

SOME NOTES TOWARDS A RHETORIC  
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## DEDICATION

For all the time travelers hiding in the wings.

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## ABSTRACT

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This project aims to examine time travel not as a scientific possibility, but as a narrative device employed towards various rhetorical aims. Drawing on Narratology, this project first establishes a terminology to discuss how time travel functions as a narrative device related to anachronies and metalepses. Having coined the term *anachronic metalepsis* to explain the narrative functions of time travel, this project then turns to close readings of eight time travel narratives drawn from different genres and mediums. Organized into clusters focusing on the causal and spatial potentials of time travel, these readings demonstrate time travel narratives' powers to manifest and dramatize narrative and historical forces, explore questions of causality and choice, and spatialize history and examine our relationship with it. Ultimately, this project demonstrates that time travel is a many-faceted narrative device that exists across multiple genres and serves many different purposes, thus calling for further examination of time travel narratives as artifacts created to shoulder specific rhetorical burdens.

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## CHAPTER I

### THIS STUFF ONLY HAPPENS IN STORIES

Time travel is only possible in narrative. Time travel *may* be possible according to certain logical, philosophical, and scientific views of the real world, but in a practical sense, it is not possible outside of narrative. If it were, where are all the time travelers? Why is Trump still president?<sup>1</sup> There are logical, philosophical, and scientific answers to these questions, but they do not prove time travel's existence; they only respond to some questions raised by the possibility of its existence. The time dilation caused by traveling at a meaningful fraction of the speed of light can lead to a sort of time travel, where the traveler experiences a shorter period of time relative to those at her departure point and destination, but this only works in one direction, going "forward" into the future, and it is not a practical means of time travel available to inhabitants of the real world. James Gleick notes a case of time dilation in the real world:

When the American astronaut Scott Kelly returned to Earth in March 2016 after nearly a year of high-speed orbit, he was reckoned to be 8.6 milliseconds younger, relative to his groundling twin brother, Mark. (Then

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<sup>1</sup> The *Futurama* episode "Decision 3012" provides an answer for this sort of question. In it, a man is sent back from the apocalyptic future resulting from Nixon's reelection (it would require another footnote to explain that, so just roll with it). His mission is to defeat Nixon and avert the future from which he comes. He is successful, and since the future from which he comes no longer happens, he ceases to exist, and Nixon wins unopposed.

again, Mark had lived through only 340 days while Scott experienced 10,944 sunrises and sunsets.) (58).

Gleick, in his parenthetical, notes that we can measure the temporal disjunction between Scott and Mark Kelly's lives in different ways, drawing attention to the fact that we can measure and perceive time in different ways. But more significant to my point is the insignificance of 8.6 milliseconds. An eye blink lasts between 100 and 400 milliseconds. Certainly, Mark and Scott Kelly were born more than 8.6 milliseconds apart; at least I hope so for their mother's sake. Traveling at high velocity for 340 days to arrive 8.6 milliseconds in the future is hardly time travel in any practical sense. And when you factor in the way that we experience time in ebbs and flows, where days sometimes seem to fly past while minutes sometimes feel like eternities, 8.6 milliseconds is so insignificant as to be meaningless. There is only one place where humans regularly experience time travel, and that is within the realm of narrative. Time travel then is foremost a narrative device, and thus it should be examined as one. Therefore, this dissertation asks: Toward what ends, narratological and rhetorical, do authors employ time travel?

Narrative itself can be seen as a time machine. David Wittenberg states that "even the most elementary narratives, whether fictional or non-fictional, set out to modify or manipulate the order, duration, and significance of events in time" (1). Narrators possess a power to manipulate time. A narrator may move

forward and backward in his or her story's timeline, revealing details of the past in flashbacks and visions of the future for his or her characters through foreshadowing. A narrator may skip over periods of time in which no pertinent action occurs and speed up or slow down their presentations of events. Consider for example what may be the most basic and natural form of narrative: the extemporaneous personal anecdote. We have all witnessed a storyteller jump about in the chronology of her tale as she remembers significant details and monitors and reacts to the questions and responses of her audience. Other more formal examples can be found in nearly all eras of Western culture. *The Odyssey* begins in the middle of its story, *in medias res*. The medieval rhetorician and poetic stylist, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, in his *Poetria Nova* encouraged the use of what he calls (ironically in this case) "unnatural" beginnings, ones that start at a middle or end point in the story's action so as to highlight the significance of that part of the action to the story's rhetorical burden. Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* begins in a time separated from its main action by centuries. The available examples explode with the advent of modern and post-modern fiction and the development of film narratives. Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* jumps forwards and backwards throughout its narrator Marcel's life, often in confusing ways. A similar sense of temporal confusion can be found in the "Benjy" section of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. Films like those in the *Rocky* series employ techniques like montage and slow motion to speed up and

slow down their presentation of events. Filmmakers like Quentin Tarantino and Christopher Nolan<sup>2</sup> use editing techniques to create temporal puzzles in which figuring out the sequence of presented events is key to understanding the story.

Thus, in a sense, time travel narratives are not so different than any other narratives. But in another sense, they are quite different, and their difference is what makes them worthy of examination. Whereas all narratives implicitly possess and often employ the narrative power to manipulate time, time travel narratives explicitly focus on this power. Furthermore, while in most narratives, the power to manipulate time is in the possession of the narrator, time travel narratives often grant that power to their characters. Time travel narratives do not just possess the power to manipulate time; they are often about that very power. This explicit focus on the narrative power to manipulate time is what makes time travel narratives significant. For this reason, David Wittenberg calls the time travel story:

a "narratological laboratory" in which many of the most basic theoretical questions about storytelling, and by extension about the philosophy of temporality, history, and subjectivity, are represented in the form of literal devices and plots, at once both convenient for criticism and fruitfully complex (Wittenberg 2).

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<sup>2</sup> See Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* and Nolan's *Memento*.

Wittenberg's argument is that time travel narratives are "not merely ... examples of or depictions of narratological or philosophical issues, but that these stories are themselves already exercises in narratology and the theorization of temporality" (2). Time travel narratives highlight the ability of all narratives to manipulate time by foregrounding that power in the actions of the characters or the natures of their lives and worlds, instead of maintaining it in the hands of the narrators. They explore that power by placing it in hands and contexts where it is not naturally present and examining the consequences of doing so.

But this is not all that time travel narratives do, and here is where I would like to expand Wittenberg's conception of the *narratological laboratory*. Were a time travel story just a narratological laboratory for exploring philosophical notions about narrative and temporality, it would be but a fascinating thought exercise, speculative fiction in its purest sense (and still worthy of examination). But time travel narratives can be more than just speculations about narrative and temporality. Time travel can also be employed allegorically and metaphorically. Or, in other words, time travel narratives can speak to us not just about their own unnatural story worlds or philosophical inquiries into the natures of narrative and time; they can also speak to us about our own world. Time travel is not just a means of creating a narratological laboratory but a rhetorical device used to reflect, observe, and interrogate our own lives and beliefs. Because of this, a thorough examination of time travel as a narrative device must rely on both

narratological and rhetorical methods. It is not enough to dissect how time is presented and manipulated in a time travel narrative. One must also examine the rhetorical burdens and effects of that presentation and manipulation.

Before I enter into a brief history of time travel narratives, it is important for two significant reasons that I lay down a working definition of time travel narratives. First, within the narrow realm of scholarship devoted to time travel narratives, a formal definition has yet to be stated. Gleick, Nahin, and Wittenberg do not provide definitions for time travel narratives or stories, instead relying on their readily recognizable nature. Bud Foote devotes an entire chapter of his *The Connecticut Yankee in the Twentieth Century: Travel to the Past in Science Fiction* to definitions, but time travel itself is not among them (17-39). It may seem unnecessary or tautological to define time travel narratives. They are just narratives in which time travel occurs. This is so self-evident that it may seem unnecessary to state. Strangely, in their preface to *Time Travel in Popular Media*, editors Matthew Jones and Joan Ormrod assert:

there are no reliable tropes to define [time travel narratives], so a traveler may travel through time by machine or magic, or even means never explained to the audience (1).

But this statement seems to be self-contradictory. *Travel through time* is the reliable trope that defines time travel narratives.

Second and related to this lack of a formal definition, some may disagree about whether a particular narrative is a time travel narrative or is instead better placed in a different, but perhaps related, genre. Time travel narratives that feature time machines or other such devices are clearly time travel narratives, but there are many narratives that involve movement or communication across temporal boundaries that may not be so obviously and self-evidently time travel narratives. For example, some may argue that a film like *Frequency* (2000) is not a time travel narrative because it contains communication across time, but not actual travel. Or, some may debate whether the time dilation present in *Interstellar* (2014) qualifies as time travel. This debate is fueled in part by the film also incorporating a time loop as key to its resolution. Others may argue that a novel like *Outlander* does not count as a time travel narrative because it includes a single one-way trip to the past, and from there proceeds as essentially a historical romance.

Because my aim is to discuss time travel narratives broadly, I want to define time travel narratives in such a way as to include narratives like these as well as ones that are more readily recognized as time travel narratives. I also want to remain genre independent. While time travel narratives are most often associated with science fiction, limiting myself to only science fiction narratives would mean ignoring a wealth of time travel narratives that are more closely associated with other genres, such as the aforementioned *Outlander*. Finally, I

want to remain medium-independent, recognizing that time travel narratives appear across print fiction, television, films, and even games. Respecting these (admittedly, self-imposed) obligations, I define time travel narratives as *narratives in which one or more characters travel or communicate across temporal boundaries by means of a device, a power, or a phenomenon.*

Narratives in which characters travel backward and/or forward through time have been with us for centuries. Samuel Madden's *Memoirs of the Twentieth Century*, published in 1733, is generally considered to be the first narrative in English to employ a time travel-like device (Nahin xiii). In it, an angel transports diplomatic missives from the late twentieth century back to the eighteenth, showing how the future world has come to be dominated by Catholicism, a troubling vision for its Anglican author and audience. The titular hero of Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) falls asleep for twenty years and finds himself awake in a world that has passed him by. Ebenezer Scrooge of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) is transported into his past and potential future through the intercessions of the Christmas ghosts. Hank Morgan, the hero of Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), finds himself transported to England in the time of King Arthur after suffering a blow to the head, where his nineteenth century understanding of engineering and science makes him seem to be a wizard.

While the roots of time travel narratives in the English language can be traced back to at least the first half of the eighteenth century, the widespread popularity of the device and the genre(s) that employed it began with a novella much closer to our own time: H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*. From Wells' novella and its popularity, we get some of our most basic terms: *time machines* and *time travelers*. Time travel as a "term first occurs in English in 1914--a back-formation from Wells's 'Time Traveller'" (Gleick 24). So while *The Time Machine* is not the first English text that fits my working definition of time travel narratives<sup>3</sup>, it is the text that defines and popularizes the genre. James Gleick argues, "[o]ne way or another, the inventions of H.G. Wells color every time-travel story that followed. When you write about time travel, you either pay homage to *The Time Machine* or dodge its shadow" (25). Darko Suvin goes even further: "For better or for worse ... all of this [Anglophone] SF has sprung from *The Time Machine*" (242). In other words, *The Time Machine* casts a long shadow over the entire genre. So I choose it as a starting point not to divorce these earlier narratives from the canon of time travel narratives, but simply to begin with the most readily recognized and influential touchstone.

With Wells' novella, we can get a glimpse of the possible rhetorical burdens towards which time travel is narratively employed. Wells treats his time machine in a scientific manner. He provides explanation for how time travel

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<sup>3</sup> Wells himself employs time travel in an earlier narrative, 1888's "The Chronic Argonauts."

works: "*There is no difference between time and the three dimensions of space except that our consciousness moves along it* (Wells 4, italics in original). He explains how the time machine does not collide with other objects in its temporal path:

So long as I traveled at a high velocity through time, this scarcely mattered: I was, so to speak, attenuated- was slipping like a vapour through the interstices of intervening substances! (Wells 15).

Wells goes to great lengths to establish the plausibility of his device, so it may seem odd to note that the narrative's focus is less on the act of traveling through time and more on the destinations in time to which the protagonist travels. For Wells, establishing the plausibility of his time machine is a supporting device for establishing the plausibility of the futures to which it is used to travel. In one such future, the time traveler comes into contact with the pastoral surface-dwelling eloi and sinister subterranean morlocks. As the time traveler comes to understand these two different species of humanity, he develops a theory for their emergence:

At first, proceeding from the problems of our own age, it seemed clear as daylight to me that the gradual widening of the present merely temporary and social difference between the Capitalist and the Labourer was the key to the whole position... So, in the end, above ground you must have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort and beauty, and below ground the

Havenots; the workers getting continually adapted to the conditions of their labour... As it seems to me, the refined beauty and the etiolated pallor followed naturally enough (Wells 36).

In short, the degenerate humanity, *eloi* and *morlocks*, witnessed by Wells' Time Traveler is the evolutionary result of generations of class division. What we have here then is "the anti-utopian form most horrifying to the Victorians--a run down class society ruled by a grotesque equivalent of the nineteenth-century industrial proletariat" (Suvin 212).

Wells' anti-utopian vision presents a violent reversal of Victorian social class structure, with the literal *lower* class preying upon the literal *upper* class. Wells couches his vision in scientific terms, presenting it as the result of social and then physical evolution, the same forces that motivate the Victorian sense of progress. This scientific buttressing would have been undermined had the device being used to see the future not itself been presented in scientific terms. So Wells conceives of time travel not to explore its possibilities and problems, but instead to exploit one of its possibilities to present a harrowing vision of the future rooted in a social ill of his own time. Rhetorically, Wells is not focused on temporality or its manipulation. He is showing his readers a way in which class divisions can lead to the destruction of humanity. Implicit in this vision is the point that class divisions are a destructive social ill. For Wells, time travel is a

rhetorical device, lending weight to his anti-utopian class allegory by allowing him to present its vision with a veneer of science.

Less than a decade after *The Time Machine's* publication, Albert Einstein published his first paper explaining the Theory of Relativity: "On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies." This theory, further developed and tested over the following decade, would make Einstein and his equation " $E=MC^2$ " world famous and begin to revolutionize the popular understanding of space and time. Time was seen to be relative to the observer and his or her position and motion; furthermore, gravity could warp both space and time, allowing the latter to flow at different relative rates. Hermann Minkowski, formerly Einstein's math teacher, formalized the concept of time as the fourth dimension, birthing the concept of spacetime, or the space-time continuum. Hugh Everitt's Many Worlds Theory formalized the concept of alternate universes or dimensions with their own parallel or branching timelines. These new popular understanding of space and time would lend more scientific plausibility to the concept of time travel and become the subject of many science fiction narratives throughout the twentieth century.

Many of these narratives focused on the causal and historical paradoxes made possible by time manipulation and travel. Common paradoxes explored in science fiction time travel narratives, according to Paul Nahin, include the "grandfather paradox, which poses the question of what happens if the assassin

goes back in time and murders his grandfather before his (the murderer's) own father is born" (29). This paradox is a dramatic rendering of the question of whether one can change the past. The grandfather paradox also points to a question of free will. Nahin asks, "[i]f the time traveler cannot change events, then *why* not? Is free will simply an illusion?" (36) Or, in other words, if our actions in the past are set in stone, were they always set in stone? Do persons have actual agency? This also relates to the future. Nahin continues: "What if we could see the future? Could we then change it? Does it mean anything to talk about events that have not happened yet?" (36) If the future is unchangeable alongside the past, we are back to a question about the existence of free will: do people make choices that affect their futures or simply act in a preordained manner? These paradoxes point to the possibility of causal loops, paradoxes in which a chronologically later event is the cause for a chronologically earlier event that itself is also the cause for the later event (Nahin 205). Another paradoxical question is, where are all the time travelers? Nahin explains:

From the moment after the first time machine is constructed, through all the rest of civilization, there would be numerous historians (to say nothing of weekend sightseers) who would want to visit every important historical event in recorded history (43).

Presumably, people with time travel powers would also have some means to disguise themselves, but one must wonder where they are hiding. For example, is there an invisible gallery for viewing the bombardment of Fort Sumter or the surrender at Appomattox courthouse or any other significant historical event? Related to this is the cumulative audience paradox. Nahin explains: "This paradox claims that as time travelers to the past continue to visit certain historically interesting dates, there will be an ever-increasing number of people present" (189-90). Here the concern is not just with the presence of unnoticed time travelers at historical events, but with the ever-growing horde of them. This paradox connects to the object duplication paradox (Nahin 190). This paradox involves using time travel to accumulate numerous copies of the same exact object, leading to the paradoxical question, can the same object exist in multiple places at the same time? These paradoxes allow for narrative, philosophical, and scientific puzzles and ethical dilemmas, and the solutions they offer to these challenges bear rhetorical burdens.

Wertenbaker's "The Man from the Atom" (1923) explores the perceptual relationship between time and space. In it, by means of scientific device, the protagonist grows to cosmic sizes and learns that one's lifespan and perception of time are linked to one's size, resulting in his finding himself millions of years into his future. Its sequel, "The Man from the Atom (Sequel)" (1926), focused on the possibility of a time loop created by the curvature of spacetime as a means

for the stranded hero to return home. By means of another scientific device, the hero travels forward far enough in time to loop back around to his own time.

Robert Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps" (1941) explores a man's sense of identity and agency through a series of encounters with future versions of himself. By means of a "time gate," Bob Wilson meets successive future versions of himself, some allied and some in conflict, before coming to understand that these future versions are truly his future selves and he must in turn visit his past self so as to ensure his future in a form of self-actualized entelechy. Another Heinlein story, "All You Zombies" (1959), further explores how time travel could affect identities. The protagonist, a transgender man, travels through time, meets a series of strangers, and comes to understand that they are all himself, and, furthermore, as a male he traveled back in time and impregnated his earlier female self, resulting in the protagonist being both his own mother and father.

Ray Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder" (1952) and Alfred Bester's "The Men Who Murdered Mohammad" (1958) examine the consequences of using time travel to alter the past. In the former, a man on a "time safari" to hunt dinosaurs accidentally crushes a butterfly in the past. This tiny change eons ago has snowballed into massive changes in his own time. In the latter, a man slays historical figures throughout time, including Mohammed, in a futile attempt to change his own present, only to discover that time is entirely subjective and thus there is no objective timeline that can be altered by his action. Moorcock's

*Behold the Man* (1969) explores how time traveling to observe history could result in one being the very agent of that history. Its protagonist travels back to Judea in the first century to witness the life of Christ, but in his failed attempts to find the historical Jesus, he comes to fulfill the Christ role himself. Asimov's *The End of Eternity* (1955) focuses on how such historical manipulation could affect our future. In it, a servant of the trans-temporal organization known as Eternity discovers that their attempts to prevent chaos in humanity's future are in fact leading to humanity's destruction, and the very technology they use to travel through and manipulate time is itself the product of an anomalous time loop.

While these narratives focus on the possibilities and consequences of time travel, they do not simply explore them. Each has a broader rhetorical burden. Heinlein's narratives present literally self-made men, Horatio Algiers in the purest sense. Bradbury's speaks to how seemingly inconsequential events can have grave consequences. Bester's suggest that actual historical events are subordinate to our perceptions of them, the narratives that define our own subjective histories. Moorcock's presents a satire of Christian faith, with its mysteries and miracles revealed as misunderstandings, and its ultimate act of sacrifice revealed as the last act of a desperate madman who has lost control of his own identity. Asimov's reads as a criticism of all who would view themselves as social engineers, presenting even the most benign and well-meaning of them as tyrants and dangers to humanity's continued growth and progress. My point

here is not to dismiss the philosophical and scientific inquiries into paradoxes made possible by time travel. They are indeed fascinating in their own rights. My point is that a more complete understanding of time travel narratives and their position within our culture rests on identifying why, narratively and rhetorically, these paradoxes are employed and resolved.

*The Time Machine's* influence and the new popular understanding of time derived from scientific discoveries in the twentieth century meant that time travel narratives would be associated with the science fiction genre. And indeed, the majority of time travel narratives are science-fiction narratives, but not all. Many time travel narratives are built on unexplained phenomenon or mystic items, recalling in some cases the sorts of time travel narratives that predate *The Time Machine*. The protagonist of Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, an African- American woman in the twentieth century, is drawn back in time again and again to save the life of her ancestor, a white slave owner. The protagonist of Kate Atkinson's *Life After Life*, an English woman born on the eve of World War One, is reborn again and again on that same day, living a series of different lives all defined by the struggles of her era. Neither of these novels attempts to explain the nature of their phenomenon, though characters do offer theories. Likewise, the film *Groundhog Day* (1993) provides no scientific or phenomenological explanation for why weatherman Phil Connors must repeat the same day over and over again. There, time travel is a purely narrative device.

These narratives, too, deal with paradox. Butler's protagonist must resist the urge to let her vile ancestor die because she is certain that will result in her ceasing to exist. Atkinson's protagonist discovers that time is not fixed and her decisions across different lives have different consequences. Phil Connors finds himself trapped in a closed-loop, though not one of his own making. Because these narratives make no moves towards scientific or rational explanations for their time travel devices, their rhetorical burdens for employing these devices are perhaps made even clearer. Butler's narrative forces her protagonist to deal with the horrors of history, but these specific horrors are what lead to her own existence in her present. There are no rational or scientific explanations for Phil Connors' experience, but its resolution, in which Phil learns from his repeated lessons and ends the loop by becoming a more caring and respecting person, provides an ethical and rhetorical explanation for the loop.

In other time travel narratives, the previously established nature of the story world renders complex explanations unnecessary. The already established existence of magic and wizards is all that is necessary to explain the existence of time turners in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* and the stories that follow it. In the television series *Game of Thrones*, Bran Stark discovers that not only can he view the past with his Three-Eyed Raven powers, but he can also, to some extent, manipulate it. Bran's powers are but a few of the many magical elements that develop over the course of the series. In these and other fantasy

narratives, the existence of other magical or mystical forces provides the reasoning for the existence of time travel. These narratives also employ paradox in their rhetorical burdens. A key moment in Harry Potter's emotional journey comes from mistaking his future time traveling self for a vision of his deceased father. Viewers discover Bran's power to manipulate the past with the revelation that his magic is what caused beloved character Hodor's affliction.

I speak of these many texts not just to make a case for their rhetorical analysis, but to hint at the great variety of rhetorical burdens time travel narratives can bear. It would be impossible to catalog all the rhetorical effects achieved by time travel, just as it is impossible to catalog all the rhetorical effects achieved by any other narrative or poetic or rhetorical device. But what is possible is the development of a methodology that allows for the examination of individual works' rhetorical burdens and from that, the extrapolation of further possibilities. This is the essential purpose of this project.

For this purpose, I must first establish a terminology and methodology to discuss and analyze the ways in which time travel narratives present and manipulate time. To do this, I will adapt and build on the language of Narratology, especially as it relates to narrative levels and narrative time. Drawing on Gerard Genette, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Marie-Laure Ryan, I will examine how narrators and characters of time travel narratives can manipulate narrative time and space. Drawing on Mieke Bal, Alice Bell, and Jan Alber, I will

examine the ways in which time travel narrators and characters engage in metaleptic movements across narrative levels and distinct sequences of narrative time.

From there, I will turn to close examinations of a number of time travel narratives drawn from different genres and mediums. These close examinations will be clustered in two broad chapters, one focusing on time travel narratives' manipulation of temporality and causality, and one focusing on their ability to transport characters to different places in time. I divide my exemplary time travel narratives in this way because doing so foregrounds some major trends in time travel narratives without drawing any artificial distinctions with regards to genre. While the former grouping is often represented by science fiction narratives, being heavily influenced by scientific theories regarding time and space, and the latter grouping is often represented by romances, allowing a "fish out of water" to find love, there are examples of both genres (and many others) that break with these trends. There are, of course, time travel narratives that exemplify both of these trends, and I will discuss some in my penultimate chapter, bridging the gap between my clusters and speaking towards other ways in which we can view time travel as a narrative and rhetorical device.

This project aims not to present *the* rhetoric of time travel, but only *a* rhetoric of time travel, one that may inspire other rhetorics of time travel, other ways in which to examine its powers and burdens. A device as widely popular

and broadly employed as time travel is a device with many potential rhetorical burdens and is impossible to examine in its totality in a single project. What is possible, though, is a wide-ranging examination of the rhetorical burdens of diverse time travel narrative that can begin to draw a broad outline of the ways in which time travel has been used and can be used as a narrative and rhetorical device. So while my selection of time travel narratives will be broad, my readings of those narratives will be close, so as to ground my methodology as firmly as possible in actual uses of time travel in narrative. The terminology I adapt and explore in the next chapter is meaningless unless it is applied to actual time travel narratives. Time travel narratives are ripe for theorizing and speculation, but their rhetorical burdens relate to our real world, and thus a rhetorical examination of them requires that I look to specific narratives and specific rhetorical burdens before drawing general conclusions.

## CHAPTER II

### A RHETORICAL POETICS OF TIME TRAVEL

My aim in this chapter is to draw together a number of threads in narrative theory to establish a set of terms with which we can discuss the structure of time travel narratives. My reasoning for this is simple: I cannot discuss the rhetorical burdens of time travel narratives without also discussing the temporal and narrative manipulations that take place in time travel narratives. The two are intertwined. So before turning to the rhetorical burdens of particular time travel narratives, I wish to establish a clear language by which to discuss the narrative functions of their temporal manipulations. Or in other words, before discussing the rhetorical burden of, say, a particular chiasmus, it is a good idea to come to terms with what one means by chiasmus.<sup>4</sup>

Before proceeding in this term-heavy chapter, I need to make two notes clarifying my use of some common terms with multiple possible meanings. Throughout this chapter, I will use the term *narrative* to refer primarily to works of narrative fiction. While much of what I discuss about narrative structure can be applied to non-fiction narratives, such as histories and news reports, my primary focus is on the structure of fiction narrative for the simple reason that time travel

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<sup>4</sup> There's something chiasmic about time travel in its temporal reversal where AB becomes BA.

narratives are works of fiction. This clarification is important for two reasons. The first is simply that readers should take the term *narrative* in the following sections to mean fictional narratives. The second is to acknowledge that many of the narrative devices described here do not happen in a real sense. Anachronies create the illusion or mimesis of movements through time. An analepsis or flashback does not move any actual person or artifact into a past time. Metalepses<sup>5</sup> create the illusion or mimesis of movement across ontological boundaries. An author does not actually enter into her work in a descending metalepsis. While we often discuss these devices in terms of movement in our own real and physical world, we must remember that they exist only as part of the narrative construct.

I make reference to genres throughout this chapter. I use the term *genre* not in the classic Aristotelian sense of literary forms like lyric and epic, but in a more contemporary sense as categories of fiction that according to Wendy Bishop and David Starkey "adhere to ... certain specific set[s] of conventions that readers of the genre expect, if not demand," such as mystery, romance, or science fiction (96). My usage of the term makes little distinction regarding medium. For example, *The Peripheral* (2013) and *Looper* (2013) are both works I classify as science fiction even though the former is a novel and the latter is a film. Thus, my use of the term *genre* is not based on "formal or technical

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<sup>5</sup> These terms will be defined shortly.

characteristics" as much as it is based upon content (Holman 239)<sup>6</sup>. This terminological distinction is important because I want to treat time travel narratives as a genre of their own. I do this not to limit time travel narratives, cordoning them off from other genre considerations, but to free them to work with and against other genres. As Ralph Cohen explains: "A genre does not exist independently; it arises to compete or contrast with other genres, to complement, augment, [and] *interrelate* with other genres" (207, emphasis added). I emphasize the interrelation of genres because a work can be a member of multiple genres. For example, *The Time Traveler's Wife* is both a time travel narrative and a romance narrative. It can be read according to both sets of conventions, and the ways it employs both sets of conventions is a factor in how it approaches its rhetorical burden.

### **NARRATIVE TIME**

In my introduction, I asserted that narrative is a time machine. It has the inherent power to manipulate time within its domain. Narrative has this power because of its essentially temporal nature. Narrative cannot exist without time. Narrative needs time for its telling. It cannot happen instantaneously. Whether one listens to a story, reads a book, watches a film or show, or even forms a

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<sup>6</sup> Mystery novels, for example, may likely share formal characteristics, but what broadly defines them here as a genre is that they deal with investigating mysteries.

narrative from a narrative image<sup>7</sup>, time is involved. Furthermore, narrative has to be about time. There has to be an "arrangement of the incidents," what Aristotle defines as the plot (25)<sup>8</sup>. A single incident or a still moment is not a narrative, though they are among its components.

Significantly, the time it takes to perform or receive a narrative and the time the narrative relates are not the same time. In all fictional narratives, the time that is narrated is displaced from the time of the narrating, existing in some invoked other time. The invoked other time can be any time other than the audience's present. Even experimental narratives that address their readers as if they were the story's characters still invoke another time because the "present" of the narrative is clearly different from the present of the reader sitting and reading the text. Furthermore, the "present" of the narrative is, unlike the audience's, repeatable. And even in nonfiction historical narratives and news reports, as well, the time being narrated is not the time of the narrating. There is even a temporal displacement at play, albeit a very small one, in live narratives, such as the play-by-play calls of a sporting event. The announcer calls the throws and receptions not as they happen, but in reaction to them happening. Their events happened

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<sup>7</sup> While the viewer can certainly take in the entire image in a single glance, interpreting its narrative content takes time and leads one to apprehend a temporal aspect to its content.

