Computational Modeling of Narrative Texts, Films and Games

Course 3 - Time and space

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Outline

- Genette’s typology of narrative space and time
- Burch’s taxonomy of filmic space and time
- Dramatic irony

- Examples in film and game
  - Paris, I love you
  - Back to the future
- New disorders : Pulp fiction, Inception, Memento, Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind

Genette : narrator and focalizer

- "We will therefore distinguish here two types of narrative: one with the narrator absent from the story he tells [...], the other with the narrator present as a character in the story he tells [...]. I call the first type, for obvious reasons, heterodiegetic, and the second type homodiegetic".
  In addition, if the homodiegetic narrator is the hero of the story, he/she is called autodiegetic.
- Genette distinguishes three kinds of focalization:

1. Zero focalization: The narrator knows more than the characters. He may know the facts about all of the protagonists, as well as their thoughts and gestures. This is the traditional "omniscient narrator".
2. Internal focalization: The narrator knows as much as the focal character. This character filters the information provided to the reader. He cannot report the thoughts of other characters.
3. External focalization: The narrator knows less than the characters. He acts a bit like a camera lens, following the protagonists' actions and gestures from the outside; he is unable to guess their thoughts.

Genette's typology

ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES	ELEMENTS ANALYZED	COMPONENTS				
NARRATIVE MOOD	DISTANCE	Narrativized speech	Transposed speech, indirect style	Transposed speech, free indirect style	Reported speech	
	FUNCTIONS OF THE NARRATOR	Narrative function	Directing function	Communication function	Testimonial function	Ideological function
NARRATIVE INSTANCE	NARRATIVE VOICE	Homodiegetic narrator	Heterodiegetic narrator	Autodiegetic narrator		
	TIME OF NARRATION	Subsequent narration	Prior narration	Simultaneous narration	Interpolated narration	
	NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE	Zero focalization	Internal focalization	External focalization		
NARRATIVE LEVELS	EMBEDDED NARRATIVES	Extra-diegetic	Intra-diegetic	Meta-diegetic	Meta-meta-diegetic, etc.	
	METALEPSIS	Breaching of narrative levels				
NARRATIVE TIME	ORDER	Analepsis	Prolepsis	Reach	Exterl	
	NARRATIVE SPEED	Pause	Scene	Summary	Ellipsis	
	FREQUENCY OF EVENTS	Singulative	Repeating	Iterative		

- GENETTE : THE NARRATIVE INSTANCE

- The narrative instance is said to be the conjunction between
- (1) narrative voice (who is speaking?)
- (2) time of the narration (when does the telling occur, relative to the story?)
- (3) narrative perspective (through whom are we perceiving?).
- As with narrative mood, by examining the narrative instance we can gain a better understanding of the relations between the narrator and the story in a given narrative.

Lucie Guillemette and Cynthia Lévesque (2006), « Narratology », in Louis Hébert (dir.), *Signo.*

- THE NARRATIVE VOICE

- If the narrator lets signs of his presence appear in the narrative he is recounting, he may acquire a particular status, depending on the way the story is rendered. "We will therefore distinguish here two types of narrative: one with the narrator absent from the story he tells [...], the other with the narrator present as a character in the story he tells [...]. I call the first type, for obvious reasons, heterodiegetic, and the second type homodiegetic" (1980, pp. 244-245).
- In addition, if the homodiegetic narrator is the hero of the story, he/she is called autodiegetic.

- THE TIME OF THE NARRATION

- The narrator is always in a specific temporal position relative to the story he/she is telling. Genette describes four kinds of narration:
- 1. Subsequent narration: This is the most common temporal position. The narrator tells what happened in some past time.
- 2. Prior narration: The narrator tells what is going to happen at some future time. This kind of narration often takes the form of a dream or prophecy.
- 3. Simultaneous narration: The narrator tells his/her story at the very moment it occurs.
- 4. Interpolated narration: This complex type of narration combines prior and simultaneous narration. For example, a narrator tells what he experienced during the day (after the fact), and also includes his current impressions about these events.

• NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE

- A distinction should be made between narrative voice and narrative perspective; the latter is the point of view adopted by the narrator, which Genette calls focalization. "So by focalization I certainly mean a restriction of 'field' – actually, that is, a selection of narrative information with respect to what was traditionally called omniscience" (1988, p. 74). These are matters of perception: the one who perceives is not necessarily the one who tells, and vice versa.
- Genette distinguishes three kinds of focalization:
  - 1. Zero focalization: The narrator knows more than the characters. He may know the facts about all of the protagonists, as well as their thoughts and gestures. This is the traditional "omniscient narrator".
  - 2. Internal focalization: The narrator knows as much as the focal character. This character filters the information provided to the reader. He cannot report the thoughts of other characters.
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Frequency

- An event can occur once and be narrated once (singular).
  - 'Today I went to the shop.'
- An event can occur n times and be narrated once (iterative).
  - 'I used to go to the shop.'
- An event can occur once and be narrated n times (repetitive).
  - 'Today I went to the shop' + 'Today he went to the shop' etc.
- An event can occur n times and be narrated n times (multiple).
  - 'I used to go to the shop' + 'He used to go to the shop' + 'I went to the shop yesterday' etc.

Order

- Say a story is narrated as follows: the clues of a murder are discovered by a detective (event A); the circumstances of the murder are finally revealed (event B); and lastly the murderer is caught (event C).
- Add corresponding numbers to the lettered events that represent their order chronologically: 1, 2, and 3.
- If these events were described chronologically, they would run B1, A2, C3. Arranged in the text, however, they run A2 (discovery), B1 (flashback), C3 (resolution).
- This accounts for the 'obvious' effects the reader will recognise, such as flashback. It also deals with the structure of narratives on a more systematic basis, accounting for flash-forward, simultaneity, as well as possible, if rarely used effects. These disarrangements on the level of order are termed 'anachrony'.

Duration

- The separation between an event and its narration means that there is discourse time and narrative time. These are the two main elements of duration.
- "Five years passed", has a lengthy narrative time, five years, but a short discourse time (it only took a second to read).
- James Joyce's novel Ulysses has a relatively short narrative time, twenty-four hours. Not many people, however, could read Ulysses in twenty-four hours. Thus it is safe to say it has a lengthy discourse time.

Analepsis and prolepsis

- What is commonly referred to in film as "flashback" and "flashforward." In other words, these are ways in which a narrative's discourse re-order's a given story: by "flashing back" to an earlier point in the story (analepsis) or "flashing forward" to a moment later in the chronological sequence of events (prolepsis).
- The classic example of prolepsis is prophecy, as when Oedipus is told that he will sleep with his mother and kill his father. As we learn later in Sophocles' play, he does both despite his efforts to evade his fate.

Example : Jacques the fatalist

- THE MASTER. — So you were in love, then?
- JACQUES. — Was I not!
- THE MASTER. — And because of a bullet shot?
- JACQUES. — Because of a bullet shot.
- THE MASTER. — You have never told me a word about it.
- JACQUES. — I dare say I have not.
- THE MASTER. — And why not?
- JACQUES. — Because it couldn't have been told any sooner or any later.
- THE MASTER. — And the time to tell of your loves has now come?
- JACQUES. — Who knows?
- THE MASTER. — Well, in any case, start on them.

- Jacques started the story of his love affairs. It was after dinner, the weather was sticky, and the master went to sleep. Night overtook them in the middle of the fields, and there they are, lost. There is the master in a terrible rage, falling on his lackey with a whip, and that poor devil saying with each blow: "That one, too, must have been written up yonder."

- You see, reader, that I am well on my way, and that it is completely up to me whether I shall make you wait one year, two years, or three years for the story of Jacques's loves, by separating him from his master and having each of them go through all the vicissitudes that I please. What's to prevent my marrying off the master and making him a cuckold? Shipping Jacques off to the islands? Guiding his master to the same place? Bringing them back to France on the same ship? How easy it is to fabricate stories!

Exercises

Answer the following questions:

1. What section of this excerpt contains reported speech in free indirect style?
2. Besides the narrative function, name two functions performed by the narrator. Is he distant from or involved in his narrative?
3. Why can we say that this narration is interpolated?
4. On what narrative level do we find the narrative of Jacques' love stories?
5. Is there an analepsis in this excerpt?
6. The first part of the excerpt (the dialogue between Jacques and his master) corresponds to what kind of narrative movement?

