a narrative both in terms of the chronology of events (from left to right) and in terms of the ‘bundles of relations’ (presented from top to bottom).\(^{34}\) It is on this approach that I build in the latter half of this book, suggesting that a ‘synchro-diachronic’ reading discloses subtle aspects of narrative time that affect the reader’s experience but bypass the consciousness of the characters. To put it simply: this book seeks to marry the close linguistic approach and the broader structural overview.

Structure and argument
Despite the obviousness of time in *The Magic Mountain*—an obviousness that I have been arguing should be largely avoided in discussions of narrative temporality—Mann presents an enormously rich subject for discussion. *The Magic Mountain* and other works besides (such as the *Joseph* novels and *Doctor Faustus*, as highlighted by Thieberger’s and Vogel’s analyses) clearly indicate Mann’s interest in and novel approach to the narration of temporal experience. But this is not all he offers. His works span such a huge period of time, a period of colossal social, industrial, and, most crucially, historical change, and he wrote such a vast amount in varied forms concerning varied subject matters, that in his oeuvre alone, there exists a considerable array of tales simply ‘of time’ as well as ‘about time’. Mann furthermore borrowed from, echoed, found inspiration in, and subsequently inspired so many other literary works and writers, that his texts are abundant with wide-ranging allusions and are (p.10) ripe for comparison with his precursors, contemporaries, and successors. The body of primary texts with which I deal therefore includes some of Mann’s major novels, *The Magic Mountain, Buddenbrooks, Doctor Faustus, and Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man*, and several novellas, namely *Death in Venice, Tonio Kröger, The Blood of the Walsungs*, and *Mario and the Magician*. In the course of this analysis, I consider too the echoes of Theodor Storm’s *Immensee* in *Tonio Kröger*; I take another of Mann’s influences, Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as a comparison with *Felix Krull;* I explore the ways in which Günter Grass’s *The Tin Drum* resonates with and subverts aspects of *Doctor Faustus* and *Felix Krull;* I juxtapose *Tonio Kröger* with Kafka’s short story *Home-Coming* as a work by a key contemporary German-language author; and finally, I look at Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel *Maus* as a different kind of narrative form that explores time and history from a more recent perspective. I allude briefly too to works that overtly play with time, such as *Mrs Dalloway, Ulysses, and The Trial*. This diverse corpus allows a varied discussion of aspects of narrative temporality, while also forcing my theoretical approach to have wide applicability. This brings me to the form the book takes.
The path of my approach moves from close linguistic analysis to a consideration of the broader structure. There are five substantive chapters, each considering a different theme that illuminates aspects of narrative temporality. These themes can be thought of as the lenses through which we may view our tour through a narrative; they colour our reading and emphasize different aspects of the story, bringing into focus details of narrative time that might otherwise not readily emerge from a large selection of texts. The themes are as follows: Chapter 1 deals with Space, Chapter 2 with Performance, Chapter 3 with Symbols and Motifs, Chapter 4 with Myth, and Chapter 5 with History. The selection of these themes is in part prompted by Mann’s own interests. He demonstrates concern for these aspects of life and narrative in many of his works, so they offer obvious topics for consideration in general, and thereby pertain to subjective experience, and thus also to subjective temporal experience. In some instances too, such as the topic of space or the question of social performance in everyday life, these issues are of perennial interest and universal concern. Symbols and motifs, moreover, are visible in most works of fiction. And discussions of myth and history open up further questions about the interplay between life and literature, about how we tell stories—fictional or factual. The analyses are therefore also potentially more widely applicable to texts beyond those with which I deal here.
In Chapter 1, I take space, commonly thought of as the concomitant of time in human experience, as the lens through which to view subjective time in narrative. The discussion focuses on how time is constructed (p.11) within a single moment in a scene, and what effect particular words or sentences or literary devices may have on the flow of time in this moment. I consider three commonly held assumptions about spatial description in literature and assess the ways in which they affect the marching of time. First, I assess the function of ‘spatial form’. Critics have suggested that the modern novel exhibits a shift away from time and towards space as a primary location for descriptions of character experience. Despite the slowed temporal pace and priority given to spatial location in works such as Ulysses or Mrs Dalloway, time nevertheless continues to progress. I argue that the suggestion that time is deprioritized in favour of spatial description is a facile and reductive way to view modern narratives. Instead, the particular description of space and the perspective that frames this description alter the degree to which time moves forwards, indicating the intricate co-workings of these fundamental dimensions of human experience. Second are the more extreme instances of the ‘pictorial image’ or the ekphrastic description, whereby words conjure static images. At first sight, such descriptions might appear to slow the narrative to a halt: where there is no movement, there is no change, and—if change is a potential marker of time as Husserl argues—then its