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Time-travel and Empathy: an Analysis of how Anachronous
Narrative Structures Affect Character/Reader Empathy

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# Abstract

This study focuses on the relationship between the author's narrative craft and the potential for the reader's empathetic response. Specifically, it discusses how an anachronous narrative structure provides the author with different ways to promote empathy.

The discussion of empathy is key in the discussion of narrative craft: great characters are those a reader can empathise with. But the discussion of empathy runs deeper than this, with many scholars turning to the wider effects literature can have on a reader's moral compass (Nussbaum 1997) and even their real-world behaviour (Keen 2007).

This study sets aside the question of how to produce empathy and turns instead to the author's craft. I have assessed the author's capability of promoting empathy by building a framework of tools for the author (dubbed *The Empathy Toolbox*) from several studies conducted by narratology theorists. I have then analysed this in relation to my own work and that of Audrey Niffenegger and Kurt Vonnegut with a particular focus on characterisation and how this is affected by anachrony.

This study is of value to all writers of creative fiction, as anachronous timelines can be employed across a breadth of genres using plot devices like flashbacks, flash-forwards and dream sequences. Furthermore, it provides authors with tools to aid their craft and help their work resonate with any reader, not just those that might have a similar background to their protagonist.

**Keywords:** Susan Keen; Gérard Genette; anachrony; empathy; narratology; time-travel; empathy toolbox; chronology

Written narratives have long eschewed chronology in its strictest sense, whereby events take place in the order in which they are presented. Pick up nearly any fiction novel and you will find a character harkening back to their past, imagining their future or daydreaming an alternate present. These small disturbances of the narrative timeline, seamlessly woven into the narrative, are evidence to the fact that authors have been distorting narrative chronology long before time travel entered the stage as a plot device. Indeed, "there would be no drive to continually subvert or play with chronology if it were not in some way a particularly powerful organising principle." (Montfort 89)

Time travel, popularised by H.G. Well's novel *The Time Machine* and since used to great effect both in literature[1] and film[2], offers perhaps the most obvious opportunity for a writer to play with the chronology of her narrative. She may muddle (or reverse) the roles of cause and effect, drop her protagonist into their future, into their past, or cause them to relive events with prior knowledge of the consequences. This not only distorts how a reader reads, but how we as humans experience the world, as a departure from chronology is, simultaneously, a departure from "the order of nature [and] the order of causality." (Sternberg 903) There has been a sustained debate on how anachronous narrative timelines impact comprehension, (Montfort 2007) or deepen character development (Genette 1983) but relatively little focus on

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[1] Some examples include: 11/22/63 (Stephen King, 2011), Kindred (Octavia E. Butler, 1979), Slaughterhouse-five (Kurt Vonnegut, 1969), Outlander (Diane Gabaldon, 1991), The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August (Catherine Web, 2014)

[2] Some examples include: Back to the Future (1985), Predestination (2014), About Time (2013), Looper (2012), Midnight in Paris (2011), Primer (2004), Men in Black III (2012), The Lake House (2006).

how a chronologically displaced timeline can impact one of the most important outcomes for any author: reader empathy.

Empathy is a widely debated topic in relation to narratology. In fact, philosophy, psychology and literature often intersect at the point of empathy, and Wood (2008) argues that it was an increase in philosophical discussions on sympathy (a word often deemed synonymous to empathy outside of the scholarly field on the topic) that popularised the novel in the first place. Throughout the debate, there has been an underlying agreement that fiction can encourage empathy[3], and from this point a consistent shift towards the discussion of whether empathy invoked in fiction has real-world benefits. Keen (2007) argues that experiencing empathy through fiction can help us become better global citizens, a view supported by Nussbaum (1997) who claims it assists the moral development of the reader. Certainly, the overall view is that empathy in fiction is beneficial to the reader (Bal & Veltkamp 2013) although the degree to which it affects the reader's subsequent moral compass is debated, alongside the question of whether some empathetic reactions are more valuable than others (Lindhé 2016) and whether empathy could be considered selfish, rather than selfless. (Jamison 2014)

In the course of this thesis, I will set aside the debate on how successfully empathy is transmitted to the reader and whether this empathy is internalised (or indeed used later, for common good) and focus instead on the tools an author can use to encourage it. This is because, as we will see, whilst the author has full control over their craft, they have little to no control over how their work will be experienced by a reader. I will therefore explore empathy in sole relation to craft, and in specific relation to chronology and its distortion. I will study what has already been discussed within the realms of narratology and empathy in order to create an "Empathy Toolbox" - the tools an author can use to encourage empathy using different narrative techniques. I will then assess these in relation to my own creative work and two other works of time-travel fiction, namely that of Audrey Niffenegger (*The Time Traveler's Wife*) and Kurt Vonnegut (*Slaughterhouse-five*) by conducting a close reading in order to discover whether a distorted narrative structure permits us, the authors, to

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[3] See Johnson, Dan R. "Transportation into a story increases empathy, prosocial behavior, and perceptual bias toward fearful expressions." *Personality and Individual Differences* 52.2 (2012): 150-155 for further discussion of this.

promote character/reader affinity in different ways with an anachronous narrative timeline.

In the course of this thesis I will analyse the impact of reversing cause and effect (present evidently in time-travel fiction but similarly possible in all fiction with a distorted timeline) and how this provides the author with more options, creatively, as part of their craft process when enacting the toolbox for their written projects.

## The Problem with Empathy

Before we are able to discuss the myriad of obstacles facing an author wishing to induce empathy in her reader, we must first discern what empathy is. Susan Keen, one of the first scholars to combine and analyse disparate areas of study on empathy in relation to literature, defines empathy as the belief that you feel the emotions of others. Thus defined, empathy is distinct from sympathy, which is having an emotion *for* someone else. When I have pity for someone, I am sympathetic, whereas when I believe I share their pain, I am empathetic.

This distinction is particularly important in relation to narratology, Yorke argues, as a focus on sympathy leads authors to the assumption their characters must be 'nice' (or, at the very least, in possession of likeable attributes) and "niceness tends to kill characters - if there's nothing wrong with them, nothing to offend us, then there's almost certainly nothing to attract our attention either." (Yorke 32) Yorke argues this assumption is a misconception, born of the convolution of empathy and sympathy, and that "the key to empathy... does not lie in manners or good behaviour... It lies in its ability to access and bond with our unconscious." (Yorke 32-34). Yorke's view is that a competent writer can encourage the reader to empathise with even the most violent protagonists (using David Chase's character Tony Soprano from *The Sopranos* as an example).

