

# Unlocking the Time-Bound Tale: Decoding the Captivating Narrative Structure of Sally Rooney's *Normal People*

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**Abstract**—Sally Rooney's *Normal People* has garnered significant acclaim for its poignant portrayal of the bond between two Irish individuals, Marianne and Connell. This article examines the novel's structural and temporal elements to elucidate its significance and foster reader engagement with the narrative. Rooney employs a non-linear storytelling method to intertwine past and current situations, enabling a more profound comprehension of the character's development and the intricacies of human connections. The study explores the impact of temporal manipulation on character relationships and its influence on readers' interpretation of the storyline. The examination highlights tactics such as flashbacks and shifting perspectives to demonstrate the gradual development of Connell and Marianne. These tools provide a valuable understanding of their challenges, incentives, and intricate emotional dynamics. The unorthodox narrative structure defies standard storytelling norms by highlighting themes such as time, memory, and human connections. This analysis reveals viewpoints on *Normal People* by examining the intersection of narrative construction, temporal dynamics, and character development. The novel emphasizes the importance of flashbacks in revealing prior traumas that influence the protagonist's actions and emotions while using several perspectives to enhance the complexity of the plot. By adopting several viewpoints, readers gain an understanding of the characters' shared experiences, motivations, and the cultural factors that shape their lives. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the narrative structure employed in *Normal People*, shedding light on its temporal complexities and enhancing reader engagement.

**Index Terms**—narrative structure, non-linear narrative, flashbacks, time travel, changing perspectives

## I. INTRODUCTION

Published in 2018, *Normal People* quickly gained acclaim from critics for its poignant representation of two Irish teenagers, Marianne and Connell, in navigating complex relationships and external pressures. Rooney's method of interweaving a non-linear narrative greatly facilitates the viewer's understanding of character progression in the text through the fluid incorporation of past and present timelines. As noted, utilizing reflections with multiple viewpoints grants audiences a multi-faceted understanding of the fluid dynamics in the relationship of Marianne and Connell, foregrounding the essential nature of human interactions. Furthermore, *Normal People* ventures into the themes of time, illustrating how its flexible representation influences character growth while challenging traditional narrative techniques. Close analysis of this literary piece's narrative structure and chronological complexity necessitates an in-depth understanding of its contextual context.

The non-linear narrative structure in *Normal People* leaves a distinct mark on readers' interpretations of the characters' development. Rooney uses flashbacks and varying points of view effectively to build the intricate dynamics of the relationship between Marianne and Connell, consequently permitting a deeper understanding of their personal problems and intertwining lives. Considering these structural choices prompts an admiration for the thematic employment of time, its narrative portrayal, and its contribution to the characters' choices, relations, and personal transformation. Integration of past and present narrative components strengthens the story, inviting readers to examine human relations and emotions (Angelo, 2024; Sarıkaya-Şen, 2021).

This article analyses Sally Rooney's *Normal People*'s narrative structure and temporal dynamics. It approaches its narrative structure, defined through time shifts and multiple narratives, and how it invites character and relationship development. It also explores the consequences of time manipulation for the engagement of the reader and the value of narrative structure. It points to the dynamic relationship between Connell and Marianne, accenting its intricate nature. Through close analysis of narrative elements in relation to time, such as flow of temporality and its value in themes, this paper tries to approach *Normal People*'s complex narrative structure, specifically chronological narration, in such a way that it would make it easier for audiences to follow character development. This paper wishes to reveal new findings of core themes of the text and raise the audience's interest in the narrative by investigating the relationship between narrative structure, temporal dynamics, and character development. The article intends to reveal new perspectives

towards the novel's core themes and raise the audience's interest by investigating narrative architecture, temporal dynamics, and character development.

## II. NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN *NORMAL PEOPLE*

In her novel *Normal People*, Sally Rooney uses the narrative technique that enhances the depth of the plot, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of the relationship between Connell and Marianne. Rooney captures the evolution of their relationship through traversing multiple points in time. While reflecting on an important exchange with Marianne, "later he would remember this moment, and understand that it was the first time he knew he could love her" (Rooney, 2018, p. 102). Readers sequentially observe critical life events through this method, gaining insight into their individual development and relationship dynamics. Retrospective narration is also an advanced technique that is used. As readers read, they peel the layers of their interwoven trajectories. Under this framework, Rooney did an excellent job in revealing past events' effects on current realities, summarizing the complex dynamics that are part and parcel of human connections.

