# Tirant, 15 (2012), pp. 135-154

ISSN: 1579-7422

# Identifying Function, Agent, and Setting Motifs in Some Early Spanish *libros de caballerías*

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#### Abstract

The essay presents the methodology of a doctoral thesis (2008, University of Wisconsin-Madison) which classifies plot motifs in some sixteenth-century Castilian books of chivalry. Therein, two critical approaches to the texts are noted: motif studies, which analyze narrative components, and structural studies, which examine whole plotlines. Based on V. Propp's Morphology of the Folktale, the motif is defined as a unit of plot structure. Propp's thirty-one functions and seven tale-roles are then reduced to three categories: settings, functions, and agents. To demonstrate, a sample text from Amadis de Gaula, Book I is analyzed and its plot motifs indexed accordingly.

#### Key words

Amadís de Gaula, books of chivalry, index, motif, plot, Propp.

## RESUMEN

El presente ensayo plantea los presupuestos metodológicos de una tesis doctoral defendida en 2008 en la Universidad de Wisconsin-Madison, en la que se clasifican los motivos argumentales de algunos libros de caballerías del siglo XVI. Se consideran aquí dos aproximaciones críticas fundamentales: el análisis de motivos, que estudia componentes narrativos; y el estructural, que examina la trama en su conjunto. Siguiendo a V. Propp (*Morfología del cuento*), se define el motivo como una unidad argumental. Las 31 funciones y las 7 esferas de acción de Propp se reducen a tres categorías: contextos, funciones y actantes. A modo de ejemplo, se analiza un fragmento del primer libro del *Amadís* y sus motivos se clasifican según la metodología propuesta.

#### PALABRAS CLAVE:

Amadís de Gaula, índice, libros de caballerías, motivo, argumento, Propp.

## 1. Plot motifs and structure: An approach<sup>1</sup>

Despite the little use that educated readers in *Don Quixote de la Mancha* profess for the *libros de caballerías*, the books offer a rich source of study to modern scholars, whether as a point of reference for editors of Cervantes' magisterial parody;<sup>2</sup> a commerical product whose trajectory reflects socioeconomic conditions in sixteenth-century Spain;<sup>3</sup> and a cultural artifact possessed, catalogued, or commented upon by early-modern readers of note.<sup>4</sup> Another approach treats the *libros de caballerías* as literary works deserving of critical attention in their own right.<sup>5</sup> These analyses address story features common to many *libros de caballerías*, such as intertwined narratives, stock characters, and exotic settings. Motif studies identify elements in the texts which are also found in traditional stories like mythology and folklore; structural studies, meanwhile, explore how the texts' plotlines organize this material into traceable patterns.

Yolanda Russinovich de Solé was the first scholar to interpret *Amadís de Gaula* based on symbolic motifs. She reads the *Amadís* story as the hero's progress through two worlds: the external world of chivalric romance and the internal world of the human psyche. In order to describe

- 1. This essay sets forth the methodology of my doctoral thesis, proposed in 2003 and defended in 2008 under the direction of Professor Ivy A. Corfis at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Since its proposal, numerous contributions to the study of the *libros de caballerías* have appeared. They include: editions and reader-guides, such as those published by the Centro de Estudios Cervantinos as part of the collections *Los libros de Rocinante* and *Guías de lectura caballeresca*; anthologies, including those edited by José Manuel Lucía Megías and Emilio Sales Dasí; article- and book-length critical studies, particularly the 2008 volume edited by Lucía Megías, María Carmen Marín Pina and Ana Carmen Bueno Serrano and dedicated to Juan Manuel Cacho Blecua; as well as the doctoral thesis of Ana Bueno (with whom I exchanged pleasant e-mails at the beginning of my research to ensure that I wouldn't infringe upon her well-developed but yet-unpublished disseratation; I consider my study complementary to hers). While this essay's bibliography does not take into account all recent studies, then, I hope that its presentation of a methodology, with its results to appear in future submissions, proves useful to scholars of the *libros de caballerías*.
- 2. Don Quixote's editors are the earliest modern commentators on the *libros de caballerías*, namely Juan Antonio Pellicer and Diego Clemencín (XLII and 134-35n21, respectively). Francisco Rico's 1998 critical edition of *Don Quixote* continues this tradition, with a preliminary study of the *libros de caballerías* by Sylvia Roubaud.
- 3. Maxime Chevalier was the among the first critics to describe the *libros de caballerías* as a mass-marketed product. Philippe Berger, Jaime Moll, and Frederick J. Norton argue that sixteenth-century printers began to publish literary works, including *libros de caballerías*, as a way to attract new readers in a difficult economy. Pere Bohigas and José María Diez Borque describe the printed texts' format; in *Imprenta y libros de caballerías*, Lucía Megías argues that this style represented a kind of commercial packaging. Harvey L. Sharrer explores the ways in which some printers, such as Juan de Burgos, may have manipulated the content of some *libros de caballerías* in order to make them more marketable. Berger and Aurora Domínguez Guzmán trace the rise of Seville as the center of production for the *libros de caballerías*, while Clive Griffin (*The Crombergers of Seville*, "El inventario del almacén") studies the Cromberger house, responsible for many surviving editions of *libros de caballerías*.
- 4. Chevalier, Eisenberg (*Romances of Chivalry* 89-118), and Griffin ("Un curioso inventario") identify royal, aristocratic, and saintly figures among the books' first readers. Arthur Askins notes various *libros de caballerías* in the "Registrum B" catalogue of the great bibliophile Hernán Colón, while María Isabel Hernández González's study of private collections from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries documents several volumes. Discussion of the *libros de caballerías*' first critics can be found in Eisenberg ("An Early Censor"), Edmund Glaser, P. E. Russell, and Ángel Valbuena Prat. A contemporary defense of the *libros de caballerías*, and of *Amadís de Gaula* in particular, has been edited by Nieves Baranda.
- 5. For decades, critics interested in the *libros de caballerías* depended upon plot summaries, such as those provided by Pascual de Gayangos, Daniel Eisenberg (*Romances of Chivalry* 55-74), and Henry Thomas. Recently, however, the texts in their entirety are being made available to modern readers. The series *Los libros de Rocinante*, mentioned above, provides full-length, modern editions of numerous titles. The *Corpus of Hispanic Chivalric Romances*, edited by Ivy A. Corfis, contains semipaleographic transcriptions and textual concordances of *libros de caballerías* in CD-ROM format. In addition, Eisenberg and Marín Pina include an appendix of unedited titles available in microfilm and facsimile (461-63).

