CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

THE INCA PRINCESS

A CREATIVE PROJECT IN STAGEPLAY DEVELOPMENT USING THE PROPP CHARACTER APPROACH TO CONTEMPORARY THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Art in Theatre

By

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This graduate project aims to incorporate and apply the attributes of the seven character types as outlined by Vladimir Propp in *Morphology of the Folk Tale* by means of the script development and execution of a first-draft new stageplay intended for Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA). The graduate project, entitled *The Inca Princess*, asks the primary question, “Do Propp’s character attributes hold up in contemporary Western society?” Based on the findings, a second question was asked, “Does anything in Propp’s character paradigm need to be changed in order for it to fit into the realm of TYA today?” In trying to answer these questions, this graduate project explains the practical application of Propp and discusses the disparities dealt with in executing a script. In the assessment, it also addresses the process and the rationale behind the decisions made during the process. The conclusion of this project is that with modifications on the gender roles, Propp’s observations provide a structural framework for characters that is still relevant.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, Propp theorized that there are seven broad character types in the structure of the Russian fairytale. This graduate project aims to incorporate and apply the character attributes outlined by Propp in the script development and execution of a first-draft new stageplay intended for Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA). The project, entitled *The Inca Princess*, seeks to ask the primary question, “Do Propp’s character attributes hold up in contemporary Western society?” Depending on the findings in trying to answer this question, a second question may then apply if some of the attributes are found not current for today’s young audiences: “Does anything in Propp’s character paradigm need to be changed in order for it to fit into the realm of TYA today?”

In trying to answer these questions, this paper will explain the project’s practical application of Propp and will discuss the disparities dealt with in executing a script. Throughout the assessment it will also address the process and the rationale behind the decisions that were made during it.

**Review of Propp**

There is a wide gamut of interpretation by other scholars on how Vladimir Propp’s theories should be applied to fairy tales and stories. A Russian scholar of folklore, Propp analyzed narrative structure in over one hundred Russian folk tales, though it is to be noted that he was most likely also aware of non-Russian folk tales, such
as those classified in the Aarne-Thompspon index. Some scholars allow a range of freedom in the application of Propp and have loosely drawn parallels of Propp’s theories to many works of dramatic literature. Other scholars have challenged the details of his analysis and have decisively rigid views in how to approach Propp’s methods. In his paper, “Formal or Structural Studies of Traditional Takes: The usefulness of some methodological proposals advanced by Vladimir Propp, Alan Dundes, Claude Levi-Strauss and Edmund Leach,” Betel Nathhorst discusses some of the harsher criticisms of Propp. While this project maintains an awareness of these perspectives, it will intend to follow Propp’s methods in neither a rigid nor loose application. Rather, it straightforwardly aspires to incorporate Propp’s approach in a way that fits Propp and remains true to the story. For example, this project is not trying to be a “paint-by-numbers” manuscript, but hopes to work as a creative piece that could stand on its own to be accepted by a TYA audience.

In adhering to Propp’s character attributes, the focus will be on the technical application of executing the story and script. While there was extensive research on the Incan empire and Machu Picchu conducted for this project, this graduate project does not claim to be culturally authentic. The author is not Incan, nor has she ever traveled to Machu Picchu or the surrounding areas of Peru. While subjects in the script such as the dead forest and priestess temple remain true to the historic nature of the region and practices of the Inca people, the project does take creative liberties, the biggest one being that it was highly unlikely for a female to be the ruler of the Inca civilization. However, while unlikely, the creative liberty in making a woman the heir to the kingdom was not completely impossible. The Inca people did not have a written language; much of what
we know about them has been based on other means of historical documentation such as through art and oral stories.

