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<https://doi.org/10.34768/zn4w-8832>

Nr: 4 (2022)

ISSN (on line) 2658-154X



From functions and actions to textual possible worlds (narrative possibilities of narrative alternatives)

Abstract

This article is an inquiry into the analysis of textual actuality via the possibilities of plot developments represented in actions and events. The topic of possible worlds is extremely important in narrative theories, particularly in those influenced by such a branch of modern logic as the possible world semantics. Scrutinizing approaches toward the narrative analysis and applying an array of methods to cinematographic piece, this paper circles around linguistics, narrative theories and cinema studies. The article mainly centers on the nature of narrative discourse and ways in which it might be brought down, getting Greimasian narrative grammar, Bremond's narrative sequences, and Ryan's classification of textual universes together. The cinematographic masterpiece *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruze* directed by Luis Buñuel is used to apply methods of narrative analysis of three authors. Here lies the actuality of this article and its relevance to the academic studies of narrativity, not to mention non-academic probing into contemporary art: methods of structural and literary possible world analysis of narratives sketched in this paper might

be exercised in interpreting not only texts of classical literature along with postmodern writings but also works of popular visual culture, such as cinema.

Key words: narrative sequence, narrative utterance, textual alternative possible world, W-world, function

Słowa kluczowe: sekwencja narracyjna, wypowiedź narracyjna, tekstowy alternatywny świat możliwy, świat-W, funkcja

Introduction

Concocting the stories and spreading them in oral or written form is perhaps the oldest activity which marks the dawn of human civilization and integrates a human being into the social fabric, occasionally going beyond the concept of language as a commode tool of conveying information and operating with entities that have murky and ambiguous ontological status. At the first sight, being by default made up, stories are populated by mere chimerical entities regardless of the form they take, given that they remain absent from our realm of actuality. Yet spine-tingling or tear-jerking experiences derived from reading or watching what seems to be a figment of someone's imagination are just a limited list of a wide range of impressions that story-telling artworks induce. We feel uncomfortable when a character we rooted for dies. We relish the perspective of an anti-hero being punished for his wrongdoings. We dread the invisible danger pouncing on us in horror literature and films, or solve the mystery of an unfathomable crime together with the police officer, following his argumentative pathway and adopting his viewpoint.

If story-telling activity pivots on the intention of making believe, then does it have to do with the imitation of the real? Telling the story presupposes a certain distance that separates the speaking subject, on the one hand, from what she tells, and, on the other, from the world, she is in. The distance between realms is needed for the imitation to take place. According to Dominique Chateau, narrative imitation rests upon the principle of the plausible, which is responsible for "internal coherence", and the principle of becoming, which stands for "external cohesion"¹. The link to the actual world, which helps to envisage the possible counterfactual situation and impossible ones, guarantees the coherence of reality depicted by the story, while the notion of becoming points to the story as a bunch of innumerable sequences of events progressing in time mostly in accordance with cultural conventions and rules establishing the right types of series, not necessarily logically appropriate.

¹D. Chateau, "*Diégèse et énonciation*". *Communications* 38, *Énonciation et cinéma*, 1983, p. 127.

This standpoint bears a striking resemblance to Claude Bremond's vision of the semiological study of narratives²: he claims that the analysis tackling the techniques of narration and research of specific laws maintaining the universe told by the narrator are two exhaustible branches embracing the theory of narratives. The latter branch of narrative studies plays a more important role for Bremond: the narrative universe comprises two levels orchestrating its borders, that is, logical restrictions and conventional particularities ranging from cultural norms to the norms of literary genres and an individual writing style³. For Marie-Laure Ryan, the theories of narrative might be divided into two main paradigms of analysis, which are substitute models and combinatory ones⁴: theoretical framework of the first kind sets off an interpretative process by moving from the uncharted waters of abstract levels of narrative discourse in the direction of particularized content investing it with concrete information along the way and, in the end, completing transformative-generative itinerary; the second model chooses an opposite direction, starting with concrete levels on whose basis the general laws holding power in the narrative universe become enforced.

As might be understood from what has been said so far, narratives never exist in an ontological vacuum, they engage in a double imitation: inheriting the legacy of literary canons and giving credit to them, narratives not only reproduce writing standards ratified by the literary traditions of the past, definitely modified in compliance with a contemporary setting, and stimulate the same cognitive reactions on the part of the reader but also imitate the world from which they depart and put the reader into the unique mental state, which could be described as a constant comparing of fictitious reality to the actual reality.

