



### Article Title

## Heroic Quests, Magical Helpers and Obstacles: An Exploration of Archetypal Patterns and Traditional Narrative in Modern Day Fairy Tales

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### Abstract:

*The book by Vladimir Propp, titled 'Morphology of Folktale,' discusses thirty-one narrative functions claimed to be present in every fairy tale. Propp's seminal work on Russian folktales provides a comprehensive framework to analyse and unveil the underlying narrative structural patterns and functions which shape and connect present-day fairy tales with traditional folklore. The present research employs Propp's Narrative Theory (1968) as lens to explore the narrative structures of 'Frozen' (2013) and 'Brave' (2012), two renowned Disney animated movies. The study focuses on the plot of both movies to investigate the narrative functions present in their original form and the ways in which they are modified and adapted. The findings conclude that majority of functions remain same as they were propagated by Propp; however, the changes observed in the functions were based on role-switch, strained and weekend family relations, and questioning traditional expectations of marriage. This article, through identifying recurring functions performed by dramatis personae, reveals the fundamental narrative components. These contribute to the developing of each plot, that is, protagonists' quests, journeys, interactions and transformations in both films. To serve the purpose, the researcher has made use of qualitative approach. Secondly, a table of thirty-one narrative functions is constructed and filled up for both the movies which were watched 2-3 times. Like Propp, the analyst has adopted a syntagmatic approach to observe the degree to which these functions are still there in contemporary fairy tale movies. Lastly, this study would be beneficial for all those who want to conduct study in the fields of Fairy Tales, Structuralism and Narratology.*

**Keywords:** Narratology; Narrative Theory; Disney Fairy Tales; Frozen; Brave; Film Studies  
**Introduction:**

The custom of storytelling is as old as the Earth itself. The rock paintings drawn by cave men are the evidence that narratives have been there since the stone-age. These paintings also reveal the fact that human beings have always been fond of narrating and listening to tales. This legacy of narrating stories is still followed in today's world and can be seen in newspaper, books, radios, films, plays and the shows we watch on television every day. The very moment human beings become intelligent enough to understand the speech; they find themselves surrounded by narratives. Fairy tales, myths, legends of our forefathers weave themselves into the fabric of our society through films, television shows, jokes and cartoons etc (Tomascikova, 2009).

Fairy tales have passed down from generation to generation and have survived ever since. As the years progressed, these stories became part of our culture and were turned into legends, myths and fairy tales which have been successful in catching the attention of not only young minds but also of adults (Ryan, 2004, as cited in Jones, 2011, p.7). Propp, in his '*Morphology of Folktales*,' examined hundred folktales in order to establish a precise scientific formula (morphology) to categorize these tales. He identified thirty-one functions that are performed by dramatis personae within a fairy tale. Every function was "understood as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of action" (Propp, 1968, p. 21). All the way through Propp's study, these functions are persistently present in fairy tales with little adaptation to sequence.

Over a period, Propp's work has influenced profoundly the study of literary texts and narratives. The domain of contemporary animated cinema, which has reached the new peaks of narrative and visual complexity, offers compelling avenues to study the application of Propp's Narrative Theory. The present study applies this theory to study the narrative structures of the two Oscar winning Disney movies, '*Frozen*' and '*Brave*.' Through this analysis the researcher aims to study the narrative functions which contribute as the foundation of storytelling as well as to highlight the relevance of Propp's classic theoretical framework to modern animated cinematic narrative.

### **Problem Statement:**

This study aims to explore how a classical theoretical framework can be utilized to study the contemporary narrative(s) of modern animated films. This research will examine how Propp's functions manifest themselves, specifically, within the plots of Disney movies, namely, '*Brave*' and '*Frozen*.' Through, examining plot sequences and evaluating applicability of Propp's theory, as well as highlighting any deviations or modifications from his model, the research intends to provide insight into evolution of narrative structures fairy tales.

### **Research Objectives:**

- To investigate the extent to which contemporary fairy tales conform to Propp's narrative theory.

- To identify the ways in which Propp's functions are modified and adapted in contemporary fairy tales.
- To observe which functions are most common in the fairy tales movies.

**Research Questions:**

- To what extent functions are still followed as they were during Propp's time?
- In what ways these functions are still present but with little modifications?
- Which functions are common in *Brave* and *Frozen*?

