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**CLAUDE BRÉMOND'S NARRATIVE GRAMMAR
AND VLADIMIR PROPP'S *MORPHOLOGY OF
THE FOLK TALE***

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The intellectual current known as textual generativism emerged in the 1960s in France as a part of the semiotic and structural study of culture. Its main representatives are Algirdas Julien Greimas, Claude Brémond, Tzvetan Todorov, as well as Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose analysis of the Oedipus myth provided a starting point for many later analyses. Inspired by Noam Chomsky's linguistics, representatives of this current attempt to construct textual grammars, that is, grammars that would generate not sentences, but entire texts. Yet, the concept of text used by those scholars is very broad. Thus, for instance, the set of texts which would, according to the premises, be generated by a single textual grammar — called a narrative grammar — is supposed to include all texts relating events whose agents or objects are anthropomorphic entities. Such a set would include not only all kinds of literary narratives and non-literary stories about true events related in any ethnic language, not only myths and fables, but also, for instance, narratives on film and in drawing, e.g. comic books.

Attempts to construct textual grammars (which, incidentally, were often fundamentally dissimilar) were motivated by a single intuition: that texts that differed radically on the level of manifestation — i.e., expressed by means of divergent linguistic or non-linguistic semiotic systems — could nevertheless share a common deep structure. Therefore, an analysis which approaches a text as a conjunction of sentences (or a sequence or structure

of syntactic units of any other semiotic system involved in the expression of the text), stops at the most superficial level of analysis. Textual grammars should therefore be constructed in such a way that the diversity of texts on the level of manifestation is represented only at the final stage of the process of generating the given textual grammar, in its very last segment. A textual analysis concerned with the deeper levels of the structure of the text and aimed at constructing a model of the earlier phases of the process of text generation should therefore dissect a text into units that are not specific to any semiotic system. Such an analysis should discover deeper semantic and syntactic similarities between texts concealed by their diversity on the level of manifestation.

What textual generativists primarily owe to Chomsky is the general idea of generative grammar, which in their interpretation is, however, taken to be an ideal model of the human (species-specific) ability to generate texts of culture or a given sub-set of such texts. They also attempt to give their grammars a similar general structure, i.e. to describe the process of generating a text as a sequence of transformations (operations) which, in the case of texts representing the same grammar, originate from the same segment or series. However, in their attempts to solve concrete problems brought about by the process of constructing those grammars — such as distinguishing the successive levels of a textual grammar corresponding to segments of Chomsky's grammar or formulating specific transformations (grammatical rules) — textual generativists refer mainly to morphological analyses of textual macro-structures found in folkloristic analyses of myths and literature. Among such studies, *Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp proved particularly inspiring.

Propp's work was only translated into English and published in the United States as late as 1958; Lévi-Strauss contributed to its popularity in France in subsequent years. Western scholars discovered Propp through this book. As a contemporary author — in the context of linguistics and structural semiotics — Propp turned out to be a highly inspiring scholar. Semioticians and theoreticians of literature fascinated with Chomsky's ideas interpreted Propp's analysis of the folktale as the first-ever textual grammar. It was only thanks to Propp that attempts to apply ideas of generative linguistics to the study of products of culture gained impetus. Propp is also responsible for making narrative grammar the only textual grammar to become more than just a postulate or programme for future study. Perceived as the first textual grammar, morphology of the folktale became the subject of various criticisms, interpretations, and revisions. In fact, the two main

currents of contemporary generative textual semiotics can be seen as two revisions of Propp's conception, generalising his ideas and developing them in different directions.

The following short presentation of Propp's main theses deliberately disregards the fact that *Morphology of the Folktale* was written not in the 1950s in the United States, but in 1928 in the Soviet Union, and that, from the historical perspective, it belongs to a completely different current of the study of culture than the one which is the topic of this article. Thus, our focus here is not on the significance of Propp's work for his contemporaries, in the context of the ethnographic research of the period, but only on those of his theses which inspired textual grammarians, those meanings which acquired special importance in their reading of *Morphology of the Folktale*, and those motifs which found a continuation in the attempts to construct narrative grammars. In short, Propp's work is of interest for us insofar as it constitutes the first generative textual grammar.

