The History of Experience, Implicit Narratives, and a Sense of the Possible

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Over the past decades, experience has become an important analytical lens for studying historical, social, and cultural phenomena across disciplines. Often, however, the concept of experience remains undertheorized and it is simply taken for granted that we know what experience is.[1] Experience is frequently taken to be something direct and immediate, the way reality is given to us in the here-and-now. A historical approach to experience, however, needs to take seriously the historically mediated nature of experience. In this article, I argue that an important aspect of this historical mediation is *narrative* mediation. This form of mediation is often neglected when narrative is merely seen as something that happens *ex post facto*, when experiences are retrospectively narrativized. I suggest that by theorising the concepts of experience and narrative as well as their entanglement, narrative hermeneutics has much to offer to the field of the history of experience.[2] I discuss conceptions of experience and narrative in different traditions of narrative studies and suggest that a hermeneutically oriented approach to narrative provides a better fit for historical research on narrative and experience than (structuralist or cognitive) narratology.

In the last part of this article, I explore ways in which the study of the possible is relevant for the history of experience. From this perspective, I revisit the idea that history deals with the actual and fiction with the possible, a dichotomy that has dominated Western thinking ever since Aristotle and has led to a dismissal of how a sense of the possible

Cultural History Online Supplement (2024): 52–73
Edinburgh University Press
DOI: 10.3366/cult.2024.0319

www.euppublishing.com/cult

constitutes an important aspect of intersubjective reality in every actual historical world. I show how narrative hermeneutics addresses these issues as a framework in which history and fiction are seen as complementary practices of narrative interpretation – and which therefore provides productive theoretical insights for historians interested in the historically changing, narratively mediated nature of experience. The cultural history of experience and narrative hermeneutics are allies in emphasising that past worlds are not merely constituted by observable actions but also by thoughts, affects, and narrative practices, which makes it crucial for the study of past worlds to map past possibilities. In this article, then, I articulate the theoretical-methodological implications of this view, and suggest that both historiographical and fictional narratives can contribute to an understanding that to live in a historical world is to live in a particular space of possibilities.

The Concept of Experience

Experience is one of the basic concepts through which we make sense of our being-in-the-world. Because we are so deeply familiar with the concept and use it so readily, we rarely stop to reflect upon it. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'experience' as follows: 'The actual observation of facts or events, considered as a source of knowledge'.[3] This definition links experience to facts and events that we observe. It suggests that through first-hand experience we can get direct knowledge of facts and events. This 'common sense' way of thinking about experience is based on the empiricist-positivistic tradition of thought that qualifies as 'knowledge' only that which can be scientifically verified and considers experience, understood as the mere observation of facts, to be unmediated, direct sensory experience of what is given to the senses. The empiricist-positivistic tradition leads us to think about experience as something that is given to individuals in the here-and-now in an unmediated and direct way.

This conception of experience fails to acknowledge that experience is historically, culturally, and socially mediated and constituted. Experience never takes place in a vacuum but rather in a cultural web of meanings that affects how we experience things and what kinds of meanings we attach to our experiences. For example, we would not even recognize an apple as an apple if we did not have the concept of an apple, and our experience of apples is mediated through cultural assumptions linked to apples, assumptions we have learned since childhood through stories we have been told (for example, 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away', or the apple as the 'forbidden fruit' that symbolizes knowledge, life, temptation, and so on).

The fundamentally mediated nature of experience is one of the key tenets of philosophical hermeneutics. Edmund Husserl's phenomenological insight that we always experience 'something as something' (*etwas als etwas*)[4] became a central starting-point for both Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer when they formulated their phenomenological hermeneutics, which emphasizes the irreducible primacy of interpretation. For example, we see an apple as an apple rather than as a red or green geometrical shape. Heidegger argued that our way of being-in-the-world has an interpretative 'as-structure',[5] and Gadamer wrote that a 'hermeneutic understanding-something-as-something' (*das hermeneutische Etwas-als-etwas-Verstehen*) is the structure of all experience.[6] The phenomenological hermeneutic tradition develops the idea that our way of being-in-the-world, as a process of understanding-something-as-something, is a process of interpretation and meaning-giving. This something-as-something is historically mediated and in motion: its quality of *how* changes over time and is entangled in historical webs of meaning.

As Gadamer acknowledges, philosophical hermeneutics draws on the antipositivistic tradition that Friedrich Nietzsche launched by arguing that there is nothing more basic than interpretation: all that is 'given' (*Gegebene*) to us is itself a result of interpretation.[7] Nietzsche famously argued that 'facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations'.[8] All experience, even simple sense perception, interprets reality by structuring and giving it shape: 'We are *interpreting* in seeing, hearing, receiving'.[9] As Heidegger observes, we do not hear abstract sounds: '"Initially" we never hear noises and complexes of sound, but the creaking wagon, the motorcycle'.[10] Similarly, Gadamer articulates that pure sense perception is an abstraction: 'Pure seeing and pure hearing are dogmatic abstractions that artificially reduce phenomena. Perception always includes meaning'.[11] From this hermeneutic perspective, there is no 'pure', unmediated experience, and the presupposition of immediately given experience is based on the problematic positivistic 'myth of the given'.[12]

As Paul Ricoeur puts it, hermeneutics is a philosophy of permanent mediated-ness: 'there is no self-understanding that is not *mediated* by signs, symbols, and texts'.[13] While philosophical hermeneutics has emphasized the temporal and historical mediation of experience, hermeneutic approaches to narrative argue that an important aspect of this mediation is narrative mediation. The approach to narrative that I, together with colleagues, call *narrative hermeneutics*, explores narratives not just as objects of interpretation but as interpretative practices in their own right.[14] In other words, narratives provide interpretations of various experiences of being-in-the-world. We are always already entangled in

webs of narratives, constantly reinterpreting our experiences through them in such a way that a process of narrative reinterpretation is constitutive of who we are. Narrative hermeneutics suggests that narratives are not only retrospective accounts of events and experiences, as narratology takes them to be, but that experience itself is narratively mediated. It sees narratives as part of larger cultural webs of meaning that mediate our experiences. Cultural narratives function as narrative models of sense-making that shape how things are experienced in the first place.[15]

