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Personal Time in Alternative and Time-Travel Narratives: The Cases of *Groundhog Day*, *Twelve Monkeys* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*

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Abstract: *In alternative and time travel narratives, our everyday conception of time is often challenged. Similarly, in counterfactual history, various parallel realities exist. In time travel narrative, it is possible to travel in the past or in the future. In all of these cases, there are clues that help viewers to comprehend new ideas of time and, in some cases, the construction of the story time is not sufficient to comprehend the story. In order to solve some of the main logical paradoxes, personal time needs to be considered and discussed. In alternative narrative, the clues are often to be found in the plot and story time, as well as in the mise-en-scène. In some examples of counterfactual history, for example Groundhog Day, and in some time travel narratives, the spectator has to reconstruct the time traveller's personal time through story and plot time and mise-en-scène, as in Twelve Monkeys, or they have to deduce story time from personal time and mise-en-scène, as is the case in 2001: A Space Odyssey. The relationships between plot, story and personal time can be visualized through graphics which can also help us to draw conclusions about A-series and B-series.*

There are films in which time becomes the film's very theme and subject matter, and which challenge our everyday conception of time. This happens mostly in narratives that present alternative or counterfactual history and in time-travel films. Counterfactual history occurs when a story is dominated by different versions of the same protagonist and these alter egos occupy another, parallel reality which, however, occurs in the same time-space. If the alter egos occupy a different time, but the same space, we have a time-travel narrative.

As regards the story time, David Bordwell introduces a distinction between *fabula*/story and *syuzhet*/plot:

> Presented with two narrative events, we look for causal or spatial or temporal links. The imaginary construct we create, progressively and retroactively, was termed by Formalists the *fabula* (sometimes translated as "story"). More specifically, the *fabula* embodies the action as a chronological, cause-and-effect chain of events occurring within a given duration and a spatial field. . . The *syuzhet* (usually translated as "plot") is the actual arrangement and presentation of the *fabula* in the film. (*Narration in the Fiction Film* 49-50 emphasis in original)

Three principles link the *fabula* and the *syuzhet*: time; space; and narrative logic, which mostly refers to causality. The arrangement of the events in the plot, in terms of order, duration and frequency, can aid or prevent the construction of the narrative logic and the story time (51). The plot time is the time that a film takes to present a story, and the story time is the time of what is represented by a film. Sometimes, the story time is insufficient to understand the story and to solve its logical paradoxes. For example, in counterfactual history it is usually possible to reconstruct the story time from the plot, but there are films, such as

Groundhog Day (Harold Ramis, 1993), in which another time variable, personal time, needs to be introduced and analysed, as this article will do, within a narratological framework and methodology.

Alternative or Counterfactual History

In alternative narratives, the world described is different from the actual one because an event changes the course of history (Ryan 2006; Gomel 2009). The different plot lines can be intercut or shown consecutively. In a Cartesian coordinate system, let us represent the plot time, which is the independent variant, on the y-axis, and the story time, which is the dependent variant, on the x-axis. We will imagine that there are two plot lines, representing two parallel realities, which are both shot in continuous long take. If the two versions of the story are shown consecutively they can be visualised as in Figure 1; if they are intercut they can be represented as in Figure 2.

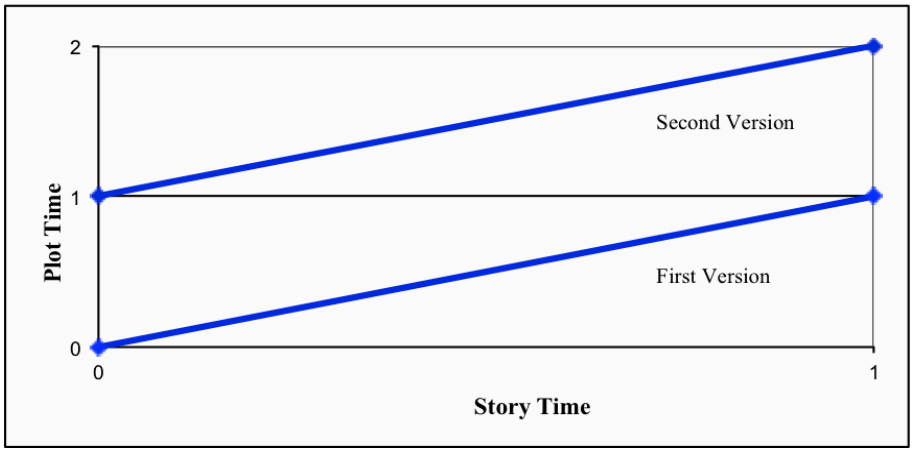

Figure 1: Story time is shown on the x-axis and plot time on the y-axis. In this example, the two versions of the story are shot in continuous long take and are shown consecutively.