Jacques le fataliste

- Le maître : Tu as donc été amoureux ?
- Jacques : Si je l’ai été !
- Le maître : Et cela par un coup de feu ?
- Jacques : Par un coup de feu.

Jacques le fataliste (2)

- Le maître : Tu ne m’en as jamais dit un mot.
- Jacques : Je le crois bien.
- Le maître : Et pourquoi cela ?
- Jacques : C’est que cela ne pouvait être dit ni plus tôt ni plus tard.
- Le maître : Et le moment d’apprendre ces amours est-il venu ?
- Jacques : Qui le sait ?
- Le maître : À tout hasard, commence toujours...

Jacques le fataliste (3)

- Jacques commença l'histoire de ses amours.
- C'était l'après-dîner : il faisait un temps lourd ; son maître s'endormit.
- La nuit les surprit au milieu des champs ; les voilà fourvoyés.
- Voilà le maître dans une colère terrible et tombant à grands coups de fouet sur son valet, et le pauvre diable disant à chaque coup : « Celui-là était apparemment encore écrit là-haut... »

Jacques le fataliste (4)

- Vous voyez, lecteur, que je suis en beau chemin, et qu'il ne tiendrait qu'à moi de vous faire attendre un an, deux ans, trois ans, le récit des amours de Jacques, en le séparant de son maître et en leur faisant courir à chacun tous les hasards qu'il me plairait.
- Qu'est-ce qui m'empêcherait de marier le maître et de le faire cocu ? d'embarquer Jacques pour les îles ? d'y conduire son maître ? de les ramener tous les deux en France sur le même vaisseau ?
- Qu'il est facile de faire des contes ! Mais ils en seront quittes l'un et l'autre pour une mauvaise nuit, et vous pour ce délai.

Todorov on the narrator

- Narrator > Character
- Narrator = Character
- Narrator < Character
- Dramatic irony : the audience knows something the characters do not. As a result, the words of the characters take on a different meaning. This can create suspense or humor.

Dramatic irony examples

- In Romeo and Juliet, Romeo thinks Juliet is dead and the audience knows she is not.
- In Hamlet, we are aware that Hamlet knows the truth about his father's murder and that Hamlet is not mad.
- In King Lear, we know that Lear's most loyal daughter is Corelia and he can't see it.
- In Star Wars, Luke does not know Darth Vader is his father until Episode V, but the audience knows sooner.
- In Groundhog Day, the audience and Phil know that Groundhog Day is repeating but the other people do not know this.

Dramatic irony in Hitchcock

- The audience is longing to warn the characters on the screen: 'You shouldn’t be talking about such trivial matters. There’s a bomb beneath you and it’s about to explode!’
- In Rope, the audience sees the murder at the beginning of the movie. This fact adds to the humor in this movie in an ironic way.
- The shower scene in Psycho starts out with the character not hearing the killer because the water is running, but the audience knows he is there.

Time in films

- Discourse time = movie time (two hours)
  - Movie time never stops
- Narrative time = story time
  - Bullet time (story time stops)
  - Descriptions
  - Real-time (Hitchcock’s Rope, Varda’s Cleo)
  - Ellipses (twenty years later)

Space and time in films

- Movie shots are continuous in time and in space
- Cuts between shots introduce discontinuities
  - Keep or change viewpoint and location
  - Keep or change time - shorter or longer ellipsis, flashback
- Noel Burch : At least 9 - 1 = 8 possible space-time cuts (pure viewpoint, pure location, pure ellipsis, pure flashback, ellipsis and viewpoint, ellipsis and location, flashback and viewpoint, flashback and location)

Time in games

- Games can be re-played until player succeeds
- Multiple outcomes are possible
- This does not usually happen in film (Groundhog Day)
- Games can be reset and re-started
- Player can die and be born again multiple times

Space in films

- Audience is « directed » by cinematography, lightng, editing, etc.
- Actions take place onscreen and offscreen

Space in games

- Game levels introduce new spaces
- The player can move around levels
- Player actions are voluntary (unlike camera movements in film)
- Player is not « directed » and can change viewpoint and location freely