Propp's aim was to discover a structural similarity between fairy tales. To this effect, Propp, like his generativist followers, took as his starting point the analysis of a certain provisional corpus of texts: folktales specified in Aarne's index (Aarne, 1911) under nos. 300—749; but he interpreted his research results as valid for an infinite set of possible texts. He pointed out that his pattern can be used to generate artificial (i.e. not corroborated by ethnographers) fairy tales with the same general structure. I underline this point in order to demonstrate that to call Propp's analysis a generative textual grammar is not an error of interpretation. Propp writes:

These conclusions, moreover, may also be verified experimentally. It is possible to artificially create new plots of an *unlimited number* [my emphasis — K.R.]. All of these plots will reflect the basic scheme, while they themselves may not resemble one another. In order to create a tale artificially, one may take any *A*, then one of the possible *B*'s, then a *C* [*A*, *B*, *C* are symbols of functions — K.R.] [... If one then distributes functions according to the dramatis personae of the tale's supply or by following one's taste, these schemes come alive and become tales. (Propp 2003:111—2)

Although he does not use the term, Propp thus obviously interprets his structural scheme of magical tales, uncovered in the process of analysing a limited corpus, as a grammar that generates an infinite set of possible texts of the same type.

Propp identified the discovery of a structural commonality with the discovery of elementary units of the tales, that is, units which retain their identity in all tales in the reviewed corpus. He sought those units out by analysing the plots of tales or, more precisely, specific events (actions) within those plots. His point of departure was the assumption that identifying similarities between the plots is easier when comparing the actions of the characters rather than the characters themselves.

However, Propp does not find elementary units of folktale narrative in definite actions in all their concreteness within particular tales, but rather in their "function," that is, a set of features of a given event which are significant from the point of view of his analysis. What matters is the discovery of those features of concrete action which makes it homologous to particular actions found in other tales in the corpus. Propp concluded that the definition of a function should abstract from the material features of specific actions which identify who performs the action and how. In this respect, "functionally" homogeneous actions in various tales are extremely diverse. Hence Propp's concept of function focuses chiefly on the formal and purely relational features of actions. The function of a given action is defined by the purpose of this action in the entire plot. The identity of the functions of specific events in different tales is guaranteed by the identity of their relations with other functions of the tale — or, more precisely, the position they occupy in the syntactic sequence of functions.

In Propp's analysis, "event" and "function" are corresponding categories on two levels of analysis of a tale's plot. To invoke generativist terminology, one might say that an event is a surface-level unit, and a function — a deep-level unit. Thanks to the formal (relational) characteristic of a function, and especially the thesis that the function of a given event is defined by its position in the sequence of events in a given plot, it was possible to characterise the deep structure of a magical tale — i.e., the level common to all fairy tales — as the *general syntagmatic structure*. Propp's analysis resulted not only in the identification of thirty-one functions, but also in a sequential ordering, in which "the sequence of functions is always identical" (Propp 2003: 22). Thus, individual tales always follow the same pattern of syntactic succession of functions; at most, some may be omitted.

Yet Propp does not describe the deep structure solely in syntactic terms. For him, the function is the significance of an event; it is a significance common to all events that occupy the same syntactic position in different tales. This significance may be impossible to recognize if the event is analysed in isolation — the same function may be performed differently at the surface

level (the level of events); two different functions may be performed by a superficially identical event. In such cases, the function is identified by its consequence: the event that follows it. When, for instance, the hero successfully overcomes an obstacle, this event will represent the first function of the donor if it allows the hero to obtain a magical object. It may, however, represent other functions, e.g. a difficult task if it results in the hero marrying the princess. Thus the pattern of thirty-one functions is concurrently the pattern of the common meaning of all fairy tales, which manifests itself on the surface level (or, in Propp's terminology, the structure of the tale) in numerous variations. In Propp's opinion, the discovery of a common meaning in the deep-structure analysis of the tales under consideration proved that all originated from one myth. As a *general structure of meaning*, the revealed pattern of functions reconstructed the structure of signification of that myth.

Particular functions have certain genre variations identified on the basis of the identity of the actor and the manner in which a given function is performed. However, this recognition does not lead to the identification of alternative sequences of functions; according to Propp, "all fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure" (Propp 2003: 23). In other words, a function retains its identity even as "one character in a tale is easily replaced by another" (Propp 2003: 87).