The focus of this study will be on the seven characters as identified in Propp’s Morphology of a Folk Tale. The book was first published in 1928, and in it Propp identified the aforementioned character types as recurrent in narrative structure. Propp’s Theory and History of Folklore, first published in 1984, is a collaboration by scholars, namely Ariadna Martin, Richard Martin, and Anatoly Lieberman, of some of Propp’s miscellaneous work. In Theory and History of Folklore, an eighth character type is identified, The Princess’s Father (or The King). For the purposes of this study, the research and focus will remain true to Propp’s seven characters in Morphology of a Folk Tale, and, although the character of The Princess’s Father is present in the project, the project will exclude giving extra attention to the structural function of The Princess’s Father, as this character was not officially included in the core character group by Propp himself.
CHAPTER TWO: THE PROCESS

After reading Russian fairytales and stageplays intended for TYA and researching Propp’s character theories in academic journals, scholastic papers, and book reviews, the main question then asked was, “What type of setting should serve as the platform for the story in addressing whether these characters are still universal and relevant in society today?” In trying to address this question another question was then asked, “What original story premises might be suitable to work and create in the realm of Propp? Is this to be an original story or an adaptation? Is there a setting for a story that lends itself well to be told as a fairytale that has not been seen before by young audiences?” After exploring options such as setting this on a farm in the Central Valley of California and at Chichen Itza in Mexico, the decision was made to place the story at the height of the Incan empire with Machu Picchu as the palace. A lost ancient “city in the clouds” rediscovered by Hiram Bingham in 1911, Machu Picchu is believed to have functioned not only as a royal retreat, but also a high-security fortress, solar observatory, and shrine of beauty.

The setting had the potential to be a rich one, as the Inca civilization was highly sophisticated, with advancements in architecture and astronomy that rivaled the Romans. Another fun realm for the story to explore was the foundation that the Incas believed in the spirits of nature, which was integral in their daily lives and practices. A driving
storyline for The Inca Princess then needed to be developed. After several drafts, the following was decided:

A girl who is unaware that she is an Incan Princess journeys to Machu Picchu seeking answers in her life, but when an Evil Priestess who once sentenced her to death learns that she is still alive, the Priestess calls upon the dark spirits of the jungle to dispose of the girl before she discovers her true identity and the prophecy about her.

Being a princess fairytale adventure, the target audience age became five to ten years’ old. While the princess genre traditionally caters to young females, the hope maintained that the piece might also be enjoyable for adults.

Propp’s Seven Character Types

In approaching this project, the first step was to get to know and explore the attributes of the seven character types as identified by Propp in Morphology of the Folk Tale: The Hero (or Victim/Seeker), The Villain, The Princess, The Donor, The Helper, The Dispatcher, and The False Hero (or Anti-Hero/Usurper). After researching Propp’s character traits and becoming familiar with how these seven characters serve the plot, the next step was to create characters for The Inca Princess who could represent these attributes. In conceptualizing the story for The Inca Princess, these characters were to structurally serve their functions in accordance with Propp, and a character list with the representative characters for The Inca Princess was generated. While this list went through several revisions, the following became the final lineup.
PROPP’S SEVEN CHARACTER TYPES (in the order as identified in *Morphology of the Folktale*):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPP CHARACTER</th>
<th>REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER(S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VILLAIN</td>
<td>SCORPION PRIESTESS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DONOR</td>
<td>YULI &amp; THE PYGMIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HELPER</td>
<td>GOOD KING &amp; QUEEN/CUXI/GOLDEN EAGLE PRIESTESS &amp; THE PRIESTESS OF THE TEMPLE/ATOC &amp; HIS MEN/COCA/YULI &amp; THE PYGMIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCE(SS)</td>
<td>ATOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISPATCHER</td>
<td>GOLDEN EAGLE PRIESTES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERO</td>
<td>PRINCESS ANYA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALSE HERO</td>
<td>TATA THE TYRANT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addressing the first character, Propp states that, “The Villain appears twice during the course of action. First he makes a sudden appearance from outside (flies to the scene, sneaks up on someone, etc.), and then he disappears. His second appearance in the tale is as a person who has been sought out, usually as the result of guidance” (84). Propp also states that *The Villain* and *The Hero* will engage in a fight and *The Villain* will ultimately lose. After researching the culture of Inca priestesses and learning how they made prophecies with spiders and coca leaves, the idea of an evil priestess seemed fitting, and the Scorpion Priestess took on many of the classic fairytale “witch” characteristics, such as vanity, having a temper, and lusting for power. The next stage was to think of questions that would help keep this character and his/her functions in line with Propp’s definition of *The Villain*. Many of the questions for all of the seven characters came from Propp’s descriptions of how characters function in his explanation of the thirty-one functions of dramatis personae (25 – 65). Regarding *The Villain*, questions asked were, “How is *The Villain* first introduced? Is it a sudden outside appearance? Does *The Villain* pursue the same goals as *The Hero*? Does *The Villain* abduct a person? Does *The Villain*...
Villain seize or take away a magical agent? Does The Villain hurt somebody close to The Hero? Is The Villain later sought out as a result of guidance?” This last question pertains to the end of a tale when the tables are turned, and The Hero pursues The Villain.

