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Seeking Story: Finding the Modern Day Folktale in the Daily News

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Seeking Story: Finding the Modern Day Folktale in the Daily News

by

Brandice Palmer

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Mass Communications
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Dedication

To storytellers, truth-seekers, and meaning-makers alike: it's all in the way you tell it.

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I am lucky to have found Dr. Robert Dardenne, who said he liked my funny idea and encouraged me to write, Dr. Deni Elliott, who gave me the discipline to write as well as I can, and Dr. S. Elizabeth Bird, whose work inspired me to think about new directions as I write.

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I will try to remember to be grateful to the people who gave me the time and the chance to explore.

Note to Reader:

The original of this document contains color, that is necessary for understanding the data
and the original thesis is on file with the USF library in Tampa, Florida.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the local news story for evidence of the folktale tradition. It examines a range of local news stories for their folktale functions. The study compares the cultural and psychological function of the news story to that of the folktale and compares the functional definition of folklore to that of journalism. The study also explores the idea of a classifiable sphere of formal character, motif and plot functions that may be explored within the news story and folktale texts. This study builds on the premise that the study of folklore should be at the center of a consideration of the cultural context of local news stories.

Using the ideas of formal classification, the study examines a selection of local news stories with folktale characteristics for evidence of folktale functions as structural features within the text. In analyzing content, the study employs a structuralist methodology to evaluate the folktale and mythic functions in the text. The study evaluates the selection of purposefully chosen news story texts for the existence of folktale functions, types, motifs, and key master myths defined formally by a structuralist methodology.

In part, this study explores how folklore acts within culture as a socio-psychological dynamic. From the findings of the critical reading, the study begins to probe the idea of the folktale function of journalism as a cultural

psychodynamic. Through the analysis of a selection of carefully chosen regional texts, this study provides an example of the application of the folktale function of journalism, examining the news story as a page in the tradition of folklore.

Chapter One: Introduction

The most broadly accessible storyteller in the present era is arguably the journalist. Newspapers, delivered daily to most homes in this country, are a common cross-cultural literature, linking people to the happenings that shape the world around them. The newspaper, delivered in a medium to the masses, has a potentially strong social and psychological impact on the readership. In turn, the mass readership has an impact on the meaning of news literature by providing interpretation.

This study does not evaluate the impact of the news journalist as referent or news reader as interpreter. It does not attempt universal applications. Instead, it looks at the way folklore functions in a limited cultural sphere and closely evaluates the content of a selection of local stories for evidence of a folktale function at work in the news. This study builds on the premise that the study of folklore should be at the center of a consideration of the cultural context of local news stories. Within the context of these local stories, the study limits itself to a formalized evaluation of written news story text content to provide reliability and consistency.

Journalism has been explored as a social utterance with socio-psychological impact by a number of mass communications theories. Folklore has also been explored as a traditional social utterance with socio-psychological impact. The first part of this study and initial chapter examines similarities and contrasts between the functions of folklore and the functions of journalism and evaluates methodologies that may be used to compare the folktale to the news story.

The second chapter of the study explores the ways folktales function as cultural and psychological meaning-makers and the ways news stories might function as folktales. The folktale function is explored as a cultural psychodynamic that provides people with a sense of meaning and identity. The folktale-teller and journalist as story senders and readers as referents and identities are introduced in this chapter.

The third chapter presents the formal structural and post-structural methodologies that will be used to conduct the critical reading and conceptual analysis of the selected local news story and folktale texts. The evaluation of text content in this study is limited to an evaluation of signifying message and content, using formalized methods. The idea of folktale functions as motifs, myths, characters, plots and themes, is outlined in this chapter. The methodology for the critical reading conducted in this study is also outlined in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four explores the text content of local folktales and news stories according to their folktale functions. The fourth chapter of the study conducts a two-part content analysis, critically reading the selected news story and the folktale texts for the folktale functions that may help govern meaning in stories. In the first part of the content analysis in Chapter Four, a traditional and non-traditional news story and a traditional and non-traditional folktale are read for evidence of the folktale functions. In the second part of the content analysis in Chapter Four, the folktale functions that repeat and vary thematically in the periodical news stories are further evaluated by analyzing a month-long series of news stories. The formalized folktale functions, evidenced in the content analysis of a month of sampled story text, are explored as consistent themes in the sampled text and compared in the range of selected stories.

The way readers and writers, story consumers and producers, refer and interpret the folktale functions within the text as universal symbols, is the subject of further investigation, in the form of a relational analysis of the folktale function of news story text and its effect on story producer and consumer. The conclusion of Chapter Five discusses the implications of the findings from the critical reading, the limitations of the study, and recommends paths for further needed research.

Statement of the Problem

At news writing's core is the fundamental need to quash subjectivity and myth and replace it with objectivity and fact. The debate between journalism and literature and subjective and objective reporting (Boynton, 2005) remains unsettled, even in the modern era of "New New Journalism" where style meets fact.

News, serial by nature, depends on newness and variation (Eco, 1990, p.96). Folklore, by nature, depends on traditional themes and repetition (Brunvand, 1998, p. 16). This study explores the dichotomy of journalism and folklore, and how the objective, factual news story and the highly subjective, mythic folktale are both chronicles of culture whose functions may parallel (Lule, 2001). By closely studying the relationship of folklore to local culture, this study builds a framework for evaluating the relationship of the folktale function to the local news story function.

Other studies of the myth-making quality of news have focused on myth as lie (Radford, 2003) or myth as the common stock of storytelling (Lule, 2001). Myth and news-making, for Lule (2001), are entwined, with myth providing the story formula for news stories. What this study illustrates is how myth and folklore actually function within

a selection of folktale and news story text. Bird and Dardenne have suggested that “the study of narrative should be at the center of any consideration of news in its cultural context” (Bird & Dardenne, 1988, p. 79). This study builds on this premise, and applies the folktale functions to a selection of stories to illustrate how the study of folklore should be at the center of a consideration of the cultural context of local news stories.

The critical reading of local folktales and news stories at the center of this study will explore the selection of story text for the existence and persistence of the folktale functions. In investigating the ways in which the news story exhibits characteristics of the folktale, the study illustrates the socio-cultural and psychological impact of journalism through a parallel study of the impact of folklore. Through the exploration of folktale functions in local news stories, the study ultimately investigates the way that news writing might act as part of the tradition of storytelling that propels the social and psychological dynamic of a culture.

Purpose of the Study

This study explores where the folktale overlaps with the news story and where folklore’s function meets journalism’s function. It investigates whether a sample of local news stories exhibits the characteristics of the folktale. It ultimately asks how finding the folktale function in the selected news stories might explain some of the subjective nature of news writing. The study first explores the possibility of finding a persistent folktale function within the evolving dynamic of news writing and then examines some implications of finding the folktale function in the regional news story. It surveys evidence of folktale functions in the forms of myth, motif, character and plot devices in a

critical reading of regional news stories. The study then defines the methodology that will be employed in the critical reading of selected stories, which attempts to prove that folktale functions exist in the selections from the local newspaper and summarizes the findings. Finally, the study discusses how the conceptual analysis and study as a whole might provide the foundation for further investigation into the socio-psychological dynamic of the folktale function in neighborhood newspaper journalism. This study is limited to an evaluation of local news stories and folktales in text form to provide uniformity among samples and to provide a clean illustration of how folktale functions might be applied to the local news story.

Assumptions of the Study

A number of variations in interpretation exist in this qualitative study. Analysis of the news story text and folktale text is highly subjective. The folktale theme itself, and hence meaning and function of the folktale or news story, may be altered by the variable telling, retelling, and interpretation of the original story as it is diffused over time (Brunvand, 1998). The folktale functions themselves are highly implicit patterns, further complicated by interpretation. This study has limited itself to an investigation of the way folktale functions appear in written text, in an attempt to eliminate variation in the story medium. This study strives to remain consistent in interpreting the folktale functions as motifs, functions, dramatis personae and myths in the content of the selected text. In studying 8 characters or dramatis personae, 22 folktale motifs, 7 myths, and 31 Proppian folktale functions in 35 regional stories, the study attempts a thorough investigation into the existence of folktale functions in the local news story. To reinforce reliability, the

critical reading uses a consistent methodological interpretation of the folktale functions within the selection of local folktales and news stories.

The socio-psychological function of the folktale depends on its function in a culture and the way the tale producer and tale consumer perceive it. These highly subjective and variable perceptions are the last portion of a critical reading of text as meaning. These variables cannot be explored in great depth in this initial conceptual analysis. This study is only an initial exploration of the content of a selection of local news stories for folktale characteristics. It presents the foundation for more elaborate relational analyses of the psychodynamic of the folktale function in the news stories.

Justification

We humans are all descended from city-builders and folktale-tellers. Cities give us a place to live in the physical world and folktales give us a sense of place and an identity within the cultural landscape. Stories are arguably as important to the development of cultural identity as cities are to the evolution of the edifice of civilization: “Primitive storytellers may have gained a wealth of social advantage, by using stories to explain the mysteries of life and universe, or to express accurately the feelings and relationships listeners had with each other and their environments” (Anderson, Dardenne & Killenberg, 1994, p. 153). Stories inhabit people and people inhabit buildings. It is the job of the journalist to collect the stories of the people who inhabit the buildings and landscapes of this world. Buildings may burn and crumble, fall dark, flood, but the stories of the people who lived within those buildings provide a witness to life, to culture, and to the idea of place. The substance of these tales may be part of our collective cultural

unconscious, the common-stock of tales that Alan Dundes (1966) referred to as the “metafolklore,” and modern journalists may be playing a part in the tradition of collective storytelling. Stories, in either the form of folktales or news stories, or as hybrid examples of both, serve a social and psychological function within a culture. In attempting to find the function of the traditional folktale in modern storytelling, this study will look to a selection of local stories in the newspaper. This research will examine the plausibility of finding the folktale function in the regional news story in an attempt to find a living sample and a thumbprint of the social and psychological presence of the relationship of story to local culture. By closely evaluating a sample of local tales, this study will illustrate the application of folktale functions to the written news.

Ultimately, the study investigates some elements of the common-stock that folklore and journalism both share through a practical application of folktale functions to story samples. This study explores the regional news story, a common-stock written story form accessible to most of the literate population, for parallels and contrasts with the regional folktale, a written and oral tradition of storytelling accessible to the non-literate population as well as the literate population. This study exists to dust, poke and dig for the place where folklore themes appear in the news; as a groundwork for further relational research from other theorists that may give us new insight, as writers and readers, into our expanding definition of cultural literacy: how we humans see each other within and through a culture, how we treat each other, how we view the world, how we use language to explain the world, what we value or disparage in one another, and in essence who we are.

Definition of Terms

Animal tales, *Animal tales fall into two major categories: those, such as the trickster tale, in which animals are actually believed to have the power of speech and the ability to conduct themselves as humans; and those in which the animal's human qualities are simply a convention that is accepted during the course of the narrative such as the medieval beast cycles...(Coffin, 2005).*

Folktale, *“a story, often with legendary or mythical elements, made and handed down among the common people: also folk story” (Websters, 1968, p. 562).*

One of the many forms of folklore, folktales are heard and remembered, and they are subject to various alterations in the course of retellings. As they are diffused (transmitted through a culture) , some folktales may pass in and out of written literature, and some stories of literary origin may cross over into oral tradition. Nevertheless, an essential trait of folktales—and all folk literature—is their diffusion, and their passage from one generation to another, by word of mouth (Coffin, 2005).

The term 'folktale' designates a traditional narrative, author unknown, whose form and content are transmitted in prose, primarily through oral performance but also through copied and printed collections, and whose sequence and details vary according to the skill, interest, and demands of teller and audience. A broader definition is sometimes found, whereby the folktale is treated simply as a

prose narrative on a traditional theme, transmitted orally-and so can function as a cover term for genres as various as legend, fairy tale, tall tales, humorous anecdotes, and others...A folktale may be based on a single motif or many, upon a single episode or many, and an established pattern frequently emerges, which scholars call a 'tale-type' ...The practice of composing and transmitting folk narratives is probably as old as human sociability, and for that reason the question of the tale's origin is usually beyond empirical grasp (Tate, 2005, pp.179-180).

Folklore, 'folklore' as a category describing vernacular, traditional, face-to-face, cultural expressions passed orally from one generation to the next is an invention of modernity. Indeed, folklore could be seen as modernity's other, designed to differentiate between the contemporary and the past, the industrial urban mechanical world, and the urban peasant artisan world. Distinctions among folk, elite, high, popular, traditional, and modern cultural expressions are best understood in this context, as strategies for granting status or legitimizing categories...Beginning in the 1960s, the discipline of folklore studies experienced a paradigm shift from textual comparison to ethnographic observations...focused on understanding folklore as a dimension of local character and culture...the study of folklore today combines ethnographic research on performance with critical reflection on the romantic legacies of the discipline...the idea of folklore as a voice of the people, a concept fundamental to the development of nationalism...As folklore research shifted to the study of performance, the field of

inquiry broadened to include not only epic, fable, fairy tale, folktale, legend, and myth but also genres of conversational storytelling (Shuman, 2005, pp. 177-178).