Amadís' internal world, Russinovich de Solé draws from Carl Jung's theory of individuation. According to this theory, heroic myths describe the individual's struggle to develop from dependent child into independent adult. For Russinovich de Solé, the *Amadís* story contains a number of motifs which symbolize this struggle, including the hero's obscure birth and upbringing (135-38), his rivalry with his brother Galaor (141-42), his quest for social and political harmony (141-42), and his love-relationship with Princess Oriana (153). Russinovich de Solé considers Amadís' enemies to be allegories of the subconscious will to power, which Amadís vanquishes with his conscious intellect (141-45). Russinovich de Solé also notes numerous minor motifs, such as circular chambers, submerged castles, incestuous monsters, and certain repeated numbers, all of which symbolize different aspects of human consciousness (150-61). The presence of these motifs leads Russinovich de Solé to read *Amadís de Gaula* as a sixteenth-century version of Jung's hero-myth (135).

Amadís: heroismo mítico-cortesano is Cacho Blecua's major work on motifs in the libros de caballerías, and develops Russinovich de Solé's ideas into a book-length study. According to Cacho Blecua, Amadís de Gaula is first and foremost a chivalric romance which reflects the historical conditions of sixteenth-century Castile. However, he adds that the text contains many more motifs than those analyzed by Jung and mentioned by Russinovich de Solé: Amadís' royal parents, King Perión and Princess Helisena (16-17, 41); the fact that Helisena was a virgin before his conception (16-18); the full moon which appears at Amadís' birth (27); Endriago, the monstruous offspring of incest (35); the importance of the characters' names (103); and identity markers, like heraldic items and birthmarks (31, 68). Cacho Blecua notes that these motifs also appear in narratives studied by literary critics, psychologists, folklorists and philosophers. As a result, Cacho Blecua presents Amadís de Gaula as a constellation of motifs from world mythology and folklore, albeit tailored to the worldview of early-modern Spanish readers.

In La aventura caballeresca: epopeya y maravillas, Sales Dasí expands the corpus of Cacho Blecua's study to include Amadís sequels, such as Lisuarte de Grecia, lesser-known Castilian titles, such as Florambel de Lucea, and translations, such as Baladro del sabio Merlín. For Sales Dasí, the libros de caballerías are the product of "una cosmovisión íntimamente ligada al pensamiento mítico-folclórico" (La aventura 26). As evidence of this traditional perspective, Sales Dasí identifies a variety of motifs nestled in the texts, such as secret marriages and interfamilial conflicts (La aventura 20, 31). Monsters emerge from "la tradición folclórica" (La aventura 109), while a seascape is described as "la morada de otras criaturas mitológicas" (La aventura 141). Sales Dasí also notes manifestations of these motifs in modern heroic genres like Western movies and science fiction novels. As a result, La aventura caballeresca considers motifs as points of contact between the libros de caballerías and other types of hero-tales.

In Estructura de los libros españoles de caballerías en el siglo XVI, Federico Francisco Curto Herrero delineates the narrative structure of Amadís de Gaula. Curto Herrero determines that the fundamental narrative element of Amadís is the adventure, or a single conflict between good and evil (12). Given the length of Amadís de Gaula, however, single adventures are too small to analy-

<sup>6.</sup> A concise explanation of this theory, along with examples of its manifestation in narrative, can be found in Jung's "Psychology of the Child Archetype" (77-87).

<sup>7.</sup> In later works, Cacho Blecua continues to explore the role of the folkloric motif in the creation and transmission of the *libros de caballerías*, as well as the possibility of studying the texts with the aid of folklore-motif indices. See in particular "Introducción al estudio de los motivos en los libros de caballerías" as well as his introduction to *De la literatura caballeresca al Quijote*. These studies develop ideas first presented in *Amadís: heroismo mítico-cortesano*, and are not discussed here so as to avoid redundancy.

ze, and therefore Curto Herrero treats groups of adventures, or *strata* (12-13). Strata, in turn, are organized into thematic patterns which Curto Herrero calls *planes* (12-13). Curto Herrero identifies four planes, each of which correspond to one of the text's four books: first, the qualification of Amadís as the bravest warrior; second, his qualification as the most loyal lover of Princess Oriana; third, the rupture between Amadís and Oriana's father, King Lisuarte, over Oriana's marriage to Patín, the Emperor of Rome; and fourth, Amadís and Lisuarte's reconciliation, sealed by Amadís' marriage to Oriana (14-17). In this manner, planes in *Amadís de Gaula* communicate the chivalric themes of valor, love, honor and social harmony. According to Curto Herrero, later *libros de caballerías* repeat the planes which qualify the protagonist as a hero and describe his participation in an important conflict (40-41). However, these works also increase their emphasis on Christian doctrine, include more references to contemporary events, and introduce characters and settings from emerging genres, such as the pastoral novel (41-44). In this manner, subsequent *libros de caballerías* conserve the basic patterns and themes of *Amadís de Gaula*, while introducing subtle innovations to reflect changing historical and cultural conditions.

Another structuralist approach treats the texts as allegories. Therein, the hero embodies the ultimate good, so that characters who assist him represent positive values, while those who oppose him encarnate negative values. María Rosa Petrucelli graphs the characters in Amadís de Gaula according to the number of instances in which they display certain traits: positive traits, such as love and beauty, are exemplified by Amadís and Oriana; loyalty is demonstrated by Amadís' page, Gandalín; and pride is embodied by the evil enchanter, Arcaláus (121-25). The allegorical message of Amadís de Gaula, then, esteems love, beauty, and loyalty over pride. Susana Gil-Albarellos also treats the characters in *Amadís* as allegorical heroes, love-objects, kings, helpers, or opponents (57). Turning to the episode in which Amadís and his supporters (hero and helpers) battle Lisuarte (king) in order to save Oriana (love-object) from her marriage to Patín (opponent), Gil-Albarellos interprets Amadís' victory as a celebration of the love-bond between Amadís and Oriana over the political contract between Patín and Lisuarte (61). Lilia E. F. de Orduna refines these allegorical readings, noting the characters' complexity ("Paradigma" 195-202). She posits that readers are meant to compare characters of similar status, such as the Kings Lisuarte and Perión. Such a comparison reveals a political theme in *Amadís de Gaula*: an honorable king is steadfast in his loyalty to his subjects; a weaker king is inconsistent and maleable. Characters in later libros de caballerías, Orduna continues, reflect competing ideologies, especially notable in the appearance of non-European and non-Christian opponents, for the reader to compare and evaluate ("Paradigma" 204-06).

