Narrative Morphology in Barbauld's 'Sir Bertrand: A Fragment'

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The Northanger Library Project

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The year 1773—nine years after the 'first' Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, appeared—saw the publication of a seminal book, *Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose*, by Anne Laetitia Aikin (later Barbauld) and her brother John. The book contained several critical essays as well as fiction, and included a brief tale (1430 words) entitled 'Sir Bertrand: A Fragment'. One of the most conscientious bibliographers in the field of Gothic studies writes of this tale as follows:

> The greatness of [this] Gothic fragment lies in its attempt to generate pure terror without an over-reliance upon Walpole's machinery. And in her medieval preternaturalism, Barbauld is at least Walpole's equal if not his superior. In the fragment, a grim bell is heard by a wandering knight who turns aside to investigate 'an antique mansion.' Upon entering the dark building he is confronted by such Gothic experiences as the touch of a cadaverous hand and the horrid manifestation of a corpselike knight 'thrusting forward the bloody stump of an arm.' Finally, he gains entrance to a remote chamber where a shrouded lady, clearly an early version of a Gothic sleeping beauty, stirs in her coffin at his approach. With a kiss upon her hideously cold lips, the knight releases her from death and the scene instantly shifts to a gay feast. Here, the Gothic fragment aborts. Nevertheless, the initiation of the quester into the marvelous horrors of the strange castle culminating with his nocturnal visit to the chamber of lovely death places Barbauld's fragment squarely at the head of the tradition of feudalised Gothic (Frederick S. Frank, 'The Gothic Romance: 1762-1820', in Tymn (ed.) 1981, pp. 3-175:40).

Some of the details in this summary are not quite exact (for instance, the knight does not 'turn aside to investigate', and the words 'hideously cold lips' reflect the critic's, not the knight's impression), but on the whole Frank's assessment is most sound. This tale has much more going for it than just the fact of its counting among the very first short pieces of Gothic fiction, or of its being a worthy rival of Walpole's novel (though the felicity of such a comparison is open to question); and though it has not been abundantly reprinted, several serious editions of it are currently available on the Internet. That we place it once more before the public can only be justified on grounds of the study that accompanies it. We will not extol the story's merits, nor will we (as too many approaches do) enumerate the Gothic appurtenances of our tale. What is offered here is rather the kind of study that is mostly absent from the critical literature, an analysis of how precisely the narrative structures of Barbauld's story 'generate pure terror'.[1]

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1) The folktale hypothesis

Our hypothesis is a simple one, but we believe it has far-reaching consequences. We observe that 'Sir Bertrand: A Fragment' adheres to a narrative convention that values action over other considerations such as characterisation or detailed description of individuals and setting. Further, we observe that the story makes an unabashed use of the supernatural or, more precisely, of the marvellous. In the third place, the text of 'Sir Bertrand' displays certain regularities that tend to be played down or avoided in canonical fiction. It would seem that the story must respond to analysis in terms of models centred on these three traits (focus on action, use of the marvellous, conspicuous regularities) as much as, or even better than to approaches based on the criteria of what we commonly understand as canonical literature. It is undeniable that 'Sir Bertrand' follows conventions found in medieval romances, but it is easy to overstate the case of Barbauld's (and the Gothics') flair for the medieval: after all, hers is a *short prose* fiction—a genre not found in medieval poetics.[2] Nor is it easy straightforwardly to explain 'Sir Bertrand' in terms of the conventions of the Gothic *genre*—a genre which in 1773 was hardly such, at least if we consider that it had only produced one major work by the time our story was published. Briefly, the prose narrative genre which exhibits the aforementioned traits is the folktale. We therefore offer an analysis of 'Sir Bertrand' based on standard approaches to certain types of folk narrative.[3] We will argue that the degree of success in our application of these approaches to the story warrants the hypothesis that at least one major source for 'Sir Bertrand' is to be found in the folk- and fairytale genres.

Our essay will deal with narrative structure, but other aspects of folktales such as motifs or typology should eventually be considered too. Though we offer a formal analysis of the story, we repudiate any facile claims that form is devoid of content; on the contrary, we take the commonsense position that only the form—which is to say, the language—of the text can generate meaningful content.

[2] Short prose narratives of course exist in the Middle Ages; but not as isolated artifacts, only as parts of some collection. The medieval romance, on the other hand, is not characterised, whether prose or verse, by the concentration and linear development we notice in 'Sir Bertrand' and the emerging genre of the short story.
[3] The claim that Gothic goes back, at least in part, to folklore has been made before (see, e.g., Carson 1996). No scholar, however, has yet attempted to prove this claim.

2) Propp's model

Within the framework of Russian formalism, folklorist Vladimir Propp analysed the structures of traditional Russian tales and produced a narrative paradigm which he published in 1928 under the title *Morphology of the Folktale.*[4] His model identifies thirty-one functions or main actions performed by the dramatis personae which account for the composition of every fairytale. Each function is 'defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action' (Propp 1928/94:21). Plot in this genre, he claims, is nothing but action and that is why functions are independent of how, why and by whom they are fulfilled. They always occur in a specific order (although there are some exceptions), and not all of them need to be present in a tale. Further, tales are arranged in different 'moves' or 'sequences' consisting of a string of functions, functions which may or may not appear again in other sequences of the same tale.

Insightfully, in his preface to the second edition of Propp's *Morphology* (1968) folklore scholar Alan Dundes suggested the possibility of applying this model to materials other than Russian fairytales. Indeed, the Proppian pattern has proven very useful to literary research since it has allowed scholars to show the connection between folklore and both canonical and popular genres such as the Anglo-Saxon epic or the spy thriller.[5] The protagonist of 'Sir Bertrand' is in the middle of an adventure the plot pattern of which also recalls that of fairytales: a hero goes through several successive challenges in order to right a wrong and obtain a boon. If our hypothesis is correct, it should be possible to apply Propp's model to our Gothic story. The results should show that fundamental elements of oral tradition such as folktale narrative structure can be recovered in Gothic fiction; and both agreements with and deviations from the folktale model should be in principle significant.

First of all let us list the thirty-one functions Propp identifies in fairytales. For each function Propp offers a brief explanation of its nature, an abbreviated definition, and a conventional sign to identify it.[6] These signs will later on allow us to construct our tale's 'DNA'.