Recurring narrative patterns that underlie concrete processes of narrating experiences can be seen as *implicit cultural narratives* that can be abstracted from narrative discourse.[16] They are historically constituted sociocultural structures that keep changing as they are interpreted and applied to concrete situations.[17] For example, 'rags-to-riches' narratives, widespread in the United States, perpetuate the underlying narrative structure of the American dream, but individuals who apply this narrative model of sense-making to their lives or to the lives of others interpret it from their own social situations, and over time this narrative structure and the role it plays as part of a broader sociocultural world may change. Narrative hermeneutics can contribute to the history of experience by showing how cultural narratives are sociocultural structures and interpretative practices that change historically and mediate individual experience in a particular sociocultural world. It can thereby also contribute to bridging the divide between social and cultural history.[18]

From the perspective of philosophical hermeneutics, the relationship between individual experiences and cultural webs of meaning is a two-way process: the cultural world shapes how individuals experience things and individuals' interpretations of experience in turn mould their cultural worlds. Both individual experiences and cultural webs of meaning are temporal processes that keep changing as new experiences throw new light on past experiences and past layers of meaning. All sociocultural reality is thus historically changing. This relational, dialogical approach allows us to avoid both the reification of social reality and an individualist emphasis on individual actors.[19] Literary fiction and life-writing participate in this process of change, for example, by giving new meanings to past and present events, by reinterpreting the processes that have led to the current situation, and by throwing new light on shared experiences such as collective traumas.

Gadamer distinguishes between two senses of experience: *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. While the former is a passing experience, such as having fun in an amusement park or getting aesthetic pleasure from a nice composition of colours, the latter is an experience that leaves a lasting mark and

ultimately changes who we are: 'genuine experience (*Erfahrung*) does not leave him who has it unchanged'.[20] For Gadamer, experience (*Erfahrung*) in the latter, strong sense has the structure of negativity, which involves the insight that things are not how we thought they were: 'experience is initially always experience of negation: something is not what we supposed it to be'.[21] Experience in this strong sense has an element of 'self-knowledge' concerning an 'experience of human finitude':

> The truly experienced person is one who has taken this to heart, who knows that he is master neither of time nor the future… . Real experience is that whereby man becomes aware of his finiteness. In it are discovered the limits of the power and the self-knowledge of his planning reason… . Genuine experience is experience of one's own historicity.[22]

Gadamer suggests that encounters with works of art can be experiences in this strong sense – they, too, can change who we are and how we understand our being-in-the-world. Such an encounter presupposes that we are fundamentally open to works of art in their otherness and accept that they might have 'something to say to me'.[23] While webs of narratives mediate experiences in general, particular literary works can be narratives that give rise to experience in the strong sense by changing us, how we narrate our lives, and how we understand our possibilities.

The temporal mediation of experience means that experience is never isolated from the past or future. It involves traces of past experiences and an orientation to the future. One dimension of experience is a *sense of the possible*: our sense of what is possible for us, of how things could be otherwise, and of possible scenarios in terms of which the current situation could unfold, shaping how we experience the here-and-now.[24] Experiences take place in historical worlds that function as a *space of possibilities* that sets certain limits to what is de facto possible for various social groups in a particular historical world. This space affects what particular inhabitants of that world take to be possible or impossible for themselves – that is, their sense of the possible. In my version of narrative hermeneutics, I have articulated how narratives can expand or diminish this sense of the possible.[25]

The Conception of Narrative in the Historians' Debate

In the context of history, the question of narrative is most often seen as a question of how historians narrativize history. Narrative has played a significant role in the philosophy of history ever since the debate in the 1960–1980s on the narrativization of history. While that debate was

importantly influenced by structuralist narratology, recently historians have expressed interest in cognitive narratology.[26] In these discussions, there has not been enough reflection on what conceptions of narrative are at play in different traditions of narrative studies and what kind of conception of narrative would be most fruitful for historians and narrative scholars with a sense of history. Here, I will discuss and problematize the conception of narrative that has dominated discussions on the relationship between narrative and history.

In the debate that started in the 1960s, Louis Mink, Arthur Danto, and Hayden White contributed to the discussion of the relationship between history and narrative by emphasising that narrative is not something that structures historical events themselves but rather something that is retrospectively projected onto them.[27] The debate drew attention to the narrative dimension of historiography, but by arguing that historians impose narrative order on events that in themselves lack narrativity, it also contained certain ontological assumptions about the nature of human reality. Mink, for example, famously asserts: 'Stories are not lived but told. Life has no beginnings, middles, or ends… . There are hopes, plans, battles and ideas, but only in retrospective stories are hopes unfulfilled, plans miscarried, battles decisive, and ideas seminal.'[28]

Here we can see a dichotomy between 'life' or human reality, on the one hand, and narratives told about it, on the other. Hayden White bases his argumentation on this same hierarchical dichotomy. He argues that a historical narrative 'reveals to us a world that is putatively "finished", done with, over, and yet not dissolved, not falling apart', and the 'value attached to narrativity in the representation of real events arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary'.[29] Later, in 1981, Mink comments that White is right in arguing '(1) that the world is not given to us in the form of well-made stories; (2) that we make such stories; (3) that we give them referentiality by imagining that in them the world speaks itself'.[30]

Both Mink and White argue that narratives project false order onto the disorder of human existence. The reception of Mink and White's ideas has focused on what they say about our epistemic relation to history and to the world in general. What has thereby been generally overlooked is that these arguments include implicit ontological assumptions about the nature of historical reality, namely assumptions about the non-narrative nature of the real. They acknowledge that narratives play an important role in making sense of reality, but at the same time they suggest that there is a more fundamental level on which human, lived

experience in its immediacy and human existence in general is non-narrative in character.[31]