Propp distinguished seven spheres of action, that is, divided all identified functions into seven subsets. These are the spheres of the villain, the donor, the magical helper, the sought-for person, the dispatcher, the hero, and the false hero. These considerations anticipate Greimas' concept of the actant — the counterpart of the character in the deep structure. In both conceptions, the deep structure of signification is best reflected in such a distribution of functions among various characters in the fairy tale that would ascribe each sphere of action to a single character. However, in both Propp's and Greimas' "grammar," functions are not necessarily distributed at the surface level according to the established pattern: for instance, a character may operate at the intersection of several spheres (Greimas' spheres of activity), or a particular sphere may be represented by several characters — e.g., the tale may contain a number of different donors or villains. Thus, one deep structure may inform many highly dissimilar plots.

Narrative grammars developed over the course of the past decade owe more to Propp than just the general direction of research — i.e., the observation that textual invariants must be sought at the level of the plot, and that inside that level, one should focus on the similarities between corresponding events and not on the acting characters. The differentiation between the

event and its function, so fundamental to textual grammars, is not Propp's only contribution. His analyses were also a source of many specific ideas used in the construction of narrative grammars; these ideas are incidentally quite different from one another.

It has already been mentioned that Greimas' actantial model originated from the seven spheres of action distinguished by Propp. Yet, Greimas' generative textual semantics are even more deeply indebted to Propp. For instance, the fundamental object of his narrative grammar — the pursuit of a description of narrative morphology and syntax by means of the same elementary unit — references Propp's ideas. After all, in *Morphology of the Folktale* the functions are simultaneously elementary syntactic units (as units in a sequence) and elementary semantic units (as elements of particular spheres).

Propp was also the first scholar to notice that functions coalesce into larger syntactic units: pairs and sequences. His observation that a large number of functions constitutes pairs linked by a logical connection, such as interdiction — violation of interdiction, reconnaissance — delivery, found its continuation in Brémond and Todorov's concept of a sequence of functions. On the other hand, Propp's idea of a sequence — "Each new act of villainy, each new lack creates a new move" (Propp 2003: 92) — was incorporated almost unchanged into Greimas' grammar under the name of *performance*. Propp's remarks pertaining to the manner in which sequences coalesce into more complex narratives were also applied in entirety in Brémond's analyses and in other textual grammars.

Generative textual grammars can be classified according to various criteria based on diverse, but equally essential differences between specific conceptions. For instance, classification according to the number of levels of analysis (potential segments of a grammar) considered by particular theories would be a good starting point for the evaluation of both the systematic aspect of a given conception and the scope of its theoretical aspirations. Apart from the surface and deep structures identified already by Propp (events and functions in his terminology), French grammarians distinguish the level of manifestations (*discours*). Though its existence is not put to question, only some scholars include it in their analyses. On the other hand, very deep structures — that is, the level of a universal textual grammar, with narrative grammar, the main object of research today, as its subset — are postulated and analysed only by some scholars, such as Greimas.

Classifications can also be based on the structural model which the scholar puts forward for the grammar he is constructing. Two opposing cur-

rents can be distinguished in that regard. Representatives of both tendencies attempt to generalise Propp's model to have it describe the structural community of folktales as well as generate at least all narrative texts. Greimas, for instance, pursues this aim by generalising and simplifying Propp's model while maintaining its structural principle, which posits the syntactic and semantic model within the deep structure as identical for all texts generated by a given grammar, with differences perceived as a result of different manners of "filling" or articulating the pattern and of possible omissions of some of its segments. Other scholars, especially Brémond, describe deep syntax as a network of possible choices. Thus conceived, deep-level grammar does not reconstruct one syntactic pattern common to all narratives, but a network of possible sequences that bifurcate at various points. In this conception, Propp's model is interpreted not as an outline of a narrative grammar, but as a description of one of the syntactic patterns possible in that grammar. Propp's discovery of the recurrence of this particular generative pattern in the production of fairy tales is explained with historical causes: it was the established (preferred) pattern of a culture at a certain stage of its development. Since the task of the grammar itself, however, is not to explain historical phenomena but rather to model the human capacity for producing texts of a given type, it ought to define (by highlighting the moments of selection) the set of theoretically possible syntactic patterns present in, or absent from, diverse types of real narrative texts. Referring to the analogy between narrative grammars and Chomsky's generative grammar, it can be said that while Greimas is particularly inspired by the core part of this grammar — where all rules are obligatory — Brémond perceives the discovery of the rules of textual grammar which would correspond to optional transformations as theoretically problematic. After all, optional rules shape the moments of the speaker's decision within language competency, underscoring its creative character.