Journalism, *Conventional journalism emphasizes traditional news values of timeliness, proximity, importance, conflict, novelty, accuracy and is defined through the spare and efficient ‘inverted pyramid’, which orders facts from most to least important. The form is well suited to organizing, delivering, and showcasing facts in a journalistic environment that holds truth-telling and objectivity to be guiding principles...narrative journalism allows reporters access to subjects and people not usually considered newsworthy, thereby offering increased potential to report outside a conventional journalism of conflict, scandal, crime, and the abnormal...narrative journalism, like the use of particularized stories in historiography, can have the effect of making individual actions primary, thereby skewing perceptions of the world by de-emphasizing social and other forces...journalistic stories provide their own context—misleading when reporters include facts because they conform to the story or ‘omit’ them because they do not...stories in early American newspapers often were untrue or exaggerated but found their ‘news’ value in qualities they illustrated-charity, loyalty, honesty, and courage...simple stories illustrating rewards of hard work and sins of sloth or intemperance...Penny Press showed that facts and information garnered more profit than opinion and moralizing...the fictionlike morality tales faded after the Civil War... (Dardenne, 2005, p. 267-269).*

Legend, “a story of some wonderful event, handed down for generations among a people and popularly believed to have a historical basis, although not verifiable: distinguished from myth” (Websters, 1968, p.836).

Legends are folk history, and even when dealing with subject matter they differ from myth in that they tell about what has happened in the world after the period of its creation is over. They are believed by both narrator and audience and encompass a great variety of subjects: saints, werewolves, ghosts, and other supernatural creatures; adventures of real heroes and heroines; personal reminiscences; and explanations of geographical features and place-names (called local legends). Legend differs from formal history in style of presentation, emphasis, and purpose. Like other folktale forms it tends to be formulaic, using clichés and standardized characterization...a similar patterning of characters and plots occurs in ghost stories, local legends, and in some cases even in family reminiscences. Such stories, though they may be presented as history, are too patterned to be trusted as historical accounts (Coffin, 2005).

Marchen, (*fairy tale*) from the Old high German *mar*, Gothic *mers*, and Middle High German *Mare*, originally meaning news or gossip (Zipes,1979).

Myth, “a traditional story of unknown authorship, ostensibly with a historical basis, but serving usually to explain some phenomenon of nature, the origin of man, or the customs, institutions, religious rites, etc. of a people: myths usually involve the exploits of gods or heroes” (Websters, 1968, p. 972).

Narrative, “a story; account; tale” (Websters, 1968, p.976).

*Though interest in the phenomenon that forms the topic of this Encyclopedia dates back to a couple of millennia, both in Western and non-Western cultures, it is only in the past fifty years that the concept of narrative has emerged as an autonomous object of inquiry. From Aristotle to Vladimir Propp and from Percy Lubbock to Wayne Booth, the critics and philosophers who are regarded today as the pioneers of narrative theory were not concerned with narrative proper but with particular literary *genres, such as *epic poetry, *drama, the *folktale, the *novel or more generally *fiction, short for ‘narrative literary fiction’. It was the legacy of French structuralism, more particularly of Roland Barthes and Claude Bremond, to have emancipated narrative from literature and from fiction, and to have recognised it as a *semiotic phenomenon that transcends disciplines and *media (see structuralist narratology)...*

Contemporary uses of the term “narrative”

*No sooner had narrative come of age as a theoretical concept than it began to invade fields as diverse as *historiography, *medicine, *law, *psychoanalysis, and *ethnography (see narrative turn in the humanities). This territorial expansion was accompanied by a semantic broadening that liberated narrative not only from literary forms, but from any kind of textual support. A decisive influence on the current uses of narrative was Jean-François Lyotard’s concept of ‘Grand Narrative’ (see master narrative), as outlined in *The Postmodern Condition* (Lyotard, 1979, pp. 27-47). Lyotard contrasts a ‘narrative’ type of knowledge, typical of ancient societies, where *truth is guaranteed by the special*

*status of the storyteller within the community, with a *scientific type in which *authors are supposed to provide proof of their claims. But scientific discourse is unable to guarantee its own validity, since it rejects authority. During the nineteenth century, science sought legitimation in what Lyotard calls 'Grand Narratives': sweeping explanations that present scientific knowledge as the instrument of the historical self-realisation of an allegorical *hero variously named Reason, Freedom, the State, or the Human Spirit (see allegory). Three features distinguish 'Grand Narratives' from the little stories that we exchange in daily life: they concern abstract entities rather than concrete individuals (see character; existent); they may exist as collective beliefs rather than as the message of particular texts; and they inherit the foundational role of *myth with respect to society rather than being told for their *anecdotal or entertainment value. Little stories and Grand Narratives share a temporal dimension, but while the former simply recount historical (or pseudo-historical) *events, the latter deal directly with a capitalised History. The tacit existence of the Grand Narratives, as well as their explanatory and abstract nature, paved the way toward the 'Narratives of Race, Class, and Gender' or the 'Narratives of Identity' of contemporary cultural studies (see cultural-studies approaches to narrative; narrative explanation).*

The increasing popularity of the term narrative also reflects the epistemological crisis of contemporary culture. 'Narrative' is what is left when belief in the possibility of knowledge is eroded. The frequently heard phrase 'the narratives of science', popular in the new field of science studies, carries the implication that

scientific discourse does not reflect but covertly constructs reality, does not discover truths but fabricates them according to the rules of its own game in a process disturbingly comparable to the overt working of narrative fiction. (Ryan, 2005, pp. 344-348).

Narrative Universals, *narrative universals are features of a story or discourse that recur across a greater number of genetically and really unrelated traditions than predicted by chance...genetically unrelated if they have different origins...absolute universals need not be found in every narrative, only in every narrative tradition...(Hogan, 2005, p.384).*

Paradigm, *from Saussure semioticians have taken the notion that every sign exists in its code as part of a paradigm, a system of relationships that connect it to other signs by resemblance and difference, before the sign appears in an utterance. In language, a word is paradigmatically related to synonyms, antonyms, other words with the same roots, words that sound like it, and so on. The paradigmatic structure offers the potential field for substitutions that result in metaphors, puns, metonyms and other figures (Scholes, 1982, p. 146).*

Pragmatics, *essentially the investigation into language use and language as it relates to interpreters and users (Green & LeBihan, 1996, p.43).*

Semantics, *the study of meaning in language. Areas of semantics include lexical*

semantics and text semantics, which is the investigation into the semantic relations of whole texts (Green & LeBihan, 1996, p.43).

Signified, *In Saussure this is the concept, which, linked to a particular sound-image, constitutes a sign. But the notion of “concept” has proved too fixed, too mentalistic, for later semiologists like Roland Barthes. The term “signified” is still useful as a way of talking about a sign’s meaning without raising the question of reference, but in other ways it has lost much of its usefulness (Scholes, 1982, pp. 147-148).*

Signifier, *the acoustic image that, linked to a concept, constitutes a sign in Saussurean linguistics. Later semiologists, following Barthes and Lacan have rejected the notion of any fixed connection between signifier and signified, arguing that signifiers “float,” attracting signifieds which merge with them to become signifiers for still other signifieds. The general result of this has been to debase the word signified and to create confusion...it is safe to say that neither term has an precise meaning at present—which perhaps justifies the semiological position on the matter (Scholes, 1982, p. 148).*

Story, *as opposed to discourse, story refers to the events and situations evoked by a narrative text. As opposed to plot (in the theories of the Russian formalists and others) it refers to the events in their chronological order, despite any rearrangements in the plotting...In current semiotic theory the story or diegesis is*

always a production of the reader of a text, based on the signs in the text but never totally controlled by them (Scholes, 1982, p. 148).

Symbol, *In Peirce's terminology this word has a precise meaning, referring to that type of sign which signifies by virtue of an arbitrary, conventional habit of usage. The Saussurean sign, in which signifier and signified are connected by convention only, in an arbitrary or "unmotivated" manner, is equivalent to the Peircean symbol...It is also important that Peirce goes on to name two sign-functions (iconic and indexical) that are not arbitrary or conventional, while Saussure's followers simply extend Saussure's notion of the linguistic sign or word to all signs, verbal and nonverbal (Scholes, 1982, p. 148).*

Syntagm, *In post-Saussurian linguistics this word is opposed to paradigm.*

Paradigm refers to a word's connection with other words in language as a whole outside of any particular utterance. Syntagm refers to a word's relation to other words within a particular speech act or utterance. Meaning is obviously a matter of both syntagmatic and paradigmatic functions. Because speech always expresses itself as a flow of verbal signs in time, syntagmatic functions are sometimes called linear (Scholes, 1982, p. 149).

Tall tale, *stories that the narrator does not believe but that are supposed to dupe the naïve listener, are particularly associated with the U.S. frontier, although variants of such stories were well known in earlier times in Europe and Asia. In the United States, tall tales were presented to the city dweller as true pictures of*

life out West. They rely on their comic effort on the incongruity between sober narration and fantastic elements in the stories themselves (Coffin, 2005).

Urban legend, contemporary stories that are set in an urban environment and reported as true (sometimes in newspapers) but that contain patterns and motifs that reveal their legendary character. The context of these legends may be contemporary, but the stories reflect timeless concerns about urban living, including privacy, death, decay, and vermin (Coffin, 2005).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Wagging the Tale

This chapter surveys structural and post-structural approaches to evaluating text and applies these approaches to an examination of the way folklore functions. It explores literature regarding the idea of social and psychological need as a motivation for the way stories are told, why stories are told in a certain way, and how this socio-psychological need is part of the dynamic that helps to perpetuate the storytelling tradition. It also examines how lack propels the narrative and how lack of personal story or narrative identity within a culture might necessitate the folktale function of the news story, and suggests how finding folktales in the news might satisfy the psychodynamic aspect of the folktale function.

Between 1936 and 1940, folklore and social-ethnic studies produced by the Federal Writers' Project were collected and documented, providing a sketch of living history known as the "Folklore Project." These sketches, collections of songs, interviews, stories, and customs from geographies throughout America, were "narratives...meant to reflect the ordinary person's struggle with the vicissitudes of daily living" (Folklore Project, October 19, 1998). These narratives were collected to become part of a:

composite and comprehensive portrait of various groups of people in America...the quality of collecting and writing lore varies from state to state, reflecting the skills of the interviewer-writers and the supervision they received. (Folklore Project, October 19, 1998)

These interviews with everyday people, and encounters with their customs and traditions, are living histories of people who helped compose the world we humans live in and give it context. The interviews that journalists do today with everyday people perform a similar socio-cultural function to this folklore. The sketches of everyday people that we find daily in our local newspaper document the culture in which we live:

Mrs. Yahn will be 88 on her next birthday. Her white hair is piled neat and proper as one of her maps. She wears big glasses, dangly earrings and a flowered blue dress. She speaks in a low, elegant voice she never raises even when she is taken aback by a request like the one she still tells folks about. ‘Ma’am,’ said the preacher. ‘I want to bring the lord to every prison in the United States.’ Mrs. Yahn sighed that day and got out a bunch of maps. (Klinkenberg, June 20, 2005, p.1E)

These character sketches in the local section of the newspaper provide a series of focused frames, that when united as a composite, illustrate the neighborhood of which we are all a part. They are the human interest stories of day-to-day life in the neighborhood. As Jan Brunvand (1998) suggests, such stories are the “lore” of the “folk.”

Folklore is defined by Jan Brunvand as “custom-related,” passing by word of mouth and “never transmitted entirely in a formal manner through printed books, phonograph records, school classes, church sermons, or by other learned, sophisticated, commercial means” (Brunvand, 1998, p. 12). Folklore retains, at its essence, the need to be passed on from one mouth to another, to remain malleable and alive. For Brunvand, folklore:

is traditional in two senses in that it is passed on repeatedly in a relatively fixed or standard form, and it circulates among members of a particular group. Traditional

form or structure allows us to recognize bits of folklore in different guises. The characters in a story, the setting, the length, the style, even the language may vary, but we can still call it the “same” story if it maintains a basic underlying form.