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle's is not the only definition of plot. E.M. Forster's definitions, for example, have "the emphasis falling on causality" to differentiate *plot* from *story* (45). In this project, I will use the term as Aristotle defines it because it suffices to explain the series of events that comprise a narrative.

in the past, though it may be the immediate past that we may think of as a sort of extended present.

So, in effect, narrative creates a kind of temporal bubble in which an alternate time plays out before its audience. This is hardly an original observation on my part. It lies at the heart of a great deal of narrative theory. Christian Metz refers to narrative as a "doubly temporal sequence" (87). He continues:

there is the time of the thing told and the time of the telling (the time of the signifi[ed] and the time of the signifier). This duality not only renders possible all the temporal distortions that are commonplace in narrative... More basically, it invites us to consider that one of the functions of narrative is to invent one time scheme in terms of another time scheme (87).

The time of the characters, settings, and actions related (signified) by the narrative cannot be invoked without the time it takes to relate (signify) them. There is a circular relationship here. Narrative *needs* time in order to make time.

The time narrative makes is highly mutable and does not conform to the natural laws of time in the real world. Gerard Genette identifies three broad ways in which narrative manipulates the time it creates: *order*, *duration*, and *frequency*.

Genette explains *order* as:

compar[ing] the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse [signifier] with the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story [signified], to the extent that story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or inferable from one or another indirect clue (35).

Many narratives relate events in an order different than the order in which those events are asserted to occur. The common device *in medias res* is an example of this, beginning the narrative at some point in the middle of the signified narrative sequence before turning back towards the narrative sequence's beginning. Flashbacks, relating an earlier signified event after a later event, is another common way in which narrative can manipulate temporal order. Some narratives, such as the film *Pulp Fiction* (1994), present their signified events completely out of sequence, creating a sort of puzzle the audience must solve.

Genette refers to these temporal disjunctions between the narration and the narrated as *anachronies* and divides them into two categories:

designating as *prolepsis* any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later, designating as *analepsis* any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment, and

reserving the general term *anachrony* to designate all forms of discordance between the two temporal orders of story and narrative (40). Note that these movements are relative to "the point in the story where we are at any given moment." That is to say that we perceive them as movements to the past or future because they are shifts away from what we perceive as the narrative's present. For example, we perceive the deaths of Martha and Thomas Wayne in *Batman* (1989) as an analepsis because we perceive the film's present as the time period when an adult Bruce Wayne fights crime as the Batman.

What we popularly refer to as flashbacks are examples of analepsis. Analepsis is a common technique used to withhold information about the past from the audience until it is most narratively and rhetorically appropriate. Analepses can be introduced in many ways, through dreams or visions or by simple narrative indications like "Yesterday" (*Crash*). Some analepses are less explicitly indicated, relying on differences in character and setting appearance to indicate an earlier point in the story's temporal sequence. Prolepses are not as common as analepses, but can be introduced in the same ways. Dreams and visions are a popular way to introduce prolepses, though we may question their reliability.

Genette develops further terminology to discuss the nature of anachronies. Noting that anachronies can be set at a range of distances into the past or future, Genette states: "this temporal distance we will name the

anachrony's *reach*" (48). He goes on: "The anachrony itself can also cover a duration of story that is more or less long: we will call this *extent*" (Genette 48). Genette also distinguishes between internal and external analepses. The former take place within the temporal sequence established by the story's beginning and end. The latter refer to a time outside that sequence. The mixed anachrony is one that begins as internal or external and becomes its counterpart (Genette 49). Anachronies and their relationships, then, can be quite complicated.

Anachronies can be further complicated in time travel narratives, for the narration of a past or future event can also be the narration of the narrative present. Recall Michael Moorcock's *Behold the Man*, in which the protagonist, Karl Glogauer, uses a time machine to travel back in time to witness the historical Jesus Christ. This is like an analepsis because the narrative relates events in the signified historical past, but it becomes the character's present, as Glogauer's attempts to find Jesus and his transformation into taking on the Christ role are the central events of the narrative. And Glogauer's experiences before he boarded the time machine are themselves presented as analepses if we take the narrative present to be Glogauer's journey through Biblical Judea. Our sense of what is and what is not an anachrony in this case depends on where we choose to anchor the present, in historical time or in Glogauer's personal time. Or consider the complicated mix of analepsis and prolepsis in *The Time Machine*. The bulk of the narrative involves a dinner party in which the Time Traveler tells

his interlocutors, including the narrator, about the adventure he had in the future. The narrative movement here is analepsis, in the sense that the Time Traveler is relating events that he already experienced. But it is also prolepsis in the sense that these events will not happen until thousands of years into his interlocutors' future. If we anchor our present in that of the Time Traveler, his future adventure is related to us as analepsis because it happened to him before the dinner party in which he relates his experience. If we anchor our present in that of the character-narrator who relates this story to us, the Time Traveler's adventure is related to us as prolepsis because it has not yet occurred in his time, nor will it occur until far into his historical future. Anachronies are complicated in time travel narratives by this shifting or nebulous sense of where to anchor the narrative present. I will return to the complex nature of anachronies in time travel narratives later in this chapter when we come to metalepsis, but we must right now return to the other ways in which narrative can manipulate the time it creates.

The second manner identified by Genette in which narrative manipulates the time it creates is the matter of *duration*. Genette's focus is on prose narration, in which duration can be difficult to pin down. He explains:

comparing the "duration" of a narrative to the story it tells is a trick[y] operation, for the simple reason that no one can measure the duration of a narrative. What we spontaneously call such can be nothing more ... than

the time needed for reading; but it is too obvious that reading time varies according to particular circumstances (Genette 86).

One reading of a particular narrative can take a single afternoon. Another can take the course of weeks. Film narratives are less susceptible to circumstance because a particular film narrative has a particular run-time, but circumstances can still intrude, causing a two hour film to be watched in shorter blocks. To address this concern, Genette proposes to measure the duration of a narrative "not relatively, by comparing its duration to the story it tells, but in a way that is more or less absolute and autonomous, as *steadiness in speed*" (87). To measure the speed of the narrative, Genette turns to the space a temporal sequence takes up:

the speed of the narrative will be defined by the relationship between a duration (that of the story, measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years) and a length (that of the text, measured in lines and pages) (87).

The events of a particular hour can take pages upon pages to relate. The course of years can be summarized in a sentence or paragraph.

Genette identifies "four narrative *movements*" to differentiate different narrative speeds (94). These include *ellipsis*, *descriptive pause*, *scene*, and *summary*. An *ellipsis* occurs when the narration glosses over a period of time, such as when a film uses a title card reading "one month later" to indicate the

passage of time without portraying any events from that time. In a *descriptive pause*, narrative time appears to pause as the text provides a description of a person, place or thing. A *scene* is a narrative passage in which the time of narration seems to roughly correspond to the time being narrated, such as in dialog or an action sequence in a film or show. A *summary* is "a form with variable tempo" in which the time of narration proceeds at a different pace than the time being narrated, such as when a written text summarizes or presents an action sequence or a film uses slow motion or montage (Genette 93-94). These four movements can be found throughout all forms of narrative to some extent or another. Films may not often employ descriptive pauses, but they exist in the form of freeze frames. Summary is generally more common in written text narratives, but can also be seen in the aforementioned slow motion and montage techniques from film.

Time travel narrative do not differ greatly from other narratives in terms of duration. But they do offer the opportunity to make movements like ellipses, descriptive pauses and summaries into signified experiences<sup>9</sup> of the narrative's characters. By that, I mean that the characters can experience events akin to the freeze of a descriptive pause or the fast-forward like effect of a summary.

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<sup>9</sup> The characters' experiences are not real, but rather effects signified by textual signs.

Consider the filmic fast-forward like description of the Time Traveler's trip to the far future<sup>10</sup>:

I drew a breath, set my teeth, gripped the starting lever with both hands, and went off with a thud. The laboratory got hazy and went dark. Mrs. Watchett came in, and walked, apparently without seeing me, towards the garden door. I suppose it took her a minute or so to traverse the place, but to me she seemed to shoot across the room like a rocket. I pressed the lever over to its extreme position. The night came like the turning out of a lamp, and in another moment came to-morrow. The laboratory grew faint and hazy, then fainter and ever fainter. To-morrow night came black and then day again, night again, day again, faster and faster still (Wells 14).

Here, an elliptic movement across thousands of years of time is visualized first in the sped up movement of Mrs. Watchett across the room and then in a more and more rapid succession of nights and days. This is ellipses, not summary, because the days crossed in this movement contain no discernible or noticeable events. Later in the novella, the Time Traveler summarizes his journey to the end of Earth's time, describing what he witnesses he witnesses on his way towards "that remote and awful twilight" (Wells 62). Wells' time machine speeds

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<sup>10</sup> That it looks like a film in fast forward would not have necessarily been evident to contemporary audiences.

its way through time, but many other forms of time travel are essentially instantaneous. In one moment the character is in one time, in the next, they are in another. This is pure elliptic movement for the characters. The Mr. Fusion equipped DeLorean Marty McFly uses to travel to his parents' past in *Back to the Future* works in such a way. Once it is up to speed and activated, Marty and any other passengers are immediately flung to their temporal destination. Time travel narratives also sometimes give their characters the power to freeze time and create a sort of descriptive pause in which they can still move about. During the climax of Marvel's *Doctor Strange* (2016), Strange uses the Eye of Agamotto, an artifact with time manipulation powers, to freeze his opponents and stop the destruction of Hong Kong, leaving himself free to move about in the eerie stillness of suddenly paused explosions and chaos. These signified experiences occur alongside the regular narrative movements that Genette identifies. The week that passes between the Time Traveler's demonstration of his machine and his relation of his experiences in the future is elided with "the next Thursday" (Wells 10). The Time Machine itself is ambiguously described in a descriptive pause (Wells 9). A montage summarizes Doctor Strange's training in the sorcerous arts. Scenes of dialogue and action occur throughout these and other time travel narratives as they would in any other kind of narrative.

The third and final manner in which narratives manipulate time identified by Genette is the matter of *frequency*. He explains: "a narrative statement is not

only produced, it can be produced again, can be repeated one or more times in the same text" (Genette 114). Repetition of narration is the means of frequency in narrative. Genette notes that repetitive events in the real world are not really repetitions of the same event, but of similar events. The sun rises every morning, but it rises in different points in the Eastern sky. There is a different context for every sunrise (Genette 113). Narrative, on the other hand, can repeat the same exact event. Genette gives the example of repeating the statement "Pierre came yesterday evening" (Genette 114). Repetition in its various forms, like polyptoton, is a powerful device in poetry and narrative. Tablet IV of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* repeats the description of Gilgamesh and Enkidu's journey again and again, creating a sense of the time it takes for them to complete their journey. Akira Kurosawa's film, *Rashomon* (1950), is renowned for its repeated presentation of the same scene from different, irreconcilable perspectives, causing the viewer to be uncertain if any of these perspectives are truthful representations of the events. Doctor Strange defeats his cosmic foe by trapping him in a time loop depicted by a repeating scene that ends in various elaborate deaths for Strange. On the other hand, narratives can use a singular instance of narration to account for a number of similar instances in the story's world. Wells informs his readers that the meetings the Time Traveler has with his interlocutors are a regular occurrence: "I suppose I was one of the Time Traveler's most constant guests" (10). These men meet regularly to discuss science and other

high-minded issues of interest to Victorian gentlemen, creating a sense that they are informed men engaged in rational debates of important matters.

Genette develops a scheme to discuss narrative frequency: "narrative, whatever it is, may tell once what happened once,  $n$  times what happened  $n$  times,  $n$  times what happened once, [and] once what happened  $n$  times" (Genette 114). Genette names the first two types of narrative "*singulative*" narrative, noting that narrating  $n$  times what happens  $n$  times is essentially the same as narrating once what happens once (114-115). The third type, "where the recurrences of the statements do not correspond to any recurrence of events," Genette names "*repeating* narrative" (116). These are the uncommon instances when the same exact event is narrated again and again. Finally, Genette calls the type of narrative "where a single utterance takes upon itself several occurrences together of the same event, ... *iterative* narrative" (116). Here a narrated event occurs more times in the story's world than it occurs in the narration, as when a narrator describes or shows a character's morning routine. Genette further develops his discussion of iterative narrative:

The [iterated] sequence is defined, first, by its diachronic limits (between [for example] the end of June and the end of September in the years 1890), and then by the rhythm of recurrence of its constituent units: one day out of seven. We will determine the first distinguishing characteristic *determination*, and the second *specification* (127).

Genette explains that determination and specification can be indeterminate. We may not know the exact span of time covered by an iterative narrative, and terms like "sometimes" can indicate indeterminacy of specification (128). Genette also identifies a third characteristic of iterative narrative related to determination: "*extension*," which determines the iterated events' "hold for narrative expansion" (129). Iterated events of incredibly short duration provide little room for narrative expansion, while iterated events of greater duration provide a greater potential for narrative expansion (Genette 129).

Iterative narrative is significant to this project because the nature of time travel narratives leaves open and often exploits the possibility that all of its narrated events are in fact iterative narration. The temporal loops established in Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps" and "All You Zombies" appear to repeat into infinity. By the looping logic of these narratives, their events must occur again and again in the stories' worlds. Bob Wilson, the protagonist of "By His Bootstraps," must travel into the past as Diktor to set himself on the path to becoming Diktor. The character-narrator of "All You Zombies" must convince his younger male self to travel into the past and seduce his even younger female self so that she may become pregnant and give birth to him. If these events do not reoccur into infinity, the causal loops will be broken. *Back to the Future* (1985) is but the first of Marty and the Doc's temporal adventures, and *Back to the Future III* (1990) ends on the promise of more.

Repeating narrative is also significant to this project, as time travel narratives often return to a certain event multiple times, often with some variation in perspective or context. In David Gerrold's *The Man Who Folded Himself*, the protagonist takes himself to a horse track to make easy money by exploiting their knowledge gleaned from the next day's paper. This scenario plays out twice, once from the "younger" protagonist, Dan's, perspective, and once again from the "older" protagonist, Don's, perspective (Gerrold 20-46). The narration in this part is both repeating and iterative, for the scenario plays out countless times beyond the two narrations of its instance as evidenced by the scores of other Dans and Dons that the narrator meets in his time travel journeys, all who have begun their own journey in the same way. We see a similar type of repeating narration in *Back to the Future*. At the film's end, Marty returns to the night when Doc was killed at Twin Pines Mall. He witnesses the events this time from atop a hill, presenting viewers with a new perspective on those events, but the scene also contains a subtle call-back joke. When Marty first arrived in the 1950s, he crashed into one of the pine trees from which the mall got its name. So when he returns to the scene of Doc's murder in the 1980s, the mall's name has changed to Lone Pine Mall, a joke and further indication that Marty's adventure into the past has changed the world of his present.

## NARRATIVE TIME AND SPACE

In addition to time, narrative also makes space<sup>11</sup>, for time and space are as intertwined within narrative as they are in the real world. This is implicit<sup>12</sup> in Aristotle's statement of tragic unity: "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete and whole and of a certain magnitude" (31). For actions to occur, there needs to be space as well as time. Narrative space is well known. It is usually called the setting(s). But we often also use the term to describe the time period of the narrative as well: *Game of Thrones* is medieval fantasy; *True Blood* is modern fantasy. To better account for this interconnection between space and time in narrative, Bakhtin developed the term *chronotope*:

We will give the name *chronotope* [literally, "time space"] to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature<sup>13</sup>. This term [space-time] is employed in mathematics and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our

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<sup>11</sup> And like time, it needs space--space for the authors, performances, artifacts, and audiences to take up as they produce, disseminate, and consume the narratives.

<sup>12</sup> These implications are made clear in the dramatic unities extrapolated from Aristotle's statement. In addition to the *unity of action*, derived from Aristotle's statement of tragic unity, critics and scholars developed the *unity of place* and the *unity of time*. While these rules have been greatly debated and often ignored or subverted, they point directly to the necessity of place and time in which action can happen (Holman 543-4).

<sup>13</sup> Bakhtin writes of literature specifically, but what he says here is relevant to any fictional narrative form.

purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely) (84).

Bakhtin is careful to point out that this is not quite a metaphor. The fabric of narrative space-time is woven as or more tightly than that of real world space-time. But there are differences. The clearest is that the space-time of narrative is not the space-time we experience in our own lives; the told is not the telling. More importantly, as we have already seen, the space-time of the told, the chronotope, is mutable in ways the space-time of the telling is not. Bakhtin beautifully describes this:

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history (84).

Bakhtin's point here is that, unlike the space-time of the real world, the chronotope of a narrative does not conform to observable and impersonal scientific laws. Instead, the chronotope conforms to the needs of the narrative, its rhetorical burdens. Time and space do not take on new meaning in narrative. They are the axes by which narrative can create meaning.

The first chronotope that Bakhtin discusses, the chronotope of the "adventure novel of ordeal," provides an illustration of how time and space are entwined in the service of narrative (Bakhtin 86). This chronotope is based on his

observations of "the so-called 'Greek' or 'Sophist' novels written between the second and sixth centuries A.D" (Bakhtin 86). Bakhtin observes a basic pattern to these novels, a romance plot involving two young people falling suddenly in love and then having to face a number of chance challenges and sudden setbacks before they can consummate their love in marriage (Bakhtin 87-88). Two important facets of these narratives influence the relation between time and space within their chronotope, which Bakhtin refers to as "*adventure time*" (Bakhtin 87, italics in original). First, he notes that the timespan of the chronotope is always a series of unfortunate events that defer but ultimately fail to prevent their love:

All action in the novel unfolds between these two points. These points--the poles of plot movement--are themselves crucial events in the heroes' lives, in and of themselves, they have a biographical significance. But it is not around these that the novel is structured; rather it is around that which lies (that which takes place) *between* them. But *in essence* nothing need lie between them. From the very beginning, the love between the hero and heroine is not subject to doubt; this love remains *absolutely unchanged* throughout the entire novel (Bakhtin 89, emphasis in original).

Adventure time is like a bubble of time that serves only the purpose of providing time for a ripping yarn. This time, divorced as it is from the rest of the heroes'

lives (and divorced from the time of its audience), is also characterized by its utter subjection to chance as determined by the narrative. Bakhtin explains:

[Adventure time] is composed of a series of short segments that correspond to separate adventures; within each such adventure, time is organized from without, technically. What is important is to be able to escape, to catch up, to outstrip, to be or not to be in a given place at a given moment, to meet or not to meet and so forth. Within the limits of a given adventure, days, nights, hours, even minutes and seconds add up, as they would in any struggle or any active external undertaking. These time segments are introduced and intersect with specific link-words:

"suddenly" and "at just that moment." (Bakhtin 91)

Neither time nor distance matters in between the segments that make up the adventures of adventure time. A character or object, if needed, will appear "suddenly" or "at just that moment," no matter where he, she, or it was last seen in the narrative. The different locations within the chronotope's world are as close or as far apart as they need to be for characters to arrive at just the right or wrong time. The time lost to a shipwreck only matters if it needs to matter when leading to the next segment. Time passes and space exists at the narrative's want and convenience. Adventure time is essentially and obviously unreal. It is a kind of time that can only exist in narrative. In the real world of schedules and distances and consequences, it is an impossibility. It helps define the "Greek"

and "Sophist" genres of narrative by describing the ways in which they create and manipulate time and space.

The time travel chronotope is similar to adventure time in a number of significant ways. Time travel easily erases the distances of time and space that separate different characters and locations. A character can always arrive just in the nick of time because if they show up early or late, they can just time travel to the correct moment. An unforeseen delay does not matter when one can just roll back the clock to the right time. We see this illustrated in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, and Hagrid's pet hippogriff, Buckbeak, are both unjustly condemned to death for crimes they did not commit. While Harry and Hermione know the truth and Dumbledore believes them, there is no way they can convince the Minister of Magic to suspend the death sentences. "What we need," says Dumbledore to his two students, "is more *time*" (Rowling 393, emphasis in original). Dumbledore alludes to a device in Hermione's possession, a time-turner, that can allow her and Harry to travel back in time and save both Sirius and Buckbeak in the nick of time. What follows is a semi-comic sequence in which Sirius and Buckbeak are freed right before their executioners' arrivals and many of the strange incongruities from earlier in the narrative are shown to be results of the time-turner's use.

But the time travel chronotope differs from adventure time in a very significant way as well. In adventure time, the characters lack control over their

fate. They may react to the segments that happen "suddenly" and "at just that moment," but they have no control over when and where those segments happen. Conversely, in the time travel chronotope, characters often have a great deal of agency. They can have absolute control of where and when segments happen through their employment of time travel devices. In adventure time, characters either meet or miss one another through the agency of chance or fate. In the time travel chronotope, characters can possess the agency to decide if they meet or miss other characters. Marty Mcfly is able to return to the parking lot of his local mall at the exact moment before Doc is apparently killed by the Libyan terrorists because the time traveling DeLorean allows absolute control of the point in time<sup>14</sup> to which it travels. In *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989), the titular protagonists need Bill's father's keys to free their historical friends from jail. To get the keys, they plan to use their time machine to steal them in the past and hide them behind a nearby sign. Checking behind the sign, they find the keys exactly where they planned to put them once they stole them.

Furthermore, in the time travel chronotope, there is the opportunity to try both options: meet or miss. If the meet does not work out the way characters would like it to, they can try out the miss. They can simply travel back in time and try it again. In the *Star Trek* episode "The City on the Edge of Forever," a delusional and paranoid Doctor McCoy is transported through a time portal back

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<sup>14</sup> And for the most part, space.

in time and space to New York City in 1930 where he saves a missionary worker named Edith Keeler from dying in an auto accident. By saving Keeler's life, McCoy alters history in such a way as to prevent the Federation from forming and the *Enterprise* from being constructed, stranding his crewmates in a future that is no longer their own. Kirk and Spock travel through the time portal, arriving in New York shortly before McCoy, and are able to prevent him from saving Keeler's life and altering their history.

While similar on its surface to adventure time, the time travel chronotope can differ greatly in how it attributes and considers causality. In adventure time, causality is all in the hands of fate and chance. In the time travel chronotope, causality can be in the hands of the characters.

Causality plays an important role in many time travel narratives. As I discussed in the first chapter, Wells' *The Time Machine* presents an anti-utopia evolved from the class divisions of Victorian England. Or, in other words, it shows that the class divisions of Victorian England will cause the fall of humanity into eloi and morlocks. Wells' novella examines a causality projecting into the future, but many time travel narratives manipulate causality with regard to the past. Not only can time travel characters retry the meets and misses of their own history, they can often affect the meets and misses of a collective history. This is the comic conceit of *Back to the Future*. Marty McFly, a California teenager from the 1980s, travels back in time to the 1950s and unintentionally interrupts the

moment when his parents' romance first blossomed. Marty has turned the meet that is the root cause of his own existence into a miss. Doing so places his very existence in jeopardy. With his time machine damaged, and the possibility of his utter disappearance imminent, he must contrive a new meet between his parents before repairing his time machine and returning home to the 1980s. *The Time Machine* and *Back to the Future* are just two of countless time travel narratives that focus on the causal chains than can be examined and exploited by time travel. This focus on causality is a characteristic feature of much time travel fiction. Chapter three will focus on a number of such time travel narratives.

Chronotopes are typical and genre-defining. Bakhtin describes a number of different chronotopes as examples of a broad spectrum of available and possible chronotopes, identifying, for example, the Chronotope of The Road as one that "fuses the course of an individual's life (at its major turning points) with his actual spatial course or road" and the Folkloric Chronotope in which "a thing that could and in fact must only be realized exclusively in the *future* is here portrayed as something out of the *past*" (120; 147). Other scholars have identified further chronotopes that help serve to characterize and define genres and works. For examples, Camilla Asplund Ingemark has identified the Chronotope of Enchantment as a defining aspect of Finnish folklore, Marita Nadal has discussed the chronotopic diversity in Flannery O'Connor's fiction, and Tara and Philip Collington have identified the Chronotopes of the Retreat, the

Embassy, and the Comic Idyll as keys to understanding the mixed genres of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*. Bakhtin explains that narratives are not limited to a single chronotope and that their interactions are complex and many, stating:

Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another and find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships (Bakhtin 252).

Narratives can employ, intertwine, and juxtapose different chronotopes towards different rhetorical burdens. The rhetorical burden of a particular narrative may be carried by the very way it intertwines and juxtaposes different chronotopes. The time travel chronotope exemplifies and exploits this mutually inclusive nature of chronotopes, enacting all the interactions Bakhtin lists above.

The chronotopes created or invoked by a narrative form a closed system of space and time, or, in other words, a world--albeit not an actual physical world. But, as Marie-Laure Ryan discusses, narratives do not manifest just one world. Recall again that narrative is a "doubly temporal sequence." There is the temporal sequence of the narrated events and the temporal sequence of the narrating. The world of the narrative unfolds before the audience in a sequential manner and is filled with different characters with different desires, ethics, and goals. "As the narrative progresses, the reader considers an increasing number of propositions, both stative and active, and constantly reevaluates the stative

propositions" (Ryan 718). These propositions are statements about the narrative's world. Stative propositions are those that "express inalienable properties" of the narrative's world; active propositions are those that "present the potential of alternating several times between truth and falsity" in the narrative's world (Ryan 718). Because of the sequential and temporal nature of experiencing narrative, the audience's propositions about the narrative's world evolve over the course of time. This leads to "a constellation of possible worlds" (Ryan 719). Ryan identifies a number of different kinds of possible worlds based on the varied intentions, objectives, values, and wishes of the characters. These worlds grow out of the audience's sequential apprehension of the narrative's actual world, "simply the sphere regarded as real by the characters" (Ryan 720). For example, "[t]he wish-world, or W-world, of characters is defined over propositions involving the predicates 'is good' or 'is bad'" (Ryan 726). Characters wish for outcomes that they see as good and wish against outcomes that they see as bad. Audiences imagine the possible worlds manifested by these outcomes, both good and bad. For example, in *Star Wars* (1977) audiences imagine the possible worlds that could result from Luke Skywalker's wish to leave his home on Tatooine. Or in the case of *Back to the Future*, Marty's wish to restart his parents' interrupted romance causes viewers to imagine the possible worlds that could occur if he succeeds or fails in this desire. Until these dilemmas are resolved, the constellation of possible worlds the audience can

imagine remains open. The tension that motivates the audience's interest in these dilemmas is based, in part, on the fact that the audience can imagine these characters failing to fulfill their wishes.

Time travel narratives are replete with possible worlds. They manifest possible worlds in the ways that all fictional narratives do, but they do not close off these possibilities as readily and completely as other fictional narratives. As a dilemma is resolved in most fictional narratives, the range of possible worlds collapses back into the actual world of the narrative. Once the dilemma is resolved, for good or ill, the outcome is set, and but one world remains, the actual one. Once aboard the *Millennium Falcon*, Luke's choice is set; he is joining Obi-wan Kenobi on his mission, and that becomes the narrative's actual world. But time travel narratives leave open the possibility to return in time and resolve the dilemma in a different way. Marty Mcfly can potentially fail in his first attempt to mend his parent's romance, but because he has a time machine at his disposal, he can also potentially return to the point in time at which he failed and try again in a different way. The range of possible worlds remains open beyond the dilemmas' resolutions, only collapsing into the actual world at the narrative's closure. This is especially evident in time travel narratives that focus on temporal loops, repeating the same sequence of time again and again, but with different events and outcomes. This also means that unlike in most fictional narratives, where only one of each set of possible worlds raised by a particular choice or

dilemma becomes part of the narrative's actual world, many of the possible worlds raised by a particular choice or dilemma can become part of the narrative's actual world for a time before being replaced by a different possible world. For example, in *Groundhog Day*, weatherman Phil Connors repeats the same day again and again, enjoying and suffering through many different possible worlds evoked by his different choices and different responses to the situations that face him. When Phil is confronted by the annoying insurance salesman, Ned Ryerson, the audience imagines a spectrum of reactions from Phil. The audience goes on to witness a number of those different reactions as Phil meets Ned again and again as the time loop repeats itself.