The non-linear narrative is defined by its breakdown from the traditional linear storytelling structure. Non-linear narratives use time shifts, multiple narratives running simultaneously, and multiple perspectives to create a multi-dimensional narrative process for the reader, scholar, or viewer (Aarseth, 1994). The non-conventional narrative structure in Sally Rooney's *Normal People* enhances the readers' understanding of the developing relationship dynamics of Connell and Marianne, thus facilitating an in-depth analysis of their respective complexities. By entwining their past and present moments, the narrative analyzes their genesis, motivating forces, and emotional states, providing a holistic picture of their development in time. This narrative structure enhances reader engagement by infusing multiple narrative elements to create a cohesive understanding of character evolution. Non-linearity disrupts traditional narrative norms and deepens themes relating to time, memory, and human relationships. Non-linear narratives demand active reconstruction of the timeline on behalf of readers, involving memory processes that differ from and supplant linear narrative applications (Antony et al., 2024; Grall et al., 2023). When events in non-linear narratives appear non-sequential, readers use more causal and chronological links to structure and retrieve narrative content, beyond narrative linearity (Antony et al., 2024; Grall et al., 2023).

Using an unconventional style in *Normal People* is critical in affecting the readers' perspective on the characters' trajectory. Sally Rooney wisely employs flashbacks and multiple perspectives to link, in intricate detail, glimpses of the lives of Connell and Marianne, thus revealing facets of the turmoil and complexity of their relationship. Rooney deftly manipulates time to demonstrate the nuances of their developing relationship and probes into their respective personal development dynamics, thus adding depth to the narrative. This unconventional narrative technique enables readers to develop an in-depth connection with Connell and Marianne, revealing emotional depth that would otherwise remain hidden in more linear narrative forms. Thus, this unconventional narrative approach in *Normal People* effectively describes human relations and personal evolution in vivid detail (Angelo, 2024; Sarıkaya-Şen, 2021).

The novel uses a non-linear narrative that requires readers to piece together the timelines of the relationship between Connell and Marianne. This form of narrative creates interest when readers follow the interwoven lives of the characters. The intertwining of past and future expresses their emotional experiences and requires readers to look at their own relations and personal development. The varying settings of times create a dynamic reading, calling for examining characters' feelings and actions. This engagement contributes to the analysis of intimacy, vulnerabilities, and the effect of time, greatly informing readers' understanding of the story (Río, 2022; Miyahara, 2021).

A look at the background and personal history of protagonists like Connell and Marianne indicates that flashbacks critically reveal their motivations, anxieties, and hopes. Narrative methods described in the discussion above indicate key events that have largely shaped the trajectory of their lives, allowing for understanding their behaviors and decisions in the present. Flashbacks provide characters with depth, allowing for a more robust portrayal of their struggles and the maturity of their personas over time. Through disclosing key past events and current realities, such reflections develop an intricate narrative of emotion and past conditions, thus shedding light on the dynamic nature of the relationship and personal growth of Connell and Marianne. Flashbacks form an essential element of character building, adding depth and authenticity to the story (Ghassani et al., 2023).

Using flashbacks in *Normal People* is essential, for they gradually reveal past traumas that shape present behavior and feelings of the main characters. Sally Rooney skillfully moves the plot through multiple temporal dimensions, establishing an intricate structure of events that precede one another and form the dynamic shifts in interactions for Connell and Marianne. Retrospective flashes are key to gaining insight into human psychological structures and revealing how past experiences inform their present relationship. With flashbacks, the characters' depth and portrayal are more compassionate. Through this storytelling tool, Rooney navigates the profound aspects of memory, trauma, and resilience, and provides an advanced portrayal of her principal characters' psychological contexts. Employment of flashbacks increases narrative interest in the story and maximizes readers' interest in the characters' quests of self-recognition and growth (Ghassani et al., 2023).

Flashbacks are essential in establishing the story in Sally Rooney's *Normal People*. Rooney skillfully integrates historical events in the story, explaining the fundamental motivations that inform the current actions and feelings of the characters. This effectively deepens the story and enables readers to examine the intricate dynamics of the relationship

between Connell and Marianne in several ways. Intricate observation of character growth and their internal drives is revealed through flashbacks that compare past and present, establishing several aspects of the story that pique their interest. Through proper use of flashbacks in the narrative structure, Rooney displays her mastery in creating a gripping novel that explores the dynamics and interrelationship of human emotions, which strongly enhances the process of reading (Miyahara, 2021).