Underlying their view is a structuralist conception of narrative and an empiricist-positivistic conception of experience. According to the structuralist conception, narrative is a retrospective representation of past events.[32] Similarly, Mink and White take narrative to be what historians construct retrospectively and thereby use to project a meaningful order on past events. By arguing that narratives impose meaningful order on the real, Mink and White rely on the empiricist-positivistic assumption of 'raw', disconnected units of experience and on the view that only that which is independent of human meaning-giving processes is truly 'real'. They represent an event-centred conception of history that does not take into account how history is also constituted by lived experience and how cultural narratives shape history as it is lived. When narrative is merely seen as something that happens afterwards, when events are forced into a narrative form, what is thereby neglected is that narratives also affect how things are experienced in the first place, including a sense of how certain things are experienced as possible and others as impossible.

Narrative and Experience in Cognitive Narratology

Over the past few decades, narratology has moved from its initial structuralist phase to what some have called 'post-classical narratology'.[33] While structuralism was the main paradigm for classical narratology, (post-classical) narratology is now dominated by the cognitive paradigm. Whereas structuralist narratology defined narrative as a representation of a series of events, cognitive narratology, in contrast, takes narrative to be characterized by experientiality, which Monika Fludernik defines as the 'quasi-mimetic evocation of "real-life experience"'.[34] This might seem promising from the perspective of the history of experience, but there is a serious theoretical tension between historical awareness and cognitive narratology because the conception of experience that is implicit in the latter is fundamentally ahistorical and universalist. It relies on the empiricist-positivistic belief in 'raw experience', in contrast to the hermeneutic conception of experience, which emphasizes that all experience is historically mediated and interpretatively structured. In cognitive narratology, 'experiencing' is a universal cognitive frame, and it is presented as something quite unproblematic.

What Fludernik calls 'natural narratology' is a cognitive approach based on the idea of universal basic-level cognitive schemata in terms of which 'real-world' understanding operates. She is attentive to how 'generic and historical frames' such as genres and styles change but considers real-life frames unchanging. She describes her approach

as a 'deep-structural account of narrativity'[35] and comments that the 'purpose of level I [which concerns universal basic-level cognitive schemata] is merely to create an inventory of subconscious cognitive parameters by which authors and readers cognize the world'.[36]

This ahistorical conception of experience is coupled with a narrow conception of history, which takes history to be something that happens elsewhere – where wars are fought and peace treaties signed – rather than right here, in our everyday lives.[37] Fludernik distinguishes between two ways of applying the notion of historical experience: we can speak, firstly, 'of our present-day experiencing of the Afghan War', and, secondly, 'in history, of the Elizabethans' experience of the war in Ireland'.[38] Fludernik hence takes two types of experiences to be 'historical':

> In order to become 'historical' experience (rather than mere experience of things happening to impinge on one), events or processes need to be cognized as either *significant* (which will cause them to be experienced as historic even though they are only just evolving) or as *past*.[39]

She adds that because mostly people experience 'historically relevant figurations … through the media, i.e. *indirectly*', one may want to create a third category for 'direct physical experience of processes and events such as *raw experience*', exemplified by soldiers' experience of war.[40] This means that her three types of historical experiences are: first, past experiences of past events; second, contemporary indirect experiences of significant events (such as our experience of watching the war in Ukraine through the media); and, third, contemporary direct experiences of significant events (such as soldiers' experience of war on the battlefield). The third category of 'direct experience' entails the empiricist-positivistic assumption that experience of events is immediately given, raw, and not historical except in the special cases when it concerns 'historical events' such as (to use Fludernik's examples) wars, the American moon landing, or the fall of the Berlin Wall.[41]

Fludernik's narrow conception ignores the historicity of everyday life where nothing spectacular happens – including the historicity of everyday narrative practices, discourses, and habits. Who gets to decide what counts as 'significant'?[42] Why would, for example, our practices of parenting, or our ways of narrating illness and health, not count as significant and hence not historical? On what grounds is political history more significant than the intimate history of our bodies and our personal relationships? Narratology rarely acknowledges that history is not something external to us but constitutive of all experience.[43] Despite the widespread use of the concept of experience in narrative studies, it is

wildly undertheorized. Narrative hermeneutics is the approach to narrative that most explicitly theorizes the concept of experience and emphasizes its historically mediated character. It thus provides a better fit for historians and historically oriented scholarship on narrative and experience than structuralist narratology, which brackets experience altogether, or cognitive narratology, which is dominated by an ahistorical conception of experience.

Narrative and Experience in Narrative Hermeneutics

In contrast to narratological approaches, narrative hermeneutics foregrounds not only the historically mediated nature of narratives but also the ethical and existential relevance of narratives for our being-in-the-world – that is, the way they open up and close down possibilities of thought, affect, and action. In this section, I discuss how narrative hermeneutics conceptualizes narrative and the twofold narrative mediation of experience.

Narrative hermeneutics draws on Paul Ricoeur's work, which approaches narrative as crucial to the human experience of time: 'time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal existence'.[44] While some representatives of contemporary narrative hermeneutics have suggested that *all* complex temporal experiences have a narrative quality,[45] I have expressed concerns about the danger of conflating narrative and experience. I consider it important both to retain a conceptual distinction between narrative and experience and to acknowledge that both experience and narrative have an interpretative structure.[46] As we saw earlier, even simple sense perception is interpretative in the sense that we always see something as something, and since narratives are complex interpretations that make sense of experiences, they manifest the logic of a double hermeneutic: they are interpretations of experiences that themselves are interpretatively constituted. When we reinterpret our experiences in light of literary narratives, for example, this process manifests the dynamics of a triple hermeneutics.[47] From the perspective of narrative hermeneutics, experience and narrative are neither the same nor opposed to one another; instead, there is an interpretative continuum from simple sense perception to complex narrative interpretations.[48]

