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A review of scene and sequence concepts

Abstract

This research aims to review the concepts of scenes and sequences from the teachings of masters in screenwriting. This objective stems from a descriptive methodological perspective: we propose to study some elements of the communication process of cinema and television narrative through scenes and sequences, defining both concepts and applying these notions to a particular audiovisual text through case analysis. Analysis will confirm that experts refer to the term scene for different realities, generating confusion among audiovisual narrative scholars. We propose a distinction of the term scene into two different concepts: the *scene* and the *narrative scene*, which, in fact, are two different parts. As far as the sequence notion is concerned, there is enough consensus regarding its constitutive nature, although there are interesting nuances among authors, some of whom emphasize the relevance of the central conflict, whilst others emphasize the completeness of the event in the sequence. Employing the case method, the theoretical notions studied here are applied to a *Pilot* episode of *Breaking Bad*, in order to contribute to the elucidation of the concepts, the object of this investigation, and verify the coherence of the proposal.

Keywords

Scene, sequence, narrative structure, Breaking Bad, tv series.

1. The narrative structure

When talking about the structure of a film or television series, diverse authors refer to the internal disposition of the story in their critique. But what is the arrangement and order by which they begin? The vast majority of authors refer to the classic model of the three acts: exposition, development, and resolution. In the first act (approach) the character and his objective would be presented. In the second (development) the main character tries to overcome the problems he encounters to reach said objective. In the third act (resolution) the hero achieves –or not– his goal. Aristotle talked about this structure in his *Poetics*, and other scholars have materialized it through different models, such as the well-known paradigm attributed to Syd Field.

The study of the script's structure has always been a key element within the subject material and many experts have devoted their efforts to delve into this field. "They are the so-called gurus of screenwriting. They come from schools of cinema (Richard Walters, Ronald Tobias, Christopher Vogler, Dara Marks, Lew Hunter) and the professional world (Robert McKee, John Truby, Syd Field, Linda Seger)" (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2014, p. 154). This author clarifies that not all the masters of script follow the division into three acts. Truby, for example, talks about seven fundamental steps, whereas McKee says that there can be three or

more acts. Horacio and Shakespeare divided their plays into five acts, however, “the division in five acts does not contradict the structure in three acts: it is based on it” (2014, p. 155).

For decades, American television fiction has used the division into four acts for one-hour dramas, “although now in many programs, five are used; in 2006, ABC introduced six acts in their episodes of an hour” (Douglas, 2011, p. 45). However, this division into four, five or six acts also preserves the trio, approach, development and resolution perspective, as we see when, for example, DiMaggio delves into some of the constituent elements of the stories in four acts: “Act I is the approach, [...] this determines the theme of the plot and the dramatic element of the character or characters. [...] Acts II and III are the acts of confrontation. In these is where the characters meet the most obstacles. [...] Act IV is the act of the resolution” (1990, p. 120).

It is clear that this division into four acts is in full harmony with the three-act structure: approach-confrontation-resolution. As DiMaggio points out, the confrontation –the development of the story– is divided into two parts –acts II and III. Additionally, this is based on a commercial criterion, since in many American tv series there is an advertising break in the middle of the confrontation.

It is evident that the structure of a drama is related to organizing internal elements into three acts through the approach, development and resolution. These acts, in turn, are composed of the so-called scenes and sequences, the definition of which is the main objective of this research. What are the scenes and sequences? On this matter there are some discrepancies among the experts.

1.1. *The scene*

Most authors in the industry admit that a scene is a narrative unit with a lesser part than a sequence. A sequence would be composed of one or several scenes. Although there are writers who argue to the contrary, that the sequence is a minor unit of the scene (based on a mistranslation and the confusion created by the term “theatrical scene”), this paper admits scene as a lesser section of a sequence.

Sánchez-Escalonilla, one of the contemporary scholars that has best summarized the concepts related to the narrative of the script, explains that in the American film world “scene is known as dramatic action unit (i.e., provided with confrontation and outcome), determined by a spatial location criterion. It is said in a script or in a film a change of scene occurs for each change of location. But it may occur that a change of scene be determined by a temporal criterion” (2014, p. 188). That means a scene is a unit with space-time continuity. If one of these two variables –or both– changes significantly, it changes the scene.