Using multiple perspectives in *Normal People* is Central. It is an essential contributor to the depth and richness of the story. Analysis of Marianne and Connell's perspectives gives readers insight, albeit more complex, into their respective experiences and drives (Hoeken et al., 2016; Suzuki et al., 2018). Application of a bi-dimensional method also allows for more inclusive analysis of psychological states, interactions, and key themes that describe the story (Hoeken et al., 2016; Suzuki et al., 2018). Application of multiple viewpoints injects another dimension of depth to the story, allowing readers to read the story intensely and to interpret the nuances ingrained in human interactions and relationships (Hoeken et al., 2016; Suzuki et al., 2018).

Sally Rooney employs alternating narratives in *Normal People* to examine the Marianne and Connell relationship. By doing this, it illustrates both protagonists' states of mind, qualities, and vulnerabilities. It displays their dissimilarity while ensuring that their intense relationship remains emphasized. These narratives provide more depth in inquiring into members of the audience's understanding of their relationship's progression. Rooney reflects on human relationship dynamics, demonstrating perceptions and interactions that form individuals. Alternating narratives effectively depict the nature of love, friendship, and personal development (Angelo, 2024; Ghassani et al., 2023).

A comprehensive understanding of the narrative complexity in *Normal People* is best supported through active exposure to multiple perspectives. The novel explores, in depth, the dynamics of character interactions, interpersonal interactions, and social settings, asking the readers to activate critical consideration of opposing viewpoints in understanding the intertwining lives of Connell and Marianne. By considering these multiple viewpoints, readers can re-evaluate their primary suppositions and biases, gaining deeper insight into the motives behind the characters' actions. Non-linearity in the narrative structure, characterized by changes in time and multiple viewpoints, requires readers to re-evaluate their understanding continuously. Consideration of various viewpoints deepens the reading process and highlights the dynamics of human relationships and fluidity in identity within the bounds of society (Vazquez, 2018, 2022).

### III. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Connell's gradual progression is the enduring motif in Sally Rooney's *Normal People*. Connell is subject to profound transition and maturation as the narrative shows, mediated through interactions and entanglement with Marianne. Described initially as reserved and inward, he gradually develops an identity characterized by increasing levels of confidence and assurance, set within the context of college life and professional ambition. Through its non-linearity, the novel foregrounds such growth, enabling readers to see Connell's progress in episodic yet coherent form that fully captures the dynamic quality of human life. Through the deployment of scenes in the past and multiple narrative perspectives, readers gain an educated insight into the challenges experienced by Connell and external barriers, eventually gaining insight into a deeper level of character insight and the dynamic that characterizes connections to Marianne. This narrative approach effectively captures the fluid nature of identity and relationship character, illustrating the efficacy of time in mediating personal growth and emotional intelligence (Fauziyyah & Anwar, 2024).

A central aspect of *Normal People* by Sally Rooney is the representation of Marianne's change, made possible through the employment of flashbacks. These narrative mechanisms effectively explore the significant events from Marianne's history and provide an enlightened understanding of her unique character development. As the story proceeds, these flashbacks formally unveil the emotional wounds and complex problems that form Marianne's character, allowing readers to understand the transformative change she experienced. Alternating viewpoints in these flashbacks provide insight into Marianne's internal states and distort the typical chronological storyline execution. Rooney effectively intertwines these non-linear narrative segments, compelling readers to investigate Marianne's journey towards personal realization, whereby she tries to overcome her misery and achieve empowerment. Through the effective use of flashback narratives, Marianne emerges as a dynamic character who surmounts obstacles and, in the end, gains more resilience (Angelo, 2024).

The intricate interplay of character development and chronological dynamics fortifies *Normal People's* narrative structure. Sally Rooney deftly moves within a non-linear chronological structure, efficaciously tracing the evolving relationship between Marianne and Connell, enabling audiences to observe their growth within more than one timescale. Specific uses of flashbacks and shifting viewpoints augment characterization, revealing their internal depth and examining the subtleties of their relationship in detail. This forges an intense relationship between readers and characters, which draws attention to the influences of life experiences and interpersonal connections in their growth. Rooney effortlessly intertwines chronological factors and character growth specifically to foreground the impacts of their past upon their present behaviors, gaining insight into an in-depth representation of the emotional development of both Connell and Marianne (Angelo, 2024; Ghassani et al., 2023; Ríó, 2022).