In my version of narrative hermeneutics, I have proposed conceptualising narrative as

> a *culturally mediated practice of sense-making* that involves the activities of *interpreting* and *presenting* someone's experiences in a specific situation to

> someone from a certain *perspective* or perspectives as part of a *meaningful, connected account*, which has a *dialogical* and a *productive, performative* dimension and is relevant for the understanding of *human possibilities* (past, present, and/or future).[49]

This definition emphasizes that narratives are forms of social action that do not merely represent but also *participate* in constructing social reality in dialogue with the cultural narrative models they reinforce or contest. Narratives thus have a 'world-constituting dimension' in that they shape 'not only our cognitive understanding of the world, but also our affective orientations and our sense of the possible', including our understanding of our 'range of possible affects, experiences, perceptions, thoughts, actions, attachments, and relationships'.[50] In my conceptualization, I suggest that it is part of the dialogical dimension of narratives that they always engage in dialogue with 'cultural models of narrative sense-making' or, for short, with 'cultural narrative models'.[51] In my later work, I have proposed the concept of *implicit narrative* to characterize these tacit narrative models.[52]

Narrative hermeneutics challenges the narratological assumption of raw, unmediated experience that is only retrospectively narrativized. Along the lines of the phenomenological-hermeneutic tradition, it emphasizes the temporal and historical mediation of experience and sees narrative mediation as an important aspect of this mediation. From the perspective of narrative hermeneutics, we can distinguish between two levels of the narrative mediation of experience.

Firstly, narrative hermeneutics emphasizes that living and narrating are entangled in a way that problematizes the hierarchical dichotomy between experience and narrative that characterizes both the views of Mink and White as well as structuralist and cognitive narratology. In the late 1980s, David Carr already argued that Mink was 'operating with a totally false distinction when he said that stories are not lived but told. They are told in being lived and lived in being told'. He continues that 'Mink and the others are right, of course, to believe that narration constitutes something, creates meaning rather than just reflecting or imitating something that exists independently of it', but this does not mean that narratives falsify experience or are somehow external or secondary to it.[53] Instead, narration and action, life and its narrative interpretation, are always intertwined: 'I am the subject of a life-story which is constantly being told and retold in the process of being lived'.[54] In a similar spirit, Ricoeur sees our narrative sense of who we are as a process of constant reinterpretation and retelling. This is a temporal process that involves shifting 'identifications with values, norms, ideals, models, and heroes, in which the person or the community recognizes

itself'.[55] From the perspective of narrative hermeneutics, we become who we are in a dynamic, interactional, constantly shifting process of telling and retelling ourselves and others how we understand ourselves and the world.[56] Experience is therefore mediated by our often unconscious narrative understandings of who we are, what things mean to us, and how they are connected.

Secondly, in addition to the constant process of retelling our experiences and life-stories, there is the way in which implicit cultural narratives shape and mediate our experiences by functioning as models of sense-making. It is a key insight of narrative hermeneutics that '*cultural webs of narratives affect the way in which we experience things in the first place*'.[57] If we want to take the historicity of experience seriously, we should acknowledge that experience is mediated through historically shaped narrative webs. They are structured by implicit narratives, which may not be available anywhere in a concrete textual form but can be abstracted from cultural discourse. For example, framing the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of a narrative of war is to follow an implicit narrative that guides us to think of the virus as an enemy and of patients, healthcare workers, and the public as a whole as soldiers battling against the virus.[58] Master narratives are often implicit narratives, which only become apparent through counter-narratives that problematize them.[59]

The concepts of implicit narratives and cultural narrative models offer to the history of experience a way of bridging the from-below analysis of everyday life and the macro analysis of sociocultural structures. They allow us to acknowledge the complex ways in which narratives mediate our relation to the world and to ourselves. Narrative hermeneutics approaches narratives as cultural practices that have both a structural and a temporal dimension: they are historically constituted interpretative resources that keep changing as individuals use and apply them in concrete social situations. The concept of implicit narrative attempts to capture the dynamic between individual processes of narrativizing experiences and the cultural forms that mediate and regulate these processes. It can thereby contribute to the kind of history of experience that is cultural historical in its orientation but at the same time interested in the cultural and social structures that are constitutive of sociocultural worlds.[60]

Concepts similar to that of implicit narrative are those of script and masterplot. Roger Schank and Robert Abelson developed the script theory in the 1970s to describe representations of temporally ordered sequences of actions that guide our actions and expectations, and in the 1980s Jerome Bruner drew on it to characterize canonical (life) narratives that rely on a culturally recognized canon of scripts.[61] Later,

Anthony Amsterdam and Jerome Bruner used the notion of script to describe tacit narratives as follows: 'Established scripts (sometimes called stock scripts) are the hidden cargo of narratives, often tacit rather than explicit, but always there'.[62] The notion of script, however, has the misleading connotation of a written text that actors consciously follow; the concept of implicit narrative, in contrast, has the advantage of drawing attention to cultural narrative models that often affect us without our awareness and that we need to construct through interpretative work in order to understand which narratives underlie dominant discourse in certain social situations.[63]

The concept of masterplot, in turn, has been championed, for example, by H. Porter Abbott with reference to skeletal storylines that particular narratives may follow and variate.[64] However, it also has the problematic connotation of a mastermind designing an overarching plot that will be followed. Both scripts and masterplots suggest the intentionality of individual actors who design an underlying narrative that specific narratives follow. Implicit narratives, in contrast, are cultural models of sense-making that take shape regardless of the intentions of individual actors and largely affect us unconsciously, without our awareness. They are patterns of cultural, historically changing practices.

Based on the aforesaid, narratives are relevant to the history of experience not only as a question of how historians retrospectively narrativize the past but also as objects of study from these two perspectives: firstly, as textual artefacts that give expression to historical experiences and may open new possibilities in a certain historical world, and secondly, as implicit narratives that researchers need to abstract from historical discourse as underlying narrative patterns that shape and mediate experiences.