lack might pause the narrative flow. But, building on the theories of the sociologist and geographer Doreen Massey, I suggest that the particular form of description does in fact inflect the narrative with temporal direction despite apparent spatial stasis. Finally, Chapter 1 considers spatial returns as modes of furthering temporal momentum. In Mann’s novella Tonio Kröger, and Kafka’s short story Home-Coming, the protagonists return to their childhood homes after an interval of several years. Rather than creating time-machine-style returns to the past in time as well as space, these moments emphasize the considerable separation between then and now. In this chapter, I use close analysis of particular scenes, sentences, and words to propose the complex ways in which spatial description does not stagnate or stall time in apparently predictable ways, but instead subtly propels time according to the fluctuating experience of different characters.
Chapter 2 considers how narrative time is affected by performance, be it explicitly theatrical or simply social. Compared to Chapter 1, the analysis here widens a little to explore how the sense of time may fluctuate over the course of a scene, slowing down or speeding up according to shifting focalization amongst different characters participating in social or theatrical performance. I first consider the challenge of conveying simultaneity in literature. Performance necessarily involves at least two perspectives: that of the performer and that of the spectator. These two perspectives are unified by participation—from different angles—in the performance, meaning that they happen at the same time but involve distinct experiences. As an inherently consecutive medium, narrative cannot tell two different experiences at the same time, so in this section I analyse ways in which simultaneity may be conveyed consecutively. The chapter turns next to different ‘stages of time’; that is, as the narrative perspective shifts between that of the performer and that of the spectator, so too does the temporal flow change pace. Just as each character has a unique subjective sense of the world, so too do they have a different experience of time. Even within a given scene, where the overt action occupies a seemingly regular time frame, the subjective experience of time may speed up and slow down in sympathy with either the performer or the spectator. Finally, I explore a theme of recurrent relevance across Mann’s works: that of sexual performance and performative sexuality. Here, I suggest that time is further confused in sex scenes with an overtly theatrical bent. Time becomes non-straightforwardly gendered with a temporal distinction between the dominant lover and the more passive partner. This chapter thus addresses certain aspects of temporality that pertain to narrative in general, but are illuminated in instances of performance.
Chapter 3 exhibits a shift to a combined linguistic-structural approach, whereby I consider the ways in which different scenes across a narrative anticipate or echo one another by way of symbols or motifs. I take symbols to refer to any image with supplementary significance, and motifs to indicate any image repeated over time. Literature is, of course, full of symbolic images and they have an interesting effect on temporality. In the first section, I propose that symbols can alter our perspective: rather than simply viewing the image in the relative present, it may also recall a time gone by or anticipate an event yet to come. In conjunction with this, I suggest in the second section that symbols can also change our actual location in the work’s chronology; that is, rather than simply being a memory prompt or making the character or reader anticipate the future, they may instead conjure a memory so vivid that the narrator shifts to telling this memory out of chronological order. By way of illustration, Theodor Storm’s novella *Immensee* swiftly moves from the frame narrative (p. 13) in the relative present back to Reinhard’s distant childhood, provoked only by the sight of a photo and the murmur of a name. Next, I build on Aristotle’s theory of *muthos*. I suggest the term ‘meta-*muthos*’ to encapsulate a complex temporal form of mise en abyme. By this I mean an image or a scene that contains the narrative’s entire plot structure in miniature. This is more than a mise en abyme which simply refers to self-similarity, for the term ‘meta-*muthos*’ (being a plot about a plot) presents to the reader the rough shape of events to come, thus giving us the power of symbolic hindsight. The fourth section considers ‘webs of allusion’. I discuss single images that thicken time by simultaneously referring to events in the past and anticipating events in the future, and of course also existing in the relative present. This creates a rich temporal mesh. Finally, I consider the approaches of Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus to surface reading in my analysis of ‘webs of illusion’. At times, characters may read supplementary import in recurrent images in a way that discloses their own temporal confusion. In such instances, characters participate in attempts to read time through symbols, complicating their view of chronology or their anticipations of the future. Symbols and motifs therefore have a significant and multilayered impact on the way we perceive narrative temporal movement.
