A METHOD FOR ANALYZING WORLD-MODELS IN SCANDINAVIAN MYTHOLOGY

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This paper discusses how to construct a method for analyzing and interpreting world-models[1] in Scandinavian mythology[2] by adapting and developing Vladimir Propp's schema for the dramatis personae of folktales found in *The Morphology of the Folktale* (1928 [1968]) as a foundational method for analyzing the world-models employed in a certain type of narratives about Scandinavian gods, which will be called *gods' journeys*. Gods' journeys comprise approximately 50% of the number of identifiable narratives about Scandinavian gods in the work called *Edda* by Snorri Sturluson (*Snorra Edda* hereafter), in eddic poetry and in skaldic poetry. The theme common to all gods' journeys is a situation of confrontation between a Nordic god (referred to hereafter by the vernacular term *æsir*) and an inhabitant of 'the otherworld'. In the other types of narratives in Scandinavian mythology, this situation of a confrontation between inhabitants of Ásgarðr ['God-Realm'] and inhabitants of different types of otherworlds is also very often present, making this a general theme of the mythology. The analysis of the narrative structures of the gods' journeys constitutes another approach to the construction of world-models in Scandinavian mythology, which is different from the prevalent discussion in scholarship about the subject (see below).

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[1]   World-models may be understood as a physical attribute to worldview, which represents the broader spectrum of cultural elements in ethnic identity See also Osborne and Frog, this volume. On ethnic identity, see Glukhov & Glukhova, this volume.

[2]   The term 'Scandinavian mythology' is described here on the basis of the work by Snorri Sturluson called *Edda*, and of both skaldic and eddic poetry. Even though these are medieval Icelandic texts written in a West-Nordic language, the Danish (i.e. East Norse) chronicler Saxo Grammaticus uses this mythology in his *Gesta Danorum*, and it will be treated as generally representative. As evidenced below, scholarship also traditionally makes use of the ethnic term 'Scandinavian' rather than 'Old Norse' to refer to the mythology in relation to world-model analysis.

By employing the analysis of narrative structures it may be possible to more skillfully negotiate the issues of genre and form in this varied type of medieval literature about the pre-Christian past. However, this should not be construed as an attempt to construct an all-encompassing method for analyzing world-models in an unrestricted variety of genres and literary themes.

This paper will begin by providing an overview of the methodological problem of analyzing world-models in Scandinavian mythology, then proceed to applying Propp's functions to the narratives and conclude with some remarks on combining Propp's schema with spatial analysis. The object is not to construct detailed world-models, but rather to keep the discussion on an abstract level in order to be generally accurate in assessing the methodological value of world-models.[3]

The Methodological Problem

The analysis of world-models in Scandinavian mythology was first promoted by Aaron Ya. Gurevich (1969) and Eleazar M. Meletinsky (1973). In *Space and Time in the Weltmodell of the Old Scandinavian Peoples*, Gurevich approached this subject from the perspective of the pre-Christian Scandinavians' inability to separate themselves from their environment (Gurevich 1969: 42), arguing that there was a direct correlation between the reality of pre-modern Scandinavians and the literary imagery of the mythological poetry and prose, as well as linguistic concepts (Gurevich 1969: 42–43). In his article "Scandinavian Mythology as a System", Meletinsky proposed an analytical approach to Scandinavian mythology that systematically seeks out elementary semantic oppositions and narrative motifs (Meletinsky 1973: 43). Meletinsky was heavily influenced by Claude Lévi-Strauss and his notion of binary oppositional categories (Meletinsky 1973: 45). This leads Meletinsky to suggest a model of the pre-Christian Scandinavian cosmos divided according to both a horizontal and a vertical axis imbued with mythological meaning in oppositional categories (Meletinsky 1973: 46–57). In the 1980s, Kirsten Hastrup adopted and expanded on Meletinsky's world-model in multiple studies (Hastrup 1981; 1985; 1990). Most importantly, Hastrup proposed the widely accepted model of concentric circles that sketches out the horizontal opposition between *æsir* and *jǫtnar* ['Giants'] in the mono-lithic cosmological terms Ásgarðr ['God-Realm'] and Útgarðr ['Out-Realm'], presumably corresponding directly to the linguistic concepts of the spatial

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[3]   It must be underlined that this discussion is under development and should be seen as pre-liminary, as it is part of my PhD dissertation, scheduled for completion in the fall of 2013.

arrangement of the farm in Icelandic: *innangarðs* ['inside the fence'] and *útan-gards* ['outside the fence'] (Hastrup 1990: 28–32).

Meletinsky and Hastrup were criticized by Jens Peter Schjødt (1990) for their use of source material, followed by Margaret Clunies Ross (1994), who suggested that there may not have been such a sharp division between the *æsir* and *jǫtnar* after all. Clunies Ross also pointed out that the term *Útgarðr* is not a common locution in the mythological vocabulary, the plural term *Jǫtunheimar* ['Giant-Realms'] is the one most widely used (Clunies Ross 1994: 51–52). Of special notice is the critique raised by Stefan Brink (2004: 295–297), in which he explicitly opposes the notion of a coherent spatial system in Scandinavian mythology, denounces the semantic oppositions of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism (and structuralism in general), and suggests that the cosmology of *Snorra Edda* in particular was "färgats av den kristna, retoriska polariteten mellan himmel och helvete" ['coloured by the Christian rhetorical polarity between Heaven and Hell'] (Brink 2004: 298). A similar critique of structuralism and the use of *Snorra Edda* to describe the pre-Christian Scandinavian world-model was also raised by Gro Steinsland (2005: 141–142).