**Significance of Study:**

The significance of study lies in its exploration of Vladimir Propp's *'Narrative Theory'* as applied to two iconic animated fairy tale films *'Frozen'* and *'Brave.'* By applying classic theoretical framework to modern cinematic narratives, this study not only deepens the understanding of relevance of narrative theory but also highlights distinctive narrative patterns and its modifications reflective of contemporaneity and novelty of today's cinema and fairy tales. Moreover, this project would provide guidance and help to those who want to conduct study in the fields of fairy tales, narratology, literature and film studies. Hence, this research bridges the gap between traditional narrative theory and the evolving platform of visual storytelling in pop-culture. Consequently, the research contributes to the wider discourse of narrative universality and its adaptation across diverse media, thereby highlighting how the principles of classic storytelling exist, adapt and thrive in contemporary fairy tales and their cinematic world.

**Delimitation of Study:**

The study has been narrowed down to two fairy tale films and is confined to Propp's narrative theory only. *'Brave'* and *'Frozen'* are specifically chosen for the research purpose because both the films are Oscar winning movies and are made from feminist perspective. Moreover, both movies are considered to be groundbreaking films as they are the first of Disney fairy tale movies which challenge the patriarchal conventions portrayed in animated movies. Secondly, movies shall be considered as true examples of Propp's theory if half of the number of functions are followed.

**Literature Review:**

Storytelling is considered one of the basic and fundamental characteristics of human understanding (Yilmaz, Erdem, & Resuloglu, 2018). It is believed to exist since the very beginning of time (Garza, 2011). In cultures' survival and evolution, storytelling has always played a crucial role (Benjamin, 2006). Hence, with the passage of time, the forms and functions of storytelling have undergone, within diverse human situations, major transformations (Yilmaz et al., 2018).

Storytelling includes all types of myths, beliefs, tribal and family gossip, secular and religious teachings, history, philosophy, propagandas, scientific writings, television plays and stories, movies, advertising etc. Thus, it is considered to be one of the most powerful capabilities of human mind (Hamilton, 1996).

Vladimir Propp (1968) believed that the study of fairy tales had primarily been pursued only on genetic level and no attempts had been made on the systematic description. In his work, '*Morphology of Folktales*,' Propp recognized that "fairy tales possess a quite particular structure which is immediately felt, even though we may not be aware of it." The focus of his study was this structure. According to him, morphology is "a description of a tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components with each other and to the whole" (Propp, 1968, as cited in Jones, 2011, p. 19).

Propp points out that the roles of characters, from antagonist to protagonist or from supernatural helper to sufferer are defined by functions; their names and attributes might vary from tale to tale but their functions and actions remain constant. Thus, from this one can draw the conclusion that identical actions are often attributed to various personages by a tale (1968). By analysing Russian fairy tales, Propp made the following observations regarding 'functions:'

- Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale.
- The number of functions known to a fairy tale is limited.
- The sequence of functions is always identical.
- All fairy tales are one type in regard to their structure (1968).

Propp's book, *Morphology of Folktale*, after its translation in English in 1968 became popular in English speaking world and hence has now become a touchstone as it was a revolutionary work on the structure and aspects of a fairy tale. It is worth mentioning here that Propp interchangeably uses the term folktales and fairy tales (Choi, 2004; Jones, 2011). In his book, Propp claims that fairy tale is a kind of folktale, and he limits his work to it. Moreover, Arne-Thompson tales, ranging from 300 to 749, which are called 'tales of magic,' are classified as fairy tale by Propp (1968).

After the translation of book, Propp's work has been applied to a large range of narratives. Dundes (1968) in *Introduction to the Second Edition of Morphology of folktale* says that "attempts to study African tales (Paulme) and American Indian tales suggest that parts of Propp's *Morphology* may be cross-culturally valid." Furthermore, he says "Propp's analysis should be useful in analysing the structure of literary forms (such as novels and plays), comic strips, motion-pictures and television plots and the like" (p. xiv).

Lastly, Since the end of ‘Second World War,’ the narrative theories are generally categorized into three main strands. According to the first one, the narrative is a sequence of events and the theorists concentrate on the narrative irrespective of the medium through which it is conveyed. The followers of second strand observe narrative ‘as a discourse.’ On the other hand, narrative is presented “as a complex artefact, the meaning of which is endowed by the receiver” in the third strand (Tomascikova, 2009, p. 282). Propp and other scholars like Strauss, Todorov and (to an extent) Bathes were the supporters of the first type (Tomascikova 2009). In fact, Propp’s work is based upon the first strand (Jones 2011). Following Propp’s footsteps, the present study is also based upon first strand of narrative theories.