The Actual and the Possible

Both concrete, explicit narratives (textual artefacts) and implicit narratives shape the sense of the possible of those affected by these narratives. In this final section, I look at how a hermeneutic conception of experience complicates the traditional way of opposing the actual and the possible when thinking about the relationship between fiction and historical reality. I argue that the history of experience should study past worlds as spaces of possibilities and that, in such an endeavour, literary narratives can be valuable resources. Literary narratives can thematize implicit narratives and critically engage with them, thereby opening up new possibilities for readers. While traditional historical research has rarely used literary narratives as objects of study, cultural historians often include literary fiction in their research material. I will here articulate

some theoretical-conceptual reasons why literary works can be valuable from the perspective of the history of experience.

Both historiographical and fictional narratives contribute to our sense that to live in a historical world is to live in a particular space of possibilities. In this space it is possible to experience, perceive, think, feel, do, and imagine certain things, and difficult or impossible to experience, perceive, think, feel, do, and imagine other things.[65] In developing this position, I have drawn on a tradition of thought that sees historical worlds as spaces of possibilities. Its pioneers include Martin Heidegger, who argues that every age has an underlying 'metaphysic' involving certain presuppositions on what is real and possible, and Michel Foucault, who describes such a metaphysic as the historical *a priori* that defines the limits of intelligibility of a particular age and subjectivity as a process of taking up subject positions 'within a more or less open field of possibilities' in which the 'exercise of power' is 'a management of possibilities'.[66] Later, Reinhart Koselleck's concept of *space of experience* (*Erfahrungsraum*) attempts to capture the ways in which the range of experiences available in a particular world is shaped by the simultaneous presence of 'many layers of earlier times' and of how the past is incorporated and remembered. Koselleck's concept of the *horizon of expectation* (*Erwartungshorizont*) refers to the ways in which the future is 'made present' through the ways in which people in the present orient themselves to the future, 'to the not-yet, to the nonexperienced'.[67] However, neither the space of experience nor the horizon of expectation of a particular world is homogenous. As Jacques Rancière acknowledges, each age includes the 'co-presence of heterogeneous temporalities'.[68] A given historical world always consists of a multitude of historical worlds.[69] Hence historical worlds are heterogeneous spaces in which diverse possibilities are available for subjects occupying different subject positions.[70]

Koselleck defines experience as follows: 'Experience is specified by the fact that it has processed past occurrence, that it can make it present, that it is drenched with reality, and that it binds together fulfilled or missed possibilities within one's own behavior'.[71] I suggest that it is also important to acknowledge how narrative practices shape the space of experience, the horizon of expectation, and their shifting relationship that participates in constituting the historical world as a space of possibilities. Narrative practices include both implicit narratives (tacit narrative models of sense-making inherited from the past) and the concrete oral and written narratives told by people in that historical world. In understanding a past world as a heterogenous space of possibilities, narrative fiction can provide value research material. It is

particularly well equipped to explore how individuals in different social positions experience the world around them.

In order to appreciate the value of literature as a source of historical understanding, it is necessary to question the dichotomy between the actual and the possible that has dominated conceptualizations of the relationship between fiction and history ever since Aristotle famously argued that history narrates what has happened and literature what 'might happen, i.e. what is possible'.[72] I have suggested that this conceptual dichotomy has led to a dismissal of how a sense of the possible constitutes an important aspect of intersubjective reality in every actual, historical world, and from this perspective, I have argued that literature provides valuable interpretations of actual (past and present) worlds through its own literary means and can thereby enrich and expand our sense of real worlds as spaces of possibilities. Narrative hermeneutics addresses these issues as a framework in which history and fiction are seen as complementary practices of narrative interpretation.[73]

Gottlob Frege's view that fiction lacks truth value (and is therefore not, as Dorrit Cohn puts it, 'subject to judgments of truth and falsity') has been widely shared by scholars across disciplines and with particular enthusiasm by narratologists.[74] Cohn defines fiction as 'nonreferential narrative' and argues that a fictional world 'remains to its end severed from the actual world'.[75] Similarly, Henrik Skov Nielsen, James Phelan, and Richard Walsh suggest that discourse construed as fictional invites us to assume 'that it is not making referential claims', and they discuss fictionality by operating on the conceptual opposition between the realms of the actual, factual, and real versus the possible, fictional, and unreal.[76]

Such a conceptual opposition between the actual and the possible, however, is based on the ontological assumption that the actual and the real refer to what can be objectively observed: to actions, events, and facts that can be verified with observations or documents. In the discipline of history, such a position is often described as 'historical realism', which maintains that history is composed of observable actions. Traditional historical realism has been challenged by cultural history and the history of experience, which consider historical reality to consist not only of actions, events, and facts, but also of such invisible phenomena as patterns of experience, affect, and thought, modes of representation and meaning-giving, and narrative practices that are often entangled with the aforesaid.[77] All these patterns and practices shape the past world as a space of possibilities. From the perspective of cultural history and the history of experience, it is hence crucial for the study of the past world to map past possibilities.[78] In this task, historians need not gather only

documentation of what can be known for certain about the past but must also develop the capacity to imagine past possibilities.[79]

Literary fiction can contribute to historical imagination by cultivating a sense of past worlds as spaces of possibilities in which certain modes of experience, action, thought, and affect were possible and others impossible or unlikely. Ricoeur argues that fiction can function as a 'detector of possibilities buried in the actual past'.[80] Fiction opens up the world in a certain way and at the same time opens up new possibilities for us: it is hence both disclosive and transformative. Ricoeur writes that the 'critique of the naive concept of "reality" applied to the pastness of the past calls for a systematic critique of the no less naive concept of "unreality" applied to the projections of fiction'; fiction is 'undividedly revealing and transforming'.[81] In dialogue with Koselleck's ideas, Ricoeur suggests that in order to avoid the shrinkage of the space of experience, we need to resist the tendency to see the past as separate from the present, as a fixed collection of past events.[82] The past should be kept open so as to acknowledge its presence in the present and to pay attention to the possibilities that the past opens up in the present. For this to succeed, we need to cultivate responsivity to the possibilities of the past through imaginative reinterpretations and retellings that broaden 'our capacity to be so affected': 'Imagination is the secret of this competence.'[83] In this process, narrative fiction can play an important role. Ricoeur argues that to understand a literary narrative is 'not to find a lifeless sense that is contained therein, but to unfold the possibility of being indicated by the text'.[84] Narrative fiction has ethically crucial transformative potential by providing us with new ways of reinterpreting our experiences and hence new ways of orienting ourselves to the world and to others.

