

questions of narrative "point of view", and that of mood? gathered together the problems of "distance" that American critics in the Jamesian tradition generally treat in terms of opposition between *showing* ("representation" in Todorov's vocabulary) and *telling* ("narration"), a resurgence of the Platonic categories of *mimesis* (perfect imitation) and *diagesis* (pure narrative), the various ways of representing the speech of characters, and the modes of explicit or implicit presence in the narrative of narrator and reader. Just as with the "time of enunciating," here too I think it is necessary to cut off the last series of problems, in that it focuses on the act of narrating and its protagonists; on the other hand, we must gather into a single large category—let us provisionally call it that of the modalities of representation or the degrees of mimesis—all the rest of what Todorov split between aspect and mood. This redistribution thus ends us up with a division substantially different from the one that inspired it, a division that I will now formulate on its own account, having recourse for my terms to a kind of linguistic metaphor that should certainly not be taken too literally.

Since any narrative, even one as extensive and complex as the *Recherche du temps perdu*,⁸ is a linguistic production undertaking to tell of one or several events, it is perhaps legitimate to treat it as the development—monstrous, if you will—given to a *verbal* form, in the grammatical sense of the term: the expansion of a verb. *I walk, Pierre has come* are for me minimal forms of narrative, and inversely the *Odyssey* or the *Recherche* is only, in a certain way, an amplification (in the rhetorical sense) of statements such as *Ulysses comes home to Ithaca* or *Marcel becomes a writer*. This perhaps authorizes us to organize, or at any rate to formulate, the problems of analyzing narrative discourse according to categories borrowed from the grammar of verbs,

⁷ Rechristened "register" in 1967 and 1968.

⁸ Is it necessary to specify that by treating this work as a narrative here we do not by any means intend to limit it to that aspect? An aspect too often neglected by critics, but one Proust himself never lost sight of. Thus he speaks of "that invisible vocation of which these volumes are the history" (RH I, 1002/P II, 397; my emphasis).

*note: the whole book is a structural analysis of Marcel Proust's extraordinarily complex *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Eng. "In Search of Lost Time"—sometimes translated as "Remembrance of Things Past"), published serially between 1913 and 1927. Thus the numerous references throughout Genette's text to Proust.

categories that I will reduce here to three basic classes of determinations: those dealing with temporal relations between narrative and story, which I will arrange under the heading of *tense*; those dealing with modalities (forms and degrees) of narrative "representation," and thus with the *mood*⁹ of the narrative; and finally, those dealing with the way in which the narrating itself is implicated in the narrative, narrating in the sense in which I have defined it, that is, the narrative situation or its instance,¹⁰ and along with that its two protagonists: the narrator and his audience, real or implied. We might be tempted to set this third determination under the heading of "person," but, for reasons that will be clear below, I prefer to adopt a term whose psychological connotations are a little less pronounced (very little less, alas), a term to which I will give a conceptual extension noticeably larger than "person"—an extension in which the "person" (referring to the traditional opposition between "first-person" and "third-person" narratives) will be merely one facet among others: this term is *voix*, whose grammatical meaning Vendry s, for example, defined thus: "Mode of action of the verb in its relations with the subject."¹¹ Of course, what he is referring to is the subject of the statement, whereas for us *voix*, since it deals with the narrating, will refer to a relation with the subject (and more generally with the instance) of the enunciator.

⁹ The term is used here with a sense very close to its linguistic meaning, if we refer, for example, to this definition in the *Littre* dictionary: "Name given to the different forms of the verb that are used to affirm more or less the thing in question, and to express . . . the different points of view from which the life or the action is looked at."

¹⁰ In the sense in which Benveniste speaks of "instance of discourse" (*Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. M. E. Meek [Coral Gables, Fla., 1971], pp. 217-222). [Translator's note: "instance" with this very particular sense appears throughout Genette's text. In Benveniste's essay ("The Nature of Pronouns"), the "instances of discourse" are defined as "the discrete and always unique acts by which the language is actualized in speech by a speaker" (p. 217); "[each] instance is unique by definition" (p. 218). The narrating instance, then, refers to something like the narrating situation, the narrative matrix—the entire set of conditions (human, temporal, spatial) out of which a narrative statement is produced.]

