AN OUTLINE OF PROPP'S MODEL FOR THE STUDY OF FAIRYTALES

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The following pages are envisaged as the first in a series of working papers. They arise from years of seeking analytical tools that would shed light on the narrative structure of Gothic fiction. They are part of a wider investigation aimed, within the scope of the *Northanger Library Project*, at laying down the grounds for a 'grammar' of Gothic.[1] Tempting though it might be, discussion of the fairytale-Gothic link must be left for a later work; here we shall concentrate on presenting a model for the study of fairytales which has been found of much use in the study of Gothic fiction.[2]

The findings of Structuralism, Russian Formalism and the New Critics since the early twentieth century led to numerous efforts towards developing a discipline nowadays known as Narratology.[3] A great many of these are inspired by a classic text which is commonly viewed as one fountainhead of the entire discipline: Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*.[4] However, far too many publications exist—both printed and electronic—that carry inaccurate vulgarizations of Propp's system. The aim of this outline is to place a tool at the disposal of researchers in the fields of folklore and popular culture.

Propp pointed out that, whereas he had meant his book to be a morphology of the *wondertale* (*volsébnaja skázka*), his editor changed the title because he thought 'folktale' (*skázki*) would make it more attractive.[5] Fairytales are conventionally classed as a special subcategory within the more general

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[1] For a preliminary statement on the 'rules' of Gothic see http://www.northangerlibrary.com/nlproject_reaches.asp.

[2] For an initial application of Propp's model to Gothic fiction see Manuel Aguirre and Eva Ardoy (2009) 'Narrative Morphology in Barbauld's "Sir Bertrand, A Fragment"', at http://www.northangerlibrary.com/library.asp.

[3] Tzvetan Todorov coined the word in his 1969 *Grammaire du Decameron* (Mouton: The Hague).

[4] Vladimir Propp (1928) *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, revised Louis A. Wagner (Austin: University of Texas Press 1968). See Gerald Prince 1977 'Narratology and Narratological Analysis', in *Oral Versions of Personal Experience: Three Decades of Narrative Analysis*, special issue of *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7:1-4 (ed. Michael G. W. Bamberg), pp. 39-44; and, of course, the seminal article that inspired the whole volume, William Labov and Joshua Waletzky 1967 'Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience', same volume, pp. 3-38. See also, e.g., Chris Baldick 1990 *A Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford UP), Martin Gray 1992 *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Harlow, Essex: Longman/York Press), both s.v. 'Narratology'.

[5] Anatoly Liberman (ed.) 1984 *Vladimir Propp: Theory and History of Folklore*, trans. A.Y. & R.P.Martin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1993), 167-88, p. 70.

set of folktales (*contes populaires*). Propp defines fairytales as 'those tales classified by Aarne under numbers 300 to 749'.[6] The reference is to the classic index *The Types of the Folktale* first published by Antti Aarne one hundred years ago and revised and expanded at various times since,[7] and generally known as the Aarne-Thompson (AT) Index. The index is arranged thematically and lists not tales but tale-types from all over the world. Each type receives a number, and this helps identify individual tales easily as belonging to this or that type. The five categories contemplated in the AT Index are as follows:

I.		Animal tales (AT1-299)
II.		Ordinary folk-tales
	A.	Tales of magic AT300-749)
	B.	Religious tales (AT750-849)
	C.	Novelle (Romantic tales) (AT850-999)
	D.	Tales of the Stupid Ogre (AT1000-1199)
III.		Jokes and anecdotes (AT1200-1999)
IV.		Formula tales (AT2000-2399)
V.		Unclassified tales (AT2400-2499)[8]

Fairytales, referred to also as 'tales of magic' (*Zaubermärchen*) and 'wondertales' (*contes merveilleux*), thus correspond to category II.A. This is the category to which Propp's research applies.

Propp based his study on Aleksandr N. Afanás'ev's classic collection *Russian Folktales* (1855-64).[9] The collection includes over six hundred folktales, of which Propp used as his corpus numbers 50-151 from Afanás'ev's fairytales section—exactly one hundred and two tales.[10] Propp's structural model is based on the following criteria:

1) All fairytales are constructed on the basis of one single string of actions or events called 'functions'.