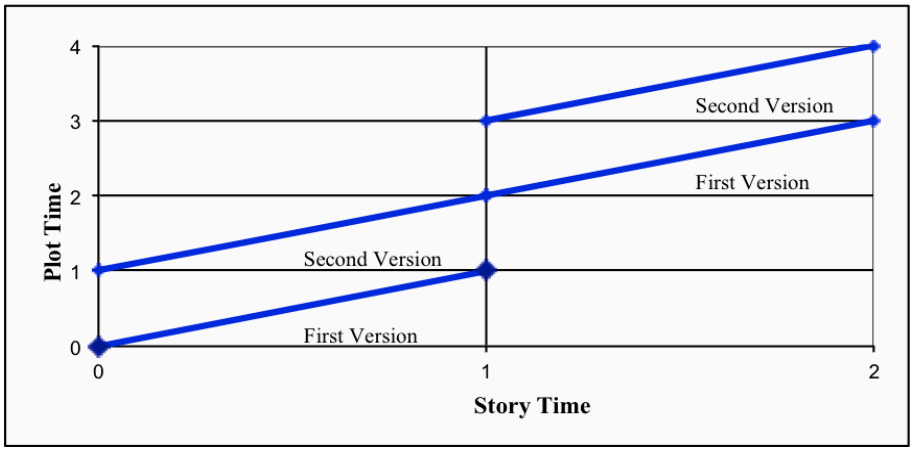

Figure 2: As in Figure 1, the story time is on the x-axis and the plot time is on the y-axis. In this example, the two versions of the story, which are intercut, are shot in continuous long take and show two contiguous moments of the story.

In his examination of forking-path narratives, Bordwell discusses four films: *Blind Chance* (Krzysztof Kieslowski, 1981), *Too Many Ways to Be No. 1* (Ka-Fai Wai, 1997), *Run Lola Run* (Tom Tykwer, 1998) and *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt 1998). Bordwell claims that these films do not evoke the infinite possibilities suggested by Jorge Luis Borges in "The Garden of Forking Paths" (1941), and in physics and philosophy by the parallel universes theory ("Film Futures" 90). According to Edward Branigan, forking-path narratives are a subset of multiple draft narratives, films in which "the relationship among parallels and alternatives is ambiguous or indeterminate, as if the parallels were seen in parallax" (107). Similarly, Kay Young claims that, although the different paths are usually shown through serial logic or splicing (which is to say the viewer is shown first one version and then another, or else the various versions are intercut), films, such as *Time Code* (Mike Figgis, 2000), can adopt a parallel time using split screens and blending sounds (117).

In the four films analysed by Bordwell, the different parallel realities do not influence each other because, in each of them, the characters are unaware of the other parallel realities and their alter egos. Moreover, the parallel realities are in the same time-space and, consequently, the story time is the same for every character; which is to say, all the characters in a parallel reality experience the same story time of their alter egos. For example, in *Sliding Doors* the spectators are shown how the protagonist Helen's (Gwyneth Paltrow) life changes depending on whether she catches a train or not. The two different paths of Helen's existence, and those of all the other characters, are intercut and do not influence each other. Therefore, the story time is the same for the characters of both parallel realities and can be represented through a graph such as the one in Figure 2.

In counterfactual history, however, as in time-travel narratives, each character can experience his or her own time. For example, in *Groundhog Day*, while the protagonist Phil (Bill Murray) knows that he is endlessly re-living the same day, the other characters do not. Each "Groundhog Day" can be read as a different parallel reality, of which only the protagonist is aware. Thus, the different Groundhog Days influence each other only from Phil's perspective and, consequently, the story time is the same for all the characters except the protagonist. Indeed, if plot and story time can be represented in a graph such as that in Figure 1, Phil's "time" cannot, because his Groundhog Days are not simply a repetition of the previous ones. He lives each new day with the memory of the previous ones and, therefore, his past influences his present. Moreover, his present becomes past, which is to say when a day ends it is no longer today, but it becomes yesterday.