¹¹ Quoted in the *Petit Robert* dictionary, under *Voix*.

ing: once more, these terms are merely borrowed, and I make no pretense of basing them on rigorous homologues.¹²

As we have seen, the three classes proposed here, which designate fields of study and determine the arrangement of the chapters that follow,¹³ do not overlap with but sort out in a more complex way the three categories defined earlier designating the levels of definition of narrative: *tense* and *mood* both operate at the level of connections between *story* and *narrative*, while *voice* designates the connections between both *narrating* and *narrative* and *narrating* and *story*. We will be careful, however, not to hypostatize these terms, not to convert into substance what is each time merely a matter of relationships.

¹² Another—purely Proustological—justification for the use of this term: the existence of Marcel Muller's valuable book entitled *Les Voix narratives dans "A la recherche du temps perdu"* (Geneva, 1965).

¹³ The first three (Order, Duration, Frequency) deal with time; the fourth, with mood; the fifth and last, with voice.

1 Order

Narrative Time?

Narrative is a . . . doubly temporal sequence . . . : There is the time of the thing told and the time of the signifier (the time of the signified and the time of the signifier). This duality not only renders possible all the temporal distortions that are commonplace in narratives (three years of the hero's life summed up in two sentences of a novel or in a few shots of a "frequentative" montage in film, etc.). More basically, it invites us to consider that one of the functions of narrative is to invent one time scheme in terms of another time scheme.¹

The temporal duality so sharply emphasized here, and referred to by German theoreticians as the opposition between *erzählte Zeit* (story time) and *Erzählzeit* (narrative time),² is a typical characteristic not only of cinematic narrative but also of oral narrative, at all its levels of aesthetic elaboration, including the fully "literary" level of epic recitation or dramatic narration (the narrative of Thérémène,³ for example). It is less relevant

¹ Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (New York, 1974), p. 18. [Translator's note: I have altered this translation slightly so as to align its terms with the terms used throughout this book.]

² See Gunther Müller, "Erzählzeit und erzählte Zeit," *Festschrift für P. Kluckhohn und Hermann Schneider*, 1948; rpt. in *Morphologische Poetik* (Tübingen, 1968).

³ [Translator's note.] A character in Racine's *Phèdre*, proverbial for his narration of Hippolytus' death.

perhaps in other forms of narrative expression, such as the *roman-photo*⁴ or the comic strip (or a pictorial strip, like the pre-della of Urbino, or an embroidered strip, like the "tapestry" of Queen Matilda), which, while making up sequences of images and thus requiring a successive or diachronic reading, also lend themselves to, and even invite, a kind of global and synchronic look—or at least a look whose direction is no longer determined by the sequence of images. The status of written literary narrative in this respect is even more difficult to establish. Like the oral or cinematic narrative, it can only be "consumed," and therefore actualized, in a *time* that is obviously reading time, and even if the sequentiality of its components can be undermined by a capricious, repetitive, or selective reading, that undermining nonetheless stops short of perfect analexia: one can run a film backwards, image by image, but one cannot read a text backwards, letter by letter, or even word by word, or even sentence by sentence, without its ceasing to be a text. Books are a little more constrained than people sometimes say they are by the celebrated *linearity* of the linguistic signifier, which is easier to deny in theory than eliminate in fact. However, there is no question here of identifying the status of written narrative (literary or not) with that of oral narrative. The temporality of written narrative is to some extent conditional or instrumental; produced in time, like everything else, written narrative exists in space and as space, and the time needed for "consuming" it is the time needed for *crossing* or *traversing* it, like a road or a field. The narrative text, like every other text, has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading.

This state of affairs, we will see below, has certain consequences for our discussion, and at times we will have to correct, or try to correct, the effects of metonymic displacement; but we must first take that displacement for granted, since it forms part of the narrative game, and therefore accept literally the quasi-fiction of *Erzählzeit*, this false time standing in for a true time and to be treated—with the combination of reservation and acquiescence that this involves—as a *pseudo-time*.