#### IV. REPRESENTATION OF TIME IN *NORMAL PEOPLE*

Rooney's *Normal People* is highly experimental in exploring the complex nature of time, placing particular relevance on its impact on interpersonal connections and individual progress. One striking characteristic of the novel is its analysis of the effects of time on the life trajectories of the protagonists, Connell and Marianne. Rooney does an effective job illustrating this premise in the form of evocative imagery and introspective settings. For instance, when Connell reflects on his relationship with Marianne, he ponders, "It feels different now, the way time passes, like the way a clock sounds loud at night when you're alone in a house" (Rooney, 2018, p. 134). Here, the excerpt depicts the influence of the passage of time on their relationship and highlights the facets of their coexistence. With these elements, in addition to using flashbacks and changes in time, Rooney effectively reveals critical points in their lives, exhibiting the relevance of their vicissitudes in the present moment. Rooney's portrayal of time forcefully expresses the enduring nature of the past, the impermanent nature of the present, and the potential for growth and mutation in the future. This skillfully crafted narrative structure captivates readers intensely.

The concept of time in *Normal People* is an effective metaphor for growth, revealing the relationship and personal development process. The story depicts that time goes beyond a mere linear structure; rather, it is an adjustable force that moves back and forth from retreat to progress, echoing the fluctuating relationship dynamics among the characters. Sally Rooney effectively uses flashbacks and multiple viewpoints to delicately describe the entwined lives of Connell and Marianne, highlighting the effects of changes in time in their interactions and personal lives. The passage of time intensifies the emotional impact of the text, demonstrating the fleeting nature of life and the irreversible progress of change. Rooney effectively entwines the past and present, showing that time is both a push toward growth and an effective symbol for fleeting human connections. In *Normal People*, time is represented as a multi-faceted symbol for change, intensifying the depth of the story through its multiple implications and connotations (Angelo, 2024; Río, 2022).

Sally Rooney's *Normal People* utilizes temporality as a complex device to explore the depth of emotional lives. Rooney skillfully manipulates time to explore Connell and Marianne's highly developing relationship dynamics. Analysis of the multi-faceted dynamics between the past and present is achieved through back-and-forth movement between these states of time (Miyahara, 2021; Angelo, 2024). Through such a method, the deep relationship between both protagonists is revealed, and insight is gained into the internal landscape of each character. As time passes, it steadily uncovers the emotional landscape of both main characters, revealing deeper levels that enable more insight into their desires, struggles, and personal growth. Manipulation of time in this deliberate way highlights the story's emotional power, and a deep analysis of human emotion is made feasible in developing relationships.

The sense of time is vital in creating and impacting interpersonal relationships, and *Normal People* illustrates this perfectly. Its non-linear chronological structure allows for examining the impact of chronological progression on the relationship dynamics of Connell and Marianne. Hence, their transition in interactions at different intervals is revealed. Retrograde structures and changes in perspective in this writing are used to examine the complexity of their relationship, the delicate nature of their interactions, and the influences of time on their emotions and interactions are highlighted. By reviewing the temporal dimension in their relationship, the story grants deeper insight into their personal growth and their growth in relation to each other. *Normal People*, therefore, highlights the critical role of time in relation building, demonstrating the intrinsic fluidness and fragility inherent in human connections (Miyahara, 2021; Angelo, 2024).

Representing past, present, and future temporalities takes considerable space in the novel's narrative structure. Its primary relationship involving Marianne and Connell is painstakingly established through an intentional entwining of non-simultaneous moments in Sally Rooney's *Normal People*. Rooney skillfully unravels the dynamics that permeate their relationship, even if in a non-linear narrative form that invites readers to engage with the variations in their emotional struggles and personal evolutions. Through the deft intertwining of memories and fluctuating perceptions, the author traverses multiple past periods, unfolding observations in prior events that powerfully shape their present actions. This deliberate structure deepens readers' insight into Marianne and Connell while foregrounding the dynamic nature of interpersonal relationships and the role of past experiences in the present decision-making process. The intertwining of past and present conditions in *Normal People* exemplifies Speer and Zacks' observations on dynamic narrative structure that brings to life the highly charged dynamics of human existence (Speer & Zacks, 2005).