(Brunvand, 1998, p.12)

News stories in the local section of the newspaper are traditional in the sense that they are printed in a standard inverted pyramid form and they are distributed among the local population within the neighborhood. For Brunvand (1998), both the traditional fixed form and circulation must be found together to claim that something is legitimate folklore. In addition, true folklore must be both oral and repeated. Conversations are oral, but not all conversations are repeated. Legal processes are recorded orally and distributed in a traditional form, but they are not considered folklore (Brunvand, 1998). It is only when the orally given story is repeated in a fixed form and distributed to a certain group that it takes on the shape of folklore:

Only those aspects of culture that are both oral or customary and traditional may be folklore; thus, there may be traditional folk stories, proverbs, or gestures passed on either in conversations or in courtroom arguments and testimony.

These items are legitimate examples of folklore. (Brunvand, 1998, p.13)

When a journalist interviews through conversations, repeats or quotes parts of those conversations in the news story, writes the story in standardized form that the newspaper passes the story on to the local community through printed publication, then the news story takes on the quality of legitimate folklore according to Brunvand’s definition.

Another key element in Brunvand’s definition of folklore is that it is orally repeated as part of folk tradition, circulated through a culture, and never reproduced entirely through

print or commercial means. For the commercially printed news story to retain its folklore quality, it must be passed on orally in the local community. The news story must be talked about and become part of the oral tradition. Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg (1994) explain the ideal of journalism “News is what people talk about, and news makes people talk.”

Using this expanded definition, the traditional American slave tales of Uncle Remus recorded in 1880 by journalist Joel Chandler Harris were legitimate folklore if they were told orally to Harris, repeated by Harris to the local community, reproduced commercially in print, and then retold orally (Brasch, 2000). The retelling of the tale, even once it has been commercialized, feeds back into the oral tradition that is a key element in defining legitimate folklore. Folklore, then, is in part defined by the nature of its telling, or retelling:

In contrast to the modern story writer’s striving after originality of plot and treatment, the teller of a folktale is proud of his ability to hand on that which he has received. He usually desires to impress his readers or hearers with the fact that he is bringing them something that has the stamp of good authority, that the tale was heard from some great storyteller or from some aged person who remembers it from old days. (Thompson, 1977, p. 4)

Repeating the tale gives it the appearance of validity. Similarly, the journalist “hands on” that which he or she has learned through interview or authority to validate a news story. The reader of the news story “hands on” through conversation what he or she has read, the newspaper providing the stamp of validity. Reporting, though, as Elliott (2004) stresses, cannot simply be repeating. A broader explanation of the folklore

function of the local neighborhood news story, then, may be defined as preserving not just the local, cultural voice through interview, but also the theme, function, and context of that voice. Context lends a sense of place and identity to the local voice. This preservation of what people find important, their cultural artifacts, through word of mouth, is an essential “folk” function of conversational storytelling (Shuman, 2005, p. 178). In this respect, the journalist who reports the local neighborhood news, interviewing local people and describing events that happen and have meaning for them, is functioning as a kind of local folktale-teller. While this definition of the “folk” function explains how and to whom traditional folklore is delivered, it does not define the “lore” or form that the text takes or the function of that form. The “lore” or text of traditional folklore and its function will be explored in some depth in the analysis portion of this study. Together, the narrative text or “lore” of the tale and the cultural function or “folk” of traditional folklore “represent(s) what people preserve in their culture through the generations by custom and word of mouth when few other means exist to preserve it” (Brunvand, 1998, p.23).

The traditional form of the folktale is oral and malleable. The traditional function of the folktale is to preserve, to repeat, and to show what local culture traditionally values and disparages. The local print news story is written in a traditional form. The local news journalist performs a traditional folk function by preserving the local collection of stories, repeating or quoting trusted sources of local information, and sharing news that the local culture values and repeats. Elliott (2004) describes one of the essential functions of the journalistic voice as “reliance on old news to give day-to-day stories context” (Elliott, 2004, p.30). In this sense, the serial of news and traditional serial of folk story themes

could provide the background and context that helps cultures form identity and meaning.

The cultural function of the folktale and the news story appears to broadcast parallel from the word of mouth of the folktale teller and the word of mouth of the journalist: “Seeing news as narrative representing culture thus allows us to study it as a symbolic model of cultural values in an attempt to uncover the particular configurations characteristic of a given culture’s news” (Bird & Dardenne, 1988, p. 76).

The form of the message, or “lore,” is a physical cultural artifact of the invisible architecture of meaning, and as such, may be scrutinized in the construction of meaning from words, through text. In scrutinizing local lore and local news in its text form in the analysis, this study will examine how the functions of local lore and local news might intersect to impact local folks socially and psychologically by forming meaning in their cultural sphere:

Instead of measuring the content, meaning, and truth of intellectual forms by something extraneous, which is supposed to be reproduced in them, we must find in these forms themselves the measure and criterion for their truth and intrinsic meaning. (Cassirer, 1946, p.8)

In modern mass-mediated cultures, “mediated narratives have replaced folk narratives in most peoples’ lives” (Bird, 2003, p.162). The fine line between news and “lore” intersects in a cultural evaluation of the way the two story forms overlap:

We tend to think of news and folklore as the opposite of each other; news is factual and verifiable, while legends are false and unverifiable. Recently, cultural researchers have sought to show that the line between news and legend is not so clear (e.g., Bird & Dardenne 1988; Bird 1992 a; Lule 2001; Oring 1990; Smith

1992). News, like folklore and myth, is a cultural construction, a narrative that tells a story about things of importance or interest. Journalists like to think that news somehow mirrors reality, that it objectively describes events; news is “out there” and to be discovered. But clearly news is not “out there.” News does not exist until it is written, until it becomes a story, and what is deemed newsworthy owes as much to our cultural conceptions of what makes a “good story” as it does to ideas of importance or significance. Student journalists are encouraged by their textbooks to “find the story” in an event, using the same kind of criteria—conflict, drama, novelty—as a good oral storyteller. (Bird, 2003, p. 149)

Another important function of news writing, then, is to find the story. As taught in journalism school, story is the variation or intrigue in the constant stream of everyday events. Story, as defined by Scholes, (1982) refers to the events and situations evoked by narrative text. Story as defined by formalists including Propp, (1968) is the product of chronological functions. For semioticians, story is ultimately a production of infinite interpretation (Scholes, 1982, p.82). Story, for Eco, (1994) deconstructed to the point of “unlimited semiosis,” becomes nonsense unless critical readers agree on certain consistent thematic patterns alongside the variations.

The folktale function in the news story provides a consistent theme for the variation of news stories. News writing, by nature periodical and regular, is part of a “dialectic between scheme and variation...where the variation is no more appreciable than the scheme” (Eco, 1994, pp. 97-98). This consistent theme is as important as variation to story, and should be evaluated as a key element of story (Eco, 1994, p. 96). A critical reading of news stories should include an evaluation of themes. Prior studies have

established that:

News shares characteristics with oral literature, myth, traditional tales, ballads, literature, family histories, and other forms of cultural narrative. This view of news content as a cultural document in which people create shared meanings shifts the emphasis from news as isolated segments of the day's realities. Rather, news can be considered significant in part because in creating realities, it creates order, and further, this particular kind of ordering can be seen, like literature and myth, as a cultural activity with its own history. (Anderson, Dardenne & Killenberg, 1994, p. 158)

This study provides a reading of the folklore theme as a function of story text in the news-making tradition. In describing the birth of modern newspapers and their strong connection to local community life, Michael Schudson hints at the folkloric theme of news writing:

Newspapers benefited from the experience of city life as a spectacle, and they contributed to it. They provided their readers a running account of the marvels and mysteries of urban life. The "action journalism" of Pulitzer, and later Hearst, created new marvels. (Schudson, 1978)

The marvels and mysteries of local everyday life can become news, diffused through the oral tradition of interviewing. During the interview process, "sources provide stories and legend becomes news" (Bird, 2003, p.150). Journalists themselves act in the role of traditional tale tellers in this respect: "Certainly, journalists set the news agenda, and they undoubtedly may function as authoritative scribes, but they are not outside the daily rhythms of culture anymore than are traditional myth-makers and storytellers" (Bird,

2003, p.160). Not only do modern journalists reporting the local news may fulfill the traditional role of storyteller, as well as satisfying the traditional function of the folktale teller, embedded in the community that is the source of stories. In journalism, local news storytelling may be an important thread woven through the cultural text of the community and local news that traditionally provides the everyday “lore” for and of the “folks.”

Through the Smoking Mirror

Whether or not the local “lore” captured in the daily newspaper are accurate reflections of the local community is at the heart of the quest for truth in journalism. News stories, as products of journalism, are driven by attention to accuracy and fact and the ideal of objectivity. As such, news stories should mirror places, faces, and events. First-person eye-witness accounts and quotes from trusted sources all support the pursuit of relaying truth through story. This study does not debate the ideal of truth-seeking in the news. Rather, it asks how exploring the feasibility of finding a folktale function in the local news might help illuminate more of the picture of news-making to include a look behind the lens, at the subjective nature of storytelling that is part of news story-making. As Michael Schudson (1967) points out, “in the past decade critics of objectivity have often pictured themselves as lonely exponents of a viewpoint without support in the traditions of journalism.” One might argue that inquisitive journalism must investigate its roots. In looking at the way news stories are told and exploring the folktale function of text within them, this initial study will begin to flesh an idea of the way the local news story might function textually as part of the folklore of a local culture.

Linguistics studies both the form and function of text. In its print form, news story

text is static and dissectible. The oral or retelling function of the text is a fluid medium for meaning-making within a culture. Cultural literacy, part of the highly subjective meaning-making process, “is not only constituted by people’s variable abilities to read and write but as people’s cultural knowledge, however that knowledge is achieved, and here one might locate oral culture in addition to print culture” (Preston & Preston, 1995, p.xi). By seeking the textual and functional characteristics of the folktale in the news story, this study will strive for a close critical reading that may build the scaffolding for an exploration of the notion of news writing as a dynamic of cultural literacy.

A survey of some methodologies of literary analysis will help illuminate the treatment of the text in the analysis. The traditional structural literary analysis of text is dominated by paradigmatic and syntagmatic approaches. The paradigmatic approach, developed by Lévi-Strauss (1969), who applied structural analysis to myth, is illustrated in the internal opposition within folkloric text. The syntagmatic approach, as outlined by Vladimir Propp (1968), views recurrent story functions as the syntax for all tales. As Scholes (1982) explains, meaning is a product of both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic functions.

Propp’s linear approach to dissecting the cultural text of the tale is more concerned with the static folktale syntax built out of the consistent sequential appearance of folktale functions and motifs in all folktales. For Propp, the tale travels in a line from a beginning point to an end point. The functions of each stop along the narrative sequence create the structure of the tale. Text, for Lévi-Strauss, is segmented into layers of myths that derive their meanings, in part, from internal conflict.

A tale about a god who is called “Feathered Serpent” and a god who is called

“Smoking Mirror,” for Lévi-Strauss, might represent the conflict between the god of truth and the god of illusion on one level and the conflict between perception and reality on another. For Propp, the tale of Quetzalcoatl, or “Feathered Serpent,” would be concerned with the syntax of the text and the sequence of functions that shape the tale. First, the hero, Quetzalcoatl, peaceful god of learning, is introduced. Next, sequentially, the hero is pursued by a treacherous villain and rival god, Smoking Mirror. The villain then gets the hero drunk one night after seducing him into drinking a potion he claims is a medicine and the hero commits a series of shameful acts of debauchery. After recovering from the potion, the hero learns of his misdeeds and leaves in disgrace, setting off to sea and exile, but not before vowing to return one day. Quetzalcoatl does return on the exact day he prophesized, in the form of a ship from the sea carrying a conquistador who brings the empire to its knees, largely in reverence of the myth of the Feathered Serpent’s return (Cotterell, 1980). For Propp, the Quetzalcoatl tale would exhibit sequential syntax consistently found in all folktales. For Lévi-Strauss, the Quetzalcoatl tale would illustrate hero battling villain in a narrative driven by fate, contrast providing the shape and definition of the myth.

Initial observations of the way paradigmatic and syntagmatic approaches may be applied to text will be provided in the following examples. In the local folktale, “Walter’s Cove,” labeled as Folktale A (Appendix A), Lévi-Strauss might see the myth-based conflict between the real world and the marvel of the otherworld and the narrator’s struggle to understand the otherworldly apparition of the key character of Walter, a figure who perished, according to local legend, in a hurricane years past (Geegan, 2004). Propp’s approach might analyze the narrative sequence of the story for characteristic

folktale functions. Lévi-Strauss' approach might show the conflict between the idea of narrator as hero and ghost as villain and narrator as victim and ghost as donor. Similarly, in the local news story, "For the sake of his namesake," labeled as News Story A (Appendix C), Lévi-Strauss might view the mythic conflict between the noble father and seedy underworld that threatens the father's impressionable son (Vansickle, February 27, 2005, p. 1A). Propp might step through each plot point in the news story's narrative sequence to illustrate its folktale functions. The text in the local Folktale A and News Story A, evaluated functionally using both the paradigmatic or syntagmatic approaches outlined by Lévi-Strauss and Propp, exhibit a range of folktale characteristics. When compared, both Folktale A and News Story A exhibit myths, motifs, characters, and plot sequence all characteristic of the classic folktale (Table 1 and Figure 2).