The preference for either of those two structural types of grammar betrays an adherence to a certain conception of culture. The tendency represented by Greimas underlines the fact that the production of texts is determined by certain very general and simple, but universal patterns. It is the culture of archetypes — persisting, deep structures existing beyond the consciousness of the participants of a culture, concealed in the diverse texts seen "on the surface." Here, all narrative texts are at bottom versions of the same text, provided the analysis reaches deep enough. The tendency represented by Brémond, on the other hand, corresponds to the vision of culture as an area of human creativity governed by certain rules which,

however, allow for an element of choice or decision.

When describing the characteristics of various types of narrative grammars, it is also worthwhile to refer to the difference in approaches to the issue that is presently the main subject of debate among the representatives of this line of research. What is at stake is the question whether a grammar should be a generator of purely syntactic structures, or whether it ought to combine semantic and syntactic analysis? This question emerged first in generative linguistics, where generative semantics began to be contrasted with Chomsky's grammar as presented in *Syntactic structures*. An analogous difference of opinion currently divides the creators of narrative grammars. On the one hand, there is the concept of Brémond, which aims to produce a grammar independent from semantics, and on the other hand — the grammar of Greimas and the analyses of Sorin Alexandrescu which it inspired. From their perspective, narrative grammar is a semantic-syntactic grammar. In other words, it contains both syntax and paradigmatics. Scholars within this tendency take inspiration from Lévi-Strauss's analysis of myths and interpret the chronological course of events in the plot (narrative syntax) as a series of transformations based on the oppositions within the semantic universe of a given text.

As did Propp, their precursor, so almost every textual grammarian creates his own terminology. For this reason, our attempt to place Brémond's grammar in the context of other textual grammars, especially that of Greimas, must end with the differentiation and naming of specific levels of analysis which serve as the focal points for the considerations of generativists. Thus, following Greimas, Hjelmslev, and Todorov, we shall call the most external level of analysis the *level of manifestation*. An analysis which focuses on that level does not disregard the "substantive" typology of signs involved in a given text. On this level of analysis, narrative texts of a high level of homology within the deep structure may be very different from one another. For instance, one may be a literary text, possible to analyse as a whole composed of either sentences or linguistic units of a higher order, such as dialogue, monologue or description, whereas another may be a sequence of film shots or a series of drawings — a set belonging to a different semiotic system. Textual grammarians devote little attention to this level; it plays a marginal role in their considerations, equivalent to the role of morphophonemics in Chomsky's grammar. Recently, however, grammarians began to recognize that even a very precise differentiation between various levels — i.e., segments of a textual grammar — does not ensure the possibility of verifying the theory if one overlooks the question of transitions from the

upper to the lower segments of the grammar, including the transition from the surface level to the level of manifestation.

The second level of analysis, referred to in many conceptions as the *surface level*, is also sometimes called the thematic or plot level. Here, a narrative text (*récit*) reveals its specificity concealed at the level of manifestation. After all, only an analysis that abstracts from the substantive characteristics of signs by means of which the given text is realised can demonstrate that every narrative is a sequence of successive events or actions carried out by a closed circle of characters. When those actions are placed in a (chronological) sequence, logical interrelations between them become apparent. A differentiation between the level of manifestation and the surface is to a certain extent analogous to Roman Ingarden's distinction between the double linguistic layer of a literary work and the layer of represented objects, with the caveat that the latter differentiation refers to a completely different, broader set of texts.

The third level of analysis is the *level of deep structures*. Here, the basic terms of analysis are no longer the categories of events or characters, but of functions and actants. If on the surface the narrative is a sequence of very concrete events which involve the characters — concrete heroes of a given *récit* — "function" and "actant" are theoretical terms. Function is a common syntactic role of a certain set of actions which perform it in specific narrative texts. Paradigmatic categories at this level, such as the actant, and later the role, are semantic meanings common to a certain set of actions in different narrative texts, and at the same time a model of the ideal (i.e., the simplest) distribution of actions between particular characters in the plot.