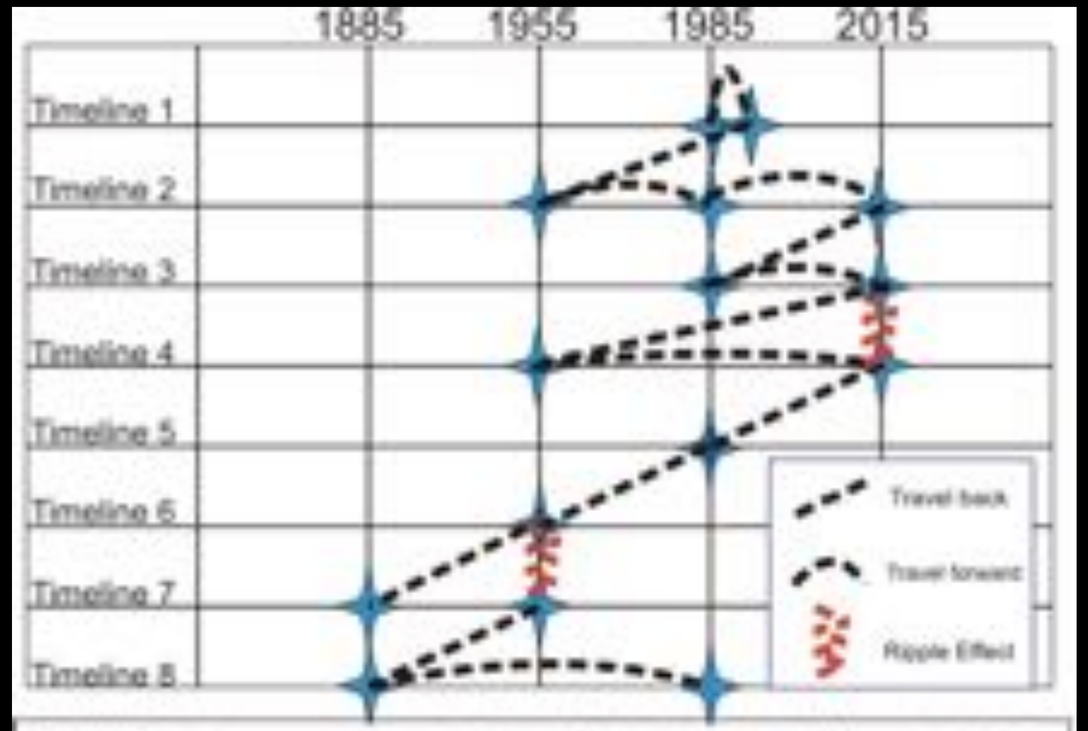
Story time vs movie time

- Paris je t’aime, part 10 (Alfonso Cuarron)
  - story-time = movie-time
- Paris je t’aime, part 2 (Gurinder Chada)
  - story-time > movie-time
- Paris je t’aime, part 16 (Tom Tykwer)
  - story-time >> movie-time

Story time vs. Movie time

- Paris je t’aime, part 7, 12e arrondissement (Bastille)
  - Directed by Isabel Coixet
- Paris je t’aime, part 15, 11eme arrondissement (Pere Lachaise)
  - Directed y by Wes Craven
- Paris je t’aime, part 18, 14eme arrondissement (Parc Montsouris)
  - Directed by Alexander Payne

Back to the future



TL1: 1985: Einstein moves 1 minute into the future. Marty then travels to 1955 creating timeline 2
TL2: 1955: Marty changes elements of his parent's history then moves forward to 1985. The Doc then travels to 2015.
TL3: 2015: Doc arrives in 1985 and takes Marty and Jennifer to 2015 to solve a problem with Marty Jr. Whilst there, Old Biff steals the De Lorean and travels to 1955 creating timeline 4.
TL4: 1955 Old Biff gives Young Biff the Almanac and changes history so drastically that he is no longer alive (he would have died in the 1990s. The ripple effect removes him from the Timeline. Doc and Marty head back to 1985 as the ripple effect is transforming TL3 into TL4
TL5: The Doc and Marty arrive in 1985A and realise what has happened. They go to 1955 to solve it.
TL6: Whilst in 1955 the De Lorean is struck by lightening and sends the Doc back to 1885. The ripple effect cleanses the TI6 into TL7.
TL7: A delivery man hands Marty instructions the Doc wrote in 1885 and Marty travels to 1885 to save him.
TL8: Marty helps Doc and travels back to 1985.