The merit of Dominique Chateau's account of narrative imitation is that he neglects as much hackneyed as a controversial distinction mimesis/diegesis (showing/telling), in spite of devoting his article to the concept of cinematographic diegesis, and introduces the notion of the possible world with regard to narrative's innate feature to imitate things one way or another: narrative universes follow the steps of an actual world whose accoutrements serve to specify the ontological status alongside truth conditions of the world in question and genre to which it belongs. In other words, the world of literary fiction is possible in relation to the actual system of reality, while the character's fantasized domains are, in turn, possible through the optics of the narrative continuum. The fact of

²C. Bremond, "*La logique des possibles narratifs*". *Communications* 8, *Recherches sémiologiques: l'analyse structurale du récit*, 1966, p. 60.

³C. Bremond, "*La logique des possibles narratifs*". *Communications* 8, *Recherches sémiologiques: l'analyse structurale du récit*, 1966, p. 60.

⁴M.-L. Ryan, "*A la recherche du thème narratif*". *Communications* 47, *Variations sur le thème: Pour une thématique*, 1998, p. 24.

the matter is that combinatory models of approaching the narrative represented by Claude Bremond and Todorov, in Marie-Laure Ryan's opinion⁵, prove to be much more promising when it comes to accounting for private worlds of literary characters, in comparison to substitution models, whose most noticeable example is Greimas with his narrative grammar.

The substitution model: the interplay of surface and deep narrative structures

The structuralist project Algirdas Julien Greimas launches aims at dismantling the edifice of meaning irrespective of whether the text, which is the subject of analysis, contains the narrative substance or not. Greimassian sets his sights on the necessary conditions leading to the emergence of meaning and, thus, sustaining the communicative nature of reading. In Greimas' language, it is vital to remember once and for all that meaning remains fuzzy and hidden until we resuscitate it, kick it into the shape of narrative structures ultimately coalescing into discourse analysis⁶. The simplest and also the deepest level, which propels the meaning mechanism, revolves around the semiotic square consisting of two semes, or object terms, which remain in the status of being the form of the content plane. Ascending to the higher surface level entails the conversion, which results in anthropomorphic terminology critically required for arriving at the point when sentential linguistics wears thin, and the text comes to be conceived as the discourse of a certain kind⁷.

Surface narrative syntax transforms primitive relations between terms at the bottom of meaning into narrative utterances of doing and utterances of states. Formulations are already anthropomorphic without further investigation as if the way we speak about the world presupposed volatile human specters standing behind both animate and inanimate objects. This unusual kind of anthropomorphism injected into language lies at the heart of the notion of an actant⁸, which is a general name for referring to subjects and objects scaffolding narrative utterances. Following the steps of Greimas, Joseph Courtés defines function as a relation set up between subject and object, whereas a narrative program is described as a narrative block made up of utterance of doing that

⁵M.-L. Ryan, "A la recherche du thème narratif". *Communications* 47, Variations sur le thème: Pour une thématique, 1998, p. 24.

⁶A.J.Greimas, "Elements of a Narrative Grammar". On Meaning: selected writings, Volume 38 University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, pp. 64-65.

⁷A.J.Greimas, "Elements of a Narrative Grammar". On Meaning: selected writings, Volume 38 University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, pp. 64-65.

⁸A.J.Greimas. *Sémantique structurale: recherche de méthode*. Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1966.

presides over the utterance of state⁹. Therefore, the ignition system of the literary plot seems to be in the hands of action, which provides transformations and conjures up a narrative skeleton or, it would be perhaps better to say, pigeonholes textual sequences of an unspecified writing piece into narrative structures as linguistic means of the meaning acknowledgment.

Unlike Bremond, who states that human interests are elementary and nonetheless mandatory components preparing the ground for the narrativity to arise and enabling a reader to catch the first glimpse of narrative discourse that undergoes further changes along the adding of driving elements such as events and actions, Greimas does not leave enough room for agency-driven intentions, desires and wants whatsoever, observing these cognitive categories under the aegis of competence on the basis of which performance of the subject is on its way to complete realization and respective closure of the narrative program. As Courtés points out, one's performance presupposes competence spanning from virtualizing modalities of wanting-to-do and having-to-do to actualizing modalities of knowing-how-to-do and being-able-to-do¹⁰.