To date, only one doctoral dissertation has been produced devoted to this subject. This is Nanna Løkka's *Sted og landskap i norrøn mytologi* (2010). Methodologically, Løkka's dissertation is interesting because she concedes to Brink's critique of Meletinskij's and Hastrup's analyses, but at the same time confesses to perform a structuralist analysis herself (Løkka 2010: 35). She rejects the Lévi-Straussian notion of semantic oppositions and suggests that the causal premises on which the cosmology works are inherently monistic rather than dualistic. Dualism is assigned to a Christian conception of the world, while it is believed that the eddic poems, taken to be sources to the pre-Christian era, arguably display notions of monism (Løkka 2010: 259–263). *Snorra Edda* is left out of the investigation owing to its literary complexity and indisputable composition in Christian times (Løkka 2010: 22). In Løkka's view it seems that the cosmology of *Snorra Edda* is indeed an expression of the "Christian rhetorical polarity between Heaven and Hell" that Brink describes in the above quotation. Løkka (2010: 37–44) makes use of two different methods for analysis: sequential analyses bordering on narratological text-analysis; and the analysis of motifs as symbols in a structured socio-religious context.

Evidently there is a later scholarly tendency to move away from Lévi-Straussian notions of semantic oppositions, and even a lowered willingness to utilize the contents of *Snorra Edda* as a source for pre-Christian Scandinavian mythology. There are, of course, good reasons to be cautious in the use of *Snorra*

Edda as a source and this material must be addressed with care,[4] but to discard this material or ignore it entirely is to rob this field of an invaluable source for new realizations. Recent scholarship seems rather overhasty in judging both the content of *Snorra Edda,* as well as the notion of semantic oppositions in the pre-Christian Scandinavian world-model. In fact, Meletinsky already has an answer to critics such as Brink on the first page of his article:

> The systematic order of Scandinavian mythology is not absolute and its degree is not constant in its various areas; there are also contradictions difficult to overcome (Meletinsky 1973: 43).

Meletinsky posits that one should not look for a complete and universally coherent system, but asserts that structures of commonalities are present. This simply calls for a further development of methodological tools for analyzing the world-model of Scandinavian mythology. Løkka has provided us with a groundbreaking attempt to develop these and there is still much that can be done. To the study of the Scandinavian mythological world-model, Løkka's sequential analyses applied to the eddic poems of gods' journeys are the most intriguing ones. If the proper tools for carrying out such sequential analyses can be developed, it is possible to transgress the different genres that communicate Scandinavian mythology and perform world-model analyses accounting for the greater part of the material.

The Data

The gods' journeys are broadly represented in Scandinavian mythology. Of the thirteen individually distinguishable mythological fictions[5] about the *æsir* in *Snorra Edda*, approximately eight are narratives about a god's journey to the otherworld. (See the source index in (1) below). *Snorra Edda* also preserves skaldic versions of Þjazi's abduction of Íðunn and Þórr's encounter with Geirrøðr in the poems *Haustlǫng* and *Þórsdrápa*. These are also journey narratives. In eddic poetry, the ratio is the opposite: five journey narratives out of approximately twelve individual eddic poems on gods extant in the main manuscripts Codex

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4   See for instance Bugge 1881–89; Mogk 1923; Baetke 1950; von See 1988; and most recently Lassen 2011.

5   These are termed *frásagnir* and appear in *Edda* as longer narratives about the gods, almost invariably preceded by an identifying (formulaic) sentence such as: "Hann hóf þar frásǫgn at ..." (*Skáldskaparmál* 1998: 1) ['He told the story that ...']; "Þat er upphaf þessa máls at ..." (*Gylfaginning* 2005: 37) ['The beginning of this tale is ...']; or "Sjá saga er til þess at ..." (*Skáldskaparmál* 1998: 4) ['The story about this is ...]. On the term 'mythological fictions', see Clunies Ross 1992: 204. It is obvious that there are more myths than the extended narratives extant, but as a distinguishable genre of narratives there are approximately thirteen *frásagnir* in *Snorra Edda*.

Regius (GkS 2365 4ᵗᵒ) and AM 748 4ᵗᵒ. Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum* presents four narratives: two about the hero Thorkillus; one about Othinus's rape of Rind; and one about Høtherus's acquisition of a sword.[6] The narratives about Thorkillus can be identified as derivatives of some of the Þórr-myths preserved in *Snorra Edda*. This is also the case for one short saga called *Þorsteins saga bæjarmagns*. (See McKinnell 1994: 57–86.) Because of their relationship with the Þórr-myths, these may also be defined as gods' journeys. The journey narratives preserved in Scandinavian mythology are therefore:

(1) Source index of gods' journey narratives

Prose narratives from *Snorra Edda*

- Þórr's Journey to Útgarðaloki   (ÞJÚ)
- Þórr and Miðgarðsormr   (ÞM)
- The Death of Baldr   (DB)
- Þjazi and Íðunn   (ÞÍ)
- The Mead of Poetry   (MP)
- Þórr and Hrungnir   (ÞH)
- Þórr's Journey to Geirrøðr   (ÞJG)
- *Æsir*'s Journey to Hreiðmar*   (ÆJH)

Eddic poems

- *Skírnismál*   (*Skm*)
- *Hymiskviða*   (*Hym*)
- *Þrymskviða*   (*Þrk*)
- *Baldrs draumar*   (*Bdr*)
- *Reginsmál*   (*Rm*)

Skaldic poems

- Þjazi and Íðunn in *Haustlǫng*   (*Hl*)
- Þórr and Geirrøðr in *Þórsdrápa*   (*Þd*)

Prose narratives from *Gesta Danorum*

- Thorkillus's Journey to Geruthus   (TJG)
- Thorkillus's Journey to Ugarthilocus   (TJU)

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[6]   This is part of a longer narrative of Baldr's death.

- Høtherus's Acquisition of the Sword   (HS)
- Othinus's Rape of Rind   (OR)

<u>Prose sagas</u>
- *Þorsteins saga bæjarmagns*   (*Þsb*)[7]

* ÆJH is the prelude to the tale of Sigurðr Fafnisbani.