⁴ [Translator's note.] Magazine with love stories told in photographs.

Having taken these precautions, we will study relations between the time of the story and the (pseudo-) time of the narrative according to what seem to me to be three essential determinations: connections between the temporal *order* of succession of the events in the story and the pseudo-temporal order of their arrangement in the narrative, which will be the subject of the first chapter; connections between the variable *duration* of these events or story sections and the pseudo-duration (in fact, length of text) of their telling in the narrative—connections, thus, of *speed*—which will be the subject of the second chapter; finally, connections of *frequency*, that is (to limit myself to an approximate formulation), relations between the repetitive capacities of the story and those of the narrative, relations to which the third chapter will be devoted.

Anachronies

To study the temporal order of a narrative is to compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story, to the extent that story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or inferable from one or another indirect clue. Obviously this reconstruction is not always possible, and it becomes useless for certain extreme cases like the novels of Robbe-Grillet, where temporal reference is deliberately sabotaged. It is just as obvious that in the classical narrative, on the other hand, reconstruction is most often not only possible, because in those texts narrative discourse never inverts the order of events without saying so, but also necessary, and precisely for the same reason: when a narrative segment begins with an indication like "Three months earlier, . . ." we must take into account both that this scene comes *after* in the narrative, and that it is supposed to have come *before* in the story: each of these, or rather the relationship between them (of contrast or of dissonance), is basic to the narrative text, and suppressing this relationship by eliminating one of its members is not only not sticking to the text, but is quite simply killing it.

Pinpointing and measuring these narrative *anachronies* (as I

will call the various types of discordance between the two orders of story and narrative) implicitly assume the existence of a kind of zero degree that would be a condition of perfect temporal correspondence between narrative and story. This point of reference is more hypothetical than real. Folklore narrative habitually conforms, at least in its major articulations, to chronological order, but our (Western) literary tradition, in contrast, was inaugurated by a characteristic effect of anachrony. In the eighth line of the *Iliad*, the narrator, having evoked the quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon that he proclaims as the starting point of his narrative (*ex hou de la prôta*), goes back about ten days to reveal the cause of the quarrel in some 140 retrospective lines (affront to Chryses—Apollo's anger—plague). We know that this beginning *in medias res*, followed by an expository return to an earlier period of time, will become one of the formal topoi of epic, and we also know how faithfully the style of novelistic narration follows in this respect the style of its remote ancestor,⁵ even in the heart of the "realistic" nineteenth century. To be convinced of this one need only think of certain of Balzac's openings, such as those in *César Bretteau* or *La Duchesse de Langeais*. D'Arthez directs Lucien de Rubempré to follow this principle,⁶ and Balzac himself chides Stendhal for not having begun the *Chartreuse* with the Waterloo episode, reducing "everything that precedes it to some narrative by or about Fabrice while he lies wounded in the Flemish village."⁷ We will thus not be so foolish as to claim that anachrony is either a rarity or a modern invention. On the contrary, it is one of the traditional resources of literary narration.

Furthermore, if we look a little more closely at the opening lines of the *Iliad* just referred to, we see that their temporal

⁵ A testimony *a contrario* is this appraisal Huet gives of [amblique's] *Babyloniennes*: "The arrangement of his design lacks art. He has roughly followed temporal order, and did not toss the reader immediately into the middle of the subject as Homer did" (*Traité de l'origine des romans*, 1670, p. 157).

⁶ "Step into the action first. Grab your subject sometimes sideways, sometimes from the rear; finally, vary your plans, so as never to be the same" (Balzac, *Illusions perdues*, Garnier ed., p. 230).

⁷ Balzac, *Études sur M. Beyle* (Geneva, 1943), p. 69.

movement is still more complex. Here they are in the translation of Andrew Lang, Walter Leaf, and Ernest Myers:

Sing, goddess, the wrath of Achilles Peleus' son, the ruinous wrath that brought on the Achaians woes innumerable, and hurled down into Hades many strong souls of heroes, and gave their bodies to be a prey to dogs and all winged fowls; and so the counsel of Zeus wrought out its accomplishment from the day when first strife parted Atreides king of men and noble Achilles.

