

Propp's Functions

Initial Situation

element 0: introduction & setup = initial situation – α (alpha)

- α — introduction of protagonist(s) and setup for story (context)

preparatory section

- **function 1: member(s) of family absents themselves from home = absentation – β (beta)**
 - β_1 — absentation (departure) of elder(s)
 - β_2 — death of parent(s)
 - β_3 — absentation (departure) of sibling(s)

- **function 2: an interdiction is addressed to protagonist(s) = interdiction – γ (gamma)**
 - γ_1 — interdiction issued
 - γ_2 — inverted form of interdiction issued as order or suggestion

- **function 3: interdiction is violated = violation – δ (delta)**
 - δ_1 — interdiction violated
 - δ_2 — order or suggestion executed

- **function 4: antagonist(s) makes attempt at reconnaissance = reconnaissance – ϵ (epsilon)**
 - ϵ_1 — reconnaissance by antagonist(s) to obtain information about victim(s) / protagonist(s)
 - ϵ_2 — inverted form of reconnaissance by victim(s) / protagonist(s) to obtain information about antagonist(s)
 - ϵ_3 — reconnaissance by other person(s)

- **function 5: antagonist(s) receives information about victim(s) / protagonist(s) = delivery – ζ (zeta)**
 - ζ_1 — antagonist(s) receives information about victim(s) / protagonist(s)
 - ζ_2 — inverted form of delivery as victim(s) / protagonist(s) receives information about antagonist(s)
 - ζ_3 — information received by other means

- **function 6: antagonist(s) attempts to deceive victim(s) / protagonist(s) in order to take possession of them or their belongings = trickery – η (eta)**
 - η_1 — deceitful persuasions by antagonist(s)
 - η_2 — direct application of magical agents by antagonist(s)
 - η_3 — use of other forms of deception or coercion

- **function 7: victim(s) / protagonist(s) accept deception and unwittingly help antagonist(s) = complicity – θ / λ (theta/lamda)**
 - θ_1 — victim(s) / protagonist(s) reacts to persuasions of antagonist(s)
 - θ_2 — victim(s) / protagonist(s) mechanically falls victim to influence of magical agent
 - θ_3 — victim(s) / protagonist(s) gives in or reacts mechanically to deceit of antagonist(s)
 - λ — preliminary misfortune caused by deceitful agreement

complications

- **function 8 (and/or 8a) is always present in tale**
 - **function 8: antagonist(s) causes harm or injury to victim(s)/member of protagonist's family = villainy – A**
 - **A1** — kidnapping of person
 - **A2** — seizure of magical agent or helper
 - **Aii** — forcible seizure of magical helper
 - **A3** — pillaging or ruining of crops
 - **A4** — theft of daylight
 - **A5** — plundering in other forms
 - **A6** — bodily injury, maiming, mutilation
 - **A7** — causes sudden disappearance
 - **Avii** — bride is forgotten
 - **A8** — demand for delivery or enticement, abduction

- **A9** — expulsion
- **A10** — casting into body of water
- **A11** — casting of a spell, transformation
- **A12** — false substitution
- **A13** — issues order to kill [requires proof]
- **A14** — commits murder
- **A15** — imprisonment, detention
- **A16** — threat of forced matrimony
- **Axvi** — threat of forced matrimony between relatives
- **A17** — threat of cannibalism
- **Axvii** — threat of cannibalism among relatives
- **A18** — tormenting at night (visitation, vampirism)
- **A19** — declaration of war

function 8a (and/or 8) is always present in tale

function 8a: one member of family lacks/desires something = lack – a

- **a1** — lack of bride, friend, or an individual
- **a2** — lack of helper or magical agent
- **a3** — lack of wondrous object(s)
- **a4** — lack of egg of death or love
- **a5** — lack of money or means of existence
- **a6** — lacks in other forms

function 9: misfortune/lack made known, protagonist(s) approached with request/command, they are allowed to go/dispatched = mediation, the connective incident – B

- **B1** — call for help received, protagonist(s) as seeker(s) dispatched
- **B2** — protagonist(s) as seeker(s) dispatched directly
- **B3** — protagonist(s) as seeker(s) released, allowed to depart
- **B4** — announcement of misfortune in other forms, protagonist(s) as seeker(s) departs
- **B5** — transportation of banished protagonist(s) as victim(s)
- **B6** — condemned protagonist(s) as victim(s) released, spared
- **B7** — lament or plaintive song by/about victim(s), heard/sung by protagonist(s)

function 10: protagonist(s) agrees to or decides on counteraction = beginning counteraction – C