Moreover, in time travel narratives, possible worlds can coexist as part of the actual world of the narrative. There can be multiple timelines existing side by side as alternate possible worlds that can interact in conflict and cooperation with one another. In the *Star Trek* films and television shows, there are multiple co-existing timelines. The various crews these films and shows focus on sometimes come into contact with their evil doppelgangers from the Mirror universe, where the Federation never existed, and in its place, the Terran Empire dominates the galaxy. In the *Star Trek: Enterprise* season 4 episodes, "In a Mirror, Darkly" parts 1 and 2, the audience sees an alternate history of humanity's steps into space, taken in a spirit of conquest instead of one of exploration as a way to explain why the violent Terran Empire exists in this alternate Mirror universe

instead of the peaceful Federation. The 2009 film, *Star Trek*, employs a time travel conceit to explain the existence of its new, younger cast and their new adventures in the classic roles of the original Enterprise crew and to incorporate Leonard Nimoy as the original "Old" Spock. In it, a temporal anomaly sends Old Spock and a crew of vengeful Romulans into the past. Old Spock and the Romulans begin to cause changes in the timeline, events that never occurred in their history, including the destruction of the Vulcan home world. These changes do not replace or undo their history, known as the Prime timeline, but instead create a new co-existing history, known as the Kelvin timeline. They resolve other possible worlds into a new actual world that exists alongside the original actual world. So in the extended universe of *Star Trek* films and television shows, there are at least three different Captain Kirks and their associated crews in at least three different Enterprises on at least three different courses of adventure that all co-exist as part of the larger actual world of their collective narrative. These time travel conceits allow for audience members who are heavily invested in the original series' continuity and in-universe history to accept the existence of evil versions of their favorite characters and the new history and continuity behind the existence of the slightly different versions of these characters played by a new cast. Many fans would possibly otherwise decry these apparent changes to a narrative world whose history and continuity they have taken to heart. These time travel conceits allow audience members to

acknowledge a new narrative continuity that does not contradict their dearly beloved original continuity. Additionally, audiences can imagine a whole host of other possible worlds based on the different choices Kirk and his crew could have made in the face of different dilemmas, and due to the logic established by the Mirror, Prime, and Kelvin timelines, these too may be actual worlds.<sup>15</sup>

### **NARRATIVE LEVELS**

Throughout out the previous sections, I have made distinctions between the real world and the fictive or possible worlds in which narrated events are asserted to take place. This distinction is significant to a great deal of narrative theory. Put simply, the narrated events exist at a different metaphysical level than that of their narration.

There is a boundary between the world of the narration and the world of the narrated. This distinction is not only important because it recognizes narrative's power to create or invoke imagined time and space, but also because it allows readers to distinguish between effects and structures that result from the narration and its presentation from those that result from the narrated events. For example, the showdown between the protagonist and antagonist in an adventure story is a point of tension resulting from the narrated events because the reader is concerned about the outcome of their conflict. The cliffhanger that

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<sup>15</sup> The many *Star Trek* films and television shows also contain a number of adventures where changing the past can have dire effects for the present. "The City on the Edge of Forever" from season one of the original series is just one such example.

defers the outcome of their conflict, on the other hand, is a point of tension resulting from the narration of those events because it is created by their deferred presentation.

There is an important ethical dimension to this distinction as well. The author does not necessarily endorse the words spoken or actions taken by his or her characters and narrator. Most narratives contain ethically suspect or bankrupt characters, and many have ethically suspect or bankrupt narrators. But their views do not necessarily reflect those of their authors or the overall ethical position of the narrative. In *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), for example, Bane makes a number of inspiring sounding speeches about the economic and social inequalities at the root of Gotham's problems, but to take him as a voice of ethics endorsed by the film's creators is to ignore that he is a murderous villain, and his speeches are just a cover for his scheme to destroy Batman and his beloved city.

Because of the possibility of discrepancy between a work's and its narrator's ethical stances, Wayne C. Booth distinguishes between reliable and unreliable narrators: "I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance of the norms of the work ..., and unreliable when he does not" (158-9). For example, the narrative voice of *Starship Troopers* (1997) promotes militarism and the extermination of the alien Arachnids, but the film's framing as a propaganda piece and its hints that humanity began the war by illegally expanding into the Arachnids' territory call this ethical judgment into question.

Ethical questions are often at the heart of a work's rhetorical burden because, as James Phelan explains, "narratives themselves implicitly or explicitly ask the question, 'How should one think, judge, and act--as author, narrator, character, or audience--for the greater good?'" ("Narrative Ethics"). One must distinguish between the ethics of the author or the work and the ethics of its characters and narrators, and one must consider their relationship. Or, in other words, one must ask both *how* and *why* the ethical stances of authors, works, narrators, and characters differ from and relate to one another. Phelan asks:

How does the use of these [narrative] techniques imply and convey the values underlying the relations of the storytellers (implied authors and narrators) to their materials (events and characters) and their audiences (narratees, implied readers, actual audiences)? ("Narrative Ethics").

We must distinguish between narrative levels to examine how they interact and carry the rhetorical burdens of a particular narrative.

There are a number of schemes for the division of narrative levels beginning with the Russian Formalist distinction between *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, or in the terms we have used so far, the distinction between the narrated and narration. Another manner of categorizing narrative levels divides what are known as *diegetic* and *extradiegetic* levels. The diegetic level is the level of the characters and their actions. The extradiegetic is the level of the narrator and features that frame the narrative (Pier). Many of these introduce further levels

and further distinctions. For example, Mieke Bal asserts three levels in the structure of narrative:

*A narrative text* is a text in which an agent or subject conveys to an addressee ('tells' the reader) a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof. *A story* is the content of that text, and produces a particular manifestation, inflection, and 'colouring' of a *fabula*; the *fabula* is presented in a certain manner. A *fabula* is a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors (5).

What I have been referring to as the narration is what Bal calls the story. The narrated events are the *fabula* in this scheme. Significantly, Bal distinguishes between the artifact encoding the narration and the narration itself. This distinction is important because it acknowledges that narration must be encoded in some physical form ("language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof") and that same or similar narratives may be encoded in multiple artifacts. An audiobook, at least an unabridged one, encodes the same narrative as its text counterpart, just using a sonic instead of visual version of the linguistic code, oral language as opposed to written. Different performances of a play encode the same narrative as each other and the play's text.

Noting the textual level is also important because:

A text does not consist solely of narration in the specific sense. In every narrative text, one can point to passages that concern something other than the events, such as an opinion about something, for example, or a disclosure on the part of the narrator which is not directly connected with the events, a description of a face or of a location (Bal 9).

I do not wish to distinguish as strikingly between narration and description in this project, but it is nonetheless important to recognize that texts can contain passages that are "narrative, descriptive, or argumentative" (Bal 9). A narrative text also contains framing features, such as titles, covers, and frontispieces, or in the case of films, opening and closing credits and musical scores. These framing features on the extradiegetic level may juxtapose with the features of the diegetic level in interesting ways. For example, the film score to *Prometheus* (2012) employs a soaring and optimistic theme that clashes with the horrifying experiences of the characters.

Adaptations are a different case because they may alter aspects of the story and fabula in the transition to a new medium. For example, *Game of Thrones* is the television adaptation of George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* novels. Even in the early seasons that track closely with their source material, there are changes in the story. Events are presented in a slightly different order, some characters are removed, altered, or added, and the textual

focus on characters' perceptions and thoughts is replaced by the external focus of the camera lens. Adaptations arguably alter the fabula as well, depending on whether one wishes to take a macro or micro view. Broadly speaking, on the macro level, both *Game of Thrones* and *A Song of Ice and Fire* present the same general fabula; they contain mostly the same major characters and events. Both relate the complex fabula of the wars to control Westeros in face of the coming winter. But on a more micro level, the show alters, combines, or cuts many of the actors and events of the novels, and adds some of its own.<sup>16</sup> Their fabulas are similar, but not the same.

Adaptations can also involve changes in narration, often because a change in medium changes the available narrative tools. *A Song of Ice and Fire* employs a narrative voice that moves among characters from chapter to chapter. This narrator reveals to readers the internal deliberations and motivations of these characters. *Game of Thrones* does not employ this interior view of the characters' minds. While it also focuses on many characters, the camera only provides an external perspective, and the show must convey characters' deliberations and motivations through dialog and emoting. Bal places the narrator at the level of the text because the narrator is a construct of the text.

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<sup>16</sup> And this has become the case more and more as the show's narrative progresses beyond that published in the novels so far.

She explains:

As soon as there is language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject. As soon as there are images that represent figures doing things, there is a form of narration going on (Bal 21).

The existence of narration implies the existence of a narrator. The selection, arrangement, and presentation of fabular events to create a story implies the presence of one performing those actions. Because the narrator is a construct of the text, it is not the author of the text. As Bal notes, "[t]he narrator of *Emma* is not Jane Austen" (15). *Emma's* narrator is an agent constructed by the text composed by the historical Jane Austen to relate the actions of the text. Bal does not draw great distinction between first and third person narration: "It does not make a difference to the status of the narration whether a narrator refers to itself or not" (21). To Bal, the "narrating subject is always a 'first person'" (21). This is important because even a narrator speaking from a first person position and presenting itself<sup>17</sup> as a character in the fabula (a "CN" or "character-bound narrator" in Bal's terminology) is an agent of the narration and thus displaced from the action of the fabula (Bal 21). Even in stream-of-consciousness narration, there is a construct relating that stream of thoughts to the audience in

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<sup>17</sup> Because the narrator is a construct and not a real person, Bal refers to the narrator as an "it" (15).

a audio, text, and/or visual medium. For example, scholars have noted that Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, a common example of seemingly unmediated stream-of-consciousness, contains "passages that could not possibly be the direct quotation of the characters' minds" (Hale 6). Darl's chapters contain passages such as this one: "It wheels up like a motionless hand lifted above the profound desolation of the ocean" (Faulkner *Dying* 108). The diction and imagery here are hardly appropriate to the son of hardscrabble and impoverished Mississippi farmer, Anse Bundren. There is an agent, one who keeps itself well disguised in this novel, relating Darl's thoughts to us in the medium of language. As the implied agent responsible for the narration, the narrator is the agent responsible for all the temporal manipulations that happen at the story level. The narrator as an agent possesses this power in all narratives, whether it employs that power or not. Even character-bound narrators can and do employ that power for they are displaced from the fabula. They are narrating its story, not engaging in its actions. This is true even for character-bound narrators narrating in the present tense or the narrators of stream-of-consciousness narratives. The proof of this is that they too have the power to manipulate narrated time. The narrator(s) of *As I Lay Dying* switch between present and past tense and does not cover every moment of the journey from the Bundren farm to Jefferson. This power to manipulate narrative time is a significant one, especially so for this project

because it is a power normally only possessed by the narrator. But in the case of time travel narratives, this power can be granted to characters as well.

This project does not focus a great deal on the distinction between the text and story levels identified by Bal. While Bal separates the narrator from the level of narration, the story, the narrator is still the agent responsible for the story and all of its moves and manipulations. Narrator and narration are engaged through the text. As Bal notes, "[t]he only material which we have for our investigation is the text before us" (7). That is to say that any analysis of the story or fabula must be entered into by engaging with the text. The text is what conveys to us the story and fabula. That said, the nature of the narrative artifact, for example film versus printed text, does affect its presentation of the story, and the framing features and commentary or "argumentative" aspects of the text are significant elements in examining its rhetorical burden. Importantly, framing features help identify genre, and so are significant to this project's generic focus.

Titles and cover or casing text will often indicate the generic nature of a narrative. The title *The Best Time Travel Stories of the 20th Century* advertises itself by its generic nature. The back cover text of *Outlander* focuses more on Claire's temporal journey than her romance with Jamie (Gabaldon). Genre identification is important part of reading any text. Peter J. Rabinowitz explains:

some preliminary generic judgment is always required even before we begin the process of reading. We can never interpret outside of generic

structures: "reading"--even the reading of a first paragraph--is always "reading as" (176).

To "read as" is to read according to a set of genre conventions. To illustrate this point, Rabinowitz notes the main division in interpretations of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*: "the question of whether it should be 'read as' a ghost story" (177). Obviously, in this project, I will be reading works as time travel narratives. That is not to say that I will not consider other genre conventions as well.

*Outlander*, for example, is a contemporary romance novel in addition to a time travel narrative. *Back to the Future* and *Groundhog Day* are both comedies; more specifically, both are fish-out-of-water comedies to different degrees.

Genres, like the chronotopes that help define them, can be mutually inclusive, and the time travel genre is an especially inclusive one, tapping into genres both speculative and realist. Magical time travel is not the only fantastic element that enters into the otherwise realist *Outlander*. *Back to the Future Part III* draws the western into its genre mix. While this project focuses on identifying the rhetorical burdens of time travel narratives in particular, acknowledging the other genres and conventions engaged by time travel narratives can be an important step in that process. But these genres and conventions, while immediately identifiable by the text's framing features, are ultimately expressed in the story. One does not necessarily need framing features to identify a narrative's genre, especially in

time travel narratives where the definitive genre feature is a device, power, or phenomenon found in the fabula expressed by or imagined through the story.

The distinction between the story and fabula levels, the narration and narrated, is of greater significance to this project than the distinction between the text and story levels. We have already seen much of this significance in my discussion of narrative time and narrative worlds. This division is rooted in what Metz calls the "doubly temporal sequence" of narrative. The time of the story level is not the time of the fabula level. The temporal manipulations of order, duration, and frequency identified by Genette occur at the story level. Through them we imagine the world of the fabula where events happen in a natural order with natural durations and frequency. That is, we identify them as manipulations of narrated time because through them we can imagine the actual world, to use Marie-Laure Ryan's terms, perceived by the characters of the fabula (720).

The distinction between time of narration and narrated time creates a boundary between story and fabula. They create a distinction in situation. The narrator is not witnessing or experiencing the fabula and narrating it as a story at the same time. Seymour Chatman explains:

As a perceptual object in the picture that the narrator is drawing, he cannot also be perceptual subject. Even if they are the same person (the character-narrator [character-bound narrator]), as in "The Pit and the Pendulum" or "The Tell-Tale Heart," the narrating half describes the

situation of the other-half-seen-as-character after the fact, and hence as object, not subject. The gap between the time of the discourse-telling [story] and the time of the story-events [fabula] is crucial. Most first person accounts are retrospective (160).

Even first person accounts that are not explicitly retrospective, those written in a present instead of past tense, tend to take on an air of retrospection because the narrator knows which events are most significant to the story. The crucial gap Chatman identifies is that between being the narrator of the story and being a character in the fabula. Even when identifying with a character in the fabula, the narrator exists outside that fabula. It is operating on the textual level and relating the story level where it arranges and presents the events of the fabula. The distinction between narrator and character is even clearer with narrators that are not character-bound. They do not exist in the fabula in any form. They may have characteristics and personalities of their own, but those are expressed through the way they represent the fabula through their narration and commentary at the story level.

While the narrator constantly acknowledges the fabula in the story's commentary and narration, the characters of the fabula rarely acknowledge the story level. Doing so breaches the boundary between story and fabula. It creates a convergence of narrative and narrated time and causes a disruption in the sense that the fabula came first and is now being narrated in story form. The

opposite is also true. To have the narrator identify with a character in its fabula in a retrospective manner does not disrupt the distance between the time of narration and the narrated time, but to have the narrator enter into the fabula as a character with full knowledge of its responsibility for the story creates a disruptive convergence in time of narration and narrated time. In truth, any such disruption is itself an aspect of the story level. Genette explains:

The transition from one narrative level to another can in principle be achieved only by the narrating, the act that consists precisely of introducing into one situation, by means of discourse, the knowledge of another situation (234).

These disruptions or transitions occur because the narrator narrates their occurrence, but they feel strange and unnatural because they involve a breach in the boundary between the story and fabula levels. A common term for this transition between narrative levels drawn from theater is "breaking the fourth wall," referring to an actor speaking across the imaginary fourth wall that separates the stage from the audience. Genette's term for this transition is *metalepsis*. He characterizes it as "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.)" (Genette 235). Genette's diegetic universe is the world of the fabula; his metadiegetic universe is that of the story and text. Genette defines *metalepsis* broadly, including such scenarios as when Balzac's narrator uses the

event of a character climbing stairs to begin a digression "as if the narrating were contemporaneous with the [fabula] and had to fill up the latter's dead spaces" (235). Such metalepses are not uncommon, but they also do not really indicate a breach of the boundary between story and fabula. Genette's example from Balzac creates the very sense of the dead space in the fabula by inserting a digression towards more interesting material in the story. It does not represent a convergence of time of narration and narrated time, but a device by which the narrator uses time of narration to create a sense of narrated time.

The truly disruptive metalepses are the *ontological metalepses* discussed by Alice Bell and Jan Alber, ones that involve "disorientating transgressions of boundaries that are physically and logically impossible and hence, unnatural" (167). These include instances when authors or distinct narrators enter into the fabula and interact with their characters, instances when characters from the fabula level begin affecting the story level, and instances when characters from one fabula are injected into another. Examples of such metalepses are not common, but they are distinct and easily remembered. Mel Brooks' science fiction spoof, *Spaceballs*, makes comic use of ontological metalepses. The characters are at times aware of their existence in a story contained in a text, such as when Dark Helmet and Colonel Sandurz fast forward the video cassette of the film to find out what they will do next or when Yogurt demonstrates the film's potential for merchandising. This latter metalepsis is made more disruptive

if one recognizes that Yogurt is played by Brooks, the film's writer and director, and this merchandising pitch is being made by a man who lives in the real world and would financially benefit from sales of talking Yogurt dolls and Spaceballs: the Flamethrower. The characters are, at these times, seemingly aware that the world of their fabula exists in a world containing the text that presents the story of their fabula. Bell and Alber prefer the terminology *narrative worlds* to *narrative levels* because these ontological metalepses "suggest a breach of *world* boundaries" (169). The world of the story is ontologically distinct from the world of the fabula. Even if the narrator is character-bound, it cannot return itself to the world of the fabula. The narrated events cannot be happening at the same time and in the same space as the narration of those events. The world of the narration is different from the world that is narrated. This boundary also exists between the fabula and any embedded stories or fabulas. For example, In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin Compson and his roommate Shreve try to piece together the history of the Sutpen family. Faulkner's novel is about their story and the stories they learn and tell about the Sutpens. There is a boundary between the time and place of them telling the stories in their Harvard dorm room in the early twentieth century and the time and place of the stories they tell about Mississippi in the early and middle nineteenth century.

Bell and Alber divide ontological metalepses into three types: *ascending*, *descending*, and *horizontal*. They explain: "In an ascending metalepsis, a

fictional character or narrator jumps from an embedded storyworld to a hierarchically higher one" (Bell 167). An ascending metalepsis would occur when a character in the fabula began acting upon the story, as when Dark Helmet and Colonel Sandurz begin manipulating the video tape to fast forward in the story. Bell and Alber continue: "[I]n a descending metalepsis, a narrator or character jumps into an embedded storyworld or an author jumps from the [real] world into the storyworld" (Bell 168). This means the author or narrator enters into and takes a direct role in the fabula as part of the story. There is an element of descending metalepsis to the humor in recognizing that Mel Brooks is making a sales pitch in the guise of Yogurt. A more striking example occurs in the final volume of Grant Morrison's *Animal Man* series for DC comics. Grant Morrison, the series' writer, is shown meeting with his protagonist and explaining to him that he is simply a fictional character, and thus his problems are not real and not to be worried about (*Deus Ex Machina* 204). The final type of metalepsis Bell and Alber describe, horizontal metalepsis, occurs when the story depicts "the transmigration of a character or narrator into a different fictional text" (168). Bell and Alber explain that this movement is also a form of metalepsis because "it involves the transgressive violation of storyworld boundaries through jumps between ontologically distinct zones or spheres" (168). In our terms, these metalepses occur when a character or narrator from one text appears in another. Broadly speaking, this could be seen as to apply to any works in a series or

shared world, but such works tend to represent their stories as presentations of just one part of a larger shared fabula, a single storyworld, and thus do not breach ontological boundaries. Animal Man meets with other DC Comics superheroes, but this is not metalepsis because he is presented as existing in the same larger storyworld known as the DC Universe. That said, comics provide a number of excellent examples of horizontal metalepsis in various forms. In the fifth issue of Morrisons' Animal Man run, "The Coyote Gospel", Animal Man meets Wyle E. Coyote, who has been sent to bring Animal Man a message he cannot read (*Animal Man* 21). This horizontal metalepsis between the story worlds of Warner Brothers cartoons and DC Comics serves as the first indication that something is amiss in Animal Man's story. These metaleptic movements can be jarring because their violations of ontological boundaries are unnatural and emphasize the fictional and artificial nature of narrative texts. In the case of Grant Morrison's Animal Man run, they serve to remind readers that Animal Man is not real, but a fictional construct whose every action and experience is under Morrison's control. Remember, though, that these movements from level to level are part of the text. They do not actually happen, but are merely represented as happening by the features of the narrative. The Grant Morrison that appears in the pages of the comic book is not the real Grant Morrison, but a textual representation of him.

The concept of metalepsis, especially ontological metalepsis, is very significant to the analysis of time travel narratives. Recall that I said I would return to the complexities of anachronies in time travel narratives when we came to metalepsis. The relationship between anachronies, analepsis and prolepsis, and metalepsis is evident in their names. They all involve some sort of shift or jump. But there is a significant distinction. Metalepsis, at least the ontological metalepsis that I wish to focus on, involves a breach of ontological barriers that, traditionally speaking, analepsis and prolepsis do not. Anachronies like analepsis and prolepsis occur completely on the story level as moves the narrator can make when relating the fabula. But we have also seen how characters can move in the fabula of time travel narratives in ways that are very similar to analepsis and prolepsis. These moves occur at the fabula level, so it may seem as though they also do not breach ontological barriers, but recall that one of the significant boundaries between the story and fabula levels is one of time. The narration cannot occur at the same time as the action. Time creates an ontological barrier. In the real world, we cannot physically travel into the past or the future. We can recall the past and predict the future, but those are mental activities that do not breach the ontological boundaries of time. By narrating the story of the fabula and employing the temporal manipulations identified by Genette, the narrator does not breach this temporal ontological boundary because such manipulations only occur on the story level, where they are a

natural aspect of narration. But when similar manipulations are employed by the characters at the fabula level, they breach temporal ontological boundaries. Readers are trained to presume that the world of the fabula operates like the real world except for when explicitly noted otherwise. Comic book universes, for example, are replete with superheroes and super powers, but readers presume, and often see<sup>18</sup>, that otherwise these worlds operate like our real world. This means that characters in the fabula and their actual world, unless noted otherwise, are bound by the same laws of physics as real people in the real world, which means that characters in the fabula also exist in a world with temporal ontological boundaries between past, present, and future. Unless provided with some device, power, or phenomenon, these boundaries cannot be breached. The devices, powers, and phenomenon of time travel narratives provide the ability to transgress these ontological boundaries. They enable a form of ontological metalepsis.

I want to present the term *anachronic metalepsis* to name the kind of metalepsis enabled in the fabulas of time travel narratives. This term acknowledges that the movements are temporal and resemble analepsis and prolepsis, but also, that they are ultimately forms of ontological metalepsis because they breach temporal ontological boundaries that exist in the storyworld of the fabula. This term allows us to differentiate between the anachronies and

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<sup>18</sup> Think of all the mundane day jobs superheroes possess.

metalepses that can occur in any narrative and the specific temporal movements that only occur in and define time travel narratives. Of course, these metalepses are not real, just like the other ontological metalepses identified by Bell and Alber are not real: "of course authors, readers, narrators, and characters cannot really interact or move between ontological domains" (169). The world of the fabula is constructed through the narration of the story. Its characters can do whatever the narrator says they can do. But we are meant to take these movements as real, as striking breaches of natural rules regarding the ontological boundaries between past, present, and future. This leads to the striking nature of the anachronic metalepsis, the defining characteristic of the time travel narrative.

We can divide anachronic metalepses into three types: *backward*, *forward*, and *alternate*. Like anachronies, these movements are identified by their relationship to the time period we perceive as the text's present, usually the time from which the characters originally travel. Backward anachronic metalepses occur when a character travels into or communicates with the past, such as when Marty McFly travels from 1985 to 1955. Forward anachronic metalepses occur when a character travels into or communicates with the future, such as when the Time Traveler travels to the time of the morlocks and eloi. Often, characters in time travel narratives return to their own original time, their present. Rather than differentiate these as return anachronic metalepses, I simply categorize them as the opposite of the original journey. So if a character first travels to the future

and then returns to her own time, she would experience first a forward anachronic metalepsis and then a backward anachronic metalepsis. These terms suffice without the need for a third term like return anachronic metalepsis, because like anachronies, anachronic metalepses are identified relative to the point readers identify as the narrative's present. In the case of time travel narratives, the narrative present is generally that of the central characters. The Time Traveler, for example, travels far into the future in a series of forward anachronic metalepses, then returns to 1890s London by means of a single backward anachronic metalepsis. Alternate anachronic metalepses occur when a character travels into or communicates with an alternate time, such as when the protagonist of Moorcock's *The Nomad of Time* trilogy travels to alternate twentieth century histories. Alternate anachronic metalepses can mesh with the other two types. A character can travel into alternate pasts and futures as is the case in the *Nomad of Time* trilogy. In that series of novels, the English army captain, Henry Bastable, finds himself transported into alternate pasts and futures where he experiences different forms of imperialism and its organized resistance all coming to violent ends with similar results. Characters can also find themselves returning to an alternate present. At the end of *Back to the Future*, Marty returns to the 1980s, but there are subtle differences in his family and hometown, changes resulting from his interactions with his parents and his hometown. This is an example of forward alternate anachronic metalepsis.

Claire North's *The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August* tells the story of Harry August, a man who upon his death is reborn again and again on the same date, January 1st 1919. He retains knowledge of his other lives when reborn and discovers a secret society of his peers and a conspiracy to dominate the Earth. With each life, he makes new attempts to stop the conspiracy, and the conspirators make new attempts to thwart him, creating alterations in history that ripple forward and backward in time. Harry August's births are backwards alternate anachronic metalepses, for each time he returns to a slightly altered history and proceeds to act in ways that alter the future.

Depending on the time travel narrative in question, alternate anachronic metalepses can indicate the existence of multiple concurrent timelines or alterations in just a single timeline. *The Nomad of Time* trilogy's alternate anachronic metalepses indicate the former. Henry Bastable experiences a number of alternate timelines, but is eventually able to return to his own timeline. *The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August's* indicate the latter. After his deaths, Harry August always returns to the same point on a single timeline, subtly altered by the effects of his previous journeys and those of other time travelers. I do not see these as different types of alternate anachronic metalepsis, and thus do not differentiate between them. Instead, I see this as a matter of storyworlds in the fabula. *The Nomad of Time* trilogy presents multiple alternate storyworlds within a single fabula. *The First Fifteen Lives of Harry August* presents a single

alterable storyworld in its fabula. In each of these narratives, characters travel to an alternate time. It being part of a single or multiple timelines does not affect the nature of the anachronal metaleptic movement.

Identifying the nature of the anachronic metalepses in time travel narratives allows us to examine how time travel narratives manipulate temporality, but this is just the first step. We must also examine why these narratives employ anachronic metalepses. In the chapters that follow, I will examine specific time travel narratives both in terms of how they manipulate temporality and why they manipulate temporality. Answering both questions is key to understanding the rhetorical burdens of time travel narratives.

## CHAPTER III

### THE END IS THE BEGINNING

Anachronic metalepses are the defining narrative movements of time travel narratives, but identifying them is merely a first step towards examining the rhetorical burdens of time travel narratives. Authors write time travel narratives to bear many different rhetorical burdens. Discussing these many rhetorical burdens, or at least some of them, requires some sort of organization.

Towards that end, I have clustered my readings into three groups: one that focuses on the power of the anachronic metalepsis to examine causality, one that focuses on the power of the anachronic metalepsis to transport characters beyond their natural time and place, and a third hybrid group. These clusters are by no means the only way one could categorize time travel narratives. They strike me as clear broad generalizations about the ways in which time travel functions in narrative, but one could just as easily employ different clusters, such as time travel narratives that focus on the past versus those that focus on the future, or ones that focus on a single trip versus ones that focus on many.

This chapter focuses on the first of my clusters, the power of anachronic metalepses to examine causality. My clusters are not mutually exclusive.

Indeed, a great number of time travel narratives, such as Michael Moorcock's *Nomad of Time* trilogy (which I will discuss further in the penultimate chapter), exploit both powers of the anachronic metalepsis for their rhetorical burdens. My division, then, is a somewhat artificial and arbitrary one, but one I find useful for allowing us to focus in detail on the different powers of anachronic metalepses.

The anachronic metalepsis's power to examine causality grows from the paradoxical potential it creates for effects to influence their own causes. Our standard understanding of causality is a linear one: "we live in a world where every effect has a cause and that cause happens first" (Nahin 127). While there are a number of scientific points that call this into question, including the reversibility of time in many physics equations, this is the way we perceive and present time: as a line (or more poetically, a river) running from left to right, past to future, with causes always to the left of their effects (Nahin 127-36). But in a time travel narrative, effects can influence their own causes. In *Back to the Future*, Marty McFly faces a crisis when, by disrupting his parents' teenage romance before it could begin, he places his own existence into jeopardy. If Lorraine Baines and George McFly do not become romantically involved, they will never create their son, Marty. This is visualized in the film by Marty's image slowly fading from the family photo he carries with him and checks throughout the film. Before Marty can return to his own time, he must ensure that he will still exist then.