Other structuralist critics analyze ways in which the text constantly brings the reader's attention to important events in the story. Frida Weber de Kurlat, for example, observes that Montalvo guides the reader through the text via the use of stock phrases like "Aquí el autor dexa de hablar" and "Como oydo hauéys" (19-21). James Fogelquist treats the ways in which characters prophesize to each other and thereby foreshadow crucial events in the story (127-30). Aida Amelia Porta ventures to propose that the *autotext*, in which one character relates plot events to another, is the text's major structural component. Porta argues that autotexts remind the reader of moments in the story that s/he may have forgotten (57-58). For these critics, *Amadís de Gaula*'s stock phrases, intertextual summaries, and constant foreshadowing are not evidence of its lesser literary quality, but deliberate techniques used to organize its motifs and themes.

The above studies reveal the *libros de caballerías* to contain a variety of motifs and narrative patterns. However, motif- and structural approaches to the texts remain disconnected. Motif-studies identify elements in the texts as symbols, but do not address how these symbols fit into the overall

storyline. Structural studies, meanwhile, interpret broad plot trends rather than describe specific plot elements. In addition, both approaches seek to interpret what motifs and narrative patterns *mean*, rather than how they relate to each other. As a result, the *libros de caballerías* are treated as allegorical vehicles, either of traditional symbols or overarching themes, rather than as the plot-driven stories they fundamentally are. This points to another avenue of research: the relationship between motif and structure in a given *libro de caballerías*.

## 2. Tailoring Propp to chivalric narrative

The disconnect between motif- and structural studies of the *libros de caballerías* can be resolved with the help of Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*. Therein, Propp harmonizes motif- and structural approaches by defining the motif as the fundamental unit of narrative structure. This unit, which he calls a *function* (21), is an action which has an impact on events in the storyline. Propp reviews a collection of one hundred Russian folktales in order to determine how functions are arranged in tale plots. On the basis of this review, Propp determines that functions follow three structural laws. First, functions may transfer from one tale to another; second, functions are limited in number; and third, while not all functions may appear in a single tale, functions in all tales follow the same sequence (22-23). Propp observes that these laws also govern the plotlines of romance and even hypothesizes that romance derives from folktales, although the limits of his study do not extend to chivalric narratives (100). The similarities between tale and romance, then, suggest that a consideration of the ways in which functions work in folktales may help clarify how motifs work in a *libro de caballerías*.

According to Propp, folktale functions are carried out by characters. Characters take a variety of forms, including that of animals, persons or objects, and even these may vary from tale to tale. Depending on the functions it performs, a character can be assigned to one of seven tale roles: the Dispatcher, the Donor, the False Hero, the Helper, the Hero, the Princess-King, and the Villain (80). Each role is endowed with its own particular group of functions, or sphere of action (80). A tale role is revealed when a character acts in accordance with the role's sphere of action. For example, when a character helps the Hero accomplish a task, he acts within the sphere of the Helper. A character's role assignment, however, is not fixed throughout the tale. It is possible for one character to perform functions pertaining to distinct tale roles at different points in the story, such as when erstwhile Donors assist the Hero later as Helpers. Likewise, two characters may function in such close tandem that they merge in a single tale role, such as in the case of the Princess-King. A sphere of action may be distributed among different tale roles too, such as when the Princess-King enlists a Helper, or sends provisions to the Hero via a Donor. Individual characters vary according to their attributes, such as form, descriptions, personality traits and/or motivations, which, in Propp's words, "provide the tale with its brilliance, charm, and beauty" (87). However, a character's tale role is always determined by its functions, not its attributes.

The list below details Propp's functions and their symbols in sequence, followed by a brief description. The tale roles responsible for each function are noted in italics. I include the list in full because it illustrates the relationship between Propp's functions and tale roles, as well as provides the basis for my own adaptations as discussed later:

# Function (Symbol) Description of function (with corresponding tale role in italics)

$(\alpha)$	Initial situation	:	The characters are introduced into the storyling	e.
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1.  $(\beta)$  Absentation : One of the characters leaves home.

2.  $(\gamma)$  Interdiction : An interdiction is addressed to the Hero.

3.  $(\delta)$  Violation : The interdiction is violated and the *Villain* appears.

4.  $(\varepsilon)$  Reconaissance: The *Villain* makes an attempt at reconaissance.

5.  $(\xi)$  Delivery : The *Villain* receives information about the victim.

6.  $(\eta)$  Trickery : The *Villain* attempts to deceive his victim.

7.  $(\theta)$  Complicity : The victim submits to the *Villain*.

8. (A) Villainy: : The Villain harms the victim.

8a. (a) Lack : A character lacks or desires something.

9. (B) Mediation : The *Dispatcher* makes a lack known to the Hero.

10. (C) Counteraction : The *Hero* decides upon counteraction.

11.  $(\uparrow)$  Departure : The *Hero* leaves home.

12. (D) Donor : The *Donor* tests the Hero.

13. (E) Reaction : The *Hero* reacts to the test of the Donor.

14. (F) Provision : The *Donor* gives the Hero a magical agent.

15. (G) Transfer : The *Helper* leads the Hero somewhere.

16. (H) Struggle : The *Villain* engages the Hero in combat.

17. (J) Branding : The *Princess* gives the Hero an identification device.

18. (I) Victory: : The *Hero* defeats the Villain.

19. (K) Liquidation : The *Helper* aids the Hero in remedying lack or misforturne.