Considering the aforementioned specificities of Greimas's jargon, a rough approximation between his account of action and that one given by the representatives of the standard theory of action would not be superfluous. Philosophers of action that side with the standard theory of action treat the fact of acting such and such as caused by the cognitive states of desire and belief¹¹. The aftermath of such a treatment is the deficiency of human agency. Greimas's conduct is at first sight consonant with the optics of the standard theory. Generally and crucially, performance is dependent upon the subject's competence and, for this matter, the mental state of wanting calls for the necessity of acquiring bits of information apropos the subject, gaining appropriate knowledge: as a result, virtualizing and actualizing qualities the agent has might be observed as reasons for action. The surface level of narrative leaves too many living beings, small particularized relics of deep structure, but rules out the agency for good and, by doing that, leaves characters' private worlds out of question.

Although Greimas's reductionism imposes a variety of restrictions that discard those things that could have been considered useful for figuring out the plot structure, it is obvious that he endeavored to satisfy other goals that have nothing in common with conceptualizing human activity

⁹J. Courtés. *Analyse sémiotique du discours: de l'énoncé à l'énonciation*. Hachette, Université linguistique, 1991, p. 87, p. 111.

¹⁰J. Courtés. *Analyse sémiotique du discours: de l'énoncé à l'énonciation*. Hachette, Université linguistique, 1991, p. 121.

¹¹Hornsby: "The standard story is sometimes encapsulated in the slogan: 'Beliefs and desires cause actions'". – J.Dansy, C.Sandis. *Philosophy of Action: an Anthology*. Wiley, Blackwell, 2015, p.48.

for the purpose of ascribing narrative structures to the text and setting up the laws reigning in narrative universes. The narrative anthropomorphic syntax, later complemented with discursive structures, formalizes twists and turns *après coup*, so to speak, by reconstructing the events and getting in "backward" touch with the characters.

As a consequence of that, what seems to be a causal relationship between the states of event or action unfolding is a bit weaker relation called presupposition that sticks to the logic of explanation, answering the question of "why": announcing that performance presupposes competence¹² is about not so much intentions and believes irrevocably culminating in actions as transformations occurring within the narrative texture, embodied by actions that bring intentions about. There is no harm in speeding up and lagging behind at the same moment because it is at the core of interpretative procedures in general: declaring the outcome of an event and scrutinizing circumstances that have led to it as if nothing happened, going through the stages as if putting off the inevitable are first and foremost applicable to the act of interpretation *per se*, while the case of the narrative grammar is one approach of digging out meaningful sentences amongst many others.

It would be probably helpful to turn to the idea of Dominique Chateau that *diégesis* should be understood in its stark distinction from its counterpart in literary theories: Chateau opines that most narratologists try hard to force narrative discourse into "the plane of predicates and (actantial) functions"¹³, being more engrossed in the language whereby we express the narrative than in the narrative universe itself. Apparently, he hints at Greimas, who attempts to perfect the global theory of meaning and signification wherein universal grammar is a tool for extracting surface particulars from deep universals. In this sense, narrative structures should be construed as a way of talking about meaning rather than an integral part of the universe demonstrated by the narrative text.

The terminological apparatus of narrative grammar gravitates toward the technical goal, which is the reconstruction of the meaning – that exists prior to its signification – by dissecting it and rendering narratives instrumental. Jean-Michel Adam makes a valuable remark regarding the deep level: the macro-structure of the narrative discourse, deep structures belong to the conventional order enclosing the matrix of production and rules of transformation¹⁴. According to Adam, who compares narrative and poetic orders in his article, *nouveau roman* as the XX-century ground-

¹²J. Courtés. *Analyse sémiotique du discours: de l'énoncé à l'énonciation*. Hachette, Université linguistique, 1991, p. 97.

¹³D. Chateau, "Diégèse et énonciation". *Communications* 38, Énonciation et cinéma, 1983, p. 127.

¹⁴J.-M. Adam. "Ordres du discours narratif/poétique". *Pratiques: linguistique, littérature, didactique*, №22-23, 1979, p. 107.

breaking literary movement is one of the greatest examples of how macro-structures get really disfigured beyond recognition¹⁵.