A deep-level analysis abstracts from all particular features of the given events or characters in order to concentrate on the shared syntactic function or semantic meaning of corresponding elements in different plots. Most generativists focus their considerations on the analysis of the deep level and of the relationship between the deep and the surface levels.

The fourth level of generative textual analysis is the *very deep level*. It may also be called the level of universal textual grammar: the deep level of narrative grammar is its surface level. In other words, generativists who operate on this level of analysis assume that narrative texts employ only one of many possible methods of semiotic realisation of a given meaning which can be presented in a more abstract manner than at the deep level of narrative grammar. Thus, for instance, the anthropomorphic categories of functions or actants are specific to the narrative manner of the presentation of those meanings, and not to the meanings themselves. By adding the

very deep level to his narrative grammar, Greimas seeks to describe its paradigmatics and syntax in the categories of logical variables and purely formal relations between those categories. If the very deep level of grammar is not a grammar of all possible coherent texts, at least it may generate a vast set of possible texts; narrative grammar would then be one of its sub-grammars.

Brémond, like Propp, focuses on the second (surface) and third (deep) levels of analysis of narrative texts and on the relations between these levels. As has already been said, this conception was an attempt to revise Propp's analysis to generalise its results onto all types of narration. Those considerations include a critique of the results arrived at in *Morphology of the Folktale*, as well as a positive reaction: an attempt to construct a grammar of syntactic structures using, according to Brémond, the same fundamental notion of function, but freed of certain weaknesses of Propp's conception. Brémond's reservations pertained chiefly to Propp's description of the interrelations between a given function and other functions of a syntactic sequence.

At first glance, the critical analysis of Propp's results seems to be a coherent and convincing argument; yet a confrontation with the positive part of Brémond's analysis reveals the fact that, while eliminating the errors in Propp's reasoning, he also removed everything that contributed to their significance.

Brémond's criticism runs as follows: if Propp's analysis is to be broadened to include all narratives, his theoretical notions, especially the notion of function, must be retained and separated from the results of morphological analysis, which refer to a relatively narrow and very homogeneous collection of tales. In particular, Propp's thesis that "the sequence of functions is always the same," and that all analysed texts represent a single structural type, is true (if it is true at all) at most with regard to a certain specific type of narrative texts, represented by the corpus analysed by Propp, but definitely does not apply to all narratives. This thesis should be interpreted (incidentally, in accordance with Propp's intention) in the following way: an analysis of a folktale discovers a shared structural type in the corpus of folktales, "a layer of autonomous signification, endowed with a structure" (Brémond 1978: 5), independent from the means by which this signification is expressed on the level of manifestation. This signification can be perceived as the archetype of a magical tale. On the other hand, the sequence of thirty-one functions in a fairy tale describes a syntactic series as a cultural stereotype. This sequence is therefore nothing but a generalised model of

a certain type of plot, a model which is more or less faithfully reproduced in all fairy tales. When translating this interpretation into the language of linguistics, Brémond argues that Propp's analysis has led to the discovery of a syntactic structure of a certain type of speech, which is stereotypical in our culture because it corresponds to a frequently expressed archetypal sense. The tales studied by Propp follow the same line of the plot because they convey a shared archetypal significance. While leading to an identical resolution, fairy tales choose between the same functions available at various moments of the process of generation of the syntactic sequence. In other words, Propp's thesis that "the succession of functions is always the same" describes the syntactic features of a certain typical variety of narrative speech, and not the language of narration. To generalise Propp's results, a narrative grammar must be constructed that would encompass Propp's sequence only as one of the possible lines of development.