Vanoye seems to agree with this approach to asserting that the scene “is a denser narrative unit, briefer than the sequence where something specific occurs. In the script it is marked by a change of place or time” (1996, p. 105).

Seger speaks of beats, which she defines as “an incident or dramatic event” (Seger, 1991, p. 44) and says that these “individual dramatic moments, one after the other, create a scene. Several scenes, one after the other, create an act, and those acts, one after the other, create the story” (1991, p. 44).

Comparato also seems to agree with Seger when he affirms that “the structure is the fragmentation of the story in dramatic moments, in dramatic situations that will later become scenes” (1993, p. 119).

Robert McKee tries to isolate the constituent elements of the scene, defining it as: “an action through conflict in almost continuous time and space, which turns the value-charged condition of a character’s life on at least one value, with a degree of perceptible significance. Ideally, every scene is a story event” (2003, p. 56).

The values mentioned by McKee refer to story values: “universal qualities of human experience that may shift from positive to negative or negative to positive.” For example,

alive/dead (positive/negative) is a story value, as is freedom/slavery, truth/lie, love/hate, courage/cowardice (2003, p. 54).

It appears that all scholars agree that a scene is a unit of dramatic action or an event. For the first two (Sánchez-Escalonilla; Vanoye) the essential key is in the space-time continuity, for the following two (Seeger; Comparato) the key is in the dramatic incidents, for McKee, in that it generates a significant change through a conflict, while the space-temporal continuity is a relative factor.

Examining the proposed definitions of scene, we verify that they speak of different units, hence the reason why this paper was written: the same concept is used to refer to different realities, which creates confusion.

The definition of McKee, Seeger and Comparato is adapted more to the work of a screenwriter when he/she forms the structure of a story, or the task that a script analyst carries out, having examined a story.

In contrast, the scene from the perspective of Sánchez-Escalonilla or Vayone, as a narrative unit with space-temporal continuity, (which divides the script into narrative blocks with headings), INT/EXT. LOCALIZATION. DAY/NIGHT is, without doubt, a concept relevant to the construction of stories, but even more suited to the work carried out by the artistic and technical production team.

Many scenes in *Breaking Bad* serve just to situate the action. For example, when briefly showing Walter's house or the high school façade, while other scenes develop complex events. It would not make much sense to compare a narrative unit that shows the façade of a house with a scene (narrative) developed and provided with an approach, or development and outcome.

Verifying the existence of two different perspectives –one more technical and the other more narrative–, it seems prudent to divide the scene concept in two, since in fact it refers to two different realities: one more focused on the spatiotemporal continuity unit, (scene) as most professionals and scholars refer to it, and another more centered on the action, the “what happens”, the dramatic unit which we will call the narrative scene.

The scene and the narrative scene may at times coincide, as we shall see later.

1.2. *The sequence*

Syd Field defines the sequence as “a series of scenes linked or connected by a single idea” (1995, p. 86) and enumerates some constituent elements of the sequence when he says that “the sequence is a whole, it is a unit, or block, of dramatic action in itself” (1995, p. 87).

Vanoye affirms that the sequence “is a set of scenes united, connected, by an idea, a motive, a situation, an action” (1996, p. 104).

For his part, Sánchez-Escalonilla states that “American directors and screenwriters called sequence a unit of dramatic action, composed of scenes and determined by a diegetic criterion: an axis exposition-confrontation-outcome, that is not subject to temporal or spatial criteria since the sequence transcends space and time” (2014, p. 188).

For McKee, the sequence is “a series of scenes –generally two to five– that culminates with greater impact, than any previous scene” (McKee, 2003, p. 60). Consequently, this author prefers to stress the entity of the sequence by referring to its “greater impact”; and not like Syd Field, who indicates the condition of a full event as a defining element of it.

The key of the sequence will be, for almost all the cited authors, the importance of their action, the greater relevance. McKee mentions explicitly that “greater impact”, and others that do so implicitly by considering the sequence as a set of scenes connected by an idea (Vanoye; Syd Field) or determined by this axis exposition-confrontation-outcome (Sánchez-Escalonilla). What is more, Syd Field proposes a refinement, adding that the sequence essence is the fact of creating a whole, of being complete, or almost complete, by referring to a greater

structure. An act, a movie or an episode obviously depend in some way on larger structures for their entire understanding.