The case of *The Butterfly Effect* (Eric Bress and J. Mackye Gruber, 2004) is even more complex. The protagonist Evan (Ashton Kutcher) does not always travel back to the same moment of his past and, during each trip, he changes his destiny and that of all the other characters, as often happens in time-travel narratives. While the protagonist of *Groundhog Day* can modify only the present, the protagonist of *The Butterfly Effect* can change every event of his past, thus also modifying everything that happened after that particular episode. Both Phil and Evan are the only characters in their worlds who know that there are different parallel realities. Although these films do not adopt split screens and blending sounds, they seem to suggest the infinite parallel universe theory. In order to analyse such films, I argue that personal time needs to be studied together with plot and story time.

Time-travel Narrative

Unlike counterfactual history, which is usually based on the contingency of history, time-travel narratives presuppose that the future is as unchangeable as the past (Ryan; Dannenberg; Gomel). For this reason, a time-travel narrative often generates logical paradoxes or chronoclasms (interferences with the course of history caused by time travel), such as the "grandfather paradox", which occurs when a character travels back in time and kills his or her biological grandfather before he has met the character's grandmother, hence making the character's existence impossible. These paradoxes are Möbius strips of causality, causal loops that are defined by Stanislaw Lem as a "circular causal structure" (Gomel 335). Indeed, if a character travels to the future, it means the future exists and is immutable; but, if the future is changed by the character, then it cannot be immutable. "Determinism requires causality, but causality excludes determinism" (Gomel 340).

According to Umberto Eco, the worlds in time-travel narratives are dominated by closed causal chains and, thus, are not "constructed" but "taken for granted"—in other words, they are said to exist and to be called by a certain name, but the way they work is not explained (233-234). Robin Le Poidevin comes to similar conclusions in his discussion of idealist metaphysician J.M.E. McTaggart's A-series and B-series, representing two different ways in which events in time can be arranged. According to the A-theory, events are ordered in the past, present or future and, thus, their position in time changes continuously because, for example, the events that are in the recent past progressively recede into the distant past. According to the B-series theory, instead, events are seen in a relational way, and are earlier than, simultaneous with, or later than other events; consequently, their position in time remains unchanged (42-43). Discussing fictions, the French philosopher introduces a distinction between fictional facts and fictional truths, which is to say between the content of the fiction and the representation of that content. The fictional facts, which define the fiction itself, should be conceived in B-series terms, if the readers do not adopt a point of view within the narrative. In this case, the future has to be as fixed as the past, because the events are all interlocked according to their order of occurrence (158-159). But, if the fictional author, who "is a character within the fiction itself, who narrates the fiction as truth, and who is not necessarily to be identified with the explicit narrator of the fiction" (152), believes that the future is unfixed, then the future is both fixed and unfixed, and the narrative is "inconsistent". Yet, Le Poidevin himself claims: "some fictions just *are* inconsistent (such as those in which a time traveller changes the past), but they are still intelligible at some level" (158-159 emphasis in original). How is it possible? How can the spectator understand time-travel narratives?

To answer this question, I argue that it is useful to adopt, as Gregory Currie does, David Lewis's distinction between external and personal time. While the latter is the time that is experienced by a time traveller, the former is the time experienced by everybody else. That is, if a time traveller's journey takes an hour of her personal time, when she arrives her wristwatch indicates that one hour has passed (Lewis 146). Currie claims that, while "objective or viewing" and "personal or fictional" time usually coincide because they move in the same direction at the same speed, in time-travel narratives they do not. Indeed, normally, the temporal direction coincides with the causal one. But in time-travel narratives the former is often the opposite of the latter, which is to say that the predominant direction of causation is that of external time and, when an object or a character travel back in external time, their causal direction is reversed. If x and y are two events in a time-travel fiction, y can be recounted before x, even if y happened after x in external time, because y happened before

x in personal time (Currie 209-211). This is why I claim that, in time-travel narratives, together with plot and story/external time, personal time must also be taken into account. Indeed, external and story time do coincide, because the story time is the time of what is represented by a film and the external time is the time experienced by everybody who is not a time traveller. The passage of time for us is as the passage of time in a fictional world for all the characters except for time travellers. But how is personal time represented in films and how can the spectator reconstruct it?