By studying literature from the analytical perspective of the history of experience informed by narrative hermeneutics, we can analyze how implicit narrative models inherited from the past shaped the spaces of experience of historical subjects and how the way they narrated their experiences (in concrete textual narratives, oral or written) participated in constituting their horizon of expectation. We can thereby interpret how narrative practices moulded their relationship to the past, present, and future, including their collective memory and aspirations, their fears and hopes. Moreover, historians of experience can study literary narratives not only to understand their historical subjects' sense of the possible, but also to cultivate the sense of the possible of their contemporaries – their sense of what it was like to live in the past world and their sense of how things could be otherwise. When a sense of the possible concerns an understanding of what was possible in a past

world, it is part and parcel of a sense of history – a sense of how certain historical processes have shaped a past world into a particular space of possibilities.[85]

In *The Ethics of Storytelling*, I explore how fiction can provide a sense of past worlds as spaces of possibilities by analysing particularly so-called perpetrator fiction, which engages with the question: how is it possible that perpetrators of atrocities did what they did? For example, Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes* (2006, *The Kindly Ones*) addresses this question through an SS officer protagonist, and Julia Franck's *Die Mittagsfrau* (2007, *The Blind Side of the Heart*) examines this by trying to imagine the events and experiences that led to the decision of a half-Jewish woman to abandon her child after surviving the Second World War, which is what happened to Julia Franck's own father, who was abandoned by his mother (Julia Franck's grandmother). Littell's novel thematizes problematic implicit narratives that are widely used to make sense of Nazism and problematizes the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy that underlies the dominant narratives of the Holocaust. Franck's novel, in turn, explores the conditions of possibility of being a mother and links it to the ability to share stories with one's child. It suggests that a war trauma can involve a loss of one's self – a 'blindness of the heart' – that entails a loss of the ability to be a mother to one's child. The study of these novels can produce an understanding of the (narratively mediated) experiences of the war and of the heterogenous spaces of possibilities in which these experiences took shape.[86]

Sometimes literary fiction as a mode of interpreting historical experiences can become so influential that people reinterpret their experiences in the light of fiction and begin to live their experiences through literary narratives. This happened, for example, when Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* (1929, *All Quiet on the Western Front*) gave expression to the experiences of ordinary soldiers in World War I, and it happened when the Finnish novelist Väinö Linna's *Tuntematon sotilas* (1954, *The Unknown Soldier*) conveyed the experiences of the war in 1941–1944 in a way that came to shape Finnish national identity and the collectively shared narrative of the war. As Pertti Haapala explains, the latter 'helped ordinary people, and especially the rank-and-file soldiers, to relocate themselves within a historically plausible war narrative *of their own*'.[87] Linna expanded the sense of the possible of ordinary soldiers by providing a new way of narrativizing their experiences, one that resonated with their lived experience, and, at the same time, his novel provides valuable insights on how these soldiers experienced the war as it was unfolding. Later on, this literary narrative became a model of sense-making that came to mould how the war was

narrated and integrated as part of a shared national narrative and cultural memory. Insofar as the history of experience is interested in experiences as a way of 'tracing collective patterns of thinking',[88] literary narratives can be valuable objects of analysis from the perspective that they can give expression precisely to such collective patterns. In addition, they can be valuable as ways of interpreting collective patterns in past worlds, as my examples of contemporary novels interpreting the Holocaust indicated. Fictional narratives are interpretations of experiences that themselves contain an interpretative dimension, and as readers interpret them, a triple hermeneutics is at play. Narratives can also thematize cultural narrative models, for example when Littell thematizes the problematic narrative that seeks to explain the Holocaust through the monstrous evil of the Nazis rather than by confronting the banal evil that is part of the instrumental rationality of modern societies and that continues to implicate us in the present.

Conclusion

Overall it is important that historians interested in experience and its narrative mediation reflect upon their conceptions of experience and narrative. In this article I have questioned the widespread empiricist-positivistic assumption that there is pure or raw experience on which narrative retrospectively imposes order. Such hierarchical models that take experience to be primary and narrative secondary easily suggest that narrative is a projection of false order or a distortion of the original experiences or events. Here I have shown how, from the perspective of narrative hermeneutics, experience is entangled with narratives in a twofold way, both through the intertwinement of living and telling and through being mediated by implicit narratives that function as cultural narrative models of sense-making. It is an important task of historians to make such implicit narratives visible and to analyze how they have shaped their subjects' sense of the possible. An integral part of the history of experience should be the study of cultural narrative models as historically constituted and temporally changing social structures that shape how things are experienced in the first place. In such historical research, it is also worth exploring how literary narratives can contribute to an understanding of historical worlds – including our own – as spaces of experience that shape the sense of the possible of their inhabitants.