Brémond believes that in order to demonstrate that a narrative grammar can also generate syntactic sequences other than the one discovered by Propp, it must be proved that there exist mutually exclusive functions which may occupy the same syntactic position. This is because only mutually exclusive functions may lead to a bifurcation of the generative course in narrative grammar. He argues that such functions manifest themselves, albeit in a vestigial form, even in such highly stereotypical narratives as folktales. From that point of view, he considers fairy tale incidents which Propp saw as rhetorical gestures delaying the action and serving only to increase tension — e.g. first meetings with the donor which fail to provide the hero with the desired information, etc. Brémond formulates the following objection to Propp's analysis: Propp does not notice alternative functions in a sequence because such a possibility is a priori excluded by the criterion that defines the identity of functions, namely the criterion of consequence. For instance, in Propp's model, a "struggle" always leads to the hero's "victory"; Propp achieves this "astounding result" because he simply does not consider clashes which do not end in the hero's victory as "struggles." According to Brémond, "Since [a function] is defined by its consequences, one does not see how any opposing consequences could come from it" (Brémond 1978: 18).

Defining a function by its consequences illustrates the finality of Propp's analysis, which, according to Brémond, is justified when analysing speech aimed towards a definite ending, but not when constructing a theory of language (i.e. a narrative grammar):

We should construct our sequences of functions starting with the *terminus a quo*, which in the general language of plots opens a network

of possibilities, and not with the *terminus ad quem*, in respect to which the particular speech acts of Russian tales make their selection from among possibilities. If (following Propp) we agree that a struggle implies the victory (of the hero), we refer to a cultural stereotype, not a necessary relation between units of a narrative syntax. (Brémond 1978: 25)

Another of Brémond's objections is that it is not the function, but an entire sequence that is the *de facto* deep-level unit in Propp's analysis. Hence an event cannot be considered a carrier of the appropriate function if it does not appear in the requisite position. In Propp's approach, rules governing the succession of functions in a sequence are concurrently logical and artistic. Brémond, on the other hand, argues that this relationship is logical in character only in some cases, whereas in others it is organised by an artistic stereotype. Generally speaking, the order of succession of functions with respect to their logical relations tolerates more freedom than Propp's model, although it is by no means entirely free. Thus, for instance, due to logical connections, the function of marking the hero with a stigma must occur before the function of the recognition of the hero by that stigma. However, the fact that in Propp's model the function of marking the hero with a stigma occurs much earlier than the logical connections between functions would require, that is between the struggle and the victory, is determined only by the cultural stereotype.

The reinterpretation of the results arrived at in *Morphology of the Folktale* is obviously aimed at eliminating those sequential relationships Propp established between functions which are not of a logical, but of an artistic character — that is, according to Brémond, those that are determined not by rules of a language (narrative grammar), but by a certain stereotype of speech. Brémond introduces the concept of an elementary narrative sequence: a unit larger than a function, but smaller than Propp's sequence. The representation of Propp's sequence as a syntagma composed of many elementary sequences leads to a reorganization of the sequence:

Instead of a unilinear schema of narrative structure, we obtain an interlacing of a number of sequences which condition, bind, interweave with or parallel one another. The functions within various interlaced sequences remain generally independent, but the sequences themselves are not fully autonomous — which explains the frequency of certain types of connections. (Brémond 1978: 30)

Brémond's elementary sequence consists of three functions, with the transition from the first function to the second and from the second to the

third occurring by way of selection between two optional functions available in a given position. The general model of these sequences is as follows: the first function is the emergence of "a situation that opens the possibility of a behaviour or an event." The second function is the "actualisation of the possibility" or the "non-actualised possibility." If the second function assumes the shape of the former option — for instance, if the hero accepts a challenge, turns to the donor for help, faces a struggle, etc. — then the last function of the sequence is realised as one of two options: the first is the hero's victory, the other — the hero's failure. If in the second function of the sequence the possibility is not actualised, the sequence remains unfinished. Thus, as a syntactic unit of the language of narration, a sequence has the form of a series of choices between elements of a binary opposition. In speech (narrative text) only one of the options is realized: the teller selects one of two functions available in a given position in the sequence. Closing the sequence creates a new situation which becomes a starting point for a new sequence directly linked with the preceding one.