If Syd Field's point of view is considered, the difference between narrative scenes and sequences is very significant: the sequences are full (or almost full) stories and the narrative scenes are not. A complete sequence might be isolated from the story and could itself be a short film. Indeed, this quality of autonomy could provide the key to the perfect sequence: the one that can be established by itself in an independent story. A challenge, on the other hand, highly rated among screenwriters: to guarantee a piece of the story not only establishes an important contribution to the whole story but it works as an independent story.

Recalling Aristotle, Tobias underlines a fundamental principle of the narrative: the fact that "a unity of action creates a whole that consists of a beginning, a development, and an end" (Tobias, 1999, p. 34). No doubt all scenes have a certain totality, but only when a narrative unit is completed (sequences of Syd Field) are we talking about an independent story, which does not need any more parts to be completely understandable.

It is possible that a simple scene could create a complete totality, and this occurs when the scene and the sequence coincide. For example, one could argue that this is the case when Walter is trying to lock the glove box of his car. In said situation, we have just begun to understand Walter White and his sad life: driving home, he puts something inside the glove box and tries to shut it, but he fails, again and again, he is unable to achieve this simple goal. It is a symbolism of his life. This event tells a story that could be seen as complete; it could become a micro short-film. In fact, the actor who plays Walter White, Bryan Cranston, comments on the DVD extras about the meaning of this scene: "I like this little moment. It is trivial, but it sums up his life. He tries to put a sign in the glove box and it won't even close, and you think: Oh, my God!" (Gilligan, 2013b). "The story of his life...", Who would not argue that this small moment which synthesizes the life of Walter White could be considered complete? In fact, that is precisely the narrative achievement: transforming this triviality into a great moment, which tells something excellent and whole. It might be a symbolic fact, but it effectively helps to turn it into a complete one. Nevertheless, in this research, that event is considered a narrative scene and not a sequence, and the reason is that although it certainly appears to be an essential and complete incident, the conflict established is not considered to be especially relevant to the narrative structure of the whole episode.

But there is a real "problem" relating to scenes, narrative scenes, and sequences: they are hugely subordinate to the subjectivity of their creators. It may not seem scientific to admit that two authors could view the identical event as opposing: one as a sequence and the other as a scene, and conclude both arguments are right, but there is no problem with that. Science seeks true knowledge through the articulation of concepts, but the realization and embodiment of those notions are part of the storytelling craft. Wherever a screenwriter discovers a sequence (a full and remarkable story) others can see a scene (a mere action) without involving a real problem. In fact, writing-room arguments are loaded with discrepancies between screenwriters regarding the suitability and transcendence of including (or not) certain events in the story.

1.3. *Definition of scenes, narrative scenes and sequences*

On the back of the preceding considerations, it would be appropriate to establish the three concepts discussed.

Acts are structured into sequences, then into narrative scenes, which are constituted by scenes, each of them providing a particular means to the story.

A scene could be defined according to most of the authors as...

...a narrative unit with space-time continuity.

The scene appears detailed in the script with a heading that gives a triple-action information: INT/EXT. LOCALIZATION. DAY/NIGHT. The key of this narrative unit is the

spatiotemporal continuity, which serves to organise the narration in sections (space-time) that provide the effective development of the story, and above all, organization of the production.

The narrative scene would be, according to McKee...

...”an action through conflict in more or less continuous time and space that turns the value-charged condition of a character’s life on at least one value with a degree of perceptible significance” (2003, p. 56).

The key to this narrative section is the unity of action: just one action established by one or several moments, which will normally be developed in several scenes, although it can also happen in one.

How many narrative scenes are there in a story? McKee says that between 30 and 70 for a movie.

We consider significant the difference between scene and narrative scene since it is common to denominate scene into a narrative unit with space-time continuity as well as a complex unit of action, which usually lacks spatiotemporal continuity (narrative scene).

Finally, we can define the sequence, as...

...*a set of scenes [or narrative scenes] which constitute a relevant action.*

Or according to Syd Field’s point of view...

...*a set of scenes [or narrative scenes] that constitute a complete action.*

The key to this narrative unit would be the importance of its action, in which a relevant conflict for the story arises. And, if we consider the teachings of Syd Field, in addition to its significance, this action should be independent and complete.