Animated films, in recent years, therefore for their sophisticated storytelling, have gained popularity and prominence as well as the ability to connect and resonate not only with younger audience but with adults as well. ‘Frozen’ and ‘Brave’ with their gripping narratives have captivated the viewers, which invites a closer investigation of their narrative structures makes these movies an ideal candidate to explore the application of Propp’s Narrative Theory.

### **Research Methodology:**

The study is qualitative in nature which utilizes the schematic description and representation of structural components as propagated by Propp. By utilizing his functional scheme, it is expected that the research would not only pave way in forming structural statement(s) regarding the selected motion pictures but would also be beneficial in determining the degree of applicability of Propp’s theory on contemporary fairy tales.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

To present the structural model for analysing a fairy tale, the researcher has divided it in three sections:

1. Propp’s theory
2. Propp’s structural model for analysing a fairy tale
3. Schematic representation for the structure of a fairy tale

### **Propp’s Theory:**

The main aim of Propp’s work was to establish an accurate description and explanation of a fairy tale. Hence, his theory regarding the composition and formation of a fairy tale and the method for analysing the material form the basis of analytical procedure utilized in the analysis of these films. Thirty-one narratemes –narrative units- were identified by Propp which, according to him, are the constituents of structure of most of tales. These narrative units are basically recurrent and constant units or components of plot and action(s) of dramatis personae; and these units were termed as ‘*functions*’ by Propp (1968).

In the introduction to the first edition of Propp’s *Morphology of Folktales*, Dundes claims that in folktales there are two kinds of structural analysis; the first one is syntagmatic while the

second is paradigmatic (1968). Syntagmatic approach deals with things that happens in a text and looks at the plots' structure as well as the characters' role within a storyline (Tomascikova 2009). In the *Introduction to The First Edition* of Propp's *Morphology of Folktales*, Pirkova-Jakobson says that Propp based his work on syntagmatic approach (1968). Following Propp's footsteps, the present study also utilizes syntagmatic for the analysis of the movies.

### **Propp's Model:**

In his book, Propp gave each function:

1. In a single word, an abridged definition
2. A conventional symbol
3. A small summary regarding its essence

For instance, the first function is '*absentation*,' which is represented by '*beta*' symbol and according to the summary; one of the family members absents him/herself from the home. A copy of tabular representation of Propp's function is attached in appendix.

### **Schematic Representation:**

Through the syntactical scheme of a tale, Propp identifies a most basic and fundamental tale; that is, the villain harms a family member or the family member 'lacks something' vital or essential. The missing object is acquired by the hero or he/she avenges what was done wrong. The hero, during his/her quest, comes across the donor who aids him/her or provides him/her with a magical agent. Furthermore, a number of difficult and complex tasks are performed by the hero and he/she is engaged in a fight or battle with the villain. Lastly, the hero, eventually, takes a new form, that is, he/she marries or ascends the throne (1968). Propp's grammar for a story can be summarized and illustrated as follows:

<i>Initial Situation (a)</i>	<i>A king, soldier, tsar</i>
<i>Absentation (β)</i>	<i>the king's daughter goes for a walk</i>
<i>Violation (δ)</i>	<i>the daughter violates an interdiction</i>
<i>Villainy (A)</i>	<i>the villain kidnaps her</i>
<i>Mediation (B)</i>	<i>a cry or call for help is made</i>
<i>Counteraction (C)</i>	<i>journey of hero</i>
<i>Struggle, Marking, Victory (H, J, I)</i>	<i>A combat or fight with villain</i>
<i>Misfortune is liquidated (K)</i>	<i>the victim is rescued</i>
<i>Return (↙)</i>	<i>the return of hero</i>
<i>Wedding (W)</i>	<i>the hero is rewarded</i>

It is demonstrated and suggested by Propp's methodology that formal rules regarding composition are fixed and, the content of a story can be analysed objectively and scientifically.

### **Research Design:**

Furthermore, along with syntagmatic approach, the study utilizes content analysis in collaboration with Propp's model. The content includes scenes, dialogues, physical actions, gestures and reactions.