Movie time in Pulp Fiction

- The movie starts on day 1 with Pumpkin and Honey Bunny preparing for a holdup
- Then flashback to Vincent and Jules earlier the same day
- Then flashforward to Vincent’s evening with Mia
- Then flashback again to that same morning
- Flashback 20 years then flash forward to day 2 and 3 with Butch’s story where Vincent dies
- Flashback to day 1 with the hold up (and Vincent alive)

Chronology of Pulp Fiction

- Twenty years ago : the story of Butch and his father's watch and its travels as told by Butch's father's friend Captain Koons.
- Day 1: Vincent and Jules are driving to an apartment to retrieve Marcellus' attache case and the property within, and to kill the occupants. It is a hit. There is a third man hiding in the bathroom. He bursts out shooting and miraculously misses hitting Jules and Vincent. Jules experiences an epiphany.
- Vincent and Jules take Marvin into their car but Vincent accidentally blows off Marvin's head, causing a very large bloody mess in the car. Jules calls his old pal Jimmie, and they drive there to find a way to get out of this mess.
- Jimmie calls Marcellus who summons Wolf (the fixer), and he is dispatched to Jimmie's house. Jules and Vincent clean up the car, change into those ridiculous shorts and t-shirts provided by Jimmy after they have cleaned off the blood and brain pulp from their bodies. They follow The Wolf to Monster Joe's Truck & Tow and the car and the body are safely disposed of.

Chronology of Pulp Fiction

- Day 1 (later that morning)
- Jules and Vincent go to a diner to eat before going to Marcellus' bar to drop off the attache case. Jules continues his discussion of the miracle he felt he witnessed, and that he is going to be leaving "the life". Vincent interrupts to go to the bathroom.
- Pumpkin and Honey Bunny decide to stage a robbery at the diner where they feel they can score big, and hold everyone at bay with guns and threats of murder. They collect wallets, and are confronted by Jules when he refuses to give up the briefcase. Through intimidation, Jules gets back his wallet, but gives the robbers his money. He does not kill them, he explains, because of this recent miracle he experienced.

Chronology of Pulp Fiction

- Day 1 (later that morning continued)
- Vincent and Jules go to Marcellus' bar (still dressed in shorts and t-shirts) to deliver their cache. They have to wait because Marcellus is talking to a washed-up palooka boxer named Butch. Butch is being paid off to throw a fight the next night. As Butch leaves, he and Vincent verbally tee off, but Butch backs down and leaves.
- Jules and the bartender are exchanging amusing looks with reference to Vincent's evening assignment. He is to escort Marcellus' wife, Mia, out for the evening. Vincent and Jules have talked about this before, while they were waiting to burst into the apartment on their hit.

Chronology of Pulp Fiction

- Day 1 (early evening): Vincent goes to his drug dealer's house and buys heroin. The dealer puts it in a baggie. Vincent shoots up, and then leaves for his evening with Mia. They go a bizarre retro 50's club. They eat, talk, and enter a dance contest, which they win.
- Back at Mia's house, Vincent goes to the bathroom to try and figure out how he can leave without getting into trouble. While he is in the bathroom, Mia sings and dances around the room. She finds the heroin in Vincent's pocket, and has an overdose.
- Vincent rushes her to his drug dealer Lance's house in hopes of getting help. With a giant hypodermic needle full of adrenaline, Mia is revived. Vincent takes her home, and they both agree that Marcellus never need know of the events of the evening.

Chronology of Pulp Fiction

- Day 2 (early evening): Butch has a dream then jumps up, ready for his fight.. However, instead of throwing the fight, he KO's his opponent, and kills him. He jumps into a cab and goes to the motel where his girlfriend is waiting. They make love and go to sleep. Marcellus is furious, and orders Butch found and killed.