Applying the narrative technique of foreshadowing in *Normal People* brings depth and interest to the storytelling. By embedding subtle signals, Sally Rooney skillfully evokes anticipation and interest in her readers (Bae & Young, 2008). This facilitates deeper analysis of the characters' actions and motivations, since preliminary indicators of their future destinies inform their emotional experiences. Again, foreshadowing strengthens the narrative structure by building connections between apparently unrelated events, facilitating a logical sense of development. When readers respond to these implicit signals, they are invited to explore deeper layers of the story, gradually assembling the dynamic relationship of Connell and Marianne. Thus, the anticipation of subsequent events in *Normal People* enhances readers' interest and deepens the analysis of themes of love, change, and growth.

Looking back on past decisions in *Normal People* is a narrative technique that uncovers significant information on internal conflict and the developmental paths of characters. Through reflections on key life moments, the characters, Connell and Marianne, reveal transformations in their relationship and personal selves. From the multi-faceted narrative, the readers see the effects of decisions on current states and future character paths. Freedom to reflect on previous decisions enables insight into motives, vulnerabilities, and desires, thus creating an informed relationship with character

interactions in readers. This piece of fiction illuminates human emotional complexity and decision consequences by portraying varying existence and imagination perceptions. Generally, reflecting on past decisions in *Normal People* puts in perspective the primary role of decisions in life, relationships, and spiritual expressions. It thus captivates audiences by emotionally exploring human realities (Shakoor et al., 2023).

The story places the themes of timelessness and the passing of time ahead of all else. *Normal People* analysis sheds light on the complex dynamics present in human interactions and the process of personal growth. These fundamental themes transcend time and are relevant to readers of all ages. The narrative style used in the reading, in which both past and present events coexist, deepens our understanding of the character growth of both Connell and Marianne in the context of non-synchronous temporal settings. Changes that result from past memories and multiple viewpoints skillfully reveal the multi-faceted nature of their relationship and the effects of time on their respective evolutions. *Normal People* explores the subject of temporality, gaining deep insight into the impact that changes in time have on the story's central characters and readers in relation to their own experienced lives. Analysis of the persistent themes in this novel finds universal human realities about emotions and phenomena in life, thus making it an insightful study in human interactions and personal growth (Bennett, 2000).

Temporal progression at various points in *Normal People* is central in determining the narrative's structure and character growth. Complex reflection and diverse points of perspective are used effectively in depicting the fluid nature of time, and the evolving relationship between Connell and Marianne is foregrounded. With the progression of the narrative, readers are actively involved in the protagonists' lives, experiencing their joy and pain as time passes. Using a chronological structure to arrange the narrative encourages a deeper analysis of the complex dynamics that characterize their relationship. The narrative highlights the repeated motif of time in relating past to present events. This referencing highlights how experiences from various points in time may influence the individual's perspective and relations among individuals. This takes depth in the narrative and provides brilliant insight into character growth (McCabe & Peterson, 1991).

The time aspect is central in influencing *Normal People* character decision-making process. The narrative structure, in its characteristic demonstration of constant flashbacks and switching of past and present, accentuates the extent to which past periods shape protagonists such as Connell and Marianne's actions in the modern day. The application of the time mechanism in this novel demonstrates their experiences and emotions, influencing their decisions and interactions in the real world. Historical occurrences present the prism through which protagonists perceive their current situation, thus affecting their interactions and decisions in the real world. As the story progresses, the characters' lives remain strongly associated with time indicators, indicating their interdependent nature. Analysis of the influence of time in character decision-making indicates that past occurrences constantly inform present conditions and future occurrences, thus accumulating an intense human interactions and associations' dynamics (Shakoor et al., 2023).

Moreover, the construct of emotional temporal resonance, such as in *Normal People*, is worth academic analysis. Incorporating emotional depth across scenes that span multiple temporal dimensions is essential when effectively involving the readership in the narrative structure of *Normal People*. Flashbacks and multiple angles converge in such a manner in *Normal People* that the deep emotional landscape defining the relationship of Connell and Marianne is examined in depth, allowing for an in-depth analysis of their interactions. Incorporating changes in time deepens the character growth and makes the rising intensity of their relationship more perceptible and believable across the narrative. With the combination of ancient and modern elements, the piece of literature effectively summarizes the subtle dynamics in human emotion and life process, challenging readers to think more intensely about the protagonists' emotional state. Including time-dependent elements in this structure highlights the thematic significance of temporality in creating personal identity and relationship dynamics, allowing for a narrative that triggers a deep emotional response and lingers long after it is read (Speer & Zacks, 2005).