Thus, empathy in its psychological form and empathy in its narratological form are similar: we are merely replacing a shared experience with a real person with that of a fictional once. Indeed Yorke (utilising analysis by Christian Keyser) argues that when we feel empathy with a fictional character we become "one, psychologically, with the protagonist." (Yorke 274) Empathy, therefore, involves a kind of displacement, elucidated beautifully by Leslie Jamison in *The Empathy Exams*:

> "Empathy comes from the Greek *empatheia*—em (into) and pathos (feeling)—a penetration, a kind of travel. It suggests you enter another person's pain as you'd enter another country, through immigration and customs, border crossing by way of query: What grows where you are? What are the laws? What animals graze there?" (Jamison, 20)

However, whilst narratives can provoke both a cognitive and an emotional empathetic response (through the act of reading) the extent to which an author can deliberately *induce* empathy is questioned. Empathy, Keen argues, can be provoked by "witnessing another's emotional state… hearing about another's condition" and that narratives are deliberately constructed to "manipulate our emotions and call upon our built-in capacity to feel with others." ("A Theory of Narrative Empathy" 209) Keen's study is very much focussed on the reader's reaction to the novel, the kernel of her enquiry being whether fiction can increase altruism (or, in the reverse, encourage vice), yet her research also shows that an author that wishes to provoke empathy in their reader will face a multitude of obstacles.

Empathy and whether it is produced sits very much in the hands of the reader, regardless of the author's intentions, and may be influenced by a wealth of variables, such as the reader's: age, individual personality, experience, location, knowledge, prejudice and fluency in genre stereotypes, to name but a few. (Keen, "Empathy and the Novel" 72) This means that a reader may resonate well with a protagonist their age, but less well with one much older than them, or that a reader may feel more empathy for a character that has had similar life experiences, an idea supported by Yorke: "If empathy is about entering the mind of a fictional character, then it helps if that mind contains feelings similar to our own." (Yorke 33) Of course one could expand this, arguing that whilst a reader may not have a direct *empathetic* link between the character (or indeed their situation) they may yet form an indirect empathetic link. In my novel, for example, whilst I imagine no reader will be able to empathise with the protagonist Marian's confusion at having time-travelled, they may very well be able to empathise with feeling displaced and somewhat far from home (this will be discussed more fully later, when we turn to promoting situational empathy).

A further difficulty is that what provokes empathy in one reader may not provoke it another. For example, in Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife* (henceforth TTTW), we follow two protagonists, Henry and Clare. Henry is a time-traveller, who is dragged backwards and forwards in time against his will, reliving

events such as the car crash that caused his mother's death, as well as experiencing events in a narratively-skewed order. For example, Henry meets Clare 'for the first time' twice, once when he is 28, (meeting Clare aged 20) and once when he is 36 (meeting Clare aged 6). Clare, on the other hand, experiences the novel in a more linear fashion. Whilst we are dropped forwards and backwards in her own timeline through Henry's travelling, present-day Clare experiences time linearly (like the reader) and is regularly left behind, waiting for Henry when he travels. Whilst a military wife, who may not see her husband for months on end may empathise strongly with Clare's loneliness due to Henry being absent so often, someone who has never been married may have a weaker empathetic response. Keen's qualitative research indeed showed that readers often empathise with different characters (Keen, "Empathy and the Novel" 73-74) for different reasons.

Furthermore, some readers claim to have never experienced empathy from reading, or that their empathetic response is different from that which is intended. Keen defines a number of forms of empathetic "failure", of which three are particularly important in our discussion: (1) empathetic inaccuracy (whereby the reader incorrectly identifies the feelings of the character) and (2) accidental empathy (whereby the author has not intended to garner an empathetic reaction for/from that character or situation [Keen "A Theory of Narrative Empathy" 222]). Lindhé defines a third, which I will dub (3) expense empathy (whereby empathy is induced for one character at the expense of second [20]).[4] This leads Keen to conclude that "empathy for a fictional character need not correspond with what the author appears to set up or invite." (Keen, "Empathy and the Novel" 136)

When you add this to the argument that a novel's ability to provoke empathy may change over time (a first reading versus a third, reading it in your twenties versus in your fifties, a novel's impact when it was published versus a hundred years later), the challenge of provoking an empathetic response in a reader looks readily stacked against the author: how are we to battle our way through this wall of subjectivity?

I argue that authors must take a step back and focus on what is within our control: our craft. Instead of asking whether we are *producing* an empathetic

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[4] Whilst *expense empathy* has wide-ranging consequences in the debate surrounding the civilising nature of literature, a discussion of this will take us too far into the realm of the *effect* of empathy on the reader's life, and thus too far away from whether an author can enact empathy in their craft in the first place. I will therefore set this aside.

response, we must ask: am I doing everything I can to *promote* an empathetic response?

*Promoting Empathy*

Keen (2007 91-94) and Forster (2005 61-78) cite a number of craft elements and plot devices that help build character/reader affinity, which can be broadly segregated into two groups: (1) Aspects of the story, such as characterisation, trials, hardship, making difficult decisions and having relatable problems and (2) Aspects of the narrative, such as the control of pace and timing, narrative order and the use of nested narratives. For the purpose of this distinction, I will be taking Genette's definition of narrative and story, whereby story means the content of the narrative (i.e. your characters, events and action) and the narrative refers to the way in which the story is presented (i.e. first person or third person, chronologically, etc. [25-27])

Interestingly in Keen's pioneering (and extensive) hypotheses surrounding narrative construction and empathy, narrative ordering and chronology is only touched upon indirectly. In her discussion on foregrounding and its impact on empathy, Keen mentions that one cannot assume that "difficult and discontinuous texts promote empathy more effectively than their simpler relatives." (Keen, "Empathy and the Novel" 87) There is a seeming link between comprehension, causality and empathy: events that are causally linked (for example, seeing someone falling over, and then seeing someone in pain) promote cognitive empathy. This empathetic link, in turn, promotes comprehension of the literature, a theory supported by Bourg's study on the effect of an empathy-building strategy on reading comprehension.

Whilst Bourg's goal is the opposite of ours (whether comprehension is improved from a starting position of empathy, rather than how we achieve empathy in the first place) the study showed that comprehension was best in stories where the narrative structure was "causally coherent" and contained outcomes directly related to the character's goals and their success/failure in achieving these goals.

Building upon this, similar psychological studies[5] on literature comprehension and empathy proposed that in order to understand a character's emotions (and thus empathise with them) "one must understand the antecedent events leading to those emotions" (Bourg 128) and have an understanding of the character's goal.

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[5] See further Stein, Nancy L., and Linda J. Levine. (1989): 343-378.

"Determining that characters are in emotional situations and understanding their emotions are necessary steps for… empathising with the characters." (Bourg 130) Thus, in order for empathy to be achieved, the reader must be able to (a) identify the character's goal and (b) identify the potential for success or failure and (c) this needs to be antecedent to scenes thwarting this goal in order for the reader to become invested in the character, and thus the story.