In looking over and answering these questions, small plot points began to develop in the initial outline. For example, the Scorpion Priestess barges into the opening solstice ceremony, seeks the crown of queen, has the Golden Eagle Priestess locked away (which also took away Princess Anya’s main source of magical help), kills Princess Anya’s parents, and is pursued in the end by Princess Anya. Because The Villain provides the most conflict in dramatic structure, this was the character who was first explored to shape the plot. While The Villain appears more than twice in the story for the purpose of retaining conflict, The Villain’s key scenes are the two that are noted by Propp.

The character role of The Dispatcher became the second character developed after The Villain, as the role is also quite central to plotting out the story. The Dispatcher is the character who sends The Hero off on the journey. According to Propp, “The Dispatcher is introduced into the initial situation” (84). Other questions based on Propp’s observations of The Dispatcher that were asked were, “Does The Dispatcher call upon The Hero for his journey with the news and threat of misfortune? Does The Dispatcher help to prepare The Hero for his quest and send him off on his journey? Does The Dispatcher dangle a prize for The Hero, so The Hero accepts the challenge? Is The Dispatcher introduced into the initial situation?” The Golden Eagle Priestess became the character who filled in all of these questions. While the character of the Golden Eagle Priestess was first viewed as a mentor type, she quickly became much more and turned out to be one of the characters who most naturally fell in line with Propp’s attributes.
Propp notes that *The Donor* is a character who *The Hero* encounters early in the journey and who often tests and rewards *The Hero* if *The Hero* responds kindly. According to Propp, “If a donor is missing from a tale, the forms of his appearance are just transferred to the next character in line; namely *The Helper*” (84). The characteristics of *The Donor* in this project are not as strong as the other six characters; however, it did not become a major concern because, as Propp noted, some of the traits of this character may be passed on to *The Helper*. The clearest form of *The Donor* in the project is Yuli along with his group of the Pygmies. Some questions asked of *The Donor* are, “Is *The Donor* encountered accidentally? Does *The Donor* greet *The Hero* initiating the encounter? Does *The Donor* ‘test’ *The Hero*? Does *The Donor* reward *The Hero* if *The Hero* passes the test? Is the reward advice or information to help *The Hero* continue on his journey? Have *The Donor*’s traits been given to *The Helper* character?” In the story, it is Yuli and the Pygmies who fit and answer these questions the best as Yuli and the Pygmies seemingly and almost magically appear from nowhere. After Princess Anya thanks Yuli for helping them, Yuli offers shelter for the night and then provides Princess Anya and Atoc with information that Tata the Tyrant is marrying the Scorpion Priestess.

A similar character to *The Donor* is *The Helper*, a character who also assists *The Hero* on his journey. *The Helper* may be one character or this character type may exist in the form of several characters. Some questions asked in developing *The Helpers* were, “Is *The Helper* magical, animal, or human? Does *The Helper* tend to spontaneously appear? Does *The Helper* provide a magical agent? Does *The Helper* make an announcement of significant change that is helpful to *The Hero*? Does more than one *Helper* appear in the play?” More than any other character type, there are multiple *Helpers* that appear in this
project. The Golden Eagle Priestess and her Golden Eagles, Cuxi, The Good King and Queen, Atoc and his Band of Men, Yuli and the Pygmies, and Priestesses could all be considered Helpers at one point or another.