Who then among the gods set the twain at strife and variance? Even the son of Leto and of Zeus; for he in anger at the king sent a sore plague upon the host, that the folk began to perish, because Atreides had done dishonour to Chryses the priest.⁸

Thus, the first narrative subject Homer refers to is the *wrath of Achilles*; the second is the *miseries of the Greeks*, which are in fact its consequence; but the third is the *quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon*, which is its immediate cause and thus precedes it; then, continuing to go back explicitly from cause to cause: the *plague*, cause of the quarrel, and finally the *affront to Chryses*, cause of the plague. The five constituent elements of this opening, which I will name A, B, C, D, and E according to the order of their appearance in the narrative, occupy in the story, respectively, the chronological positions 4, 5, 3, 2, and 1: hence this formula that will synthesize the sequential relationships more or less well: A4-B5-C3-D2-E1. We are fairly close to an evenly retrograde movement.⁹

We must now go into greater detail in our analysis of anachronies. I take a fairly typical example from *Jean Santeuil*. The situation is one that will appear in various forms in the *Recherche*: the future has become present but does not resemble the idea of it that one had in the past. Jean, after several years, again

⁸ Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Andrew Lang, Walter Leaf, and Ernest Myers (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), Book I, ll.1-11. [Translator's note: Genette's reference in the text is to the French translation by Paul Mazon (Paris, 1962).]

⁹ And even more so if we take into account the first—nonnarrative—section, in the present tense of the narrating instance (in Benveniste's sense), which thus comes at the last possible moment: "Sing, goddess."

was the concurrence between diegetic sequence and narrative sequence, and which here would be rigorous isochrony between narrative and story, is now therefore absent—even if it be true, as Jean Ricardou notes, that a scene with dialogue (supposing it unadulterated by any intervention of the narrator and without any ellipsis) gives us “a sort of equality between the narrative section and the fictive section.”¹ It is I who emphasize “sort,” in order to insist on the unrigorous, and especially unrigorously temporal, nature of this equality. All that we can affirm of such a narrative (or dramatic) section is that it reports everything that was said, either really or fictively, without adding anything to it; but it does not restore the speed with which those words were pronounced or the possible dead spaces in the conversation. In no way, therefore, can it play the role of temporal indicator; it would play that role only if its indications could serve to measure the “narrative duration” of the differently paced sections surrounding it. Thus a scene with dialogue has only a kind of conventional equality between narrative time and story time, and later we will utilize it in this way in a typology of the traditional forms of narrative duration, but it cannot serve us as reference point for a rigorous comparison of real durations.

We must thus give up the idea of measuring variations in duration with respect to an inaccessible, because unverifiable, equality of duration between narrative and story. But the isochronism of a narrative may also be defined—like that of a pendulum, for example—not relatively, by comparing its duration to that of the story it tells, but in a way that is more or less absolute and autonomous, as *steadiness in speed*. By “speed” we mean the relationship between a temporal dimension and a spatial dimension (so many meters per second, so many seconds per meter): the speed of a narrative will be defined by the relationship between a duration (that of the story, measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years) and a length

¹Jean Ricardou, *Problèmes du nouveau roman* (Paris, 1967), p. 164. Ricardou contrasts *narrating* to *fiction* in the sense in which I contrast *narrative* (and sometimes *narrating*) to *story* (or *diegesis*): “narrating is the manner of telling, fiction is what is told” (p. 11).