1.4 The sequence shot

The sequence shot is a narrative entity that adapts perfectly to the three concepts studied. During a sequence shot, the action is recorded in continuity, changing the frame and the place of the action, as the camera moves while recording the images, in such a way that “an integral action is developed throughout a single shot” (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2003, p. 236). The sequence shot has that spatiotemporal continuity of the scene itself but is –in a certain sense a contradiction– it usually develops into various spaces, as the camera covers different sets while showing action. That action may be as diverse as high society customs in New York, in *The Age of Innocence* (Martin Scorsese, 1993) or the intricacies of the acting art, in *Birdman* (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2014). It must also be emphasized that the sequence shot constitutes a unit of action (as in any narrative scene) and has the capacity to show a relevant and complete conflict (as in any sequence).

In this way, the sequence shot tends to be a real technical, narrative and artistic challenge that combines all the peculiarities of the scene (spatiotemporal continuity), the narrative scene (unity of action) and the sequence (relevance or completeness) in the same narrative unit registered in continuity.

2. The narrative structure of the *Pilot*

Following is the study of some scenes, narrative scenes, and sequences of *Breaking Bad*’s first episode, to examine the concepts covered through the case study.

As explained by its creator, Vince Gilligan, *Breaking Bad* is a drama of one hour in four acts. “In the United States, a comedy broadcast on any one of the major networks lasts 22 minutes, while dramas last 43 (47 on some basic cable channels like AMC or FX). The rest of the time is for commercial breaks, which also serve to structure the story into the usual four acts (Newman, 2006, p. 21)” (García Martínez, 2012).

These four blocks are created with autonomy and each one elaborated being mindful of its structure. “Every act in an hour-long episode is an independent unit with its crisis and climax. The acts are separated by advertising breaks” (DiMaggio, 1990, p. 120). Besides, each

of these four segments is an independent and consistent story. “While screenwriters structure an episode, they must consider every act as a complete block” (DiMaggio, 1990, p. 121).

The showrunner Vince Gilligan, when talking about the way in which they structured the story of *Breaking Bad*, says: “we do the division in a teaser, which is the opening sequence we see before the title, and then Act one, Act two, Act three, Act four” (2011).

Breaking Bad's script team was formed by Vince Gilligan, Moira Walley-Beckett, Thomas Schnauz, Sam Catlin, George Mastras, Peter Gould, Gennifer Hutchison and Gordon Smith who is the scriptwriter's assistant. They were the people who structured the stories, working with the dynamics Brett explains: “virtually all discussion in the writing room boils down to two possible questions: ‘Where the character is going’ and ‘What happens next?’ The ideas opposing the actions. The text versus the subtext” (Martin, 2014, p. 364).

Breaking Bad is focused on the transformation of Walter White, its main character, who, although is a bland chemistry teacher, becomes the darkest methamphetamine dealer in New Mexico. The destructive spiral of Walter White “has to do with the emotional restitution of his long wounded pride” (Echart & García, 2013). This inner journey of the protagonist, who provides the central argument of the series, has a particular manifestation in the structure of the story.

The series is mainly a character-driven story: “we do everything in our power to listen to the characters and let them show us where we should move. This class of organic narration puts us, sometimes, into unpleasant situations” (Gilligan & Van DeeWerf, 2013, p. 73).

2.1. *The four acts of the Pilot*

The first episode of *Breaking Bad* does not lose an essential idea of narrative writing: “conflict is the essence of drama” (Seger, 1994, p. 181). During the 55 minutes of the Pilot, the main character has to deal with a large number of incidents, although he is a dull chemistry teacher at a small high school in Albuquerque (New Mexico), or so it appeared...

In less than an hour of fiction, Walter White discovers that he has inoperable lung cancer, faces the manager of his other job: a car wash that he leaves furiously, enters the world of drugs, steals chemicals from the chemistry laboratory at his high school, produces the purest methamphetamine on the market, escapes from the police, stands up to three pimps that mock his son who suffers from cerebral palsy and overcomes the largest of them. He tries to commit suicide, and, he kills two drug dealers! All this, just a loser who has not amounted to anything in his life; and incidentally, he turned fifty during this episode.

It is difficult to be familiar with such a gray character, subject to said circumstances during the short period of three or four weeks that constitutes the diegetic time of a Pilot. A real dramatic achievement for its creators.