The plot of each of these narratives consists of a situation, where one or more representatives of the *æsir* group undertake a journey to Útgarðr, Hel, Jǫtunheimar or the location of an antagonist that is named after its owner, such as Geirrøðargarðar, Þrymheimr, etc. These locations may commonly be denoted as *the otherworld*. There are many different reasons for the otherworld journeys, but in each instance the culmination of the journey is the confrontation with a primary inhabitant of the otherworld. This situation of confrontation is also present in several other narratives, which for different reasons cannot be satisfyingly analyzed as gods' journeys using Propp's functions of the dramatis personae. These narratives include the tale of the Masterbuilder in *Snorra Edda* (describing the origins of the walls of Ásgarðr) and the narrative frame of the monologic and dialogic eddic poems *Vǫluspá, Vafþrúðnismál, Grímnismál, Hábarðzljóð, Lokasenna, Alvíssmál* and *Hyndluljóð*. The primary problem with fitting these narratives to the functions of the dramatis personae is that they simply lack a significant number of the relevant functions. It does, however, seem that the subject of confrontation between the *æsir* and the primary inhabitants of the otherworld is widely represented in Scandinavian mythology, and that the narrative plots are either the situation of confrontation or the narrative sequence leading up to and including the confrontation. The form, function and result of these confrontations vary greatly, but the structures of the journey narratives have many features and details in common.

Analytical Approach

Vladimir Propp's (1968: 25–65) pattern for approaching the folktale is adapted here as an analytical tool in order to consider the distinguishable functions of the narrative structures. These unique functions of the narrative structures reveal the dynamics between the protagonists and antagonists of the narratives, and are thus expressions of movements in a conceivable world-model that must

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[7]   For the sake of brevity *Rm*, *Þsb*, HS, OR, TJG and TJU will not be included in the following.

be present for the mythology to work. In 1928, the Russian formalist Vladimir Propp published his morphological analysis of Russian fairy tales in *Morphology of the Folktale* (*Morfológija skázki*). The aim was the structural description of the Russian fairy tale (Propp 1968: xx–xxi). Propp observed that the fairy tales have a limited set of functions related to the characters, or dramatis personae, which are constant elements of the tales, and appear throughout the material independently of how and by whom they are fulfilled. These functions are realized within a formalized structure in narratives. This can be illustrated with the following four variants of a journey-plot (Propp 1968: 19–22) in example (2):

(2)

1. A tsar gives an eagle to a hero. The eagle carries the hero away to another kingdom.
2. An old man gives Súčenko a horse. The horse carries him away to another kingdom.
3. A sorcerer gives Iván a little boat. The boat takes Iván to another kingdom.
4. A princess gives Iván a ring. Young men appearing from out of the ring and carry Iván away into another kingdom.

The corresponding plot in journey narratives in Scandinavian mythology can be identified in a similar manner as outlined in (3). It is observed that they include a similar motion: a member of the collective must for some reason undertake a journey to the otherworld by some special means:

(3)

1. One or more gods desire something that is located in the otherworld. Someone from the *æsir* collective is sent there to retrieve it.
2. A crisis situation occurs in Ásgarðr as a result of social exchange with the otherworld. Someone from the *æsir* collective is sent there to resolve the situation.

Propp observed that all the fairy tales that he analyzed are of one type in regards to their structure (Propp 1968: 23). This structure outlines a set of actions or functions that are identified as part of a chain of events relating to the plot of journeying to another world. This makes his method highly useful for this present study of world-models in Scandinavian mythology.

(4) Complete list of functions in folktales according to Propp (1968: 25–65)

α: Initial situation (introduction of the hero, enumeration of a family)

β: Absentation (one of the protagonist group leaves home)

γ: Interdiction (the hero is presented with an interdiction in some capacity)

δ: Violation (the hero violates the interdiction)

ε: Reconnaissance (the villain attempts to obtain information in order to hurt the protagonist and/or his group, or a member of this group)

ζ: Delivery (the villain obtains information)

η: Trickery (the villain attempts to deceive or take possession of a victim or his belongings)

θ: Complicity (the victim of the villain's deception submits)

A: Villainy (the villain causes harm to a member of the protagonist group)

a: Lack (a member of the protagonist group lacks something. This can supplant A)

B: The connective incident (the lack or misfortune is made known)

C: Beginning counteraction (the seeker-hero agrees to counteract)

↑: Departure (the hero leaves home)

D: Donor situation (a potential donor tests, interrogates, attacks or in another way interacts with the hero)

E: Reaction (the hero reacts to the confrontation with the donor)

F: Provision/receipt of a magical agent (the hero acquires provision of some kind from the donor)

G: Spatial transference/guidance (the hero enters another realm)

H: Struggle (the hero engages in a confrontation with the villain)

J: Branding (the hero is branded in his confrontation with the villain)

I: Victory (the hero defeats the villain)

K: Liquidation of lack or misfortune (the balance is restored and the lack or misfortune represented by 'A' or '*a*' is liquidated)

↓: Return (the hero returns home)

Pr: Pursuit (the hero is pursued by the villain)

Rs: Rescue (the hero is rescued from the villan)

o: Unrecognized arrival (the hero arrives at home without being recognized, or he arrives in another country)

L: Unfounded claims (in the absence of the hero, another man claims to be the hero)

M: Difficult task (the hero is faced with a difficult task to prove his authenticity)

N: Solution (the task is resolved)

Q: Recognition (the hero is recognized)

Ex: Exposure (the false hero [or the villain in disguise] is exposed)

T: Transfiguration (the hero is given a new appearance)

U: Punishment (the villain is punished)

W: Wedding (the hero is married or receives compensation)