When effects can influence their own causes, they can alter those causes and, in turn, those causes' effects<sup>19</sup>. Or in less convoluted terms, the power of time travel to affect causality is a power to alter causes and effects. Marty McFly does not simply restore his family's future existence, he alters it. Marty's intervention in his family's past ultimately results in a stronger family in his present. In Marty's unaltered past, his parents came together when his mother took sympathy on his father and nursed him after he was the victim of a car accident. In Marty's altered past, *he* becomes the object of his mother's sympathies after becoming the victim of the car accident that would otherwise have hurt his father had Marty not arrived. This leads to Marty's attempts to play matchmaker for his parents-to-be. Marty's efforts ultimately lead to George punching out thuggish Biff Tannon as he tries to assault Lorraine. This act kindles the romance between them, and when Marty returns to his own present, he discovers that his family is made stronger by his alterations to his parents' romance. By confronting and defeating Biff, George has become a stronger person, more assertive, and thus more successful. Lorraine has more respect for George as well, and a relationship that appeared rocky and on the path towards dissolution has transformed into a model of 1980s American nuclear families. One can certainly criticize this transformation for ennobling toxic masculinity. The implication that a relationship founded on a man using violence

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<sup>19</sup> My brain hurts too.

to defend a woman is stronger than one founded on a woman nurturing a man is certainly an odious one. But within the ethical boundaries of the film's narrative world, this transformation is shown to be a positive one. Through Marty's efforts, both successes and failures, his family transcends its previous flaws and becomes a model family. In essence, Marty's family becomes the family it should have always been. Narratively and rhetorically, this transformation is a purpose of Marty's backward anachronic metalepsis to 1955. This transformation casts the past as prologue. Its purpose is to establish the conditions of the narrative present; in this case, Marty's native 1985. Because those conditions are not ideal in the original version of 1985, Marty must, because of narrative and rhetorical imperative, travel to 1955 and alter how it establishes his own present. Or in other words, the narrative presents an unsatisfying effect (the original state of Marty's family in 1985) and then the adventure to alter its cause in such a way as to transform it into a satisfying effect. The effect becomes the motivation for its own cause.

This power to alter causality recalls the concept of *entelechy*, the idea that something's end-state is the reason for its very being, like the child born to fulfill a prophecy. Kenneth Burke explains entelechy in Aristotelian terms:

Everything that comes into existence moves towards an end. This end is the principle of its existence; and it comes into existence for the sake of

this end. This state of completion is its full actuality, and 'it is for the sake of this that the potency has been acquired (261).

This view posits the ultimate end as the reason or cause for its own causes. For example, the entelechial view of the seed and the tree posits that the seed exists so that it can grow into the tree. The tree is its ultimate end, "its full actuality," and thus the very reason for the seed.

Time travel narratives can make this philosophical point a literal one. Take for examples, Heinlein's short story, "All You Zombies." In this work, a man known as the Unmarried Mother tells the story of his name to an enigmatic bartender who serves as the narrator in the year 1970. The Unmarried Mother explains that he was an orphan raised as a young woman who became pregnant after a romance with a mysterious stranger who dazzled her with hundred dollar bills. During the delivery of his daughter, the doctors discovered that he possessed two functioning sets of sexual organs. Complications during the delivery causes irreparable damage to his female organs, and the doctors took the liberty of "rearrang[ing] things so [he] could properly develop as a man" (Heinlein "Zombies" 729). Shortly after this, the Unmarried Mother's daughter was kidnapped by, he assumes, his seducer. The Unmarried Mother wants nothing more than to confront the man who literally ruined him as a woman and stole away his child, and the enigmatic bartender offers him the opportunity to do so. The Unmarried Mother agrees to this, and the enigmatic bartender takes him

to a back room where they use a time machine to travel in a backward anachronic metalepsis to 1963 when the Unmarried Mother first met the mysterious stranger. There, the enigmatic bartender hands him a wad of hundred dollar bills and leaves him to his devices. The next two scenes involve first a forward anachronic metalepsis to 1964, where the enigmatic bartender steals the Unmarried Mother's newborn daughter, and then a backward anachronic metalepsis to 1945 where he deposits her at the orphanage where the Unmarried Mother was raised. After completing this errand, he returns to 1963 to pick up the Unmarried Mother who has just finished seducing himself as a young woman. The bartender explains: "Now you know who *he* is--and after you think it over you'll know who *you* are... and if you think hard enough, you'll figure out who the baby is... and who *I* am" ("Zombies" 733, emphasis in original). The enigmatic bartender's point is that they are *all* the same person, earlier versions of himself, just at different points in their life. The enigmatic bartender goes on to reveal that he is a temporal agent, a sort of police officer of history who travels through time preventing anomalies and catastrophes. His purpose in all this has been both to cause himself to come into being and recruit himself by revealing to himself his own origins.

Here then, the end, the temporal agent posing as enigmatic bartender, is the cause of his own existence. The orphan child who would grow into a young woman seduced by a mysterious stranger is the result of that seduction. That

seduction is a result of the Unmarried Mother being transported back in time to the night he was seduced as a young woman. His ability to impregnate his younger self is a result of the complications that follow that pregnancy. All of this is the result of the temporal agent's power to transport himself and others through time. He sets this into motion by asking his younger self about his strange name, listening to a story he already knows, and making an offer he remembers accepting. These events have all happened before but they also all happen *because* the temporal agent asks his younger self, the Unmarried Mother, about his strange name and sets into motion a series of anachronic metalepses. Without the temporal agent's power to travel in time, he would not exist. He is the cause of his own existence.

This looping causality raises a question: How did the loop start? Our linear perspective of time drives us to seek a first cause. This is the classic chicken or egg question. There is a possibly uncomfortable uncertainty here. Heinlein deftly side-steps this question with the work's titular line: "I *know* where I came from--but *where did all you zombies come from?*" ("Zombies" 735, emphasis in original). For the narrator, his looping causality is natural and certain. He knows his own origin with certainty, something the rest of humanity cannot say for themselves. Much human thought is dedicated to the questions of our origins, and those questions often intertwine with questions of our purpose. The rhetorical burden of "All You Zombies" lies in presenting a situation where

the answers to these questions are clear but provide no comfort. The narrator knows where he comes from, but this leads him to question not just the origin, but the very existence of his narratees: "*You* aren't really there at all. There isn't anybody but me--Jane--here alone in the dark" (Heinlein "Zombies" 735). With this clear understanding of his own origin and purpose, the narrator is divided from the rest of mankind.

The concept of entelechy will guide the readings that follow in this chapter. We will see how the entelechial characteristics of looping causalities can be used to interrogate narrative forces and imperatives, to explore the ethics of choice, and to establish allegories. These rhetorical burdens are shared by all three works examined in the following sections, but each work and its reading focuses primarily on one of them. Audrey Niffenegger's novel, *The Time Traveler's Wife*, shows a romance narrative whose causes loop back on themselves to highlight the root causes of narrative romance. Kate Atkinson's novel, *Life After Life*, tells the stories of a woman who is reborn on the same day to live different lives to examine the many consequences of hers and other's choices. Rian Johnson's 2012 film *Looper* presents a temporal loop as an allegory for cyclical and self-inflicted violence.

### **THE ENTELECHY OF LOVE IN *THE TIME TRAVELER'S WIFE***

Audrey Niffenegger's *The Time Traveler's Wife* relates the romantic relationship between Clare Abershire and Henry DeTamble. Clare is an artistic

woman from a wealthy, Catholic, Midwestern family, an exemplar of upper middle class normalcy. Henry is a "Chrono-Displaced Person," meaning that he involuntarily travels backwards and forwards through time (Niffenegger 389). These anachronic metalepses, forward and backward, transport Henry alone with no clothes or objects to scenes out of his past and future. Some of these scenes he travels to only once, while others he returns to again and again. One such scene is the side of the highway where, again and again, he must witness his mother's violent death during a car accident and care for his younger traumatized self. Another is the meadow behind Clare's family home.

It is there where his and Clare's relationship begins in historical time when she is six years old and he thirty-six. From Clare's perspective, this is their very first meeting. From Henry's, this is but one of many jaunts to the past he has made since meeting and falling in love with Clare when she is twenty and he twenty-eight. What results from this is a relationship that loops back on itself through time. In his older years, Henry influences the person who his younger self will one day fall in love with. In her twenties and thirties, Clare influences the person who she falls in love with and who will, in turn, become the major influence of her youth. As far as both are concerned, this love is their destiny. Clare has known Henry, or at least versions of him, nearly her entire life. Henry comes to know and love Clare at nearly every stage in her life. This relationship is only possible because of the anachronic metalepses Henry experiences.

*The Time Traveler's Wife* presents this relationship from both Clare and Henry's perspectives, beginning with their first meeting as adults and ending with their final encounter when an elderly Clare has one last meeting with her long deceased husband. The arc of their adult relationship--falling in love, getting married, attempting to and finally having a child, and Henry's untimely death--defines the novel's narrative present to and from which Henry experiences his anachronic metalepses. Each section is led off by a time stamp, which helps fix Clare's age, but Henry may be from her past, present, or future. For example, their wedding on Saturday, October 23, 1993 involves a 22-year-old Clare, a 30-year-old Henry, *and* a 38-year-old Henry (Niffenegger 264-280).

By presenting the relationship from both Clare and Henry's perspectives, Niffenegger allows readers to see how they understand it and the different ways in which it affects them. For Clare, Henry is the man she has always loved, albeit in different ways. When she was a young girl, he was a mysterious teacher and helpmate, a sort of imaginary friend made real. As she grew into a young woman, she began to be romantically interested in this man who constantly reappeared in her life and hinted at their future together. As an adult, she comes to deeply love him despite his strange condition and the strains it places on their relationship. Henry is a sort of parent figure before becoming a lover and then a husband. For Henry, Clare is the woman who anchors his existence. She is the young woman who finds him when he is aimless and distraught and gives him

hope and purpose for his future. She is the girl who provides him with companionship and trust as he is thrust into the past. She is the woman who waits for him at home in the present as he jaunts into past and future. Clare compares herself to the wife of a sailor who patiently and painfully waits for her husband's return (Niffenegger vii). It would seem as though Henry has the advantage over Clare here, for he has been influencing her since she was six years old, but the Henry that influences Clare is a product of his adult relationship with Clare. She influences the man who will in turn influence her in her youth. Thus, despite the strange phenomenon that grips Henry, Clare and he enjoy a relatively equal relationship, albeit a strange and potentially troubling one<sup>20</sup>. The power that draws Henry to and from Clare is beyond their control. She suffers uncertainty and he attempts to avoid danger. They are not so different than the sailor or soldier and their spouse.

Young Clare waits for Henry but knows when he will appear in the meadow because of the list of dates he wrote out for her during one of his earliest visits. Henry knows this list of dates because she shows it to him when they are both adults (Niffenegger 8). This list is a physical manifestation of the looping causality at play. It does not exist outside the loop created by Henry's backward anachronic metalepses. Clare knows the list because Henry wrote it

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<sup>20</sup> Niffenegger makes it clear that Henry never takes advantage of Clare when he visits her in her youth, nor does he tell her that she will marry him when she is older (Niffenegger 417-27). But her efforts to demonstrate that adult Henry is not actively influencing and seducing child Clare only serve to highlight that he implicitly is doing just that.

down for her. Henry knows the list because he memorizes it after Clare shows it to him. She compares the list to a Mobius strip, a shape that loops back to itself (Niffenegger 8). Clare and Henry find this looping causality both troubling and reassuring. While it leads them to questions about free will, it also leads them to believe that they are destined for one another.

Clare worries that Henry's foreknowledge of their life together means that she cannot make meaningful decisions about her own life and their life together. She complains to Henry that he is making her a freak, explaining:

You know, like telling me that I like coffee with cream and sugar before I hardly even taste it. I mean, how am I going to figure out if that's what I like or if I just like it because you tell me I like it? (Niffenegger 74)

Clare is concerned that Henry is taking away her opportunities to define herself by informing her about personal characteristics she has yet to discover on her own, but from Henry's perspective, he is only relaying to her things he has learned about her as an adult. Henry is haunted by the concept of determinism (Niffenegger 75). He believes that he cannot change the past. For a time, he would experience repeated backwards anachronic metalepses to the day he "saw a little girl get hit in the head with a hockey puck" (Niffenegger 56). Despite his desire to, he could never bring himself to warn her or her mother, having to bear mute witness to this tragic accident again and again. Henry can witness

history, past and future, from many different perspectives, but he appears as hopeless as anyone else to alter it.

Clare feels her relationship with Henry is fated. Having known and loved him in one way or another since she was six years old, Clare has come to believe that she and Henry are meant for each other despite any misgivings arising from Henry's strange condition. She thinks:

*Henry loves me. Henry is here, finally, now, finally. And I love him... Why does everything have to be complicated? Isn't the complicated part behind us now? ... I never chose Henry, and he never chose me. So how could it be a mistake?* (Niffenegger 150, emphasis in original)

She is both correct and incorrect that she and Henry did not choose each other. Clare introduced herself to Henry when she was twenty and he twenty-eight because she had grown up with his older self. Henry surmises that he is drawn to Clare's childhood because of the deep love he develops for her after meeting her as an adult. Clare certainly has and Henry may have made a choice in how they met each other, but Clare is already in love with and waiting for Henry when she introduces herself to him, and Henry is already in love with and seemingly anchored to Clare when he experiences backwards anachronic metalepses to her childhood. They could conceivably make different choices, but they would not. They are compelled by their love for one another. They are compelled for the forces of their own romance.

*The Time Traveler's Wife* incorporates time travel not to break with romance narratives, but instead to literalize, dramatize, and accentuate certain aspects of them. Clare loves Henry because of the man she *knows* he will grow into being. This is not a strongly held belief; this is factual knowledge. Henry's love for the Clare he knows causes him to love the person she was before they met. Thanks to his strange condition, he gets to meet that person. And the loop of causality is established: she will fall in love with him as a child and groom him as an adult to be the man she fell in love with. Clare and Henry have no choice but to love one another. It is their fate.

And it is the fate of all lovers in romance narratives, despite any obstacles or protestations. Elizabeth and Darcy, Romeo and Juliet, Scott Summers and Jean Grey--all are meant to be together. They exist to fulfill the romantic narrative design. They are who they are, faults and all, so that they can be the people who fall in love with each other. Their perceptions of one another are determined by the romantic imperative. This is love as entelechy. The end purpose of their very existence, and thus the cause of that existence, is the love that they will inevitably feel for one another. This entelechial love is dramatized through the anachronic metalepses that Henry experiences. His love for her stems from her love for him which stems from his love for her. This loop of causality is driven by its own purpose, namely love itself. Love is the driving purpose behind much, if not all, romance fiction; *The Time Traveler's Wife* just

provides it with a strange manifest power that serves to dramatize and accentuate its entelechial causality and logic.

By foregrounding the entelechial nature of romantic love through anachronic metalepses, *The Time Traveler's Wife* is able to interrogate and play with it. The novel deliberately loops the order of romantic causality, who loved whom first, to indicate to both readers and its characters the real start and end of the causal chain, which is love itself. By making this apparent and strange to its characters, *The Time Traveler's Wife* provides them with opportunity to contemplate and question it. The love that Clare and Henry feel for one another may not ultimately have a more profound effect upon them than love has for any other romantic characters, but it does have an incredibly strange effect upon them, one that they cannot take for granted and must contend with. This, in turn, invites readers to consider the compelling powers of narrative love.

*The Time Traveler's Wife's* use of anachronic metalepses also highlights how the entelechial nature of romance narratives define romantic characters across their narrative lives. They are drawn together into the same narrative by that love. That love is what defines and delimits their nature as characters.<sup>21</sup> The anachronic metalepses Henry experiences highlight this connection between he and Clare by being a manifest phenomenon in their story world. They are

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<sup>21</sup> Even Scott and Jean are defined as characters as much by their romance as by their awesome mutant powers.

otherwise normal people with no special histories or links to each other or history. They are drawn together explicitly by this one strange phenomenon. They wish to be normal despite this strange phenomenon. Their personal histories become defined by their interactions that only happen because of this phenomenon.

By incorporating anachronic metalepses into its own romance narrative, *The Time Traveler's Wife* foregrounds romantic love's entelechial qualities, turning them from something that characters and readers can take for granted into something that characters and readers must consider. In *The Time Traveler's Wife*, we see time travel's power to accentuate and allow the consideration of narrative forces, dramatizing at the fabula level their powers at the story level. This invites the interrogation of those forces. The phenomenon that binds Clare and Henry together also steals him away from her. It is the source of both their joy and tragedy. It comes to define Clare and Henry more than anything else in their lives, as evidenced by the novel's very title. He is the time traveler, she but his wife. It is the manifestation of the narrative forces that define them. The romantic narrative forces manifested as anachronic metalepses overwhelm all other aspects of their lives because their lives exist as part of a romance narrative. Or in other words, Clare and Henry are romance characters because they exist in a romance narrative.

This sort of tautology rings true for any sort of narrative and its characters because of their entelechial qualities: characters are ultimately created to fulfill

narrative ends. John McClain is hard to kill because he is the hero of *Die Hard* (1988). Sherlock Holmes is the only man who can solve the case because it is a Sherlock Holmes case. Well drawn characters have depths that can lead us to believe they are more than just narrative constructs. But ultimately even the most rounded of characters are defined by their functions in narrative. Clare and Henry have full narrative lives with interesting careers and hobbies. They have opinions about art and politics. They go to fun concerts and parties. But ultimately what defines them is that, as stated, he is the time traveller, she his wife. They exist as characters to fulfill romantic narrative designs. Everything else about them exists to complicate or support those designs.

The anachronic metalepses in *The Time Traveler's Wife* highlight this narrative entelechy by manifesting it as a strange phenomenon at the fabula level that the characters apprehend and contemplate. Clare and Henry experience and discuss the narrative forces that operate upon them and foreground those forces in their readers' attention. This invites the readers to consider and interrogate this force and its effects upon the characters in the narrative. It makes explicit that this power is the narrative's motive and unifying force. Here the anachronic metalepsis bears the rhetorical burden of manifesting story-level forces as fabula-level phenomenon to foreground those forces in the readers' attention.

*The Time Traveler's Wife* does not invite specific ethical judgments about those forces. All of the narration is from Clare and Henry's alternating perspectives and all narrative commentary is in their voices. Ultimately, they are satisfied with the effects those forces have on their lives, but they certainly have a reason to be biased. Nothing discourages the reader from being skeptical about their judgments. An advantage of the anachronic metalepsis here is that it is relatively free of ethical burdens that would influence the readers' judgments about its effects upon the characters. It is free to be judged only by those effects on the characters. Those effects are many and complex, inviting a nuanced judgment.

*The Time Traveler's Wife* demonstrates the power of anachronic metalepses to foreground narrative forces and invite readers to consider them. This power arises from its relationship with anachronies and other forms of metalepsis. It allows for similar temporal manipulations and movements across ontological boundaries, but its manipulations and movements happen at the fabula level by means of devices, powers, or phenomenon that the characters experience and discuss. Because the characters are aware of these manipulations and movements, they are brought more clearly to the readers' attention, inviting the reader to consider and make judgments about them.

## THE POSSIBILITIES OF CHOICE IN *LIFE AFTER LIFE*

Kate Atkinson's *Life After Life* relates the many lives of Ursula Todd, an Englishwoman born again and again on February 11, 1910. Each time Ursula dies, she experiences a backwards anachronic metalepsis and is reborn on this same date with vague *deja vu* like memories of her previous lives. These rebirths are anachronic metalepses because a character experiences them as phenomenon in the fabula. Ursula's memories of previous lives and, later in the narrative, her active plans for future lives demonstrate that this is a fabular phenomenon. This fabular phenomenon is what draws the many lives in *Life After Life* into a single narrative instead of a series of narratives about the same character in different lives.

Each life Ursula experiences is slightly altered by her own choices and those of the people around her. Her lives are filled with joy and despair for herself and others, in equal doses. The alterations in the lives she lives mean the backward anachronic metalepses she experiences are also alternate anachronic metalepses. The choices Ursula and those around her make have profound effects upon her history, personal, familial, and global.

The novel begins with Ursula following through on a profound choice: to kill Hitler in Munich in November of 1930. Ursula draws her father's revolver and in "[a] move rehearsed a hundred times" shoots Hitler (Atkinson 4). The scene is short, and Ursula's own life is cut short by Hitler's bodyguards. This brief scene

ends with the language that will serve to narrate the last moments of all Ursula's lives: "Darkness fell" (Atkinson 4). The novel's protagonist dies on its fourth page. Then readers turn the page to read of her birth.

Ursula's birth is a difficult one. Her umbilical cord has become wrapped around her neck, and the first time readers see her birth, this causes her to die as she is delivered (Atkinson 7-8). The next time readers witness this birth, the local doctor has arrived in time to cut the cord and save her, and Ursula is able to begin living her life (Atkinson 11-13). This life is also cut short: Ursula drowns playing in the ocean, and she once again experiences a backwards alternate anachronic metalepsis to February of 1910 to experience her birth a third time (Atkinson 28-32). As the novel progresses, Ursula lives generally longer lives, but always inevitably dies and experiences a backward alternate anachronic metalepsis to that cold February night. The deaths Ursula experiences come about by chance or the choices made by herself and others. She chooses to climb onto the shingles outside her window to rescue her doll. Her family's servant, Bridget, chooses to travel to London for the Armistice celebration in 1918 and contracts the Spanish Flu while there. The gas goes out while Ursula is in a drunken stupor, leading to her freezing to death. The bombs of the Blitz fall on her or around her at random. She survives the Allied bombing of Berlin, but takes her own life in its aftermath.

As Ursula's lives progress, she is able to avoid her earlier deaths through a mixture of chance, her own actions, and the fortunate intercessions of others. An amateur artist pulls her from the ocean before she can drown (Atkinson 36). Bridget pulls her back before she can climb out onto the icy shingles outside her bedroom window (Atkinson 67). She avoids the Spanish Flu by preventing Bridget from traveling to London for the Armistice celebrations (Atkinson 124).

This mixture of chance and choice runs through *Life After Life*. Her repeated backwards alternate anachronic metalepses do not ensure that she will live a better or longer life than her last. Instead, they allow her to experience different lives with different meanings. Ursula's lives become a search for meaning. Her vague, *deja vu* like memories of her past lives lead her parents to take her to a psychiatrist, Dr. Kellet, who discusses with her the metaphysical and philosophical implications of her experience. He teaches her about the Buddhist conception of reincarnation: "the disciples of the Buddha don't believe that you keep coming back as the *same* person in the *same* circumstances, as you feel you do" (Atkinson 158). Of course, readers discover that Ursula's circumstances change from life to life, and due to those changing circumstances, she develops into different versions of herself. Dr. Kellet explains to Ursula Nietzsche's concept of *amor fati*, "a simple acceptance of what comes to us regarding it as neither bad nor good" to guide her through her life (Atkinson 164). He counsels her to live according to that principle in rather entelechial terms:

"become who you are" (Atkinson 164). Ursula, sensing already that she has the possibility to become many different people, does not heed this advice. She will not simply accept what comes to her, and perhaps this itself is the driving force behind her reoccurring rebirths.

Twice readers witness Ursula choose death over some other fate. The first time is when she is in Berlin at the end of World War Two. The novel presents this choice in a harrowing light: "She had never chosen death over life before and as she was leaving she knew something had cracked and broken and the order of things had changed" (Atkinson 379). Ursula's grim choice here reflects the grim nature of her life in Germany, a life defined by wishing she was back in England, a life of regret despite being the life in which she finds love and has a child, for the circumstances of this life are awful even in comparison to suffering the Blitz. Embracing death is her opportunity to return to her home and be someone else. The change in order Ursula feels seems to have few consequences aside from providing Ursula with a more clear awareness of her many lives. Ursula becomes more proactive in her lives after this death. She joins the Air Raid Precautions Department "after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in March '39 when it suddenly seem[s] horribly clear to her that Europe is doomed" (Atkinson 386). As an ARP warden, Ursula hopes to play her own small part in resisting the horrors of World War Two. Yet her efforts are so small and she still suffers grievous personal losses against the backdrop of the greater

tragedy engulfing Europe, including her fellows in the ARP, her father, and her brother Teddy, who is shot down as a bomber pilot over Germany.

So when Ursula chooses to embrace death again towards the novel's end, she does so deliberately with a plan in mind for her next life. She will assassinate Hitler and stop the many deaths he causes with World War Two (Atkinson 508). Her life in Germany has afforded her an understanding of the suffering and death on both sides of the conflict. Ursula follows through on this plan, kills Hitler in December of 1930, and is gunned down by his bodyguards and henchmen immediately after. There are small details that indicate this scene is not the same as that which opens the novel. The dialogue is different, and Ursula enjoys hot chocolate instead of streusel. Because of these differences, the repeated line, "A move rehearsed a hundred times," carries much more weight here (Atkinson 505). Readers are invited to consider now how she has rehearsed this move so many times: how many of Ursula's lives have ended this way? Again, readers never see the effects of this choice, whether or not Ursula succeeds in preventing World War Two, because we are once again returned to the moment of her rebirth. This is an ambiguous take on using time travel to fundamentally alter history. The scene initially appears to be a move towards some sense of closure, a return to the novel's beginning, a way to bring the narrative full circle. But it does not gain that significance because it does not serve as the novel's closing scene. The significance of Ursula successfully killing

Hitler is downplayed by how little effect it has on the narrative. Ursula is just reborn again and the novel continues. This serves to downplay both the significance of killing Hitler and the significance of the novel's opening scene. It is where the story starts, but as a starting point it is rendered arbitrary and insignificant beyond its ability to function as a hook for readers. Ultimately, readers are left to wonder if killing Hitler matters at all. It has no effect on the narrative.

In the novel's penultimate scene, prior to one more repetition of the night of Ursula's birth, we see Teddy has survived World War Two and returned to jubilant victory celebrations in London. There he sees Ursula across a bar and shouts something to her. Ursula thinks "it [is] 'thank you' but she might have been wrong" (Atkinson 525). The initial impression left by this scene is that Ursula believes she has done something to ensure Teddy's survival. But his story of how he survives involves the bravery of his fellow crewman and some good luck as a prisoner of war. Ursula is nowhere involved. And more significantly, Teddy would have no way of knowing that Ursula manipulated events to save him. He is not aware of the phenomenon she experiences.

Thus the novel ends on an ambiguous note, raising the question: even with the advantage of foreknowledge, how much power does Ursula actually have to affect history? Her belief that Teddy has reason to thank her may indicate that she was able to find some combination of actions that somehow led

to him surviving and coming home. But in his recount of when his bomber was shot down does not point to any direct intercessions on her behalf. Ursula is also not entirely sure of this belief, as indicated by her acknowledgment that she "might have been wrong," so even if she made plans to help save Teddy, she is not entirely sure that they were successful. Teddy has others to thank for his survival. And again, even if Teddy has reason to thank Ursula, how would he know to thank her? Perhaps Ursula should really just live her lives according to *amor fati*, or perhaps she has indeed found a way to prevent the personal tragedies should previously suffered in the war.

This sense of uncertainty is quite different from the entelechial sense of closure found in many other narratives that employ anachronic metalepses to establish temporal loops. It is reinforced by the many differences across the lives that Ursula lives. It is further reinforced by the complete absence of any explanation for Ursula's experience. Readers are left wondering about not just the extent of Ursula's power, but whether it is really a power at all. While Ursula has some control of her own life, she is also at the mercy of others' choices. Despite transcending time by carrying on her memories of previous lives and remembering the consequences of choices made before her death and backwards anachronic metalepses, Ursula cannot transcend chance. There is no question that Ursula possesses a free will and ability to make choices, but with that comes the understanding that she does not possess the *only* free will

and ability to make choices. And the will and choices of others affect her as much or more than her own. Ursula's backwards anachronic metalepses do not lock her into a single life lived as a loop, but instead free her to experience many lives in many ways.

Kate Atkinson's *Life After Life* employs anachronic metalepses to explore a myriad of possibilities enabled by the possibilities of free will and the ability to choose. On a purely story level, the backwards anachronic metalepses experienced by Ursula serve to unite a multitude of different narratives about Ursula and her lives in the first half of the twentieth century into a single story and text. But those lives are united on the fabula level as well. Ursula is aware that her life repeats. She acts upon this awareness. She considers the consequences of previous choices and at least once crafts a specific plan for her next life in light of what she has learned in previous lives. This further foregrounds the significance of the choices that Ursula makes. But equally significant are the choices others make. Ursula's power to define her life is limited and her power to define the lives of others is suspect. Even the time traveler, it would seem, is at the mercy of history's forces, yet she is not entirely without control. This may seem to point to a contradiction, but instead it points to a transcendent view of history as a force comprised of the wills of many acting upon one another. It is fitting that the novel explore this view of history against the backdrop of one of history's most significant and widespread events, World

War Two, an event that can be paradoxically viewed as an inevitability rooted in historical forces and the product of urgent choices made by its participants. Yet readers never see the outcome of the most urgent and significant choice made in the narrative: Ursula's decision to kill Hitler. Individual choice's power or impotence to affect historical forces of World War Two's magnitude is never depicted. Even if Ursula is correct and Teddy does thank her, he certainly is not thanking her for killing Hitler.