During the writing process, a question that was repeatedly asked was, “What is the role of Hut the Henchman?” With his two failed attempts in killing Princess Anya, his character was essential to the plot. Was he a Helper to Princess Anya in that twice he spared her life? As both incidents were passive accidents, the title of Helper hardly seemed appropriate. However, the Golden Eagle Priestess pointed out to him when they were locked in the cliff cell together that she believed that Hut’s failures came from a place of good. If Hut helping Anya came out of a place of good, then Hut could also be defined as a Helper, as he assisted The Hero in surviving and continuing on her journey.

One of the first questions addressed to all of the characters was “Has the character taken on a different gender or the form of an animal or spirit? If so, what?” In breaking the story, there were many character attributes that fell naturally in line with Propp’s character attributes. However, there were some that didn’t. Propp’s character functions as they pertain to the roles of gender felt dated, specifically the notion that The Hero is male and The Princess is to be sought after and obtained as a prize with marriage. With gender roles in Western society having drastically progressed in the last fifty plus years, there has also been a change in the representation of genders in TYA.

This led to a complication in how to deal with handling The Princess and The Hero. A rough outline was created that made Atoc The Hero of the story, yet the story did not feel like it was Atoc’s. It may be because the author is female, but as research and other characters unfolded, the story strongly leaned in favor of being Princess Anya’s. A
question next posed was, “Is it right to change the gender in this application?” It is to be noted that Propp never focused on gender. Gender studies were not relevant in the time of Propp, and he simply observed the functions of the characters that he studied.

In reading Susan Sellers, *Myth and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women’s Fiction*, Sellers argues that with the evolving roles of women in society, that there is a “force” in women’s fiction where women are altering myth to better reflect the way they view themselves in society. After reading Sellers, the decision was easier. Rather than fighting the need to make this change, *The Hero* and *The Princess* would instead jump on the bandwagon and become part of the force. This gender switch still could meet Propp’s criteria. With Princess Anya becoming the protagonist, she would take on all the functions of Propp’s *Hero*, while Atoc would take on qualities of *The Prince(ss)*.

*The Hero* is also referred to by Propp as the “Victim” or the “Seeker.” According to Propp, *The Hero* is introduced into the initial situation (84). Propp states that *The Hero*, “is born usually in some miraculous manner. The miraculous birth of *The Hero* is a very important narrative element. It is one of the forms of *The Hero’s* appearance and this form is included in the initial situation. *The Hero’s* birth is usually accompanied by a prophecy concerning his destiny” (85). Other questions asked were, “Is *The Hero* described in childhood or in his existing world as different from others? Does *The Hero* experience a call to the journey? Does *The Hero* withstand tests of strength and character? Does *The Hero* react to actions (such as showing mercy)? Does *The Hero* acquire the use of a magical agent?”

In sticking with the direction of developing the story with Princess Anya as *The Hero*, many of these character functions fell quickly into place. It was not long before the
outline had Princess Anya born on a propitious occasion with a prophecy told about her. She also did not fit in at the priestess temple and was to experience a call to a journey that tested her and had her show mercy with some magical help given to her along the way. While Atoc took on typically “heroic” qualities at times, such as bravely fighting the giant scorpion at the end, as far as literary function is concerned, Atoc’s functions fell more in the realm of *The Princess(ss)* and *The Helper*.

In looking at more of the character of *The Princess*, according to Propp, *The Princess* is also introduced into the initial situation (84). Propp also notes that the sphere of action for a princess is as a sought-for person (79). Working the plot around this question caused a pause in the process and this “damsel in distress” trait of *The Princess* seemed dated in Western society today. While it is to be noted that *Shrek The Musical* did a successful job of executing a classic hero rescuing a princess in its tale, the notion of a helpless princess does not seem like an empowering or positive character for today’s youth. Some questions asked for the role of this character were, “Is *The Princess* introduced into the initial situation? Is *The Princess* sought by both *The Hero* and *The Villain*? Does *The Princess* provide a kiss to *The Hero*? Does *The Princess* wed *The Hero*?” It was decided that some of the functions of this role of *The Princess* were to be given to Atoc. While Atoc acts repeatedly as *The Helper*, it is also Atoc who provides Princess Anya with a kiss and marries her.