[4] Although the title reads *Morphology of the Folktale* (Russian *Morfológija skázki*), Propp acknowledges in his second chapter that his work is dedicated to the study of the genre of folktales known as 'fairytales' (*volšébnaja skázki*) (Propp 1928/94:19), i.e. the specific subset of folktales classified in the now standard Aarne-Thompson index (1961) between numbers 300 and 749.

[5] See, e.g., Daniel Barnes' 1970 'Folktale Morphology and the Structure of *Beowulf*' or Umberto Eco's 1965 'Le strutture narrative in Fleming'.

[6] Each function can be realised by different 'function forms' (A^1, A^2, A^3, etc.) taken from open paradigms, but for our analysis these forms are not necessary and therefore will not be included.

0. *Initial situation* (α)
I. *One of the members of a family absents himself from home* (absentation; β)
II. *An interdiction is addressed to the hero* (interdiction; γ)
III. *The interdiction is violated* (violation; δ)
IV. *The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance* (reconnaissance; ε)
V. *The villain receives information about his victim* (delivery; ζ)
VI. *The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings* (trickery; η)
VII. *The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy* (complicity; θ)
VIII. *The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family* (villainy; *A*)
VIIIa. *One member of a family either lacks something or desires to have something* (lack; *a*)
IX. *Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched* (mediation, the connective incident; *B*)
X. *The hero agrees to or decides upon counteraction* (beginning counteraction; *C*)
XI. *The hero leaves home* (departure; ↑)
XII. *The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or a helper* (the first function of the donor; *D*)
XIII. *The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor* (the hero's reaction; *E*)
XIV. *The hero acquires the use of a magical agent* (provision or receipt of a magical agent; *F*)
XV. *The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search* (spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance; *G*)
XVI. *The hero and the villain join in direct combat* (struggle; *H*)
XVII. *The hero is branded* (branding, marking; *I*)[7]
XVIII. *The villain is defeated* (victory; *J*)
XIX. *The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated* (liquidation; *K*)
XX. *The hero returns* (return; ↓)
XXI. *The hero is pursued* (pursuit, chase; *Pr*)
XXII. *Rescue of the hero from pursuit* (rescue; *Rs*)
XXIII. *The hero, unrecognised, arrives home or in another country* (unrecognised arrival; *O*)
XXIV. *A false hero presents unfounded claims* (unfounded claims; *L*)
XXV. *A difficult task is proposed to the hero* (difficult task; *M*)
XXVI. *The task is resolved* (solution; *N*)
XXVII. *The hero is recognised* (recognition; *Q*)
XVIII. *The false hero or villain is exposed* (exposure; *Ex*)
XXIX. *The hero is given a new appearance* (transfiguration; *T*)
XXX. *The villain is punished* (punishment; *U*)
XXXI. *The hero is married and ascends the throne* (wedding; *W*)

Table 1: Propp's Thirty-One Functions of the Fairytale

[7] A mistake in the English translation (Propp 1928/94:52-53, 152-53) assigns *J* to Branding, *I* to Victory. The proper order is Branding (*I*), Victory (*J*).

As regards the characters of the tale, Propp distinguishes up to seven dramatis personae that are defined according to the functions they perform, i.e., in relation to their so-called *sphere of action* (Propp 1928/94:79):

Villain	Causes villainy (*A*); fights with Hero (*H*); pursues Hero (*Pr*)
Donor	Prepares Hero (*D*) for the transmission of a magical agent (*F*) (the Donor may be friendly, but also hostile; since the tale is fundamentally action, the Donor's *attitude* is immaterial, what counts is the result of the Hero's confrontation with him or her).
Helper	Guides Hero spatially (*G*); liquidates misfortune or lack (*K*); rescues Hero from pursuit (*Rs*); helps solve difficult task (*N*); transfigures Hero (*T*)
Princess (sought-for person) and / or her father	Assigns difficult tasks (*M*); brands Hero (*I*); exposes false hero or Villain (*Ex*); recognises Hero (*Q*); punishes a second Villain (*U*); marries Hero (*W*)
Dispatcher	Dispatches Hero on his quest (*B*)
Hero	Departs on search (*C ↑*); reacts to demands of Donor (*E*); marries (*W*)[8]
False hero	Departs on search (*C ↑*); reacts to demands of Donor (*E*); presents unfounded claims (*L*)

Table 2: Propp's Dramatis Personae

The notion of 'spheres of action' helps clarify a phenomenon noted by Propp: a function may be performed by different dramatis personae. One character may be involved in several spheres of action, and a single sphere of action may be distributed among several characters (Propp 1928/94:80-81). One character may thus act as Villain at one stage, as Donor at another; a girl may be sought-for person (Princess), Villain, Donor, Helper, or Dispatcher at different points along the tale. Furthermore, from a structural point of view, in the sphere of action of magical helpers 'objects and qualities act in the same way as any living thing' (Propp:82).

[8] Though Propp does not mention this, the struggle with and victory over the Villain (*HJ*) of course belong to the Hero's sphere of action too.

3) The Proppian structure of 'Sir Bertrand'

The following table displays the narrative functions present in the story. Square brackets indicate the action or event is not mentioned in the narrative itself but is understood to have happened; following Propp, a minus sign after a function identifies a function that is improperly carried out or that fails to yield the expected result; and our symbol ⇨ represents a phenomenon noticed by Propp: functions can be assimilated to other functions (Propp 1928/94:66-70). Thus, a challenge (*D*) may simultaneously be a confrontation or attack (*H*).[9]

SEQUENCE I	
[*A*	A spell has been placed on lady and mansion]
SEQUENCE II	
γδ	Hero hopes to cross moors before curfew but night surprises him[10]
↑	Hero sets out (gets lost)
DE-F-	Moon discloses moors and disappears behind clouds; hero throws himself on the ground in despair[11]
DEF	Hero hears distant bell, starts up and sees light which shows the way
G	Hero crosses moors and reaches moated ditch
DEF	Moon shows antique mansion[12]
G	Hero crosses draw-bridge and reaches mansion's courtyard
DEF	Mysterious light appears at a turret window and vanishes together with moon
G	Hero approaches mansion, reaches porch and gate and knocks three times
DE-EF	Hero perceives light and bell again and almost runs back towards his horse but honour makes him return to the porch; pulling out sword, he opens door
G	Hero enters mansion
DE-F-	Door shuts with a thundering clap and hero, turning wildly, vainly tries to open it
DEF	Blue flame on staircase beckons
G	Hero climbs stairs, enters wide gallery and reaches second staircase
DEF	Bell tolls, hero is scared but resolves to proceed
G	Hero starts up the stairs
D⇨H	He meets first enemy: dead cold hand grasps his left hand drawing him forwards[13]

[9] On the logic of the entire system of functions, see Aguirre 2007, especially chapter 3.