### **Analysis and Discussion:**

Propp divides the tale in four main segments. The first segment '*preparatory section,*' prepares the scenario for the act of villainy (or lack) which acts as second segment's, known as '*complication,*' opening function. The third segment, '*donor,*' begins when the hero sets off to correct what is done wrong. During his/her journey, the hero meets the potential donor(s)/helper(s) who, after testing the hero, provide him/her with a magical agent. The hero performs the task that stands between him/her and his/her goal, he/she survives the pursuit and lastly, he/she is acknowledged as a hero and receives the reward for his/her bravery and prowess. Hence, the fourth segment begins with '*the entry of helper in the tale and concludes with the end of the story*' (1968).

### **Functions Common in Both Movies:**

According to Propp, a tale begins with an '*initial situation,*' represented by ( $\alpha$ ) symbol; though it is not a function but plays a critical role in the commencement of a tale. Its main purpose is to introduce the hero, –his/her name, status, occupation- or the family which will suffer from a misfortune or villainy. It paves the way for the impending misfortune or villainy; which invisibly hovers already over the victim. He defines fairy tale's hero as the one who either suffers directly at the hands of the villain during second segment –compilation- or the one who accepts to liquidate a calamity or lack of the victim. The first type of hero explained is known as victimized hero, whereas, the second one is categorized as seeker hero.

In the movie *Frozen*, the small scene from 03:40 till 05:14 can be taken as 'initial situation;' because in this one minute and seventy-four seconds, the audience is introduced to the hero. In this clip, the prosperity is not shown in monetary sense but in terms of healthy relationship between two sisters. At 05:14, where Elsa accidentally injures Ana's brain, is the point from which the peace is disturbed and the sisterhood is rifted.

In *Brave*, the scene in which both mother and daughter are introduced (01:21-02:32) can be considered as 'initial situation;' because in this short clip both Merida and Elinor are introduced. Just like *Frozen*, prosperity in *Brave* is also shown in terms of a healthy relationship between a mother and her daughter. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph that in the 'initial situation' the shadow of the upcoming misfortune clings itself over the happy family; therefore, Merida's interest in archery and Elinor's apprehensions regarding Merida's interest highlights the approaching misfortune: "A bow Fergus, she is a lady" (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012).

According to Propp's model, the first function of a tale is '**absentation ( $\beta$ )**;' that is, one of the family members absents her/himself from home. He then elaborates this function by giving different kinds of absentation. Two types of 'absentations' are present in *Frozen*. The first one is that a member of an older generation absents himself: for example, he/she might leave for work. At 09:51, the first kind of 'absentation,' occurs when king and queen leave for a journey. The second one is an intensified form of 'absentation.' It is presented in the form of death of parents. Thus, at 10:08, the ship along with king and queen drowns in the ocean.

At the 'absentation of older generations,' Propp says that children are often left on their own after the death or departure of parents; which paves the path for the misfortune (1968). In *Frozen*, after the death of their parents Ana says to Elsa: "We only have each other. It is just you and me. What are we gonna do?" (Vecho & Buck, 2013). Due to this absence of parents, Ana became frustrated, as she had nobody to provide her with answers; and this became the reason for her fight with Elsa, which ultimately led to Elsa's expulsion from society. However, in '*Brave*,' absentation is present in a modified form, that is rather than physically absent, Elinor and Merida are emotionally absent from each other's life. In other words, both mother and daughter fail to understand each other. For instance, during a scene in which Elinor is with Fergus and Merida with her horse they both simultaneously say: "I think I could make you understand if you would just listen" (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012).

The '**interdiction(s) ( $\gamma$ )**,' (function 2) is basically a command or an order which is addressed to the hero for instance, 'do not go outside.' It often originates from the 'initial situation.' Furthermore, in most of the tales, 'absentation' (function 1) occurs before interdiction but the sequence in reality is in reverse. Thus, an interdiction can occur without having any connections with 'absentation' (Propp 1968).

Sometimes, it is given in form of an advice or request and is considered as a weak form of interdiction. In *Frozen*, interdiction is present in the form of an advice given to Elsa by Grand Pabbie: "Listen to me Elsa, your powers will only grow. There is beauty in it....But also a great danger! You must learn to control it. Fear will be your enemy" (Vecho & Buck, 2013).

On the other hand, in *Brave* the interdiction(s) are there in form of the orders and advices - regarding the behavior of an ideal princess- given to Merida by Elinor. Among all the interdictions the most important is the one regarding marriage: "The lords are presenting their sons as suitors for your betrothal" (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012).