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Notes

1. This is true across disciplines and in interdisciplinary fields such as narrative studies and trauma studies. For example, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* has no entry for 'experience' but only a very short entry on 'experientiality', in which Fludernik refers to her own ahistorical conceptualization of experientiality, see Monika Fludernik, 'Experientiality', in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (eds), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 155. For a discussion of experience in the context of trauma studies, see Hanna Meretoja, 'Philosophies of Trauma', in Colin Davis and Hanna Meretoja (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2020).
2. On the history of experience, see the Palgrave book series 'Palgrave Studies in the History of Experience'. Available at <https://link.springer.com/series/16255> (last accessed 30 July 2023).
3. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'experience, n.'. Available at <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5485237439> (last accessed 30 July 2023).
4. Edmund Husserl, *Späte Texte über Zeitkonstitution (1929–1934): Die C-Manuskripte* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), p. 250; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (transl.) (London: Continuum, 1997), p. 90.
5. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Joan Stambaugh (transl.) (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996 [1927]), p. 140.
6. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Gesammelte Werke: Hermeneutik II* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1993), p. 339.
7. Quoted in Ibid. p. 339.
8. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (transl.) (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 267.
9. Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'The Hermeneutics of Suspicion', in Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica (eds), *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), pp. 54–65, here p. 59.
10. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 153.
11. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 92.
12. Wilfried Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality* (London: Routledge, 1963). A similar criticism of the empiricist-positivistic conception of experience is presented in the phenomenological sociology of knowledge of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1987 [1966]). See also Kokko & Harjula in this Special Issue.
13. Paul Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (transl.) (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991 [1986]), p. 15.
14. Hanna Meretoja, *The Ethics of Storytelling: Narrative Hermeneutics, History, and the Possible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 44. See also Hanna Meretoja, *The Narrative Turn in Fiction and Theory: The Crisis and Return of Storytelling from Robbe-Grillet to Tournier* (London: Palgrave, 2014); Jens Brockmeier and Hanna Meretoja, 'Understanding narrative hermeneutics', *Storyworlds*, 6:2 (2014), pp. 1–17; Hanna Meretoja and Mark Freeman (eds), *The Use and Abuse of Stories: New Directions in Narrative Hermeneutics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).
15. Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, p. 9, 49, 57. The idea that 'historical narratives' are not only retrospective accounts of past events and experiences but can also 'determine experiences' is also acknowledged by Pertti Haapala, 'Lived Historiographies: National History as a Script to the Past', in Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki, and

Tanja Vahtikari (eds), *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000* (London: Palgrave, 2021), p. 30.

16. Hanna Meretoja, 'Implicit Narratives and Narrative Agency: Evaluating Pandemic Storytelling', *Narrative Inquiry*, 33:2 (2023), pp. 288–316.
17. On how the move from social history to cultural history was linked to the idea that social and cultural structures are constituted through the interpretative practices of actors of social and cultural worlds, see William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 41–2.
18. On the need for such a bridge, see Kokko and Harjula's article in this issue; I share their emphasis on the intertwinement of the social and cultural, and also embrace Clifford Geertz's definition of culture as 'the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action' in *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 145. While Kokko and Harjula link the social primarily to the interactional processes in the present and the cultural to the cultural tradition, I would like to emphasize that the cultural fabric of meaning (including its narrative dimension) is also integral to social interaction. In my narrative hermeneutics, I see cultural narratives as models of sense-making that not only shape social interaction but also only exist through a dialogical, relational, interactional process (Meretoja, *The Narrative Turn in Fiction and Theory*; Meretoja, *The Ethics of Storytelling*).
19. On reification, see Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality*, p. 106. On a dialogical relationship between individuals and narrative webs of meaning, see Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, pp. 74–83.
20. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 100.
21. Ibid. p. 354.
22. Ibid. p. 357.
23. Ibid. p. 361.
24. Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, pp. 90–7.
25. Ibid. See also Hanna Meretoja, 'The Ethical Potential and Risks of Narratives: Six Evaluative Continuums (and Sofi Oksanen's Open Letter to Melania Trump)', in Sjoerd-Jeroen Moenandar and Barend van Heusden (eds), *Narrative Values, the Value of Narratives* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), pp. 23–42.
26. See Reetta Eiranen, Mari Hatavara, Ville Kivimäki, Maria Mäkelä and Raisa Maria Toivo (eds), Theme Issue Narrative and Experience. *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 47:1 (2022).
27. Arthur Danto, 'Narrative sentences', *History and Theory*, 2:1 (1962), pp. 146–79; Louis Mink, 'The Autonomy of Historical Understanding', *History and Theory*, 5:1 (1966), pp. 24–47; Louis Mink, 'History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension', *New Literary History*, 1:3 (1970), pp. 541–58; Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', in W. Mitchell (ed.), *On Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). For an overview of this debate, see Elizabeth Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 86–105.
28. Mink, 'The Autonomy of Historical Understanding', p. 557.
29. White, 'The Value of Narrativity', pp. 20, 23.
30. Mink, 'Everyone His or Her Own Annalist', in W. Mitchell (ed.), *On Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 238–9.