This, however, does not mean that narrative speech is just a simple succession of complete sequences. Brémond devoted much attention to the analysis of various syntactic combinations across sequences, i.e. combinations which enable the formation of higher syntactic units, the so-called complex sequences composed of two or more elementary sequences.¹ Thus, besides the simplest way of binding known as the chain connection, in which the event playing the role of the function closing an earlier sequence also opens the next sequence, sequences may also coalesce into systems of enclaves. In this case, an opening sequence reaches its conclusion by way of one or many other sequences. An enclave occurs when, for instance, the second function of the opening sequence (actualisation of a possibility) develops into a series of events that form a sub-sequence of the opening sequence. In an enclave structure, one process becomes the means of realising another process. Another manner of connecting sequences stems from the fact that the same event may perform two separate functions in two different but parallel sequences. According to Brémond, the multiplicity of ways of linking elementary sequences in narratives is the main reason for their variety. Structural differences between various complex sequences may also prove useful in describing the differences between variations of narrative texts specific to diverse cultures. In Brémond's opinion, his analysis "demonstrates that, by combining a limited number of easily specified elements (functions organ-

¹Brémond analysed this issue in "Le Message narratif" (1965).

ised in triads), it is indisputably possible to construct models of situations and conduct of an infinitely increasing complexity, which may constitute a reflection of the events and protagonists (characters in a play, actants, or roles) required by the semiotic analysis of narration" (Brémond 1965).

Brémond's later articles add a new facet to his conception. The function, thus far viewed mainly as an element of an elementary sequence, is now additionally specified by being related to figures taking part in an action. In this analysis, Brémond accentuates the fact that, from the perspective of a specific character, each process (elementary sequence) brings an improvement or a deterioration of his or her situation: "Each agent is his own hero. His partners are defined from his point of view as allies, adversaries, etc. These definitions are reversed when passing from one perspective to another" (Brémond 1980: 392). Brémond considers this observation ground-breaking because he is striving to supplement his grammar with an equally general and choice-driven model of a narrative universe, that is "the patterns that are herein developed will integrate the many perspectives belonging to diverse agents into the unity of a single schema" (Brémond 1980: 392). As he himself puts it, "Amelioration, degradation, reparation: the narrative circle is now closed, opening the possibility of new degradations followed by new reparations according to a cycle which can repeat itself indefinitely" (Brémond 1980: 405).

What this quote demonstrates is that, in Brémond's approach, narration is no longer a singular structure. His grammar describes the connections between specific functions of the elementary sequence and the relationships between those sequences because it formulates the rules governing these relations. After all, the entire narration consists of an arbitrary — i.e. not determined by the rules of his grammar — number of complex sequences. A narrative is only a cycle of changes in situation (its improvements or deteriorations), a cycle which may be broken at a randomly selected moment.

Brémond was right to observe that Propp identified an entire sequence, and not a function, as a fully autonomous unit of the deep structure, but he failed to note that this was precisely the feature that gave Propp's analysis a structural as well as a semiotic character. This is because the sequence of thirty-one functions is a syntactic model of a folktale as a whole, but also a description of the syntactic commonality of many materially different tales. To Propp, fairy tales are syntactically identical, because they convey a certain common meaning. Propp reconstructs a common semantic universe of fairy tales by arranging functions into spheres. Although he does not complete the distinction between the paradigmatic (semantic) and syntagmatic aspect of

the deep structure of the tales, his analysis leaves no doubt that neither the meaning nor the syntactic role of an action can be explained in separation from the structural whole constituted by the given plot. In this conception, actions acquire the status of signs (*signifiants*) — though only in specific structural positions — i.e., carriers of a specific significance which remains the same in diverse tales, even when represented by different events occupying analogous positions in plot sequences. Therefore, the direction of Propp's analysis leads from events to their significance and from a surface variety to the discovery of an identity of meaning on the deep level. In particular tales, these meanings are tied to different events and may be analysed in separation from their *signifiants* — which is exactly what Propp is doing by arranging the functions and grouping them into seven semantic spheres.

Let us consider whether the concept of function retains the same meaning in Brémond's conception. Brémond frees the function from Propp's sequence to subordinate it to a different entity: the tripartite elementary sequence. It is, however, clear that an elementary sequence does not constitute a satisfactory model for narrative units. It is not a semiotic (signifying) unit, since the relations between its elements which Brémond considers do not concern events as carriers of specific meanings, but as real events. Brémond's sequence is, simply put, a model of any simple process of action whose subject initiates (or does not initiate) a specific action with a definite purpose, succeeding (or failing) to reach the aim — a certain change in the surrounding world. In other words, Brémond's model refers above all to the actions themselves — to the behaviour of human beings in the real world — and can apply to fictitious actions in a narrative only provided that their meaning (function) in the texts is determined once and for all as one of imitating real-life human actions, especially the cause-and-effect links between such actions.