Let us look at a summary through acts of the episode. To conduct the analysis, greater importance has been given to the broadcast episode, since it is the final audiovisual text, but usually comparing the events with the original script, where its creator, Vince Gilligan, provides guidelines on his creative intentions and the way to structure the narrative.

Teaser: Duration: 4,15 minutes. The escape. Walter drives a caravan at full speed through the desert. He is dressed in just underpants and a gas mask. At his side, there is an unconscious young man also wearing gas mask. On the floor of the caravan rolling around are the “lifeless” bodies of two drug dealers.

Act 1: Duration: 12,56 minutes. Walter's life. He has insomnia. We get acquainted with his family: a domineering woman, a teenage son with cerebral palsy, and a baby on the way. Later we see him in class, where it is obvious that his students do not have any respect for him. He eats alone in his office. To make ends meet, he also works in a car wash where he is humiliated. The glove box of his car doesn't fit –neither does his life–. He is given a surprise family party in which he is the center of mockery by his policeman brother-in-law. His love life is poor and, finally, he is in poor health, because he faints in the middle of work.

Act 2: Duration: 12,18 minutes. Lung cancer and consequences. An ambulance drives Walter to the hospital where he is given a scan and diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer. He leaves his job at the car wash and tells his boss to get lost. He witnesses a DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) raid with his brother-in-law. He forces Jesse, a former student and small-time drug trafficker who escapes from the police raid, to associate with him to make drugs, or else, he will turn him over to the police.

Act 3: Duration: 9,37 minutes. Walter and Jesse hatch a plan. Walter steals material from the high school lab to make drugs. He muses, together with his partner Jesse, on how to carry out the manufacture of the substance and, finally, they decide to buy an RV in which to cook the drugs in the desert.

Act 4: Duration: 17,35 minutes. First cooking and sale: they prepare the first batch of drugs, everything goes well for them. Jesse tries to sell the drugs to a few Drug Lords that he knows –Emilio and Crazy-8–, but then ends up fighting them because Emilio saw Walter White in the DEA's car during the raid. Walter, to save his life, tells them that he will teach them how to make a drug as pure as the one he has cooked. They agree, get into the RV and Walter prepares a toxic product that ends up killing the two drug lords. Finally, we see Walter storing the money he obtained. He then has sex with his wife.

When it comes to structuring the story, it is necessary to know the subplots of the episode, i.e., “stories of relationships between characters” (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2014, p. 63). There are four subplots in the Pilot.

1. Walter's disease (Walter with Walter: learning subplot that could be considered an emotional story).
2. The relationship between Walter and his family (love/lack of love subplot).
3. The relationship between Walter and Jesse (learning subplot).
4. The relationship between Walter and Bogdan, the boss of the car wash (enmity subplot).

The episode lasts 55 minutes, 8 minutes more than a conventional one, so some mismatches with the usual structure of the rest of the episodes are reasonable. They are practically reduced to Act 4, which is longer than usual, because it lasts 17,35 minutes, and standard episodes are no longer than 10. Plus, the teaser requires a few minutes more in this episode, because teasers do not frequently exceed two minutes, and here it is stretched to more than four.

2.2. *The scenes of the Pilot*

A narrative success of the series is the presentation of its main character, a grey, bland teacher, in the heart of an absolutely frantic and absurd situation, thanks to the temporary alteration of the story through the opening flashforward. “The figure and personality of Walter White caught our attention from the beginning of the series. This takes place, above all, because of the narrative architecture chosen as the structural design of the first episode.” (Gordillo & Guarinos, 2013, pp. 188–189). Due to how tedious it would be, the description of the 59 Pilot scenes is omitted, mentioning just:

The teaser: The RV getaway (4:15 min), uses 5 scenes to show the escape of the RV in the desert.

Act 1: The life of Walter White (12,56 min.), is composed of 14 scenes.

Act 2: Cancer and its consequences (12,18 min.), 14 scenes.

Act 3: Cooking methamphetamine (9,37 min), 9 scenes.

Act 4: First cooking and sale (17,35 min.), 17 scenes.

59 scenes, in total. Those units are determined by headings (INT/EXT. LOCATION – DAY/NIGHT), which have two goals: divide the story into smaller sections and coordinate the production.