31. Meretoja, *The Narrative Turn in Fiction and Theory*, p. 54; Meretoja, 'Narrative and Human Existence: Ontology, Epistemology, and Ethics', *New Literary History*, 45:1 (2014), pp. 89–109.
32. See e.g. Gérald Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972); Slomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2002).
33. See e.g. David Herman, 'Introduction', in David Herman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 11.
34. Monika Fludernik, *Towards 'Natural' Narratology* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 12.
35. Monika Fludernik, 'Natural Narratology and Cognitive Parameters', in David Herman (ed.). *Narrative Theory and the Cognitive Sciences* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 2003), pp. 243–67, here p. 260.
36. Ibid. p. 258.
37. Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, p. 8.
38. Monika Fludernik, 'Experience, Experientiality and Historical Narrative: A View from Narratology', in Thiemo Breyer and Daniel Creutz (eds), *Erfahrung und Geschichte. Historische Sinnbildung im Pränarrativen* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 40–72, here pp. 42–3.
39. Ibid. p. 46, emphasis added.
40. Ibid. p. 42.
41. Ibid. p. 43, 46.
42. Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, p. 8.
43. This applies to rhetorical narratology, too, although it acknowledges that experience has different layers (intellectual, emotive, ethical, aesthetic). It focuses on how authorial strategies and textual phenomena affect these layers of the reading experience, but it tends to take the concept of experience for granted and neglect its historically and socially mediated nature. See James Phelan, *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2007), p. xiii.
44. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol I, Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (transl.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 3.
45. See Jens Brockmeier, *Beyond the Archive: Narrative, Memory, and the Autobiographical Process* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 105.
46. See Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, pp. 60–1.
47. Meretoja, *Narrative Turn in Fiction and Theory*, p. 149; Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, pp. 59–62.
48. Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, p. 61.
49. Ibid. p. 48. In later versions, I have replaced 'human possibilities' with 'different possibilities of being in the world' (e.g. Meretoja, 'The Ethical Potential and Risks of Narratives'), since literature often explores possibilities that imaginatively reach beyond the human perspective.
50. Ibid. p. 52.
51. Ibid. p. 48, 62.
52. In *The Ethics of Storytelling* I write: 'Narrative as an interpretative activity is mediated by cultural models of narrative sense-making that are often described as "cultural narratives," "scripts," or "schemas"' (p. 48). In 'Implicit Narratives and Narrative Agency' I propose the concept of implicit narrative to describe these tacit narrative models. On the use of the notion of 'script', with reference to how historical narratives can determine experiences, see for example Haapala, 'Lived Historiographies' and Kokko and Harjula in this Special Issue.

53. David Carr, 'Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity', *History and Theory* 25: 2 (1986), pp. 125–6. See also David Carr, *Time, Narrative, and History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991).
54. Carr, 'Narrative and the Real World', p. 126.
55. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, Kathleen Blamey (transl.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 121.
56. See Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, pp. 62–8.
57. Ibid. p. 9.
58. Meretoja, 'Implicit Narratives and Narrative Agency'.
59. Hanna Meretoja, 'A Dialogics of Counter-Narratives', in Klarissa Lueg and Marianne Lundholt (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Counter-Narratives* (London: Routledge, 2021).
60. This approach is in line with that developed in the Centre for Excellence in the History of Experiences (HEX) at Tampere University, and it can contribute to our understanding of narratives as (interpretative) sociocultural structures. Josephine Hoegaerts and Stephanie Olsen characterize the approach of the HEX scholars as follows in 'Afterword', in Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki, and Tanja Vahtikari (eds), *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000* (London: Palgrave, 2021), p. 356: 'The history of experience is concerned with embodied engagement with social, cultural, political and material contexts, in order to understand lived experiences through these engagements. It centers the (inter) subjectivity of discourses and practices of the past.'
61. Roger Schank and Robert Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding: An Inquiry into Human Knowledge Structures* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1977); Jerome Bruner, 'Life as Narrative', *Social Research*, 54:1 (1987), pp. 11–32.
62. Anthony Amsterdam and Jerome Bruner, *Minding the Law* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 21.
63. Meretoja, 'Implicit Narratives and Narrative Agency', p. 292.
64. H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 53.
65. Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, p. 16.
66. Martin Heidegger, 'Die Zeit des Weltbildes', in *Gesamtausgabe 5: Holzwege*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977 [1938]), pp. 75–113; Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966); Michel Foucault, *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984*, Vol. 3, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 2000), p. 341.
67. Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Keith Tribe (transl.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004 [1979]), pp. 259–260.
68. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Gabriel Rockhill (transl.) (London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [2000]), p. 26.
69. Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, p. 16.
70. Meretoja, 'Expanding our Sense of the Possible: Ten Theses for Possibility Studies', *Possibility Studies & Society* 1:1–2 (2023), pp. 137–144.
71. Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 261.
72. Aristotle, Poetics, in J. Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 1451a/1985, pp. 2322–3.
73. Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling*, pp. 14–15. See also Meretoja, 'Memory as Interpretation: A Hermeneutics of Agency, Historical Responsibility, and Jenny Erpenbeck's *Heimsuchung* [*Visitation*]', in Guido Bartolini and Joseph Ford (eds), *Mediating*

Historical Responsibility: Memories of 'Difficult Pasts' in European Cultures (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), pp. 35–53.

74. Gottlob Frege, 'Über Sinn und Bedeutung', in *Funktion, Begriff, Bedeutung: Fünf logische Studien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 2008 [1892]), pp. 23–46; Dorrit Cohn, *The Distinction of Fiction* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 15.
75. Cohn, *The Distinction*, pp. 9, 13.
76. Henrik Skov Nielsen, James Phelan, and Richard Walsh. 'Ten Theses about Fictionality', *Narrative* 23:1 (2015), pp. 61–73, here p. 68.
77. However, there are also other interpretations of realism, including the idea of 'narrative realism' (Haapala, in this issue).
78. Hannu Salmi, 'Cultural History, the Possible, and the Principle of Plenitude', *History and Theory* 50 (2011), pp. 171–87, here pp. 173–4; Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology and the Nameless Others* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998).
79. Salmi, 'Cultural History', pp. 176–7.
80. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol III, Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (transl.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 191–2.
81. Ibid. p. 158. The transformative potential of literature and of art more broadly – linked to its power to open up new possibilities of being-in-the-world – is also developed by the theorists of the Frankfurt school (Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse etc.).
82. Ibid. p. 215–35; Meretoja, *The Ethics of Storytelling*, p. 199.
83. Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, p. 181.
84. Ibid. p. 66.
85. On a sense of history, see Hanna Meretoja, 'A Sense of History – A Sense of the Possible: Nussbaum and Hermeneutics on the Ethical Potential of Literature', in Hanna Meretoja, Saija Isomaa, Pirjo Lyytikäinen & Kristina Malmio (eds), *Values of Literature* (Leiden: Brill/Rodopi, 2015), pp. 25–46.
86. For a more detailed discussion of these novels, see Meretoja, *Ethics of Storytelling* (chs. 4 and 6).
87. Haapala, 'Lived Historiographies', p. 50.
88. Ibid. p. 31.