[10] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term *curfew* (from the Old French *cuevrefeu*, literally 'to cover fire') referred to a decree operative in medieval Europe by which at a fixed hour in the evening, indicated by the ringing of a bell, fires were to be extinguished. The practice of ringing the bell at a fixed hour (usually 8 or 9 PM) continued even after the original regulation was withdrawn. In 'Sir Bertrand' the word *curfew* is used in this sense, but it can also be taken as indicating the existence of an interdiction (Propp's *γ*). The light which leads Sir Bertrand towards the mansion thus acquires a special value: it is if not unlawful at least exceptional because it should not be there at that time of the day. It therefore suggests (and invites) a transgression (Propp's *δ*).

[11] In 'Sir Bertrand' the nature of function *F* (and its corresponding negative *F-*) may be as simple as a physical indication of the way to follow (e.g. by means of light, sound or a key), or it may signal a psychological incentive or arousal which empowers him in various ways (mainly, encouraging him to go forwards). As mentioned before, in what concerns magical helpers (*F*) qualities (such as the ability to overcome fear and advance) operate in the same way as do living things or objects (e.g. a key). So, from the morphological point of view, every time the hero advances we consider he has 'received' the equivalent of a 'magical' quality, and conversely, when he withdraws or is stopped by an obstacle, that quality is (momentarily at least) lacking.

[12] It is called a mansion, but has turrets, battlements, a moat and drawbridge—it is a castle, really.

E⇨J	Hero strikes a lethal blow at the hand; a loud shriek indicates the success of his action
G	He rushes forwards up the narrow, crumbling staircase and pushes open a low iron grate at the end of it
DEF	Glimmer shows the way
G	He enters a winding passage
DEF	Deep hollow groan is heard[14]
G	He proceeds beyond first turning of passage
DEF	Blue flame beckons and hero follows it
G	Hero enters lofty gallery
D⇨H	He meets second enemy: figure completely armed shows 'bloody stump of an arm'
E⇨J	Hero aims fierce blow at figure
F	Figure vanishes letting fall massy iron key
DEF	Flame shows folding doors; hero applies key to lock
G	Hero enters large apartment
DEF	Hero follows bell and flame
G	He arrives within six feet of coffin
D⇨H	Lady rises up in coffin and (third confrontation) statues advance towards him clashing their sabres
E⇨J	Hero rushes through towards her; he clasps her in his arms and she kisses him
K	Spell is broken: building and lady are restored
Q	He is acknowledged as her deliverer
W	He receives laurel garland, banquet, is feasted, and is taken into lady's confidence.

Table 3: Proppian structure of 'Sir Bertrand: A Fragment'

In fairytales, functions *DEF* usually occur once (or thrice), and have clearly distinguishable manifestations. In 'Sir Bertrand', one peculiarity to be studied later is iteration: the segment *DEF* occurs so often as to make it hard (and, often, sterile) to differentiate between challenge (*D*), reaction (*E*), and help (*F*) given (or denied), and consequently to render a too nuanced analysis impractical. Often the text offers simply the challenge and the help provided; often, too, details are given as to the hero's reaction. When the former is the case, *DF* obtains; when the latter, *E* becomes prominent. At times, only *D* is made explicit. In our analysis, we offer *DEF* (or their negative versions) everytime as a full segment for simplicity's sake.

Propp's functional model for fairytales has been applied to 'Sir Bertrand' with remarkable ease and logic. This does not prove that the story is a fairytale, but it does prove that its structure is related to that of folk narrative: both in folklore and in this kind of Gothic fiction action is a fundamental feature of the structure. The analysis above allows us now to distil what might be called the story's morphological 'DNA', which may be useful when we comment on the specific traits of 'Sir Bertrand' as regards its narrative composition and compare it to the original Proppian paradigm.

[A]γδ↑ DE-F- DEFG DEFG DEFG DE-EFG DE-F- DEFG DEFG D⇨HE⇨J G
DEFG DEFG DEFG D⇨HE⇨JF DEFG DEFG D⇨HE⇨J KQW

Table 4: The Morphology of 'Sir Bertrand'

[13] That is, the donor here appears in his guise as a villain or antagonist. This correspondence between donors and villains will be explained below.
[14] This groan is cataphoric, that is, it belongs to the 'disabled' ghost the knight is to meet a few lines later.

4) Fragmentation

One of the most distinctive features of this Gothic text is its use of fragmentation. The full title of the story is 'Sir Bertrand: A Fragment'. The story starts *in medias res*, straight in the middle of a series of events ('After this adventure,') of which 'Sir Bertrand' is most probably only a little incident. It is a spurious fragment, of course, since in actual fact we do not need to know what came before or what must follow for the 'fragment' to make sense. The manuscript (for surely the reader is invited by such a title to assume this is a broken-off section of a written text) has been conveniently cut up where the amputation will do least damage.[15] No matter; the missing portions do give Barbauld's story an incomplete quality.

We read that Sir Bertrand is urged 'by a resistless desire of finishing [an] adventure' of whose nature the reader has no knowledge because the story begins when misfortune (seemingly, a spell on the mansion and the lady) has already taken place. This Initial Misfortune, presumably the outcome of Villainy (function *A*), is the only ascertainable function we have for Sequence I, and its elision is noteworthy because Propp regards the act of villainy (*A*) as peculiarly fundamental, 'since by it the actual movement of the tale is created' (Propp 1928/94:30). The earlier functions in his scheme, identified by Greek letters, have just an introductory role, namely, to pave the way for function *A* to appear.[16] In other words, fairytales usually build up a crescendo of minor events which trigger the real beginning of the story: a villainous act (*A*) or a lack (*a*). From that moment onwards, fairytales develop to reach a climax by and large in the struggle between Hero and Villain (*H*) and in the subsequent liquidation of the initial misfortune or lack (*K*).[17] So the omission of function *A* at the start of 'Sir Bertrand' is an aspect of its narrative structure which will have to receive special consideration below.