In looking at the character of *The False Hero*, “*The False Hero* may try to take credit for *The Hero*’s actions, or oftentimes *The False Hero* pursues the same goals as *The Hero*.” According to Propp, *The False Hero* is “sometimes not mentioned among the enumerated dramatis personae in the initial situation, and only later is it known that he
lives at the court or in the house.” This last sentence inspired the character of Tata the Tyrant, and it was chosen to not introduce him in the initial opening of the play, but rather to have The Villain bring him in. It is also to be noted that there is another character, Cuxi the Llama, who at times takes on characteristics of The False Hero, for Cuxi likes to brag and at times take credit for The Hero’s action. The next question asked was, “What form does The False Hero take (evil step-sister, suitor/rival also courting the princess, etc.)? Does The False Hero make a false claim against the actual Hero or lie in order to try to defeat him?” In making Tata the Tyrant character Princess Anya’s uncle who felt entitled to her throne, the same overall goal was created for The Hero and The False Hero. For humor sake, the main goal of Tata the Tyrant shifted to him wanting presents. However, the function of this False Hero created an extra beat to the dramatic structure in the end in that his character had to be dealt with even after Princess Anya defeated the Scorpion Princess. An early draft was written, where Tata the Tyrant refused to step down as King and was dethroned while kicking and screaming in a tantrum. This scene was amended, as the stronger choice for this moment (that needed to move quickly for the end of the story pacing) became a moment of Princess Anya granting mercy on Tata the Tyrant by banishing him instead of having him killed.

Building Around Propp’s Characters

Upon answering these questions and evaluating these multiple characters as they fit into the seven character types, a story was then built, first in outline form. After the outline was revised several times, a story synopsis was generated, and after several revisions of the synopsis, another outline had to be written. The goal of this second
outline was to break the synopsis up into specific scenes. Several questions then had to be asked: “Was the act break working dramatically? Was it even needed? How many scenes are appropriate? How many for the first act and for the second?” After addressing these questions, a scene beat outline became the scene breakdown that is including in the opening of the play. Before starting to write the play, more research was then conducted and a visual presentation of slides was created to help envision what the world and costumes might look like. A “scene design” page was also drafted to help with the visualization of how the action of the story might logistically work and play out on a stage. The story was then written as a stageplay, and while keeping all of the aforementioned attributes of Propp’s characters in mind, the first draft was executed.

After completion of the first draft, another important question was revisited: “What do the characters contribute to the plot?” In the original character list, there was a Preying Mantis character named Titu (and later “Tipu”) who was a pet to the Golden Eagle Priestess. This character liked to think of himself as her assistant and would try to dance prophecies for her that never worked. In the end of the story, the character thought he found his own powers, when in fact he was actually saved by the Golden Eagle Priestess. This is an example of a character who had no purpose in the story. While the character had originally been envisioned as one of Propp’s Helper’s, it was only after writing the character that it was realized he provided no help at all. He neither furthered the plot nor helped the hero. His function didn’t even help the Golden Eagle Priestess. With no story function, the character was merely trying too hard to be funny and cute, and was therefore cut out entirely. It was in cutting out this character that all the other
characters were given a second look, and in doing so their functions were deemed important enough for them to remain in the story.
CHAPTER THREE: WHERE PROPP COULD GO

While every attempt was made to make this graduate project both follow Propp and work as an entertaining stageplay, it is to be noted that this is still merely first draft. There is much that can be addressed in future drafts, especially passes on the comedy. Specifically, passes might be made to add humor that is still appropriate for children but hopefully more appreciated by adults, such as the Scorpion Priestess’s comment to King Tata’s reaction to marriage, “We’ve already come to pass our time together either bickering or ignoring each other.”