The link between emotional states and temporal aspects is central to the narrative of *Normal People*. Sally Rooney can show the complex nuances of human emotion and relationships in an organizational structure that does not follow linear time. Here, the element of time moves beyond its typical linear flow, effectively highlighting the fleeting nature of the characters' emotions. The relationship dynamic between Connell and Marianne proceeds in phases of fervor, closeness, and growth. Changes of these states of emotion are highly entwined with the passage of time, echoing the intricate networks defined by intertemporal bonds. By reflecting on the past and altering our perspectives, we understand the characters' emotional journeys in an unexpected yet realistic form. This representation of the fluidity of time in the story highlights the profound impact of narratives of temporal changes on the internal lives of individuals (Miyahara, 2021).

*Normal People's* emotional depth and meaning rely on readers' ability to identify with the characters' experiences over time. Through their reading of the non-linear narrative, readers receive insight into multiple aspects of the lives of Connell and Marianne at different times, allowing for an overall understanding of their characters. Changes in temporal context provide an added basis for interpreting the motivations and behaviors of these characters, but also establish an effective sense of connection among the audience and principal actors. Sally Rooney skillfully captures the complexity of human connections by effectively utilizing multiple perspectives and reflections. This process allows readers to identify with the experiences of joy, pain, and personal growth among the characters across time. By exploring the

dynamics of temporality and the facets of memory, *Normal People* provides an effective narrative that encourages audiences to examine their own timelines and emotional identifications (Miyahara, 2021).

Time symbolism in *Normal People* maximizes the readers' involvement in the progress of the protagonists' relationship. Time is used in the narrative as a metaphorical representation of the intricacies that accompany interpersonal connections, and it effectively captures the varying degrees of attachment that link Connell and Marianne. The non-chronological organization of the story appropriately captures the fragmented nature of their relationship, and reflections and alternating viewpoints complement their interactions (Bennett, 2000). The novel examines the subtleties that accompany human connections through the manipulation of temporal aspects, illustrating how periods of affection and estrangement impact the growth of the central characters. Time is significant beyond its simple chronological role, acting instead as a mirror for emotional maturity and shifting relationship dynamics. As readers follow the intersecting timelines of Connell and Marianne, they become lost in a story that captures the significant role of time in understanding and managing the dynamics of love. Time in Rooney's text captures the intricacies existing within interpersonal connections through an in-depth perspective.

In *Normal People*, Sally Rooney employs time as a critical measure in gauging growth in individuals, documenting character development such as that of Connell and Marianne in various time frames. Rooney comments, "While they were kissing, time stopped. It stopped for both, for the first time" (Rooney, 2018, p. 217). This sentence does a great job in summarizing the role that time serves in the story. It captures one critical turning point in the relationship between Marianne and Connell. The expression "time stopped" states that the external world is stalled for once, and their relationship is highlighted for its intense and critical nature. For the moment in question, the consciousness of time is diluted, and complete immersion in the present and its emotional rapport is felt. The statement denotes one critical point in their relationship, in which time itself is cognizant of the interdependence they have for one another. This time, employment indicates their relationship's force and capacity to move beyond boundaries.

The novel's unique narrative structure allows for close analysis of the dynamics whereby the perceptions and behaviors of character(s) are shaped through time. Using retrospective analysis in combination with the consideration of multiple viewpoints, this study provides valuable insight into the complex dynamics of the relationship between Connell and Marianne across varying points in their lives. Their experience highlights the extent to which time influences identities and interconnection, demonstrating how life events inform their own maturation. Rooney skillfully explores the thematic dimension of time, foregrounding its vicissitudes in personal growth while enticing the reader to introspection about the impact of past events on present individuals. Text illustrates the extent to which timing functions as a powerful register of character growth, providing deep meditation on the passing of time and its consequences (Miyahara, 2021).

Moreover, Sally Rooney explores the role of time as a looking-back mechanism that strongly influences her characters' emotions, choices, and interpersonal connections. *Normal People's* non-linear chronological structure provides insight into individuals and collective growth in the lives of Connell and Marianne, which is depicted in the form of a fragmented timeline that captures the essence of real memories and introspection. With the employment of retrospective events and multiple perspectives, Rooney skillfully captures the complex nature of human interconnections in varied timeframes, foregrounding moments characterized by intimacy, miscommunications, and personal growth. *Normal People* illustrates time as an essential thematic aspect that informs the story and reveals the mental process at work in the protagonists' minds. This makes readers navigate an emotionally multi-faceted web of life and emotions, essential in capturing the interconnections in Connell and Marianne (Angelo, 2024). Time's fluidity in *Normal People* unveils the embedded ambiguities and vulnerabilities of human interconnections, and readers may interpret their perceptions on fluctuating love and personal identity.