Propp claims that "interdictions are always broken" (Propp, 1968, p. 30). For example, the hero (or any other character) despite the fact is not allowed to leave the house, still goes in the field and violates the interdiction. Thus, the third function is '**violation ( $\delta$ )**.' In *Frozen* it occurs when Elsa out of rage and anger, shoots ice from her hand which causes snow spikes across the floor (Vecho & Buck, 2013). As a result, everyone is shocked and astonished. In *Brave* it



occurs when Merida intervenes in the archery competition: “I Merida, first born descendent of clan DunBroch and I will be shooting for my own hand!” (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012).

The function of **‘villainy (A),’** the eighth function, is exceptionally significant as it is from here “the actual movement” of story is created (Propp, 1968, p. 16). The first seven functions are regarded as *‘preparatory section’* while the second segment, *‘complication,’* begins with villainy (Propp, 1968). Moreover, Propp explains various forms of villainy exhaustively.

According to this function, the villain causes harm or injury to a family member. In *Frozen* the act of ‘villainy’ occurs twice in the film. First, when Elsa is expelled by the Duke of Weselton and the society (27:39-29:05). The second form of villainy occurs when the Duke of Weselton orders his men to kill Elsa: “Be prepared for anything. And should you encounter the Queen, you are to put an end to this winter. Do you understand?” (Vecho & Buck, 2013).

According to one of the categories of villainy (function 8), the villain casts a spell upon someone or something (Propp 1968). However, in *Brave* the spell is cast upon Elinor by Merida (the hero) and as a result of its Elinor turns into a bear (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012). Propp further adds to this category that there are some forms which are not encountered independently; that is, they often occur in groups and pairs; and the casting of spell is one of them (1968). He says that in most of the tales the act of casting a spell is followed by other harmful acts. Thus, when Elinor turned in to a bear she was also made to leave the castle.

According to the twelfth function, **‘the first function of donor (D),’** the hero is tested, attacked, interrogated etc. This ultimately prepares his/her path for receiving a helper or magical agent (Propp 1968). For example, hero is asked to serve as an apprentice to a merchant etc. According to the tenth category of this function the hero receives a magical agent which is offered for exchange (Propp 1968). However, in *Frozen*, Ana offers the donor (Kristoff) with things in exchange for taking her to the ‘North Mountain’ (Vecho & Buck, 2013). Hence, the roles have been reversed. In *Brave*, this function occurs in the same way that it is Merida (the hero) who exchanges her locket for the spell (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012). Hence, in *Brave* too, the roles of hero and donor are reversed.

The thirteenth function says that the **‘hero’s reaction (E)’** is either positive or negative; that is hero either passes or fails the donor’s test while in some instances, the hero agrees or disagrees for the exchange. However, as in both the movies, it is the hero who is making the trade, so the reaction would come from the donor. In *Frozen*, this function occurs when Kristoff agrees to take Ana to the ‘North Mountain:’ “We leave in the morning” (Vecho & Buck, 2013). While in *Brave*, it occurs when the witch agrees to the exchange of locket (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012).

Propp explains that some stories have things with material value rather than the magical agent. He classifies it as the fourteenth function, **‘the hero acquires the use of a magical agent (F)’**

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(1968). In *Frozen* the actual beginning of the journey of Kristoff and Ana to the 'North Mountain' can be taken as the acquisition of a magical agent. The function 14 also occurs when Grand Pabbie tells Ana and Kristoff that she can only be cured by the kiss of true love. Although in this scene (01:09:03-01:09:06), there is no magic involved but Propp says that in some tales the donor only tells formula through which the hero can make a steed appear etc (1968).

Propp has given different categories of this function; *Brave* contains four of them. The first one is that the magical agent is pointed out (1968). Though in this movie Merida is taken to the donor (who will provide her with the agent) by the willows of wisps. The second form of this function that is present in *Brave* is: the hero buys the agent while the third is that the agent is prepared. So, when Merida buys the spell and when the witch prepares it for her, thus these two actions become the second and third categories of function 14. The fourth and last type that is present in the film is that the donor only tells a formula through which hero can gain a magical agent (Propp 1968). Hence, when Merida and Elinor go to the witch's house, she only tells a way (formula) through which they can break the spell (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012).

One thing should be noted here that the ninth type, in which the donor tells the hero through which he can solve the problem, is present in both the movies. In *Frozen* Grand Pabbie informs Ana and Kristoff that an act of true love can save a frozen heart. While in *Brave*, the witch tells Merida and Elinor, that to undo the spell, they should mend the mother and daughter bond.