There is only one inevitability, however, in Ursula's life, that she will live it again and again. Kate Atkinson's use of anachronic metalepsis bears the rhetorical burden of illuminating the significance of choice by illuminating its many possibilities, but it also takes pains to illustrate that choice is not necessarily control. Ursula's own free will does not equal a freedom from the will of others. This, however, is neither bad nor good, for as often as the choices of others negatively impact Ursula's life, they also impact it in positive ways. For every choice, Ursula's or someone else's, that leads to her death, there is a choice that continues her current life.

By highlighting the many choices and their consequences that characters make, *Life After Life* also addresses the choices that drive narratives. Atkinson chooses to end Ursula's life at different points and in different ways. Atkinson chooses to focus on different aspects of Ursula's different lives. These choices lead to different lives falling into different narrative structures. Early sections of

the novel where Ursula dies young read like coming-of-age stories. Middle sections where Ursula dies in the course of World War Two read more like tragedies. When Ursula plans her life around assassinating Hitler, the novel takes on a spy thriller quality. Atkinson's use of the assassination scene to open the novel establishes expectations that are later undermined by her choice to return to a similar scene *before* the novel's conclusion. The anachronic metalepsis allows Kate Atkinson to unite different narratives and genres in a single novel while demonstrating the choices that differentiate those narratives and genres.

*Life After Life* demonstrates time travel narratives' particular power to examine choice and consequence rooted in the anachronic metalepsis's power to alter the relationship between cause and effect. Anachronic metalepses allow characters to change their decisions after learning of their consequences by affording them the opportunity to return to the past and make different choices. Ursula remembers decisions that lead to her death and makes different choices. The anachronic metalepsis allows a single narrative to take multiple paths at the fabula level. The characters apprehend the anachronic metalepsis as a thing in their own world and are empowered to interact with it. Ursula cannot stop herself from being reborn, but she can live her lives in the knowledge that she will be. Even if the characters do not directly control the anachronic metalepses they experience, they still have new powers and opportunities to make and revise

choices. These powers and opportunities are highlighted and brought to the readers' attention by the strange devices, powers, or phenomenon that enable them.

### **BREAKING THE CAUSAL CYCLE IN *LOOPER***

In Rian Johnson's 2012 film, *Looper*, a criminal syndicate led by a man called the Rain Maker in 2074 uses time travel technology to send people back in time to 2044 to be assassinated by criminal associates called loopers. If those loopers themselves survive until 2074, they will be sent back in time to 2044 to be killed by their younger self. These backwards anachronic metalepses are known as "closing the loop," and from them the loopers derive their name. The film presents the story of two instances of the same man named Joe. One instance is Joe's younger self in 2044, a young and successful looper. The other instance is Joe's older self from 2074 sent back to 2044 in a backwards anachronic metalepsis so that he can be killed by his younger self and have his loop closed. Old Joe manages to escape his younger self's clutches and sets out to change history by finding and slaying the child who will grow into the Rain Maker of 2074. This sets off an elaborate chase where Young Joe tries to hunt his older self as his older self tries to hunt down the child who will become the Rain Maker while both are being hunted by the criminal syndicate for which they work. This chase eventually leads Young Joe to lie low at a farm outside the city owned by Sarah, who lives alone with her young son Cid. It turns out that Cid is

the child who will one day become the Rain Maker, setting up a showdown between Young and Old Joes.

*Looper* explicitly reminds its viewers that the technology that underlies its premise is not only fictional, but also impossible, to encourage viewers to instead focus on the rhetorical and thematic implications of its action. One character states that "time travel shit fries your brain like an egg" (*Looper*). When confronted by his younger self, Old Joe yells, "I don't want to talk about time travel shit because if we start talking about it then we're going to be here all day talking about it, making diagrams with straws" (*Looper*). Characters refuse to discuss the mechanics of how time travel works, dismiss it all as so much "shit," and have trouble explaining the specifics of its effects. When pressed to explain what is happening to his memories, Old Joe says:

my memories are cloudy. It's a cloud. Because my memories are not really memories. They're just one possibility now ... But this is a precise description of a fuzzy mechanism. It's messy. (*Looper*)

Note that Old Joe says "precise" not "imprecise." The mechanism itself is confusing and "fuzzy," not his explanation of it. It is illogical and ineffable, or in other words, "messy." Time travel is *Looper's* central, but not its only, science fiction conceit. Telekinesis plays a very significant role as well, and the story is set in an anti-utopian future of urban decay, criminal drug abuse, and global

climate change. The emergence of telekinetic powers is left unexplained, as are the forces that have led to its anti-utopian setting.

Time travel in *Looper* is as symbolic as it is literal, part of a larger motif of cycles and violence. *Looper* opens on a close up of Young Joe's vintage pocket-watch and the sound of a second hand ticking. Young Joe's career as a looper is apparently lucrative. He enjoys an upscale apartment, a vintage sports car<sup>22</sup>, and various criminal recreational activities, including psychotropic eye drops and prostitution. As we see this lifestyle, we are presented with further cyclical visuals. His friend Seth and many others possess minor telekinetic abilities, allowing them to levitate and rotate small objects. We see him using a vintage record player, and the effects of his drug use are depicted by a shot where the camera makes a complete clockwise turn, spinning upside-down and back around. As we are introduced further to the criminal syndicate for which Young Joe works, we see further examples of this cyclical visual motif. The prostitutes who work for the syndicate frequently check the clocks hanging up around the syndicate's nightclub. The syndicate's muscle is provided by young men called "gat men." These enforcers carry "gats," large revolvers whose cylinders we see rotate as they chamber new rounds. The most prominent of these gat men, the foolish Kid Blue, has a habit of clumsily spinning his gun around his index finger with comic but violent results. During an especially tense scene, a gat man

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<sup>22</sup> Which in 2044 means a cherry red 1991 Mazda Miata.

named Jesse and Young Joe play a cat and mouse game, cycling around Sarah's farmhouse. Cid, the child who will become the Rain Maker of 2074, possesses frightening telekinetic powers that cause objects and people to levitate and orbit around him before their bodies are torn apart by centrifugal forces<sup>23</sup>. All of these visuals complement the film's time travel loop and magnify its symbolic resonance.

The time travel loop that gives the assassins and the film their names is a cycle of violence, one in which younger loopers must kill their older selves. This is a subtle variation on the grandfather paradox; instead of the older self killing the younger self and eliminating his own existence, in this case the younger self kills the older, eliminating a possible loose end for the syndicate in the future. In effect, the loopers commit suicide. Or at the very least, their actions are literally self-destructive. This self-destructive cycle of violence is the central science fiction conceit and motif of the film because self destructive cycles of violence, their effects, and how to break them are the film's central concern. Significantly, the film shows how violence at one end of the cycle has ripple effects on and outside the cycle itself.

In *Looper*, violence inflicted upon an earlier self can transgress the boundaries of past, present, and future, and always affects the future self, no

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<sup>23</sup> The way the resulting gore falls to the ground is presumably why he would gain the name "Rain Maker."

matter where he or she is in the timeline. We see the horrifying effects of this anachronic metaleptic violence when Young Seth is tortured to ensure the surrender of Old Seth. Young Seth, like Young Joe is a looper, but he lacks any of Young Joe's calm or inventiveness. Because of his kindly, but bumbling nature, Young Seth fails to close his loop, allowing his older self to escape after his backwards anachronic metalepsis to 2044. To capture and eliminate Old Seth, gat men capture and mutilate Young Seth. This is depicted in a shocking sequence where we see Old Seth on the run, trying to climb a fence when his fingers and nose disappear and a message appears carved into the flesh of his arm telling him to "Be at" an address in the city (*Looper*). We see Old Seth frantically try to get to the address as his limbs disappear one after another, until limbless, he makes it to the door, only to get shot by Kid Blue. Behind Kid Blue we can see a bloody operating table and on it, presumably, the mutilated remains of Young Seth. Old Seth cannot escape the cycle of violence even by transgressing time itself. His backwards anachronic metalepsis does not sever his connection to his younger self. The wounds that Young Seth suffers have their own anachronic metaleptic nature and appear on the body of his older self even though that older self is now in his own present.

Young Joe uses this same anachronic metaleptic violence to get Old Joe's attention. In a scene especially comic because of its juxtaposition against the SETHS' violent end, Old Joe discovers a scar reading "Be at" on his arm like that

appeared on Old Seth's, but as he pulls his sleeve back, he sees that his scar says "Beatrix," a reference to one of the waitresses at the diner he would often visit in his own past. When Old Joe arrives at the diner, we see the freshly bandaged wound peaking from Young Joe's sleeve, and it is during their confrontation here that Old Joe attempts to explain how the time travel is affecting his memory. Old Joe tells Young Joe, "I can remember what you do after you do it, and it hurts" (*Looper*). Like injuries, memories can follow a character through time across the ontological boundaries of past, present, and future. And they are painful because these new memories overwrite the old ones. This is one of Old Joe's greatest fears, for in the past, all he has left to define himself are his memories of his future wife, the Chinese woman who helped him set aside a life of violence and crime until the day the Rain Maker's men came for him and accidentally shot her. We see the effects of this on Old Joe in a number of scenes. As he hides out in the city's sewers, we see him fight against his anachronic metaleptic memories, telling himself to "remember the first time you saw her," referring to his wife as his memories of her begin to blur and get replaced by memories of Sarah, the mother of Cid and the woman Young Joe is falling in love with (*Looper*). He has a moment of anachronic metaleptic memory when he recalls Sarah shooting him with rock salt at the same time scars from the incident appear on his ear and shoulder.

To make its timeline even more recursive and looping, *Looper* employs story level anachronies alongside fabula level anachronic metalepses when presenting the story of how Young Joe became Old Joe. Significantly, this section of the film serves to illustrate the clear distinction between anachronies and anachronic metalepses. Audience members are able to distinguish between the two because the anachronies only involve edits at the story level without any device, power, or phenomenon at the fabula level, such as when we see Young Joe's perspective as he falls from his fire escape and then Old Joe's perspective as he watches his younger counterpart's fall. Conversely, Old Joe's backward anachronic metalepsis to 2044 is clearly indicated as such by the time machine he climbs inside in 2074 and the way he appears out of nowhere before Young Joe in 2044 to "close his loop" and complete the cycle of violence.

*Looper's* time travel cycle of violence causes its possible worlds to collide and come into conflict. Old Joe fights to save a past that no longer exists. Young Joe fights to preserve his control of his future. Young Joe's actions instantly become Old Joe's memories and erase other memories of a future that will never be. As self comes into conflict with self, causes become the predicates of their own effects. Ontological worlds collide and blend together, obliterating distinctions and identities.

*Looper* offers a way out of this cycle, though, a way to end it and allow for a new future that is not defined by the scars left by its past, a future that does not

seek to destroy its own future to preserve itself. Fleeing pursuit, Young Joe finds his way to a farm in the countryside. On the farm, he meets Sarah, a woman who once worked for the syndicate in the city before coming to the country to reunite with and raise her estranged young son, Cid. Cid is a savant, and as we discover, a telekinetic marvel who has the potential to grow up and become the Rain Maker, the criminal overlord of the syndicate in 2074. Young Joe realizes that Cid is the child Old Joe is hunting for just as he also realizes that Old Joe will himself remember this realization and make his way to the farm. Young Joe chooses to try to protect Sarah and Cid from Old Joe, convinced by Sarah that if she is able to raise Cid in a loving home, he will not grow into a villain.

Young Joe and Old Joe's conflict comes to its crisis on the farm when Old Joe arrives to slay Cid. Young Joe tries to dissuade Old Joe and show him his course of action is unnecessary while Sarah and Cid attempt to escape into the cane fields. But Young Joe is interrupted by Kid Blue, who has finally caught up with him and Old Joe. Before Young Joe can defeat Kid Blue, Old Joe gets away and begins pursuing Sarah and Cid. As Sarah and Cid flee into the cane fields, Old Joe manages to clip Cid with a gun shot to the jaw<sup>24</sup>. Cid runs to the Cane while Sarah stands to block Old Joe's line of sight to him. Old Joe threatens to shoot Sarah down to get to Cid while Young Joe realizes he is too far away to

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<sup>24</sup> This draws a clear connection between Cid and the Rain Maker, who earlier is described as possessing a metal jaw.

stop Old Joe from shooting either of them. Then Young Joe has a metaleptic vision of a possible--and at this point seemingly likely future--that he narrates and shows to the audience:

Then I saw it. I saw a mom who would die for her son. A man who would kill for his wife. A boy, angry and alone. Laid out in front of him, the bad path. I saw it. And the path was a circle. Round and round. So I changed it. (*Looper*)

The film shows us a vision of Cid fleeing from the cane fields after Sarah is shot and hopping on a train where he nurses his wound and his grudge against loopers, the first steps on his path towards becoming the Rain Maker. Young Joe sees that the cycle of violence is rooted in itself; it is a *loop*. Cid becomes the Rain Maker because Old Joe shot his mother because the Rain Maker's henchmen shot Old Joe's wife. Young Joe sees only one way to break the cycle of violence. To stop Old Joe from killing Sarah and turning Cid into the Rainmaker, Young Joe turns his blunderbuss on himself, using the cycle's anachronic metaleptic violence to end the cycle itself. Young Joe closes his loop, but not in the way the cycle demands or for the reason that the cycle demands it. He breaks the cycle of violence by sacrificing his own life instead of taking another's. The film ends on two powerful symbolic beats: Sarah picks up and closes Young Joe's pocket watch, symbolically acknowledging the cycle's end, and we see Cid sleeping peacefully in his own bed, not fitfully on a speeding

train, showing us that the cycle is over, and that there is a new possible world on the horizon.

*Looper* employs anachronic metalepses to create a temporal causal loop much like that of *The Time Traveler's Wife*, but it does so for very different reasons. While *The Time Traveler's Wife* presents its loops as something unchangeable and fixed, the temporal loop of *Looper* is more like that of *Life After Life*, alterable and malleable. But it is also distinct from *Life After Life's* loop in that it has a resolution. The loops found in these novels are positives, allowing characters to discover their identities, embrace their destinies, and explore the power of their choices. *Looper's* loop, on the other hand, is presented problematically as a cycle of violence that feeds itself. In this sense it is an allegory for all self-feeding cycles of violence. *Looper's* characters do not benefit from closing their temporal loop. Instead, they must strive to find a way to break it. The backwards anachronic metalepses of *Looper* establish an effect that is the cause of its own cause, but unlike Clare and Henry's transcendent love, this looping causality is a troubling anomaly that destroys the lives of those touched by it. It must be broken.

*Looper* all but explicitly tells the viewer to ignore the scientific impossibility and logical inconsistencies of its time travel premise<sup>25</sup>. Its anachronic

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<sup>25</sup> In 2074, the Rain Maker's henchmen use time machines to dispose of victims, and that is pretty much it. It seems like the Rain Maker could be getting a lot more out of this resource.

metalepses are "fuzzy," and thinking about them "fries your brain like an egg" (*Looper*). Instead, it invites its audience to focus attention on its narrative logic and rhetorical weight. *Looper* can do this because time travel is well established as a narrative device or trope, as are its paradoxes. Viewers have seen it often enough in other narratives to accept it here. The title directly invokes the paradoxical temporal loops created by anachronic metalepses. The spinning visuals further direct attention towards the loop concept, the film's central narrative force.

Here again, the anachronic metalepses manifest narrative forces at the fabula level. The temporal loop is both an actual cycle of violence experienced by the characters and a metaphor for the other cycles of violence in their world and lives. It is both literal and symbolic. Young Joe realizes that saving Cid's mother is key to breaking the loop because he recognizes that being abandoned by his own mother led him to the loop. He sees how to break the loop because he understands the loop's allegorical meaning, its rhetorical burden. That allegorical meaning is quite simple: the cycle of violence is rooted in a lack of parenting or proper role models. After being abandoned by his parents, Joe joins a criminal organization created by a man who lost his parents. That organization encourages parents like Sarah to abandon their children, ensuring a supply of young men and women who can eventually be encouraged to in turn abandon their own children. This is the cycle that Young Joe breaks when he closes his

loop, choosing to suffer himself the deadly consequences of the cycle and preventing his own future actions. Ending the cycle is necessary for narrative closure. The allegory must be complete and needs an end. But a loop has no end. So Young Joe must fulfill his narrative role and break the loop.

*Looper* demonstrates the symbolic and allegorical potential of anachronic metalepses. Here, the circular causality of a temporal loops allows its use as a symbol for cycles of violence and their circular causality. This is especially effective in *Looper* because the medium of film allows the time travel loop to be reinforced by a reoccurring visual motif--in this case, a series of circles, clocks, and visual loops. The visual depiction of time machines and time travel in film can further reinforce its ethical values. In *Looper*, the time machine is a spherical chamber covered in wires and pipes held within a metal ring like some strange futuristic crucible. Its very design is part of the circular visual motif. Significantly, once one enters the time machine, one does come back out. One instead appears in the past to be gunned down by a looper. The visual of the time machine offers no escape from the cycle. Contrast this time machine with the one from the *Back to the Future* films. *Looper's* time machine is an ugly, industrial device from which one cannot escape. *Back to the Future's* is an automobile--itself a motif for freedom--covered in bright wires and devices. In *Looper*, the temporal loop is a troubling curse that must be broken. In *Back to the Future*, the temporal loop is an exciting adventure.

Young Joe's decision to end the cycle in *Looper* is an ethical and narrative judgment about the cycle, lending allegorical weight to the cycle's symbolism: it is both ethically and narratively suspect. The cycle of violence in which the loopers are trapped is fictional and impossible, but the cycles of abandonment and revenge it symbolizes are all too real. The very impossibility of the anachronic metalepsis highlights it and its symbolic uses within time travel narratives.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Through this chapter, we have examined how anachronic metalepses can be used to establish looping narratives that complicate causality. This is done most often with backwards anachronic metalepses that juxtapose the normal ordering of cause and effect, allowing effects to precede and influence their own causes, creating causal loops. These looping causalities bring questions of cause and effect to the foreground by highlighting them with strange devices, powers, or phenomenon that exist in the story world at the fabula level. In a sense, they transfer the temporal manipulations that are common on the story level to the fabula level where the characters experience them firsthand. The existence of the genetic anomaly that leads to Chronally Displaced Persons, the strange form of reincarnation that Ursula Todd experiences, and the Rain Maker's time machines, as well as many other devices, powers and phenomenon, allow for reader's to accept anachronic metalepses as plausible and rational parts of the story worlds in their fabulas. This acceptance allows

audiences to accept the very strangeness of these story worlds and focus on the ways characters interact with and are influenced by the anachronic metalepses they experience.

Because the anachronic metalepses occur at the fabula level as opposed to the story level, they can be used to represent narrative forces in a form that the characters can directly experience and apprehend. We see this in *The Time Traveler's Wife*, where the time travel phenomenon that preordains and motivates Clare and Henry's love is the manifestation of the entelechial forces of narrative romance. Because these forces are manifest in their storyworld, Clare and Henry can consciously experience them as forces on their lives, which makes them more noticeable to the audience. Here, the causal loop created through anachronic metalepses allows the characters and audience to apprehend and contemplate narrative causes, the forces that create the loop in the first place.

Similar to its ability to manifest and foreground narrative forces, the anachronic metalepsis can also serve other symbolic purposes. We see this in *Looper* where the causal loop at the film's center is a reflection and symbol of the other cycles of violence that feed into or off of the loopers' criminal enterprise. The symbolic power of the causal loop here comes from its similarity with real cycles of violence motivated by similar feedback loops of causality.

Foregrounding causality invites the audience to make judgments about the causes motivating the narrative and its action. This adds an ethical dimension to the anachronic metalepsis's rhetorical burdens. We see this in *Life After Life* and *Looper*. In the former, audiences are invited to judge the ethics of Ursula's different choices through her different lives. In the latter, audiences are invited to judge the motivations behind the central temporal loop and the cycles of violence that it reflects. *Life After Life* is ultimately ambiguous about its ethical positions, but *Looper* makes clear that its cycles and loops are caused by ethically suspect choices. These different ethical positions are reflected by the narratives' different endings. In *Life After Life*, the causal loop is shown to continue on after the narrative's closure with Ursula being reborn once again. In *Looper*, the narrative closes when the characters find a way to break its central loop. In each case, while the causal loops are established by impossible means, the ethical questions raised by them speak to real world concerns, allowing them to bear significant and meaningful rhetorical burdens.

The rhetorical burdens of the time travel narratives in this chapter are born out of the anachronic metalepsis's ability to foreground questions of cause and effect through strange devices, powers, or phenomenon that cannot escape the audience's notice. These are not, however, the only rhetorical burdens born by anachronic metalepses. In the next chapter, we will turn to a different set of time travel narratives, ones that focus less on the potential for looping causalities and

more on the potential for visiting different and often disorienting locations in time and space. These are narratives that exploit the power of the anachronic metalepsis to narratively fulfill our desires to visit the past or future, to witness and experience history. They too can speak to questions of identity and choice, but those questions are rooted more in questions of where and when than questions of how and why.

## CHAPTER IV

### AT A DISTANT TIME, IN A DISTANT LOCATION

Anachronic metalepses are not just capable of transporting characters to their own pasts or establishing temporal loops of causality. They can transport characters to many different times and places, the distant past and future and far-off countries and worlds<sup>26</sup>. Time travel is, obvious to say, a form of travel, and thus the anachronic metalepsis is often used to enable otherwise impossible journeys. Marty McFly, a teenager of the 1980s, finds himself in the 1950s, then the 2010s, and finally the 1880s, before settling back into his own native time. Wells' Time Traveler only visits distant futures, but his machine is also capable of visiting England's past. The agents of Isaac Asimov's *Eternity* travel to strange futures and pasts from their own paradoxical timeless headquarters<sup>27</sup>. Often in time travel narratives, the place in time to which the characters travel is as narratively and rhetorically significant as the act of traveling through time.

Recall in Chapter 2 our long discussion of the relationship between narrative space and time. The two are as intrinsically linked in narratives as they

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<sup>26</sup> From a scientific perspective, any time travel also involves spatial travel. The reason for this is that locations are not fixed in space. The earth revolves around its axis and orbits around the Sun. The Sun and its planets orbit around the center of the Milky Way Galaxy. The Milky Way Galaxy moves in space as the Universe expands. Thus, even Wells' apparently immobile Time Machine must travel in space to remain in the same location in London thousands of years in the future. Of course, time travel is a narrative device and not beholden to scientific laws.

<sup>27</sup> Asimov, Isaac. *The End of Eternity*. Orb Books, 1955.

are in physics, hence Bakhtin adopting space-time for his chronotope. This link is also in evidence in the ways we conceptualize and discuss time. Bertrand Westphall notes: "The passage of time has often been conveyed through spatial metaphors" (10). Or in other words, to think and speak about time, we often treat it like space. We think of time flowing like a river (Gleick 125-128). English speakers and many other Westerners speak of the future as being in front of us and the past being behind us. Gleick notes of English speakers: "when we are running late we say we have fallen behind" (137). He presents the Aymara speakers of the Andes as a counterpoint: "[they] point forward (where they can see) when talking about the past and gesture behind their backs when talking about the future" (137-8). While this is the reverse of the English conception, both are aligned spatially along a line. We also draw a connection between places and time. Bud Foote has discussed how Americans tend to view time periods in spatial terms:

*Americans have a peculiar tendency to identify past, present, and future time with location; as one travels to the past in space, one can generate the idea of doing so in time* (65, italics in original).

The largely immigrant descended population of the United States comes from somewhere else. "And that Somewhere Else is for them, in general, their symbol for the past." (Foote 64). We see a sense of this in the terminology of "New World" for the Americas, and "Old World" for the continents many of our

ancestors came from, specifically Europe. When one travels to Europe, Asia, or Africa, one usually spends at least some time visiting the past in the form of structures and buildings out of history, such as Stonehenge, the Forbidden City, or the Great Pyramid. As Foote states, "when he [the American] goes to the old country as a tourist, he is in a sense a pilgrim to the past" (89). Yi-Fu Tuan locates this conception of time in Europe:

For some seventy years after the middle of the nineteenth century, European explorers searched for the source of the Nile in Africa and for signs of ancient civilizations in the interior of Asia. Narratives of their journeys give the impressions of odysseys into the past rather than into the future. Why? One reason may be the common belief in the antiquity of the African and Asian continents. Popular as well as scientific works characterized these broad landmasses as cradles of mankind and of civilization. Africa was antediluvian, its people "pre-adamite"; Asia was a museum of dead cultures. Exploring these places was like visiting a historic city or museum in which every object reminded the visitor of a remote past (125).

Tuan also discusses how when Europeans encountered isolated foreign cultures, "they tended to romanticize them and put them beyond the burden and erosion of time" (122). These discoveries coincide with the development of linear perspective and the realistic depiction of space in art. Robert T. Tally Jr. notes

that the shift to linear perspective in the Early Modern period led to a "wholesale re-imagining of space" as continuous and seemingly infinite (16). The shift to linear perspective corresponds to a changed understanding of history as a narrative of progress reaching ever into the future instead of a story of humanity's decline since prelapsarian prehistory. While these connections between time and space are culturally centered, they may be rooted in a more universal human psychology. Tuan discusses a general connection between distance and time. He states: "The distant view need not call forth the idea of a future time; the view could be our backward glance and the vanishing road the path we have already trodden. Both the past and future can be evoked by the distant scene" (Tuan 124). Our use of terms such as the near future and distant past demonstrate the relationship between spatial and temporal distance.

The relationship between space and time plays a significant role in establishing the settings in narratives. Consider the classic fairy tale opening: "once upon a time." This opening is used to establish that the fabula takes place in a nebulously distant location in the nebulously distant past. The use of "upon," a preposition indicating physical location, reflects that the fabula occurs at a time *and* place. The relationship between space and time has an effect on how we think of narratives' story worlds. Robert T. Tally Jr. notes that "the Gothic romance calls to mind a certain kind of landscape, whose buildings maintain a distinct architectural style" (56). Along with a landscape, a genre calls to mind a

time period, hence the particular architecture of the Gothic romance. A Western recalls the American West of the late nineteenth century, or at least a fictional version of it, the "Wild West." Even though many fantasy narratives like *Game of Thrones* or *The Dragonlance Chronicles*<sup>28</sup> are set on entirely different worlds with unique histories completely unrelated to our own, we tend to think of them as occurring in the past because of their pseudo-medieval cultures and technology. Similarly, we tend to think of science fiction settings as futuristic because of their advanced technologies even when, as is the case with *Star Wars* and *Battlestar Galactica*, they are explicitly set in the past. *Star Wars*' own opening scrawl, "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away," recalls the fairy tale opening with a more explicit indication of its distance in space and time. The relationship between time and space also informs our means of visualizing history: the timeline, which is itself a visual representation of the temporally organized historical narrative. The significant events of that narrative establish the points along the timeline. The line connecting them implies a causal, narrative relationship between those events.

Significant events happen in a place as well as a time, leading to another way in which we associate the two together. Certain locations can come to signify for us certain times in our lives. One may recall memories of youthful

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<sup>28</sup> With the *Game of Thrones* setting, the existence of a different world with its own history is implicit. With the *Dragonlance* setting, it is explicit, and according to the byzantine continuity of 2nd Edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, it is located contemporaneously in a very distant galaxy.

shenanigans when driving past one's childhood home or the high school one attended as a teenager. One may associate a certain location, say a movie theater or a park, with significant moments from one's past, such as one's first kiss or first breakup. A cemetery may recall our past times with beloved ones interred there. A particular location, like a college campus, sports stadium, or alas, also a cemetery, may cause one to think about one's future. Tuan notes that "[g]oal is a temporal as well as spatial term" (128). When we imagine or plan for our futures, we imagine or plan for the place in which those futures will take place<sup>29</sup>. Likewise, when we recall our pasts, we recall a time as well as a place.

The memories of an interrelated time and place are at the root of our sense of nostalgia, a significant rhetorical burden of many time travel narratives. Jochen Gebauer and Constantine Sedikides explain that nostalgia is a compound word derived from the Greek "*nostos* ('return') and *algos* ('pain')," coined by Johannes Hofer in the seventeenth century "to describe the behavior of Swiss mercenaries in the service of European monarchs" (30). These mercenaries, serving in other European countries and their colonies around the world would become homesick, wishing to return the country in which they were raised. In the ensuing years, the term has come to mean a great deal more than just homesickness. Today it means not just a yearning for home, but a yearning for the past as well. This past is often an irrecoverable one, which makes the

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<sup>29</sup> I'm still coming to grips with the likelihood that my future won't take place on Mars.

yearning only stronger. Gebauer and Sedikides explain that this yearning is often a positive psychological experience, one relating to good memories of the past that help reinforce a person's sense of identity and self. They note: "nostalgic memories quite often feature a so-called redemption theme or mastery sequence--a story line that begins with a bad experience out of which something good ensues" (Gebauer 32). Note the narrative nature of these nostalgic memories. They are the recollection of a "story" that occurred in space and time, stories that reinforce our identities by recalling happy times.