2) Function is significant action or event defined according to its place in the plot.

3) Function, and not theme, motif, character, plot or motivation, is the fundamental unit of analysis.[11]

4) Functions are independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled; from the standpoint of

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[6] *Morphology*, p. 19.

[7] Antti Aarne 1910 *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* (Helsinki: Folklore Fellows Communications (FFC) 3); second edition, Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson 1928 *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* (FFC 74); third edition, AT 1961 (FFC 184); fourth edition, revised by Hans-Jörg Uther in 2004 as *The Types of International Folktales* (FFC 286, 3 vols.) (ATU 2004).

[8] In ATU 2004, this fifth category has been eschewed.

[9] Leonard A. Magnus' early translation, *Russian Folk-Tales* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1915), contained only 73 of Afanas'ev's tales. The standard American reference, *Russian Fairy Tales*, trans. Norbert Guterman (New York: Pantheon Books 1945), offered less than one third of the original collection. For a complete translation readers are referred to *Cuentos populares rusos* in 3 vols., trans. Isabel Vicente from the 6th (1957) Russian edition (Madrid: Anaya 1983).

[10] Not several hundred, not one thousand, as appears in various websites best ignored. It does seem that a surprising number of would-be Propp scholars have not really read his book (see pp. 23-4).

[11] That fairytales hinge on *action* has been conclusively argued by other researchers. See Axel Olrik 1921 *Principles for Oral Narrative Research*, trans. K. Wolf and J. Jensen (Bloomington: Indiana U.P. 1992), p. 45; Max Lüthi 1948 *The European Folktale: Form and Nature*, trans. D. J. Niles (Bloomington: Indiana U.P. 1986), p. 13.

structural analysis, not doers, their method, their motivations or their psychology but the deed itself alone matters.

    5) The number of functions available to fairytale-tellers is thirty-one.

    6) With (codifiable) exceptions, functions always follow a strict order.

    7) Tales are organized into *sequences* (see below); each sequence is composed of a selection of functions in the appropriate temporal order, and constitutes a narrative episode.

    8) Each function is susceptible of realization by different means ('forms of function'): Propp offers lists of the 'function forms' that appear in his corpus (but warns that others are possible).

    9) Only seven characters are available to fairytale-tellers: hero, false hero, villain, donor, helper, dispatcher, princess (sought-for person) and/or her father.[12]

    10) All fairytales are composed of the same functions, though not every function appears in every tale.

    11) All fairytales share the same fundamental structure.

    The standard presentation of the system begins with a list of the thirty-one functions. The usual order of presentation is number (in Roman numerals), summary of the function, definition (usually one single word), and the conventional sign given it for identification purposes—a Greek letter for the first seven functions (the 'preparatory sequence'), Roman capitals for the rest (two functions receive signs in place of a letter). Thus:

	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)

And so on. The Initial Situation, though vital to the series, is no 'function' and accordingly receives no number (but it does receive a letter). Though structurally sound, in practice this method is cumbersome since it identifies functions by a number whereas they will actually be referred to mostly by their letter. Because the visual quality of Propp's nomenclature is of great help, our first operation will be to invert the order of presentation, identifying the functions by their letter or sign (Propp himself resorted to this strategy in his synoptic presentation of tales). This is particularly necessary in that the English, French and (in a different way) Italian translations made an effort towards adjusting the definitions of functions to the letter chosen (alphabetically in many cases) for each.[13] Thus, although the match could not be maintained in every instance, it helps that the appearance of the Donor should correspond to *D*, or that *G* should stand for Guidance. Furthermore, in the construction of a string, say I,V,VIII,XII,XVII (or 1,5,8,12,17), numbers would tend to be jumbled together and on the whole fail to give a clear picture.

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[12] This is exactly seven, not eight, as some commentators claim. The choice to blend princess and her father into one 'character' can be defended on empirical grounds; its significance will be discussed in a later paper.

[13] *Vladimir Propp. Morphologie du conte*, tr. M. Dérrida (Paris: Seuil 1973). *Vladimir Propp: Morfologia della fiaba*, tr. Gian Luigi Bravo (Torino: Einaudi editore 1966). The Spanish version is an indifferent translation from the French.