It seems that, as well as a proper beginning, most fairytales are in need of an appropriate ending: a suitable denouement that rounds off the story. However, in 'Sir Bertrand' we do not know either what happened *before* this adventure or *in which words* the lady addressed our knight after the banquet, because the tale ends as abruptly as it started. The truncated ending makes sense, of course, only if we are familiar with folk- and fairytale conventions of haunted houses disenchanted by daring youths. Such 'deviations' from the standard pattern of traditional narratives are not accidental but deliberate omissions which create a modest aura of mystery around the text and add to its fragmented quality.

[15] Barbauld is here exploiting a device which Walpole had already employed when he presented his *Castle of Otranto* as an old printed text found in a remote library, then had a character hint at the existence of 'an authentic writing' (p. 102 in Mack's 1993 edition) purportedly confirming the truth of his narrative.
[16] Nevertheless, interdiction and its violation (γ and δ) are functions of great import in 'Sir Bertrand' because they represent the first of the numerous thresholds the hero has to cross in order to complete his adventure. See below.
[17] Though the tale allows for, indeed favours, a graded series of climactic points, at, e.g., *Pr* or *M*. See Meletinsky 1973.

5) Plot

Fragmentation is not limited to the title, a truncated beginning and ending, and an omitted function; it is also to be found in the plot. On applying Propp's scheme to 'Sir Bertrand' we noticed that more than two thirds of its structure are made out of iterations of the function-segment *DEFG*: challenge, reaction, reception of magical agent and guided advance. This segment, which in all appears sixteen times,[18] corresponds to the moment of the testing of the hero's courage, and its iteration amounts to a lengthening of his progress, now fragmented into different steps of increasing hardship.[19] Advance (we know he is moving towards the turret whence the flame was first seen, so we have a definite sense of direction) is thereby checked by iteration. In a sense the hero seems to be repeating actions rather than moving forwards—a phenomenon which, as we will see below, constitutes the narrative equivalent of the physical labyrinth.

It is standard fare in traditional narrative (epic, ballad, folktale, myth) that the hero must move from point A to point B, and that in order to do this he must face some difficulty, overcome an obstacle, vanquish an antagonist. The task to be accomplished operates as a threshold between the two poles of the hero's progress, without crossing which there will be no real achievement. All traditional narrative avails itself of techniques to *delay* the consummation by extending the threshold, as it were, that separates the hero from his goal. In essence, the possibilities are: 1) multiplying the number of obstacles or tasks, 2) reiterating one or more of these, 3) lengthening or complicating one or more tasks or obstacles, 4) setting up a regressive chain of obstacles to be overcome or tasks to be carried out before the final (that is to say, the meaningful) deed can be successfully performed. Of course combinations of these are possible. When the tasks are sufficiently similar we can speak of one single task extended and fragmented into episodes, sections or phases of itself.

Sir Bertrand must perform what is basically one single action: advance through a variety of spaces, from a point somewhere in the middle of the moors to the chamber where the lady lies. Each opponent, each sign of danger hinder (and, if properly dealt with, grant) passage to the next section of the building, and so defeating his antagonists (and his own misgivings) is a subordinate part of his main endeavour. His is thus not the kind of meandering motion we find in medieval romances (crammed with detours, returns, midway changes of course, interlaced narrative strands; see Vinaver 1971) but a single relentless march forwards; the relative sophistication of the writing does not obscure the structural simplicity of the action, as brought out by the Proppian scheme. But precisely because the action is so simple, the iteration of the *DEFG* segment lengthens and stalls the knight's advance. At each point in his progress a new threshold element (be it adversary, door, gallery or staircase, light or sound) appears before him, so that the ordeal he faces becomes a series

[18] More specifically, the combination *DEFG* appears eleven times, but several variations (e.g. *DEF*, *DEG* and *DE*) are found too.

[19] These steps correspond to specific spatial locations or encounters, to wit: moors > circular moated ditch > draw-bridge > courtyard > porch > door > hall > first staircase > first wide gallery > second staircase > (*dead hand*) > low iron gate > intricate winding passage > second lofty gallery > (*dead hand's owner*) > folding doors with brazen lock > large apartment > coffin > (*black-marble statues + lady*). The whole has a concentric quality, proceeding towards the innermost chamber where her restoration is to take place. Needless to say, the sense of heightened difficulty is also achieved through physical ascent: the light proceeds from 'a window in one of the turrets', and so the hero must go up two staircases to break the spell on the mansion and the lady.

of ordeals. Two consequences follow: the merit of his actions is enhanced, but they also risk losing their meaning inasmuch as they turn out to be (pre)liminary actions only.[20]

One peculiarity of thresholds, it has by now become abundantly clear, is that they constitute spaces different in kind from ordinary space; as anthropologist Victor Turner has famously put it, the limen is 'a place that is not a place', a phantom territory governed by laws of its own.[21] While we occupy the threshold, that in-between locus, we are subjected to forces and experiences different from those that obtain in ordinary loci. Such liminal areas are endowed with numinous qualities, or are prone to generate in their occupant the experience of the Numinous.[22] Another peculiarity of thresholds is their ambiguity: they are prone to offer both promise and danger. While engaged in his search, Sir Bertrand exists in a liminal domain that seems to expand in the form of new spaces to be traversed, punctuated by new doors to be crossed and new challenges to be met.[23] A clue to understand this multiplication of threshold points is to be found in the concept of *phasing*, introduced in Aguirre (2002a) to account for the characteristic segmentation of actions or events in epic and fairytale.

[20] To give one well-known contemporary example: Frodo's part in the second and third books of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* basically consists in one single agonising march towards the Mountain of Doom. Everything else in his narrative strand is detour or repeat situation. The result, as far as he is concerned, is a sense of the futility of his effort. This, too, is part of the labyrinth experience.

[21] Victor Turner 1974, p. 239. On the significance of thresholds, see also Van Gennep 1909, Turner 1969, and Aguirre, Quance, Sutton 2000.

[22] The Numinous is not to be equated with the supernatural; it is rather the incomprehensible residue of all rational experience, and corresponds closely to what the 18th century understood by the Sublime. See Otto 1917; on the Sublime, see Burke 1757.

[23] There are basically three of each: the main gate, the low iron gate, the folding doors; the disembodied hand, the armed ghost, the Moorish statues which guard the lady.