Margaret Clunies Ross and B. K. Martin (1986) have suggested that it is possible to apply Propp's pattern to the mythological fictions of *Snorra Edda,* and demonstrated this with the example of Þórr's Journey to Geirrøðr (ÞJG). The attempt at doing so is carried out with certain difficulty, assigning several of Propp's functions to be presupposed in the course of the ÞJG narrative and after giving another example, this time applied to Þjazi's Abduction of Íðunn (ÞÍ), they conclude that "Snorri appears to conform to the Proppian pattern, but uses it skillfully and freely" (Clunies Ross & Martin 1986: 65). According to Clunies Ross and Martin, this suggests a conscious attempt on behalf of the author of *Snorra Edda* to employ folktale patterns in his treatment of the myths, and further that it indicates this was purely a 13th-century phenomenon (Clunies Ross & Martin 1986: 72). This view is problematic. There is no reason to assume that this pattern was only adapted to myths in the 13th century, and that the pattern was only meaningful in a medieval context. There is also no reason to assume that such structural patterning is specific to the genre of folktales as opposed to other types and genres of traditional narrative (cf. Lord 1960 [2000]; Briggs & Bauman 1992: 133–134). As will be shown below, the same structural pattern is also perceivable in eddic poems (traditional Old Norse narrative poetry that offers the closest equivalent to epic). This pattern corresponds to a plot of journeying to the otherworld. It could be argued that this plot of journeying simply requires a minimal number of the basic narrative units as identified by Propp, and so it does not necessarily suggest conscious redaction on behalf of a medieval author.[8] However, the purpose here is not to address generic strategies of specific examples but rather to illustrate the application of Proppian pattern analysis of narratives of Scandinavian mythology, and what such analysis can reveal.

The patterns of the two examples given by Clunies Ross and Martin (1986: 64–65) are provided in example (5):

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[8] Notably, ÞJÚ and ÞM seem to form a special case among the mythological fictions in *Snorra Edda*, and it is not entirely impossible that they are constructed to fit in the narrative frame of *Gylfaginning* for the purpose of insulting Þórr (see Frog 2011a: 18–23). These two narratives lack both a preparatory phase and the complication (see below), and if they are indeed narrative constructions of the medieval period, they seem to contradict the notions of Clunies Ross and Martin that the adapted Proppian pattern reveals medieval redaction of myths, as they only make use of half the pattern. On the contrary, deviation from the traditional structural paradigm could be a symptom of non-traditional adaptation of narrative material.

(5)
a. (ÞJG): (α) β (γ) (δ) ε ζ η θ A (B) (C) ↑ (D) (E) F G Hx3 Ix3 K (↓)[9]

b. (ÞÍ): α β η θ A B C ↑ G K ↓ Pr Rs : a C ↑ G M N K/W

These examples can serve as models for analyzing the other journey narratives in Scandinavian mythology, and the structures can thus serve as model examples of the basic elements of journey narratives. With very few exceptions, the available material displays a structure that is built around a preparatory part; a complication; a donor situation and a confrontation (see below). It is important to note, however, that it is not the entire structure of Propp's folktale pattern which is relevant to this material. Practically none of Propp's functions from 'o' to 'W' are present in this material. This is due to the genre and theme of the mythic fictions of *Snorra Edda* as well as the eddic and skaldic poems. The folktales are preoccupied with human life, whereas the central narratives of Scandinavian mythology do not typically engage such themes: they are most often preoccupied with events of numinous or cosmic significance.[10] It is, however, interesting to note that many of these elements are incorporated in TJG/TJU and *Þsb*, where the characters are human. This is an obvious condition derived from the fact that a) Propp's pattern was developed for a certain type of narrative in a certain culture, and b) Scandinavian mythology is transmitted in several genres. However, if the Proppian pattern is employed in instances where it is meaningful as a tool to examine the narrative structure, the situation is different.

Clunies Ross and Martin have established that the Proppian pattern can meaningfully be applied to the mythological fictions of *Snorra Edda*. In other areas of Old Norse studies, structural analyses are being used for discussing embedded ritual structures in narratives. The scholar of religion Jens Peter Schjødt argues that a myth in Scandinavian mythology is a sequence of Proppian functions which are combined in a certain order, and that the narratives deal with events that play out in the field between this world and the other world. This is important to the way in which society's worldview is organized. (Schjødt 2008: 65–66.) Although Schjødt does not directly employ Propp's pattern in his structural analyses, his current work attests to the applicability of sequential analysis to Scandinavian mythology for discussions about worldview.[11] The ob-

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9   Parenthesis indicates that the function is presupposed from the narrative context.

10   It must be stressed that this is a generalized observation, and that some of the elements can and will occur in *Snorra Edda*, eddic and skaldic poetry. An example of this is the above-mentioned ÞÍ, where a marriage occurs.

11   Another scholar who has used Propp in worldview studies is Juha Pentikäinen (1978: 273–294) on Karelian folk-material.

servation of the realization of spatial codes and conceptions in narrative patterns is present in Schjødt's work as well as the work of other scholars of religion, anthropologists and even philosophers.

The anthropologist Roy Wagner (2001) has observed how spatial structures of the cosmos and world among tribes in Papua New Guinea are directly involved in the narrative web of their cosmological myths, and philosophers of place and space such as J. E. Malpas (1999: 44–45) argue that space is only fully conceivable if understood as space for movement and activity. To Malpas (1999: 50) space is egocentric and experiential, and should be understood on the premises of a creature's involvement with its world. Notions of the connectedness of space and time in narratology is also at the basis of Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981: 84–258) theory of *chronotopes*. The sequential analysis of the journey narratives reveals expressions of movements in a conceived world-model. That world-model must be present for the mythology to function insofar as such an analysis reveals narrative characters' involvement with their world. Consequently, analysis of journey narratives produces information about conceptions of the world-model within which the narrative is framed. On this basis, a world-model can be abstracted. The analysis of world-models in Scandinavian mythology is thus essentially an attempt to understand the space experienced in the narratives.