20.  $(\uparrow)$  Return : The *Hero* returns home.

21. (Pr) Pursuit : The *Villain* pursues the Hero.

22. (Rs) Rescue : The *Helper* rescues the Hero from pursuit.

23. (o) Arrival : The *Hero* arrives somewhere unrecognized.

24. (L) Claim : A False Hero presents an unfounded claim.

25. (M) Task : The *Princess* assigns a task to the Hero.

26. (N) Solution : The *Helper* aids the Hero in resolving the task.

27. (Q) Recognition : The *Princess* recognizes the Hero.

28. (Ex) Exposure : The *Princess* exposes the False Hero or Villain.

29. (Tr) Transfiguration : The *Helper* gives the Hero a new appearance.

30. (U) Punishment : The *Princess* punishes the Villain.

31. (W) Wedding : The Hero marries the *Princess* and becomes king (26-64).

Within a story, actions can be identified as functions depending upon their consequences in the plotline. For instance, a hero may accomplish many different tasks in a given narrative. If he is rewarded with an enchanted sword, the task itself pertains to function D, The donor tests the hero, since this function is followed by F, The donor provides the hero with a magical agent. If, however, the hero marries a princess and becomes king, the task pertains to function M, The princess assigns a task, as function W, The hero marries and ascends the throne, follows. As a result, actions and their consequences group together in chains of functions which Propp calls moves (92). For example, functions D through F (The donor tests the hero; the donor provides the hero with a magical agent) make up a move, as do M through W (The Princess assigns a task to the Hero through The Hero marries the Princess and becomes king).

Propp calls narrative material which delays, lengthens or weaves one move into another *auxiliary elements* (71). Auxiliary elements which delay moves include the multiplication of functions and/or characters, explorations of character motivations, and authorial digressions; weaving elements are often notifications, such as letters, dreams, and conversations among characters. While any element, be it functional or auxiliary, may give rise to a new moves, even an entire story, within a given tale, the resulting move progresses according to the same structural laws. Propp observes that these laws consistently generate tales which can be described as "any development proceeding from villainy (A) or lack (a), through intermediary functions to marriage (W) or to other functions employed as a *dénouement*" (92).

To illustrate how Propp's principles can describe the structure of chivalric narrative, I have selected a sample story for analysis: the romance-in-miniature which appears in the opening four chapters of *Amadís de Gaula*, Book I. The story is of manageable length, meets Propp's definition of a tale, and proves that functions and tale roles operate at all points along a plot. Following Propp's method, I have summarized the story in the left-hand column. In the right-hand column, I note Propp's corresponding functions, with their attendant numbers and symbols. For the sake of clarity, I include a brief explanation of each function. Auxiliary elements, labeled *Aux*, appear in parentheses.

## Sample Storyline Function

Description of Pequeña Bretaña, forest.	α	Initial Situation
Two knights attack King Perión.	12. D	Donor's test
Perión combats and kills both knights.	13. E	Hero's reaction
King Garínter appears, guides Perión through the forest.	15. G	Helper's appearance
A lion kills a deer, then lunges at Perión.	12. <i>D</i>	Donor's test
Perión kills the lion.	13. E	Hero's reaction
Garínter guides Perión to court and honors him with a feast.		Helper's guidance, Hero's arrival

(Perión meets, falls in love with Princess Helisena.	Aux:	Character motivation)	
Helisena tells a damsel, Darioleta, of her desire for Perión.	8a. a	Character's desire	
Darioleta tells Perión and demands he act honorably.	9. B	Dispatcher tells hero	
Perión vows on his sword to marry Helisena.	10. C	Hero's counteraction	
(Perión dreams a prophecy.	Aux:	Foreshadowing)	
Helisena offers Perión her love, as arranged by Darioleta.	19. K	Helper and hero remedy lack	
(Digression on female chastity.	Aux:	Digression)	
(Perión gives ring to Darioleta for Helisena.	Aux:	Notification)	
Perión leaves Pequeña Bretaña.	11.	Hero's departure	
(At roadside, hermit interprets Perión's dream.	Aux:	Foreshadowing)	
(Amadís is born and abandoned into the sea.	α	Initial Situation)	
Perión returns to his court in Gaula.	20. o	Hero's return	
(Three wise men interpret the dream.	Aux:	Foreshadowing)	
(A letter from Helisena arrives in Gaula asking for help.	Aux:	Notification)	
Helisena's claim to the throne is challenged by Languines; Languines wages war on Pequeña Bretaña.	25. M	Princess' task	
Perión sets out for Pequeña Bretaña.	11.	Hero's departure	
Perión arrives in Pequeña Bretaña.	23. o	Hero's arrival	
Languines surrenders to Perión.	26. N	Hero's solution	
Helisena marries Perión.	31. W	Hero's wedding	

Based on the above outline, we can make some observations on the structure of the story. First, all of the actions correspond to Propp's folktale functions. Second, the functions follow roughly numerical sequences. In these sequences, four moves can be identified: the Donor's test of the two knights and the Donor's test of the lion (functions D-G); the character's lack (a-K); and the Princess' task (L-W). Moves are delayed by the following auxiliary elements: multiplications, such as the double knights in the first move and the triple wise men in the fourth; Montalvo's digression in the third; and the birth of Amadís in the fourth. Auxiliary elements also knit moves together, such as the presence of Garínter in the first and second moves; the love-motivation between Helisena and Perión in the second and third moves; and the notification rings, dreams, and letters in the third and fourth moves.

The outline also demonstrates how tale roles are occupied by different characters. In all moves, the Hero functions, namely reaction (E), solution (N), and wedding (W), are carried out by Perión. However, characters who carry out other functions vary. In the first and second moves, the knights and lion act as Donors who test Perión (D), and in both cases reward his victory with a Helper, Garínter (G). In the third move, the Dispatcher and Helper functions are carried out by

Darioleta, who informs Perión of Helisena's desire for him (B) and then helps him remedy that desire by arranging their tryst (K). The final episode contains different functions, in that Helisena asks Perión to rescue her and later marries him. This means that Helisena acts as a Princess-King who assigns a task to Perión (M) and then rewards his solution by marrying him (W). The tale roles at work in the sample storyline, then, are: Dispatcher (Darioleta), Donor (Knights, Lion, and Darioleta), Helper (Garínter, Darioleta), Hero (Perión), and Princess-King (Helisena).