2.3. *The sequences of the Pilot*

When examining fiction, it is verified that it is more coherent and effective to consider the sequences as units of action with a relevant conflict (McKee), than as a complete story (Syd Field). And this is due to the higher objectivity of this reasoning. According to this principle, we found thirteen sequences in the Pilot episode:

- The escape from the police (Teaser)
- Walter's family (Act I)
- Walter's work (Act I)
- The humiliating second job at the car wash. (Acts I)
- The family party (Act I)
- Walter's lung cancer (Act II)
- The confrontation with his boss at the car wash (Act II)
- The search for a partner to make narcotics (Act III)
- How to start a narcotics business (Act III)
- The first cooking (Act IV)
- The dispute with the pimps (Act III)
- The confrontation with the drug dealers (Act IV)
- The attempted suicide and firefighters' discovery (Act IV)

Applying Syd Field's viewpoint –looking for a full story– to identify the sequences in a tv series episode or movie is a subjective and more complicated craft. That is why Syd Field's complete rule can shift the writing work –and analysis– in a manner that is too personal and subjective. It seems more reasonable to build the sequences around the most relevant conflicts.

The 13 mentioned sequences establish central concepts or conflicts: escape, family, work, humiliation, party, cancer, dispute, partner, business, first cooking, pimp's confrontation, confrontation with dealers, suicide attempt, and final discovery. The central concept always carries a conflict with it, for example, the first concept: "family", serves to show the viewer how a family composed of a dominant woman, a son with cerebral palsy and a baby on the way, constitute an environment that will make the protagonist more vulnerable to achieving his goals.

The scenes that establish the different sequences appear in continuity. This is the reason the dramatic bit¹ "the escape in the RV", for example, arises into two sequences. The first in the teaser, when we see the beginning of Walter's exciting getaway in the desert, and the next one at the ending of the episode, when we are party to the suicide attempt and discover that the sirens are actually from the fire department instead of the police.

This dramatic beat is divided into two sequences because of a narrative strategy: starting with a flashforward that does not show the full story until the ending. When the script returns to the desert, then, "we are full-circle back to the Teaser" (Gilligan, 2008, p. 54). This makes us wonder if these two sequences could, in fact, be considered as one, even though they are in different acts. You can ask the question this way: can a sequence be divided into several acts while remaining a sequence? It has opened many unreachable questions for the study carried out in this paper, leaving the issue for future research. At this moment, we establish, with the majority of the authors, this dramatic beat (the escape in the RV) holds two sequences: one in the teaser, and other in Act IV.

¹ Antonio Sánchez-Escalonilla refers to the dramatic beats as complete dramatic units with their own approach, development and outcome, interconnected by a cause/effect relationship (2014, pp. 175-176). A dramatic beat could be considered a future sequence, although some beats consist of a single scene or several sequences (2014, p. 189).

2.4. *The narrative scenes of the Pilot*

To better understand the narrative scene concept, let us look at the scenes and narrative scenes that make up the sequence “lung cancer”. The value of this sequence is the health/disease of the main character, which changes from positive to negative: so far, Walter is a healthy man and but discovers that he has inoperable lung cancer.

The sequence is composed of 6 scenes, giving rise to 4 narrative scenes:

1. Walter passes out at the car wash.
2. An ambulance circulates with an activated emergency siren.
3. A doctor recognizes Walter inside the ambulance and asks him whether he smokes.
4. Walter has a scan.
5. The doctor tells Walter that he has inoperable lung cancer, but he seems more interested in the spot of mustard of doctor’s white coat than in the shocking news.
6. Walter tells his wife that the day has gone well.

Scenes 2 and 3, outside and inside the ambulance, form a unique narrative scene, we could headline “transfer to the hospital”, the conflict is the suspicion that something is wrong, according to doctor’s examination and attitude. Scenes 4 and 5 make the narrative scene “testing and diagnostics”.

This example clarifies well the difference between a scene and a narrative scene. The outside and the inside of the ambulance are two scenes that create a narrative scene. We distinguish between inside and outside mainly for the production’s organization rather than a narrative matter. The most important thing, for example for the cinematographer, is to know how he/she is going to organize the recording for the outside and inside. He/she knows that they are two different tasks, one will be held outdoors, on a highway, and the other will be held indoors, presumably on a set; the recording of both scenes requires a very different technical and artistic expertise. On the other hand, to compose a story, a screenwriter is more interested in the conflict of this narrative scene (something goes wrong), and the distinction between inside and outside of the ambulance will be slightly more circumstantial in this singular case. With this example, it is palpable that the scene is a more transcendent concept for the production team, while the narrative scene is more relevant to the creation of the narration.