This poses a very interesting question for time-travel novels, and indeed any novel that seeks present its story to the reader in anything other than chronological order, and we will discuss this further when we turn to character realism and character wants. For now, we will turn to narrative chronology and the different ways in which an author can distort their narrative ordering, before expounding the Empathy Toolbox and discussing how anachronous structures can promote empathy.

## Chronology and Narratology

Novels are constrained by linearity. We do not typically read backwards, and nor do we typically read chapter five before chapter one (granted, there are instances of exception, such as Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*). Authors have long been fighting against the "tyranny" of chronology, to the extent that chronological ordering, as far back as Aristotle, has been considered an inferior method of narrative organisation. (Sternberg 1990) Indeed, the order of "events in time is one of the most fundamental characteristics of any story" (Prince 23) and thus there has long been a tradition of non-chronological ordering: we need only look to *The Iliad* for examples of this. For the purpose of this thesis, two things are pertinent when it comes to narrative ordering: comprehension and causality.

Whilst distorting the chronology of the narrative can enrich the story (e.g. by providing backstory to a character), there remains the view that narratives must make chronological sense. If the events do not fall into some kind of chronology, then "however appealing their alternative arrangement… narrativity itself disappears." (Sternberg 903) This is supported by Montford who argues that if events are not in any way chronologically related, "nothing can be said about how the order in which they are narrated relates to their order in the content plane." (Montfort 88-89)

However, chronological ordering is not in and of itself sufficient: it must involve causality. For example, one could write a novel whereby "Little Red Riding

Hood strays into the forest and then Pip aids the runaway convict" (Rimmon-Kenan, 20-21). The two events may well be sequential (in the sense that one is presented before the other) and they may also be chronological (in the sense that one precedes the other in story-time), but they are not causal, as there is nothing contained within Red Riding Hood's trip to the forest that causes Pip to aid Magwitch (indeed, as they are two different stories.) Thus, it is important to point out that sequentiality and chronology are not one and the same: events can be sequentially ordered without being chronological (for example, in Chapter Two of *Slaughterhouse-five*, a novel about the Dresden bombing through the eyes of time-slipping protagonist Billy Pilgrim, Billy moves between being behind enemy lines in 1944 and giving a speech in 1967). In order for us to turn a sequence of events into a story, there must be a meaningful causal connection. Otherwise, we run the risk of simply presenting a list of events, with no real reason as to why one comes before, or after, the other.

This is not to say that a meaningful causal connection requires events to be in chronological order in terms of story-time. In Chapter Two of TTTW we follow Henry (age 5) during his birthday trip to the museum. At the end of that scene, Henry (age 5) time travels "I stayed there for a while, trying to feel sleepy, and then I stood up and everything changed." (Niffenegger, 29) The scene then shifts to follow Henry (age 24) who is returning home drunk when he time-travels to the museum, where his younger self will soon arrive. Thus, the causal link is clear: the events are sequenced as such so that we can follow young Henry on his first time-travelling venture, guided by older Henry, however the chronology has shifted: we have moved from 1968 to 1988, and back again.

Forster argues that this kind of explicit causation is the difference between a story (a list of events) and a plot (events that are causally connected): "the king died and then the queen died of grief" is a plot, because of the introduction of causation, whereas "the king died and then the queen died" is merely a story because there is no causation present. (Forster 45)

However, if *explicit* causal connections are required to coherently link two scenes, this could problematic for time-travel writers such as myself because we will often present the reader the effect before the cause. Chatman however (supported by Rimmon-Kenan) disagrees that in Forster's argument the two examples are different, instead claiming that causality is present in both: it is merely explicated in one. Readers will infer 'of grief' for themselves.

In TTTW, whilst we do occasionally get instances of explicit causation, such as the example above, we more often see examples of implicit causation. For example, in Chapter Five we see Henry with Clare's father and brother, both wearing their hunting clothes. Clare does not know why Henry is there, and neither does the reader: "I am sitting on my bed, shivering, and I still don't know what just happened, but I know it was bad, it was very, very bad." (Niffenegger 81) Later, in Chapter Thirty-Three, we learn this is how Henry dies. The context of Chapter Five unravels from the chapters that follow, and thus Chapter Five serves as foreshadowing. In this sense then, there is implicit causation at work: it is up to the reader to connect the scattered dots of the story and discern the causal link.

An example of this in my own work is the reader seeing the effect of Marian's reputation on the likes of Hugh, Art and Ineen before they see the cause (where Marian first meets them, which will be present in the second book). This is shown to the reader in a number of ways: Hugh calling Marian by a nickname, *Scátach,* Art resolving to bring Marian with him once he learns her name, and more explicitly in the scene with Ineen where she says: "I should have known you would return. Why is it that wherever you go, bad news follows?" (Austin 84)

What both I and Niffenegger are doing is creating an *enigma,* whereby the character, or the reader, or both, are left in the dark. (Genette 57) There is an unfulfilled promise to the reader of an explanation in the form of a seed of information (indeed this is the very definition of foreshadowing). However, there is a distinct difference between enigmas (whereby the event's importance, or its causal connection to the story-now narrative is not yet clear) and events are not causally connected at all.

Chatman argues that readers will not causally connect two events that make the story sequence indiscernible. It would not make sense in my novel, for example, for Marian to swim ashore at Lough Swilly and the next moment be riding breakneck for Ballyshannon - we require the intermediary scene, where she meets Art and gets a horse. Vonnegut uses this to opposite effect in his novel: he does not want readers to be able to draw a rational causal connection between Billy one moment being in a spaceship and the next a train, carrying him to a prisoner of war camp (although as we will see, the scenes tend to have a connecting thread). This fragmentation is deliberate:

> "It is so short and jumbled and jangled, Sam, because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds." (Vonnegut 263-265)

There is therefore a difference between causally unconnected scenes (evident in Vonnegut) and merely "enigmas" (evident in my own work and that of Niffenegger). With enigmas, the causal connection still exists, it is merely explicated later, in order to draw the plot together neatly and bring it full circle.

This idea of a completing plot is important: Genette (1983) argues that plots must ensure they retain unity when distorting time, meaning that authors must ensure that the story sequence remains discernible (this can be as simple as adding time-markers into the narrative or dialogue). Genette has arguably produced the most comprehensive analysis of narrative ordering and its effects, identifying seven main ways in which an author can present their story. For the purpose of this thesis, the following six are most pertinent:

(1) Chronicle, (or chronological narratives) whereby events are narrated in the order in which they occur. In chronological narratives, cause is presented before effect in a linear fashion. If we agree with what has been noted above in terms of causation and understanding, chronicle is possibly the best method for promoting comprehension. Chronology is broadly evident in my novel from the point that Marian arrives in 1591 (Austin 37) and up until the point that she returns to her own time in Chapter 33. Whilst reference is made to events occurring outside of the story-now (for example, Hugh's engagement, Marian's first meeting with the O'Donnells) the story-now is maintained, and we follow the characters from one event to another in a linear fashion from the point of Marian's arrival.