The combinatory model: the birth of possibility in narrative sequences

In contrast to Greimassian formalistic methods weaving the way from macro- to micro-level, Claude Bremond brings in narrative possibilities of narratives which consequently turn out to be considerably flexible in usage, letting in definitely more narrative material than can be expected from surface grammars. First, Bremond makes recourse to the good old concept of function which he modifies: the Greimas' function in truth incarnating static or dynamic predicates cements subject and object of narrative utterance together, while Bremond defines a function as the narrative atom and the basic unit generating elementary and complex narrative sequences¹⁶. The complex narrative sequence is a combination of elementary sequences composed of three functions setting off the process, or activating a change constitutive of narrativity.

Second, Bremond specifies three functions: "a) a function opening up the possibility of process under the form of behavior to take or event to anticipate, b) a function that realizes this virtuality under the form of behavior or event in progress, c) function closing the process under the form of a result reached¹⁷". Three functions joined differently give rise to three configurations, three types of complex sequences. Configuration "end-to-end" describes an event performing two functions simultaneously, that is to the say, the function closing the given sequence is equal to the function opening another sequence¹⁸. For example, wrongdoing actually committed by an anti-hero switches on the possibility of a hero's payback in relation to which the perpetrator takes up the passive role, the role of being subjected to the punishment.

The second configuration labeled "inclusion"¹⁹ covers situations in which the process taken in its entirety demands a sub-sequence to finalize one of the stages: between the possibility of payback and eventual comeuppance stretches the whole sequence delineating the process of

¹⁵J.-M.Adam. "*Ordres du discours narratif/poétique*". *Pratiques: linguistique, littérature, didactique*, №22-23, 1979, p. 107.

¹⁶C. Bremond, "*La logique des possibles narratifs*". *Communications 8, Recherches sémiologiques: l'analyse structurale du récit*, 1966, p. 60.

¹⁷C. Bremond, "*La logique des possibles narratifs*". *Communications 8, Recherches sémiologiques: l'analyse structurale du récit*, 1966, p. 60.

¹⁸C. Bremond, "*La logique des possibles narratifs*". *Communications 8, Recherches sémiologiques: l'analyse structurale du récit*, 1966, p. 61.

¹⁹C. Bremond, "*La logique des possibles narratifs*". *Communications 8, Recherches sémiologiques: l'analyse structurale du récit*, 1966, p. 61.

compensation which encompasses harm to incur, the processes of incurring harm and the harm incurred. Outside of two separate functions explaining the same event or the elementary set of functions acting as a sub-goal inserted in the sequence, what matters is the perspective of the characters involved in the plot. This type of configuration Bremond calls “juxtaposition”²⁰ which can hardly be deemed a sequence found in the narrative universe since the fact that viewpoint of the character A concerning the event runs counter to character B is not the question of organizing narrative principles.

Having discussed the types of functions most of which express certain actions exerted by characters, Bremond divided events into two big categories: improvement and deterioration. He proposes to rethink and revalue the functions in terms of these types of events just mentioned. Under new definitions, we receive the following elementary sequence: a) an opening function of improvement outlining the possibility of b.1) the process of improving or 2) the failure of improving; in turn, the realization of b.1) leads to c.1) the improvement made or c.2) improvement failed. The same goes for deterioration. In the ensuing examples, the plot of the movie *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruze*²¹ directed by Luis Buñuel will be analyzed for the purpose of understanding how the methods of Claude Bremond work.

In a nutshell, this film deals with a would-be killer who attempts to commit crimes in the heat of the moment and never succeeds in his intentions, but his “would-be” victims mysteriously die anyway, by an almost incomprehensible twist of fate. To begin with, a quick recap of the scene chosen for exemplification. Archibaldo plans to kill his fiancée on the day of the marriage ceremony after finding out that she had a love affair for a long time, but at the last moment events take an unexpected turn: the fiancée is shot by her ex-lover in front of the guests attending the ceremony. According to Bremond’s scheme, this event might be read in the following way: the knowledge of fiancée’s betrayal triggers Archibaldo’s intention to do away with her so that the first function persisting under the name “crime to commit” is ready to open the narrative sequence; the next stage covers two possibilities, which are crime actualization or breaking short of killing the bride; strangely enough, Archibaldo’s malevolent act is interrupted by another man, whose intention turned out to coincide with his, but the goal is fulfilled after all.

As far as it might be seen, the process of committing the crime requires one more sequence which corresponds to configuration “inclusion” and gives information linked to the specification of

²⁰C. Bremond, “*La logique des possibles narratifs*”. Communications 8, Recherches sémiologiques: l’analyse structurale du récit, 1966, p. 62.