The sample text also contains decorative attributes. Settings, such as Pequeña Bretaña, a forest, Garínter's court, or Perión's court in Gaula are all descriptive elements which place moves in context. Two of these moves center around a donor test, but one is a battle and the other a hunt. This suggests that functions can be elaborated in different ways within a story. Characters display a wide range of traits as well. For example, the Donor may appear as multiple persons (two knights), an animal (the lion), or a handmaid (Darioleta). Characters from different tale roles also share attributes. This is the case, for instance, with the kings Perión (Hero), Garínter (Helper), and Languines (False Hero). Auxiliary elements are also endowed with attributes. For example, notifications among characters are achieved via objects, like swords and rings; verbal communications, like conversations and letters; or prophetic dreams and their interpretations.

While Propp's concepts of functions and tale roles adequately describe story elements in the sample text, a full-scale application of his thirty-one functions and seven tale roles to a corpus of *libros de caballerías* poses some problems. First, critics note that Propp's thirty-eight units describe a brief storyline in detail, but prove cumbersome when applied to longer narratives.<sup>8</sup> Second, the distinction between tale roles is not always clear. For instance, functions *K*, *The Helper aids the Hero in remedying lack*, and *N*, *The Helper aids the Hero in resolving a task*, require the participation of two tale roles, Helper and Hero. Last, many functions are redundant. For example, functions *D*, *The Donor tests the Hero* and *M*, *The Princess assigns a task to the Hero* represent challenges, while *F*, *The Donor gives the Hero a magical agent* and *W*, *The Princess marries the Hero* represent items, persons, or services presented to the Hero. This suggests that it may be possible to consolidate similar functions into fewer, more general ones, and then assign one tale role to each. In this manner, functions and tale roles are reduced to a simple set able to describe longer narratives without altering their underlying principles.

In order to reduce Propp's narrative elements to a number more suited to the study of a *libro de caballerías*, I first divide his list of thirty-one functions into two major groups. The first entails descriptions and changes of settings, while the second treats plot events proper. The resulting groups, Settings and Events, are discussed below.

8. Alan Dundes, Heda Jason, and A. J. Greimas, for example, grapple with ways to apply Propp's principles to narratives other than the Russian folktale. Dundes proposes that scholars consider the narrative unit a *motif*; Propp's function a *motifeme*; and the motif which fulfills a motifeme in a particular story as an *allomotif* (101-02). Drawing from Dundes, Jason describes the motifeme as a kind of "slot" filled by variable motifs (22); she also notes that each culture has its own pool of motifs and preferred combinations of such (22). Greimas attempts to make Propp more accessible by reducing the number of tale roles from seven to five and the number of functions from thirty-one to twenty (225-28). He also reimagines Propp's moves as four kinds of identically-structured *tests* (228). These scholars have informed and inspired the adjustments made to Propp's principles here. The work of Dundes and Jason is reflected in my consideration of story elements as structural units defined by the purpose they serve in the texts' storylines; Jason's concept of motif pools and preferred combinations is reflected in my analysis of plot motifs, motif pools, and motif combinations, to be completed in the future. Although Greimas remained unsatisfied with his refinements to *Morphology* (225), and his twenty functions and five tale roles remain too cumbersome for use in the present study, his insight that Propp's lists were reducible and his moves structurally similar encouraged the four-function episode developed here.

# A) Settings

The first major group of functions from Propp's list follow:

- α The setting and main characters are described.
- β One of the characters leaves home.
- ↑ The hero leaves home.
- ↓ The hero returns home.
- o The hero arrives somewhere.

These functions denote where the story takes place (i.e., setting, home, somewhere), rather than what happens in the story. As a result, they can be consolidated into a single group, *Settings*. While romances vary in the degree to which they describe settings, two types are found in each: immediate surroundings, like forests, castles, and roads; and general geopolitical contexts, like kingdoms, islands, or seas. As a result, two subgroups can be derived: *Immediate* and *General Settings*. Descriptions of settings in a given story may be thus defined as its *setting motifs*.

## **B) Plot Events**

This group includes all of Propp's functions which treat plot events without mentioning the surroundings in which they take place. These functions can be further divided into four subgroups, depending on the nature of each, its place in the story's sequence of events, and its consequences for the Hero. The resulting four subgroups, with definitions and relevant functions from Propp's list, follow.

## First Function: Impetus

The first subgroup includes all of Propp's functions which commence a move and thus serve as an impetus. These functions may be consolidated into a single starter-function which I call the *First Function*. The following items from Propp's list are included in the First Function:

- a One character desires or lacks something.
- $\varepsilon$ - $\xi$  The Villain obtains information about the victim.
- A The Villain harms the victim.
- $\eta$ - $\theta$  The Villain deceives the victim.
- B A lack or misfortune is made known to the Hero.
- *C* The Hero decides to counteract the lack or misfortune.

These actions describe misfortunes  $(\varepsilon - \xi, A, \eta - \theta)$  or desires (a) which are made known to the Hero (B) and provoke his response (C). The First Function, then, can be defined as *A misfortune* or desire is made known to the Hero and provokes his response. The misfortunes or desires in a story which pertain to the First Function may be defined as *impetus motifs*.

#### Second Function: Obstacle

The next subgroup entails functions which are a direct consequence of the First Function and appear as the second event in a move. As such, they can be consolidated into a single function, the *Second Function*. The following items from Propp's list pertain to the Second Function:

- $\gamma$ - $\delta$  An interdiction is addressed to the Hero.
- *Pr* The Villain pursues the Hero.
- L The False Hero makes an unfounded claim.
- H The Villain engages the Hero in combat.
- *D* The Donor tests the Hero.
- *M* The Princess assigns a difficult task to the Hero.

While carried out by different tale-roles (i.e., Villain, Donor, False Hero, or Princess), all of the above actions describe obstacles, such as conflicts ( $\gamma$ - $\delta$ , H, Pr, L), tests (D), or tasks (M), which are presented to the Hero upon his response to the previous misfortune or desire. As a result, the Second Function can be defined as *An obstacle is presented to the Hero upon his response to the misfortune or desire*. In a given story, obstacles which correspond to this function may be defined as *obstacle motifs*.