Thus, Brémond's grammar constitutes a particular and rather banal ontology of human behaviour which can only be applied to explanations of fictitious occurrences if the aforementioned, fairly demanding condition is accepted. For Brémond, a function taken out of the sequence which determined its significance within the narration is no longer a function, but simply an event within the plot. The fact that Brémond goes on to analyse that event or action as a part of a three-stage process does not change anything, since his triad describes the cause-and-effect links between events, and not the syntactic and semantic connections between their significance within the narrative structure. Brémond's theory, therefore, at best describes the possible courses of plots, but not the meanings borne by those plots. It cannot, for instance, account for the fact that the same complex sequences

of events may carry entirely different meanings in different plots.

Propp's conception, which often identifies the function of an event only when its consequences are revealed, describes the signifying structure of narration, not the logic of the plot. Contrary to Brémond's criticism, Propp assigns to a given clash the function of a struggle not because it ends with the hero's victory: a victorious fight may also represent the entirely different function of a trial. It becomes a struggle only when the victory over an opponent cancels out a villainy or a lack; generally speaking, struggle occurs when the victory allows the hero to attain the goal that he had set out to achieve. Thus, Jonathan Culler is right in criticising Brémond's grammar: "It is true that if the hero does battle with the villain much of the interest for the reader may depend on the uncertainty of the outcome; but one can say that this is also uncertainty about the function of the struggle. The reader knows its significance and its place in the tale only when he knows the outcome" (Culler 1975: 209).

Culler cites examples of plots in which only the knowledge of the results of events reveals their significance in the structure of the plot:

The moments of choice or bifurcation of which Brémond speaks can be thought of as points in the plot when action itself poses a problem of identification and classification. After a severe quarrel hero and heroine may either be reconciled or go their separate ways, and the suspense which the reader might feel at such moment is, structurally, a desire to know whether the quarrel is to be classified as a testing of love or as an end of love. And it is only when the enigma or problems is resolved that he moves from an understanding of action to an understating or representation of plot. (Culler 1975: 211)

The distinction between action and its significance is missing in Brémond's analysis; he stops at actions and does not reach the question of their significance for the narration.

Brémond's suggestions that his conception is structurally the closest to a grammar of language seem unjustified, as well. The generative model proposed by Brémond, which proposes that the initial event opens two possibilities and the choice of one of them restricts the number of available alternatives to follow, etc., does not correspond structurally to any grammar of language. It merely resembles the manner of modelling grammars, that is, the grammar of finite states, which was rejected by Chomsky. Propp's model turns out to be more satisfactory in that regard, too, being closer

to the linguistic structure of a generative grammar. In Propp's approach, the process of generation begins with the sequence of thirty-one functions which is a structural pattern shared by all fairy tales. As with Chomsky, the process of generation follows a series of rules of the "write A in the place of X" type, where X denotes the successive functions of the opening pattern, while A represents the events in a tale substituted in their place.

Finally, it has to be noted that Brémond's grammar — even when treated as a model for generating plots, not establishing the significance of events in the plot — is unsatisfactory for purely formal reasons, as it does not fulfil the fundamental requirement of adequacy. This interpretation suggests that the grammar is capable of generating all plots — and only plots — of narrative texts. From this point of view, Brémond's model has an excessive generative power, i.e., produces more than just the plots. As has already been pointed out, Brémond's grammar, his elementary sequence and complex sequences alike, models the connections between physical (real) actions as much as the connections between actions that are the subject of a narration.

The most recent works by textual generativists make it possible to assert that Brémond's results discouraged the representatives of this school from attempts to construct purely syntactic grammars. The failure to fulfil the requirement of adequacy, a weakness of other textual grammars apart from Brémond's, was one of the reasons why the representatives of this school currently devote more attention to the level of manifestation. It seems that only the inclusion of this level of textual structure into the analysis will make it possible to describe the difference between a real action and an action that is a subject of a statement.

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