## V. TIME AND MEMORY IN THE NOVEL

In *Normal People*, Sally Rooney shows the considerable role that time and memory play in the lives and interactions of the characters. The narrative examines the survival, re-emerging nature, and influence of memories in the present setting. Rooney does justice to the dynamics of memories, highlighting their in-built nature and likelihood of evoking feelings. For example, Marianne reflects on her relationship with Connell, stating, "all these years they've been like two little plants sharing the same pot, growing round each other, contorting to make room, taking certain unlikely positions" (Rooney, 2018, p. 176). This observation illustrates the long-lasting influence of shared memories from the past on their interactions in the present. In addition, Rooney best uses flashbacks, leaving both the characters and readers to revisit pivotal events and appreciate their influence. By analyzing past events' influence on the present through time and memory, Rooney brings to life the essential nature of human interactions.

*Normal People* examines in depth the significant role memories play in affecting present conditions for the main characters. Sally Rooney succeeds in relating memories from past times to current occurrences and examining deep reflections and intricate traits for Connell and Marianne. Memory serves individuals in their day-to-day associations and decisions regarding unsuccessful endeavors or pleasant recollections. With the addition of memories from both the character of Connell and the character of Marianne in the narrative, audiences achieve more understanding of the essential motivators that push their actions and feelings, allowing for an additional level of intricacy in the constantly unfolding relationship. With narrative techniques, Rooney effectively demonstrates that remembering is more than

reflection itself but is intimately connected to the present-day reality for each character, impacting their own sense of self and associations with others. With narratives utilizing memory, Rooney allows for deeper audience engagement and prompts profound exploration in human nature and personal development (Miyahara, 2021).

*Normal People* explores the closely interwoven themes of nostalgia, regret, and the passing of time considerably. Connell and Marianne look back at their prior experiences and decision-making, thus illuminating their multifaceted relationship and personal growth. Both partners frequently ponder likely alternate realities that could have ensued from their collective pasts, highlighting the persistent force of their interlinked personal narratives. Through changes in time and multiple perspectives, the narrative explores the effects of these feelings on the present states of the respective characters concerned. Such sentiments create intense deliberation and speculation, highlighting the protagonists' vulnerabilities and drives. By bridging the past, present, and future dimensions within its narrative framework, Legrand (2020) effectively depicts how nostalgia and regret remold the self-conceptions of individuals and their inter-relations with others with the passage of time. This prompts them to deal with their internal conflicts and desires. Recognition of enduring traits at their own pace creates essential points for all individuals to comprehend the fluctuating conceptions of identities that revolve in their times. The interrelated connections in such a structure cover temporal elements, allowing them to move through long and complex identification relations.

Decision-making is primarily informed by memory, as it influences the decisions of individuals based on their prior experiences and emotional connections. Memory's role in decision-making draws attention to the complex dynamics of cognitive operations, emotion, and personal history. Memories have been noted to engage certain parts of the brain, thus allowing for the reintroduction of suitable information essential for the decision-making process (Ramachandran, 2024). From this perspective, analyzing *Normal People* by Sally Rooney draws attention to the role of memory in informing the decision-making process of both Connell and Marianne, informed by their everyday past life and personal memories. Decisions made by individuals not only indicate their prevailing state of life but also indicate the residual effects of the past, thus drawing attention to the magnitude of the role that is played by memory in informing decision outcomes.

## VI. TIME TRAVEL AND NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

Using time travel as a narrative tool, authors may explore complex plotlines, character growth, and key themes of exploration. The use of non-linearity in Sally Rooney's *Normal People* enhances the portrayal of the relationship dynamics of Connell and Marianne in exploring multiple periods of growth and learning. Incorporating elements of history and multiple points of view provides insight into deeper levels of complexity in their relationship and shows how personal growth impacts their relationship. Here, time travel goes beyond being used solely as part of the story mechanism; instead, it is used in depth to explore human emotion and experience. Rooney seamlessly integrates multiple timelines: past, present, and future, building an intertextually complex narrative structure that challenges traditional notions of story progression. Portraying time elements in *Normal People* enhances discussion about love, friendship, and personal growth; it prompts consideration of the fluid nature of time and its impact on human life (Yang, 2023; Legrand, 2020).