#### Third Function: Outcome

The next subgroup treats functions which are a direct consequence of the Second Function and appear as the third event in a move. As such, they can be consolidated into the *Third Function*. The following actions from Propp's list are included:

- *Rs* The Hero is rescued from pursuit.
- I The Hero defeats the Villain in combat.
- *E* The Hero reacts to the test of the Donor.
- N The Hero solves the Princess' task.
- *K* The Hero remedies the lack or misfortune.

These functions describe the outcome of the obstacle in the Second Function. The outcome is determined by the Hero, who may emerge victorious in combat (I,Rs), succeed in the test (E), or accomplish the task (N), and thereby remedy the misfortune or desire (K). As a result, the Third Function can be defined as *The Hero overcomes the obstacle, thereby remedying the misfortune or desire*. In a given story, the ways in which the Hero overcomes an obstacle may be defined as *outcome motifs*.

#### Fourth Function: Conclusion

The final subgroup treats functions which conclude a move. As such, they can be consolidated into the *Fourth Function*. The following actions from Propp's list are included:

- *F* The Donor provides the Hero with a magical agent.
- *G* The Helper leads the Hero somewhere.
- *Tr* The Helper gives the Hero a new appearance.
- *J* The Princess gives the Hero an identification device.
- *Q-Ex* The Princess recognizes the Hero.
- *U-W* The Princess marries the Hero.

The above functions are performed by different tale roles (i.e., Donor, Helper, or Princess), but all entail the presentation of beneficial items (*F*, *J*), privileges (*Q-Ex*, *U-W*), or services (*G*, *Tr*) to the Hero once he overcomes the obstacle. The Fourth Function, then, may be defined as *Items*, *privileges* or *services* are presented to the Hero once he overcomes the obstacle. The particular items, privileges or services presented to the Hero in a story may be defined as *conclusion motifs*.

The sequence of these new, reduced functions may be summarized as follows:

- I. Impetus: A misfortune or desire is made known to the Hero and provokes his response;
- **II. Obstacle:** An obstacle is presented to the Hero upon his response to the misfortune or desire;
- **III. Outcome:** The Hero overcomes the obstacle, thereby remedying the misfortune or desire; and
- **IV. Conclusion:** Items, privileges, or services are presented to the Hero upon overcoming the obstacle.

Propp's tale roles can now be assigned to one of the above four functions. According to Propp's principles, tale roles reflect solely a character's actions, without taking into account form, traits, motivations, or lack thereof. Propp's own tale roles, however, prove inconsistent in this regard. Some designate actions (such as Donor or Hero); others treat the character's relationship to the Hero (Dispatcher, Helper, and Mediator); others imply value (like the bad Villain and False Hero); and still others indicate gender, family relationship, and/or status (Princess-King). To avoid the contradiction, I replace Propp's *tale role* with *agent*. *Agent* is a neutral term which does not imply form, motivation or traits. Unlike *character*, which is often taken to mean a person, *agent* may be understood to indicate an animal, person, or object. Neither does *agent* indicate relationships among characters, as do Propp's Helper-Hero and Princess-King, nor a character's value, like Villain or False Hero. Instead, *agent* indicates *agency*, in the sense of *influence in the plot*. It thus distinguishes animals, persons, and objects who perform functions in a story from those who do not.

Agents can be linked to specific functions in the storyline. Agents of the First Function, or *First Agents*, suffer misfortunes or harbor desires which are made known to and provoke a response from the Hero. Agents of the Second Function, or *Second Agents*, present obstacles to the Hero upon the latter's response to the misfortune or desire. Agents of the Third Function, or *Third Agents*, are Heroes who overcome the obstacle and remedy the misfortune or desire. Agents of the Fourth Function, or *Fourth Agents*, present items, privileges, or services to the Hero once the obstacle is overcome. Characters who act in concert with or on behalf of agents are defined as *helpers*. For example, an evil enchanter may combat the Hero in battle, and thus act as a Second Agent. However, if the enchanter sends a vassal to combat the Hero in his stead, the enchanter is

the Second Agent and the vassal is his helper. Helpers may also communicate information from one agent to another. To illustrate, a princess may suffer a misfortune, such as a kidnapping, and thus act as the First Agent. Should the princess send a handmaid to ask the Hero for assistance, the handmaid acts as the princess' helper. The list below illustrates how the four agents correspond to Propp's original seven tale roles without altering their fundamental tasks (tale roles now defined as helpers appear in parentheses):

Agents Propp's Tale Roles:
First Agent Victim (Mediator)

Second Agent Villain, False Hero, Donor, Princess

Third Agent Hero (Dispatcher, Helper)
Fourth Agent Donor, Princess (Helper)

In a given story, the characters who act as agents may be defined as agent motifs.

A sequence of the four functions constitutes an *episode*. The episode is similar to Propp's term *move*, in that both refer to a chain of events in a story. However, while any combination of Propp's thirty-one functions can make up a move, only a sequence of the above four functions makes up an episode. It ought to be noted that a single episode can entail multiple plot elements. For example, the First Agent may suffer many misfortunes; the Second Agent can impose several obstacles upon the Hero; the Hero may overcome the obstacle(s) in a variety of ways; or the Fourth Agent may present the Hero with an abundance of items upon his success. However, as structural categories, the number and sequence of functions in an episode is requisite and inalterable. Indeed, Propp defines a story as "any development proceeding from villainy (A) or lack (a), through intermediary functions to marriage (W) or to other functions employed as a *dénouement*" (92). Clearly, the episode, with its four sequential functions, constitutes a minimal story. However, as Propp also observes, minimal stories may be linked together through auxiliary elements or other narrative strategies in order to generate longer storylines.