(2) Anachrony: any instance whereby there is a discord between the story order and the narrative order. This encompasses: (3) Zigzag: whereby events are narrated in order, but passing between the "now" (period 1) and the "once" (period 2). A strict zigzag features (a) an equal number of "now" and "then" scenes and (b) the "now" prompts a recollection of the "then" in the sense they are brought about by a noticing of similarities (which thus retains sequential cohesion). This is evident throughout TTTW, as events are ordered by a recollection of similar events taking place at different times (for example, Chapters Six, Seven and Nine recount Christmas Eve between 1988, 1989 and 1991). Similarly, in *Slaughterhouse-five* Billy Pilgrim's

description of the POW trains having "black and orange stripes" in Chapter Three (Vonnegut 864) carries through to his daughter's wedding in Chapter Four, whereby the tents are striped "black and orange." (Vonnegut 886)

(4) Analepsis: whereby an event is being narrated at a past time to the story present. This is evident in the opening chapter of my own work, whereby Marian is recounting Charles' proposal to her (which happened antecedent to her travelling to Ireland) whilst sitting on the boat with her mother: "Charles' proposal had been awkward, his palms sweating as he brandished the ring. If it were up to her she would have bolted for her room and locked the door." (Austin, 9)

(5) Prolepsis: whereby an event is narrated from a future time in relation to the story present. Rimmon-Kenan, using Genette's terminology, discusses analepsis and prolepsis in relation to narrative structure, citing that prolepses are less commonly found in fiction that analepses. "When they occur, they replace the kind of suspense deriving from the question 'What will happen next?' by another kind of suspense, revolving around the question 'How is it going to happen?'"(50) This is present consistently in TTTW, and most noticeably in Chapter 29 (*"Alba: An Introduction"*), where Henry (his present time being 2001) learns he is dead in 2011 and has been dead since 2005 (as we have already seen, there is foreshadowing of this present from Chapter Five). This is also present in my novel, whereby Marian learns when she time travels to 1591 that the people around her have knowledge of her from before. This will be expounded in the second novel of the series, as otherwise it would not be a true prolepsis, but rather (6) an Ellipsis: a leap forward in time without any return (therefore it is more of an acceleration, such as a scene cut, than an instance of anachrony).

Thus, we can draw three conclusions to carry forward when discussing the ability of the time-travel novel (or indeed any novel that uses anachrony) to promote empathy. Firstly, anachronous ordering should not distort cause-and-effect relations in such a way that the reader cannot assume even implicit causation. Secondly, anachronous ordering should not impede comprehension (unless, like Vonnegut, that is the author's intention.) Thirdly, anachronous ordering should still show the character's goal antecedent to events preventing the character from achieving that goal. We must also carry forward the caveat that the Toolbox will focus only on what the author has control over: i.e. elements of the craft, rather than the effect this has on

readers (the goal being the *promotion* of empathy, rather than being able to prove its provocation) due to the subjective nature of empathy production.

I will now turn to the Empathy Toolbox, discussing it in specific relation to my own novel, and that of Niffenegger and Vonnegut and with explicit reference to the role of anachronous ordering. Broadly, I have split the Empathy Toolbox into two segments: those concerned with aspects of the characters and aspects of the story world, discussing elements of both story (i.e. plot) and narrative (i.e. how this is presented) within each.

## The Empathy Toolbox

Characterisation is an important aspect of narrative craft, as well as being a fundamental part of the story itself. After all, the protagonist is effectively the person (or indeed, people) through which you experience the story. "When they're in jeopardy, you're in jeopardy...you empathize with them." (Yorke 29) It's worth noting that whether or not a reader *identifies* with your character falls outside of the scope of things the author has control over (Keen "Empathy and the Novel" 86) although an author could deliberately craft their characters to encourage situational empathy[6] by crafting characters designed to resonate with a certain demographic of readers, "to reach readers with appropriately correlating experiences." (Keen "A Theory of Narrative Empathy" 215) Whilst Keen specifies situational empathy can only reach those who have experienced something similar, her previous qualitative research on flat vs. round character empathy (which will we discuss fully later) suggests this view does not have to be narrow: it can also be broad, an idea supported by Patrick Colm Hogan.

Hogan argues that there is necessarily a difference between the readers' experience and that of the characters', as no two humans can ever have the same experiences. Thus, the reasoning between the situation of the character and the situation(s) of the reader can be related in an altogether vague way:

> "Jones may empathize with Smith because they have both had surgery for colon cancer or because they have both had surgery for cancer of different sorts or because they both have had surgery of some sort or because they both have been in the hospital or because they both have

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[6] Note that Keen also defines ambassadorial empathy separately to bounded, strategic empathy. However, given that these two overlap, I have combined them here.

experienced severe physical pain from illness or have had reason to fear a premature death." (Hogan 143-144)

Situational empathy, therefore, can be both direct or abstract, but the underlying notion is that it is related to the personal experience of the reader. Whilst we may not empathise with Billy Pilgrim's ability to become unstuck in time in *Slaughterhouse-five,* we may well empathise with his cowardice in the face of danger (Chapter Two) or his trauma at the events in Dresden (Chapter Eight). If an author wants to promote situational empathy, they must turn their focus to something that many readers have experienced (which is why, Hogan argues, that so many novels centre around the ideas of love or loss) and are able, in some way, to map their own feelings onto that of the character's. However, from a craft perspective, I think it's more pertinent to focus instead on characters that fail to create empathy in this way, that block this 'mapping' as Hogan so aptly puts it.

Hogan argues that characters that can be defined in terms of absolutes will block an empathetic response. What's important for Hogan is that the character's identity is faceted, such that they cannot be categorised as wholly good, or wholly evil (or wholly powerful, and so forth). This categorisation, Hogan argues, is what presents the barrier for empathetic identification, an idea he claims has been supported as early as Aristotle, who argued that an antagonist who is wholly evil will not inspire pity. (45; 1453a) Arguably this is applicable to both flat and round characters, which we will turn to individually.

*Flat characters*

Keen argues that 'flat characters' (defined by Forster as being characters that are reducible to one quality or idea [48-49]) can be just as adept at producing empathy, particularly in less-experienced readers (Keen "Empathy and the Novel" 69). It is important to note that Forster's definition does not promote categorisation, but rather states the flat character is reduced to her goal, with no existence outside of this. (Forster 49) For example, in my own work, Nora can be characterised in one sentence, "I want to keep working for Charles Hunbry." I applied this retroactively to the scenes in which Nora features, ensuring that her dialogue and actions were pointing towards this, and added a number of dialogue lines to promote this idea:

> She paused, mid-stroke. 'I am very lucky to work for him, My Lady.'
> Marian tilted her head to catch the woman's eye. 'You can be frank with me. I hope we will be friends.'