2 Duration

start here

Anisochronies

At the beginning of the last chapter I recalled what difficulties the very idea of “time of the narrative” runs up against in written literature. It is obviously apropos of duration that these difficulties are so strongly felt, for the data of order, or of frequency, can be transposed with no problem from the temporal plane of the story to the spatial plane of the text: to say that episode A comes “after” episode B in the syntagmatic arrangement of a narrative text or that episode C is told “twice” is to make statements that have an obvious meaning and that can be clearly compared with other assertions such as “event A is earlier than event B in the story’s time” or “event C happens only once.” Here, therefore, comparison between the two planes is legitimate and relevant. On the other hand, comparing the “duration” of a narrative to that of the story it tells is a trickier operation, for the simple reason that no one can measure the duration of a narrative. What we spontaneously call such can be nothing more, as we have already said, than the time needed for reading; but it is too obvious that reading time varies according to particular circumstances, and that, unlike what happens in movies, or even in music, nothing here allows us to determine a “normal” speed of execution.

The reference point, or degree zero, which in matters of order

(that of the text, measured in lines and in pages).² The isochronous narrative, our hypothetical reference zero, would thus be here a narrative with unchanging speed, without accelerations or slowdowns, where the relationship duration-of-story/length-of-narrative would remain always steady. It is doubtless unnecessary to specify that such a narrative does not exist, and cannot exist except as a laboratory experiment: at any level of aesthetic elaboration at all, it is hard to imagine the existence of a narrative that would admit of no variation in speed—and even this banal observation is somewhat important: a narrative can do without anachronies, but not without *anischronies*, or, if one prefers (as one probably does), effects of *rhythm*.

Detailed analysis of these effects would be both wearying and devoid of all real rigor, since diegetic time is almost never indicated (or inferable) with the precision that would be necessary. The analysis is relevant, therefore, only at the macroscopic level, that of large narrative units, granting that the measurement for each unit covers only a statistical approximation.³

stop here

If we want to draw up a picture of these variations for the *Recherche du temps perdu*, we must decide at the very beginning what to consider as large narrative articulations, and then, to measure their story time, we must have at our disposal an approximately clear and coherent internal chronology. If the first datum is fairly easy to establish, the second is not.

So far as narrative articulations are concerned, we must observe first that they do not coincide with the work's visible divisions into parts and chapters supplied with titles and numbers.⁴ If for our demarcating criterion, however, we adopt the

² This procedure is proposed by Gunther Müller, "Erzählzeit," and Roland Barthes, "Le Discours de l'histoire," *Information sur les sciences sociales*, August 1967.

³ Metz (pp. 119 ff.) calls this "the large syntagmatic category" of narrative.

⁴ We know besides, that only external constraint is responsible for the existing break between *Swann* and the *Jeunes Filles en fleurs*. The relations between external divisions (parts, chapters, etc.) and internal narrative articulations have not—up until now, in general and to my knowledge—generated all the attention they deserve. These relations, however, are what mainly determine the rhythm of a narrative.

presence of an important temporal and/or spatial break, we can establish the separation without too much hesitation, as follows (I give some of these units titles—purely indicative ones—of my own making):

- (1) I, 3-142, leaving out the memory-elicited analepses studied in the preceding chapter, is the unit devoted to the childhood in Combray: we, like Proust himself, will obviously name it *Combray*.
- (2) After a temporal and spatial break, *Un amour de Swann*, I, 144-292.
- (3) After a temporal break, the unit devoted to the Parisian adolescence and dominated by love with Gilberte and the discovery of Swann's milieu, occupying the third part of *Du côté de chez Swann* ("Noms de pays: le nom") and the first part of the *Jeunes Filles en fleurs* ("Autour de Mme. Swann"), I, 293-487: we will name it *Gilberte*.
- (4) After a break that is both temporal (two years) and spatial (the movement from Paris to Balbec), the episode of the first stay at Balbec, corresponding to the second part of the *Jeunes Filles* ("Noms de pays: le pays"), I, 488-714: *Balbec I*.
- (5) After a spatial break (return to Paris), we will take as one and the same unit everything coming between the two visits to Balbec, occurring almost entirely in Paris (with the exception of a short visit to Doncières) and in the Guermantes milieu, thus the complete *Côté de Guermantes* (I, 719-1141) and the beginning of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (II, 3-109): *Guermantes*.
- (6) The second visit to Balbec, after a new spatial break, in other words, all the rest of *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, II, 110-378: we will christen this unit *Balbec II*.
- (7) After a new change of place (return to Paris), the story of Albertine's confinement, flight, and death, up to II, 820, in other words, the entire *Prisonnière* and most of *La Fugitive*, up to the departure for Venice: *Albertine*.
- (8) II, 821-856, the visit to Venice and the trip back: *Venice*.
- (9) II, 856-889, straddling *La Fugitive* and *Le Temps retrouvé*, the stay at *Tansonville*.
- (10) After a break that is both temporal (stay in a clinic) and spatial (return to Paris), II, 890-987: *The War*.
- (11) After a final temporal break (again a stay in a clinic),