In Chapter 4, I take a topic close to Mann’s heart—myth—and propose new ways of reading some of his works in the light of temporal analysis. This chapter considers the wider plot shape of the works, approaching them with a structural overview of the events they portray, to see how this may affect the reader’s sense of narrative time beyond the consciousness of the characters. Not only Mann, but twentieth-century European culture in general, saw a resurgent interest in mythology, and this is visible in many literary works of the period. Using Lévi-Strauss’s seminal theories of myth, I assess the ways in which the adoption of mythic tales in modern works alters the flow of subjective time. First, I suggest that Mann’s final novel, *Confessions of Felix Krull, Confidence Man*, in fact conceals an as yet unnoticed mythic mould based on ‘The Judgement of Paris’. This can be seen through the repetition of three triads, the effect of which is to stagnate Felix’s apparent Bildung. In Mann’s novella *The Blood of the Walsungs*, due to the condensed novella form, the Wagnerian tale does not have space for the same degree of plot repetition as is visible in *Felix Krull*. Instead, we find repetition at the level of language and imagery, also (p.14) imbuing the story with a cyclical sensation. Next, I reassess the mythological aspect of *Doctor Faustus*, which famously (or perhaps infamously) shows the mythologization of German history. I argue, however, that the overt echoes of the Faust myth are nothing more than the retroactive, interpretative additions of an embittered narrator. No mythic repetition is visible in either structural or linguistic terms. Instead, the protagonist, Adrian Leverkühn, is more aligned with Goethe’s victim Gretchen. Fourth, I explore the mythic allusions in Günter Grass’s *The Tin Drum*. This exploration indicates that although *The Tin Drum* nods to a myriad of myths and legends, and appears to repeat seemingly idiosyncratic episodes, this mythic repetition is irregular. Although it demonstrates repeated returns to a troubled past, it is not sufficiently predictable to allow anticipation of the future. In plot terms, the adoption of mythic stories has a powerful effect on the reader’s sense of narrative time, at times stagnating the flow, at times dragging us inexorably backwards, at times offering us knowledge of what is to come, and at times underlining our temporal uncertainty.
Chapter 5 focuses on one of the most obvious aspects of temporality in a broad sense, namely history. The analysis zooms out further still and suggests that the context in which the works were written—their particular place in history and the general knowledge the reader may have of this context—also affects the temporal experience of the narrative. Mann lived through both world wars and his works are very much of and about the historical times in which he lived. I compare Mann’s *Doctor Faustus*, *Felix Krull*, and *Mario and the Magician* to Grass’s *The Tin Drum* and Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel *Maus*. Mann began *Doctor Faustus* during the Second World War, finishing it in 1947, Grass’s work shows a slightly later post-war perspective, while Spiegelman presents the story of a Holocaust survivor as well as the second-generation legacy of the Holocaust. In the first section on ‘History now and then’, I suggest that Tzvetan Todorov’s distinction between the ‘curiosity’ that leads us in the whodunnit and the ‘suspense’ that drives the thriller, operates in a complex fashion in historical narratives. We may know the outcome of historical events, but we do not yet know the shape of the characters’ lives. As the title of this section also indicates, history crops up ‘now and then’ in these narratives, giving a context to individual tales and altering our temporal expectations. Second, these works all use allegory to tie together the individual tale with the universal, and this inevitably complicates the subjective temporal flow. (p.15) Initially, we read individual tales, but then the allegorical character thickens time as we become aware that these individual tales also stand for something wider. Next, when we question the allegorical aspect (and here I return to my readings of myth in *Doctor Faustus* and *Felix Krull*), we may realize that the superficial allegory may not disclose the full story. Rereading *Felix Krull* as ‘The Judgement of Paris’, *Doctor Faustus* as a tale about Gretchen the victim rather than Faust the active perpetrator, or *The Tin Drum* itself as a reading of *Felix Krull* and *Doctor Faustus*, in effect alters the historical ramifications of the works. *Mario and the Magician* inhabits an uneasy point in history where Mann allegorically anticipates historical events yet to come, while we as readers today know what will actually occur. We are therefore forced to reconsider the significances of the narratives, and doing so in turn changes our sense of the individual tales. Time becomes multilayered and constantly pulled in concurrent, competing directions.
In terms of the order of chapters in this book, analytically, the focus of each chapter becomes increasingly broad, starting with a close-reading approach in the first substantive chapter and culminating in the consideration of historical context by the time of the final chapter. Thematically, space offers an obvious starting point for discussions of time, and in subsequent chapters I build on this discussion because it is of relevance to each and every narrative. Performance is a logical next step; not only do Mann’s works display an explicit interest in theatricality and role play, but also storytelling is in any case a kind of performance, and these texts support Erving Goffman’s suggestion that performance is an integral part of everyday life. The discussion of symbols and motifs bridges the gap between the discourse-oriented approach and the structure-led analysis. The reasoning for the order of myth and history is primarily practical: Mann had a lifelong interest in mythology and toyed with mythic tales in many of his works. With the *Joseph* tetralogy he famously sought to reclaim myth from the Nazis, but then with *Doctor Faustus* he was accused of facilely mythologizing history. In Chapter 4, I reassess Mann’s use of myth in *Doctor Faustus* and *Felix Krull* in conjunction with presentations of time. This reassessment, I argue, alters the historical significance and presentation of history in these works, and this forms the subject of discussion in Chapter 5.