THE THIRTY-ONE FUNCTIONS

α   Initial situation   (0)
β   Absentation   *One of the members of a family absents himself from home* (1)
γ   Interdiction   *An interdiction is addressed to the hero* (2)
δ   Violation   *The interdiction is violated* (3)
ε   Reconnaissance   *The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance* (4)
ζ   Delivery   *The villain receives information about his victim* (5)
η   Trickery   *The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings* (6)
θ   Complicity   *Victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy* (7)
λ   Preliminary misfortune   *Preliminary misfortune caused by a deceitful agreement* (7a)
A   Villainy   *The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family* (8)
a   Lack   *A member of a family lacks something or desires to have something* (8a)
B   Mediation   *Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched* (9)
C   Beginning counteraction   *The hero agrees to or decides upon counteraction* (10)
↑   Departure   *The hero leaves home* (11)
D   First function of the Donor   *The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or a helper* (12)
E   The hero's reaction   *The hero reacts to the actions of the future Donor* (13)
F   Provision of a magical agent *The hero acquires the use of a magical agent* (14)
G   Guidance   *Hero is led to the whereabouts of an object of search* (15)
H   Struggle   *The hero and the villain join in direct combat* (16)
I   Branding   *The hero is branded* (17)
J   Victory   *The villain is defeated* (18)
K   Liquidation of Lack   *The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated* (19)
↓   Return   *The hero returns* (20)
Pr Pursuit   *The hero is pursued* (21)
Rs Rescue   *Rescue of the hero from pursuit* (22)
O   Unrecognized arrival   *Unrecognized, he arrives home or in another country* (23)
L   Unfounded claims   *A false hero presents unfounded claims* (24)
M   Difficult task   *A difficult task is proposed to the hero* (25)
N   Solution   *The task is resolved* (26)
Q   Recognition   *The hero is recognized* (27)
Ex Exposure   *The false hero or villain is exposed* (28)
T   Transfiguration   *The hero is given a new appearance* (29)
U   Punishment   *The villain is punished* (30)
W   Wedding   *The hero is married and ascends the throne* (31)

'Function' is an action or event 'defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action' (p. 21). This is a fundamental tenet in Propp's system. In practice this means that FUNCTION = ACTION (or EVENT) + POSITION in the sequence. The same action will have different morphological values depending on its place in the story. A wedding may be a reward (*W*) only if it occurs at the end of a sequence or of the tale; it may amount to a test if it occurs at *E*; while if it takes place in the preliminary sequence it may signal the entrance of the Villain (e.g., as stepmother; function *ε*) and the onset of misfortune for a young heroine. Other values are possible.

Functions may be successfully realized; they may fail of their purpose, in which case Propp identifies them by a *neg.* sign; or a function may yield a result contrary to that expected, and is then identified by a *contr.* sign. Thus, *Fneg.* means that the seeker failed to respond adequately to the Donor's test and in consequence received no help; while *Fcontr.* means that instead of help the seeker's conduct towards the Donor earned him a punishment. Here follow additional remarks about specific functions.

- 'Function' *α* speaks of 'a family'; an extended family or just a community is sometimes meant.

- Function *γ* is defined as 'Interdiction' (p. 26). Since the two function forms available here are 'interdiction' and 'command', we might opt for the general term 'Injunction'. Injunctions may be followed or disobeyed, and it is interesting here that the character's decision to do either will *not* change the course of the story: either way, the Villain will appear and act. We may extract from this an argument as to the *determinism* of fairytales, and note that it entails assigning a 'semantic' value to narrative structure.

- Function *θ* is defined as 'Complicity' in the English translation (p. 30). But this word suggests a conscious participation in self-deception; this is no part of Propp's meaning—as his adverb 'unwittingly' makes clear (nor indeed does it reflect the reality of tales). We might therefore prefer to use 'Compliance'.

- Function *λ* offers an interesting instance of variable function spread. In his discussion of the Villain's machinations, Propp uses *η* for the villain's attempt at tricking the victim, *θ* for the victim's compliance with the villain. However, at p. 30 we read:

  > A special form of deceitful proposal and its corresponding acceptance is represented by the deceitful agreement. ('Give away that which you do not know you have in your house.') [...] This element may be defined as preliminary misfortune. (Designation: *λ*, differentiating between this and other forms of deception.)