Venice: spring 1902
 Tansonville: 1903?
 The War: 1914 and 1916
Matinée Guermantes: about 1925

According to this hypothesis, and some other temporal data of secondary importance, the main variations of speed in the narrative work out approximately like this:

Combray: 140 pages for about ten years.
Un amour de Swann: 150 pages for some two years.
Gilberte: 200 pages for about two years.
 (Here, ellipsis of two years.)
Balbec I: 225 pages for three or four months.
Guermantes: 525 pages for two and one-half years. But we must specify that this sequence itself contains very wide variations, since 80 pages tell about the Villeparisis reception, which must last two or three hours; 110 pages tell about the dinner at the Duchesse de Guermantes's, lasting almost the same length of time; and 65 pages tell about the Princess's soiree: in other words, almost half the sequence is for fewer than ten hours of fashionable gatherings.
Balbec II: 270 pages for nearly six months, 80 of which are for a soiree at La Raspelière.
Albertine: 440 pages for some eighteen months, 215 of which are devoted to only two days, and 95 of these are for the Charlus-Verdurin musical soiree alone.
Venice: 35 pages for some weeks.
 (Indefinite ellipsis: at least some weeks.)
Tansonville: 30 pages for "some days."
 (Ellipsis of about twelve years.)
The War: 100 pages for some weeks, the main part of which is for a single evening (stroll in Paris and Jupien's male brothel).
 (Ellipsis of "many years.")
Matinée Guermantes: 150 pages for two or three hours.

It seems to me, from this very sketchy list, that we can draw at least two conclusions. First, the range of variations, going from 150 pages for three hours to three lines for twelve years, viz. (very roughly), from a page for one minute to a page for one century. Next, the internal evolution of the narrative in proportion as it advances toward its end, an evolution that we can summarily describe by saying that we observe on the one hand a

gradual slowing down of the narrative, through the growing importance of very long scenes covering a very short time of story; and on the other hand, in a sense compensating for this slowing down, a more and more massive presence of ellipses. We can easily synthesize these two aspects with the following phrase: the *increasing discontinuity* of the narrative. The Proustian narrative tends to become more and more discontinuous, syncopated, built of enormous scenes separated by immense gaps, and thus it tends to deviate more and more from the hypothetical "norm" of narrative isochrony. Let us remember that we are not by any means dealing here with an evolution over time that would refer us to a psychological transformation in the author, since the *Recherche* was not by any means written in the order in which it is arranged today. On the other hand, it is true that Proust, who we well know tended unceasingly to inflate his text with additions, had more time to increase the later volumes than the earlier ones; the bulkiness of the later scenes thus partakes of that well-known imbalance that the publication delay imposed by the war brought about in the *Recherche*. But circumstances, if they explain the "stuffing" with details, cannot account for the overall composition. It certainly seems that Proust wanted, and wanted from the beginning, this ever more abrupt rhythm, with a Beethovenian massiveness and brutality, which contrasts so sharply with the almost imperceptible fluidity of the early parts, as if to compare the temporal texture of the older events with that of the more recent ones—as if the narrator's memory, while the facts draw nearer, were becoming both more selective and more enormously enlarging.