The author of *Snorra Edda*, who also makes an analysis of the cosmic space of Scandinavian mythology on his own terms, puts his understanding of the world-model into the mouths of Hár, Jafnhár and Þriði within the frame of the *Gylfaginning* section of this work. The composers of eddic poems place corresponding understandings in the mouths of Óðinn, the *vǫlva*, Alvíss, Vafþrúðnir and other characters in monologic and dialogic presentations. This is described space and it stands in contrast to experienced space in so far as experienced space is accessible through the analysis of narrative sequences. Described space is consciously locked in its contemporary frame of reference as a medieval attempt to describe the world-model that is otherwise reflected in narratives, experience and the cultural discourses surrounds these. In the following, Propp's principles for the narrative analysis of folktales is applied to gods' journeys for the purpose of understanding the experienced space of these tales, and negotiate this problem. The analysis follows a grouping of functions in four phases which are logical narrative consequences of one another. These phases are: *the preparatory phase*, which is identified as the course of dramatis personae actions leading to Propp's function 'A' *villainy* or '*a*' *lack*; *the complication,* which is the course of actions initiated by the protagonist collective to counteract the effect of 'A'/'*a*'; *the donor situation,* which corresponds to a point of no return, where the

journeying god has entered another realm; and *the confrontation,* which is the final situation, where the god engages the primary inhabitant of the otherworld.

The Preparatory Phase

The preparatory phase sets the stage for a narrative, presenting the essential conditions for the complication and movement of plot. Propp represents the chain of functions with Greek letters (see (4) above). In the narratives of *Snorra Edda,*[12] the preparatory phase is initiated by the absentation (β) of one or more members of the *æsir* collective and it is characterized as a situation that is of threat to the stability of the *æsir:*

(6) The *preparatory phase* of gods' journeys in *Snorra Edda*

  a. DB: Frigg is alone in the hall and susceptible to Loki's deceit. The preparatory phase leads to the murder of Baldr (murder/loss): α β ε ζ η θ = A/*a*

  b. ÞÍ: Óðinn, Hœnir and Loki are out in the wilderness (*eyðimǫrk*). The preparatory phase leads to Þjazi's abduction of Íðunn (abduction/loss): α β η θ = A/*a*

  c. MP: Kvasir leaves the *æsir* and travels the world exposing himself to the crimes of Fjalar and Galar. The preparatory phase leads to Bǫlverkr's quest for the mead (a need is implied: murder/need): α β η θ = A(/*a*)

  d. ÞH: Óðinn rides to Jǫtunheimar and is confronted with Hrungnir. The preparatory phase leads to Hrungnir's threat to Ásgarðr (giant threatens): α β ε ζ η = A

  e. ÞJG: Loki flies to Geirrøðargarðar and is captured. The preparatory phase leads to a threat to Loki and thus the collective of the *æsir* (giant threatens): α β ε ζ η θ = A

  f. ÆJH: Óðinn, Hœnir and Loki kill Óttar and are confronted (tricked?) by Hreiðmar who is a skilled magician (*fjǫlkunnigr*). The preparatory phase leads to a threat against the *æsir* collective (threat/need): α β η θ = A/*a*

In the gods' journeys of skaldic and eddic poetry, there is a little more variation, but the same structure is identifiable:

(7) The *preparatory phase* of gods' journeys in eddic and skaldic poetry

  a. *Skm*: Freyr sits on Hlíðskjalfr (violating an implicit interdiction) and sees Gerðr. The preparatory phase leads to Freyr's need to have Gerðr (need): α γ δ = *a*

  b. *Hym*: Þórr demands of Ægir that he holds a feast for the *æsir*, but the *jǫtunn* attempts to cheat him, saying that he has no kettle (thereby leading Þórr to Hymir in an

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[12]   In this instance, the two narratives ÞJÚ and ÞM in *Gylfaginning* about Þórr have been left out because of their different nature (see note 7 above).

attempt to have him killed). The preparatory phase leads to the need for the kettle (need): α β (ε) η = A

c. *Þd*: Loki tricks Þórr to go search for Geirrøðr and Þórr accepts this. The preparatory phase leads to a threat against Þórr and a need to kill Geirrøðr (threat/need): η θ = A/*a*

d. *Hl*: Þjazi seeks out the *æsir*, finds them, abducts Loki and coerces him to bring him Íðunn. The preparatory phase leads to Íðunn's abduction (abduction/loss): *a* ε ζ η θ = A/*a*

In the cases of *Þrk* and *Bdr* the preparatory phase is not as such present in the narrative. Both begin *in medias res* and in the case of *Þrk* it is clear that the preparatory phase is presupposed (Þrymr, the villain, has already stolen Þórr's hammer when Þórr wakes up, and it is at this point the poem begins). In *Bdr*, it is not possible to analyze the preparatory phase in the same way, as the events leading to '*a*' (lack) are not caused by an individual, but by ominous dreams.

The preparatory phase is a situation of violation: where one or more social rules are violated by a transgressor – i.e. someone who crosses the line from a socially acceptable state to a state of crisis. The transgressor can be from outside of Ásgarðr, but in a few instances it is one of the *æsir*. There are ten narratives with a preparatory phase. In seven of these, the violation occurs outside of Ásgarðr (6b, 6c, 6d, 6e, 6f, 7b, 7d), indicating a conception of the realm outside as a place where the *æsir* are vulnerable. In each case, it is an outsider that violates the social rules of the *æsir* (also in the cases where a god has some responsibility for the situation, when Óðinn challenges Hrungnir [6d] or Loki lures Íðunn outside to Þjazi [6e]). In the three narratives where the violation occurs inside Ásgarðr (6a, 7a, 7c), there are two instances where Loki is the villain (6a, 7c), and one instance where Freyr violates what must be construed as an interdiction not to sit on Hliðskjálfr, causing him to be lovesick (7a). When the violation occurs inside Ásgarðr, the subject of it relates to internal affairs, such as Loki's disloyalty or Freyr's emotions.[13] When the violation occurs outside, it is because of hostile creatures attempting to deceive, kill or take possession of the *æsir*.