  It is clear that, whereas Propp viewed *η* and *θ* as two different functions, here he proposes one single function to cover the (structurally identical) exchange: *λ* is the equivalent of *η* + *θ*. This means something extremely important, of which he may not have been aware: if a given action may be represented by a single letter in a tale but may be 'decomposed' into two or more functions in another, then the converse holds, too: two or more functions may 'contract' into one,

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and therefore the entire string may be reducible to a much smaller number. This point will merit detailed commentary in future papers.

- Functions *A* and *a* are to be seen as variants of each other, and count therefore as one: the adventure is motivated by a misfortune or lack (*a*), or by an act of villainy (*A*) which creates misfortune or lack.

- Function *D* is defined as 'The first function of the Donor' (p. 39). It is implied that the second function of the Donor is *F*. But whereas the definition of *F* (Provision of a magical agent) is self-explanatory, that of *D* does not clarify much, and it will be more useful to replace it with 'A Donor tests the hero' or 'The hero is tested'.

- At p. 52, the letter *J* is used to designate the Branding of the Hero, *I* to designate Victory over the Villain; in actual fact, the circa-alphabetical order proposed in both the English and the French translations requires *I* for the Branding, *J* for the Victory. To complicate matters, at p. 152 the alphabetical order of the two letters *IJ* is preserved, but 'Branding' is now made to follow 'Victory'. Clearly there is confusion here. Let us agree with the translator of the French edition[14] on the following:

  > *H* Struggle with the Villain
  > *I* Branding or Marking of the Hero
  > *J* Victory over the Villain

- At pp. 60 and 154, lower case *o* is used to indicate 'Unrecognized arrival'. I have preferred a capital *O* to bring this function in line with the other letters.

- 'Wedding'.- As with so many functions, the abbreviated label does not do justice to the concept (though seeing the letter *W* as the initial of 'Wedding' is helpful). Wedding is only one (albeit the most characteristic) of the possible function forms for *W*; other forms include monetary or other reward, or ascent to the throne.

The system does not contemplate tales as mere agglomerations of functions. Rather, as indicated earlier, functions appear in series, each series constituting a narrative episode. For such series Propp employs the Russian term *xod*. This word in fact means several things. The term adopted in the English translation is 'move', in the sense in which we speak of a move in a game such as chess. But every time a character acts or an event takes place we could, on the analogy of games, speak of a move; there would then be as many moves as there were functions in a given tale, which defeats the purpose—as stated before, by *xod* Propp had in mind a *series* of these rather than single actions. Therefore the term 'move' is not quite accurate for such a series, and another rendering might be 'sequence', which tallies much better with the sense of the text.[15]

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[14] Who everywhere else adopts the letter choices made by the American edition.
[15] This is the term chosen in the French translation.

For the breakdown of tale elements Propp thus uses a three-tier arrangement (a variation on the system employed in the AT Index). A first level concerns major blocks of events (sequences). The second level consists of major, significant actions (functions). The third level offers alternative versions of these functions ('function forms'). The functions shape (in Lévi-Strauss' nomenclature[16]) a *syntagma*, the forms a function can take in a given corpus (*allomorphs* in Meletinsky's terminology[17]) shape an open *paradigm* of options.

The shape of the table is thus rendered more complex since practically every function has a number of optional function forms. The syntagma-paradigms arrangement can be illustrated with some of the forms corresponding to functions γ through A (A actually presents nineteen allomorphs in Propp's corpus):

γ *An injunction is addressed to the hero*
        γ^1 *interdiction*
        γ^2 *command*
δ *The injunction is violated*
        δ^1 *interdiction violated*
        δ^2 *command carried out*
ε *The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance*
        ε^1 *reconnaissance by the villain*
        ε^2 *reconnaissance by the hero*
        ε^3 *reconnaissance by other persons*
ζ *The villain receives information about his victim*
        ζ^1 *the villain receives information about the hero*[18]
        ζ^2 *the hero receives information about the villain*
        ζ^3 *information received by other means*
η *The villain attempts to deceive his victim*
        η^1 *deceitful persuasions of the villain*
        η^2 *application of magical agents by the villain*
        η^3 *other forms of deception or coercion*
θ *The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy*
        θ^1 *the hero reacts to the persuasions of a villain*
        θ^2 *the hero mechanically falls victim to the influence of a magical agent*
        θ^3 *the hero gives in or reacts mechanically to the deceit of the villain*
λ *Preliminary misfortune caused by a deceitful agreement* (a special form of η and θ)
A *The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family*
        A^1 *kidnapping of a person*
        A^2 *seizure of a magical agent or helper*
        A^3 *the ruining of crops*
        ......
        A^{14} *murder*
        A^{15} *imprisonment, detention*

