

## Structuralism

Vladimir Propp

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Outline

- Announcements
- Vladimir Propp
- Aarne and Thompson
- The Problem
- Methods and Materials
- Features of Functions
- Conclusions
- Key Functions
- Sample Tale: "The Magic Swan Geese"



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Exam essays

Provide a Freudian analysis of either "Vasilisa the Beautiful" or "The Armless Maiden." Note that the question does not ask for a list of Freudian terms and concepts with illustrations from the tale; it asks, instead, for an analysis of the tale according to Freudian principles. In other words, organize your essay around the tale, not the theory.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Exam Multiple-Choice

In "The Magic Swan Geese," when the young girl asks the stove where the geese went and the stove responds "If you eat my cake of rye I will tell you," the young girl replies "In my father's house we don't even eat cakes of wheat!" Bruno Bettelheim might view the girl's response as an example of which stage of her development ...

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Extra Credit

- If you wish to submit extra credit, you must consult with an instructor no later than Wednesday, November 4, 5:00 p.m.
- Consultations take about 10 minutes
- You may see any instructor (not just your own) during office hours without an appointment
- Consultations are individual
  - No groups huddled together after recitations
- Consulting does not obligate you to submit extra credit (you can change your mind), but if you don't consult by the deadline, we can't accept your extra credit
- Therefore: If you think there is any chance that you might want to write extra credit, come in for a consultation

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Why we require consultations

- When we didn't, students often submitted unacceptable work and failed to receive full credit
- Consultations let you tell us what you'd like to write about and how you'd like to do it, and they let us provide suggestions for how to succeed and warnings about possible misunderstandings and other pitfalls

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Student responsibilities

- Read about extra credit in the Course Description before the consultation
- Come in with some idea of what you want to write about
- Print and bring with you an Extra Credit Consultation Form (there's a link in the extra-credit section of the Course Description), so that you and the instructor can complete it together

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Instructor responsibilities

- Advise students about how to succeed in their extra-credit work based on the specific papers they plan to write
- Alert students to misunderstandings that have sometimes caused students in the past not to receive full credit

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Propp: Background

- Vladimir Propp, 1895–1970
- Professor (folklore), St. Petersburg University
- Russian Formalism
  - Scientific study of literature, akin to the natural sciences
  - Moscow Linguistics Circle, Moscow, 1915
  - Opoyaz (Society for the Study of Poetic Language), St. Petersburg, 1916–23
- *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Motifs: Aarne and Thompson

- Antti Aarne, Stith Thompson
- Aarne's basic typology (excerpt)
  - Supernatural adversary
  - Supernatural husband or wife
  - Supernatural task
  - Supernatural helper
  - Magic object
  - Supernatural power or knowledge
  - Other supernatural motif

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## The Problem

- Morphology
- Classification systems
- Identification of primitive compositional elements.
- Specific actors change; their actions (functions) are constant.
- Number of specific actors is infinite, number of functions is limited.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Examples from Tales

- A tsar gives an eagle to a hero. The eagle carries the hero away to another kingdom.
- An old man gives Suchenko a horse. The horse carries Suchenko away to another kingdom.
- A sorcerer gives Ivan a little boat. The boat takes Ivan to another kingdom.
- A princess gives Ivan a ring. Young men appearing from out of the ring carry Ivan away into another kingdom.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Features of Functions

- A function is an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action.
- Functions are the stable, constant features of tales, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. Functions are the fundamental features of tales.
- Sequence of functions is always identical.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Tales and Functions

- All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure:
  - Sequence of functions is always identical.
  - No function excludes the possibility of any other function.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Multiple-Move Tales

- One move
  - I. A \_\_\_\_\_ W\*
- Two moves (serial)
  - I. A \_\_\_\_\_ W\*
  - II. A \_\_\_\_\_ W\*
- Two moves (embedded)
  - I. A \_\_\_\_\_ G ..... K \_\_\_\_\_ W\*
  - II. a \_\_\_\_\_ K

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Propp's Conclusions

- Number of function is limited.
- Functions need not all be present in all tales, but those functions that are present always occur in the same order.
- Because of the preceding two facts, all tales are similar.
- Functional classification gives a better measure of similarity among tales than motif-based classification.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Tale Components