But there is also a negative side to nostalgia. The past for which we yearn may not be as good as we remember it to be, or it may be a time that was terrible for many people. Dirk Klopper points to this problem in "South Africa, in the immediate post-apartheid context, where the home to which the feeling refers may be located in an impoverished black township or in an affluent white suburb" (9). The past for which we yearn may be a very problematic one. The narrative of our memory may gloss over these problems. This issue with memory can be complicated when we feel nostalgia not just for a personal memory, but a historical one. Klopper states, "nostalgia nevertheless has an unnerving way of slipping between the personal and historical" (12). We sometimes yearn for times we did not ourselves experience. This is called vicarious or historical nostalgia. Altaf Merchant and Gregory M. Rose explain that it "examines the experience of emotionally connecting to and fantasizing about experiences and

associations from past eras" (2620). Merchant and Rose examine this phenomenon in light of commercial branding and heritage, but the fact that it can be invoked in marketing means it is a power than can be invoked. And truly, many people feel this sort of nostalgia as well as the more personal strain. The success of Donald Trump's "Make American Great Again" slogan and its associated idealized images of an American past are testament to this. Historical nostalgia's complications are the same as those found in personal nostalgia: the past evoked may be a terrible one for many people. Furthermore, the nostalgic past is a romanticized past, one that elides the problems of that era. Klopper states, "[n]ostalgia is always going to be a lying memory in the face of the empirical circumstances, is always going to be a wishful colouring of the past" (10). Nostalgia is always a "lying memory" because nostalgia recalls not pure events from personal or historical past, but a particular narrative of those events. Recall Gebauer and Sedikides' discussion of nostalgic memories involving redemption theme or mastery sequence storylines. These storylines are retrospectively constructed to give meaning to the sequence of events they memorialize. Nostalgia's central problem is that it often ignores the past's problems. But nevertheless, it is a powerful force, one that drives many of our imaginations and desires to recapture or experience a past.

The readings in this chapter will focus on texts that explore and interrogate the fulfillment of nostalgia through anachronic metalepses. We will begin by

examining Jack Finney's *Time and Again* as a novel that embraces and glorifies the nostalgic pull of previous historical eras. Following that, we will turn to Octavia Butler's *Kindred* to see how the anachronic metalepsis can be employed towards a critical examination of nostalgia and history. We will then look to Heidi Heilig's *The Girl From Everywhere*, a novel that employs anachronic metalepsis to explore how people both define history and are defined by history.

### **HYPNOTIC NOSTALGIA IN *TIME AND AGAIN***

Jack Finney's *Time and Again* is a novel about nostalgia. In it, Si (short for Simon) Morley, an advertising artist in 1970s New York City, is recruited as part of a secret government project exploring the possibilities of time travel. Si joins this project because he is disappointed with life in the 1970s and is fascinated with New York City of the late nineteenth century. The secret project provides him an opportunity to visit the past New York City with which he is obsessed. Si's girlfriend, Kate, is in possession of a mysterious, fire-damaged letter from the period that provides Si and his government handlers with a mystery worth unraveling:

*That the sending of this should cause the destruction by Fire of the entire World (a word seemed to be missing here at the end of the top line where the paper was burned) seems well-nigh incredible. Yet it is so, and the Fault and the Guilt (another word missing in the burned area) mine, and can never be denied or escaped. So, with this wretched souvenir of that*

*Event before me, I now end the life which should have ended then* (Finney 79).

Si is intrigued by this letter because it provides a motive to not just observe New York in the 1890s, but to also interact with the city and its people as he tries to discover the letter's meaning. Si wants to fulfill his historic nostalgia for New York's past. The strange letter and government project give him reason and opportunity.

To send Si and their other subjects back in time, Dr. Danziger, the scientist running the project, does not employ a device, but instead utilizes a power possessed by certain people who can "see things as they are and at the same time as they might have been" (Finney 6). Danziger explains to Si "that the past, back there around the curves and bends, *really exists*" (Finney 56). According to Danziger's theories, all times exist at the same time, but individuals are bound to a particular present by their perceptions and knowledge. He explains: "Si, you are surrounded by literally countless facts that bind you to this century...year...month...day...and moment, like ten billion invisible threads" (Finney 58). These facts, ranging from simple knowledge of the date and time to knowledge of contemporary culture and life bind a person to his or her present. Danziger's theory contends that were someone to immerse herself in the facts of a different time, she could become unmoored from her present and find herself in that time. Because one cannot know the facts of a future time, the initial journeys

of this form of time travel are limited to only backwards anachronic metalepses, but the power is capable of transporting one to any period in the past so long as one has been properly immersed in the facts of that time and there is a known physical location known to exist in both past and present. One of Si's colleagues is attempting to travel to medieval Paris by way of the Notre Dame Cathedral (Finney 72). This focus on edifices recalls the relationship between places and our recall of and nostalgia for historical periods. This also features in the choice of New York City for the novel's setting. While the city has developed a great deal throughout the twentieth century, that development began in earnest at the end of the 19th, and a number of buildings still stand from that era and those in-between. New York is a city whose history can be seen in its architecture, and the juxtaposition of new and old, brownstones and skyscrapers, can inspire feelings of nostalgia.

The process by which one immerses his or her self in a different time is a sort of elaborate form of method acting and hypnosis. Si is booked into a room in the Dakota, a hotel from the 1880s that still stands outside Central Park. In his hotel room, Si lives like a person in 1890s New York. He wears proper period clothing, receives deliveries of period newspapers and magazines, and cooks and grooms as a traveler in the 1880s would. One winter afternoon after experiencing a session of hypnosis, Si wakes from a nap to discover that he has been transported to the past. Across the park, he can see the Museum of

Natural History, a building that one cannot see from the Dakota in the 1970s because of the apartment buildings that have gone up in the intervening years (Finney 120). With Danziger's theory proven, Si is ready to further explore New York of the 1890s and discover the provenance of Kate's strange letter.

Si is an artist, and in addition to narrating his experience in language, he also sketches what he sees in the past. This narrative conceit allows Finney to include photos and sketches of New York in the 1880s, providing his readers with visual reinforcement. These are actual period photos and sketches that add verisimilitude to the narrative, bringing both Si's backwards anachronic metalepsis and 1880s New York to life. They reinforce the notion at the heart of Danziger's theory, that the past still exists, by providing visual evidence of its existence. With these images, presented as Si's sketches, Finney invites his readers to literally view New York of the 1880s through his protagonist's eyes and experience his sense of historical nostalgia fulfilled.

Si gets his wish to really experience New York in the past. He has remarkable, rule-breaking control over his power to experience a backwards anachronic metalepsis and is able to bring Kate along with him. They spend a day exploring the city how it stood over fifty years before they were born. They marvel at the narrow cobbled expanse of Fifth Avenue so different from the wide street lined with skyscrapers in their own time (Finney 132-3).

Si is fascinated by the color of a man's face:

This was no motionless brown-and-white face in an ancient photograph.

As I watched, the pink tongue touched the chapped lips, the eyes blinked, and just beyond him the background of brick and stone houses slip past. I can see it yet, that face against the slow-moving background, and hear the unending hard rattle of the iron-tired wheels on packed snow and bare cobbles (Finney 138).

This focus on color, motion, and sound interacts with the black and white still photographs and sketches, mutually reinforcing the sense of bringing 1890s New York City to life, and the awe Si and Kate feel in its presence. The focus on faces also sets up a further comparison between the past and present: "*Today's faces are different; they are much more alike and much less alive*" (Finney 255). Si and Kate are overcome by their sensations and return to the present.

Si continues to investigate the mystery behind this letter. With experience and practice, he gains a great deal of control over his anachronic metalepses, able to travel between the 1970s and 1890s at will as long as he is in a place common to both. As he investigates the mystery, he falls in love with a young woman of the time named Julia Charbonneau and his investigation embroils them in a conspiracy that results in them being temporary fugitives. Because of his exceptional control over his power, Si is able to bring Julia with him in a forward anachronic metalepsis to the 1970s.

There, Julia is alternately delighted and bewildered. She is fascinated by the skyscrapers and delighted to see women driving cars (Finney 429-31). But she is also embarrassed by the outfits and customs and horrified by the history she learns of (Finney 440-52). In love with Si, she is willing to stay in the 1970s with him, but he has a realization:

*No. I won't let you stay here. Julia, we're a people who pollute the very air we breathe. And our rivers. We're destroying the Great Lakes; Erie is already gone, and now we've begun on the oceans. We filled our atmosphere with radioactive fallout that put poison into our children's bones, and we knew it. We've made bombs that can wipe out humanity in minutes, and they are aimed and ready to fire. We ended polio, and then the United States Army bred new strains of germs that can cause fatal, incurable disease. We had a chance to do justice to our Negroes, and when they asked it, we refused. In Asia we burned people alive, we really did. We allow children to grow up malnourished in the United States. We allow people to make money by using our television channels to persuade our own children to smoke, knowing what it is going to do to them. This is a time when it becomes harder and harder to continue telling yourself that we are still good people. We hate each other. And we're used to it* (Finney 452).

Si thinks, but does not make, this speech. He does not wish to burden Julia with his grim appraisal of his own time. It is really for the audience, an argument against the present of the 1970s. This speech summarizes everything that bothers Si about the 1970s and it leads him to again compare his own time with Julia's. While he is not entirely blind to the problems of the 1880s, he still romanticizes the period. When Julia reveals the final piece of the puzzle involving the letter, Si finds himself smiling: "Jake is such a *villain!* It's the first time I've ever even used that word" (Finney 454). This recalls an earlier statement Si makes about his own time:

Evildoers will be tawdry, committing crimes of violence or bookkeeping in which any sense of drama will be nonexistent. And of the two kinds of people and evil, I'll take those with a sense of style (Finney 385).

Si cannot help but enjoy what he has learned about the mystery because it fulfills a sense of drama and excitement he feels lacking in his own time. He knows there is evil in both times, but he prefers the evil he experiences in Julia's time. The "sense of style" he speaks of is a sense of narrative style, a "sense of drama." It is the exciting evil of nostalgic narrative, not the banal evil of reality.

Si's nostalgia for the 1890s has allowed him to travel back to them, and it now convinces him to return to them for good. Si leaves the government project, engineering its destruction on his way out, and after a short conversation with

Kate<sup>30</sup> in which she conveniently feels and accepts the distance that has grown between them, he embarks on one final backward anachronic metalepsis to be with the woman and time period he loves.

Finney's novel not only romanticizes the objects of Si's nostalgia, it romanticizes the very act of feeling nostalgia by making it a sort of super power that allows protagonist to fully experience and eventually join the time and place for which he feels nostalgia. Si finds love and purpose in a romanticized past by thoroughly embracing the romanticizing of that past. Nostalgia can be an escapist endeavor, and in this novel it is dramatized as a literal escape from the banality of its 1970s present. The novel is designed to tilt its comparison between the romanticized 1890s and the criticized 1970s. Si serves as reliable narrator; nothing in the narrative contradicts his nostalgic judgments. Only the 1890s benefit from the novel's multimodal conceit. Si never bothers to sketch an image of the 1970s. Julia and many of the other characters from the 1890s get portraits. Nobody from the 1970s gets one, not even Kate. The monochrome and stillness of these images is addressed with vivid descriptions of color and movement. The faults of the 1890s are either downplayed, ignored, or romanticized. Imperialism, the World Wars, the environmental effects of industrialization--these are not the effects of the nostalgic past in *Time and*

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<sup>30</sup> Si's superpower is time travel. Kate's superpower is being remarkably chill about the whole thing.

*Again's* formulation, but the causes of its maligned present. Ultimately, the story Si tells is his justification for choosing to literally live in the past. And he is special, the protagonist and narrator of this narrative, specifically because he possesses the power to do so. He is rewarded for this with love and adventure. The novel uses every power at its disposal to bring this adventure to narrative life.

*Time and Again* demonstrates the anachronic metalepsis's potential for nostalgia. While the anachronic metalepsis is not necessary to create vivid representations of different time periods, it allows for a direct narrative connection between different time periods that can be experienced by characters. These characters can draw direct comparisons and make seemingly firsthand judgments of the periods to and from which they travel. In the case of *Time and Again*, this power is used to draw a direct comparison between the maligned 1970s and the nostalgic 1890s. Here nostalgia is both a desire and the means to fulfill that desire. Here nostalgia is an unalloyed good.

### **THE PAINFUL PAST IN *KINDRED***

Far from being nostalgic for the past, Octavia Butler's *Kindred* provides a stark interrogation of its horrors. On her birthday in 1976, a twenty-six-year-old black woman named Dana suffers a strange dizzy spell and finds herself along a rural riverbank where she saves a young boy from drowning (Butler 13-14). The child's parents confront her and threaten her life, but she experiences that

strange dizziness again and finds herself back in her Los Angeles home with her white husband, Kevin.

Dana soon learns that these dizzy spells are the physical sensation of being transported through time and space. The young boy she saved by the river is Rufus Weylin, her "several times great grandfather" (Butler 28). Rufus is the son of a plantation owner in 1815 Maryland. Because of some strange phenomenon, when Rufus is in danger of death, he sees visions of her and instinctually calls her back to save him. Dana has no control over these backwards anachronic metalepses. She is summoned by Rufus, and she must answer. This power dynamic has important thematic resonances. The antebellum white slave owner can compel the appearance of his modern black descendent like he can compel the behaviors of his contemporary slaves, and this means that Dana is, in a sense, a slave to history. She is forced to experience it, and even when she learns how to escape, she can be pulled back. To experience a forward anachronic metalepsis, Dana must sincerely fear that her own death is imminent. Thus, to voluntarily experience a forwards anachronic metalepsis to her home in the 1970s, Dana must make a real attempt on her own life. She must be in a position where she would rationally choose death over remaining on the plantation. Again there is a grim parallel with slavery here: death is the only guarantee of escape.

Dana's trips to the past grow longer and longer as Rufus summons her back again and again, always to situations that result from Rufus's own poor decisions. During these trips, she experiences more and more what the lives of blacks, both free and slave, are like in the antebellum South. On her second backwards anachronic metalepsis, she appears in time to stop him from burning down his home as an angry retaliation for his father's discipline (Butler 19-20). She has a conversation with Rufus, now a bit older, and learns of his friend Alice Greenwood, a free black girl and another of her ancestors. Together, Rufus and Alice will have Hagar Weylin, the matriarch of her family, a free black woman from Baltimore. Dana begins to get a sense of what draws her into the past: "Was that why I was here? Not only to insure the survival of one accident-prone small boy, but to insure my family's survival, my own birth" (Butler 29). Again, the time travel phenomenon has parallels with slavery. Dana's life and the lives of her entire family depend on her behavior when drawn to the past. She must protect her slave-owning ancestor to protect the family that is dependent on his survival. This parallel is drawn more closely later in the novel. Dana tells Kevin, "if I had let Rufus die, everyone would have been sold" (Butler 242). Dana's own family is not the only one dependent on Rufus's survival. If Rufus dies, the plantation and slaves working it will be sold. This will result in the slave families being broken up and spread across the South. Parents will lose their children; children their parents. Families will be destroyed.

Fearful of staying on the Weylin plantation and desirous to meet her other ancestor, Dana seeks out Alice and her mother for shelter. She wants to understand how Rufus and Alice come together and hopes her familial resemblance to these ancestors will earn their sympathy and protection. Along the way, Dana is frightened by the sounds of dogs barking in the distance, the "tame hunting dogs used to track runaway slaves" (Butler 34). At the Greenwood cabin, Dana has her first experience with the horrors of slavery. She witnesses a Patrol throwing Alice and her parents out of their cabin. Alice's father is a slave and he does not have a pass to be off his plantation. The patrollers beat Alice's mother and scourge her father while he is lashed to a tree. The violence is shocking and sickening to Dana:

I had seen people beaten on television and in the movies. I had seen the too-red blood substitute streaked across their backs and heard their well-rehearsed screams. But I hadn't lain nearby and smelled their sweat or heard them pleading and praying, shamed before their families and themselves. I was probably less prepared for the reality than the child crying not far from me (Butler 36).

Here, the violence Dana witnesses is juxtaposed against the stylized and even romanticized violence of film and television. The real thing is much worse than its representation in media. The real thing is not romantic; it is shameful and terrible.

Dana discovers that things she is carrying are transported with her, and she prepares a survival bag that she always carries with her. It turns out this part of the phenomenon also extends to people she is in contact with and in her next backwards anachronic metalepsis, she draws Kevin with her. Upon meeting him, Rufus is shocked to learn that Dana and Kevin are married because such things are illegal in his time and place. This leads to Dana finally explaining to him where she comes from. Dana and Kevin are forced to settle in at the plantation where she must pretend to be his slave and wait until she experiences another forward anachronic metalepsis to their time and place. She explains: "I have to make a place for myself here. That means work. I think everyone here, black and white, will resent me if I don't work. And I need friends. I need all the friends I can make here" (Butler 79). Dana realizes that the key to her survival is fitting in and not angering the white masters or her fellow blacks. Pretending to be a slave means living as a slave. But wanting to maintain some of her own independence and help subvert this terrible situation, Dana starts secretly teaching some of the slave children to leave. She is caught and whipped for doing so. The pain is so agonizing and unbearable, Dana fears for her own life and experiences a forward anachronic metalepsis to her own time and place, leaving Kevin behind (Butler 106-7). It is significant that the pain of the lashing is enough to cause Dana to fear dying. Rationally, she knows that these lashings are not normally fatal. She has witnessed them and seen the scars they leave.

Yet even with this rational knowledge, the sensation is so painful and agonizing, she cannot but help be overcome with fear. She is so overcome that she cannot even hold out long enough for Kevin to get to her. Dana is returned to 1976, but Kevin is left behind.

Before this, Dana and Kevin have a couple of conversations that reveal very different appraisals of the past. Somewhat amazed by the experience, Kevin remarks to Dana, "There are so many really fascinating times we could have gone back to visit" (Butler 77). Kevin is willing to still romanticize the past even after witnessing some of its horrors first hand. Dana replies, "I can't think of any time I'd like to go back to. But of all of them, this must be one of the most dangerous--for me anyway" (Butler 77). Dana acknowledges that there may be better past times and places to be transported to, but she has a much less romantic vision of the past. As Dana experiences the life of a slave and Kevin enjoys the plantation owner's hospitality, he remarks, "I keep thinking what an experience it would be to stay in [the 1800s]--go West and watch the building of the country, see how much of the Old West mythology is true" (Butler 97). Dana's reply is bitter and acknowledges the reality of those myths Kevin wants to witness: "West ... That's where they're doing it to the Indians instead of the blacks!" (Butler 97). Here the novel specifically juxtaposes its own stark representation of the past with Kevin's invocation of the nostalgic representation of the past, specifically the "Wild West mythology." The significance of Dana and

Kevin's native time, 1976, becomes clear. The Bicentennial is not a date for remembrance, but one for nostalgia, and thus represents an escape from the past and its horrors.

Dana experiences and witnesses more of those horrors on her next backwards anachronic metalepsis. This time she arrives to save young adult Rufus from being beaten to death by Isaac, Alice's slave husband. Rufus wants Alice, and if she will not go willingly with him, he will force her. Dana tells him, "She had the right to say no," and Rufus replies, "We'll see about her rights!" (Butler 123). Rufus loves Alice, but that love is corrupted by the institutions of his time and place, slavery and patriarchy. Alice was his childhood friend. She has grown into the woman he loves. But despite his great feelings for her, he sees her as an object that he has a right to regardless of her own feelings. Dana asks Rufus what he will do with Alice if she and Isaac are captured and returned, and he replies, "Buy her. I've got some money" (Butler 124). Alice is captured, and Rufus gets what he wants with no regard for her desires.

Alice's capture leaves her catatonic from her injuries and draws Dana into becoming a troubled accomplice in Rufus's plot to have her. Rufus places Dana in charge of caring for Alice and nursing her back to health while also charging her with convincing Alice to come to him. Dana does not want to help Rufus in this endeavor, but she also knows that Rufus and Alice must come together to ensure her family's existence. Dana does so and also helps Alice recover her

lost memory of her horrifying ordeal (Butler 158). With the return of her memory comes the return of Alice's rage against Rufus. Dana tries to console her but Alice has none of it. She explodes at Dana:

"Doctor-nigger," she said with contempt. "Think you know so much. Reading-nigger. *White-nigger!* Why didn't you know enough to let me die?" (Butler 160).

Alice would rather be dead than be the property and lover of the man who destroyed her freedom, her marriage, and her husband. Dana sympathizes with her, but she is compelled to help Rufus. He tells her, "All I want you to do is fix it so I don't have to beat her. You're no friend of hers if you won't do that much!" (Butler 164). This is the terrible choice owners offer their slaves: go willingly or go painfully.

Rufus also has another way to compel Dana's assistance: she needs to send Kevin a letter so they can reunite, but she needs Rufus to send it. He promises to do so, but lies to her. Rufus does not just want to trap Alice, he wants to trap Dana as well. He feels possessive of both of them. When Dana learns that Rufus has been lying to her even though she has helped him like he wanted, she tries to run away and find Kevin on her own. Doing this leads her to experience the horrors of running away first hand. Rufus hunts her down on horseback and drives her from the bushes she is hiding in by threatening to trample her if she does not move (Butler 173). He acts kindly to her only to tell her,

"you're going to get the cowhide ... you know that" (Butler 175). Dana is indeed whipped for running away, even though she is not a slave herself. She thinks, "*See how easily slaves are made?*" (Butler 177, italics in original). Dana is beaten down and filled with fear to the point where she becomes docile. She obeys the overseer Edwards' orders even though she does not normally have to listen to him. She explains to herself, "I couldn't face another beating so soon. I just couldn't" (Butler 182). Dana has experienced and witnessed violence to the point where its threat is enough to compel her compliance. She has been taught to be a slave. This ends any chance that this will be a narrative of one modern woman's resistance, ensuring that the novel does not offer an implicit criticism of the real victims of slavery and that it does not come to falsely romanticize resistance.

Kevin eventually returns because Rufus's father keeps the promise Rufus made to her. Rufus explains his father's sense of honor: "Daddy's the only man I know ... who cares as much about giving his word to a black as to a white" (Butler 181). His father is a cruel man, but a man of his word. This should not be taken as a call for sympathy, but instead an acknowledgment of complexity. *Kindred's* villains are not cartoons; they are not the simple villains of a simple good versus evil narrative. Kevin's time in the past has opened his eyes. He has been harrowed by his experiences, and when he arrives to take Dana away, he is willing to acquiesce to Rufus's demands that they stay (Butler 185-6). Kevin's

nostalgic illusions about the past have been shattered by experiencing it firsthand, even from the privileged position of a white man. The point here is clear: the nostalgic view cannot survive exposure to the truth.

Dana and Kevin eventually return to 1976, but Dana experiences another backward anachronic metalepsis when Rufus becomes very ill. During his recovery, Dana learns that Alice has begun to find some semblance of happiness with him. They have a son together, and with Dana's prodding, Rufus begins to appreciate and even love his son. Dana even convinces him to promise Alice that he will be freed. But Alice is not convinced: "But he lies. And he won't put it down on no paper" (Butler 232). Alice, despite accepting her life with Rufus, does not trust him. She will not believe that he will free her son until she sees the paperwork. Alice is also pregnant with another child who turns out to be Hagar. Dana feels some relief, but is still concerned:

The danger to my family was past, yes, Hagar had been born. But the danger to me personally ... the danger to me personally still walked and talked and sometimes sat with Alice in her cabin in the evening as she nursed Hagar. I was there with them a couple of times, and I felt like an intruder (Butler 234).

Dana has accomplished her goal, ensuring the existence of her family, but the threat, Rufus, remains. And while Rufus has Alice and children, he still does not want to let go of Dana. When one of the field hands, a man named Sam, begins

to flirt with Dana, Rufus sells him off the plantation. When Dana begs him not to, he hits her. Again the violence goes too far: "And it was a mistake. It was the breaking of an unspoken agreement between us--a very basic agreement--and he knew it" (Butler 238). Rufus's act of violence compels Dana to leave using the only way available to slaves who cannot escape their horrible situations. She slits her wrists in the cookhouse (Butler 239).

Dana does not die. Her wounds are not deep enough to be fatal, but they do frighten her enough to trigger a forward anachronic metalepsis to her own time and place. Dana is home again, but she is not yet free of Rufus. She experiences one more backward anachronic metalepsis. This time Rufus does not appear to be in any immediate danger. He is shocked to see her and she is surprised to have returned to him. To explain his situation, he leads her to the barn and shows her Alice, who has hanged herself. Rufus explains that he got angry with Alice and her threats to run away if he did not produce papers freeing her children. He responded by sending her children to Baltimore to live with his mother and telling Alice he had sold them "[t]o punish her, scare her. To make her see what could happen if she didn't ... if she tried to leave me" (Butler 251). Again, in his attempts to control the black women in his life, Rufus has gone too far. Alice believed him and took her own life, and now Rufus is contemplating taking his own. Dana convinces Rufus that the only way he can redeem anything from this situation is by truly freeing his children. He does so, drawing up

freedom papers for his son and Hagar. But while Rufus is willing to free his children to find some redemption for the terrible things he has done and caused, he is not willing to let go of Dana. Rufus has come to conflate his desires for Alice and Dana. He tells Dana, "You were one woman ... You and her. One woman. Two halves of a whole" (Butler 257). Rufus tries to talk Dana into loving him, and when that does not work, he tries to force himself on her. This time, Dana is prepared to fight off her attacker. She has experienced enough violence and horror to not be squeamish. Using the knife she has kept with her since she and Kevin first put together a satchel for her to bring to the past, she stabs Rufus. The fear and horror she experiences for herself and for the slaves whose fates are now in jeopardy because Rufus is dead triggers one final forward anachronic metalepsis.

But the experience leaves Dana with one final, terrible injury. She returns with part of her left arm fused into the wall of her and Kevin's home. This occurs because Dana's forward anachronic metalepses do not return her to the same spot from which she disappeared into the past. But more important than its phenomenological reasons are its narrative and rhetorical ones. Pulling away from the wall wrenches the trapped part of her arm away from her. This creates a scar, a wound that will never heal. The violence in the past has left a permanent mark on Dana's body. It has taken away a part of herself. This injury is full of symbolism. It is both a mark of history upon her body and like the injury

of an animal that escaped from a trap by gnawing off one of its own limbs. It paints the history Dana has experienced as a trap that no one can escape from without some loss. It paints that history and its experience as a scar that can never be healed. History has permanently taken something from Dana that she can never get back. Just as significantly, the injury results from Dana's own act of violence. By killing Rufus and participating in the history of violence, Dana dooms many slave families to destruction. She is complicit in her own terrible history, not just for killing Rufus, but for helping him force Alice into a relationship. And bears an injury as a mark of that complicity. The injury will never heal. Her arm will never return. The scars of history will not fade for those complicit in it.

*Kindred* demonstrates the flipside of the anachronic metalepsis's nostalgic power: its ability to offer a counter-narrative about past periods. Here, the same narrative device that allows Si Morley to experience the past and compare it favorably to his present forces Dana and Kevin to experience the horrors of the past and undermine the latter's nostalgic notions regarding it. The different forms *Time and Again* and *Kindred's* anachronic metalepses take in their fabulas, as controllable power and uncontrollable phenomenon respectively, reflect too their different stances towards nostalgia and history. Specifically, *Time and Again's* anachronic metalepses empower its protagonist while *Kindred's* disempower its protagonist. Si Morley is able to control his anachronic metalepses and even alter events in the past. Conversely, Dana has no control over her anachronic

metalepses and must hope that she does not alter events in the past. *Time and Again* presents nostalgia as a power to engage with and alter history. *Kindred* casts it as, at most, a temporary escape from the scars left by history.

### **THE MAP IS THE TERRITORY IN *THE GIRL FROM EVERYWHERE***

In Heidi Heilig's *The Girl from Everywhere*, the past is defined by people's perceptions of it. The novel presents us with Navigators, people who have the power to transport themselves and pilot vehicles to different places in time by using a sort of strange map-based magic. To Navigate to a different place in time, they must first enter the misty, limbo-like dimension called the Margins, a sort of liminal zone outside normal space and time. From there, they must focus all their attention and belief upon the place and time depicted by the map they are using. If they cannot focus their attention or belief in this way, they will find themselves returned to their Native Time, the place in time where they were born and would normally live out their lives if they were not Navigators. These journeys are not without risks: "the seas in the Margins [are] unpredictable--the currents mercurial and the winds erratic--and passage [is] always rougher the farther afield we travel" (Heilig 13). The maps they use must be hand-drawn, dated and detailed, and each map may only be used once. Thus, Navigators who wish to return to a place in time that they have already visited must find a map of that place in time that they have not yet used. The places in time to which they travel are not necessarily historical places in time, for they reflect the

beliefs and understandings of the mapmaker. This means that the Navigators may find mythical creatures or figures in their destinations. This also means that a Navigator may be able to travel to a location from myth if he or she believes in it. There is one more complication involved: Navigators cannot Navigate to a place in time where they are already present. So a Navigator cannot meet a double of herself. Any attempt to do so would presumably return her to the place in time from which she tried to Navigate or to her Native Time<sup>31</sup>.