For example, in *Twelve Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995), the sequence shot at the airport, when the time traveller James Cole (Bruce Willis) meets his younger self (Joseph Melito), is shown five times. The first four times present the scene as a dream or memory of the protagonist, and the last time it is staged as an event that takes place in the present of the characters involved in it. Consequently, in the story, this scene happens once, at the very end of the film. During this sequence, the protagonist, who travels into his past, meets himself and, thus, in his personal time, the scene happens twice. According to Lewis:

> An event in a time traveller's life may have more than one location in his personal time. If he doubles back toward the past, but not too far, he may be able to talk to himself. The conversation involves two of his stages, separated in his personal time but simultaneous in external time. (147)

Leif Frenzel claims that, in science fiction novels, external and personal time can both be represented using "story knots" and "perspective fusion". The former is an event that happens once in story time, but that is recounted more than once in the plot. Usually, each time that a story knot is recounted, it is presented from a different character's point of view and, often, when there is a time traveller who meets her younger or older self, it is presented from her different alter egos' perspectives (4-5). Frenzel explains:

> I know of no genre of fiction where it seems more suitable; on the one hand, it highlights the subjective character of what is narrated (it is *perspectives* that are fused, that is, points of view of a character in the story), while on the other hand there are necessarily two *different* experiences to be recounted (since we have *two* instances of the character, who differ in the least some of their experiences)—but experiences still of one and the same situation (the story knot). (11 emphasis in original)

The graph in Figure 3 visualises the story knot in *Twelve Monkeys*. If the story time is on the x-axis and the plot time on the y-axis, two segments that have the same abscissas and different ordinates represent a repetition of a part of the story, as in alternative history (Figures 1 and 2).

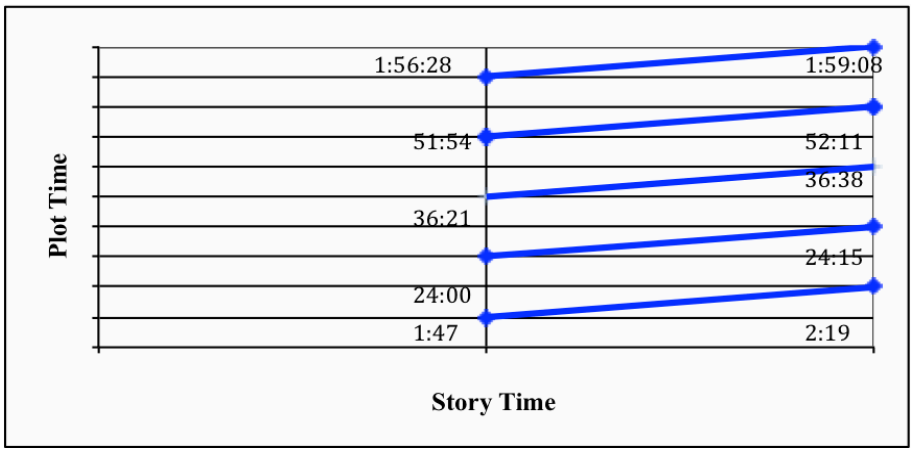

Figure 3: The scene at the airport in *Twelve Monkeys* is shown to the audience five times. In the graph, the story time can be seen on the x-axis and the plot time on the y-axis. To simplify, I imagine that the five sequences are shown at regular intervals, and that sequences and intervals have the same duration. Nonetheless, in text boxes I have shown the right plot time. For example, the first sequence begins one minute and forty-seven seconds after the beginning of the film, and ends two minutes and nineteen seconds after the beginning of the film.