- **C** — protagonist(s) as seeker consents to counteraction

function 11: protagonist(s) leaves home = departure – ↑

- **↑** — departure, dispatch of protagonist(s) from home

donors

function 12: protagonist(s) tested, interrogates, attacked, etc. which prepares way for receiving magical agent or helper = first function of donor – D

- **D1** — donor tests protagonist(s)
- **D2** — donor greets and interrogates protagonist(s)
- **D3** — request of favor after death
- **D4** — entreaty of prisoner for freedom
- ***D4** — entreaty of prisoner for freedom, with preliminary imprisonment
- **D5** — request for mercy
- **D6** — request for division
- **d6** — argument without express request for division
- **D7** — other requests
- ***D7** — other requests, with preliminary helpless situation of person making request
- **d7** — helpless situation of donor without stated request, possibility of rendering service
- **D8** — attempt to destroy
- **D9** — combat with hostile donor
- **D10** — offer of magical agent as an exchange

function 13: protagonist(s) reacts to actions of future donor = protagonist's reaction – E

- **E1** — protagonist(s) withstands ordeal (or not)
- **E2** — protagonist(s) answers greeting (or not)
- **E3** — protagonist(s) renders service to dead person (or not)
- **E4** — protagonist(s) frees of captive
- **E5** — mercy to suppliant
- **E6** — protagonist completes apportionment and reconciles disputants
- **Evi** — protagonist(s) deceives disputants

- E7 — performance of some other service, fulfillment of request, pious deeds
- E8 — attempt at destruction averted by turnabout
- E9 — protagonist(s) vanquishes hostile donor (or not)
- E10 — deception in an exchange, protagonist(s) employs magical agent on donor

function 14: protagonist(s) acquires use of magical agent = acquisition of magical agent – F

- F1 — agent is directly transferred
- f1 — gift is of a material nature
- F- — agent is not transferred
- F= — protagonist's negative reaction provokes cruel retribution
- F2 — agent is pointed out
- F3 — agent is prepared
- F4 — agent is sold and purchased
- F43 — agent is made on order
- F5 — agent is found by chance
- F6 — agent suddenly appears of its own accord
- Fvi — agent appears from out of earth
- F7 — agent is drunk or eaten
- F8 — agent is seized
- F9 — agent offers its services, places itself at someone's disposal
- f9 — agent indicates it will appear of its own accord in some time of need
- F96 — meeting with magical helper(s) who offers their services

from entry of helper to end of first move

function 15: protagonist(s) transferred, delivered or led to vicinity of object of search = transference, guidance – G

- G1 — protagonist(s) flies thru air
- G2 — protagonist(s) travels on ground or water
- G3 — protagonist(s) is led
- G4 — route is shown to protagonist(s)
- G5 — protagonist(s) makes use of stationary means of communication (stairs, bridge, passageway. etc.)
- G6 — marked trail shows the way (blood, tracks, yarn, etc.)

function 16: protagonist(s) and antagonist(s) join in direct combat = struggle – H

- H1 — fight in an open field
- H2 — contest, competition
- H3 — game of cards
- H4 — weighing with scales

function 17: protagonist(s) branded = branding – J

- J1 — application of mark to body of protagonist(s)
- J2 — transference of token (ring, towel, etc.)

function 18: antagonist(s) defeated = victory – I

- I1 — antagonist(s) defeated in open battle
- *I1 — antagonist(s) defeated by one protagonist(s) while the other(s) hide
- I2 — antagonist(s) defeated in contest
- I3 — antagonist(s) defeated at cards
- I4 — antagonist(s) defeated in weighing with scales
- I5 — protagonist(s) kills antagonist(s) without preliminary fight
- I6 — expulsion of antagonist(s)

function 19: initial misfortune or lack is liquidated = liquidation – K

- K1 — direct acquisition thru application of force or cunning
- Ki — direct acquisition thru application of force or cunning, with one person compelling another
- K2 — acquisition accomplished by several helpers at once
- K3 — acquisition achieved with help of an enticement or decoy(s)
- K4 — liquidation of misfortune as direct result of previous actions
- K5 — object of search attained instantly thru use of magical agent
- K6 — poverty done away with thru use of magical agent
- K7 — object of search captured
- K8 — breaking of spell on victim
- K9 — resuscitation of slain
- Kix — resuscitation, with preliminary obtaining of water of life