Heilig's protagonist and narrator, Nixie, is the daughter and student of the Navigator, Slate. She sails with her father aboard the ship *Temptation*<sup>32</sup> as he searches for a map that will allow him to return to Honolulu in 1868 and his lost love, Nixie's mother. Nixie was born in Honolulu in 1868 and is sixteen-years-old, meaning her native time and place is Honolulu in 1884. This is why Slate must find a new map to Honolulu in 1868. Finding a way to return to Nixie's mother is an addiction-like obsession for Slate, one mirrored by his addiction to opium. Like a drug addiction, Slate's obsessive quest leads to behavior that is self destructive and causes pain to those around him. Traveling to Honolulu in 1868 means leaving Nixie behind on some other map. Significantly, Nixie is afraid that returning to 1868 may erase what happened the first time Slate was there, namely her conception: "he hoped to unmake the mistakes of his past.

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<sup>31</sup> No character actually attempts this in the novel, so the exact consequences are unclear. It is possible that the characters only think this is a rule.

<sup>32</sup> A nod to Captain Morgan's *Satisfaction*.

Mistakes like me, perhaps" (Heilig 1). Slate cares more about his dead wife, his past, than his living daughter, his present and future. Slate's priorities cause Nixie great pain and create a gap between them that manifests in her beginning to call him "Slate" instead of "dad" (Heilig 47). Nixie's one consolation is that Slate has promised to teach her how to Navigate across the maps and Margins before leaving her behind.

That time comes close as Slate has found an auction in his own native time and place for a map of Honolulu in 1868. The map, however, turns out to be a forgery and they arrive in Honolulu in 1884, what should be Nixie's own Native Time, where they are drawn into a conspiracy to rob the Hawaiian royal treasury in exchange for a real map of Honolulu in 1868. These conspirators are members of the Hawaiian League, a group of American businessmen who wish to undermine the native monarchy and pave the way for the island's annexation (Heilig 446). Slate knows how this history will play out, that Hawaii will become a colony and then a state, but he does not care about any person but himself or any past but his own. To uphold his end of the conspiracy, he must teach Nixie to use Navigation to travel to the tomb of Emperor Qin of China over two-thousand years before. To return to Honolulu in 1884, they use a map drawn by Blake Heart, a son of one of the conspirators who loves Hawaii and its legends.

As Nixie and Slate go on this adventure, we learn that the times and places they travel to are not necessarily historical times and places, but instead

the reflections of what the map-makers believed about those times and places. The tomb of Emperor Qin is a location out of legend like a map itself with seas, lakes, and rivers of mercury. The Terra Cotta Warriors found within can be animated like golems because the map's maker believed in the legends about the tomb (Heilig 361). Nixie fills a wine bottle with mercury from the tomb because while she "knew mercury as a poison ... Qin had believed it was a cure-all" (Heilig 371). The Honolulu of 1868 that they return to contains legendary sacred springs with healing powers and is haunted by the ghostly Night Marchers (Heilig 431-2). Nixie voices the possibility that different maps do not necessarily lead to the same place: "I've been thinking about it. The map where you met is the map where she died. A different map means a different version of her" (Heilig 64). There is the literal possibility here that a different map leads to a different version of the place, defined by different beliefs, and containing different people. But there is also a more metaphorical possibility: that one cannot really recapture the past even if one can return to it. Nixie voices this as well: "Going back to the same place doesn't mean you'll find the same thing" (Heilig 64). Slate does not believe this. He retorts: "It does. It's the same time!" (Heilig 64). Again, Slate's obsession with the past blinds him. He cannot conceive of his own past being made different by returning to it, even though he has seen variations on other pasts.

The impact of the map makers' and Navigators' beliefs on the pasts (and futures) to which Slate and Nixie Navigate raises a significant question about the nature of the anachronic metalepses in this novel, one that points to their rhetorical burden: are these backwards and forwards anachronic metalepses, or are these alternate anachronic metalepses? The inclusion of objects and creatures from legend indicates that they are alternate anachronic metalepses because these inclusions indicate the presence of multiple versions of places in time. This is reinforced by a conversation between Nixie and her crewmate and closest friend, Kashmir, where she notes they "have shelves of maps of places that only *used* to exist" (Heilig 72, italics in original). Kashmir replies:

The age of exploration is long over, *Amira* [his pet name for Nixie]. Now it's the age of globalization. And once everyone agrees something is one way, all the other ways it could have been disappear (Heilig 72-3).

Navigation does not allow one to travel to *the* past, but instead to travel to a past as understood and believed in by the map maker and the Navigator. The map is the territory. The time and place it depicts<sup>33</sup> is true, but it is true in a subjective sense, the truth known to the person of that time. This casts all of history, and thus the past as well, in a subjective light. The past is then a product of memory, both personal and cultural. The past is malleable, not just because a Navigator

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<sup>33</sup> For maps depict a place in time. A map of Honolulu from 1868 depicts a very different city than a map of Honolulu from our own time.

can travel into it and make alterations, but because everyone, not just Navigators, can remember it in their own ways.

Maps provide an excellent motif with which to make this point about the constructed nature of history. As Robert J. Tally Jr. notes, maps are "ideological [and] embedded within and often serve the interests of structures of power and domination" (25). He provides Mercator Projection maps of the world as an example of this, noting that they are "deliberately false or *fictional* image[s] of the world," made so for both practical and ideological reasons<sup>34</sup> (Tally 24). Mapmakers, in choosing how and what to present, are making similar choices to storytellers about what is and is not important and how they wish their audiences to view the subjects of their work. In short, maps tell stories.

Because of the narrative nature of history, *The Girl From Everywhere* does not specifically romanticize a particular place in time in the way that *Time and Again* does, nor does it specifically condemn one in the way that *Kindred* does. While central to her narrative is the conspiracy that leads to the end of Hawaiian self-rule, as the conspiracy unfolds, Nixie discovers that another plot is afoot, the very plot that will lead to her own conception (Heilig 438-9). While that plot involves some complicated recursive causality only possible with anachronic metalepses, its roots are in two real historical tragedies: the fire that destroyed

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<sup>34</sup> All flat images of the world are distortions. The distortions of a Mercator Projection map allow sea navigation to be plotted with straight lines, but also make countries in the Northern Hemisphere appear larger and more important than those in the Southern Hemisphere.

Honolulu in 1886 and the coup against Hawaii's native monarchy. Nixie is born out of the tragedies in which she has a hand. The end result is that while the past and history may contain terrible tragedies, those same tragedies can lead to our own present existence, much like how Butler's protagonist, Dana, is an eventual product of the tragedies she must endure and to some extent aid. The difference here is that *The Girl From Everywhere's* characters define the past as much as the past defines them.

Dramatizing this reciprocal relationship between history and personal identity is the central rhetorical burden of *The Girl From Everywhere*. The maps its Navigators use are explicitly reflections of *beliefs* about a place in time, not necessarily *truths*. These beliefs are held because they make for compelling or comforting narratives about places in time. Nixie may very well be correct: there is no single past but many because history is a narrative construct, people's beliefs about places and events in time structured as a narrative. While we construct history as a narrative, that narrative in turn constructs us because we define ourselves as products of our histories. The novel's very construction reflects this relationship. Its events and locations are drawn from both history and legend. They are intermingled and redefined as parts of the narrative of Nixie's role in her own conception. *The Girl From Everywhere* is both defined by and redefines the history and legends it invokes.

*The Girl From Everywhere* demonstrates the anachronic metalepsis's power to dramatize the constructed narrative nature of history. This is possible because the anachronic metalepsis allows for the exploration of multiple versions of a single place in time as part of a single fabula. This allows readers to consider the implications of those different versions of the same thing and make judgments about their causes, effects, and relative truth values. The anachronic metalepsis allows for narratives with multiple timelines that do not just coexist, but intermingle and interact, something that we will explore further in the next chapter.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Throughout this chapter, we have examined how anachronic metalepses can be used to experience and interact with multiple places in time. This often draws a comparison between different places in time, one that results in explicit judgments made by the characters or narrators, or implicitly invites the readers' judgments. The narratives construct the places in time that they depict out of pieces of history, myth, and fiction. *Time and Again's* version of New York City in the 1890s contains anachronisms identified in its end notes, a relieving note of honesty in an otherwise relentlessly nostalgic text. *Kindred* narrows the scope of its places in time to the confines of a single plantation in 1815 and an apartment in 1976, further entrapping its protagonist. *The Girl From Everywhere* cruises between numerous places in historical and mythic time, intertwining them in the

complex story of a young woman's origin. The ways in which these and other time travel narratives depict different places in time reflect their different rhetorical burdens. *Time and Again* presents nostalgia as a fantastic power that allows its protagonist to escape the debased New York City of the 1970s to explore the dramatic and stylish New York City of the 1890s. *Kindred* depicts the history of slavery as a trap that leaves its protagonist emotionally and physically scarred. *The Girl From Everywhere* depicts history as a collection of narratives that are shaped by and shape the lives of people like its protagonist.

What makes the anachronic metalepsis remarkably useful for these and other rhetorical burdens is that it brings together different places in time at the fabula level. The anachronic metalepsis allows for different places in time to exist side-by-side in the same story world. Because the characters consciously interact with these different places in time, those interactions and their motivations are foregrounded. Because those characters can judge the different places in time from firsthand experience, their judgments carry rhetorical weight. Because the different places in time and the characters' interactions with and judgments of them are narratively constructed, they can be tailored to support many different rhetorical burdens. Different narratives can draw different maps of different places in time, focusing their audiences' attentions on different characteristics. Characters can cross from one map to another map of the same place in time, and through the ways they apprehend and interact with these

different territories, they can help direct the audiences' attentions to actions and features that are significant to the works' various rhetorical burdens.

These different places in time are different chronotopes, so one can say that time travel narratives create chronotopes that bridge and merge other chronotopes. The comparisons and judgments made by characters are not comparisons and judgments about real places in time; they are about fictional chronotopes that may represent real places in time. This is an important point to remember when analyzing these comparisons and judgments. *Time and Again's* New Yorks are specifically constructed to make the 1890s version more appealing than the 1970s version. The very way a narrative builds and presents its chronotopes reflects its ethics. We may find *Time and Again's* ethics suspect because the novel so clearly tilts its comparison to justify its view of nostalgia. This is a point that is true to all narratives, but it becomes especially apparent in time travel narratives that juxtapose different places in time.

In the previous chapter, we approached time travel narratives from a temporal frame, examining their ability to manipulate time and causality. In this chapter, we have approached time travel narratives from a spatial frame, examining how they can manifest different places in time. In the following chapter, we will examine these temporal and spatial frames together.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SPACE BETWEEN TIMES

In the previous two chapters, we have examined time travel narratives in separate temporal and spatial frames. While this has allowed us to focus on different aspects of time travel narratives and their rhetorical burdens, we must also acknowledge that many time travel narratives use both temporal and spatial manipulations to support their rhetorical burdens. This is a result of my particular analytical categories. They result in a third hybrid category. We see both frames at play in *Back to the Future* where comedy results from both Marty's interference in his parents' romance and his anachronistic behavior as he interacts with the world of the 1950s. Both of these sources of comedy are only possible with the anachronic metalepsis. Less comic narratives also rely on both the spatial and temporal potentials of the anachronic metalepsis. In Ray Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder," a man travels to the past to hunt dinosaurs, and while exploring the lush jungles of the Triassic era, he accidentally crushes a butterfly. The results of this ripple through time and fundamentally alter his present into a form he finds almost unrecognizable. Bradbury's story starkly illustrates the dangers taken for

granted by many other time travel narratives,<sup>35</sup> and it does so by having its protagonist return to a present that is not the same as the one he left. His actions in the past have resulted in the alteration of his present. He returns to a home he no longer recognizes.

A significant point here is that a single physical location can be different places at different points in time. The Hill Valley Marty McFly leaves in 1985 is different from the Hill Valleys he visits in 1955, 2015, and 1885.<sup>36</sup> Historical changes and the results of Marty's and other characters' own actions alter the characteristics of these different towns that share a name and physical locations. Bradbury's protagonist leaves one version of the United States and returns to a different version. His actions in the prehistoric past so alter the timeline that he returns to a different place in time. Recall that *Time and Again's* Si Morley hates New York City in the 1970s, but loves New York City in the 1890s. We think of these two places in time as the same city, but as Si's adventures show us, the city has changed a great deal since the 1890s. Manhattan Island had farms where high-rises stand today, the Statue of Liberty lay in pieces scattered across town, and the iconic Brooklyn<sup>37</sup> Bridge was still under construction (Finney 301-320). Yi-Fu Tuan illustrates how cities change over time and become different

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<sup>35</sup> And more broadly, it reminds us that even seemingly insignificant events can have profound effects.

<sup>36</sup> And alternate 1985s: the "improved" one that results from his actions in the first film and the dystopian one ruled by villain Biff Tannin in *Back to the Future Part II*.

<sup>37</sup> Still its own city and not yet one of the Five Boroughs of contemporary New York City.

places in his presentation of a map depicting the "Growth Rings (Successive Walls) of Paris" and his discussion of the different uses to which the Coliseum in Rome has been put over the centuries (192-3). The iconic historical site of Rome's gladiatorial games came to serve as housing before being stripped for building supplies before coming to be a protected heritage site. We can visit the site and imagine ourselves transported back to the gore and glory of its past, but we cannot experience the Coliseum that was (or the Coliseums that were) because they lie beyond the ontological boundaries of time.

The ontological boundaries of time are themselves borders that are normally impassible. The ability to communicate or travel across this border provided by time travel allows for the establishment of a temporal borderland. These temporal borderlands are not always physical locations, but can be, as in *Eternity* from Asimov's *The End of Eternity* or the strange limbo seen in *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*. The characters who travel across this border are the people of this borderland, affected by their passage across it and their experiences on either side. The borders they cross are historical ones, established by the ontological divisions between past, present, and future. Whereas the borderlands along the edges of nations are the result of artificial barriers imposed upon naturally open tracts of land, the borderlands created by time travel are the result of artificial openings through naturally impassible

barriers. In either case, these borderlands are created by humans for human purposes.

The anachronic metalepsis makes temporal borderlands possible through narrative's ability to spatialize time. Recall Bakhtin's description of how narrative fuses space and time: "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible" (84). Narrative creates places in time for its characters to interact at the fabula level. These places in time are related to one another spatially (near, far, etc.) and temporally (before, contemporaneously, etc.). The anachronic metalepsis allows for characters to travel or communicate across temporal distances like they could spatial distances. Another way of saying this is that the anachronic metalepsis allows for temporally distant places in time to be brought close together. The relationships between places in time created by the anachronic metalepsis recall Bertrand Westphall's description of the Geocritical view of history: "Synchrony seems to take precedence over diachrony. Events are crammed into the present" (14). The temporal relationships between places in time (diachrony) can still be significant in time travel narratives, but more significant is the device, power, or phenomenon that allows characters to experience them as if they all occur at once (synchrony). Or in other words, the anachronic metalepsis renders places in times' temporal relationships into spatial relationships because characters can *travel* between them. These new spatial relationships establish borderlands, turning the

ontological boundaries of time into what Westphall would call a liminal space, "a *limes*, or boundary line, intended to make one stop, but ... also a *limen*, or porous border, intended to be crossed" (42). In a time travel narrative, temporal borders become places where characters can stop or cross depending on the nature of the device, power, or phenomenon that explains their anachronic metalepses. Westphall draws a connection between borders and transgression, noting that "among that Romans, one transgressed when passing to the other side of a boundary or river" (41). And there is often something transgressive about the anachronic metalepses characters experience and sometimes exploit. The device, power, or phenomenon that the characters experience violates the normal rules of space and time and makes them into a denizen of the temporal borderland, a person forever changed by their strange experiences.

We see an example of this with Claire Randall from *Outlander*, a married English woman from the middle of the twentieth century who finds herself transported, fittingly, to the contested borderland between England and Scotland in the eighteenth century. Claire joins a band of Scottish rebels and proves herself to be a useful companion because of her service as a nurse during World War Two. She finds herself being forced to marry one of the Scottish rebels, Jamie Fraser, to protect her from falling into the hands of the English who believe her to be some sort of spy and wish to treat her accordingly. Claire comes to accept her role as Jamie Fraser's bride, but more out of love and

desire for him than out of acquiescence to eighteenth century social roles and her fugitive status. Claire's very status, as a woman married to two men separated by two centuries, as both a Randall and a Frasier, an English woman and a Scottish woman, a twentieth century woman and an eighteenth century woman, makes her an embodiment of this synergy, albeit a positive embodiment of it. Claire's identity is a hybrid identity. She is at the same time both parts of each of those pairings (Randall/Frasier, etc.) and neither part, but somewhere in between, an embodiment of the temporal borderland.

The setting for Claire's adventures is a fitting one. The spatial border between England and Scotland mirrors the temporal border between 18th and 20th centuries and Claire's own divided identity. Furthermore, it illustrates again how a single location can be different places at different times. The Scottish-English borderland is a violent frontier in the eighteenth century, and a peaceful countryside in the twentieth century. Claire is exceptionally--perhaps unrealistically--well prepared to adjust to the dangers on the other side of *Outlander's* temporal border. The novel either downplays those dangers or presents them as exciting challenges for Claire to overcome on her adventure. But even as an exceptionally competent romantic heroine, Claire remains torn by her hybrid identity, as symbolized by her conflicting loves for her English husband in the twentieth century and her Scottish husband in the 18th. The anachronic metalepsis allows Claire to become the embodiment of the border

motif that runs throughout *Outlander*. The backward anachronic metalepsis to this particular setting also allows *Outlander* to temper somewhat its nostalgia. Claire's twentieth century upbringing provides a quick and easy character shorthand for why she would question gender politics and be surprised by some of the period's particular horrors. Her sympathy with the Scottish over her "native" English aligns her with a historically marginalized voice. Her knowledge of the Scottish rebels' future and her potential to affect that future draw the readers' attention to the violent conflicts that lie in the past of the peaceful British countryside where she enjoys her honeymoon. Here the anachronic metalepsis draws attention to the historical nature of this historical romance. Through Claire's crossing of the temporal border and its parallels with the border country in which she adventures, readers are invited to sympathize with a community who lost their bid for independence and imagine the possibility of their success.

The readings in this chapter focus on narratives that employ the anachronic metalepsis's spatial and temporal possibilities to allow characters to communicate and travel across temporal borderlands. In Michael Moorcock's *Nomad of Time*, we will follow a man's journey through alternate histories rooted in the same human causes. And in William Gibson's *The Peripheral*, we will see how a temporal border can be both a metaphor and warning for national borders.

## MEET NEW WORLDS, SAME AS THE OLD WORLD IN *NOMAD OF TIME*

Michael Moorcock's *The Nomad of Time Trilogy* is framed as a series of manuscripts discovered by the author. The first of these, *The Warlord of the Air*, is a manuscript reportedly written by Moorcock's grandfather recording the tale of British army officer Henry Bastable's adventure in a future world. The second, *The Land Leviathan*, and third, *The Steel Tsar*, are manuscripts reportedly written by Bastable himself and given to Moorcock's grandfather by another time traveler, Una Persson<sup>38</sup>. These describe Bastable's adventures in two other alternate worlds with their own terrible histories. In each of these worlds, Bastable comes to learn about the terrible consequences of ideologically driven violence.

In *The Warlord of the Air* (1971), Bastable leads a punitive expedition against the remote Himalayan kingdom of Kumbalari, "a state which claims to be older than Time" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 16). The people of Kumbalari have attacked British border outposts, and Bastable is in charge of a show of strength against them. After an exchange in which we learn that the British outposts were built on Kumbalari territory and Kang compares the British Empire to a "rapacious beast," Bastable is invited by their leader to dine and discuss the situation in his capital (Moorcock, *Nomad* 20). There, he panics when he believes he has been

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<sup>38</sup> Una is a reoccurring character in these novels. We know this because she makes reference to other places in time and her name means literally "One Person."

drugged and flees into the catacombs beneath the capital just as it is struck by an earthquake.

When Bastable awakes, he finds himself among the ruins of the capital and cut off from the rest of the world by an impassible chasm. Luckily for him, a British airship, a sort of giant zeppelin, flies overhead and spots him. Rescued, Bastable learns that he has awoke in the year 1973 into a world that has known peace for almost a century under the administration of the great colonial powers and the watchful presence of their great airship fleets. Bastable admires the world he finds himself in:

The carping critics of Imperialism in my own day would have been silenced pretty sharply if they had heard what I had just heard--and seen the evidence of prosperity and stability which I could now see from my window. I warmed with pride, and thanked Providence, for this vision of Utopia. Over the past seventy years, the White Man had shouldered his burden jolly well, it seemed to me (Moorcock, *Nomad* 47).

Bastable, the colonial military officer, is quite glad to see the fruits of colonialism and its apparent triumph over the world. At this point, Bastable believes himself to be in his own future, so to him this is the culmination of the cause he fought for in his own time. Wishing to continue serving this apparently admirable cause and wanting to further experience the wonder of travel aboard airships, Bastable enlists in the Special Air Police, a newer service "formed because the need to

protect civil aircraft against acts of piracy in the air, against potential saboteurs" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 59). Bastable does not realize that the very existence of this organization points to flaws in his "vision of Utopia."

Bastable soon learns, however, that the world is not as perfect and peaceful as he first believed. He is drummed out of the service for assaulting a swaggering racist American passenger and after being taken captive by a Chinese warlord, Bastable finally begins to learn about the dark side of his "vision of Utopia." Bastable's captors explain to him the economic controls the Great Powers exert over their colonies, the ways they essentially enslave colonial peoples to support their own prosperity. Bastable responds by pointing to the world's stability and slow progress for colonial peoples as justification for this, but he is rejected by his fellow captives: "You are so typical of all those 'decent,' 'humane' and 'liberal' men who hold two thirds of the world in slavery" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 105). This debate reads like Socratic dialog, using Bastable and his interlocutors to make the case against colonialism and imperialism for the reader. And like many Socratic dialogs, despite Bastable's initial disagreement, he eventually comes to see the logic of his interlocutors. He joins them in their war against the Great Powers and using a terrible invention, the atomic bomb, they strike a crippling blow that will break the Great Powers' control of the world by destroying their airship yards in Hiroshima, Japan in a conspicuous parallel with the atomic bombings that ended World War Two.

But Bastable is not able to witness the results of this attack. The release of atomic energy causes him to experience another alternate anachronic metalepsis to a world that is apparently our own, but perhaps not his own:

You see this is not completely the world I remember. I'm sure it's my memory. Something caused by my passage to and fro in Time. But there are small details which seem wrong (Moorcock, *Nomad* 152).

This concern leads Bastable to return to the ruins of Kumbalari in hopes of finding his own time, but instead he finds himself transported to other alternate times in which he experiences further examples of colonialism's violence and repression and the violent reactions that result.

*The Warlord of the Air* presents Bastable with a possible future, but for readers, it is an alternate present or, now, a past. This is quite clear from the introduction of the airships, and made explicit by the century of peace this world has enjoyed. Significantly, the world Bastable finds himself in is one in which the World Wars did not occur, so Europe's empires never came to an end and were able to continue and strengthen their control of their colonies. This causal connection is made explicit by Bastable himself: "A war in Europe should have happened a long time ago. A war between the Great Powers would have destroyed their grip on their subject peoples" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 142). *The Warlord of the Air* appears to make a case for the necessity of the World Wars for ending the exploitation and injustice of imperialism. This terrible alternate

world Bastable finds himself in is caused by the absence of the World Wars. This case is narratively reinforced by the parallels between the atomic bombings that end Shaw's war against the Great Powers and our own World War Two. While their circumstances are different, each serves to bring the age of empires to its end with an act of conspicuous and extreme violence. The terror of atomic fire is seemingly justified as the means to a good end, a shock of sudden extreme violence to bring to end an era of ongoing violence. By presenting this case through Bastable's dawning realization that the world he has discovered is not a "vision of Utopia," *The Warlord of the Air* eases its readers into accepting its case. One sees the "vision of Utopia" that would exist if not for the World Wars and then sees this vision systematically dismantled and critiqued before being destroyed. But Bastable and readers do not get to witness the world that results from this violence, and the further alternate anachronic metalepses he experiences in *The Land Leviathan* and *The Steel Tsar* complicate *The Warlord of the Air's* case for ending imperialism with atomic fire while bolstering its criticism of imperialism.

In *The Land Leviathan*, Bastable returns to the ruins of Kumbalari and is once again transported to an alternate Earth. The year is 1904 and the war Bastable believes is necessary for imperialism to end has laid waste to the world. After experiencing the chaos and violence that have engulfed Asia and Europe, Bastable once again finds himself serving with Captain Korzeniowski, who in this

world is a privateer submarine captain. They enter the service of the pacifist nation of Bantustan "[u]nder the leadership of a young politician of Indian parentage named Gandhi" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 230). President Gandhi employs a military to serve only as an "expensive and impressive scarecrow" to deter attack from the forces of General Cicero Hood (Moorcock, *Nomad* 233). General Hood, an African-American also known as the Black Attila, is bent on conquering the world and now turns his sights to America, intending to liberate its once again enslaved black population and punish its white rulers. At this point, the novel appears to be setting up a contrast between these two approaches to post-colonialism: Gandhi's focus on peaceful reconstruction and Hood's focus on violent retribution. But Gandhi's project here is somewhat suspect as well. Bantustan occupies the southern tip of Africa and appears to be a colonial enclave of Asians and Europeans, so it draws parallels with our own world's South Africa and that nation's history of colonial oppression and apartheid. And while Gandhi insists that he would never order its formidable forces to war, Bastable and Korzeniowski show an inclination to fight if they feel necessary.

But the novel shifts away from developing the contrast between Bantustan and Hood's empire. Gandhi sends Bastable to serve as an advisor to Hood, hoping to influence him towards more peaceful ends. Bastable is not himself convinced by Gandhi's pacifism and initially intends to assassinate General Hood, but comes to respect him and serves in his forces as they cross the

Atlantic and begin their invasion of America. He loses heart, however, in Hood's cause when he sees the titular Land Leviathan, a tank of city-sized proportions that literally crushes all resistance in its path. Bastable comes to see Hood as just another agent of destruction, and he deserts to join the Americans in their defense of Washington D.C. But there he loses heart again when he sees the armies of "sweating, dying black slaves being worked, quite literally, to death" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 284). Seeing injustice on both sides of this conflict, Bastable decides to do his best to help as many slaves survive the coming battle as possible. His efforts meet with some success, and he and a group of slaves survive the onslaught that completes Hood's conquest of America. Bastable is welcome in Hood's new America, but he does not wish to stay. As he closes his manuscript to Moorcock's grandfather, he comments:

And yet just as I feel a peculiar loyalty to you to try to get this story to you somehow, so I am beginning to develop a loyalty not to one man, like Hood or even Gandhi, not to one nation, one world or even one period of history! My loyalty is at once to myself and to all of mankind (Moorcock, *Nomad* 299).

Bastable has seen the war he found necessary and its aftermath and finds it terrifying. The world is not made a better place simply because the Great Powers have fallen. New Great Powers emerge to take their place, and while they work against the injustices of colonialism and imperialism, they are not

necessarily without injustices themselves. President Gandhi's Bantustan may be a land of peace, but it exists only as long as Hood allows and exerts little influence over his empire or the wider world. Hood has the power to expand his empire across the world, but he does so by brutally and literally crushing his opposition under the treads of his land leviathan. While *The Warlord of the Air* ends with the implication that ending imperialism with violence is necessary and will result in a better world, *The Land Leviathan* undercuts this impression, showing that the result may simply be more destruction and violence. Its possible counterpoint, Gandhi's Bantustan, is left aside, as if it is a fleeting but ultimately impossible wish, and its commitment to nonviolence undermined by its reliance on the threat of violence. The causal relationship between imperialism and violence established by the alternate world of the first volume is complicated by the world visited in the second. Through this second alternate anachronic metalepsis, Moorcock expands beyond the simple comparison between our world and the alternate world of *The Warlord of the Air* and complicates his examination of the relationship between imperialism and violence.