Concerning the implied subjectivity of the work of writing –and analysis of– a script, there is another good example here. It well may be argued that inside this sequence are five narrative scenes instead of four. For example, if you discriminate between the scan (one narrative scene) and diagnosis (another). But viewing the fiction, the scan lasts just five seconds, in which we see how Walter’s scan is done. This moment just shows the main character in the hospital, there is not much difference between seeing him in the scan or seeing the hospital facade. The significant point happens when the doctor gives the diagnosis. Consequently, it seems coherent to include these two scenes into a unique narrative scene, and not separate them into two.

A third and final consideration: what makes the “lung cancer” sequence become a complete story precisely is the closing provided by scene 6, where Walter tells his wife the day has gone well. This end informs us that Walter will endure his inoperable lung cancer alone, and all that this implies, so this turning point closes the story with relevant information that provides a kind of completion to the sequence. The challenge purposed by Syd Field seems to be making a complete story of each sequence. A more arduous task for any screenwriter.

After the analysis of the scenes and narrative scenes that make up the sequence of lung cancer, observe the narrative scenes that make up the episode 3 in the teaser.

7 in Act 1: (1- Walter’s family, 2- Walter’s job, 3- Walter’s second job, 4- the glovebox scene, 5- the surprise party, 6- Walter’s poor sex life and 7- fainting).

7 Act 2 (1-medical tests and diagnosis, 2-"the good day", 3- "fuck your, Bogdan", 4- ask Hank to attend a raid, 5-waiting in the car and 5b Walter sees Jesse flee, 6- police raid, 7- Walter makes a proposal to Jesse that he cannot refuse).

5 in act 3 (1- Skyler and Mary talk about Walter, 2- robbery at high school, 3- deciding to cook in a caravan 4- I do it because "I'm awake" and 5- Walter confronts the pimps who mock his son).

8 in Act 4 (1- the first cooking, 2- Jesse tries to sell the drugs to two drug dealers, 3- the drug dealers go to the RV and when they see Walter, they try to kill him, and Jesse, 4- Walter kills the drug dealers, 5- RV in the ditch, 6- the police, in fact, are the firemen, 7- putting away the money, 8- Walter and Skyler have sex).

How many narrative scenes are in the Pilot episode?: 30.

Typically, several scenes give rise to a narrative scene, several narrative scenes make up a sequence, several sequences create an Act, and different acts develop the whole story. Although, at times, as already determined, scenes can coincide with narrative scenes and sequences.

3. Conclusions

1. This research proposes a separation of the scene concept into two, for the better understanding of any audiovisual narrative: scene and narrative scene. A scene is a narrative unit with space-time continuity. The key to this unit is spatiotemporal continuity. The narrative scene is, according to McKee: "an action through conflict in more or less continuous time and space that turns the value-charged condition of a character's life on at least one value with a degree of perceptible significance. Ideally, every scene is a story event" (2003, p. 56). The key is its unity of action.

2. A narrative scene is a particularly relevant concept when used to create or analyze a story. A scene is an essential narrative section in the development of scripts and crucial for the organization of production.

3. There seems to be a consensus about the components of a sequence. It is a set of scenes (or narrative scenes) narrating an action with a consistent conflict. Syd Field emphasizes it on being a complete narrative unit.

4. After this review, it looks considerably objective, effective and coherent to say that every sequence is so because it carries an important conflict, rather than being itself a full story. It is a narrative and artistic challenge to create a sequence with a whole story. This observation may need to be investigated in future research.

5. In view of the theoretical considerations applied to the case study of *Breaking Bad*, we can state that the Pilot episode is structured in 4 acts, which are suited to the three acts structure, and is composed of 13 sequences, 30 narrative scenes and 59 scenes.

6. The narrative scenes appear to be the most adequate method of structuring a story because they are neither too few (as in sequences) nor too many (as in scenes).

7. The shot sequence combines the singularities of a scene (spatiotemporal continuity), narrative scene (unity of action) and sequence (significance and/or completeness).

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