- **K10** — release from captivity
- **KF1** — liquidation in form F: object of search is transferred
- **KF2** — liquidation in form F: object of search is pointed out
- **KF3** — liquidation in form F: object of search is prepared
- **KF4** — liquidation in form F: object of search is sold, purchased
- **KF43** — liquidation in form F: object of search is made on order
- **KF5** — liquidation in form F: object of search is found
- **KF6** — liquidation in form F: object of search appears of its own accord
- **KFvi** — liquidation in form F: object of search appears from out of earth
- **KF7** — liquidation in form F: object of search is drunk or eaten
- **KF8** — liquidation in form F: object of search is seized
- **KF9** — liquidation in form F: object of search offers its services, places itself at someone's disposal
- **KF96** — liquidation in form F: object of search are helpers who offers their services

function 20: protagonist(s) returns = return – ↓

- ↓ — return of protagonist(s)

function 21: protagonist(s) pursued = pursuit – Pr

- **Pr1** — antagonist(s) flies thru air
- **Pr2** — antagonist(s) demands guilty person
- **Pr3** — antagonist(s) pursues, accompanied by series of transformations into animals
- **Pr4** — antagonist(s) pursues, with transformations into enticing objects
- **Pr5** — antagonist(s) attempts to devour protagonist(s)
- **Pr6** — antagonist(s) attempts to destroy protagonist(s)
- **Pr7** — antagonist(s) attempts to gnaw thru tree with protagonist(s) up in it

function 22: rescue of protagonist(s) from pursuit = rescue – Rs

- **Rs1** — protagonist(s) carried thru air or runs quickly
- **Rs2** — protagonist(s) places obstacles in path of pursuers [with transformation]
- **Rs3** — fleeing, with transformation to escape recognition
- **Rs4** — fleeing with concealment of escapee
- **Rs5** — concealment of escapee by blacksmiths
- **Rs6** — escapee goes thru series of transformations into animals, plants & stones
- **Rs7** — warding of temptation of enticing object(s)
- **Rs8** — rescue or salvation from being devoured
- **Rs9** — rescue or salvation from being destroyed
- **Rs10** — leap into another tree

beginning of second move —

(repeat from new villainy to unrecognized arrival)

function 23: protagonist, unrecognized, arrives home or another country = unrecognized arrival – o

- **o** — unrecognized arrival

function 24: false protagonist(s) presents unfounded claims = unfounded claims – L

- **L** — claims of false protagonist(s)

function 25: difficult task proposed to protagonist(s) = difficult task – M

- **M1** — ordeal by food and drink
- **M2** — ordeal by fire
- **M3** — riddle guessing
- **M4** — ordeal of choice
- **M5** — hide and seek
- **M6** — test of strength
- **M7** — test of adroitness
- **M8** — test of fortitude
- **M9** — test of endurance
- **M10** — tasks of supply
- **Mx** — tasks of manufacture
- **M11** — sorting tasks
- **M12** — other tasks

function 26: task resolved = solution – N

- **N1** — food and drink consumed
- **N2** — fire survived

- **N3** — riddle guessed
- **N4** — correct choice selected
- **N5** — protagonist(s) not found
- **N6** — test of strength passed
- **N7** — test of adroitness passed
- **N8** — test of fortitude passed
- **N9** — test of endurance passed
- **N10** — object(s) supplied
- **Nx** — object(s) manufactured
- **N11** — sorting tasks completed
- **N12** — other tasks completed
- ***N** — solution before deadline

function 27: protagonist(s) recognized = recognition – Q

- **Q1** — recognition of protagonist(s) by mark on body
- **Q2** — recognition of protagonist(s) by token
- **Q3** — recognition of protagonist(s) by accomplishment of difficult task
- **Q4** — recognition of protagonist(s) by family member

function 28: false protagonist(s) or antagonist(s) exposed = exposure – Ex

- **Ex1** — exposure of false protagonist(s) or antagonist(s) by lack of mark on body
- **Ex2** — exposure of false protagonist(s) or antagonist(s) by lack of token
- **Ex3** — exposure of false protagonist(s) or antagonist(s) by failure to accomplish difficult task
- **Ex4** — exposure of false protagonist(s) or antagonist(s) thru song / lament

function 29: protagonist(s) given new appearance = transfiguration – T

- **T1** — new physical appearance by magical action of helper
- **T2** — protagonist(s) builds palace
- **T3** — protagonist(s) puts on new garments
- **T4** — humorous and rationalized forms, new appearance achieved by deception

function 30: false protagonist(s) or antagonist(s) punished = punishment – U

- **U** — punishment of false protagonist(s) or antagonist(s)
- **U-** — false protagonist(s) or antagonist(s) pardoned

function 31: protagonist(s) marries and ascends throne = wedding – W

- **W#*** — protagonist(s) weds and ascends throne
- **W#** — protagonist(s) weds
- **W*** — protagonist(s) ascends throne
- **w1** — protagonist(s) promised marriage
- **w2** — protagonist(s) resumes marriage
- **wo** — protagonist(s) given monetary reward or other forms of material gain

Function definitions expanded on those from: "Morphology of the Folktale by Vladimir Propp" (University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas, 1968), pp.149-155

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