In novels, according to Frenzel, perspective fusion helps the reader to understand personal time. In films, personal time seems to be conveyed in other ways. For example, in *Twelve Monkeys* the first time that the spectator is shown the scene discussed above, there are three shots of a boy (Joseph Melito), and the last one of them ends with a close-up of his eyes. A cut is then followed by a close-up of James as if to explain that the sequence is the protagonist's dream/memory, but also to associate the boy and James's faces. A shot of the boy also appears when the scene is shown for the second and the fourth time, and two shots of the boy appear when the sequence is shown for the third time. The very last sequence of the film, however, constitutes the clearest suggestion that the boy is a young James. Indeed, when the psychiatrist Kathryn Railly (Madeleine Stowe) and the protagonist enter the airport, James claims that he had already been there as a child. Moreover, when the boy passes under a metal detector, his mother calls him James. The hypothesis that the boy is James is confirmed in the last shots of the film. After James's death, a medium close-up of Kathryn, who seems to look for somebody, is followed by a close-up of the boy, accompanied by a zooming-in on his eyes. Another close-up of the psychiatrist is followed by a detail of the boy's eyes and by a close-up of Kathryn smiling. It is now evident that the psychiatrist is looking for the young James, recognises him in the boy, and is satisfied by the evidence that James, in some way, is still alive. The film closes with a high-angle long shot of the boy and his parents in the airport car park, with the camera craning to follow them. The camera's perspective is almost suggestive of a higher presence, and perhaps of destiny. Therefore, we understand that the boy is James thanks to a combination of dialogue, acting, montage and camera movements.

Thus, unlike in the novels discussed by Frenzel, in *Twelve Monkeys*, as in many other science fiction films in which a time traveller meets her younger or older self, a story knot is not presented from her alter ego's point of view. Together with plot and story time, other cinematic techniques, such as *mise-en-scène*, editing and cinematography help the spectators to comprehend personal time. Indeed, the sequence discussed above is not shown from a particular character's point of view and, even when it is the protagonist's memory, it is not shot from his perspective only. If it were shown from James's point of view, in fact, how would it be possible that he did not recognise himself as a boy?

Personal time seems to depend upon plot time, story time and other cinematic techniques. As a case study, let us summarise all of James Cole's time travels. The film begins with the following titles: "5 billion people will die from a deadly virus in 1997"; "The survivors will abandon the surface of the planet"; "Once again the animals will run the world"; "Excerpt from interview with clinically diagnosed schizophrenic. April 12, 1990, Baltimore County Hospital". From these titles, the audience deduces that the protagonist's present is in the years following 1997 and that, when he finds himself in an asylum, it is 1990. Indeed, excluding James's memory of the airport sequence, the film begins sometime after 1997; the protagonist travels to the past until 1990, as indicated by the title "Baltimore—April 1990"; he then goes back to his present; he is wrongly sent to 1917, during a battle of War World I, as the viewer can deduce from the setting and learn both during the psychiatrist's conference and when the bullet found in James's leg is analysed. James thus travels to 1996, as indicated by the title "Baltimore—November 1996"; he goes back to his present; and, finally, he travels back to 1996, where he dies. Thus, following the order of James's travels in plot time, we obtain the following chain of dates: after 1997; during 1990; after 1997; in 1917; during 1996; after 1997; in 1996 (Figure 4). These dates, which are deduced from plot time and story time and, especially, from the *mise-en-scène*, indicate James's personal time (Figure 5).