As a final note, it is important to state that a structural analysis of the episode and its components do not take into account thematic or stylistic material. No reference is made to meaning, either for the real-life reader, the characters, or the text as a whole. In the same vein, authorial expositions, including digressions, prologues, sermons, glosses, and epilogues, are overlooked. Neither are notifications, foreshadowings, or summaries considered. These elements may serve to make the story more cohesive, logical, or interesting, but they do not move the plot forward. The exclusion of these passages undoubtably results in the loss of some of the tale's "brilliance, charm and beauty" (Propp, 87). However, these exclusions allow the present study to focus solely on structural elements in the plotlines of the *libros de caballerías*.

# 3. Identifying function, agent, and setting motifs

In order to identify plot motifs in a given text, the storyline is reduced to a summary of events. Each event is assigned a function according to the following factors: its place in the episode's sequence of events; the kind of action it is; and its consequences for the Hero. For example, chivalric narratives contain many instances of capture. When an episode begins with a character's capture

and the Hero decides to rescue him, the capture corresponds to the First Function, since it commences the episode, represents a misfortune, and provokes a response from the Hero. If the Hero responds to the First Agent's cry for help and is himself captured, the capture corresponds to the Second Function, since it arises from the First Agent's misfortune and represents an obstacle for the Hero. If the Hero combats and then captures the Second Agent, the capture corresponds to the Third Function, since it describes the way in which the Hero has overcome the Second Agent's obstacle. As a result, an event must be considered in the context of its episode before being assigned to a function.

Once a storyline's events have been assigned to their function, characters may be identified as agents. As in Propp, agents are defined solely according to the function(s) they perform in an episode and, as a result, agents may take many forms and/or display a wide range of appearances, traits, motivations, or lack thereof. In the Second Function, for example, a Hero may be confronted in battle by a jealous knight, a wild lion, or an evil giant. In each instance, the Second Agent is the Hero's opponent, regardless of the character's physical form or motivation. In addition, a single character can correspond to multiple agents in one or more episodes. For example, a damsel who is captured at the beginning of an episode is a First Agent, but should this same damsel reward the Hero at its conclusion, she also acts as the episode's Fourth Agent. Likewise, a knight can combat the Hero in one episode as the Second Agent, but appear in a subsequent episode as a Third Agent, or Hero, in his own right.

The sample story from *Amadís*, Book I, used above to illustrate Propp's functions and tale roles, can also demonstrate how the study's key concepts identify plot motifs. The same summary is provided, but all auxiliary elements are excluded. Propp's original functions are replaced by the newly-defined four functions (numbered I-IV), and settings are noted in parentheses. Once a sequence of the four functions is complete, it is set off as an episode. A brief commentary, with an identification of the story's plot motifs, follows each episode:

# Sample Storyline 1

# **Functions**

(Description of Pequeña Bretaña, forest. Ger		neral, Immediate Settings)	
Two knights attack King Perión.	I.	Impetus	
Perión combats both knights.	II.	Obstacle	
Perión kills both knights.	III.	Outcome	
King Garínter appears, guides Perión through the forest.	IV.	Conclusion	
		END OF EPISODE 1	

The impetus for this episode is a misfortune, i.e., the attack on King Perión. As the victim, Perión is the episode's First Agent. An obstacle immediately follows, i.e., the combat between Perión and two knights. Since the two knights pose the obstacle, they act as the episode's Second Agents. Perión overcomes the obstacle by putting his opponents to death, thereby emerging as the episode's Hero. The episode concludes with the appearance of King Garínter, the Fourth Agent, who provides Perión a service by guiding him through the forest. The episode's motifs may be identified as follows:

Function motifs: Attack; Combat; Death; Guidance.

Agent motifs: King (Perión, Garínter); Knights (Anonymous)

Setting motifs: Kingdom (Pequeña Bretaña); Forest (Anonymous)

This example illustrates how one character (Perión) can correspond to multiple agents (First and Third) in the same episode:

Sample Storyline 2		Functions		
A deer is killed by a lion.	I.	Impetus		
The lion lunges at Perión.	II.	Obstacle		
Perión kills the lion.	III.	Outcome		
Garínter honors Perión at court with a feast.	IV.	Conclusion		
		END OF EPISODE 2		

The impetus for this episode is another misfortune, e.g., the death of the deer. As the victim, the deer is the First Agent. The misfortune is followed by another combat obstacle, this time presented to Perión by a lion, acting as the Second Agent. Perión, the Hero, overcomes the obstacle by killing the lion. The episode concludes with Garínter, the Fourth Agent, guiding Perión to court and honoring him. The episode's motifs follow:

Function motifs: Death; Combat; Death; Honor.

Agent motifs: King (Perión, Garínter); Animal (lion)

Setting motifs: Kingdom (Pequeña Bretaña); Forest (Anonymous);

Court (Garínter).

This example demonstrates how a single event (i.e., an agent's death) can correspond to different functions in an episode (to the First as the episode's impetus and to the Third as the way in which the Hero overcomes an obstacle.)

## Sample Storyline 3 Functions

Princess Helisena tells Darioleta of her love for Perión.	I.	Impetus
Darioleta tells Perión and demands he act honorably.	II.	Obstacle
Perión vows on his sword to marry Helisena.	III.	Outcome
Helisena offers Perión her love, as arranged by Darioleta.	IV.	Conclusion

**END OF EPISODE 3** 

This episode's impetus is Princess Helisena's desire, i.e., her lovesickness for Perión. Helisena is thus the episode's First Agent, while Darioleta, who communicates her desire to Perión, is a helper. Darioleta then presents Perión with a demand: he must prove his honorable intentions before satisfying Helisena. By imposing an obstacle on Perión, Darioleta also acts as the episode's

Second Agent. Perión satisfies Darioleta's demand by vowing to marry Helisena, thus emerging as the episode's Hero. The episode concludes when Helisena, acting as the Fourth Agent and assisted once more by Darioleta, rewards Perión with her love. The episode's motifs follow:

Function motifs: Desire; Demand; Satisfaction of Demand; Love.

Agent motifs: Princess (Helisena); Damsel (Darioleta); King (Perión).

Setting motifs: Kingdom (Gran Bretaña); Court (Garínter).

This example illustrates how a desire (Helisena's lovesickness) can initiate an episode. Likewise, it demonstrates how one character can correspond to a variety of agents, since Helisena acts as the First and Fourth Agents, while Darioleta acts as a helper and the Second Agent.