Using the syntagmatic structural approach, Propp's dissection of the functions and motifs of the folktale introduces the idea of basic narrative function and sequential patterns in the folktale. For Propp, the narrative sequence of functions in the folktale is always static:

Propp's seminal work, although explicitly limited to the Russian folk tale, has in fact generally been evoked as the paradigm of narrative as such, and of so-called quest-romance in particular, in that it allows us to reformulate or rewrite the episodes of individual romance texts as an invariable sequence of 'functions,' or in other words, as a fixed form. (Jameson, 1981, p. 119)

This fixed form becomes part of the sequential narrative structure that Propp further qualifies within the folktale functions:

- 1.) Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in the tale,

independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale.

2.) The number of functions known to the fairy tale is limited.

3.) The sequence of functions is always identical.

4.) All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure.

(Propp, 1968, pp. 21-24)

The narrative sequence and functions in the news story, then, must parallel the Proppian functions in order to fit Propp's syntagmatic definition of folktale. As the Proppian story analysis of News Story A and Folktale A suggests, (Table 1 and Figure 2) the sequence of functions within the news story text can satisfy Propp's folktale functions. This data suggests that the text in the news story can function like a folktale, providing a scheme of myths, motifs, characters, and plot sequence familiar to classic folklore.

The focus on sequential function excludes the role of unique character in folktale. For Propp, the characters are interchangeable faces, defined by their functions within the sequence of the folktale. Folktale characters, for Propp (1968), are classified as malleable, redefined in each story segment according to their functions. Their human characteristics: the broad spectrum of variable socio-political and psychological motivations, are ignored in the syntagmatic structural analysis. Characters in the Proppian analysis are purely utilitarian, classified according to their designated functions. The shading and nuance of their characteristics are obscured. They are defined simply by what they do:

We may now reformulate our earlier diagnosis of the semiotic ideal of formalization in the more practical terms of our objection to classificatory

operations. From this point-of-view, what is problematic about Propp's character-functions (hero, donor, villain) or Greimas' more formalized *actants* emerges when it turns out that we are merely being asked to drop the various elements of the surface narrative into these various prepared slots. (Jameson, 1981, p. 125)

In evaluating text in the Proppian view of the folktale, a defined set of *dramatis personae*, present themselves. The folktale function in the news story, then, might be perceived as presenting formulaic versions of the true story and stereotypical portrayals or cookie-cutter renderings of real people. Both sampled News Story A and Folktale A exhibit the characteristic *dramatis personae*. The local news story contains all eight of the traditional *dramatis personae*, which include "Villain," "Donor," "Helper," "Princess," "Her Father," "Dispatcher," "Hero," and "False Hero." The presence of these *personae*, guided and defined by their functions, further indicates the presence of the folktale functions at work in the news story (Table 1-D).

Folktales, defined in part by their apparent malleability and reinterpretation and diffusion through culture, are formalized, or formularized, according to their functions in the structuralist universe. The function, the motif and even the sequence itself, in the Proppian view, is static and irreversible:

...what is ultimately irreducible in Propp's analysis is simply narrative diachrony itself, the movement of storytelling in time. To characterize this movement in terms of "irreversibility" is then to produce not a solution, but rather the problem itself. (Jameson, 1981, p. 122)

Propp's functions, so formalized:

fail to attain an adequate level of abstraction... Yet what was powerful and

attractive about the method from the outset was precisely the possibility it offered of reducing a wealth of empirical or surface narrative events to a much smaller number of abstract or “deep-structural” moments. Such a reduction allows us not only to compare narrative texts which seem very different from one another; it also allows us to simplify a single involved narrative into redundant surface manifestations of a single recurrent function. (Jameson, 1981, p. 120)

The redundant manifestations of function in Propp’s diagram of the folktale suggest so many spots on a larger body of myth.

Part of what is operating beneath the surface of the syntax is a struggle for meaning. Both motifs and myths help form meaning in stories. Stith Thompson outlined more than twenty motif types for the typical folktale, including “mythological,” “animals,” “tabu,” “magic,” “the dead,” “marvels,” “ogres,” “tests,” “the wise and the foolish,” “deceptions,” “reversal of fortune,” “ordaining the future,” “chance and fate,” “society,” “rewards and punishments,” “captives and fugitives,” “unnatural cruelty,” “sex,” “religion,” “traits and characters,” “humor,” and “miscellaneous groups and motifs” (Thompson, 1977, p.481). This internal struggle for meaning within the text provides the conflict, and thus the paradigm of meaning. As bridges to meaning, the motifs appear in equal parts in News Story A and Folktale A (Table 1-C). In both News Story A and in Folktale A, half of all the total Folktale Motifs presented. Not only is the folktale motif present in the news story labeled News Story A, it is present in the story labeled Folktale A to the same degree, indicating that the news story has as many folktale motifs as the folktale. Motif, as part of the structure of story syntax, functions as meaning-maker in both the news story and the folktale.

Myth provides the deep structure for Lévi-Strauss, and the conflict between myths reveals the scaffolding of the cultural narrative. The idea of an underlying structure beneath the formulaic surface details formalized by Propp and later explored by Lévi-Strauss, approaches cultural text as an artifact of the internal struggle within culture and politics: “Lévi-Strauss’s work suggests that the proposition whereby all cultural artifacts are to be read as symbolic resolutions of real political and social contradictions deserves serious exploration and systematic experimental verification” (Jameson, 1981, p. 80). If the local news story is a neighborhood artifact that illustrates plot resolution of real political, social, and mythic conflicts, then it deserves serious exploration as an indicator of cultural literacy.

In real life, and in the news stories portraying real life, plot resolutions are not always plausible endings to conflict. Drama, without resolution, is a fact of life. In exploring the evidence of Lévi-Straussian conflicts and resolutions in the news story, this study finds evidence of a folktale quality in the news that closely parallels myth.

Using Lévi-Strauss’s paradigmatic approach, this study searches for inherent contrasting patterns within the text that create the shape of meaning. In exploring the deeper structure of myth, I find a connection between character and socio-political function and meaning. For Lévi-Strauss, myth is metaphor in the making, a study in contrasts that shows us truth through contrasting dark and light. Myth is not a lie that obscures, but a reflection, a cultural metaphor that suggests who we are:

...thanks to the myths, we discover that metaphors are based on an intuitive sense of the logical relations between one realm and other realms; metaphor reintegrates the first realm with the totality of the others, in spite of the fact that reflective

thought struggles to separate them. Metaphor, far from being a decoration that is added to language, purifies it and restores it to its original nature, through momentarily obliterating one of the innumerable synecdoche that make up speech. (Lévi-Strauss, 1969, p. 339)

Contrasts among the meanings for myths provide the layers and depth of the stories they inhabit. A myth about rain-making, for example, is not just a meteorological forecast or a story about an archetypal deluge. It also contains shards of descriptions that inform about the social condition and the importance of rain-making within the myth's own culture. A news story about a month-long local rain, similarly, is not just part of the news almanac or a piece of the flood myth. The story may also inform about the social or psychological impact of the month-long rain on the population. For Lévi-Strauss, the multiplicity of meaning is part of the tale. In viewing only one application of meaning, myth functions as a myopically observed stereotype: "To give only one example, caricature consists in the emphatic exploitation of a visual feature, a process that is prompted not by the desire to reduplicate the model, but by the intention of making some function or aspect meaningful" (Lévi-Strauss, 1969, p. 340).

Jack Lule suggests that "like myth, news offers the steady repetition of stories, the rhythmic recurrence of themes and events" (Lule, 2001, p.19). How this steady diet of formulaic themes in local news stories affects cultural literacy is explored in some depth in Lule's (2001) critical reading of the myth function in the news. The function of the "master myths" in the news story might be directly related to the socio-psychological function of preserving the status quo in the news story through repetition and reinforcement of myth (Lule, 2001). The myths of "Victim," "Scapegoat," "Hero,"

“Trickster,” “Other World,” “Good Mother,” and the “Flood” regularly appear in storytelling. As Lévi-Strauss explored, the mythic paradigm helps stories resonate with meaning. As Jack Lule suggests in his application to news stories, myth can also be used to draw connections between real people in the news and mythic functions. When myth is repeatedly appropriated to illustrate people or cultures in the news, he suggests, dangerous stereotypes are reinforced. The saga of Mike Tyson’s criminal trial, for Lule, takes on storybook proportions when: “Jim Murray of the Los Angeles Times wrote that ‘Mike Tyson comes into public focus as a combination Jack the Ripper and Bluebeard’” (Lule, 2001, p. 131). News stories invested with myth and stereotype run the risk of characterizing people as caricatures of themselves. In the stories sampled, News Story A exhibited more of the “master myths” than Folktale A, showing evidence of the element of myth in the news (Table 1-A). To what extent these discovered myths within news stories act to reinforce stereotypes or make meanings could be the subject of a more in-depth relational analysis of the text.

The actual definition of *märchen*, or fairytale, from the Old High German, originally meant news or gossip, so the tie between fairytale and news has some historical foundation (Zipes, 1979). In a neighborhood news article from the local newspaper, “The princess maker,” the journalist describes the fairytale quality of the Sweet Pea Pageants and its prima-Donna contestants and fairy-godmotheresque pageant model manager (Spicuzza, July 24, 2005, p. 1E). This modern news article from the local paper shows the reader a rhinestone fairytale spectrum of superficial pageant details, supplemented by insights into the motivations of the real princess-maker, Miss Dee.

Lévi-Strauss explains that, at its best, myth functions as layers of meaning rather

than as a one-dimensional stereotype within a tale, and its distinctive characteristic is its ability to be viewed from different levels, dense with layers of metaphorical meaning:

It can thus be understood how mistaken those mythologists were who supposed that the natural phenomena which figure so largely in myths are trying to explain. This mistake forms a simple counterpart to another, committed by those mythologists who, in reacting against their predecessors (the latter were themselves reacting against the other type of interpretation), tried to reduce the meaning of myths to a moralizing comment on the situation of mankind and made them into an explanation of love and death or pleasure and suffering, instead of an account of the phases of the moon and seasonal changes. In both cases there was a failure to grasp the distinctive character of myths, which is a precisely emphatic statement, resulting from the multiplication of one level by another or several others, and which, as in language, serves to indicate areas of meaning. (Lévi-Strauss, 1969, p. 340)

Myth, then, may explain personal characteristics by qualifying them as related to mythic characteristics. Myth exchanges real for metaphor, what a thing is for what a thing is like:

The multiplicity of levels appears then as the price that mythic thought has to pay in order to move from the continuous to the discreet...Mythic thought only accepts nature on condition that it is able to reproduce it. By so doing, it limits itself to the choice of those formal properties by which nature can signify itself and which consequently are appropriate to metaphor. (Lévi-Strauss, 1969, p. 341)

Perhaps the tie between the mythical princess-maker and the real Miss Dee, in the form of the local news story, "The princess maker," gives myth a context in real affairs that

can make concrete what a thing is like (Spicuzza, July 24, 2005, p. 1E). News stories can give readers illustrations of how local folks might be like heroes or villains in fairytales, and in doing so, inform about what culture values through story illustration. On another level, as Lule's (2001) work of the stereotyping aspect of myth suggests, news stories that show the reader how real people like Miss Dee are like fairy-tale helpers can obscure the rich details of realness, trading carefully-drawn character sketches for shallow cartoon renderings that do little to inform the reader about reality. As a myth-maker in this respect, journalism provides a smudgy mirror of real life.

Breaking the Looking Glass

The post-structuralist reaction to ideas developed by Propp and Lévi-Strauss adds another layer of meaning to the multi-dimensional interpretation of the folktale function of text:

Ambiguity, multivalence, the fact that language simply cannot be regarded as a clear and final exposition of what it says, is central both to science, and of course, to literature...for the same reason that you cannot make a single general statement about anything in the world which is really wholly delimited, wholly

unambiguous, and divided the world into two pieces. (Bronowski, 1978, p. 106)

In exploring the ambiguous nature of the symbols that compose language and meaning, the post-structuralist approach to linguistics introduces a morphing lens that deconstructs meaning in much the same way the folktale itself is diffused and takes on new meaning in new cultural contexts. Reading the news story, "The princess maker," most readers are familiar with the character of the princess from fairytales. In fact, if the reader is not

familiar with the universal symbolism of a fairytale princess, a layer of meaning within the story is lost. The parallel and contrast between the fairytale princess and the child pageant contestant is also lost. The news story illustrates how a pageant model manager is like a princess maker and how a pageant contestant is like a princess. The fairytale concepts of princess maker and princess are part of a shared fairytale heritage that convey a culturally universal meaning. By understanding the reference to the fairytale in the news story, the reader can see how the characters are like and unlike their fairytale counterparts. The news story illustrates a real event, and contrasts it with a well-known fairytale. What is less easy to know, is the implied meaning of “princess maker.” The “princess maker” could be a benevolent mother figure or a child pageant pimp. How the reader perceives the character is dependent on a broad spectrum of personal and cultural beliefs that contribute to the infinite multiplicity and subjectivity of meaning.