For the fifteenth function, '*spatial transference between two kingdoms (G)*,' Propp says that the object of search may lie in another kingdom. Therefore, the hero must travel to this kingdom, which most of the time is horizontally or vertically far away (1968). So, in *Frozen*, the journey from the shop to the 'North Mountain' can be considered as transference from one kingdom to another because when Ana says: "This way to the North Mountain." As a reaction to this question, Kristoff laughs and moves her hand upwards and says: "More like this way" (Vecho & Buck, 2013). Thus, Ana is shocked to see a mountain hidden in clouds.

Propp has defined different types of function 15. *Frozen* contains three kinds of transference. According to the first type, the hero travels on a ground or water; in this movie Ana and Kristoff begin their journey on a sledge but after the accident rest of distance is covered by foot. The second category is that the hero is shown the route; Olaf is the one who takes Ana to Elsa by the end of the journey. Whereas the third and last kind of this function, which is present in movie, is that the hero makes use of a stationary means of communication. This means that the hero makes use of a staircase or bridge (1968). So, when Olaf shows Ana the staircase and she climbs it up, comes under this category of function 15 (Vecho & Buck, 2013). In *Brave*, Merida and Elinor are shown the route by the willows of wisps which make them enter into a strange land from where they found the answer of the riddle (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012).

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The category three of this function is also common in both the films. In *Frozen* by the end of the journey, it is Olaf who leads Ana to Elsa. Whereas in *Brave* the willows of wisps lead Merida and Elinor to a land and from there Merida finds the answer of the riddle.

In *Frozen*, at 05:14, Elsa accidentally injures Ana's brain. This injury is Propp's 17<sup>th</sup> function, '**branding (J)**,' according to it the hero receives a brand, mark or cut on his/her body. Thus, after the mishap, a lock of Ana's hair turns white. The branding again occurs at 01:01:59 when Ana's rest of the hair starts turning white after she got hit by Elsa's ice. Branding for the last time occurs at 01:26:27 when Ana completely turns into ice statue because of Elsa's ice present in her heart. On the other hand, in *Brave*, at 01:11:22 Merida gets a cut on her arm while she was trying to stop her father from killing her mother. One thing is worth mentioning over here, that is both the heroes accidentally got branded by their family member.

According to the function 18, '**victory (I)**,' the villain is defeated. For example, he is beaten in an open combat, he may lose in a game or he may get banished. In *Frozen*, this function occurs when Hans comes to know that Ana is still alive (Vecho & Buck, 2013). Thus, all his evil desires of killing the sisters and taking over their kingdom remained unfulfilled. On the other hand, in *Brave* it occurs at 01:19:25 when Mor-Du is defeated in a one-to-one with Elinor.

According to Propp the 19<sup>th</sup> function, '**initial misfortune is liquidated (K)**,' is the point where the narrative reaches its peak. He further says that this function constitutes a pair with function 8 that is villainy (1968). In this function the misfortune, problem or the villainy that occurred at the beginning of the story is resolved. In *Frozen* by the end of the movie, the broken bond between the sisters is mended; Elsa finally learns to control her powers and society accepts her (Vecho & Buck, 2013). On the other hand, in *Brave* at 01:22:12 spell breaks and Elinor become human again and the bond between the mother and daughter is rekindled (Sarafian & Andrews, 2012).

According to the function 21, the hero is pursued by a dragon, witch, geese etc '**pursuit (Pr)**.' In *Frozen*, at 42:08 Ana and Kristoff are chased by wolves and at 58:50 Ana, Kristoff and Olaf are pursued by 'ice giant.' In *Brave*, when Elinor runs away from the castle after realizing that she is losing control over herself; she is not only followed by king and his men but also by 'Mor-Du.' Thus, this pursuit becomes the function number 21(01:13:04-01:15:59).

In *Frozen* the whole song 'Let It Go' (31:20-34:41) is function 29 known as '**transfiguration (T)**.' According to Propp in this function the hero gets a new appearance (1968). In this song the audience sees that Elsa has given up her previous identity and has taken up a whole new look. She lets go off her coronation dress and crown and takes up a new dress and builds a castle for herself. Hence over here, two types of transfiguration are taking place, the first one is hero putting on a new garment and the second one is that the hero builds a new palace for

himself/herself. At 01:23:22, in *Brave*, Elinor is given a new appearance, that is, at the end of the film her hair is not tied up as they used to be at the beginning.