The Complication

The preparatory part leads to *the complication*, which works in the journey narratives much as in Propp's folktales. This phase is initiated by the act of

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[13] *Þrk* is a special case because, if it had a preparatory phase, it could possibly take place inside Ásgarðr, where an outsider violates the inner sanctuary. Another example where the inner sanctum is violated is in ÞH. Óðinn's reckless conduct with Hrungnir brings the *jǫtunn* into Ásgarðr. Hrungnir threatens to bury Ásgarðr and steal Freyja. This situation is not, however, the same type as *Þrk*, because it is preceded by the preparatory phase.

villainy which is the result of the preparatory phase. It consists of the functions A/*a* B C ↑ (Propp 1968: 31–39). It is by means of 'A'/'*a*' that the movement of the journeying god (who in this capacity becomes a seeker) is launched (Propp 1968: 30) and the following functions 'B' 'C' and '↑' are reactions to 'A', where the collective seeks to remedy the act that constitutes 'A' (murder, loss, abduction, need, threat to the collective, threat to a representative of the collective). The complication results in the transfer of the seeker to the otherworld. There is an aspect of these mythological fictions that is not recorded by Propp in relation to his folktales; before departure, the seeker is quite often equipped with some special means for the journey (designated by me as 'P'):

(8) The god is equipped for the journey ('P')[14]

  a. DB: Hermóðr is given Sleipnir.

  b. ÞÍ: Loki dresses as a falcon.

  c. MP: Óðinn is disguised as Bǫlverkr.

  d. ÞH: The duel is prepared and the giant Mokkurkálfi is created (this is an inversion).

  e. *Skm*: Skírnir receives the sword and horse.

  f. *Þrk*: Loki is dressed in Freyja's feathers.

  g. *Bdr*: Óðinn prepares Sleipnir.

  h. ÞM: Þórr disguises himself as a youth.

The Donor Situation

On his way to the primary destination in the otherworld, the journeying god encounters a donor figure that in some way facilitates his further movement. An inhabitant of the otherworld tests, interrogates, attacks or in other ways interacts with the seeker, if for no other reason than simply to signify the entry into this new world. This action is the sequence 'D' 'E' 'F'. In terms of the narratives, it can be classified as a *donor situation,* where the encounter between the seeker and the donor has the sole function of leading the narrative on to the *confrontation* with the primary inhabitant of the otherworld:

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[14]   In TJG, TJU and *Þsb*, the ships are prepared for the journey. This has special importance in TJG and TJU because the preparation has a strong protective function in the hostile environment to the north beyond the sunlight. The element may also be noted to appear in the version of this narrative in ÞJG, where Þórr receives the staff and iron gloves from Gríðr, although in this case it is function 'F' as a result of the encounter with the *donor*: 'D' 'E' 'F' (Propp 1968: 39–50). On a situation of equipping the hero as an indicator of more than a light journey, see below. Sometimes the equipping also seems to be for the purpose of disguising the seeker, for instance in the cases of MP and ÞM.

(9) *Donor situations* in gods' journey narratives

a. ÞJÚ: There are two types of donors: the peasant's family and Skrýmir. The peasant's family provides Þórr with Þjálfi, who is of use in Útgarðr, and the test is Þórr having to master his temper when he learns that Þjálfi has broken the goat's leg. Here, the seeker trades his two goats for two helpers (thought Rǫskva disappears from the narrative immediately following this trade). When they have crossed the sea, Þórr is faced with another – quite comical – test in the donor of Skrýmir. Skrymir also tests Þórr's temper, but here Þórr responds with violence,[15] and Skrýmir's role is to direct the *æsir* to Útgarðr. This function of directing the journeying god is found quite often.

b. ÞM: Hymir's testing of Þórr has the function of bringing Þórr to the confrontation with the Miðgarðsormr, but at the same time also to provide him with utilities for the confrontation (the ox-head).

c. DB: Móðguðr directs Hermóðr on his way, when he has told her his name and family.

d. MP: Bǫlverkr's encounter with Baugi and his slaves fills the function of providing him with tools and access to Gunnlǫð.

e. ÞH: Þjálfi's persuading of Hrungnir to stand on his shield can fill the donor function, though not in a way that corresponds to Propp's definition. It nevertheless has the same function as D E F because the narrative element leads to the confrontation between Þórr and Hrungnir.[16]

f. ÞJG: Gríðr acts as a benevolent donor to Þórr; Geirrøðr's daughters act as malevolent 'donors' attempting to kill Þórr (this corresponds to the functions $D^{8/9}$ and $E^{8/9}$ in Propp's schema [1968: 42–43]). Geirrøðr's daughters involuntarily lead Þórr to Geirrøðr.

g. ÆJH: Loki acquires the gold from Andvari in order to pay wergild to Hreiðmar.

h. *Skm*: Skírnir's encounter with the shepherd fills the donor's interrogative function (Propp 1968: 40).

i. *Hym*: Týr's mother hides Þórr and Týr.

j. *Þrk*: Loki's question to Þrymr. Here Þrymr plays the part of the donor although he is also the primary inhabitant of the otherworld. This is similar to the case of Útgarðaloki who disguises himself as Skrýmir.

k. *Bdr*: Óðinn is met by the Hel-hound.

l. *Þd*: Þórr is saved from Gjálp and Vímur by Þjálfi, and they vanquish the *jǫtnar* before confronting Geirrøðr.

The donor situation and the confrontation occur in all these narratives except in both versions of Þjazi's Abduction of Íðunn (ÞÍ and *Hl*), where the narratives advance directly from the complication to the confrontation. It is important

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[15] On this difference in Þórr's behavior, see Lindow 2001.