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[16] Claude Lévi-Strauss 1960 'La structure et la forme. Réflexions sur un ouvrage de Vladimir Propp', in *Cahiers de l'Institut de Science Economique Apliquée* 99 (s.M. 7), 1-36.
[17] Eleazar Meletinsky 1973 'L'étude structurale et typologique du conte' (tr. C.Kahn), in *Vladimir Propp. Morphologie du conte*, 201-54.
[18] There is some inconsistency here. 'Hero' and 'victim' are used interchangeably here, though often they are quite different characters. See Propp 28-9, 121, 149.

Notice, too, that the main event under ε is not the hero's or the villain's action but the action itself: reconnaissance takes place; likewise under η, it matters that information is conveyed, not who conveys it. In other words, structure has primacy over the identity of the performer.

The syntagma is one, and closed. The paradigms are open, and subject to expansion; this last point is important in any attempt at applying the model to other narratives than fairytales, since there is in principle no reason why further allomorphs could not be found in alternative texts. Paradigmatic variation is envisaged by the model itself, whereas syntagmatic variation is not; the latter, but not the former, will therefore, whenever it occurs, constitute the literary equivalent of a mutation or, for a more accurate metaphor, a graft.[19]

The construction of tales follows a double strategy. The storyteller chooses certain functions from the 31-string, and for each function chosen he or she chooses a certain form of it. Insightfully, if perhaps unknowingly, this system takes cognizance of a decisive feature of fairytales—their *oral* nature. From the work of Parry and Lord on South Slavic epic[20] we know that oral composition consists neither in repeating memorized texts nor in mere improvisation; singers (and the reasoning may be extended to oral storytellers) can create in an *extempore* manner because they have mastered a toolbox of possibilities which include patterns, formulas, systems of options. The 'discovery' that tales operate as aggregations of sequences is again of great value for the study of the orality of tales, for the use of sequences gives tales a recursive structure, and iteration is one of the basic principles of all oral narrative.

The whole string looks as follows (the simplified paradigms of function forms for *A* and *K* are offered by way of illustration):

$$\alpha \; \beta \; \gamma \; \delta \; \varepsilon \; \zeta \; \eta \; \theta \; (\lambda) \; A \; a \; B \; C \uparrow D \; E \; F \; G \; H \; I \; J \; K \downarrow Pr \; Rs \; O \; L \; M \; N \; Q \; Ex \; T \; U \; W$$

$$
\begin{array}{cc}
A^1 & K^1 \\
A^2 & K^2 \\
A^3 & K^3 \\
. & . \\
. & .
\end{array}
$$

The following is an example of analysis of a two-sequence tale ('Pokatigoróšek', Afanase'ev 133) offered by Propp (pp. 129-30) (between square brackets I have added a few succinct remarks to clarify the issue of iteration):

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[19] On this argument it is possible to build the hypothesis that Gothic is the result of a hybrid graft of a fairytale-structure scion onto a literary rootstock.

[20] See Milman Parry 1928 "Homeric Formulae and Homeric Meter", in *The Making of Homeric Verse: the Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. A. Parry (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1971), 191-239; Albert B. Lord 1960 *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard UP).

Sequence I.

A man, his wife, two sons, a daughter (α). The brothers, on leaving for work, request their sister to bring lunch to them ($\beta^1 \gamma^2$); they show the road to the field with shavings (thereby betraying their sister to the dragon ζ^1). The dragon rearranges the shavings (η^3), the girl goes out to the field with the lunch (δ^2), and follows the wrong road (θ^3). The dragon kidnaps her (A^1). The brothers' quests ($C\uparrow$). Herdsmen say: "Eat up my biggest ox" (D^1). The brothers are unable to do so (E^1 *neg.*). [New demand concerning a ram, then a hog. In all, three requests.] The dragon says: "Eat up twelve oxen", etc. [then twelve rams, then twelve hogs.] (D^1), E^1*neg.* follows. The brothers are thrown beneath a stone (*F contr.*).