The last function, '**wedding (W)**,' says that the hero marries and ascends the throne. Although in *Frozen*, there is no marriage but by the end of the film Ana and Kristoff are in a relationship; which highlights the fact that one day they might get married. Secondly, at 01:30:38, Ana tells Kristoff that "She's named you the official Arendelle Ice Master and Deliverer." Hence, this status makes Kristoff, a part of royal family. In *Brave*, also there is no marriage but this function can be taken as the happy ending. Hence, by the end all the issues are resolved and everybody is happy with his/her life.

#### **Functions Only Occurring in *Frozen*:**

The function that the researcher found only occurring in *Frozen* is '**trickery ( $\eta$ )**' (function 6). In this function, the villain deceives his victim by assuming a disguise such as of a golden goat, a handsome youth or an old lady etc. He/she further uses persuasion to trap his/her victim. In *Frozen*, Prince Hans of Southern Isles tries to deceive Ana through persuasion from the moment they meet each other (Vecho & Buck, 2013) and keep doing that till Ana accepts his marriage proposal.

Propp argues that "deceitful proposals are always accepted and fulfilled" (1968, p. 30). The function 7-which is '**complicity ( $\theta$ )**-occurs simultaneously with function 6. According to this function the victim submits to the villain's deception. In the movie Ana falls for Hans' persuasion and deception and by the end of the song "The doors are opened" (25:33), she accepts his marriage proposal. The next function that occurs in the movie is of '**reconnaissance ( $\epsilon$ )**' (function 4). It means that the villain tries to gather information regarding the object he desires. Thus, when the Duke of Weselton, asks questions regarding the shutting down of gates to Ana (21:44), he is making the reconnaissance. The next function that occurs in the movie is '**delivery ( $\zeta$ )**' (function 5). According to it the villain gets the information about his/her victim. In the movie, the delivery is present in an inverted form; which means that the information is gathered through a different mean. So, in the movie, when Elsa shows her hidden powers, it is the moment when the Duke of Weselton receives all his answers. The Duke of Weselton after witnessing Elsa's power says: "Sorcery. I knew there was something dubious going on here" (Vecho & Buck, 2013). Hence, at this point he finds all the answers of the questions that he had regarding Arendelle.

From 30:06 till 30:45, three functions, namely, '**Mediation (B)**, '**Beginning Counteraction (C)**, '**Departure ( $\uparrow$ )**' occur simultaneously. The first one is the function 9-mediation. Through this, the hero is brought into the story (Propp, 1968, p. 36). Although the audience is introduced to both the sisters in 'initial situation;' but due to this function, Ana emerges as a seeker hero. According to this function, the misfortune or lack is made known and the hero is dispatched to

end the crisis. In one of types of mediation, Propp says that sometimes the hero takes the decision to depart rather than being asked by the dispatcher and his/her parents allow him/her to embark the journey (1968). Therefore, Ana's decision of going after her sister and Hans' apprehensions and concern can come under this category. The second one is function 10 that is the 'beginning counteraction.' According to this function the hero (seeker) agrees upon counteraction. In the movie it occurs when Ana announces that she will go to find Elsa: "Tonight was my fault. I pushed her, so I am the one that need to go after her" (30:06-30:13). The third one, which occurs with the rest of the two functions, is function 11 this says that the hero leaves the home (departure). For the heroes who are seekers, this departure has "search as their goal" (Propp, 1968, p. 39). Thus, the scene from 30:27-30:44, is the moment when Ana leaves the palace to find her sister Elsa. In conclusion, all these three functions occur at the same time in the movie (Vecho & Buck, 2013).

According to this 22<sup>nd</sup> function '*rescue (Rs)*,' the hero is rescued from the chase or pursuit. For instance, the hero may fly away on a horse or a geese etc (Prop 1968). In the movie, at 43:08 both Ana and Kristoff are rescued from wolf chase. This function occurs again at 1:01:15 when Ana, Kristoff and Olaf are rescued from the pursuit of the 'ice giant.' The function 24 that is '*unfounded claims (L)*' are presented by a false hero, in the film from 49:40 till 50:32 Hans presents himself to be very noble and caring but by the end of the movie his true face is revealed. According to function 28, '*exposure (Ex)*,' the false hero is exposed. In the film, the moment of revelation occurs from 01:15:41 till 01:16:51. In this one minute and ten seconds scene Hans refuses to kiss Ana and tells her about his plan of taking over Arendelle. By the end of the movie, both Hans and the Duke of Weselton are punished; which is the 30<sup>th</sup> function, '*punishment (U)*' of Propp's morphology. Prince Hans is imprisoned whereas the kingdom of Arendelle breaks all its trade relations with Kingdom of Weselton (01:29:42-01:30:13).