[16] ÞH generally makes use of the same elements, but it distributes them a bit differently and their causality does not always correspond to the other narratives. This is because of its theme of a duel that is caused by the *jǫtunn*'s invasion of Ásgarðr, and it could thus be understood as a special narrative that deals with the problem of invasion.

to note that the donor can have many different roles and that the situation can have many different outcomes (Propp 1968: 43). It may also be noted that this testing function occurs repeatedly in several narratives and that *spatial transference/guidance* (function G) may occur multiple times in this sequence.[17]

In the complication, advice is often sought among the *æsir*, indicating strong synergy in the familiar group and its safe haven. The journeying god is chosen among its members (never from an outsider group) and he is equipped with some special means for the journey (in eight cases out of twelve: see index (8) above). The notion that the journeying god must be equipped with a means of transportation or a guise of some kind shows that the journey is not taken lightly. If there was no need for equipment, the journey would be very local. (See also McKinnell 1994: 63–65). The equipping of the journeying god indicates a long distance, a complicated journey and/or that the journey requires special attention. This presumably points to the notion that the destination is in fact distant from home in a world of insecurity and danger.

The meeting with the donor signifies the journeying god's entry into the otherworld and quite often includes a warning against danger, if not an expression of danger. Skrýmir warns the *æsir* against Útgardaloki and his men (9a); Hymir says Þórr is too small to row out to sea (9b); Baugi tries to kill Bǫlverkr (9d); Geirrøðr's daughters try to kill Þórr (9f); the shepherd warns Skírnir (9h); Týr's mother hides Þórr and Týr (9i); and the Hel-hound that Óðinn meets has an ominous appearance (9k).[18] Þórr's behavior in ÞJÚ (9a) is also an indicator of the inherently dangerous situation in travelling out of the familiar realm; Þórr is constantly aggressive and violent in Útgarðr and in the company of Skrýmir. This may be understood as a defensive strategy.

The Confrontation

The element of confrontation in each of these tales corresponds to the series of functions in Propp's (1968: 51–57) schema designated as 'H' 'J' 'I' 'Pr' and 'Rs'. This is where the journeying god confronts the primary inhabitant of the otherworld – the being that the journeying god was looking for in the first place:

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17   In ÞH, as a special case, function 'G' also appears in between the preparatory phase and the complication, as Óðinn and Hrungnir return to Ásgarðr.

18   It seems that the role of the Hel-hound as a 'donor' or liminal figure is only to signify the danger of entering Niflhel, and possibly the premonitions of Ragnarǫk.

(10) *Confrontations* in gods' journey narratives

- a. ÞJÚ: Útgarðaloki confronts Þórr and his party with a series of tests.
- b. ÞM: Þórr and Miðgardsormr join in a trial of strength and combat.
- c. DB: Hermóðr confronts Hel and is given an ultimatum.
- d. ÞÍ: Þjazi is killed in his pursuit of Loki.
- e. MP: Bǫlverkr trades sex for mead with Gunnlǫð and Suttung is defeated in his pursuit of Óðinn.
- f. ÞH: Þórr kills Hrungnir.
- g. ÞJG: Þórr kills Geirrøðr.
- h. ÆJH: Óðinn, Hœnir and Loki pay wergild to Hreiðmar.
- i. *Skm*: Skírnir confronts Gerðr.
- j. *Hym*: Þórr has a series of trials with Hymir, gets the kettle, is pursued by Hymir and kills him.[19]
- k. *Þrk*: Loki and Þórr are confronted with Þrymr in a series of comical 'trials' that Loki resolves (Þrymr's questions about 'Freyja') and eventually Þórr kills Þrymr.
- l. *Bdr*: Óðinn confronts the dead '*vǫlva*'.
- m. *Þd*: Þórr kills Geirrøðr.
- n. *Hl*: Þjazi is killed by the *æsir*.

The confrontation is often violent and life-threatening, but this is dependent on the theme of the narrative. There is no threat to the male protagonist's life when he encounters a female inhabitant of the otherworld (the only case is in the donor situation in ÞJG (9f)). Both in *Skm* (10i) and in MP (10e) the male associates of Gunnlǫð and Gerðr are threats to the protagonist's life, though the females themselves – including Hel in DB (10c) and the *vǫlva* in *Bdr* (10l) – seem rather hostile. As in the case of the donor situation, the functions of the confrontation can be repeated, but what separates the two situations is that the confrontation comes after the donor situation, when the journeying god has obtained helping items and/or has been guided to the location of the confrontation.

The narratives end with the *return* function ('↓') and different kinds of resolutions are involved. These vary greatly and relate only to the logic of the individual narrative. The resolution (designated by me as 'K') in ÞJÚ is Útgarðaloki's explanation of his tricks (10a); in DB it is the punishment of

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[19] The encounter with Miðgarðsormr is not included here, because it is not the purpose of the journey. The fishing trip for Miðgarðsormr in this narrative is one in the series of tests leading to the final confrontation with the giant Hymir.

Loki (10c); in ÞH Magni gets Gullfaxi and Óðinn comments (jealously) on this (10f); in *Þd*, the resolution could be identified as the skald's (poet's) praise of Þórr's might (10m), which might be considered a genre-dependent variation as the poem is oriented to different priorities to which communicating the narrative is secondary.