- Sets of Functions
- Modifications of Functions

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Sets of Functions

- Preparatory section
- Villainy (A), Liquidation (K), and Wedding (W)
- Departure or dispatch (↑) and Return (↓) of hero
- Donor Sequence (D, E, and F)
- Struggle (H), Victory (I), and Branding (J)
- Pursuit (Pr) and Rescue (Rs) of hero
- Claims of false hero (L), Recognition of hero (Q), Exposure of false hero (Ex), and Punishment of false hero (U)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Modifications of Functions

- Positive or Negative Results
- Trebling

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What to Learn From Propp 1

- Know principal types
  - A: Villainy, B: Mediation
- Know that these have subtypes, but you do not need to memorize the lists of specific subtypes
  - A<sup>1</sup>: Kidnapping, A<sup>2</sup>: Seizure, etc.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## What to Learn from Propp 2

- Concentrate on most common functions
  - As you read tales and think about them from a Proppian perspective, you will notice that some functions occur in almost every tale, while others are rarer
- Know what the common specific functions are, but you do not need to memorize the letters
  - You may have to identify “acquisition or receipt of magic agent” in a tale, but you do not have to remember that Propp labeled it “F”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Preparatory Section

- Represented by Greek letters in Propp's notation
- Precedes the Villainy (A) or lack (a) that serves as the main motivation for the tale
- Initial Situation ( $\alpha$ )
- Absentation ( $\beta$ )
- Interdiction ( $\gamma$ ) and Violation ( $\delta$ )
- Reconnaissance ( $\epsilon$ ) and Information ( $\zeta$ )

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Villainy, Liquidation, and Wedding

- Villainy (A) or Lack (a)
  - Lack may be implicit (young man lacks a wife)
  - Motivation for subsequent action
- Liquidation (K)
  - Villainy or Lack is remedied after adventures
- Wedding (W)
  - May be implemented by acquisition of wealth or power, rather than explicitly a wife

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Departure or dispatch and Return

- Departure or dispatch ( $\uparrow$ ) of the hero
  - Villainy (A) or Lack (a) has occurred
  - Mediation or connective incident (B)
    - The hero knows about the misfortune
  - The hero consents to counteraction (C)
  - The hero departs ( $\uparrow$ )
- Return ( $\downarrow$ ) of hero
  - After liquidation of misfortune or lack (K)
  - Hero still may be pursued (Pr) or have other problems

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Donor Sequence

- “Donor” is Propp’s term for “magic helper”
- First function of the donor (D)
  - Donor makes contact with and tests the hero (test may be implicit)
- Reaction of the hero (E)
  - Hero may or may not pass the test
  - This function is only the *hero’s reaction to the donor’s test*. When a hero reacts to anything else, it is a different function. “Reaction” is technical term here; it doesn’t mean any time anyone reacts to anything.
- Acquisition or receipt of magical agent (F)
  - Hero is rewarded or not, depending on response to test

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Struggle, Victory, and Branding

- The hero struggles with the villain (H)
- Victory over the villain (I)
- May be followed by branding of the hero (J)
  - Branding may result from injury in battle
  - If the hero is marked physically, the mark will prove significant later, e.g., to recognize the hero (Q) and expose a false hero (Ex)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Pursuit and Rescue

- Pursuit of the hero by the villain (Pr)
  - This is pursuit *after* the liquidation of misfortune (K)
  - E.g., the hero defeats the villain (I) and rescues the princess (K), but the villain then chases the hero
  - Other times when the villain chases the hero are not the same function. “Pursuit” is another technical term; it doesn’t mean any time anyone pursues anyone else.
- Rescue of the hero (Rs)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Claims, Recognition,  
Exposure, and Punishment**

- Claims of a false hero (L)
- Recognition of the hero (Q)
- Exposure of the false hero (Ex)
- Punishment of the false hero or villain (U)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Modifications**

- Positive or negative results
  - When the donor tests the hero (D), the hero may pass or fail (E) and receive or not receive a magic agent (F)
- Trebling
  - Trebled H-I (Struggle-Victory) sequence
  - Hero may battle three dragons, each with more heads than the last

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---