#### **Functions Only Occurring in *Brave*:**

In function 16, '*struggle (H)*,' Propp says that the hero and villain get in a direct fight (1968). In this movie, from 01:18:13 till 01:19:15, Elinor and Mor-Du fight with each other in an open field. According to Propp in function number 27, '*recognition (Q)*,' the hero is recognized by a mark, wound or a thing which was given to him (1968). In *Brave*, recognition occurs when the king and his men realizes that the bear is none other than the queen- Elinor (01:22:30).

#### **Modified Functions:**

The first function which is present in both *Frozen* and *Brave* with little modification is **function 12**. According to the tenth category of this function, the magical agent is shown to the hero, which is offered to him in exchange of something else. However, in both movies the roles of both hero and donor have changed; that is, in *Frozen*, it is Ana who provides Kristoff ropes, hammer and carrot in exchange to take her to the 'North Mountain.' Whereas, in *Brave* Merida

offers her locket to the witch in exchange for the spell. As there is modification in function, consequently, **function 13** is also changed in this movie. According to Propp, in function 13 the hero's reaction is either positive or negative towards the actions of the donor (1968); but as Ana (hero) offers things to Kristoff (donor) then it is Kristoff who will either reject or accept the offer. This kind of role reversal is also present in *Brave*; that is, it is the witch who will either accept or reject Merida's offer. Thus, in both modern contemporary fairy tales, the function 12 and 13 are present in modified form.

The next function that has been altered in the movies is the **19<sup>th</sup>** one (the initial lack is liquidated). The makers of the movie have added an extra factor in this function. According to the original function, the hero finds the desired object; although in *Frozen*, the hero (Ana) finds Elsa and she comes back to Arendelle but apart from this, the sister bond is also mended by the end of the movie. The same kind of situation is also present in *Brave*. By the end of the film, the spell breaks and Elinor become human again. Thus, a physical misfortune is liquidated. Other than this an emotional misfortune is liquidated when the mother and daughter relationship is restored again. Thus, in both the modern fairy tales' misfortune is not limited to something physical rather it also includes emotional needs.

The last function which is transformed is the **function 31** that is wedding. Although, in *Frozen*, there is no wedding explicitly but the relationship between Kristoff and Ana highlights that a wedding may occur in the future. Apart from this, a wedding at the end of the fairy tale can be taken synonymous to a happy ending as in *Brave* there is no sign of wedding but by the end of the movie, all the characters are shown satisfied with their life and happy with the people around them.

Apart from the four common modified functions, individually there is only one modified function in *Frozen* that is **function 24**-false hero. According to Propp, a false hero claims for the achievements of the hero (1968). However, Hans does not take any credit of works that Ana does; rather he pretends to be very noble and caring towards Ana and behaves as if he is worried about the kingdom of Arendelle. Whereas, in *Brave* there are only two functions which are modified. The first function which is modified is **function 8** which is villainy. According to Propp, it is the villain who casts the spell on a person or thing (1968). However, in this movie, Merida (hero) casts the spell on Elinor. Secondly, **function 1**, assentation is also modified as rather than physically absent Elinor is emotionally absent from Merida's life.

### **Conclusion:**

This research was conducted to find whether the contemporary fairy tales conform to the narrative theory propounded by the Russian folklorist, Vladimir Propp. The two Oscar winning and feminisms supporting films, *Frozen* and *Brave* were chosen to serve the purpose. The researcher was quite successful in achieving the objective; as the morphological structure of

both the films highly correlates with Propp's theory, especially of *Frozen*. Secondly, it was not difficult to answer the research questions because all the functions (whether in original or modified form) that were present in the films were quite apparent. As Propp himself has only focused on the morphology of Russian folktales, the main focus of the research was also the plot structure of the films. It was found that most of functions in the films are present in their original form. Individually, twenty-five and seventeen functions were followed in 'Frozen' and 'Brave' respectively and fourteen (excluding initial situation) out of thirty-one functions were common in both films. There were only seven out of thirty-one functions which were followed in modified form. These modifications occur in form of role-reversals, broken bonds and estranged relationships, and challenging conventional notion of wedding. Through the use of syntagmatic approach, the researcher concluded that Propp's narrative functions retain the relevance in today's academia.

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