(p.16) Subjective experience and perspectives on time
When I talk of subjective experience, there is no easy explanation as to whose experience I mean. The narrator’s voice shapes the tale we read, the characters’ experience is the focus of the tale, and the reading experience is our own. None of these perspectives is independent of the others. My analysis takes a phenomenological approach to narrative time in the Husserlian sense. As Jaakko Hintikka says: ‘What a phenomenologist like Husserl maintains is that everything must be based on, and traced back to, what is given to me in my direct experience.’ My exploration does not concentrate on external questions of authorship, the literary movements to which the works may belong, and so on. Instead, I take what is present before us—the words, sentences, plot developments—and analyse the ways in which these facets appear to us. Although I do not make heavy use of philosophical discussions of time, I do echo Husserl’s phenomenological starting point in my approach to narrative time. This necessarily involves discussion of the ways in which the narrator shapes the temporal movement, and the different senses of individual characters, which may also change over time. I therefore use the workings of the narrator and the temporal sensations of the characters to consider what our experience is as readers. Emily Troscianko observes in her cognitive study of space in Kafka’s works: ‘Just as readers are more complex than any single study can do justice to, so literary texts are richer than any single perspective can capture.’ There is no such thing as a single, simple reader with one predictable response, but, by analysing the narrative intricacies of language and structure, my approach highlights factors and posits theories that have a bearing on why it is that we have certain shared reactions to the temporal workings of a given text. This is by no means intended as a way of objectifying the subjective or as an attempt to offer a one-size-fits-all theory; instead, it seeks to increase awareness of the myriad of factors that influence narrative time.
What emerges in the course of this analysis is that the speed and direction of temporal experience are predominantly questions of perspective. The individual words, sentences, scenes, images, and literary devices reveal to us the character experience of time. This speeds up and slows (p.17) down in step with their senses and emotions. In terms of the reader’s experience, narrative time changes for us depending on whose perspective is being prioritized at any given moment. So every narrative presents an erratic time, fluctuating not only according to the whims and moods of individual minds, but also in oscillation with the changing minds that the story may inhabit. The structural consideration of time then shifts the phenomenological focus onto the reader and away from the characters. This is particularly true for works that deal heavily with mythological tales or historical context. Our knowledge of myth or our historical hindsight immediately means that we know more than the characters who are experiencing events in the relative present as they occur. We may then anticipate developments, where the characters cannot know what is coming. When taken together, the multiple competing temporal forces at work in any given narrative, ranging from a seemingly static description of setting to the monumental adoption of a mythic tale, construct a huge, intricate web of experiences; as readers, we sense and share the undulating temporal experiences of countless characters, while also working our way through complex plot arcs, often complicated by the knowledge of world events not yet known to the characters, whose stories we read.

Time matters to all of us. Our experience of it is at once unique and ever-changing. Our concerns about the future, frets about the past, hopes and happy memories, boredom or excitement in the precarious present, are all questions of time. It is because subjective experience involves time that analysis of temporal experience discloses subjectivity. Just as the narratives here are not just ‘about time’, so too is this book not just about time; instead, it seeks to propose a new way of seeing how our lives are expressed in literature and how literature inflects our lives. (p.18)

Notes:


(3) Elias, p. 3.


(9) Ricoeur, ii. 101.


(12) Currie, p. 89.


(15) Ricoeur, ii. 77.


(20) Vogel, p. 32.

(21) Vogel, pp. 268, 272, 276-7.


(25) Hick, p. 73.
Introduction


(27) Cohn, p. 204.


(30) Elizabeth Boa, ‘The Meaning of Time in Thomas Mann’s Der Zauberberg and Vicki Baum’s Menschen Im Hotel’, About Time: Conceptualizing and Representing Temporality in German, Swiss and Austrian Culture, Germanistik in Ireland, 8 (2013), 13–26


(37) Husserl, p. 13.


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