6) Phased events

Phasing consists in expanding and/or breaking up an event into a number of sequenced and graded moments or episodes. This constructional technique conditions the narrative in several ways. It delays action, provides rhythm, creates tension, and makes a climax and denouement possible; it defamiliarises space and action, and enhances (but may also devalue) the character's deeds; it is likewise associated with patterns of latency and disclosure, of foreshadowing and fulfilment, of tension and release.[24] In our Gothic tale the hero's advance has been broken down into a series of phases or stages. The delaying of action lengthens the story: if only one light or sound guided Sir Bertrand towards the lady, or if he was challenged only once, there would not be enough meat to the narrative bone. Time and iteration are needed for the story to develop, for the illusion of process to be created. Secondly, from the recurrence of events a rhythm is established: barely has the knight crossed one threshold or made up his mind to continue his way when he meets his next ordeal. It soon becomes obvious that his enterprise is going to be marked by the passing of difficult tasks. The rhythm of phasing is hereby linked with predictability (see below).

Like the fairytale hero, Bertrand faces a series of dangers and overcomes a series of obstacles. But especially in the first half of the story, he does not simply *act* as a fairytale hero might; not only are his tests multiplied, but he is seen to waver, a prey to conflicting feelings. His motion is broken up into three or four distinct reactions which lengthen and delay the narrative of his advance. We see, for instance, how contrary impulses lead to immobility: hope and courage impel him at first, but eventually darkness and fatigue overcome him, he dreads moving for fear of pits and bogs, and at last he throws himself on the ground in despair (lines 10-14)—a state from which he will be roused by bell and light. Conversely, contrary impulses lead to action: at a given point terror urges him to retreat, then shame stops his flight, finally honour and eagerness spur him on (38-41). On hearing the door slam shut, his blood is chilled, he retreats, tries and fails to open the door, then roused again by the bluish flame he summons forth his courage and advances (45-50). Each of these instances amplifies a simple move into a succession of fragments or phases of it, yielding a psychological version of the traditional hero's more physical plight.[25]

In the third place, by the time our knight arrives at the door of the lady's apartment (where he will finally liquidate the misfortune) a climax has been reached[26]—a climax resulting from the *phasing* of the threshold Sir Bertrand must cross and the concomitant accumulation of tension (arising from e.g. unknown lights and sounds, struggles with enemies), as well as from the intangible nature of the magical agents (*F*) Sir Bertrand has obtained. Until this moment his sole help has been light, sound and his own courage. Only at the climactic point is the magical agent he is given corporeal, a key which will take him to the final confrontation which in turn will conclude

[24] For discussion see Aguirre 2002a:366-367, Aguirre 2002c:6-10. It is to be observed that phasing concerns events, and is a technique different from either simple or incremental repetition, which characterises the *language* in which events are presented.

[25] The language of the text abounds in delay devices: 'cautious steps' (13), 'after a painful march' (13), 'slow footsteps' (22); he hesitates ('a short parley with himself', 23-4) before entering the porch, and again before knocking (25); 'he was a while motionless' (30), 'it was long ere his trembling hands could seize' the door (36-7), 'several ineffectual attempts' (37), 'after a moment's deliberation' (40). 'He went slowly up' (40), 'treading lightly' (42), 'endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not' (46); the lock opens with difficulty (59-60). These moments again break up action and/or slow it down.

[26] Propp noted that 'the narrative reaches its peak' in function *K* (Liquidation of Lack). Together with Villainy (*A*), this function is an inflection point: the story officially starts with *A* and culminates with *K*.

the adventure. Finally, the quality of the hero's deed (breaking the spell) is enhanced by such an accumulation of challenges, thus bringing the adventure to a satisfactory end.

To this we may add that the technique of *phasing* defamiliarises action and, therefore, space: in extending and fragmenting the threshold, space is not only rendered visible[27] but also numinous and, therefore, an object of terror. This is because space in 'Sir Bertrand' does not exist in relation to the normal structure of the world but is problematised as recursive, disorientating, labyrinthine.[28] In particular, the multiplication of thresholds or threshold points and events renders the entire domain where the hero loses his bearings—the moors, then the mansion itself—*liminal*, an in-between zone:

DOORS		**3**
STAIRCASES		2
PASSAGES		**3**
LIGHTS		
moon	2	7
light in turret	**3**	
blue flame	2	
SOUNDS		
bell in turret	4	12
knocks on door	**3**	
slamming door	1	
shriek of dead hand's owner	1	
groan of enemy	1	
clashing of sabres	1	
soft music	1	
ENEMIES		**3**

Table 5: Iterated elements in 'Sir Bertrand'

It is noticeable that many of these items occur three times (doors, passages, light in turret, knocks on door, enemies). Some which occur singly actually belong in a larger class of iterated elements (that of sound effects). This multiplication of action, space or objects is common practice in traditional tales (see Aguirre 2002b); and although three is not the only number in fairytales, triplication does seem a favourite in Western culture.[29] Far from being an arbitrary technique, trebling is perhaps the most common phasal strategy in Western traditional narrative. In Barbauld's story it soon becomes obvious that behind every obstacle another similar one is likely to arise. There is a goal which is never lost sight of, but which is never—beyond 'getting there' or 'finishing the adventure'—acknowledged textually until the moment it is reached. Theoretically, the recurrence of doors, passages, blue flames, strides forward and so on fosters an illusion that Bertrand is not so much getting ahead as going over the same ground or, better, over the same experience—that he is caught in a maze. The nature of the maze—that space betwixt its entrance and its centre (and betwixt centre and exit)—is liminal; it differs from ordinary space in that it resists our orientation strategies, renders the common unfamiliar, lengthens action and protracts results so that motion may come to seem problematic, when not futile. And though it is not so much the character as the reader who reflects on the problematization of action, we know Bertrand is downright affected by it.

[27] On visibility and estrangement (Schklovsky's *ostranaeny*, Brecht's *Entfremdung*) see Lodge 1992:53.
[28] Not merely the mansion but the dark moors surrounding it had become for Bertrand an inextricable place.
[29] See Dundes 1968. An explanation for the Western flair for triplication has been advanced by folklorist Max Lüthi (1975), who suggested that since Indo-European possessed three grammatical numbers (viz. singular, dual, and plural), three was the smallest number capable of evoking genuine plurality. In many languages of Indo-European origin, three may thus constitute the smallest number that can be made use of to symbolise universality, wholeness or completion.