The script could also use more audience interaction with Cuxi; however, the concern is that the audience might tire of him. As the script currently rests, there is a great deal, if not too much, exposition given by Cuxi. While some of it may be trimmed the concern would then become whether the audience, especially the younger ones for which the project is intended, might be confused without it.

The Musical

Another way of handling the issue of getting out the exposition might be developing this first draft into a musical. By incorporating and reiterating the exposition in a song, the information might take a more approachable and less “in the audience’s face” role, which leads to a concern the script had in its development. In the early stages of the first draft, a musical number was written for Yuli and the pygmies, as they like to think of themselves as magician performers. However, the musical number did not fit
with the rest of the project. With only one song in the stageplay, the number felt out of place and created an imbalance. It was realized that the song needed to either be cut or the entire project needed to shift to become a full musical. The song was removed, and an example of a draft of the musical number may be found at the end of this document in Appendix A.

While the decision was made to keep the first draft of the graduate project a non-musical, it is to be noted that the project could easily lend itself to being adapted into a musical while still remaining true to Propp’s characters, as the functions of the characters and their support to the story would remain the same. In transforming this draft into a musical, the elements of dance that already exist could be built upon and expanded, and the scenes’ exposition could be adapted into lyrics with a score that incorporates Peruvian music. A sample song list could be along the lines of the following:

Song List for The Inca Princess

ACT 1

“ALLIN P’UNCHAY, IT MEANS GOOD DAY” – Company
“THE LIFE OF A PREISTESS” – Priestesses
“UNDER THE STARS I DREAM” - Nawi
“AN INCA WARRIOR IS STRONG AND TOUGH” - Atoc and his Band of Men
“MY PALACE FULL OF TOYS” – Tata the Tyrant
“NOW YA SEE US, NOW YA DON’T” – Yuli and the Pygmies
“SPIRITS OF THE DEEP DARK FOREST” – Scorpion Priestess
“THROUGH THE JUNGLE” – Company

ACT 2

“TO THE WEDDING” – Company
“WHATEVER YOU CHOOSE TO DO, WE WILL BE PROUD OF YOU” – Good King and Good Queen
“WHEN WE RULE” – Scorpion Priestess and Tata the Tyrant
“If THE STARS ALIGNED” – Nawi and Atoc
“THE BATTLE SONG” - Company
“MACHU PICCHU” – Company
Propp’s 31 Story Functions

Another future version of this script might also address and take on the challenge of incorporating the thirty-one story functions as identified by Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale*. In aiming to abide by Propp’s seven character types in this project’s first draft, it was pleasantly surprising to discover that the majority of his thirty-one functions had also been incorporated in the story. While these functions had been reviewed during the process of studying Propp, there was not a conscious attempt made to incorporate and abide by these functions during the writing of the synopsis or script. In first approaching the project, the concept of creating these character types was daunting enough; the idea of having to mold a story around these thirty-one functions was overwhelming.

PROPP’S 31 FUNCTIONS in *MORPHOLOGY OF THE FOLKTALE*:

1. One of the Members of a Family Absents Himself from Home
2. An Interdiction is Addressed to the Hero
3. The Interdiction is Violated
4. The Villain Makes an Attempt at Reconnaissance
5. The Villain Receives Information About his Victim
6. The Villain Attempts to Deceive his Victim in Order to Take Possession of Him or of His Belongings
7. The Victim Submits to Deception and Thereby Unwittingly Helps His Enemy
8. The Villain Causes Harm or Injury to a Member of a Family (includes abduction)
9. Misfortune or Lack is Made Known; the Hero is Approached With a Request or Command; He is Allowed to Go or he is Dispatched
10. The Hero Agrees to or Decides upon Counteraction
11. The Hero Leaves Home
12. The Hero is Tested, Interrogated, Attacked, which Prepares the Way for his Receiving Either a Magical Agent or Helper
13. The Hero Reacts to The Actions of the Future Donor
14. The Hero Acquires the Use of a Magical Agent (provision or receipt)
15. The Hero is Transferred, Delivered, or Led to the Whereabouts of an Object of Search
16. The Hero and the Villain Join in Direct Combat
17. The Hero is Branded (could be an item to wear)
18. The Villain is Defeated
19. The Initial Misfortune or Lack is Liquidated
20. The Hero Returns
21. The Hero is Pursued
22. Rescue of the Hero from Pursuit
23. The Hero, Unrecognized, Arrives Home Or in Another Country
24. The False Hero Presents Unfounded Claims
25. A Difficult Task is Proposed to the Hero
26. The Task is Resolved
27. The Hero is Recognized
28. The False Hero or Villain is Exposed
29. The Hero is Given a New Appearance
30. The Villain is Punished
31. The Hero is Married and Ascends to the Throne

A few functions such as function number seventeen, “The Hero is Branded,” would have to be written into a new draft of the script to make this story truly “Proppian.” However, with a liberal interpretation of these functions, it could be argued that most of these thirty-one story functions exist in the stageplay draft as it currently stands. A rewrite to make this project fully follow Propp’s thirty-one story functions could be applied and executed without drastically changing the current story.
CONCLUSION

In regards to concluding findings, contributions, and challenges to Propp, it has been found that while Propp’s characters generally still hold true in fitting into the realm of TYA today, the model has slightly changed. This project’s goal was to serve Propp while trying to create a work that would be accepted by today’s young audiences. In this graduate project’s development, the attributes of Propp’s characters that were most challenged had to do with the roles of gender, as Propp’s could be considered old-fashioned to today’s Western audiences. Young audiences today are accustomed to seeing strong female protagonists on stage; however, this notion of a female Hero was not observed by Propp in his work.

In 1928 when *Morphology of a Folktale* was first published, the gender roles as proposed by Propp (the male as the protagonist hero and the princess being a sought prize) most likely paralleled society and were completely acceptable. In fact the gender roles as proposed by Propp probably held true in society for the past several thousand years. It is just in the last fifty years that the roles of women in Western society have drastically changed. However, it is to be questioned whether Propp’s characters might still hold true in other non-Western cultures such as China. In trying to research the current TYA landscape in China, it was very difficult to find information on what is being produced for young audiences. As far as Western society, in looking at recently produced fairytales, it is observed that the trend is that audiences are now being
entertained with stronger female protagonists who are more active in shaping their destinies.

Examples of this in current popular culture can be found in the Princess Mononoke stageplay that is being developed at the Whole Hog Theatre in London for an April 2013 premiere. Adapted from the popular anime story, the story is of a princess warrior and the picture in the press release has a picture of the princess with blood on her face. The play is in such demand that the entire run of performances were sold out by September of 2012, seven full months before its premiere. Another princess play exhibiting a strong princess role that has been in demand of late is The Princess Bride. While it seems that an official version of the script has not been published for the stage, adaptations for live performances in San Francisco, Austin, and Los Angeles have recently been popping up so that audiences can see this stubborn princess’s adventure in the medium of theatre. Other recent productions in TYA have also showcased strong female protagonists. The Minneapolis Children’s Theatre Company recently produced Barrio Grrrl! A New Musical and Tale of a West Texas Marsupial Girl. Female protagonists are also feature at the Dallas Children’s Theatre in their 2012 production of The Secret Life of Girls, and Seattle Children’s Theatre has run recent productions of Addy: An American Girl Story and Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business.

In the medium of film, there are also strong female protagonists and princesses that young audiences have been exposed to recently. Princess Merida from Brave fights to pave her own way in life and shoots bows and arrows to win the right to her own hand. In the recent “Snow White and the Huntsmen,” audiences witnessed a very different version of Snow White than the 1937 Walt Disney version. In the 2012 version, Snow
White leads her army and the battle on horseback with her sword raised against the Evil Queen.