²¹L. Buñuel. *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruze*, 1955.

means for completing the process: the process of killing presupposes harm to incur which grants either a) the option of aggressive process or b) the failure of doing that and in the case of b) being successful the harm is done and at the next stage, which comes after the process, what is left is either the intended death of the person or the person still remaining alive. In our case, Archibaldo thinks of accomplishing his goal by shooting the bride when they will be alone in the room so that no one could possibly upset the plan. However the sequence is disrupted at the first stage of the sub-sequence: having prepared the gun beforehand – as the means of inflicting damage and putting the process into action – and waiting until they are alone, Archibaldo fails when the woman's ex-lover, who is more of *deus ex machina*, enters the stage and literally "saves" him from being charged with the murder.

The reader is supposed to expect if not explicit punishment for the crime, then at least the clash of two opposing perspectives stemming from the conflict between the characters' private worlds. The main character is not punished because all the wrongdoings he dreams of are never real. The function "the crime actualization", which is barred from becoming reality, is resumed by another character. In other words, the function is one and the same, and the perspective of Archibaldo, who paradoxically stays on the straight and narrow, matches that of the woman's ex-lover whose future is to be brought to book and answer for the murder: this correlates to the configuration "end-to-end", for the function "crime committed" by the character is synonymous with the function "wrongdoing to punish" that will be fulfilled by the legal system.

As to events qua generic background of actions-functions, Archibaldo's master plan could be regarded as an instruction of improvement in the sense of wreaking vengeance on the fiancée; contrarily, from the viewpoint of the fiancée, this event is about deterioration since she is the one whose life is taken. It is noteworthy to admit that the "juxtaposition" of events, whose status of narrative configuration is questionable, characterizes the majority of literary oeuvres that contains more than one character: the same event is susceptible to different, oftentimes conflicting, assessments due to the agent's perspective. That's why the dichotomy "improvement versus deterioration" looks like the value one attributes to an event or qualification of narrative sequences working out the plot.

Thanks to Bremond's account of narrative utterance, we are able to take into consideration the liberty of the character's actions: information about betrayal might not have engendered the intention to take revenge, which might not have made Archibaldo hatch the plan of the hot-blooded murder, and the woman might not have been shot to death. All these things that might have been

other way are what they are, signaling that details indicating alternative developments of the plot say substantially more about the characters and their personality than the matter-of-fact-like estimation of what happened. From the perspective of factual report, Archibaldo wanted to commit homicide, but he remains innocent because someone overtook him in this ill-will design. Certainly, even in the cases of severe factual layout, it is impossible to do without the subject of one's intentions and other cognitive states crucial for breaking down the plot at any rate.

Acquiring the competence of being-able-to-kill caused by wanting-to-kill, Archibaldo is about to disjoin his fiancée from the object of value (her life) but fails: disjunction stands for deprivation conforming to the figure of dispossession, which would have perfectly fitted into the framework of the scene if Archibaldo had killed the woman. Terminological edifice, which is central to Greimassian structuralism, pinpoints two types of transformations (conjunctive and disjunctive) between subjects and objects. The instance of killing is imputed to the secondary character who will be the performing subject in the narrative program portraying deprivation.

Neither accountable for disjunction nor conjunction, Archibaldo's actions never reaching his aims cannot be even expressed inasmuch as the starting point of narrative syntax is the passage from effects to causes. Even though it is viable to talk about effects and causes vis-à-vis agents who stand behind the plot lines in the given cinematographic work, we would be going around the bush thinking about the peripheral characters, not knowing why this oeuvre was given the name "*The Criminal life of Archibaldo de la Cruze*" or "*Attempted murder*" (another name, often used). As soon as the entire story narrates a series of unrealized possibilities, abstract formulas would affirm the uselessness of the formalistic enterprise.

The final product of the analysis of narrative structures should be the territory of "*discursive dictionary, an inventory of configurations constituted from closed collective and/or individual universes*"²², the territory which is certainly not helpful in relation to Buñuel's movie. Claude Bremond successfully passes the test of leaving the notion of functionality without harming the narrative universe too much: contrary to narrative grammaticians, he pays attention to human interests, intentions, desires, and needs that give the green light to taking seriously the category of possibility.

Possible worlds: the contribution of private worlds to the textual universe

²²A.J.Greimas, "*Actants, Actors, and Figures*". On Meaning: selected writings, Volume 38 University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p. 80.