7) Incomplete objects

Essentially, phasing is a technique for fragmenting an event, place or object and simultaneously reconstituting it as a new whole—a whole which has yet been defamiliarised and thereby rendered a plausible abode of the Numinous. This becomes particularly relevant if we consider the insistent use 'Sir Bertrand' (and so much Gothic fiction besides) makes of two other 'fragments', the crumbling manuscript and the ruinous castle.

The 'incompleteness' of the manuscript which character or reader are confronted with—in our text, the *fragment* that the story of 'Sir Bertrand' is—has already been examined and needs no further comment here beyond the observation that the reader does not know where the text comes from or where it is going, hence the textual fragment turns out to be one more aspect of a multi-layered labyrinth. As to the ruin, it becomes the paradigmatic spatial fragment in Gothic fiction. Typically, it is never described as a whole building but only as a series of discrete items touched up with suitable marks of decay; we are thus prevented from having a complete view of the building beyond such vague expressions as 'a hoary pile' or, in our text, 'a large antique mansion, with turrets at the corners, and an ample porch in the centre' (lines 19-20). The fragmentary description is noteworthy:

> The injuries of time were strongly marked on every thing about it. The roof in various places was fallen in, the battlements were half demolished, and the windows broken and dismantled. A draw-bridge, with a ruinous gate-way at each end, led to the court before the building […]. (lines 20-24)

In that only items 'injured by time' are offered, this description has as its purpose not primarily a presentation of the mansion so much as a commentary on its derelict state. Paradoxically, its diminished condition and synecdochical presentation make the building seem unfinished, hence an appealing object of imaginative reconstruction in the reader's (sometimes the characters') mind.[30] This building that is only a wreck of itself, a 'place that is not a place' indeed, is the perfect embodiment of the liminal and, a fortiori, of the Numinous.

[30] By itself or in combination with the technique of iteration, this synecdochical presentation in Gothic fiction often makes the building appear larger than it naturally ought to be.

8) Typography

The story of 'Sir Bertrand' is written as one single paragraph with no beginning and no end, but with a very large number of hyphens—33 altogether. In the story as a whole (100 lines), the rate is one hyphen for every 3 lines, but more than half of them (18 out of 33) occur in lines 24-52; and between lines 36 and 52 the rate doubles, with one hyphen for every 1.5 lines; this is the segment that deals with Bertrand's demure approach and entrance and culminates in his defeat of his first adversary.[31] At certain points, hyphens indicate a liminal moment between functions *D* and *E*, that is, between the challenge to the hero and his response to it;[32] or the moment when *D* or *F* (light or sound in the role of donor or magical agent) are about to appear. At other times the hyphen highlights a silence or stillness about to be disturbed by action, be it fastening a steed, advancing 'with light and slow footsteps', knocking on or opening a door.

Hyphens isolate and thereby magnify actions, events or special situations. Characteristically (see Table 6 below) they mediate between an event in the environment and the hero's reaction to it (5 instances; 6 if we count the hero's failure to react on one occasion), between description and hero's action (6 instances; 7 if we count the hero's failure to react suitably on one occasion), or conversely, between action and description (4 instances), between action and event (the most frequent case: 7 instances), or between two consecutive actions by the hero (3 instances; 5 if we count cases where the hero fails to act at first, then reacts to his own failure effectively). In most cases they mark a point of inflection between hero and environment, creating a moment of reflection, hesitation, fear or suspense. They therefore have a clear psychological role. This use of hyphens creates a multiplicity of typographic thresholds which break up the flow of the action into discrete 'takes' separated by pregnant pauses. Each hyphen performs the function of another limen to be crossed, contributing to the phasing effect discussed above.

[31] Significantly, no hyphens occur during his encounter with the second adversary, as if no pauses or hesitations were needed there.

[32] When the hero confronts his enemies, a hyphen indicates the liminal moment between functions *H* and *J*: 'he endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not—he made a furious blow with his sword'. This is equivalent to *DE*, the Challenge-and-Reaction pattern: 'A deep hollow groan resounded from a distance through the vault—He went forwards'.

Between event and hero's reaction:
1) the sudden toll of a distant bell struck his ears — he started up,
13) [the door] yielded to his hand — he applied his shoulder to it and forced it open
21) another toll sounded from the turret — Sir Bertrand felt it strike upon his heart.
24) the dead hand was left powerless in his — He dropt it, and rushed forwards
27) A deep hollow groan resounded from a distance through the vault — He went forwards

Between description and hero's action:
2) A draw-bridge, with a ruinous gate-way at each end, led to the court before the building — He entered,
3) All was silent — Sir Bertrand fastened his steed
5) All was still as death — He looked in at the lower windows
6) All was still again — He repeated the strokes more boldly and louder
8) another interval of silence ensued — A third time he knocked,
16) Sir Bertrand's blood was chilled — he turned back to find the door

Between action and description:
4) [he] traversed the whole front with light and slow footsteps — All was still as death
7) He repeated the strokes more boldly and louder — another interval of silence ensued
11) Sir Bertrand's heart made a fearful stop — He was a while motionless;
25) [he] pushed it open — it led to an intricate winding passage

Between action and event:
9) that he might discern whether any light could be seen in the whole front — It again appeared
15) he quitted it and stept forward — the door instantly shut with a thundering clap.
18) [he] advanced towards it — It retired
19) till he came to a wide gallery — The flame proceeded along it,
26) Sir Bertrand entered — A deep hollow groan resounded from a distance through the vault
29) with difficulty he turned the bolt — instantly the doors flew open,
31) Sir Bertrand flew to the lady and clasped her in his arms — she threw up her veil and kissed his lips;

Between two simultaneous events:
10) [the light] quickly glided away as before — at the same instant a deep sullen toll
20) [the flame] then vanished — At the same instant another toll sounded from the turret
30) a lady in a shrowd and black veil rose up in it, and stretched out her arms towards him — at the same time the statues clashed their sabres

Between action and action:
12) to make some hasty steps towards his steed — but shame stopt his flight
14) he applied his shoulder to it and forced it open — he quitted it and stept forward
28) [he] applied the key to a brazen lock — with difficulty he turned the bolt

Between description and failed action:
17) it was long ere his trembling hands could seize it — but his utmost strength could not open it again