Where Bronowski (1978) introduces the idea of an absence of one universal truth in language and understanding, Dor’s (2004) translation of Lacan introduces the idea of floating signifiers, meanings in constant flux. Both discourses confront the idea of a static underlying structural understanding or significance. In post-structuralism, Propp’s stable sequential functions and even Lévi-Strauss’ recurring contrasting patterns are morphed and become elastic in the unstable universe of multiple interpretation. In this post-structural story world, lacking foundational stability, Lacan (2004) suggests that the lack of structure and meaning itself may be a motivation for tale-telling and myth-making. Lack of meaning contributes to the need for meaning, especially consistent meaning, in the form of the universal language of myth.

To the storytellers of journalism, a lack of coverage can be seductive. For Ted

Conover, subject selection has much to do with the overlooked and underrepresented: “those that seem socially significant and underreported, particularly if they allow me to participate in the story in some meaningful way” (Conover, 2005, p.7).

Meaning is unstable and language is a living thing. For Lacan, the static structure of self is an illusion, where meaning is either condensed (in metaphor) or displaced (in metonymy). The unconscious, for Lacan, is like a language, where meaning is constantly constructed and deconstructed:

In fact, the notion of structure is central to Lacan’s work only because of his frequent references to the structure of language: first, insofar as it is this very structure that Lacan posits as related to the unconscious, and second, because it is in the act of language that the unconscious emerges and finds its locus of expression. (Dor, 2004, p. 23)

Lacan’s version of the tale as a psychoanalytic narrative is of a tale whose meaning is constantly reinterpreted and diffused, in much the same way that the meaning of the folktale or news story is diffused through cross-cultural adaptation.

The essential binding mechanism for the post-structural story world of the unconscious is the lack of and desire to find meaning. For Lacan, the experience of the lack of meaning and desire to find meaning is displaced by language. Language puts words in our mouths in an attempt to fulfill the desire for meaning. This idea of psychological lack and desire to find meaning propels language, story, and the folktale function in a post-structuralist universe. The absence of meaning and desire to find meaning is a sequential pattern, and there is syntax to this linguistic rest and measure. It is this desire for resolution that propels the plot (Dor, 2004). It is perhaps the desire to

make meaning that propels the storyteller inside the journalist to use theme to explain variable news events.

Bronowski's interpretation of language introduces the idea of seeing words or text beyond the terms of syntax or thematic function. This approach seeks an understanding of why words have certain meanings, why we understand them in certain ways, and how our very consciousness is part of this symbolic system of language. In discussing consciousness and awareness, Bronowski (1978) alludes to the biblical inscription "In the beginning was the word and the word was made flesh." He elaborates:

Now our consciousness depends wholly on our seeing the outside world in such categories. And the problems of consciousness arise from putting *reconstitution* beside *internalization*, from our also being able to see ourselves as if we were objects in the outside world. That is the very nature of language; it is impossible to have a symbolic system without it. (Bronowski, 1978, p.38)

The metaphor and symbolism that is the self of story, for post-structuralists, is unstable, a thing determined by perception, interpretation, and by recomposing the shattered pieces of the looking glass. Meanings, then, in stories, are shattered, in flux, their meanings diffused. Only the lack of meaning and desire for meaning remain constant, satisfied superficially by tales that temporarily symbolize meaning through the language of their telling. The constant need to put fragments into wholes drives the tale: "Of this ultimate intention the present volume is merely portent and fragment, experiment, dissonant prologue" (Agee, 1939, p. x1).

This recurrent hunger for temporal satisfaction through tale-telling may help explain the psychological need for the daily news. The reader is given plot summary in

the local story headline: “For vet, duty is to stay active” (Davison, May 30, 2005, 1B). Staying active, the lead suggests, is the paralyzed veteran’s duty. It is the given meaning for the veteran’s story, and his present life. The details of his experience fall neatly into place as parts of duty. This story has a ring of traditional folk credence because other tales have been told like it. The brave soldier is a well-worn folk theme, and this brave soldier tale in the local news satisfies a psychological need for reinforcement. At the same time that the repetition of theme contributes to the serial aspect of the periodical, the variation of this particular soldier’s story personalizes the story, and makes it new and unique news. This story deserves a close critical read for both the folktale theme and variation. As Eco explains, “when we fail to find innovation in the serial, it is perhaps a result less of the structures of the text than of our ‘horizon of expectations’ and our cultural habits” (Eco, 1994, p. 93).

In this veteran’s story from the local newspaper, Harold Summers, a veteran of three wars, is described as keeping up “the good fight against total paralysis” (Davison, May 30, 2005, 1B). Summers survived the wars, one day woke up paralyzed, but still, the article reads, “he’s a survivor” (Davison, May 30, 2005, 1B). The cause of the veteran’s current condition is medically described as Guillain-Barre syndrome, a common cause of paralysis, which Summers disputes, believing his paralysis to be uniquely attributed to DDT and Agent Orange. In the article, Summers argues that his situation and his story is unique. Despite Summers’ unique story, the survivor theme remains a central myth. The article concludes with a paralyzed Summers safe in his bed, “under a sheet that reads ‘Department of Veterans Affairs Property --- Not for Sale’” (Davison, May 30, 2005, 1B). The survivor theme colors Summers’ life, and gives a shade of meaning to his

present condition. The need to find traditional myth themes in unique experiences is part of the meaning-making need illustrated by the application of the traditional survivor myth in this news story.

Finding Camelot

John F. Kennedy (1962) said “The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived, and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive, and unrealistic.” Perhaps the key to understanding the psychological function of folktales is embedded in uncovering why they are so enchanting. The folktale functions, according to Zipes, (1979) to fulfill a socio-psychological need for utopian endings and wish fulfillment. Zipes suggests one reason for the charm and persistence of the tales:

The original autonomous power of the folk tales, their aura, which has been carried over into the fairy tales, was a social one, for they sought to celebrate humankind’s capacity to transform the mundane into the utopian as part of a communal project. (Zipes, 1979, Preface xiii)

Cultures have traditionally used folktales to celebrate humankind’s ability to transform the real world into a better, or at the very least more dramatic and significant place, through storytelling. Today’s version of the folktale is a marketable commodity, “ripped untimely from the socio-cultural setting in which it once flourished” (Zipes, 1979, p. 4). The oral form of the folktale has been transformed into mass-mediated and literary forms. Today, the folktale has become industry, fulfilling an economic need to produce product in a culture hungry for stories with utopian endings. The local cultural identity that the folktale once preserved through narrative tradition has been replaced by a mass mediated

cultural identity in the marketplace of the capitalistic tradition (Zipes, 1979).

Originally, the folktale was a narrative form cultivated by and for people to make sense of the physical and social neighborhood in which they lived. Taken out of the local social context in which it was embedded, the original folktale adapted to a new social context (Zipes, 1979). The interpretation of folktale, then, remains variable and malleable. Black folktales, originally recorded commercially in America in the nineteenth century, were tales adapted to illustrate the plantation experience. The slave tales told stories in which the small clever rabbit outsmarted the stronger and larger animals. As Virginia Hamilton (1985) explains, every time the slave teller told of how the small rabbit outsmarted the intimidating bear, fox, wolf or gator in the tales, the slave community celebrated another happy ending. Hamilton asks us to “remember that these folktales were once a creative way for an oppressed people to express their fears and hopes to one another” (Hamilton, 1985, xii).

Perhaps the promise of hope is what makes the folktale form so enchanting, and so persistent, in today’s mass mediated marketplace. Perhaps, the function of the folktale as a link to local cultural identity-making still exists in the form of the features in the neighborhood or local section of the daily newspaper. The fourth chapter of this study will pay close attention to these local tales, then, in the analysis of their content, because they may be telling our human story, the story of our local culture, and as such, they belong to us. Journalists are “handing on” the stories that they collect for the reader and those stories may function as part of the local cultural text.

Hope for Meaning

The lore of the tale can provide meaning by providing explanations or solutions, albeit fantastical, to seemingly unsolvable situations:

stories are about people and their motivations—heroes and villains, good actions and bad actions...these explanations require analyses that transcend story forms, or they require story and narrative forms supplemented by analysis or commentary. (Anderson, Dardenne & Killenberg, 1994, p. 157)

In part, this analysis attempts to provide a solid bridge for approaching the temporal nature of storytelling. The role of folktale as meaning-maker may help explain an aspect of folktale's popularity as a story function in the news. Bruno Bettelheim (1977) views the fairy-tale solutions in terms of psychological functions in children:

Translated in terms of human behavior, the more secure a person feels within the world, the less he will need to hold on to "infantile" projections—mythical explanations or fairy-tale solutions to life's eternal problems—and the more he can afford to seek rational explanations. (Bettelheim, 1977, p.51)

The mythical explanation or fairy tale solution can provide a sense of security that "permits the child to develop that feeling of confidence in life which he needs in order to trust himself—a trust necessary for his learning to solve life's problems through his own growing rational abilities" (Bettelheim, 1977, p.50). Fairytales in a positive capacity can also serve a moralizing role, instructing the child not to judge other people by appearance:

Belief in the "truth" of the fairy tale gives [the child] courage not to withdraw because of the way this stranger appears to him at first. Recalling how the hero of

many a fairy tale succeeded in life because he dared to befriend a seemingly unpleasant figure, the child believes he may work the same magic. (Bettelheim, 1977, p.50)

Fairytales also contain dreamlike features that serve as reflections of the human unconscious, giving shape and story form to abstract needs and desires. These stories are wish fulfillment for the psyche, illuminating the emotional engine that drives the mind:

When realistic stories are combined with ample and psychologically correct exposure to fairy tales, then the child receives information that speaks to both parts of his budding personality—the rational and the emotional. (Bettelheim, 1977, p. 54)

Awareness of this otherworld of emotion can help us understand the basis of what drives us psychologically. Recounting a local legend about a ghost who survived a devastating hurricane to haunt a deserted island can inform us a little about the storytellers in this community. The local folktale, labeled as Folktale A (Appendix A), about a benign ghost who survives a hurricane that levels his home, suggests that the storyteller wants us to believe in immortality and marvels. While this ghost story is unrealistic, it satisfies the emotional and psychological need to survive. The local news story about a woman who survives a hurricane that levels her home satisfies the same survivor myth. While the news story may be set in real time and with real facts and faces, the fact that the woman survived the storm despite the devastation is the heart of the tale, the amazing and almost unbelievable fact that drives the story. Had the woman in the news story been crushed by the storm, we would have a more common story. Many people were devastated by the hurricane that spared this woman. The fact that this particular woman survives becomes

the stuff of legend in the news story. In this respect, the news story satisfies the same emotional and psychological need for hope and survival that the local ghost legend does, perhaps even more effectively, since it is printed in a credible or at least indelible ink.

The news story that retains elements of the fantastic and almost unbelievable while remaining grounded in facts is the gripping story, because it strikes an emotional chord. This emotional chord is grounded in need and desire and is manifested in story form. For a psychoanalyst, looking deeper into the function of the chord, “desire remains forever unsatisfied because it ha[s] to become language” (Dor, 2004, p. 118). The desire for meaning amidst the experience of the devastating hurricane is supplanted by the story on the front page of the local newspaper that tells of the woman who survived against the odds. Reading this news story as a fantastical survivor myth, the reader finds hope and security, and perhaps suspends his or her disbelief of immortality for a split second, until finishing the story. Asking for some reason as to “why” the devastation occurred, the reader’s mouth is filled with words that make a nice story. The neighborhood news story, functioning as a true fairy tale with a happy ending, satisfies the emotional need to believe in the possibility of survival despite the worst odds. Like the local legend about the ghost who haunts a desolate cove after a devastating storm, the folk heroine motif in the survivor tale in the news inspires a strong sense of hope in a devastated community:

We know that the more deeply unhappy and despairing we are, the more we need to be able to engage in optimistic fantasies. While the fantasy is *unreal*, the good feelings it gives us about ourselves and our future are *real*, and these real good feelings are what we need to sustain us. (Bettelheim, 1977, p.126)

Optimistic outcomes and happy endings, although especially rare in the news, do happen.