Bastable's third manuscript begins on May 3, 1941 in the aftermath of the "Destruction of Singapore by the Third Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Aerial Navy" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 316). Bastable has found himself once again in a war to end the grip of the Great Powers. Singapore in this world had been a model city of British rule before the Japanese destroyed it, "a Utopia of sorts"

(Moorcock, *Nomad* 317). Here, it is destroyed in the final, apocalyptic conflict between the Great Powers, and Bastable comes to a realization about his alternate anachronic metalepses: "No matter how idyllic the world seemed, it always knew conflict in the end, and I was powerless to be anything but an observer" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 320). Bastable, though he has been involved now in three great conflicts, has had little impact upon them by his own actions. All he can really do is travel to these worlds and witness the terrible conflicts that devour them.

The Great Powers destroy one another, but this simply leads to a new conflict between anarchist and socialist ruling philosophies. Bastable finds himself in the service of the titular Steel Tsar, Iosef Djugashvili<sup>39</sup>. Bastable soon learns that the Steel Tsar is a fanatic with a nearly religious dedication to his socialist philosophy who is willing to sacrifice his people "[f]or History" and "[f]or the Future" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 436). In a repeat of the events of the first novel, Bastable once again finds himself commanding the airship that will drop a nuclear bomb to destroy his enemies. But before the attack can be completed, the bomb's inventor takes control of the airship and forces Bastable and his companions to abandon it. Aboard the airship with the Steel Tsar, the inventor detonates the bomb, demonstrating its power to the gathered socialist and anarchist forces and slaying "the despot prepared to use it and the despot's

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<sup>39</sup> This man's parallel in our history comes to be known as Joseph Stalin.

servants" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 440). The inventors hope is that the demonstration of this terrible weapon will be enough to dissuade both sides from further violence, but Bastable writes no more of this world after the detonation of the atomic bomb and death of the Steel Tsar. He is uncertain that the bomb's inventor's plan served to save lives or bring an end to the world-wide conflict that has engulfed this world. He leaves Moorcock's grandfather with this observation: "despots are all pretty much the same, but there are many different kinds of victims" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 441). Once again, Bastable has seen imperialism destroyed by war only for more war to follow. Here the further conflict is not driven by revenge against colonial masters as was General Hood's conquests in *The Land Leviathan*. Instead, it is driven by competing ideologies set on securing the world's future. This parallels the ideological conflict that defined our own world in the aftermath of the World Wars. One-time allies become ideological enemies in the wake of their defeat of their common foe. Ideologies dedicated to equality can still produce injustice and despotism. *The Steel Tsar* completes the complications begun with *The Land Leviathan*, turning *The Warlord of the Air's* criticism of colonialism and imperialism into a broader condemnation of the ideological forces that drive human conflict. No matter how idyllic or idealized a world may seem, it can breed discontent and violence and its eventual destruction. Loyalty should not be owed "to one nation, one world or even one period of history!" (Moorcock, *Nomad* 299). For each is flawed and

contains the seeds of injustice and violence. Instead, it should be owed to humanity as a whole. A nation or historical period may appear to make progress, but one should also be aware of those it leaves behind. Justice and prosperity for one place in time may come at the expense of people in another.

Moorcock's *Nomad of Time* trilogy employs alternate anachronic metalepses to explore different worlds in conflict. Despite their differences, their conflicts are rooted in the same causes: colonialism, imperialism, and the ideological forces that rise in response to them. These are the forces that would divvy up the world and establish arbitrary claims and borders. The alternate anachronic metalepses allow one protagonist to cross the borders of time and witness these different worlds and compare their different conditions. What at first seems like a justification for the terrible violence our own world experienced to end the age of empires turns out to be an interrogation of all our justifications for large scale violence, whether to preserve or destroy the status quo or in an attempt to establish a new one. Each is shown to be simply a justification for further violence. This rhetorical burden is carried by both the novels' presentation of alternate places in time and their focus on the causes and effects of these places in time and their outbursts of violence. In each place in time, Bastable finds similar powers fighting over similar borders. While the different places in time Bastable visits do not have direct causal influences on each other,

their historical differences invite readers to attend to their causal similarities and differences.

*The Nomad of Time* trilogy demonstrates the anachronic metalepsis's power to unite different autonomous story worlds in a single fabula by allowing or forcing characters to cross the borders between them. Here, this power is used to draw attention to their historical qualities, especially their similarities that are presented as the results of the universally violent qualities of colonialism, imperialism, and the ideologies that arise in response to them. Ironically, these forces that impose borders are shown to be themselves borderless, existing across and uniting the various story worlds Bastable experiences. The alternate histories of these various story worlds are foregrounded by the protagonist's travel across the ontological borders between them and their universal qualities are brought to the readers attention by the protagonist witnessing and commenting on them. In our next reading, we will examine how the anachronic metalepsis can bring different places in time into contact with each other and what happens when the temporal borderland grows beyond being a site of passage between places in time and becomes a site of interaction between them.

#### **ALONG THE BORDER OF TWO TOMORROWS IN *THE PERIPHERAL***

William Gibson's novel *The Peripheral* presents two very different places in time separated by seventy years. The earlier of these places in time, set some

time in mid-21st century Appalachia, is a world of material want and intense corruption. The latter place in time, set some time in 22nd century London, is a world of material excess and even greater corruption. By means of a mysterious "Server," persons in the latter place in time are able to establish electronic communication<sup>40</sup> with persons in the prior place in time. Establishing this connection between times creates a "Stub," a new timeline branching into a new possible world with its future in flux, able to be affected by the interactions of people in the two timelines. From then on, time in the stub and time in the present of the 22nd century proceeds at a one to one ratio. For every hour that passes in the 22nd century, an hour passes in the stub. Thus, the Server enables a form of backward alternate anachronic metalepsis for the people of the 22nd century that in turn allows for the people in the stubs to experience a forward alternate anachronic metalepsis.

While this particular form of anachronic metalepsis is limited to information transfer, the advanced technology of the titular Peripherals allow characters from the stubs to take on a hybrid form and explore the alternate future in surrogate bodies. The precursor technology to the Peripherals, remote drones and video chat software, allows the people of the 22nd century to experience a more limited form of embodiment in the stubs. Thus, by seeking to engage with the past, the people of the 22nd century create new pasts that are not their pasts. Instead

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<sup>40</sup> Basically anything that is possible with the Internet today.

they are like new presents, presents with lesser technology and greater populations.

Note the parallels with contemporary borders between developed and developing nations. The world of the 22nd century is like the former, boasting in material wealth but in need of a labor class to sustain that wealth. The stub worlds of the 21st century are like the latter, economically disadvantaged and inhabited by a desperate, and thus, readily exploited, labor pool. Gibson's temporal border is designed to reflect real world borders, and as we come to see, the interactions across this border reflect the kinds of interactions that take place across real borders. Because the Server's connections allow for backward alternate anachronic metalepses, the people of the 22nd century do not need to worry about meddling in their own pasts. They can exploit the stubs with impunity.

Some users experiment with their stubs, such as the unnamed user who uses his to stage elaborate "war games" by manipulating its governments and feeding them technological specifications to see what terrifying war machines they will produce. These wars epitomize the proxy wars that decimate developing nations. Others exploit them for free tech labor, such as Wilf Netherton, the novel's 22nd century protagonist, who "loans" the novel's 21st century protagonist, Flynne Fisher, to his client's sister. Flynne ends up piloting a security drone in what she believes is just some strange and realistic video

game, for which she receives a nominal payment (paid to her by electronically manipulating 21st century banking systems through the Server). People like Flynne are referred to as "Polts," a grim joke on the fact that they are almost certainly dead in the present of the 22nd century, but are still able to manipulate physical objects through the Server's connection, like the poltergeists of legend. Here we see a sort of temporal outsourcing made possible by the forward alternate anachronic metalepses people in the stubs can experience once they have been contacted by the people of the 22nd century. Polts moonlight as remote security agents, much like the remote customer and technical service agents of our own world. Like them, Polts are exploited and often treated with disdain.

While immersed in this "game," Flynne Fisher, an underemployed young woman living in an impoverished rural Southern community, witnesses a grisly murder. The victim turns out to be the sister to whom Netherton "loaned" her. The perpetrators of the crime learn that Flynne witnessed it and begin to access her world in an attempt to kill her and prevent her from being used as a witness against them. They can do so with relative impunity in their own world because as Detective Ainsley Lowbeer explains to Flynne: "arranging your death would in no way constitute a crime here, as you are, according to current best legal opinion, not considered to be real" (Gibson 200). Flynne is just a "Polt," a legal non-person with no rights or protections.

Note here the parallels with contemporary displaced persons and undocumented immigrants. Persons like Flynne are exploited in illicit work, derided with dehumanizing slurs, and denied the legal recognition and protection of their personhood and rights. Gibson's anachronic metalepses allow him to establish this "all-American girl" as the victim of cross-border exploitation, accomplishing two powerful rhetorical effects. He provides his audience with both a vision of America as an exploited developing nation and a sympathetic face for contemporary cross-border exploitation in a familiar American stereotype.

Flynn, her friends, and her family are forced to ally themselves with Netherton, his friends, and Detective Lowbeer, a high-ranking 22nd century British intelligence agent tasked with maintaining order but retaining a commitment to justice, in order to protect themselves and ultimately their world from these murderers until Flynne can be brought forward to identify them. As only information can be exchanged over the Server, this proves to be quite difficult. The two sides must operate through blinds and dummy corporations. While Flynne has the benefit of Lowbeer's vast knowledge and her veteran brother and his friends' military experience, her antagonists are completely without scruples, willing to hire assassins through the dark web to strike at Flynne. And when that proves ineffective, they are willing to escalate by bribing more and more powerful criminal and then government organizations. These

antagonists have already proven their disregard for human life in their own time, but they have absolutely no regard for Flynne and her world at all. As far as they are concerned, these are not *lives* that they are expending to cover their tracks. To seek parity, Flynne's allies in the 22nd century must also begin gaining control of 21st century power centers, resulting in both sides seeking to bribe their way to the top of Flynne's world's political organizations like "fists stacking up around the handle of a softball bat" (Gibson 338). To generate the capital necessary for these criminal and political activities, both sides manipulate global stock markets, resulting in economic crises. The corrupting conflict throws Flynne's world into chaos, threatening an Armageddon both similar to and different from the Jackpot that led to Netherton's world.

Again, we see a parallel with our own world, as Flynne's world becomes much like the site of a proxy war, a less developed world serving as the battleground for a conflict between powers from a more developed one. Significantly, as in contemporary proxy wars, the victims of this conflict are the residents of the less developed world drawn into this conflict largely beyond their own control. Flynne's actual antagonists are under little or no actual risk, but their proxies in her own time, fighting for a cause they have no vested interest in, risk financial ruin and violent death.

As this conflict between 22nd century powers plays out in a 21st century, the protagonists in Netherton's world provide those in Flynne's with the technical

schematics necessary to reproduce the telepresence technology needed to access and operate the titular Peripherals. These are "anthropomorphic drone[s]" or "telepresence avatar[s]" genetically engineered to be all but human, biological constructs with all faculties but no consciousness of their own. They are designed to be "inhabited" by a user wishing to project herself across the world, or in this case, across time. These peripherals operate by means of an autonomous cutout, a bulky helmet-like device with the 21st century's technology, but a simple diadem with the 22nd century's. This device is a means of displacing the operator's consciousness from her own body to that of the peripheral. While operating the peripheral, the operator's own body lies in a comatose state. Here, information transfer through the anachronic metalepses can produce a simulacrum of actual movement across temporal ontological borders. Because of physiological differences, the body of the peripheral will "feel" different than the operator's original body. For example, a slight difference in height between the operator's own body and the peripheral's can lead to a barely noticeable, but perplexing shift in the operator's perspective. This is often disorienting, amplified in Flynn's case because of her displacement across time as well as space. Flynn can live in and interact with the 22nd century, but she is always tethered to and identified with her own time. But the peripherals can also be liberating, as in the case of Connor, a quadruple amputee veteran who takes to operating his peripheral with joy because it allows him to once again

have arms and legs that he can not only manipulate, but also feel. The protagonists go through this effort because they need to make Flynne present in the 22nd century so that she can identify the man responsible for the murder she witnessed, a man who does not even exist (yet) in her own world.

Here we see a parallel with how technology crosses borders. Netherton and his allies do not provide Flynne and her friends with advanced technology until they have a need in the 22nd century for that technology to exist in Flynne's 21st century. The less developed world receives a technological uplift because doing so benefits the powers of the more developed world. The technology Flynne's world receives is less advanced than its counterparts in the 22nd century because Netherton's allies do not need them have the most advanced form possible, just what is workable for their purposes.

These two futures are two possible worlds that, as all fictional worlds do, hint at infinite others. This is made explicit and literal in *The Peripheral* by the existence of the Server and the potentially limitless number of stubs that can be created by its use. These two futures' actual possibility rings with probability. Flynne's world reflects the slow decline of the American heartland from domestic economic, political and social crises. Flynne, her brother Burton, and Connor are archetypes of a forgotten Middle America. Flynne has never had time or space for ambitions of her own, for she has spent her entire young adult life working odd jobs to help afford her mother's cancer medication. Burton and Connor bear

the scars of military service that was their only real opportunity for a career. Netherton's world, on the other hand, exists in the shadows of worldwide ecological, economic, and military calamities that threaten our time. The Jackpot was not one event, but many. Ecological crises led to political and then military crises. The resulting world is one where few people are left to enjoy technological and material excess. While that world may sound appealing, it is a world bought for the most tragic price. And it is a world devoid of nature or authenticity. The trees that line the 22nd century's streets are fakes, elaborate climate manipulating devices disguised to look like trees. Neo-primitives reject telecommunication and transportation technology but embrace genetic engineering to turn themselves into tribes of people with monstrous mutations. The 22nd century is filled with a sense of ennui and loss, as illustrated by Netherton's frequent drinking and his companion, Ash's tattoos: black silhouettes of the many species that went extinct during the Jackpot that can move about her body and often "flee" when one looks at them.

These futures are both reflection and prediction. They are possibilities drawn from potentials that exist in our own world. As much as *The Peripheral* is about its two future worlds, it is about our own world as well. Flynn's future may not seem all that futuristic to those already living in economically depressed regions of America's heartland. Her future may have 3D printers, but those are used mainly to produce simple toys and phone accessories, like the fidget

spinners and iPhone cases produced in Asian factories today. The 3D printers return production to America, but not labor, a reflection of the fact that automation presents just as dire a threat to American manufacturing employment as outsourcing. Netherton's future is rooted in the foreseeable crises that face our present, and its marriage of advertising and politics may seem all too real in the wake of Donald Trump's election. These worlds are possibilities born of our own world.

These possible worlds are also distinct and separate worlds, ontologically discrete worlds. Their intercommunication ensures that their original causal relationship is severed. As Netherton's friend, Lev Zubov explains:

*Not the past. When the connection's made, that didn't happen, in our past. It all forks, there. They're no longer headed for this* (Gibson 38, italics in original).

Flynn's world is no longer Netherton's world's past. Netherton's world is no longer Flynn's world's future. By engaging with the Server, the people of the 22nd century experience backwards alternate anachronic metalepses, creating new time lines that branch from their own.

The relationship between Netherton's and Flynn's worlds once again reflects the relationship between our own developed and developing worlds by recalling and interrogating the very myth that leads to our terms "developed" and "developing." These terms reflect a view of nations as being on different points

of a single timeline. The developed nation is seen at or towards the end of that timeline, having achieved the goal of development, usually understood to be a mix of an advanced economy and at least lip service to Western liberal democracy. The developing nation is seen at an earlier point on that timeline, still attempting to become developed. Paradoxically, this view both reflects and obscures the colonial history that has contributed to the division between developed and developing nations. Rather than existing in the past, developing nations exist contemporaneously with developed nations, and any nation's position along any indices of development is reflection of its past and present interactions with other nations. In a sense, *The Peripheral* literalizes Bertrand Westphall's description of the Geocritical view of history where a synchronic understanding of the world has replaced a diachronic one. This parallel with our own world is made explicit when in response to the many ways in which people exploit their stubs, Netherton's ally, Ash, cries out: "Imperialism ... We're third-worlding alternate continua [the past]. Calling them stubs makes that a bit easier" (Gibson 103). Ash's outburst reminds us that for most of her contemporaries, the interest does not lie in improving or "developing" the stub, but in exploiting it.

*The Peripheral's* rhetorical burdens are clear. We are at once presented with two possible futures that are built on the crises that threaten our horizons and act as a metaphor for our own time. We are reminded of the consequences

of our actions, both for our future and for our present, both within and across our borders. The ruined future is a vision of both our future and our present. Flynne's future of the latter 21st century is not so different from our own present, just a further development of domestic trends we see today. Netherton's future of the 22nd century is quite different from our present, but still reflective of it, the result of global trends and concerns we see today. And its relationship with Flynne's future and other stubs created or accessed through the Server is reflective of the relationship between developed and developing nations we see today. To summarize: the ruination of our future is rooted in our own exploitative ruination of our present.

*The Peripheral's* use of anachronic metalepses demonstrates how they can be used to explore the causal relationships between different places in time. Here the anachronic metalepsis allows for direct personal and political action across the temporal border with critical results for people on both sides of a border. This is made possible by the anachronic metalepsis's power to make spatial the temporal relationship between different places in time, allowing characters to move and communicate between these different places in time across a temporal border. The transgressive nature of the anachronic metalepsis highlights these crossings, and they in turn help highlight the narratives' rhetorical burdens.

## CLOSING REMARKS

In this chapter, we have seen that the anachronic metalepsis affords characters a spatial experience of time. Past, present, and future become places where characters go. These places are drawn together along temporal borderlands that may themselves be distinct places in time. Crossing these borderlands is inherently transgressive and highlights both the actions of the characters and the relationship between the places in time that that the characters visit. Characters can experience and influence those relationships first hand, allowing them to play historical roles only possible when places in time are brought together along temporal borderlands.

These places in time are related by shared history and the existence of the temporal borderland. Their shared history is often reflected in the nature of the device, power, or phenomenon that makes them possible. And that device, power, or phenomenon often plays a significant role in carrying their rhetorical burdens. *The Nomad of Time's* Henry Bastable has little control over where his anachronic metalepses will take him, and he feels as though he has little effect on the places in time where he finds himself. *The Peripheral's* Flynne Fisher and Wilf Netherton are limited in other ways, but also possess much greater freedom to affect change across the temporal border. *The Nomad of Time* makes a case for the inevitability of history. *The Peripheral* asks readers to learn from it. The places in time of *The Nomad of Time* do not share a causal link, but they do

share a root cause: the violent results of imperialism. The places in time in *The Peripheral* exist in something like an open causal loop. Netherton's time is a result of Flynn's lived history. Flynn's world is a creation of the Server's operation. Again we see that *The Nomad of Time's* worlds are inevitabilities, and *The Peripheral's* are the direct results of human action.

Again, these different places in time can only be brought together at the fabula level by the anachronic metalepsis. The people of the future and the past can only interact by means of the anachronic metalepsis. This allows characters to interact with history in ways that would otherwise be impossible. The transgressive and remarkable nature of these interactions and what they reveal about history and places in time is key to the rhetorical burdens time travel narratives can carry.

## CHAPTER VI

### BACK TO THE BEGINNING AGAIN

I began this project by pointing to the vast diversity of time travel narratives, something I hope to have illustrated by the breadth of my examples. Of course, a body of eight close readings and maybe a dozen shorter examples hardly scratches the surface of available time travel narratives, but I hope my choices point to the variety of time travel narratives, and more importantly, their variety of possible rhetorical burdens. I frame these as possible rhetorical burdens because my purpose has been to point to what time travel narratives can do. My examples are not intended to mark the limits of time travel narratives' rhetorical burdens, but instead to point to the many possible types of rhetorical burdens time travel narratives can carry. There are certainly rhetorical burdens I have not dealt with in detail here. Many further possibilities exist, and this project is truly just a beginning.

But now that beginning comes to a close, and I can make some definitive and summative statements about it. I have identified the anachronic metalepsis as the definitive narrative device in time travel narratives. Identifying this device is significant for a number of reasons. First, it allows us to define time travel narratives based on a device instead of surface features. As I mention in my

introduction, while some narratives, such as *The Time Machine* or *Back to the Future*, are indisputably time travel narratives, employing time travel machines to allow their characters to travel backward and forward across the ontological boundaries of time, other narratives, such as *Frequency* (2000) or the *Forever War* are not so obviously time travel narratives. The former features only communication across time. The latter features the disorienting results of time dilation. But both feature a device, power, or phenomenon that breaches the ontological boundaries of time, something that is only possible in fiction.<sup>41</sup> Both employ anachronic metalepses, and thus, both are time travel narratives.

Another reason why identifying the anachronic metalepsis is important is that it gives us a terminology with which to discuss the temporal movements that make up time travel narratives. A consistent and readily defined terminology saves us the effort of having to continuously describe the often complex temporal movements that fill time travel narratives. Henry's many temporal jaunts into his past, future, and present in *The Time Traveler's Wife* can become unwieldy and difficult to describe in an analysis, but we can make this easier and clearer by identifying them as different kinds of anachronic metalepsis.

The final reason why identifying the anachronic metalepsis is significant is that it allows us to acknowledge its similarities with anachronies and other forms

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<sup>41</sup> Starships capable of speeds that would result in noticeable time dilation exist, for now at least, only in fiction.

of metalepsis while also distinguishing it. The anachronic metalepsis manipulates time very much like an anachrony, and it breaches ontological boundaries like other forms of metalepsis, but significantly, it does so at the fabula level and allows characters to manipulate or experience the manipulation of time in ways that normally are only available to narrators and readers. This can be especially useful when discussing narratives, such as *The Time Machine* and *Looper* (2012) that make use of both anachronies and anachronic metalepses. The temporal movements that occur at the story level, anachronies, do not affect the characters the same way as the temporal movements that occur at the fabula level, anachronic metalepses. Characters experience anachronic metalepses directly, whereas they may have no knowledge of the anachronies the narrator employs in organizing her narration. Because characters directly experience anachronic metalepses, they must contend with and often discuss their effects. The direct notice and interaction of characters serves to further highlight the anachronic metalepses and the rhetorical burdens they help carry.

Identifying the anachronic metalepsis is just a start. It allows us to speak more clearly and definitively about time travel narratives, but it does not tell us what to say. There are many ways we can approach speaking about time travel. We can consider its scientific possibility. According to physics, if one travels fast enough, one will experience time dilation. A week-long journey aboard a starship traveling at or near the speed of light may leave one years in the future. This is

the scientific conceit that informs Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, a novel in which a soldier in an interstellar war finds himself becoming more and more alienated from society as centuries pass on Earth in the months and years he spends on campaign. We can consider it philosophically. The ability to travel to the future and past raises profound questions about the nature of the universe and our perception of time. In Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, characters discover the existence of other Earths with different histories and come to wonder if their own existence is but a nightmare. We can consider it practically. The ability to travel through time would grant one a number of advantages over those without that power. The protagonist of David Gerrold's *The Man Who Folded Himself* teams up with a future duplicate of himself to win big at the horse races, but not too big because they wish to avoid too much attention. But then again, other time travelers may be a threat. In *Star Trek: Enterprise*, the crew of the first fictional starship to bear that name become pawns in a "Temporal Cold War" between rival time traveling factions.

All of these considerations and many others are legitimate ways to approach a discussion of time travel narratives, which is why I chose to frame this project in terms of narrative and rhetoric. Because while all of these considerations are legitimate, we need to remember that time travel only exists in fiction. It is a narrative device. Narrative devices can be employed towards

many different rhetorical burdens; scientific, philosophical, and practical considerations are just a few of them.

Because time travel is a narrative device, it can operate just about any way authors and creators want it to. It does not have to follow external rules. According to basic laws of motion, the Earth will not occupy the same location in space in the far future, so *The Time Machine* should really dump the Time Traveler off to suffocate in the vacuum instead of sending him on an adventure among the eloi and morlocks. Time travel does not have to be particularly consistent within a single story world. The crew in *Star Trek's* original series experiences at least three different ways to travel to the past and also encounter an alternate timeline with its own past. Time travel does not even have to follow its own rules all that consistently. Only organic matter can go through Skynet's time machine in *The Terminator*, but then the liquid metal T1000 goes through it in the sequel, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991). The concept of time travel invites a number of paradoxes, but individual time travel narratives treat them as a buffet. Alfred Bester's "The Men Who Murdered Mohammed" shows that changing the past has no effect upon the present because time and history are entirely subjective. On the other hand, Bradbury's "A Sound of Thunder" shows that something so slight as killing a butterfly millions of years ago can have

profound effects that ripple into the present.<sup>42</sup> The point here is that in every one of these examples, time travel functions first and foremost according to narrative and rhetorical demands. We should certainly consider how a time travel narrative presents the device, power, or phenomenon that explains its anachronic metalepsis, and we should take note of apparent inconsistencies, but we should remember that time travel is fictional--there is no wrong way to do it. So it becomes imperative that we consider the anachronic metalepsis rhetorically, as part of the means a narrative employs towards its various ends.

To explore those various ends, I examined a relatively broad variety of time travel narratives. I did not want to limit my readings to science fiction narratives or novels. I did not want to limit my readings to one particular kind of device, power, or phenomenon. These readings only hint at the variety of time travel narratives, but to summarize, they include scientific devices, magic and superhuman powers, and magic and supernatural phenomenon. And they cross between the fantasy, history, science fiction, and romance genres. They include, six novels, a trilogy of novellas, and one film. Alongside them are numerous examples drawn from other time travel narratives. Altogether, this project looks in some detail at about twenty different time travel narratives.

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<sup>42</sup> Yet conveniently, they aren't so profound as to leave the new present incomparable to the old, and they don't affect the protagonist's existence.

More significant than the number of examples is the variety of rhetorical burdens they represent. Wells' *The Time Machine* uses the anachronic metalepsis to condemn Victorian class divisions by showing their horrible evolutionary outcome. *Back to the Future* employs the anachronic metalepsis for anachronistic comedy and a story of familial improvement. *The Time Traveler's Wife's* anachronic metalepses are the fabula level manifestation of narrative's entelechial causality. *Life After Life* uses the anachronic metalepsis to explore the possibilities afforded by choice, but is ambiguous about the ultimate effects of any one person's choices. *Looper's* anachronic metalepses establish a temporal loop that stands as allegory for cycles of violence. *Time and Again's* anachronic metalepses are the manifestation of its celebration of nostalgia while *Kindred's* anachronic metalepses are the manifestation of history's violent hold on the present. *The Girl From Everywhere* employs the anachronic metalepsis to dramatize how people construct history and how history constructs identity. *Outlander* uses the anachronic metalepsis to romanticize historical unknowns. *The Nomad of Time* trilogy uses the anachronic metalepsis to explore multiple timelines that demonstrate the inevitably violent results of imperialism. And *The Peripheral's* anachronic metalepses create a temporal borderland that stands as a metaphor for our own real world borders.

This is quite a variety of rhetorical burdens, but we can see some trends. The anachronic metalepsis is often employed to allow characters to interact with

history, both public and personal. They can celebrate history or interrogate it, and many time travel narratives allow characters to interact with their own history. The anachronic metalepsis is often used to manipulate or highlight causality. Many time travel narratives employ the anachronic metalepsis to establish temporal loops that can serve as metaphors or manifestations of narrative and social forces. Many time travel narratives vividly recreate places in time, sometimes to juxtapose them against one another, sometimes to celebrate or condemn them, and sometimes to explore how people may act in the place in time. Perhaps the best summary of these many rhetorical burdens is that time travel narratives allow us to reconsider our places in history and time by reminding us that they are indeed places.

Having summarized this project, allow me to reiterate that this is but a beginning by briefly pointing to some further ways in which we can explore time travel narratives. First, this project is limited to works by American and British creators. This is simply a result of convenience; there are so many American and British works to choose from. But that does mean that this project is limited to one set of perspectives. Exploring global voices will allow us to see many more of the anachronic metalepsis's possibilities. Second, this project is largely limited to novels and films, with a focus on novels. But these are not the only mediums in which we will find time travel narratives. Time travel appears in

interactive narrative mediums like video games and CYOA<sup>43</sup> or interactive narratives. The interactions between the anachronic metalepsis and the audience's control over the narrative can result in many interesting rhetorical burdens. And while this project includes a number of women authors, their works are not examined specifically as works by women. A feminist perspective would further enrich our understanding of the many rhetorical burdens the anachronic metalepsis can support. Finally, there is no shortage of other novels and films to explore, and new ones are being produced regularly. We have by no means exhausted the possibilities of the anachronic metalepsis.

As I conclude, I am drawn once again to Bakhtin's statement about what he refers to as "the literary artistic chronotope" but what I would take to refer to narrative in general and fictional narrative in particular: "Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84). This description seems especially apt for time travel narratives. All narratives intertwine time and space in the construction of the worlds and characters of their fabulas, but time travel narratives make this especially clear. This, recall, is why David Wittenberg referred to time travel as a "narratological laboratory." What is remarkable about this laboratory is the number of effects it can achieve. The anachronic metalepsis is a surprisingly versatile and dynamic narrative device.

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<sup>43</sup> Choose Your Own Adventure

Time travel is only possible in narrative, but the rhetorical possibilities of time travel narratives are limitless.

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