Between event and failed action:
22) A dead cold hand grasped [his] drawing him forcibly forwards — he endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not

Between failed action and reaction:
23) he endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not — he made a furious blow with his sword,
33) Sir Bertrand could not speak for astonishment — he could only return their honours by courteous looks and gestures

Between description and lady's action:
32) a lady of incomparable beauty, attired with amazing splendor entered, surrounded by a troop of gay nymphs more fair than the Graces — She advanced to the knight

Table 6: The use of hyphens in 'Sir Bertrand'

9) The appointed

'Sir Bertrand' resorts to phasal structures, but not like the folktale does. We have shown that the story is made up of sixteen occurrences of the *DEFG* function segment. This goes well beyond what folktale tellers are prepared to do,[33] and suggests deliberation. The story uses folktale techniques (such as iteration and phasing) not simply to tell a tale of action but to insist on one elementary emotion, fear. The repeated sounds, lights and threshold points Sir Bertrand comes to face in the course of his adventure play a crucial role in that through his reactions to them we see, as it were, an innocent fairytale transformed into an exploration of the psychology of dread by means of carefully structured action.

In his study of the sublime, Edmund Burke made a point about the potential for sublimity in light and sound which may give us an insight into Barbauld's choice:

> A LOW, tremulous, intermitting sound, [...] is productive of the sublime. [...] [S]ome low, confused, uncertain sounds, leave us in the same fearful anxiety concerning their causes, that no light, or an uncertain light, does concerning the objects that surround us. [...] But light now appearing and now leaving us, and so off and on, is even more terrible than total darkness: and a sort of uncertain sounds are, when the necessary dispositions concur, more alarming than a total silence. (*Enquiry* II, xix).

The key term here is 'intermitting'. The distinctness which a faint degree of light confers to darkness is enhanced by discontinuity; both faint light and intermittent light delineate that 'darkness visible' which is part of Milton's legacy to Gothic.[34] Similarly, 'uncertain sounds' limn out silence, and can add emotional intensity to it through fitful iteration. Intermittent light and sound are staple ingredients for fear, the dominant mood in our story. In the text we read of a 'bewildered' hero with 'trembling hands', startled by his own footsteps, and whose heart makes 'fearful stop[s]' everytime he catches the dim twinkling light or the toll of the distant bell. Not only action, then, but also the presence of an extended threshold, the concommitant experience of the Numinous, and above all the dread associated with these, are the main concerns of 'Sir Bertrand'. By means of a modification on the traditional narrative pattern—emphasising certain functions and deliberately omitting others—Barbauld develops a psychological tale which questions the pat structures of fairytales, and one central feature of which is fragmentation.

In this regard, the absence of function *A* is most significant—things have already happened, the present turns out to be a fragment of a broader temporal span and to be determined by some unknown past event. Fairytales rarely begin *in medias res*, and when they do they do not lean on hints as to a significant mystery in the past—rather they come out straight with an explicit statement of the problem. From the ordered run of events we are sure to understand that things *will* happen as they must for the bliss of the hero; Gothic fiction, on the other hand, most often resorts to a secret deed which, committed *in illo tempore*, will dictate the outcome. As deterministic as the fairytale, Gothic, however, etches a harsh destiny against the grain of its protagonists' expectations, whereas fairytales benevolently 'help' the hero along (whether or not he knows or accepts it) towards his

[33] Except in jocular and formula tales, six or seven phases are about the maximum a teller seems willing to offer and, as pointed out earlier, three is standard in Western folktales.

[34] Modest examples of 'darkness visible' can be found even in our brief text. One is that moon whose fitful light did not quite show the way to the hero but 'just served to give the forlorn Sir Bertrand a wide extended prospect over the desolate waste' (9-10); instead of information, this light reveals its absence. Another, that 'pale bluish flame' whose usefulness as a source of illumination is compromised by the remark that it 'cast a dismal gleam of light around.' (49)

appointed happiness. If we were to seek a terminological contrast we could say that in traditional tales some manner of providence rules, while Gothic is set in motion by a form of fate.

'Sir Bertrand' may be said to lie half way between the two genres. The chronology of events is manipulated both to the extent that the beginning of the episode is no such (it is actually a sequel to some previous adventure) and because a 'hidden' function conditions the story from the start. The text has thus a 'destinal' sense, and the ambiguity of its agents and the interchangeability of roles (Villain can be Donor, the flame-and-bell is both threat and helper, the lady is Villain and Princess) are consonant with the fact that action is paramount in 'Sir Bertrand', for, as in traditional narrative, actions are dictated by the logic of the story, not by the intentions of the characters. In such a text, we can claim on formal grounds that some manner of providence rules. In this Barbauld faithfully adheres to the fairytale formula, while adding to it an interest in the exploration of certain emotions. In other Gothic fictions the 'hidden function' (e.g., the secret murder in *The Castle of Otranto*) yields an irrevocable present and is a marker of the fatality that is to engulf many a protagonist; in 'Sir Bertrand', that fairytale-like story, it points to a providential success for this most traditional of Gothic heroes.

To sum up, it has been shown that 'Sir Bertrand' does respond to a treatment suitable to folktales. Specifically, it is susceptible of a Proppian analysis in terms of functions and dramatis personae, phasing, trebling of action, events and objects; but its omissions, hidden function, multiplication of thresholds and massive phasing of action lead to a delineation of psychological states which is foreign to fairytales.

We have argued that fragmentation is the major technique employed in 'Sir Bertrand'. It is manifested in the phasal structure of the hero's advance, in the story's recourse to the 'broken' manuscript and the ruinous mansion, in the use of hyphens to create pregnant pauses across the flow of the reading, in the disaggregation of action into short segments of itself, in the recourse to intermittence, in the omission of a crucial function *A*. It results in the creation of a narrative labyrinth—a liminal domain—as well as in a sense of the inevitable. The tale employs an aesthetics of the fragment to construct a study in fear. The more philosophical implications of this technique—which, we surmise, is the basis for all Gothic—we leave for further studies. As to the story's resemblance to specific folktales, we propose to deal with it in a subsequent paper.