> Nora cast a furtive glance towards the door. 'I won't say a word against the Master,' she said. (Austin, 27)

Whilst Nora is a flat character, it gives the reader more of a sense of her purpose, and thus a baseline from which they can judge her actions (which we will discuss in full when we turn to character realism). However, there are difficulties in arguing that an author can directly *provoke* reader empathy through the use of flat characters such as Nora, as studies have also shown that mature readers are less likely to identify with stereotypical characters, (Keen "Empathy and the Novel" 69) and it remains a question as to whether mature readers are less readily drawn into an empathetic response when a new character is introduced. However, Keen hypothesises that characters only need to be identifiable at a very basic level to kick-start a reader's empathetic response, such as giving the character a name and a basic description, as "character identification often invites empathy, even when the character and the reader differ from each other in all sorts of practical and obvious ways." ("Empathy and the Novel" 69-70) That is not to say that every minor character requires their own introduction and backstory. Wood points out that minor characters are barely physically described (75) and Forster that minor characters should not merely be decorative but serve a purpose (104).

Furthermore, Keen adds a psychological element to the argument for flat characters, claiming that their basic nature may be more adept at promoting a quicker empathetic response, as "human empathy may arise from a set of responses so swift and automatic that cognition… functions to limit it." (Keen 69) I applied this readily in my own work in Chapter Twelve, where we meet the castle's bursar, Shane. Originally, this character was nameless, however whilst editing I tried to flesh out his character a bit further, identifying him and giving him a larger part in the conversation (despite Marian not being able to understand what's being said): Shane is seen hobbling as he enters, begging Ineen to reconsider her decision to choose her son's return over the region's food stores and leaving, defeated. I chose to name Shane (in contrast to the nameless boy who rides past Charles and Marian in Chapter Five) because Shane advances the mood of the scene: his reaction confirms that what Ineen is doing is dangerous and that it will not be taken well by the people.

What's interesting in relation to flat characters is that an anachronous structure can allow repeated introductions to this character, even if they do not appear more than once, chronologically speaking, within the story. One of the flat characters we

are drawn to create an empathetic link with in *Slaughterhouse-five* is Edgar Derby, regularly referenced as "poor old Edgar Derby," who we learn in Chapter One died at the hands of the firing squad for stealing a teapot, an event we finally witness in the final chapter.

Applying our analyses regarding categorisation being a barrier for empathy, it's true that Edgar's character cannot be defined in terms of absolutes. Whilst he displays what may be deemed 'good' qualities, such as cradling Weary's head as he dies, he also displays what could be seen as arrogance ("he had expected to become a commander… because of his wisdom" [Vonnegut 1126-1127]) and he decides to steal. Hogan's argument against categorical sympathy (by way of characterising through absolutes), I think, is particularly pertinent to the discussion of flat characters as there is a propensity to categorise flat characters more so than rounded ones. The author has less opportunity (and often, no need) to flesh out the intricacies of their personalities. This is what caused me to edit the final chapter, whereby Nora decides not to help Marian go undetected and instead alerts Charles to her presence. If I were to be true to Nora character, that she wants to continue working for Charles, then her deciding to help Marian avoid Charles may directly negate that. Furthermore, it rounds her character, she is not wholly good (as we see where she helps Marian) and nor is she wholly bad (when she does not help Marian) she is simply pursuing her own goal.

The difference between a flat character like Shane or Nora (from my novel) and Edgar is the repetition of Edgar's presence (and his death), which the anachronous structure allows for. Although Edgar is only present for a short period of Billy's chronological timeline (from the boxcar to his death after Dresden) the character is present throughout *Slaughterhouse-five* (indeed, he is mentioned no fewer than 24 times). This repetition of his death (and the fact the reader is given notice of it at the very beginning of the novel) lends the event and the character himself more importance. Genette argues this is because it serves as a seed: a breadcrumb laid by the author to alert the reader to an event's future importance or significance (particularly evident, Genette argues, in the Mystery/Crime Thriller genres [36]). This repetition also increases the duration of Edgar's time on the page, (duration being classed by Genette as how much pseudo-time story events take and how much of the text this takes up) which gives his death more significance within the story than say, that of two scouts in Chapter Three. Notably, Genette argues another way an author

can place importance on an event is by way of repeating analepsis, (where the character retraces their own emotions or actions) which can confer present importance on past events or bring to light a character's view on the situation that we weren't privy to before "either by making significant what was not so originally, or by refuting the first interpretation and replacing it with a new one." (Genette 56)

Thus, we can carry forward a number of conclusions in relation to flat characters in relation to anachrony: firstly, in order for a flat character to be capable of promoting empathy, she must be a faceted character that cannot be reduced to an absolute, empathy may be better promoted by giving the character a name and goal, and finally, this empathy can potentially be increased by lending the character more importance, either by increasing the frequency of their appearance, or the duration, or the combination of the two.

### *Round characters, character goal and character realism*

If a flat character is designated as one that takes up fewer words, then a sensical opposite to this should be found in the definition of a 'round' character. However, Wood argues we cannot merely define a round character as one that is given more space on the page. Wood claims that a character's depth (via the means of soliloquy, monologue etc.) does not necessitate her impact on the reader (noting the vibrancy of Fluellen in Shakespeare's *Henry V* in contrast to the King's formulaic self-pity). (Wood 131-32) Wood instead would prefer to define round characters as opaque (and thus more mysterious) and flat characters as transparent. (Wood 129) Thus with round characters, instead of explaining why characters act in the way they do, we must leave the reader with questions.

Importantly, however, the character's goal in the story should not be one of the questions the reader is left to ponder. Yorke argues "if we know why characters do what they do, we will love them more," (32) which relates directly to our previous discussion on character goal, comprehension and empathy. Readers need to know the character's goal in order to empathise with them and their failure or success in achieving it.

Having a character goal is crucial. As Butler so aptly puts it: "Fiction is about human beings… and, as any Buddhist will tell you, you cannot exist as a human being on this planet for thirty seconds without desiring something." (Butler 39-40), but what form does this goal need to take in order to best promote empathy?