This change in rhythm cannot be accurately defined and interpreted until we connect it to other temporal treatments that we will study in the next chapter. But from now on we can and should examine more closely how the more or less infinite diversity of narrative speeds is in fact distributed and organized. Theoretically, indeed, there exists a continuous gradation from the infinite speed of ellipsis, where a nonexistent section of narrative corresponds to some duration of story, on up to the absolute slowness of descriptive pause, where some section of narra-

tive discourse corresponds to a nonexistent diegetic duration.¹² In fact, it turns out that narrative tradition, and in particular the novel's tradition, has reduced that liberty, or at any rate has regulated it by effecting a selection from all the possibilities: it has selected four basic relationships that have become—in the course of an evolution that the (as yet unborn) *history of literature* will some day start to study—the canonical forms of novel *tempo*, a little bit the way the classical tradition in music singled out, from the infinitude of possible speeds of execution, some canonical movements (*andante*, *allegro*, *presto*, etc.) whose relationships of succession and alternation governed structures like those of the sonata, the symphony, or the concerto for some two centuries. These four basic forms of narrative movement, that we will hereafter call the four narrative *movements*, are the two extremes that I have just mentioned (*ellipsis* and descriptive *pause*) and two intermediaries: *scene*, most often in dialogue, which, as we have already observed, realizes conventionally the equality of time between narrative and story; and what English-language critics call *summary*¹³—a form with variable tempo (whereas the tempo of the other three is fixed, at least in principle), which with great flexibility of pace covers the entire range included between scene and ellipsis. We could schematize the temporal values of these four movements fairly well with the following formulas, with *ST* designating story time and *NT* the pseudo-time, or conventional time, of the narrative:

¹² This formulation can occasion two misunderstandings that I wish to dissipate at once. (1) The fact that a section of discourse corresponds to no duration in the story does not in itself characterize description: it may also characterize those commentarial excursions in the present tense which, ever since Blin and Brombert, we have generally called *author's intrusions* or *interruptions*, and which we will meet again in the last chapter. But what is distinctive about these excursions is that they are not strictly speaking narrative. Descriptions, on the other hand, as constituents of the spatio-temporal universe of the story, are *diegetic*, and thus when we deal with them we are involved with the *narrative* discourse. (2) Every description is not necessarily a pause in the narrative, which we will observe in Proust himself. So we are not concerned here with description, but with *descriptive pause*, which is therefore not to be confused either with every pause or with every description.

¹³ [Translator's note.] I have omitted from the text a brief statement on French terminology.

pause: $NT = n$, $ST = 0$. Thus: $NT \infty > ST$ ¹⁴
 scene: $NT = ST$
 summary: $NT < ST$
 ellipsis: $NT = 0$, $ST = n$. Thus: $NT < \infty ST$.

A plain reading of this chart reveals an asymmetry, which is the absence of a form with variable tempo symmetrical to the summary and whose formula would be $NT > ST$. This would obviously be a sort of scene in slow motion, and we think immediately of the long Proustian scenes, the reading of which often seems to take longer, much longer, than the diegetic time that such scenes are supposed to be covering. But, as we shall see, big scenes in novels, and especially in Proust, are extended mainly by extranarrative elements or interrupted by descriptive pauses, but are not exactly slowed down. And needless to say, pure dialogue cannot be slowed down. So there remains detailed narration of acts or events told about more slowly than they were performed or undergone. The thing is undoubtedly feasible as a deliberate experiment,¹⁵ but we are not dealing there with a canonical form, or even a form really actualized in literary tradition. The canonical forms are indeed restricted, in fact, to the four movements I have enumerated.

Summary

Now, if we examine from this point of view the narrative pacing of the *Recherche*, what we are first compelled to note is the almost total absence of summary in the form it had during the whole previous history of the novel: that is, the narration in a few paragraphs or a few pages of several days, months, or

¹⁴ This sign ∞ (infinitely greater), as well as the inverse one $< \infty$ (infinitely less), are not, I am told, mathematically orthodox. I am retaining them, however, because they seem to me, in this context and for anyone of good will, as transparent a means as there is to designate an idea that is itself mathematically suspect, but very clear here.

¹⁵ This is somewhat the circumstance with *L'Agrandissement* by Claude Mauriac (1963), which devotes some two hundred pages to a period of two minutes. But there again, the lengthening of the text does not arise from a real expansion of the time period, but from various insertions (memory-elicited analepses, etc.).