Examples such as these show changes in how young audiences are accepting and perceiving princesses and the role of *The Hero*. Because of this, gender changes were needed for this project to fit in the contemporary realm for today’s young audiences. By utilizing Propp’s structural character theories as a model for the piece, this graduate project questioned if the use of these stock characters is still relevant in plays being developed for young audiences today.

The questions asked were, “Do Propp’s attributes hold up in Western contemporary society and does anything in Propp’s character paradigm need to be changed in order for it to fit into the realm of TYA today?” While the “success” of this creative project has subjective elements, objective criteria was set up in the form of following the parameters of character functions to make the judgment of the success of this creative project as objective as possible. The answer to this question having been through the process of development is yes, with an adjustment on the gender roles, it can. Not only do Propp’s observations provide a structural framework that is helpful and still relevant. It also provides a basic structure for conflict and drama that is necessary for dramatic fiction.
WORKS CONSULTED


APPENDIX A

In the early stages of the graduate project, a musical number was written for Yuli and the pygmies. However, the musical number created an imbalance with the rest of the project and the song was cut. The following is the song that was removed from the script.

Sample Musical Number

ACT I, Scene 13:

Atoc and Nawi look at Yuli and the pygmies in awe.

NAWI
I’ve heard about you. I didn’t realize you guys really existed.

ATOOC
Me neither. I’m embarrassed to say I’d thought your tribe had disappeared. Why do you all remain so hidden?

YULI
Why? Why not? When there is a good king like King Soncha was, we like to be known in the forest. Other times when there is a bad king like King Tata, we prefer to disappear. We like to think of ourselves as magician performers of sorts. Let me put it this way…

Music intro.

YULI
(Speaking and singing)
Some folks say we don’t exist.
A tribe long lost into the mist.
They believe we’re legend.
Think we’re lore.
They don’t conceive we’re around anymore.
But they never thought, that’s what we want them to believe.
The trick’s on them, and we’ve got tons up our sleeves.

Yuli and the Pygmies break into a “razzmatazz” musical number, “Now Ya See Us, Now Ya Don’t!”
THE PYGMIES (CHORUS)
(Singing and dancing)
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!
King Tata thinks we died but we’re not that dumb.
It’s easy to hide when you’re three feet long.
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!
We like to come and go as we please.
We pop up here but then we’re gone in a sneeze.
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!
We’re in like magic and we steal your socks.
Then disappear leaving presents of rocks.
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!

The chorus of Pygmies disappear.

YULI
(Speaking and singing)
King Tata called us wee little monsters.
Haunting the forest night and day.
He said we’re freaky.
But we’re gosh darn cute.
So when it comes to him we don’t give a hoot. Cause…

The Pygmies pop out of hiding places to perform tricks.

THE PYGMIES (CHORUS)
(Singing and dancing)
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!
King Tata thinks we died but we’re not that dumb.
It’s easy to hide when you’re three feet long.
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!
We like to come and go as we please.
We pop up here but then we’re gone in a sneeze.
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!
We’re in like magic and we steal your socks.
Then disappear leaving presents of rocks.
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!

YULI
(Singing)
Oooooooooh, to be free again.
Out on that Inca Trail and seen again.
We dream of that day.
Come when it may.
When the stinky old King is gone, gone, gone, gone...
THE PYGMIES
(Singing and dancing)
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!
We’ll be back some day when the king is done.
We might be little, but our hearts our strong.
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!
Now ya see us. Now ya don’t!

With various disappearing acts, the Pygmies all hide.

THE PYGMIES
(In whispers off stage) Now you don’t see us.
APPENDIX B

Suggestions for Future Research

Additional areas of research might ask whether the functions of Propp’s characters could be successfully applied in other mediums of storytelling, such as in the episodic nature of television or in the choices provided to users in video gaming. Future research might also delve into asking whether a project like this could be successful in non-Western cultures or countries such as China.
APPENDIX C

Script Request

A copy of the script to The Inca Princess may be provided upon request. If interested, please contact the following agency:

Preferred Artists
818.990.0305