Yorke argues that the character's desire both has to be at the macro and the micro level, meaning that intangible desires need to have a physical representation in order to promote character/reader affinity as it is the thwarting of this goal that causes conflict, and ultimately, suffering on the part of the character. This is supported by Butler, who argues that the character goal is the "dynamic of desire" that ultimately underpins the plot (40) and that if this desire is not physically present ("manifest") - "you may admire [it]... but nothing resonates in the marrow of your bones." (41) Whilst Butler is not explicitly calling this affinity empathy, it is implicit in his definition of its alternative: leaving your reader cold and distanced. (39)

In my novel, Marian's desire is to belong somewhere. Given this desire in intangible, I needed to give it a physical representation, too: located in her wanting a house she can call home. This is signalled to the reader in a number of ways: Marian only refers to her family home in Scotland as "home", she feels uncomfortable and awkward in Charles's house, she baulks at the idea of a life spent at sea or between multiple houses and she dreams of a white house with a picket fence. Whilst the macro goal of "belonging" is vague, the micro goal of "having a house to call home" is very much physical.

Likewise, in the TTTW, Clare and Henry's goal is to be together. This goal is impeded by Henry's ability to time travel, causing Clare to feel lonely and afraid, and the goal is located physically in them being together, and not apart:

> "Our life together in this too-small apartment is punctuated by Henry's small absences. Sometimes he disappears unobtrusively... Sometimes it's frightening...When I was a child I looked forward to seeing Henry. Every visit was an event. Now every absence is a nonevent, a subtraction, an adventure I will hear about when my adventurer materializes at my feet, bleeding or whistling, smiling or shaking. Now I am afraid when he is gone." (Niffenegger 274-275)

Yorke goes a step further than this, however, arguing that a narrative that centres around the character's *needs*, rather than her *wants* promotes empathy more effectively. Thus, characters shouldn't always get want they want, but rather what they need. K.M. Weiland argues that a character's want is physical, whereas his need "will transform his perspective of himself and the world around him, leaving him more capable of coping with his remaining external problems." (36) For example, in my own novel, Marian's *want* is to have a home of her own, and her *need* is to realise she has the ability to create this for herself.

This is the difference, Yorke argues, between a narrative that creates an empathetic link and one that doesn't. I found this aspect particularly hard to develop in my own writing, as the realisation of the need is something that must come in stages, rather than all at once (and preferably, if we are to follow Yorke's story act patterns, before the final climax). Thus I turned to my analysis of TTTW to aid me: Clare's *want* is to be with Henry, but her *need* is to realise that a life spent waiting is not a life lived. Throughout the novel, Clare shows signs that she will fight against her role as 'the one that is left behind': she focuses on her art and is angry at Henry when he returns from a particularly long absence, she begins to gain independence in other areas, but the reality is she does not stop waiting for Henry. Part Three of the novel, *A Treatise in Longing*, shows that she has waited for Henry, in some sense, all her life - their last meeting being when she is an elderly woman.

In my own novel, Marian's development towards her realisation of her need is accelerated by the way the people around her perceive her, in a similar way that Henry's character development is accelerated by Clare's knowledge of the man he will become. The Marian Hugh, Art and Ineen know is a warrior, one who is not afraid and one who will stand up for what she wants. Art pushes Marian into teaching Eustace how to fight on the boat, citing skills he thinks already exist and Ineen convinces Marian to lead the negotiation for Hugh's release. Marian rises to these challenges (albeit reluctantly) such that when it comes to the scene where Marian must rescue Hugh, she goes alone. Later, when she is faced with her fear: coming face to face with Charles, she stands her ground and asks for a divorce.

That is not to say that a well-crafted character is one that pursues their goal unwaveringly, and for whom all actions can be explicated in terms of their goal. Indeed, Wood argues that in round characters, there must be room for surprise. This is in agreement with Forster's claim that in order for a character to be considered round it must be capable of surprising the reader, but Forster adds a second caveat: that is must be surprising *in a convincing way*. If the character performs actions or says things wildly outside of his or her personality, "it is flat, pretending to be round." (55) In order to unpack what could be considered convincing and what not, we must turn to character realism.

Authors can promote character realism in a number of ways: presenting the character's mind (Herman 267-8) and presenting their motives for their actions (Miall 54) being two of the most commonly enacted. Bortolussi and Dixon expand on

Miall's view, adding that motivations and reactions should be realistic, as a character who behaves in a coherent way given their situation and surroundings is more likely to garner empathy than one that doesn't. (Bortolussi and Dixon 240) Thus characters should have clear motives for their actions, and their actions should be coherent with their situation. Character realism is important in and of itself for empathy promotion, too. Keen argues that a reader's judgement about the realism of the characters can directly impact on character/reader affinity. (Keen "Empathy and the Novel" 86)

This concept of 'convincing surprise' in a rounded character is something I have brought into my own writing and caused me to change a scene entirely. In a later chapter, Marian, Art and Eustace are shipwrecked on route to barter for Hugh's release. Originally, this scene involved them losing the ransom in the wreck and having to calculate a new plot to save Hugh. In my rework, I altered this so that it became Art's choice to bury the ransom on the beach they are wrecked upon, and to deliberately have them leave without it. This added a number of benefits, as I could introduce conflict between Marian and Art and further develop (and deepen) Art's character:

> 'Have you lost your mind?' Marian hissed, standing and catching her balance, her arms outstretched. She had meant to tower over him menacingly, but she could barely manage to stay upright. 'Are you telling me that we're walking into this with nothing to bring to the bargaining table?'
> 'It would've ruined Donegal,' Art said, his voice low. 'Just one bad harvest and the people would have starved!'(Austin, Chapter 14, unpublished ms)

Whilst Art's motive is not opaque (his thoughts on Ineen's decision to potentially starve the region are clear in Chapter Twelve) my narrative follows Marian more closely, and so Art's thoughts and feelings are more opaque than Marian's. It is worth noting here that the effect of narrative choice on empathy is inconclusive, although there is a general feeling that first person narrative promotes greater empathy between author and reader (Keen "Empathy and the Novel" 97, footnote 102). However, Keen also notes that "direct description of a character's emotional state or circumstances by a third-person narrator may produce empathy in readers just as effectively as indirect implication of emotional states through actions and context" (92) and cautions against focussing too heavily on narrative choice: as there is a great deal that has not been subjected to empirical testing. Whilst we do not get a direct description of Art's emotional state, we are able to ascertain how he feels through his action and his

reaction. Thus, a layer is added to Art which did not exist before: he is a loyal friend, but he is also loyal to his people. The point of the scene was not to give answers to the reader, but to allow them to question, to allow them to see Art as a character who is not entirely transparent, but one that makes his own decisions (potentially poor ones) and acts upon his own will. Furthermore, by changing the loss of the ransom from an act of misfortune to a calculated decision, Art becomes his own obstacle to his goal of rescuing Hugh (although importantly his goal does not change: he still wants to rescue Hugh, he just wants to do it another way.) In changing the scene, Art's conflict, that which is stopping him from achieving his goal, becomes internal, rather than external.

Thus, character realism insofar as 'behaving in a coherent way' must be understood as follows in order to promote empathy: coherent with the character's goal, coherent with the world around them and coherent with what the reader knows about the character.