Introducing the notions of the principle of minimal departure primarily articulating textual economy in action, Marie-Laure Ryan lays down an unwritten law prohibiting those reading paths that are unjustifiable, unsubstantiated. This hermeneutical principle/requirement is a direct consequence of ontological inconsistency underlying all types of fiction and marking impreciseness with which the textual universe digs out one series of details pivotal at a definite time and ignores or “deliberately” conceals for an indefinite time period another type of series: authors are incapable of exhaustive characterizations and full panorama of the reality they create²³.

For instance, we know nothing about the teenage years of Archibaldo de la Cruze. The movie’s finale does not clarify the topic of the protagonist’s past: all the information about his early life available to the watcher is one event from Archibaldo’s childhood memory partly explaining his morbid interest in crime. On the other hand, it would be strange to look for information covering his teenage years because it is unimportant to the plot and irrelevant to what seems to be the current objectives that the author implicitly sets up. Here goes literary Occam’s razor which, in relation to the process of interpreting fiction, would sound “Do not conjure up entities not stated in the text, do not multiply possible worlds without reason”.

For instance, if we are about to keep in mind that Gothic novels usually feature medieval settings, it would be unreasonable to neutralize the lack of textual data concerning the building’s interior by the way of ascribing to it properties taken from later historical periods, say furniture designed in the style of Art Deco: the absence of certain information does not mean that we are totally free to decide how to fill in the gaps in knowledge. This is the first intuition of the principle of minimal departure, an intuition that relies on the suggestion that the reader instinctively takes the plot development as it comes. The second intuition shedding light on the principle in point rests upon Ryan's statement that the textual universe always springs from the actual world²³.

Presumably, the first thought we come up with when hearing or seeing in the book the name of a famous person or historical event is that these entities refer to the same thing that we are aware of on the basis of our knowledge. First of all, the reader works on reconstructing the textual universe in concert with the actual world. Then, guided by the author’s “instructions” spread out across the text, he makes adjustments to the picture of reality. According to the textual economy fuelling our interpretative process, the Mexican revolution mentioned in *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruze* signifies the Mexican revolution known from historical documents until certain information

²³M.-L.Ryan. *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. Indiana university, Bloomington & Indianapolis Press, 1991, p.51.

differing at some points from what is usually associated with this event makes us believe that this movie relates an alternative Mexican history.

Thus, the maximal departure from the current reality, which could be frequently detected in fairy tales and science fiction, does not contradict the hypothesis of minimal departure pertaining to the phenomenology of reading: up to the moment of receiving precise “directions” from the author, we expand our knowledge at hand to the regions of possibility, projecting our knowledge of how the universe “works” onto the plot. Ryan advances the principle of minimal departure because it inaugurates the key topic she discusses in her book: the topic of possible worlds, actual worlds, and types of relations between them. Her primary concerns are directed toward fictionality.

For Ryan, fiction might be characterized by the following components: the textual universe of fiction affixes the textual actual world (TAW) to the textual reference world (TRW), which is in no way identical to the actual one from which the sender/author speaks, around which textual alternative possible worlds (TAPW), that is, private worlds of the characters as the “mental constructs”²⁴, also circulate. In this context, Archibaldo’s fantasies involving criminal activity exist under the status of TAPW and remain so throughout the plot unraveling. Needless to say that insight into transworld relations will help to elucidate the system of reality in fiction: on the one hand, TAW is tied to AW so that the notion of accessibility relations comes to the fore; on the other hand, there are interconnected TAPWs within TAW²⁵. The former types of relations correlate to Dominique Chateau’s “external cohesion” mentioned earlier, whilst the latter type jibes well with “internal coherence”²⁶.

Sharpening the list of accessibility relations, such as the identity of properties, the identity of inventory, and physical and taxonomical compatibility, to name a few, Ryan adds other “factors of semantic diversification” – thematic focus, stylistic filtering, and probabilistic emphasis²⁷ – with the hope of working out more accurate criteria for building up a typology of fiction. In virtue of being accessible from AW no matter the type of relations, Buñuel’s movie remains extremely close to AW and, on the surface, appears to employ a realistic plot but in fact evokes a surrealist atmosphere. What interests us here is the internal structure of the textual universe as suggested by Ryan. The only textual alternative possible world is the private domain of Archibaldo de la Cruze – the wish-

²⁴M.-L.Ryan. *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. Indiana university, Bloomington & Indianapolis Press, 1991, p. 24, p. 25.