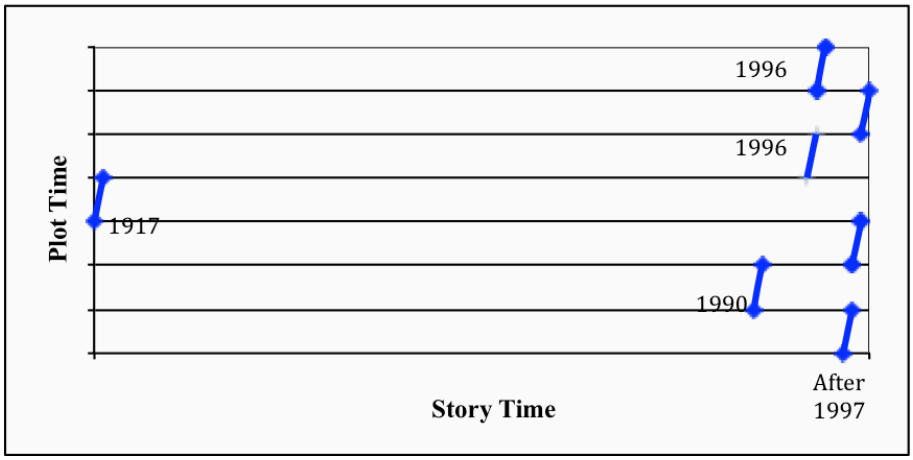

Figure 4: The x-axis shows the story time, and the y-axis shows an approximation of the plot time in *Twelve Monkeys*. To simplify, I have imagined that all the episodes set in a different period are shot in continuous long take and have the same duration. Because the film is set, at least at the beginning, in the years after 1997, all the episodes that take place before 1997 should be flashbacks according to story time. Moreover, all the episodes should be divided by ellipses according to story time.

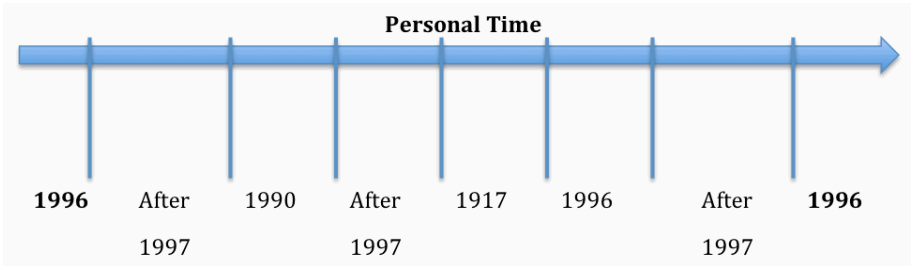

Figure 5: James Cole's personal time in *Twelve Monkeys*. Each vertical segment represents an instance of time travel. If we compare the story time in Figure 4 with the personal time in this graph, we can see that the flashbacks and the ellipses in story time disappear in personal time and that, in personal time, the future often precedes the past, thereby influencing it. Moreover, the events that take place in the airport

happen once in story time, at the end of it, while they happen twice in personal time, both when the protagonist is a boy and when he is an adult, just before his death. In this case, the past influences the future and vice versa.

The flashbacks and flashforwards of story time become, in personal time, time travels into the past and the future respectively; the ellipses are no longer perceived as gaps, because the time that the protagonist takes to travel in the past or in the future is null. Moreover, according to James's personal time, the years after 1997 influence 1990; 1990 influences the years after 1997; the years after 1997 influence 1917; 1917 influences 1996; 1996 influences the years after 1997; the years after 1997 influence 1996. Thus, the past can change the future, but also vice versa. The causal chain is closed, to use again Eco's words; but if personal time is distinguished from external time, as proposed by Lewis and Currie, there are no chronoclasms here. Indeed, the protagonist dies in 1996 at the airport, but he is still alive in the years after 1997 because, according to his personal time, those years come before 1996. There is a logical paradox of course here: if James dies in 1996, he cannot be alive subsequent to 1997.

I have suggested that, in time-travel films, the clues to comprehend personal time are given by story time, plot time and other cinematic techniques, especially the *mise-en-scène*. For example, in *The Time-Machine* (Simon Wells, 2002) the clock of the time machine, together with the setting, indicate where the time traveller arrives. Thus, space has often a leading role in the comprehension of story and personal time.

Mikhail Bakhtin adopts the term "chronotope" to name those indissoluble relationships between space and time that are artistically expressed. The concept of chronotope underlines the leading role of time as the fourth dimension of space (15). Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, discussing the metaphor of time as space, claim that the concept of time is a blend of three conceptual domains, Events (E), Motion (X) and Universal Events (M): "E is the input of Events. Human beings are expert at parsing the world into events (selling shoes, solving math problems, dining) and objects" (9). As regards the domain of Motion: "An important kind of event for human beings is motion through physical space from point A to point B, with corresponding objective and subjective experiences" (9). E and X are often blended and one of the consequences is the structure commonly called the "Event Structure Metaphor": "According to this notion, we can 'go through the lecture' just as we can 'go through the park' because in the blend, the event is motion from one point to another" (10).