However, it is not sufficient that characters are capable of surprise in order to promote empathy. Yorke argues that three-dimensional characters must also *develop* as they progress through the narrative, they must change: and it is this change that allows the reader to connect with the character. "Only then can we transcend our own egos; only then can connection be really made" (Yorke 274) a view supported by both Wood and Forster.

Anachrony has interesting effects on character realism in the context of character development. When Clare meets Henry in TTTW at age 28, she knows a number of things about Henry (age 29+) that he is not presently aware of. For example, when he goes to drink, she tells him that he doesn't drink (or rather that he shouldn't) and she tells him they will get married (despite the fact that Henry is presently dating a woman called Ingrid). For Clare, Henry's actions at the age of 28 are out of character, because Henry has not yet developed to become the Henry she knows (aged 33)*:*

> "I've missed you—" now I am crying.
> "You've been with me almost nonstop for weeks."
> "I know but—you're not you, yet—I mean, you're different. Damn."
> (Niffenegger 156)

Anachrony allows Niffenegger to perform prolepsis in the narrative-now. For Clare, the version of Henry she knows does not yet exist: she must work to help him develop into the person she knows:

> "When we met I was wrecked, blasted, and damned, and I am slowly pulling myself together because I can see that you are a human being and I would like to be one, too... But it's a long way from the me you're dealing with in 1991 to me, talking to you right now from 1996. You have to work at me; I can't get there alone." (Niffenegger 157)

By highlighting the fact that Henry's character is not consistent with what Clare knows, Niffenegger is promoting character realism as well as foreshadowing character development: Henry will change when he meets Clare, and changes because of her, as well as for her.

Thus, I would argue that within an anachronous structure, this 'convincing surprise' can be twofold. Whilst character actions can convincingly surprise the reader, they can also convincingly surprise other characters, creating an interesting vibration between what they think they know about a character and the reality of that character. That's not to say the same could not be achieved with a chronicle structure (an example being two characters who have spent time apart) however the difference with an anachronous structure is that the reader does not see the time passing in the meantime.

Character realism is further developed by what the author puts in place around her characters and has them do. Nussbaum argues that concrete descriptions of lives which are different from our own and the seeming reality of these lives is what allows the reader to bond with the character. (Nussbaum "Poetic Justice" 10) Concrete descriptions could include things such as having the characters eat, drink and sleep and describing their surroundings, however, as Wood points out, this detail does not need to be excessive. It can include bringing minor characters surrounding the protagonist to life (75-76) as we have seen with flat characters, describing scenery in panning bursts and allowing the reader to fill in the gaps, (74) or having the character fixate on some details and pass over others, (72) in a mirror of human observation. Wood claims that an over-attention to detail (which he fantastically coins "a procession of strung details, a necklace of noticings" [77]) is more likely to draw the reader out of the writing, rather than towards it.

This is not to say that these 'concrete descriptions' need to depict realistic situations, (although the world around them should be, and we will come to this next), merely that the reaction should be. Wood goes as far as to say that realism is one of the most important aspects of the novel: "novels tend to fail… when [it] has failed to

teach us how to adapt to its own conventions, has failed to manage a specific hunger for its own characters, its own reality level." (120)

This was especially pertinent for me writing the scene in which Marian discovers that she has time-travelled. I needed to balance her character's keen intellect with the logical impossibility of the situation, whilst simultaneously keeping in mind the fact that the reader knows Marian has time travelled, and it only Marian herself that is in the dark (and thus the pace should be balanced). Manipulation of pace can do its own work in promoting empathy, both by slowing the narrative down and speeding it up and both have been argued to produce empathy. David Miall argues that foregrounding (which slows the pace of the narrative) can promote an empathetic response by encouraging active reading. On the other hand, Keen argues that there is a potential link between how quickly a reader finishes a novel and how engaged they are: "speedy reading may be a token of involvement in a character's fate, identification and even empathy." (Keen "Empathy and the Novel" 94) In terms of the pacing, I went through three rounds of edits for Chapter Six, adding in more dialogue (to speed up the pace) and reducing the number of times Marian notes the oddity of the situation before she walks through the veil. In terms of character realism, I approached this threefold: firstly, by foreshadowing (providing Marian with the clues she would need to make her own discovery): the odd clothes, the language; and secondly with concrete evidence: the horses had disappeared and Charles' boat dissolves in and out of view, cementing the idea that she is not where she thinks she is. Finally, her character lends itself to one that would seek a rational solution. In Chapter Two she tries to rationalise a way out of her own wedding: "'Charles will not want me like this,' Marian said, her brain desperate to find the end of this knot and pull on it until the whole mess unravelled." (Austin 14)

In comparison, Clare's first reaction to Henry being a time-traveller in TTTW (*First Date: Two)* is coloured by her age: she is six years old when she meets him, and we already know that she is an outspoken child (when Henry first arrives, she yells at him, thinking he is her brother and proceeds to throw a shoe at him.) Thus, her incredulity is coherent not only with her character but with the irrationality of the situation in its totality. It is only when Henry disappears in front of her eyes that she believes him. The anachronous structure of TTTW, however, adds an additional layer to character realism. We already know Clare's adult reaction to Henry's revelation from the first chapter (*First Date: One)*: "I remember you knew my name, and I

remember you vanishing quite spectacularly. In retrospect, it's obvious that you'd been there before." (Niffenegger 12) Thus Niffenegger and I mirror each other in our use of foreshadowing, however, whereas I am priming the reader for Marian's clues, Niffenegger is priming the reader for Clare's acceptance of Henry and his time-travelling. Niffenegger's anachronous structure allows her to interplay analepsis and prolepsis (Clare is referring to an event in her past, that is simultaneously in Henry's future) in order to prime the reader for what they will then consider a realistic character reaction on behalf of her younger self (her incredulity). Niffenegger's decision to place Clare's recalled reaction before the scene in which she reacts allows the reader not only to anticipate the incredulity but to anticipate it with the knowledge that Clare accepts it, accepts Henry, loves him for it and plans to marry him.

The impact of this is more evident if we consider how it would read chronologically (whereby we see Clare, age 6, acting incredulously to Henry's revelation, and then much later, Clare, age 20, recalling this). Chronological ordering removes the "other kind of suspense" that Rimmon-Kenan refers to in relation to prolepsis, the question of *how* events will unfold, rather than the question of *what* will unfold, the *how* in this case being: how does Clare fall in love with Henry? We see the effect ("The girl sort of breathes "Henry!" in this very evocative way that convinces me that at some point in time we have a really amazing thing together" [Niffenegger 12]) but as yet, we do not get the cause. This suspense could arguably serve to promote empathy further, as Keen argues that suspense is linked to a reader's emotional engagement with the piece[7] and indeed, the speed at which a reader reads has also been linked to their degree of empathetic connection to the novel. (Keen, "Empathy and the Novel" 94)

In summary then, in order for a round character to classed as such, it must be capable of surprise. In order for the character to be surprising in a convincing way, she must have a goal, and in order for that character to better promote empathy, she must also have a need, that causes her to develop and change over the course of the narrative. This is all underpinned by the reality of the character: the realism of their reactions being tied to their goal. An anachronous structure can allow the author to bolster character realism (by producing past or future confirmation or causation for story-now events) and induce suspense in the form of prolepsis (showing aspects of

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[7] For more on this see further Herman, 2007, p.63

the character's personality as an effect, before the reader is privy to the cause) and even accelerate character development by helping the protagonist realise their need.