Chronology of Pulp Fiction

- Day 3 (early in the morning): Butch realizes that his girlfriend forgot his watch back in his apartment. He goes back to his apartment for his watch. Marcellus has put out a hit, and dispatched Vincent to wait for Butch should he return to his apartment. Butch does return, but as Vincent is once again in the bathroom, and is able not only to retrieve his watch, but to kill Vincent as well. Vincent's story is done.
- Butch feels lucky. He drives away and literally bangs into Marcellus on the street carrying burgers and cokes. There is a bloody confrontation, and Marcellus chases Butch into a sleazy gun shop.

Chronology of Pulp Fiction

- The owner brings them both down to the basement,which is an S/M playground. Marcellus is chosen to be the victim first, and Butch is able to untie himself and flee.
- On the way out, Butch decides to go back and save Marcellus with a Samurai sword. Marcellus is being raped by one of the men, and Butch saves him by shooting the other guy. Marcellus is appropriately thankful. Butch is free to go, providing he never mention this to anyone, or come back to L.A. again.
- Butch rides off on "Grace", Zed's chopper, and returns to the waiting arms of his girlfriend Fabienne back at the motel. They both ride off happily into the sunset, heading to Knoxville. Butch is the winner in a story of losers.

Space and Time in Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

- Wednesday 19th November 2003: Joel Barish is bored at the prospect of being a boring couple with Clem Kruczynski, as they have dinner at Kang's again.
- Wednesday 11th February 2004: Joel Barish asks for Clem Kruczynski to be erased from his mind.
- Friday 13th February 2004: Stan and Patrick erase Clem from Joel's mind as he sleeps.
- Saturday 14th February 2004: Joel takes a train to Montauk instead of going to work, and meets Clem (again); Mary the receptionist quits her job at the clinic.
- Sunday 15th February 2004: Clem and Joel visit the frozen Charles River.
- Monday 16th February 2004: Mary the ex-receptionist sends out tapes to all former patients; Clem and Joel realise they erased each other.

Space and Time in Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

Starts on day 2

Then flashback to day 1
with parallel actions in reality (forward)
and in Joel's memory (backward)

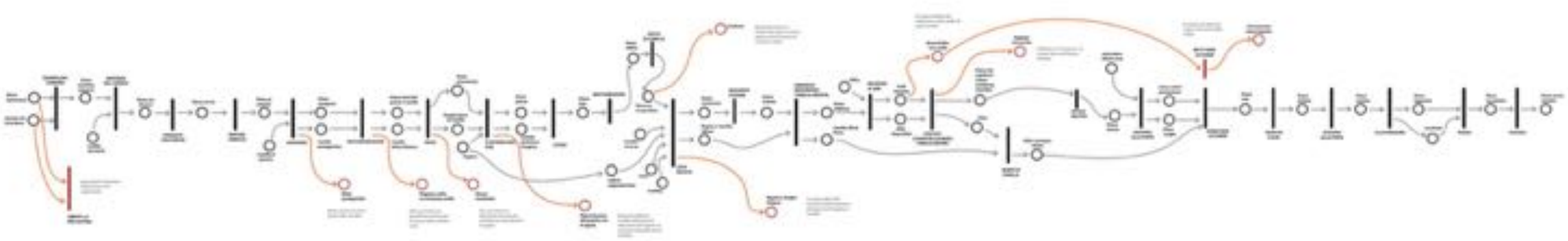
Then return to day 2, 3 and 4

Boris Vian in Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

- L’Herbe rouge narre les aventures d'un ingénieur nommé Wolf, créateur d'une machine pouvant lui faire revivre son passé et ses angoisses pour les oublier.
- L'Arrache-cœur narre le parcours de Jacquemort, psychiatre qui est en fait une capacité vide et cherche à se remplir en psychanalysant les gens, en assimilant leurs pensées et dont deux des personnages se prénomment Clémentine et Joël.
- La maison au bord de l'océan est également une reprise de celle de L'Arrache-cœur, qui était déjà inspirée de la maison d'enfance de Boris Vian, à Landemer.

Space and Time in Mulholland Drive

- Two versions of the same story
  - First as a dream
  - Then as reality
- Petri net representation of story / discourse



Next week : plot/story grammars