Responding to stories incorporating the time travel theory can significantly transform a protagonist's perception of the flow of events in non-linear settings. Flashbacks and multiple points of view used in Sally Rooney's *Normal People* serve to expand our understanding of character growth and human interactions. As we navigate through different periods, our understanding of Connell and Marianne's evolving relationship strengthens our emotional connection to these key characters. This fragmented narrative technique encourages readers to construct the story actively, placing them in a more active role as interpreters of literature. Exploring the temporal dimensions within this literary work pushes readers to actively interact with the complexities inherent in human relationships and how time shapes personal growth and interconnectedness. Utilizing temporal shifts within this framework serves as a means to enhance audience involvement with the story and enhance its narrative complexity (Río, 2022).

The integration of time travel in literature frequently introduces supplementary levels of complexity within the narrative structure, enabling authors to explore diverse narrative frameworks (Río, 2022; Angelo, 2024). In *Normal People*, Sally Rooney skillfully employs this method by oscillating between the future and the bygone ages, illuminating her characters' inner emotions. The novel's unorthodox chronological sequence captivates its readers and enhances their understanding of the evolution of Connell and Marianne's relationship over time. Rooney skillfully intertwines scenes from many periods and combines multiple perspectives to create a complex narrative that delves into the profound nature of human connections and personal growth. The substance of the issue about time becomes apparent as individuals grapple with historical traumas and unrealized aspirations, highlighting the malleability of identity and the transient nature of relationships. *Normal People* showcases the utilization of time travel to enhance intricate plot structures commonly found in contemporary storytelling through its unique narrative approach.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Sally Rooney's *Normal People* employs a narrative technique characterized by fragmented scenes, enhancing reader involvement and fostering a more profound understanding of the central characters, Connell and Marianne. The utilization of retrospective analysis in conjunction with multiple perspectives facilitates the presentation of a wide range

of insights into the complex dynamics of their interaction. The intricate integration of temporal components facilitates a comprehensive examination of their respective advancements and evolving relationships. Sally Rooney skillfully combines past and present events to depict these characters' emotional depth and psychological intricacies, resulting in a more immersive experience with the story. This narrative technique enhances the conveyed story and underscores the central time motif within this literary text (Miyahara, 2021; R o, 2022; Ghassani et al., 2023).

This study concludes with a concise synthesis that examines the dynamic interplay between non-linear narrative and character growth. Through analysis of flashbacks and multiple viewpoints, the interconnection between Connell and Marianne is revealed as central to understanding their respective journeys toward personal growth. Temporality is stressed in its thematic significance as a chronological referent and an authorial tool to develop nuanced emotional depth and cognitive complexity. Through the dissection of chronological organization in the narrative, this question sheds light on Sally Rooney's purposeful manipulation of chronological elements in building a narrative that strongly appeals to its readership. The findings from this analysis move beyond simple textual analysis, allowing for an added level of understanding regarding storytelling methods and their impact on audience response (Miyahara, 2021).

Investigating *Normal People's* narrative structure and temporal elements is an expansive and potentially valuable avenue for future research. Tracing the cognitive impact that the non-linearity of the narrative structure has on readers' emotional involvement and identifications with protagonists could create fruitful insight. Tracing the cognitive process that readers follow when reading both the timelines of Connell and Marianne interwoven could reveal insight into the impact of this form of narrative on the interpretation of character development. Further, investigating the purpose that time takes on as a thematic device in the unfolding of deeper narrative meaning could reveal fruitful insight toward understanding the narrative style of Sally Rooney. Broadening these areas of research would not only reveal more understanding of the novel's multiple narrative dynamics and inform discussion surrounding contemporary literary techniques (Angelo, 2024).

*Normal People's* complex non-linear narrative structure significantly enhances the audience's engagement with the characters' developing identities. Through skillful use of flashbacks and shifting viewpoints, Sally Rooney adeptly depicts the subtle interactions between Connell and Marianne, providing a comprehensive examination of their inner intricacies. In addition, exploring topics related to temporality enhances the complexity of the tale, highlighting the transient nature of human interactions and how personal identities change over time. In the future, it would be beneficial for future studies to explore further how this narrative structure influences how readers understand the development of characters and the overall thematic significance of the novel. *Normal People* is a captivating work in contemporary literature that defies traditional storytelling standards.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author extends the appreciation to the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies and Scientific Research at Majmaah University for funding this research work through the project number (R-2024-1066).

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