Within this conceptual framework, when we travel from point A to point B our mind creates an Event Structure Metaphor, an abstract path that becomes almost real. Similarly, in science fiction narrative, the abstract path, created by our mind from the E/X/M blend, becomes almost real. "The rationality of time travel depends on the selected conceptual model of location: the location of a person is the body. The person travels between their different bodies" (Aparta 2006). This is the case in which a time traveller who goes to her past or future enters into her younger or older body respectively. Her physical aspect helps the viewers to understand whether she travelled into her past or future. The last sequence of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) is emblematic because the time traveller's personal time can only be reconstructed through his physical changes. Story time is deduced from personal time and the *mise-en-scène* is not as helpful here as in the films discussed above. After having travelled through the Star Gate, the astronaut David Bowman (Keir Dullea) finds himself in a room where he progressively becomes older. If we call the

astronaut at the age during which he begins his travel Bowman0, then Bowman1 is older than Bowman0; Bowman2 is older than Bowman1; and Bowman3 is older than Bowman2. In the first and second scenes of the sequence. the spectator sees Bowman0 and Bowman1, respectively. In the third scene, Bowman1 and Bowman2 appear together on screen. In the fourth scene, Bowman2 is shown alone. In the fifth scene, Bowman2 and Bowman3 appear together. In the sixth scene, Bowman3 is shown alone (Figure 6). Finally, in the last scene, the Star Child appears on screen.

Here, story time and personal time cannot be deduced from the setting. Indeed, the sequence is entirely shot in a room that presents some changes, such as the apparition of a table prepared for dinner. These changes obviously indicate that some time has passed, but they are not linked to any particular time, which is to say they do not refer to story time. After each transformation, Bowman is shown in different parts of the room, in different attitudes and wearing different clothes, but the audience understands that it is always the same astronaut because they recognise his face. Indeed, apart from the last scene, during which Bowman is reborn into another, supernatural being, during this sequence he progressively gets older. Our only point of reference in the protagonist's accelerated advance into the future is his face. In this manner, we can reconstruct Bowman's personal time and, through it, we can deduce the story time. Hiding external time seems a way to suggest to the viewers that the causal chain is completely subverted. Indeed, in two scenes a younger and an older Bowman appear on screen together. As a result of these shots, the sequence becomes even more enigmatic because it seems to underline the very questions that usually arise in time-travel narratives: how can the past and the future be co-present? Does the past influence the future or vice versa?

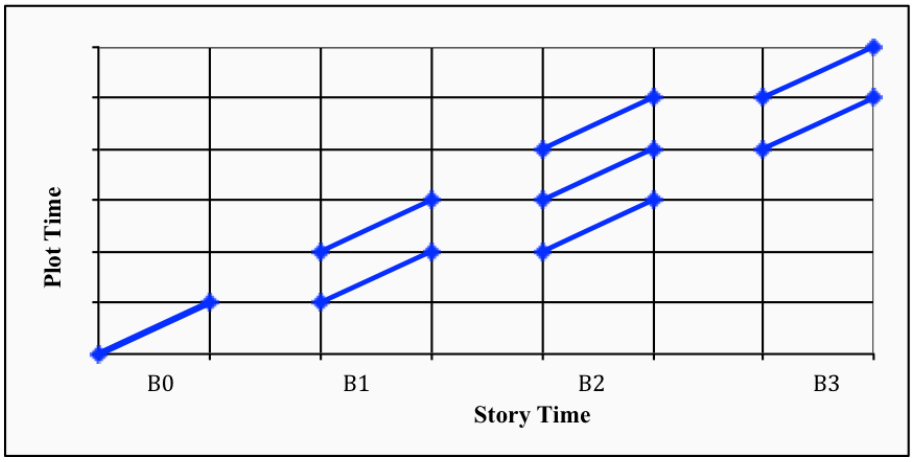

Figure 6: Again, story time is on the x-axis, and plot time of the last sequence of *2001*, when Bowman ages quickly, is seen on the y-axis. To simplify, I have assumed that each scene has the same duration both according to story and plot time, and that the ellipses between two contiguous scenes have the same duration.