## Story world realism

The realism of an author's character is (to a degree) hinged upon the realism of the world around them. A study into transportation in fiction and empathy showed that readers were more likely to report an empathetic response to a piece of work where they felt transported into the fictional world, versus when they did not. (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013) For the purpose of the study, 'transportation' was defined as: "a convergent process where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative." (Bal & Veltkamp, Footnote 14) The most important factor for transportation was believability: readers that believed the narrative were more likely to report transportation.

Believability is importantly distinct to realism, although the two are connected. Whilst time-travel is ultimately unreal, it has to be believable within the narrative. In the case of TTTW, arguably what makes Henry's time travel believable is the fact that Henry and Clare (by and large) do not benefit from it: time travel is what causes Clare to miscarry, it is what causes Henry to almost miss his own wedding, and ultimately it kills him. However, Henry and Clare's world is "real within its context" (Bal & Veltkamp, 2) in the sense that the mode of Henry's travel remains consistent throughout: he feels dizzy, or displaced, and he begins to disappear, losing his clothes along the way. Niffenegger creates a set of rules around Henry's time-travel and follows these in order to create this realism (it would feel jarring if, having spent a large portion of the book talking about how Henry always arrives at his time-travelled location naked, he suddenly showed up with clothes). This is something I have worked very hard to manage in my own novel: ensuring that the modus operandi of time travel is consistent (the locket gets hot, the air shimmers, Marian walks through the veil) and that is only *time* that is displaced, and not location (unlike Henry or indeed Billy, Marian will always find herself in the same location, just at a different time).

Furthermore, I think this point of transportation relates somewhat indirectly to the argument previously put forward by Wood, that the moment a reader becomes too focussed on the author's hand behind the writing (which one can achieve with too much description) they are drawn away from the text. The extent to which your

writing style affects the promotion of empathy is inconclusive, but it is worth mentioning in so far as empathetic responses can be affected by an author's own writing flair. Bortolussi and Dixon emphasise that the aesthetic quality of the writing can promote empathy, and Keen agrees, claiming that "unusual or striking representations in the literary text promote foregrounding and open the way to empathetic reading" (Keen, "Empathy and the Novel" 87) although this may be affected by a reader's personal experiences and how mature a reader they are. (93-93) On the other hand, Hakemulder argues that too close a focus on poetic language can also have the opposite effect and draw the reader out of the story as they turn their focus onto the craftsmanship of the author, rather than focussing on the story itself. I do not want to focus too keenly on writing style as a way of promoting (or negating) transportation, as I believe that whilst an author may flex their writing style to suit a great number of genres, their fundamental writing style is unique to each author. As Wood rightly points out: "Shakespeare's characters sound like themselves and always like Shakespeare, too." (30) However, it is worth being aware that transportation can be affected by writing style although it is affected to a greater degree by believability and realism.

An anachronous structure can potentially impact believability and story world realism because it is deliberately removed from human experience. After all, chronology is "not only the order of nature, but also the order of causality [and] hence of plot coherence." (Sternberg 903) If we are to accept the earlier point, that plot cohesion and comprehension are linked, and the further conclusion that empathy and comprehension go hand in hand, we must take forward the notion that anachronous novels must retain a degree of chronology in order to be believable to the reader in the sense that each cause must have an effect. What anachrony permits the author to do is displace these, presenting cause before effect, or effect before cause (for example in my novel, we see that Hugh thinks kindly of Marian, but as yet we don't know why):

> "I have always thought that, you know,' he said, his voice low. 'Elise O'Neill never did stand a chance against you. A milk-and-whey girl of only fourteen could never have competed with the warrior I met on the roads to Dublin.'
> *Warrior?* She bit down on the insides of her cheeks, forcing herself to stay silent.
> He leant towards her until the gap between them a mere slither of air. 'Do you remember what you said to me, that night under the stars?'
> Marian shook her head.

> 'I've thought of it every day since then,' he said, the wine sweet on his breath. 'And you. Every single day. Have you thought of me?'
> (Austin, 50)

However, I would argue that this believability does not necessarily need to sit solely at the hands of the reader. Instead, it has to be believable that the *character* believes something. In the example above, it is clear Hugh believes he knows Marian, even if Marian doesn't believe he does. Likewise, in *Slaughterhouse-five*, it's clear that Billy Pilgrim ardently believes he was abducted by aliens from Tralfamadore. The reader, however, may very well question it (and indeed I think this is Vonnegut's intention) for various reasons: Billy's love for Kilgore Trout's science fiction novel bears similarities to his experiences, Billy does not mention Tralfamadore before his head injury, and his conversations with the alien mirrors the conversion with the German guard in the POW camp. What's important is the author's role in crafting the narrative such that the characters believe the world around them.

To conclude, the Empathy Toolbox has defined a number of ways to promote empathy through craft: round characters must be surprising in a convincing way, and flat character must not be reducible to a category. Character and story-world realism are key, with the pillars of believability and consistency a priority for authors. Furthermore, pacing elements like foregrounding and narrative elements like duration and repetition can be used to lend importance to characters and events. However, it is clear that time travel is not the only way an author can employ anachrony, and anachrony is not the only way in which the author can employ elements of the Empathy Toolbox. Anachrony permits prolepsis and analepsis, which can both foster character realism and accelerate character development. Time-travel in particular can present unique enigmas between characters, or between character and reader, whereby one (or both) are left in the dark due to the reversal of effect and cause (although as we've noted, there is a strong argument for fulfilling the causal link eventually, lest it becomes an ellipsis.) This presentation of effect because cause can also induce suspense, however, as we have also seen, this suspense is not effective on its own. It must, in some way, be related to the character's goal and the thwarting of it, and this goal must be present antecedent to events pertaining to the character's success or failure in order to promote empathy in those scenes. On the other hand, we have also seen that anachrony can hinder empathy (as it may impact comprehension by removing causal links or rendering them unclear). Thus, whilst it's not evident that

anachrony can promote empathy to a greater extent, it's clear that anachrony can promote it differently and, when done well, the author is able to approach the goal of promoting empathy in an anachronous narrative with a variety of additional tools.

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