Real life can be just as good as the fantasy or fairy tale occasionally, and when that happens to find its way into the local news, a counter to neighborhood devastation is the result. In fact, amidst widespread devastation and destruction, a singular survival may be the news.

The folktale may also function as instruction. The local Florida folk story, *Peazy and Beanzy* (Appendix B), provides a moral lesson. Beanzy, the heroine, is rewarded for her kindness while her unkind sister Peazy is punished. The folktale of *Peazy and Beanzy* (Reaver, 1988) illustrates what it is to be rewarded for kindness through a series of tests. Both sisters in the tale encounter the same tests, but only Beanzy acts selflessly to tend to a stopped brook, a crooked tree, and an ailing aunt. For her kindness, she is rewarded with riches. This kind of “child as helper” tale provides a step by step instruction of how a girl is to act when tested in life, and reinforces the traditional nurturing role of the female. An article in the local newspaper about the plight of Clara, a child of migrant workers in Plant City, illustrates what it is like to be a young girl who is tested by life in hopeless circumstances and wants another life. Clara, struggling over the FCAT and long hours in the fields, is contrasted with her classmates, vacationing and working summer jobs in air-conditioning. Clara, the story says, “dreams of a mall job” (Amrhein, June 20, 2005, p. 1B). In this “child as helper” tale, Clara, whose sister died at the age of six, acts as translator for Spanish-speaking co-workers, volunteers as a nurse’s aide in a local hospital, and helps her family by working in the fields. For her labor, however, Clara is not rewarded with riches as her counterpart Beanzy is in the folktale. Clara’s story ends on a desperate note, its heroine unsure of how she will go to college or get a better job without the help of reformed immigration legislation. The dismal ending of the news

story provides a sharp contrast with the happy ending of the folktale. The news story finishes with what should be a better ending for Clara, a happy ending just like the ones we find in fairytales. This would give meaning to Clara's struggle in "Summer reaping." The news story, in this respect, provides a moral instruction of how life should be for Clara by providing a contrast to the fairytale theme that hard work pays off. Viewing the news story in terms of its folktale themes provides a foundation for a detailed conceptual analysis of the way the folktale functions act in the news story text.

In analyzing the way content functions, this study seeks to bridge the gap between form and function by combining both in an illustration of the applications of folktale functions to the news story. News writing, after all, is as complex as any other medium:

News is more than its practice, its form or content; it is more than information, fact or entertainment. Media abhor a vacuum, and as they spread to fill every empty space, they make it impossible to live in the world and escape their content and influence. (Anderson, Dardenne & Killenberg, 1994, p. 67)

In their desire to make meaning, storytellers fill the readers' lives with words. A close evaluation of the function of those words is at least worthy of a critical reading.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This critical reading focuses on first defining the folktale function as a theme in the local news story, a definition based in part on the psychological and sociological functions of folktale and folklore discussed in the literature review. This chapter outlines a framework for the methodology used in the content analysis of the selected regional stories in the fourth chapter of the study. The analysis then examines, through a critical reading of regional folktales and news stories, whether the folktale functions defined in this methodology might exhibit in the story selections. These folktales and news stories have been selected because their subject matter focused on local people, animals, or aspects of the environment that created a cultural link to the stories. As part of the “lore” of the local “folk,” these stories have been chosen because they seemed likely to show folklore characteristics. The analysis examines a month-long serial of stories in the local section of the newspaper for the likeliness of a range of folktale functions, exploring whether these functions strongly or weakly exhibit. From this data, the research determines which folktale functions are most and least persistent in the news stories, and how these functions exhibit in the news stories.

The analysis is conducted in 2 parts. The initial qualitative inquiry conducts a conceptual analysis of the folktale function found in 2 regional folktales and 2 regional news stories. The first four stories were chosen to evaluate whether folktale functions are present in stories that differ in style and length. Research first analyzes a regional news story and a regional folktale, labeled as News Story A and Folktale A (Appendixes C and

A), critically reading each for evidence of one or more of 3 folktale types, folktale functions as defined by Propp's materials for tabulating tales according to their 31 functions, 8 dramatis personae, Thompson's index of 22 folktale motifs, and Lule's case studies of news as 7 Master Myths. Folktale A is chosen as an example of an atypical folktale with a first-person narrator. News story A is chosen as an example of an atypical news story written in an extended narrative.

A total of 71 folktale points are possible in each story evaluation.

To quantify the exhibiting functions, each folktale function found in the text is assigned a positive value of +1. The sum of these values is the total folktale functions possible in each story. Analysis of the text in each story is restricted to finding the concepts of implicit folktale functions, as outlined by the Propp, Thompson, and Lule definitions, in an attempt to maintain reliability throughout the study. In the criteria of this analysis, the "Folktale Functions" consist of a combined total of "Folktale Types," "Master Myths," "Folktale Motifs," "Dramatis Personae," and "Propp's Functions." This initial analysis seeks whether there is a strong positive presence of the folktale functions in the story selections (Table 1, Table 1-A, Table 1-C, Table 1-D, Table 1-E and Figure 2).

In the second part of the inquiry, research examines another set of stories, labeled News Story B and Folktale B (Appendixes D and B), for evidence of folktale functions as defined again by Propp, Thompson, and Lule, assigning each folktale function found in the text a value of +1. News Story B, a traditional inverted pyramid story, and Folktale B, a traditional folktale, are selected to illustrate a contrast to the a-typical story samples in the first evaluation. Total folktale points are tabulated from the text of each story to provide a framework for comparison of folktale points in each story. This analysis seeks

whether there is a strong positive presence of the folktale functions in the second set of story selections (Table 1-B and Figure 3). The analysis then compares the number of folktale points in the regional folktale, labeled as Folktale B with that of the local news story, labeled as News Story B.

A total of 284 points are possible for all 4 of the stories investigated in the initial portion of the analysis. The +1 point comparisons compare content between each pair of news story and folktale. The first (News Story A and Folktale A) and second pair (News Story B and Folktale B) of stories are then compared to illustrate shared characteristic folktale functions. The stories are further analyzed to find a percentage of folktale functions present in each, evaluating percentage on a 0-100 percent scale (Figure1). These percentages are used in further comparisons between the stories as the basis of graphed comparisons and illustrations to evaluate the strength of evidence that the folktale function exists in the analyzed stories, and to what extent it exists in each story. This first part of the analysis provides the method of analysis, +1 coding, calculations and chart illustrations that will be used consistently throughout the evaluation of story content. The comparisons in this initial study should show how the a-typical news story and folktale and typical news story and folktale vary in their display of the folktale functions.

The second part of the conceptual analysis applies the established methods of reading a month serial of news stories to evaluate a persistent presence of a folktale function in the sampled local newspaper. This month selection of stories are selected because they are a mixture of both inverted pyramid and narrative news stories that illustrate some aspect of the local culture, through the local environment, person, or

animal that may inform the local culture through the application of folklore functions. Stories sampled July 1, 2005 through July 31, 2005 from the neighborhood and local sections of *The St. Petersburg Times* are critically read for evidence of Propp's 31 functions and 8 dramatis personae, Thompson's index of 22 folktale motifs and 3 folktale types, and Lule's case studies of news as 7 master myths. For consistency, each function in the 31 evaluated stories is assigned a value of +1. Further, the sum of values in each story is plotted in a chart comparing the 31 Propp folktale functions and all 71 folktale functions combined (Figure 4). A total of 2,201 possible points are evaluated in the 31 stories investigated in the second portion of the analysis. Frequency of appearance of each folktale function within the 31 day serial of stories is also tabulated using the point system and charted to illustrate strong or weak persistence of the folktale functions in each story (Figure 5, Figure 6). Myths, folktale types, and dramatis personae are further tabulated according to the +1 point system to find percentages of functions in each of the 31 stories selected (Table 2, Table 2-A, Table 2-B).

A total of 2,485 possible folktale function positive points are assigned to the 35 total stories examined in both portions of the analysis combined. Each story carries a total of 71 total possible folktale function points of +1. These point values for the stories are used to provide consistency when evaluating data for charted comparisons and percentages.

In studying the regional news story for evidence of the folktale function, this analysis of content attempts to form a bridge to further investigation, in the form of a relational analysis, of the way folktale functions or themes in the neighborhood news might affect local culture by functioning as part of a cultural psychodynamic. How

folktale themes in the local newspaper help define local culture, and how local culture might use the folktale functions in the news to reinforce traditional cultural definitions and traditional identities, is the springboard subject for further study.

Subject Selection and Description

A total of 35 stories are analyzed for evidence of folktale functions. All stories chosen for the analysis of the folktale function in the text are regional local stories about local people, animals, or their environment from the regional newspaper, *The St. Petersburg Times*. These local stories reflect an identity and a sense of place that communicate the local culture. A study of stories within the regional focus group provides the basis for further investigation of the way the folktale function in the newspaper might have a socio-psychological effect on the local culture.

Of the 4 stories sampled for the initial analysis, 2 news stories are selected from the local newspaper. News Story A (Appendix C) is considerably longer, more well-researched, and exhibits a lengthy narrative style uncharacteristic of most news stories. News Story B (Appendix D) is short, difficult to follow, with no definitive theme, and told in the traditional inverted pyramid news writing style. Both stories are based on facts about local people and their struggles with some system of authority, yet stylistically they provide contrasting samples. News Story A tells the tale of a local man battling the justice system for the right to acquire and introduce evidence that could free his imprisoned son. News Story B is about a pet owner facing new county restrictions that could threaten the safety and freedom of her exotic pets. Thematically, the stories are similar, sharing the “Society” folktale motif. Stylistically, the lengthy narrative

unraveling of News Story A contrasts sharply with the short, inverted pyramid style fact-stacking of News Story B. News Story A exhibits many of the classic characteristic folktale functions, including folktale type, myth, motif, Proppian functions and dramatis personae. News Story B exhibits fewer of the folktale functions, providing a contrasting textual analysis. These stylistically contrasting stories have been selected to evaluate how the persistence of folktale functions in the news story might be affected by contrasting story length and style.

The stories labeled Folktale A (Appendix A) and Folktale B (Appendix B) are both regional folktales, chosen to provide a basis for the regional study. Folktale A is a story based on a local ghost story legend, told by an apparent narrator in a narrative style. Folktale B is a classic regional moral fable, told by a first-person narrator in a narrative style. Folktale A tells the story of the narrator encountering a ghost in a local waterway and struggling to accept his existence. Folktale B concerns the story of two sisters, one good, the other bad, who are punished and rewarded for their respective kindness and abusiveness when sent on identical quests. Neither story is based on fact. Stylistically, Folktale B is written in a classic folktale form, with an omniscient narrator and an instructive, moralizing conclusion. Folktale A is written as a first-person narrative, with an uncertain ending. These stories are selected to evaluate how the persistence of folktale functions in the news story might be affected by folktale type and style.

In the second portion of the analysis, the 31 day month sample of local news stories is selected from the same regional newspaper to provide a sample from the same reader community. One story is selected from each day of the month of July to provide a serial of local news stories. Each story chosen fulfills basic subject matter criteria. Stories

must be about a local person or animal or environment and must describe a local event or story of interest that informs about the local culture. The stories may vary in length, author, and style. They are stories about local crimes, local environmental concerns, local weather-related events, local cultures, and local personal interest, pulled from the “City & State” and “Neighborhood Times” sections of *The St. Petersburg Times*. The 31 stories share consistent general subject matter and lengths and are evaluated to show contrast between similar stories of the frequency and weak or strong presence of the folktale function concept.

Data Collection Procedures

One story is collected from the local section of *The St. Petersburg Times* for each day July 1-July 31. The text in each story is critically read for evidence of myth, motif, and dramatis personae and folktale type and function as defined by folktale types, Propp’s functions, dramatis personae, motif, and myth. Each function discovered in each story is coded with a value of +1. Each story can sum to a total of 71 coded points. Care is taken to perform the same analyses in each sampled story selected, and to maintain regional and general thematic uniformity in story selections from the same local newspaper.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

In examining the text of the selection of regional news stories for characteristics of the folktale, this chapter attempts to prove the existence of the folktale function in the news story text. It then asks what folktale themes present in the sampled news stories, with what frequency, and how these folktale themes help to provide meaning in the story text. This content analysis illustrates application of the methodologies and the folktale functions defined in Chapter Three of the study. These definitions and applications of the folktale functions in the news story selections lay the groundwork for a relational analysis that might explore the relationships between the news story-consumer and the news story and the news story-producer and the news story.