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Sir Bertrand: A Fragment

---------- After this adventure, Sir Bertrand turned his steed towards the woulds, hoping to cross these dreary moors before the curfew. But ere he had proceeded half his journey, he was bewildered by the different tracks, and not being able, as far as the eye could reach, to espy any object but the brown heath surrounding him, he was at length quite uncertain which way he should direct his course. Night overtook him in this situation. It was one of those nights when the moon gives a faint glimmering of light through the thick black clouds of a lowering sky. Now and then she suddenly emerged in full splendor from her veil; and then instantly retired behind it, having just served to give the forlorn Sir Bertrand a wide extended prospect over the desolate waste. Hope and native courage a while urged him to push forwards, but at length the increasing darkness and fatigue of body and mind overcame him; he dreaded moving from the ground he stood on, for fear of unknown pits and bogs, and alighting from his horse in despair, he threw himself on the ground. He had not long continued in that posture when the sudden toll of a distant bell struck his ears — he started up, and turning towards the sound discerned a dim twinkling light. Instantly he seized his horse’s bridle, and with cautious steps advanced towards it. After a painful march he was stopt by a moated ditch surrounding the place from whence the light proceeded; and by a momentary glimpse of moon-light he had a full view of a large antique mansion, with turrets at the corners, and an ample porch in the centre. The injuries of time were strongly marked on every thing about it. The roof in various places was fallen in, the battlements were half demolished, and the windows broken and dismantled. A draw-bridge, with a ruinous gate-way at each end, led to the court before the building — He entered, and instantly the light, which proceeded from a window in one of the turrets, glided along and vanished; at the same moment the moon sunk beneath a black cloud, and the night was darker than ever. All was silent — Sir Bertrand fastened his steed under a shed, and approaching the house traversed the

whole front with light and slow footsteps — All was still as death — He looked in at the lower windows, but could not distinguish a single object through the impenetrable gloom. After a short parley with himself, he entered the porch, and seizing a massy iron knocker at the gate, lifted it up, and hesitating, at length struck a loud stroke. The noise resounded through the whole mansion with hollow echoes. All was still again — He repeated the strokes more boldly and louder — another interval of silence ensued — A third time he knocked, and a third time all was still. He then fell back to some distance that he might discern whether any light could be seen in the whole front — It again appeared in the same place and quickly glided away as before — at the same instant a deep sullen toll sounded from the turret. Sir Bertrand's heart made a fearful stop — He was a while motionless; then terror impelled him to make some hasty steps towards his steed — but shame stopt his flight; and urged by honour, and a resistless desire of finishing the adventure, he returned to the porch; and working up his soul to a full readiness of resolution, he drew forth his sword with one hand, and with the other lifted up the latch of the gate. The heavy door, creaking upon its hinges, reluctantly yielded to his hand — he applied his shoulder to it and forced it open — he quitted it and stept forward — the door instantly shut with a thundering clap. Sir Bertrand's blood was chilled — he turned back to find the door, and it was long ere his trembling hands could seize it — but his utmost strength could not open it again. After several ineffectual attempts, he looked behind him, and beheld, across a hall, upon a large staircase, a pale bluish flame which cast a dismal gleam of light around. He again summoned forth his courage and advanced towards it — It retired. He came to the foot of the stairs, and after a moment's deliberation ascended. He went slowly up, the flame retiring before him, till he came to a wide gallery — The flame proceeded along it, and he followed in silent horror, treading lightly, for the echoes of his footsteps startled him. It led him to the foot of another staircase, and then vanished — At the same instant another toll sounded from the turret — Sir Bertrand felt it strike upon his heart. He was now in total darkness, and with his arms extended, began to ascend the second staircase. A dead cold hand met his left hand and firmly grasped it, drawing him forcibly forwards — he endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not — he made a furious blow with his sword, and instantly a loud shriek pierced his ears, and the dead hand was left powerless in his — He dropt it, and rushed forwards with a desperate valour. The stairs were narrow and winding, and interrupted by frequent breaches, and loose fragments of stone. The staircase grew narrower and narrower, and at length terminated in a low iron grate. Sir Bertrand pushed it open — it led to an intricate winding passage, just large enough to admit

a person on his hands and knees. A faint glimmering of light served to show the nature of the place. Sir Bertrand entered — A deep hollow groan resounded from a distance through the vault — He went forwards, and proceeding beyond the first turning, he discerned the same blue flame which had before conducted him. He followed it. The vault, at length, suddenly opened into a lofty gallery, in the midst of which a figure appeared, compleatly armed, thrusting forwards the bloody stump of an arm, with a terrible frown and menacing gesture, and brandishing a sword in his hand. Sir Bertrand undauntedly sprung forwards; and aiming a fierce blow at the figure, it instantly vanished, letting fall a massy iron key. The flame now rested upon a pair of ample folding doors at the end of the gallery. Sir Bertrand went up to it, and applied the key to a brazen lock — with difficulty he turned the bolt — instantly the doors flew open, and discovered a large apartment, at the end of which was a coffin rested upon a bier, with a taper burning on each side of it. Along the room on both sides were gigantic statues of black marble, attired in the Moorish habit, and holding enormous sabres in their right hands. Each of them reared his arm, and advanced one leg forwards, as the knight entered; at the same moment the lid of the coffin flew open, and the bell tolled. The flame still glided forwards, and Sir Bertrand resolutely followed, till he arrived within six paces of the coffin. Suddenly, a lady in a shrowd and black veil rose up in it, and stretched out her arms towards him — at the same time the statues clashed their sabres and advanced. Sir Bertrand flew to the lady and clasped her in his arms — she threw up her veil and kissed his lips; and instantly the whole building shook as with an earthquake, and fell asunder with a horrible crash. Sir Bertrand was thrown into a sudden trance, and on recovering, found himself seated on a velvet sofa, in the most magnificent room he had ever seen, lighted with innumerable tapers, in lustres of pure crystal. A sumptuous banquet was set in the middle. The doors opening to soft music, a lady of incomparable beauty, attired with amazing splendor entered, surrounded by a troop of gay nymphs more fair than the Graces — She advanced to the knight, and falling on her knees thanked him as her deliverer. The nymphs placed a garland of laurel upon his head, and the lady led him by the hand to the banquet, and sat beside him. The nymphs placed themselves at the table, and a numerous train of servants entering, served up the feast; delicious music playing all the time. Sir Bertrand could not speak for astonishment — he could only return their honours by courteous looks and gestures. After the banquet was finished, all retired but the lady, who leading back the knight to the sofa, addressed him in these words: ----------