Sequence II.

Pokatigoróšek is born. The mother tells of the misfortune (B^4). Quests ($C\uparrow$). Herdsmen and dragon—as before (D^1E^1, testing remains without consequences for the course of the action). Battle with the dragon and victory (H^1-J^1). Deliverance of the sister and the brothers (K^4). Return ($\downarrow$).

Propp's synoptic table for this tale (again, slightly adapted) is as follows:

I. $\alpha\ \beta^1\ \gamma^2\ \zeta^1\ \eta^3\ \delta^2\ \theta^3\ A^1\ C\uparrow [D^1\ E^1 neg.]^3\ [D^1\ E^1\ neg.]^3\ Fcontr.$

II. $B^4\ C\uparrow [D^1\ E^1]^3\ [D^1\ E^1]^3\ H^1\ J^1\ K^4 \downarrow$

Some remarks are in order. The superscript number ^{3} after square brackets indicates threefold repetition of the relevant function segment. The model is able to convey this fundamental property of fairytales—iteration—but not (as it stands) its structural and narrative significance.[21] This remains a problem for subsequent work.

A second sequence is introduced, not necessarily because we have the birth of a hero but because it brings in a number of functions which make more sense as a new departure than as continuations from *Fcontr.* (this last function is a bit of a dead end; only a new departure will resolve the situation). The new sequence tells basically the same adventure with a different outcome. Other tales offer much greater complexity and several sequences (even interrupted sequences) may be necessary.

It is not quite exact that 'the testing remains without consequences for the course of the action' since only through his ability to gulp large animals does the hero earn a chance (denied to his brothers) actually to fight the dragon; too, such impossible ability presages his impossible victory eventually. It is

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[21] See Propp's cursory remarks on trebling at pp. 74-5.

true that 'truncated' or 'blind' motifs are found in fairytales[22] but, as the example shows, we should not too readily assume that structural material occupies semantically empty slots. On the other hand, the hero's early prowess, though semantically significant, is not syntactically relevant since we *know* he will eventually fight and defeat the dragon (the way this knowledge arises in us has to do with narrative techniques we cannot discuss here). Once again, a deterministic principle rules the narrative.[23]

In the first sequence above, δ appears after $\zeta\,\eta$ whereas theoretically the order should be the reverse; but although it is standard for the villain to appear *right after* the victim has disobeyed the injunction (or unquestioningly followed it), nothing prevents the villain logically from intervening *so as to* make the victim disobey (or comply). Whence another important proposition ensues: not only is it immaterial for the course of events whether or not the victim fails to follow instructions, but the very causal nexus between functions may be specious: whatever characters do, the sequel is defined not by their actions but by the structure of the tale. We may have here yet another structural basis for the determinism of fairytales; and the 'semantic' value of their 'form' becomes an inescapable issue.

Lastly, at pages xxv, 19 and elsewhere Propp writes of a 'morphology'. His is a botanical analogy, but in actual fact he is constructing a 'syntax' of the fairytale. Though his term is consecrated by use and it will be well to retain it, it opens the way for an examination of the 'grammar' of functions.

The efficacy of Propp's system is hard to dispute. All the same, numerous loose ends remain to be dealt with, and they may force a reconsideration of at least aspects of the model. To name but a few, both the 'grammar' and the semantics of functions must be studied in detail. If form has semantic content, we must approach issues like the significance of structural iteration or the deterministic nature of tales. The number of both functions and characters, too, may turn out to be an issue of much import. And—moving into the comparative field that initially motivated the present study—we need to consider the 'graft' nature of Gothic as well as its 'formulaic' construction in the light of fairytales. These and other matters will be tackled in coming papers.

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[22] Lüthi, *The European Folktale*, pp. 60-4.
[23] For discussion see my *The Thresholds of the Tale: Liminality and the Structure of Fairytales* (Madrid: The Gateway Press 2007), pp. 72-83.