In this critical reading, qualitative analysis focuses on determining the existence and frequency of the folktale functions in the selection of local folktales and news stories. The first part of the analysis involves a critical reading of 2 pairs of stories for folktale functions. The first pair of stories, Folktale A and News Story A, (Appendixes A and C) is a non-traditional regional folktale and a non-traditional regional news story that greatly satisfies the folktale functions and the second pair of stories, Folktale B and News Story B, (Appendixes B and D) is a traditional regional folktale and a traditional regional news story that do not greatly satisfy the outlined folktale functions. All stories employ the use of local character, occurrence or environment. These stories are observed for evidence of the folktale functions outlined in the methodology.

The second part of the analysis is a critical reading of 31 local news stories for

folktale functions. One story was chosen for every day July 1 through July 31 from the local, neighborhood section of the regional newspaper. These stories exhibit a variety of motifs in both non-traditional and traditional news writing styles. Present in each of the news stories selected in the month of July is the use of local character, local occurrence, and local environment.

Findings

News Story A and News Story B/Folktale A and Folktale B.

Non-traditional and traditional story types appear to have a correlation to the folktale function in the initial news story analysis (Figure 1). The longer, non-traditional narrative news story exhibits nearly twice as many folktale functions as the shorter, more traditional inverted-pyramid news story.

Data shows: In Figure 1, 68 possible folktale functions are observed from the set of 71 available. Folktale type is not evaluated in this figure. From the data, News Story A, a long narrative, exhibits 81% of the folktale functions compared to News Story B, a short inverted pyramid style story, exhibiting 44% percent of the folktale functions. This initial data suggests that there may be a relationship between the longer narrative style and the strong presence of folktale functions in the story. The longer narrative style in the news story might be better suited to developing myths, dramatis personae, folktale motifs and folktale functions common to folklore.

In the pairs of compared stories, the non-traditional, narrative-style news story exhibits nearly double the total folktale functions as the traditional, inverted pyramid-style news story. There is only a slight contrast between the total number of folktale

functions in the 2 folktales evaluated. The traditional folktale and non-traditional, narrative style news story exhibit the highest percentage of Master Myths. The non-traditional folktale and news story exhibit the highest percentage of Motifs. The non-traditional news story exhibits all 8 available Dramatis Personae. The non-traditional folktale and news story exhibit the greatest number of Propp's Functions.

Data shows: From the 7 Master Myths available, Folktale B (71%) and News Story A (71%) exhibited the highest percentage of Master Myths. The Folktale A (50%) and News Story A (50%) evenly exhibited the highest percentage of the 22 available Folktale Motifs. News Story A (100%) exhibited the highest percentage of 8 available Dramatis Personae. Folktale A (100%) and News Story A (100%) exhibited the highest percentage of the 31 available Propp's Functions. News Story B (44%) exhibited the lowest percentage of the 68 available folktale functions across all categories. News Story A and News Story B looked dramatically different in the charted samples. News Story A (81%) exhibited a far greater percentage of folktale functions than News Story B (44%). Folktale A (68%) and Folktale B (62%) were less contrasting samples, with both stories exhibiting a similar percentage of total folktale functions.

News Story A and News Story B look dramatically different charted in the illustration. The lengthier, non-traditional narrative-style News Story A exhibits 55 out of 68 possible folktale functions. The shorter, traditional, inverted pyramid-style News Story B exhibits 30 out of 68 possible functions, suggesting that there may be a correlation between traditional story style and folktale function.

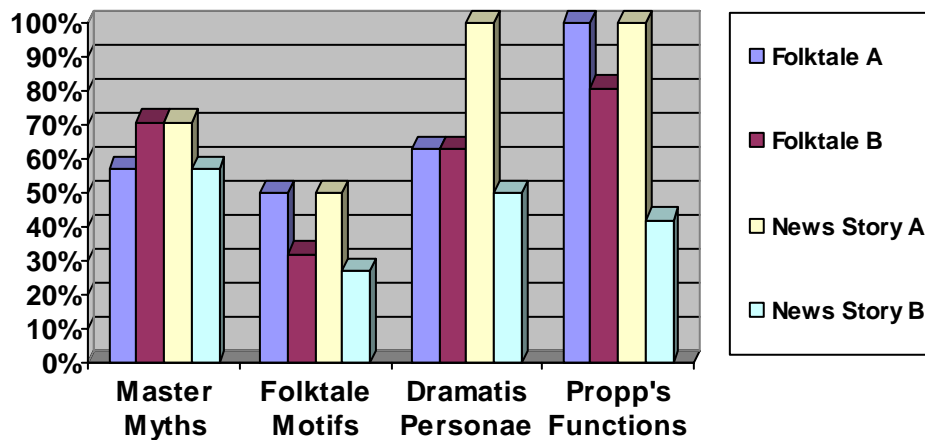


Figure 1. Chart of Total Folktale Functions in Folktale A and Folktale B and News Story A and News Story B. In the item depicted, News Story A and News Story B and Folktale A and Folktale B are evaluated for evidence of the 7 Master Myths, 22 Folktale Motifs, 8 Dramatis Personae and 31 Propp's Functions. The stories are assigned 1 point for each function found in a reading of the text. 68 points are available in each story. Percentages are based on the total number of folktale functions found divided by the total number of folktale functions available in each story. The bar graph illustrates a comparison of percentages of folktale functions present in each story.

Further analysis of the individual folktale functions in the compared stories is less conclusive. Folktale B (71%) and News Story A (71%) exhibit the highest percentage of Master Myths. Folktale A (50%) and News Story A (50%) exhibit the highest percentage of Folktale Motifs. News Story A (100%) exhibits the highest percentage of Dramatis Personae. News Story A (100%) also exhibits the highest percentage of Propp's Functions. Folktale A (100%) exhibits the highest percentage of Propp's Functions. From this analysis, it can be determined that the 2 folktales, while exhibiting a similar

percentage of folktale functions, are intrinsically different. This initial comparison finds that the strong presence of Master Myths in Folktale B (71%) does not necessarily indicate a stronger presence of the folktale functions overall. Folktale B satisfies only 62% of the 68 total folktale functions. News Story A satisfies 81% of the 68 total folktale functions, the highest percentage in all stories compared. News Story A also shows high numbers of Master Myths (71%), Folktale Motifs (50%), Dramatis Personae (100%), and Propp's Functions (100%). From the initial comparisons, a higher percentage of Master Myths, or any other folktale function alone, does not appear to be the indicator of a story showing the highest percentage of folktale functions.

Without Myth and Personae, a story appears to have less key folklore qualities.

Data Shows: In a comparison of folktale functions in News Story A and Folktale A (Table 1): Both News Story A and Folktale A satisfy 100% of Propp's 31 folktale functions. Both News Story A and Folktale A exhibit 50% of the 22 Folktale Motifs. However, when the functions of Master Myths and Dramatis Personae are included in the evaluation, News Story A satisfies 81% of the total folktale functions while Folktale A satisfies 68%. This finding suggests that Master Myths and Dramatis Personae may be imperative folktale functions.

Story	Master Myths	Folktale Motifs	Dramatis Personae	Propp's Functions
News Story A	71%	50%	100%	100%
Folktale A	57%	50%	63%	100%

Table 1. Comparison of Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A.

The table shows a percent comparison of folktale functions in News Story A and Folktale A. News Story A satisfies 81% and Folktale A satisfies 68% of all folktale functions combined.

Figure 2 illustrates the tabulated data from Table 1, showing that News Story A exhibits a greater number of folktale functions than Folktale A. This data suggests that Master Myth and Dramatis Personae are determining factors in the comparison of News Story A to Folktale A. News Story A exhibited 71% of the 7 Master Myths, while Folktale A exhibited 57% of the 7 Master Myths. News Story A exhibited 50% of the 22 Folklore Motifs, while Folktale A exhibited 50% of the 22 Folklore Motifs. News Story A exhibited 100% of the 8 Dramatis Personae, while Folktale A exhibited 62.5% of the 8 Dramatis Personae. News Story A exhibited 100% of the 31 Propp's Functions, while Folktale A exhibited 100% of the 31 Propp's Functions.

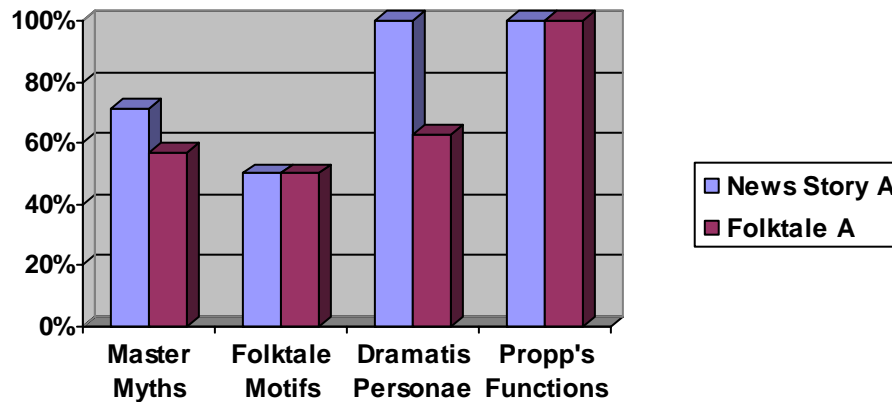


Figure 2. Chart of Total Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A. In the item depicted, News Story A and Folktale A are evaluated for evidence of the 7 Master Myths, 22 Folklore Motifs, 8 Dramatis Personae and 31 Propp's Functions. The stories are assigned 1 point for each function found in a reading of the text. Percentages are based on the total number of folktale functions found divided by the total number of folktale functions (68) available in each story.

News Story A and Folktale A.

News Story A exhibits the Master Myths of Victim, Scapegoat, Hero, Trickster, and Other World while Folktale A exhibits evidence of Hero, Trickster, Other World and

Flood. This data suggests a similar amount of Master Myths in each story, though their identity differs.

Data shows: In *Table 1-A*, Master Myths are closely evaluated as folktale functions in News Story A and Folktale A. News Story A exhibits 71% of the Master Myths, while Folktale A exhibits 57% of the Master Myths. In addition to exhibiting the greater amount of Master Myths, News Story A also exhibits the greatest amount of folktale functions (81%), as evidenced in the preceding data (Figure 2).

Master Myths	Victim	Scape-Goat	Hero	Trickster	Other World	Good Mother	Flood
News Story A	Daniel	Daniel	Father	Drug Dealer	Drug Underworld		
Folktale A			Narrator	Walter	Walter's Cove		Hurricane Donna

Table 1-A. Master Myths as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A.

The table shows the different Master Myths found in News Story A and Folktale A.

In News Story A, the character of Daniel is both Victim of and Scapegoat for a crime, the character of Father is the Hero who rescues his son from prison, the Drug Dealer is a Trickster figure who offers the key to Daniel's freedom and then takes it away, and the Drug Underworld is the Other World that consumes Daniel's Father on his quest to free his son from prison. In Folktale A, the character of Narrator is the Hero who navigates the reader through Walter's Cove, the ghostly Other World, where Walter the ghost is encountered in the form of the Trickster, partly in the real world of the Narrator and partly in the ghostly Other World. Hurricane Donna is the original Flood that took Walter's life.

Comparison of Folktale Functions in News Story B and Folktale B.

Story set A, composed of the narrative news story and non-traditional folktale, exhibits more of the folktale functions overall than story set B, composed of the traditional inverted-pyramid news story and traditional folktale. These initial findings suggest that there may be a correlation between story style and the presence of the folktale functions.

Data shows: In *Table 1-B* and corresponding *Figure 3*, Folktale B exhibits 81% of Propp's 22 Functions and News Story B exhibits only 42% of Propp's 22 Functions. Folktale B exhibits 71% of the 7 Master Myths and 63% of the 22 Dramatis Personae while News Story B exhibits 57% of the 7 Master Myths and 50% of the 22 Dramatis Personae. Compared to story set A (75%), story set B (53%) exhibits less of the overall folktale functions.

Story	Master Myths	Folktale Motifs	Dramatis Personae	Propp's Functions
News Story B	57%	27%	50%	42%
Folktale B	71%	32%	63%	81%

Table 1-B. Comparison of Folktale Functions in News Story B and Folktale B. The table shows the percentage of folktale functions in story set B, comparing News Story B to Folktale B. News Story B satisfies 44% of the 68 folktale functions combined, while Folktale B satisfies 62% of the 68 folktale functions combined.