²⁵M.-L.Ryan. *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. Indiana university, Bloomington & Indianapolis Press, 1991, p. 24, p. 31.

²⁶D. Chateau, “*Diégèse et énonciation*”. *Communications* 38, *Énonciation et cinéma*, 1983, p. 127

²⁷M.-L.Ryan. *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. Indiana university, Bloomington & Indianapolis Press, 1991, p. 43.

world (W-world) in Ryan's terminology – rooted in axiological predicates and represented by the proposition: "X considers that [state, action] p is [good, bad] for x"²⁸.

Traditionally, narrative conflicts are the most powerful driving forces of the plot. Small dissimilarities between private worlds aggravating their points of divergence set the dynamics of the narrative universe. World literature teems with conflicts arising at places where W-world and O-world (O – for obligation) do not intersect²⁹. In his later works Buñuel, the master of non-denouement, gets rid of the thesis claiming that fixation on the conflict is a necessity for the author who wants to tell a story. Archibaldo is motivated by the desire to kill, which borders with the ridiculous owing to the fact that he personally never pulls it off.

The movie ends on a positive note: Archibaldo abandons his W-world forever and starts new life not because he falls in love or the burden of guilt oppresses him, and O-world proves to be incompatible with W-world. Buñuel's narrative universe is not conflictual: the kind of conflict (or pseudo-conflict, to be precise) is between the main character's plans situated in TAPW and exterior circumstances as an external force from TRW posing obstacles and precluding from criminal actions, while TAW exists in agreement with W-world because nearly all the time Archibaldo's goals are achieved, and the whole story seems to be the story about wish-fulfillment. Bremond's logical possibilities grasp the fringes of virtuality through narrative sequences, in which actions and events are inextricable from the designs of literary characters.

Through Bremond's prism, Archibaldo hardly ever goes further than the primary stage allowing various possibilities to be examined and finally realized. This account helps to identify the nature of the conflict – initiation of an action doomed to be quickly omitted, which is exhibited in the narrative sequence with Archibaldo as an agent, and the result of an action, which coincides with the final stage of an intended plan but belongs to the narrative sequence whose "author" is other than the main hero – but misses its origins.

Ryan's theory is of great use when it comes to the question of origins of typically Buñuel-like conflict: her analysis contributes to grasping once and for all that the problem with Archibaldo emerges in the dimension of TRW-TAPW, whilst the dimension of TAPW-TAW – analyzed by Bremond's instruments – is unproblematic insofar as the intersection of narrative sequences and propitious resolution of the W-world needs and yearnings makes the story a mere description of states of affairs. Still, something is not right: it is TRW in which Archibaldo is trapped; it is a touch

²⁸M.-L.Ryan. *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory*. Indiana university, Bloomington & Indianapolis Press, 1991, p. 117.

²⁹Ibid, 121.

of reality, an uncontrollable flow of events coming from outside, a supernatural element enclosed in the natural order of things, a concatenation of coincidences creating an impression of magical thinking.

In comparison to Greimas' theory of narrativity as articulated meaning, Bremond's and Ryan's exploration of possibilities and interaction between narrative sequential units in the former case and private worlds in the latter are their calling cards. Greimassian surface structures, which originate in the deep macro-structural logico-semantic machinery, are peppered with narrative utterances forming anthropomorphic syntax, which at the later interpretative stages are at the mercy of the discursive plane. In contrast to Greimas who makes the concept of function determined by the pair subject-object, Bremond reduces function to the stage at which an event is presented in a narrative sequence: each stage opens the possibility of a plan being fulfilled or interrupted and foiled. The scene taken from *The Criminal Life of Archibaldo de la Cruze* demonstrates that the stage/function portraying the process of acting and its results coincide with the sequential order "owned" by another character. Formally, Archibaldo's criminal plans are implemented and, because of that, under this interpretation, the story happens to be felt as a mere chronological description of something. Some points of Ryan's narrative theory permit us to palpate the place at which unproblematic descriptions grow into the narrative conflict. In Ryan's terminology, Textual alternative possible world of Archibaldo's wishes is synchronized with the Textual actual world. Bremond's problem is that his dissection of narratives does not overcome this dimension. Ryan's Textual reference world that seeps into actuality explains the conflict between attempting and doing.

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