From Structural Analysis to Information about the World-Model

Propp's functions are applied to these narratives as a tool for analyzing their structure and to understanding the exchange between the world of the *æsir* and the otherworld as described in Table 1. Propp's pattern can be used as a tool to distinguish action-defined sequences in the narratives about gods' journeys. Most of the narratives include all the sequences, but it is noteworthy that ÞJÚ and ÞM do not include the preparatory and complication phase. They begin at the point of departure, where Þórr sets off to go to Útgarðr or to confront Miðgarðsormr.[20] All the narratives include the part of confrontation with a primary inhabitant of the otherworld, and this indicates that the confrontation is the whole purpose of telling the narrative. When the journey culminates with a visit to an otherworld inhabitant who is male, the confrontation involves violence or a threat to the safety of the journeying god. If the otherworld inhabitant is female, there is no primary threat to the gods' life and safety from her, but there is from donors. There is no donor situation in ÞÍ and *Hl*. This is the only case where there is no donor, so it may be surmised that this sequence is a fairly constant element throughout the narratives. Both the donor situation and the confrontation may repeat the pattern of functions multiple times. *Table 1* thus shows the following pattern for the majority of gods' journeys in *Snorra Edda*, eddic and skaldic poetry.

These patterns are generated as the minimal functions of a certain type of tales in Scandinavian mythology, which can be grouped together on basis of their thematic commonalities. It has been raised as a problem in the discussion of the method of constructing world-models that structuralism produces binary oppositions, even in circumstances where there are none. It has been argued that structuralism reproduces a binary opposition that reflects a Christian

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[20]   It could be argued that ÞJÚ appears to be the preparatory phase and complication leading up to the departure, donor situation and confrontation in ÞM, but the two narratives are separated in the text by Gylfi's comments and Hár's answer. The causal progression from ÞJÚ to ÞM is thus imposed from outside the internal narrative logic of ÞJÚ and ÞM by a narrating voice. This means that it cannot be assumed that they correspond to each other in the same way as the preparatory phase and complication do to the donor situation and confrontation.

	Preparatory phase	Compli-cation	Donor situation	Confrontation
ÞJÚ:		↑	DEF G DEF DE-DE-DEF G	HI-HI-HI-HI-HIK↓
ÞM:		↑	DEF G DE-DE G	HI↓
DB:	α β ε ζ η θ	A/aBCP↑	DEG	H↓IK
ÞÍ:	α β η θ	A/aBCP↑		H↓IK
MP:	α β η θ	A(/a) P↑	DEF-DEF-DE-DE G	H↓IK
ÞH:	α β ε ζ η	ABCP↑	DEF	HIJ-HI-HI-K↓
ÞJG:	α β ε ζ η θ	A(BC)↑	DEF(P)-DE G DE G	HIK↓
ÆJH:	α β η θ	A/aB(C)↑	DEF G	HIK(↓)
Skm:	α γ δ	aBCP↑	DE G	HI-HI-HI-HI↓K
Hym:	α β (ε) η	A/aBC↑	D(E)F	HI-HI-HI G HI G HI-HI↓HIK
Þrk:		aB(C)P↑	DEF G DE-DEF G	HI-HI-HIK(↓)
Bdr:		a(B)CP↑	DE G	HIK(↓)
Þd:	η θ	A/aB(C)↑	DEF G DE G	HI-HI-HIK(↓)
Hl:	α ε ζ η θ	A/aB(C)P↑		HIK(↓)

Table 1. Overview of the sequence of functions in gods' journeys.[21]

rhetorical polarity between Heaven and Hell, and that this is mainly expressed in *Snorra Edda.* The above analyses show that a pattern of protagonist-antagonist exchanges may be generated from a specific type of narratives throughout the different genres of Scandinavian mythology. This pattern is indicative of a spatial structure within which the characters exercise these exchanges: a world-model. The model consists of:

1. A sanctum, an inviolable space belonging to the Scandinavian gods which must be protected at all costs from outside invasions.

2. An outfield where the inhabitants of the inner sanctum are vulnerable to attack and plots against their safety.

3. A 'realm beyond', or otherworld,[22] to which the journeying representative must go in order to restore the imbalance that has been created by a violation or disturbance in the sanctum.

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[21]   Parentheses indicate that the function is presupposed from the narrative context.

[22]   This is not necessarily the same space as the outfield. It seems that at least in the narratives about Þjazi, there is a distinction between the *eyðimǫrkr* where the gods meet Þjazi and the realm that Þjazi rules. The notion of multiple versions of "outfield" and otherworld also seems present in some *fornaldarsǫgur* (Leslie 2009).

The functions of the dramatis personae in these tales reflect these aspects of the world-model of the mythology. The information about the world-model that this produces is highly abstract. However, abstract yet generally applicable information about the world-model of the mythology provides a contextualizing frame for approaching individual sources and narratives within the mythology (cf. Bradley, this volume, and also note 7 above). Nevertheless, it must also be observed that the analysis offered here only covers one field of culture and mythology (cf. Frog 2011b: 32–34; Stepanova 2012: 262, 270–271). There are genres and themes associated with other areas of culture which have not found representation (Stepanova 2011: 140), and this analysis should therefore not be seen as all-encompassing for Scandinavian mythology.

Conclusion

Propp's narratological tools have been specifically chosen because of their applicability to this type of texts. The current scholarly environment seems to reflect a paradigmatic crisis (cf. Lewis-Peterson, this volume) that has been born from critique of Lévi-Strauss (Geertz 1973) and a tendency in Old Norse scholarship to distrust the usefulness of *Snorra Edda* because of its apparent Christian influence. It must be the point of developing methods not to do this simply on basis of opposition to existing tools, but to apply the most appropriate tool for a given type of texts. Structuralism has its advantages and certainly also some disadvantages, but to indiscriminately reject it as a method altogether would be disastrous. In the present case, I have applied the structuralist approach of Propp to the gods' journeys of Scandinavian mythology because these narratives have a structure that is suited to this type of analysis. This new application of the Proppian structuralist approach may be applied to other systems as well in order to produce information about principle and world-model structures, for example in medieval sagas, epic traditions, and modern experience narratives (cf. Latvala & Laurén, this volume). This method has the potential to be complementary to surveys of valuation associated with different types of movement and locations that can be revealed in large corpus-based studies of different traditions.

Acknowledgements

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