## Sample Storyline 4

### **Function**

(Perión returns to his court in Gaula. General, Immediate Setting)

Helisena's claim to the throne is challenged. I. Impetus

(Perión arrives in Pequeña Bretaña. General, Immediate Setting)

Languines wages war on Pequeña Bretaña. II. Obstacle

Languines surrenders to Perión. III. Outcome

Helisena marries Perión. IV. Conclusion

**END OF EPISODE 4** 

The impetus for this episode is Helisena's dispossession of the throne of Pequeña Bretaña. As the victim of a misfortune, Helisena is the episode's First Agent. When Perión arrives, he is impeded by King Languines, who wages war in the capacity of the Second Agent. Perión overcomes Languine's obstacle by causing him to surrender, and thus emerges as the episode's Hero. Now restored to the throne, Helisena, the Fourth Agent, honors Perión by marrying him. The episode's motifs follow:

Function motifs: Dispossession; War; Surrender; Wedding

Agent motifs: Princess (Helisena); King (Perión, Languines)

Setting motifs: Kingdom (Gaula, Pequeña Bretaña); Court (Perión, Helisena).

This example also contains single characters acting as multiple agents, since Helisena corresponds to the First and Fourth Agents.

Once a story's elements have been identified as function, agent, or setting motifs, they can be classified. The classification scheme is derived from the study's key concepts: a Function category with four subcategories (First: Impetus; Second: Obstacle; Third: Outcome; and Fourth: Conclusion); an Agent category, also with four subcategories (First, Second, Third [Hero], and Fourth); and a Setting category, with two subcategories (Immediate and General). Headings and subheadings can be derived from the motifs in the story under analysis. For example, the above text includes four impetus motifs: Perión's attack; the deer's death; Helisena's lovesickness; and Helisena's dispossession. In the First Function category, then, two headings may be derived: Mis-

fortune, with the motifs Attack, Death, and Dispossession; and Desire, with the motif Lovesickness. A sample classification from each category appears below, with headings and subheadings taken from the story. References to the story's content appear in parentheses, with the episode number noted in superscript.

CATEGORY: 1. FUNCTION

Subcategory: I. First Function: Impetus

Heading: A. Misfortune

Subheadings: 1. Attack (King Perión is attacked¹)

2. Death (A deer is killed<sup>2</sup>)

3. Dispossession (Helisena is dispossessed<sup>4</sup>)

CATEGORY: 2. AGENT

Subcategory: I. First Agent

Headings: A. Animal (Deer<sup>2</sup>)

B. King (Perión<sup>1</sup>)

C. Princess (Helisena<sup>3-4</sup>)

CATEGORY: 3. SETTING

Subcategory: I. Immediate Setting

Headings: A. Court (of Gaula, 4 of Pequeña Bretaña 2-4)

B. Forest (Anonymous<sup>1-2</sup>)

The key concepts of episodes, functions, agents, and settings identify plot motifs in a simple manner without altering Propp's underlying principles. These concepts also allow for the classification of motifs into a three-category index, replete with subcategories, headings, subheadings, and entries. The resulting index will provide a source of data for the analysis of plot motifs in a given set of *libros de caballerías*.

In future submissions, I will provide the results of this method as applied to six books of what has come to be known as the *Amadís* cyle of romances, or *Amadises*: *Amadís de Gaula*, Books I-IV by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo; *Florisando* (Book VI) by Ruy Páez de Ribera; and *Lisuarte de Grecia* (Book VII) by Feliciano de Silva. All were published sometime from 1508 to 1525, the apogee of chivalric romances in Castile, and thus contributed to the first flourishing of *libros de caballerías*. The texts represent milestones in the development of the *Amadises* as well: the first three books of *Amadís de Gaula* represent Montalvo's rewrite of an earlier *Amadís* story, which Montalvo himself continues in the fourth; *Florisando* is the first sequel written by someone other

<sup>9.</sup> Montalvo's *Amadís de Gaula* is extant in print from 1508 (Eisenberg and Marín Pina, 130-31 entry 635); *Florisando* is extant from 1510 (Eisenberg and Marín Pina, 235 entry 1367); and Silva's *Lisuarte* is extant from 1525, although some evidence suggests at least one edition from 1514 (Eisenberg and Marín Pina, 237-38, entries 1378-80).

than Montalvo; and *Lisuarte* is the first of Silva's many successful romances. As a result, the corpus includes notable titles in the genre's most successful series. At the same time, however, these same titles provide diverse material for analysis. Montalvo's *Amadis* is widely regarded as the *libro de caballerías* which best embodies the chivalric themes of love and war; in *Florisando*, chivalric actions, characters and settings which originate in *Amadis* are placed in the service of Christian doctrine and Montalvo's moralistic digressions are extended to full-length sermons on Biblical topics. Silva's *Lisuarte de Grecia*, meanwhile, recovers and multiplies secular chivalric elements, adventures, and themes found in *Amadis* and eliminates overt moralizing of any kind. The application of my methodology to these texts, to appear in forthcoming submissions, tries to prove that the texts' actions, characters, and settings obey similar structural laws in spite of ideological, thematic, or descriptive differences, and may suggest a new way to study literary features in the larger corpus of *libros de caballerías*.

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- 10. A summary of critical discussion surrounding the three-book version of *Amadís de Gaula* prior to 1508, Montalvo's adaptations of his source material, and his continuation in Book IV can be found in Cacho Blecua's introduction to his edition of *Amadís* (19-216). Book V, *Sergas de Esplandián*, is an original work by Montalvo, making Páez de Ribera's *Florisando* the first *Amadís* to be written by someone other than Montalvo. Silva's *Lisuarte* follows as Book VII. Juan Díaz published Book VIII in 1526, but the sequel was unsuccessful, and Silva went on to write Books IX-XII, each with varying degrees of commercial success (see Eisenberg and Marín Pina, 243-61 entries 1422-1504).
- 11. While *Florisando* and Silva's *Lisuarte* have not received the same critical attention as *Amadís*, Gil-Albarellos, Orduna, Ana Cristina Ramos Grados, and Sales Dasí ("Las continuaciones" as well as the introduction to his edition of *Lisuarte*) comment on thematic differences among these and other *Amadises*.

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