Thus, irrespective of whether a time traveller assumes his younger or older body (*2001: A Space Odyssey*) or his physical appearance does not change (*Twelve Monkeys*), there usually is a clue that helps the audience to understand the time traveller's personal time. Past, present and future are not absolute, because they are relative to the point of reference. As claimed by Le Poidevin, "fictional time, like real time, is simply a B-series. Fictional events are not in themselves past, present, future. We generate an A-series by choosing to

adopt the view from a particular location within that fiction" (175). In time-travel films we adopt a view, a point of reference to comprehend personal time and, thus, we create an A-series. But A-series change, because the point of reference changes and, consequently, the spectator's ideas about what is past, present and future are modified. In the *2001: A Space Odyssey* sequence discussed above, the present of a scene becomes past when compared with the present of the subsequent scene, because the astronaut gets progressively older. In *Twelve Monkeys*, the past in which James Cole finds himself becomes present when he meets and recognises his younger self before dying. At the airport, when the protagonist is in the restroom and hears a voice, he claims that the time in which he finds himself is the present, that it is neither the past nor the future. For the viewer, it is also the present, while the future is represented by a world dominated by wild animals, the world from which James comes. In the graphs above (Figures 4 and 6), the present can be represented by a line parallel to the y-axis that translates along the x-axis following the changes of the point of reference. For example, in *Twelve Monkeys*, while at the beginning of the film the present can be represented by x=1997, at the end it can be represented by x=1996. Thus, everything that comes before 1996 represents the past, while everything that happens after 1996 symbolises the future. Therefore, if a time-travel film is represented in a Cartesian coordinate system in which the plot time is on the y-axis and the story time on the x-axis, the possible A-series are symbolised by a sheaf of lines parallel to the y-axis.

Usually, in a time-travel film, the story time, the plot time and the *mise-en-scène* are a necessary condition to reconstruct a time traveller's personal time because they furnish points of reference, as do the titles and the setting in *Twelve Monkeys*. Sometimes, as in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the time traveller's personal time cannot be deduced from the story time, but only from the time traveller's physical appearance, which becomes the clue to understanding personal and story time. Fauconnier and Turner argue that: "X has motion along a path. But motion is relative. . . For any scene we inhabit, we can take ourselves as a point of reference, or something else as a point of reference" (16-17). Although spectators of time-travel films are given clues to reconstruct personal and story time and, thus, to follow the development of the story, they are challenged by the fact that these points of reference often change, thus changing the A-series and translating the line of present.

Conclusion

In general, our concept of time and, in particular, our idea of story time, is challenged both in counterfactual history and time-travel narratives. Alternative history, playing with frequency and repetitions of story time, challenges our idea that time is unique, that a cause or set of causes is followed by determined effects, and that we cannot know how our present would have been, should we have acted differently in the past. Only a comparison of the different versions of the same characters demonstrates that they are living in parallel realities that unfold in the same time. The viewer understands that she is viewing different versions of the same characters because, usually, the event that changes the course of the protagonist's life is repeated, each time provoking different effects, as happens in *Blind Chance*, *Too Many Ways to Be No. 1*, *Run Lola Run* and *Sliding Doors*. Furthermore, when the different plot lines are intercut, the viewer distinguishes between the different versions of a character because his or her physical aspect changes in each plot line (for instance, in *Sliding Doors* the protagonist is blond in one plot line and brunette in the other).

Moreover, in some cases, counterfactual history, like time-travel narratives, challenges completely our concept of time, playing not only with story and plot time, but also introducing a new variable, personal time. Indeed, there are cases in which a character is aware of the existence of his or her alter egos and of other parallel realities, as in *Groundhog Day* and *Butterfly Effect.* In these films, the story time is insufficient to comprehend the story. The personal time of the character who knows that there are other parallel realities is different from the story time of the other characters. Therefore, for the protagonist, each parallel reality does not develop in the same story time: it is as if the parallel realities were not parallel, but almost 'consecutive' or 'superimposed', because they influence each other.

In time-travel narratives, the spectators must reconstruct personal time through story time, plot time and *mise-en-scène*, as in *Twelve Monkeys*, or must deduce story time from personal time and *mise-en-scène*, as in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The flashbacks and flashforwards of story time become, in a time traveller's personal time, trips into the past and the future. Furthermore, the spectator generates A-series by adopting a point of reference, such as the time traveller's body or an element of the setting; however, the A-series change, because the point of reference also changes continuously.

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