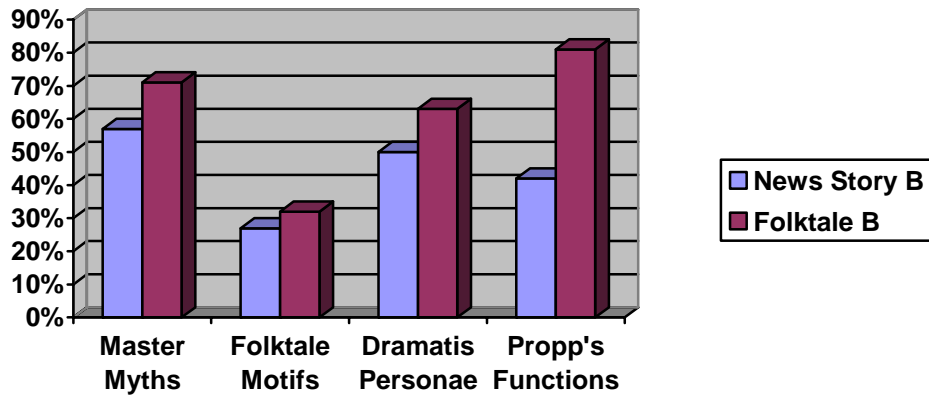


Figure 3. Chart of Total Folktale Functions in News Story B and Folktale B. In the item depicted, News Story B and Folktale B are evaluated for evidence of the 7 Master Myths, 22 Folktale Motifs, 8 Dramatis Personae and 31 Propp’s Functions. The stories are assigned 1 point for each function found in a reading of the text. Percentages are based on the total number of folktale functions found divided by the total number of folktale functions available in each story.

Folktale Motifs as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A.

In *Table 1-C*, both News Story A and Folktale A exhibit 50% of the available 22 folktale motifs. This data suggests that the folktale function does not exhibit more frequently in the folktale than in the news story. Story type, in this comparison, does not appear to determine whether the folktale motif exhibits frequently.

Data shows: News Story A exhibits 100% of the 8 Dramatis Personae while Folktale A exhibits only 63% of the 8 Dramatis Personae. In Folktale A, the character of Walter played multiple personae in the roles of “Villain,” “Helper,” and “False Hero,” yet

fewer of the Dramatis Personae were present. The personae of Walter changed with the Narrator's perception of him as the plot of Folktale A evolved. This multiplicity of Dramatis Personae does not exist in News Story A and further suggests strong evidence of the Trickster myth in Folktale A. In both News Story A and Folktale A, 50% of the 22 Folktale Motifs presented, despite the prevalence of Dramatis Personae in News Story A.

In the sample of News Story A, each character represents 1 Dramatis Persona throughout the story. In Folktale A, the character of Walter plays multiple personae in the roles of "Villain," "Helper," and "False Hero," yet less of the Dramatis Personae overall are present. The personae of Walter changed with the Narrator's perception of him as the plot of Folktale A evolved. This multivalence of Dramatis Personae does not exist in News Story A and further strengthens evidence of the Trickster myth in Folktale A.

Data shows: In *Table 1-D*, News Story A exhibits 100% of the 8 Dramatis Personae while Folktale A comparatively exhibits 63% of the 8 Dramatis Personae. In both News Story A and Folktale A, 50% of the 22 Folktale Motifs presented.

Propp's Functions as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A.

Finding Propp's folktale functions in the news stories sampled could suggest that these functions are clearly not unique to the folktale story type.

Data shows: In *Table 1-E*, both News Story A and Folktale A exhibit 100% of 31 Propp's Functions, suggesting that a news story and a folktale can exhibit the same amount of Propp's folktale functions.

<i>Folktale Motifs</i>	<i>News Story A</i>	<i>Folktale A</i>
Mythological	Victim, Hero, Scapegoat, Trickster, Other World	The Other World
Animals		
Tabu	Descent into drug world	Narrator enters Other World
Magic		Walter is immortal
The Dead		Walter is a ghost
Marvels	Father's descent into drug underworld and to recover gun	Walter survives the flood and hurricane
Ogres	Drug dealer and acquaintances	
Tests	Quest to save Daniel	Braving the Other World
The Wise and the Foolish	Harsh judge/Lenient judge	Walter teaches Narrator about the existence of the Other World
Deceptions	Drug dealer deceives Father	Walter's ghost convinces Narrator he is real
Reversal of Fortune	Daniel is freed by Father	
Ordaining the Future		
Chance and Fate		Narrator's childhood friend Walter reappears later in Narrator's life by chance encounter
Society	Gravity of crime lessened, Daniel freed	Modern Life on shore contrasts with traditional life in Other World
Rewards and Punishments	Daniel is imprisoned and Father wins his freedom	
Captives and Fugitives		
Unnatural Cruelty		
Sex		
Religion		
Traits and Character	Daniel is easily influenced and Father is heroic	Narrator's skepticism contrasts with Walter's other worldliness
Humor		
Misc. Groups and Motifs		
	11 (50%)	11 (50%)

Table 1-C. Folktale Motifs as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A.

The table shows the 22 key folktale motifs as they appear in News Story A and Folktale A.

As illustrated by Table 1-C: Victim, Hero, Scapegoat, Trickster, and Other World all appear as *Mythological* motifs in News Story A, a story that follows the heroic efforts of a father to save his son from prison by entering the drug underworld and encountering deceptive criminals. The Other World mythological motif is prevalent in the ghost story and the local folktale, Folktale A.

The descent into the drug underworld in News Story A and passage into the ghostly otherworld in Folktale A illustrate the motif of the *Tabu* in the stories.

The motifs of *Magic* and *The Dead* are both presented in the ghostly character of Walter, the ghost in Folktale A, who is both magically immortal in his Other World and deceased in the Narrator's real world.

Both News Story A and Folktale A satisfy elements of the *Marvels* motif. The Father character in News Story A accomplishes seemingly impossible tasks, retrieving a stolen gun that lessens his son's prison sentence. Walter's character in Folktale A amazes the Narrator by "surviving" the hurricane that took his life, according to legend.

The drug dealers, as pratfalls to the hero in News Story A, act as *Ogres*.

Test motifs appear in both stories. In News Story A, the Father must encounter a number of obstacles thrown at him by drug dealers and the justice system. In Folktale A, the Narrator must suspend his disbelief to enter Walter's Other World.

The motif of the *Wise and the Foolish* also appears in both stories. In News Story A, the harsh judge who passes the sentence on Daniel is contrasted with the lenient judge who allows Daniel to go free after recognizing his Father's trials to free his son. In

Folktale A, the ghost character of Walter teaches the Narrator how he has survived outside society on an isolated island.

Deceptions are a motif in both stories. The Father character is repeatedly deceived by drug dealers throughout the story. The character of Walter deceives the Narrator by convincing him that his ghost world is real.

The *Reversal of Fortune* motif is strongly apparent at the end of News Story A, when the Father character frees his son Daniel from prison.

The *Chance and Fate* motif brings the Narrator together with his childhood friend Walter in the story by chance encounter.

Society plays a role in both stories. In News Story A, a harsh judge, representing conservative society, must be convinced that Daniel has done his time and that the Father's good deeds for his son and recovery of a stolen gun satisfies the court's need for law, order, and punishment. In Folktale A, the Narrator has a difficult time believing that Walter the ghost can exist on his own on an uninhabited island without the trappings of society.

Rewards and Punishments are apparent in News Story A when Daniel is finally freed from his prison punishment by his father's deeds and the father and son are united.

The *Traits and Character* motif plays largely in both stories. The heroic character of Father contrasts sharply with his easily passive and easily influenced son in News Story A. The skeptical Narrator contrasts with Walter's ghostly and otherworldly trickster character in Folktale A.

Folktale Dramatis Personae as Folktale Functions in News Story A and

Folktale A.

<i>Dramatis Personae</i>	<i>News Story A</i>	<i>Folktale A</i>
Villain	Drug Dealer	Walter
Donor	Grandfather	Salty the Dog
Helper	Judge and Attorney	Walter
Princess	Daniel's Sister	
Her Father	Daniel's Father	
Dispatcher	Acquaintance of Drug Dealer	
Hero	Father	Narrator
False Hero	Daniel's Friend	Walter
8 total	8 (100%)	5 (63%)

Table 1-D. Folktale Dramatis Personae as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A.

Table 1-E: Propp's Functions as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A.

This data could suggest that the “Good Mother” (a positive, nurturing or supportive element) and the “Other World” (a foreign, mystic or religious element) are mythic themes less relevant to the local news stories sampled. The “Hero” and “Victim” myths, common themes in tragedy, might simply appear most frequently in the local news stories sampled because the news stories in the sample predominantly focus on tragedy. The common appearance of these myths in the news stories suggests that news stories that exhibit the “Hero” or “Victim” myth are not unique. The “Other World” myth may be exhibiting less frequently in the local news stories sampled because it is a theme more common to international news, reported elsewhere in the newspaper. The “Good Mother” myth may be appearing less frequently in the local news because being a “Good

Mother” may be a more unique, and less prevalent, mythic theme in the local news, which focuses more on the bad or tragic element.

<i>(Initial Situation)</i> Abstentation	News Story A: Daniel is sent away to prison for trading a stolen gun to a dealer for drugs
Interdiction	Daniel can't be freed unless stolen gun recovered
Violation	Father is determined to recover stolen gun
Reconnaissance	Drug dealer learns that Father is looking for him
Delivery	Drug dealer learns that stolen gun is key to Daniel's freedom
Trickery	Drug dealer offers Father stolen gun for \$1000
Complicity	Father pays \$1000 for the recovery of the wrong gun
Villainy <i>(Lack)</i>	Drug dealer makes Father wait one month for delivery of the right gun
Mediation	Drug dealer's acquaintance finds out Father is desperate for gun and will pay more
Counteraction	Daniel's sister agrees to make drop of more money in exchange for the gun
Departure	Father drives to Grandfather's home for extra cash
1st Function of Donor	Father, desperate, asks for cash
Hero's Reaction	Cash is collected from family funds Father is relieved and excited
Receipt of Magic Agent	Father receives extra cash
Spatial Transference	Father drives to Crystal River to the drop site
Struggle	Father meets to men in darkness who lead him to the end of a strange street
Branding	Father confronts obstacles and the underworld, recovers stolen gun, and is branded a hero
Victory	Father has stolen gun
Liquidation	Obstacle to Daniel's freedom has been recovered
Return	Father returns home to show gun to Mother

Table 1-E: Propp's Functions as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A (Continued)

Pursuit	Police question Father as to recovery of the stolen gun
Rescue	Father's story, though sketchy, is accepted
Unrecognized Arrival	Court will not allow stolen gun to be recognized as evidence that could lessen Daniel's prison sentence
Unfounded Claims	Owner of stolen gun claims Daniel's actions destroyed her ability to trust
Difficult Task	Judge will not mention recovery of the gun in a plea to reduce sentence
Solution	Case appealed and new judge finds Daniel's sentence was overly harsh
Recognition	Father's testimony about his quest to recover the stolen gun is heard in court
Exposure	Drug dealer's deceptions and extortions are revealed in court
Transfiguration	Father dresses up for his son Daniel's release from prison
Punishment	Drug dealer has lost his power to extort money from the family
Wedding	Daniel's Father is reunited with his son and they return home together

Table 1-E (Continued): Propp's Functions as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A

<i>(Initial Situation)</i> Abstention	Folktale A: Walter's Son remembers Walter, his absent Father
Interdiction	Walter's son won't talk much about Walter to Narrator
Violation	Narrator talks about his memories of Walter
Reconnaissance	Walter's memory enfolds Narrator's reality
Delivery	Walter happens on Narrator on the shore
Trickery	Walter invites Narrator aboard his ghost boat
Complicity	Narrator agrees to leave shore and go with Walter in his boat
Villainy <i>(Lack)</i>	Walter tells Narrator the tale of how he survived a hurricane away from civilization

Table 1-E: Propp's Functions as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A (Continued)

Mediation	Narrator wonders how Walter can still be alive and questions his existence in a deserted cove
Counteraction	Narrator and Walter leave for Walter's Other World home in a
Departure	Narrator begins to doubt his skepticism when he sees and experiences Walter's hideaway
1st Function of Donor	Narrator reunited with Walter's old dog Salty
Hero's Reaction	Narrator starts to believe Walter is still alive
Receipt of Magic Agent	Walter gives Narrator a smoked mullet
Spatial Transference	Narrator starts to relax and feel at home in Walter's mysterious Other World
Struggle	Narrator wants to return home and feels trapped in Walter's strange world
Branding	Narrator finds himself a believer in strange mysteries
Victory	Narrator believes he is talking to the real Walter
Liquidation	Narrator no longer wonders about the fate of Walter
Return	Walter rows Narrator back to shore
Pursuit	Walter enters Narrator's world when he leaves him on shore
Rescue	Walter disappears
Unrecognized Arrival	Narrator returns alone to his truck
Unfounded Claims	The experience with Walter seems like a dream or illusion
Difficult Task	Narrator must come to terms with meeting long missing Walter in a strange Other World
Solution	Narrator concludes experience was a mystery
Recognition	Narrator accepts there are things he can't explain
Exposure	Proof of Walter has disappeared and he seems less real
Transfiguration	Narrator has ability to suspend disbelief to experience unknowns
Punishment	Walter does not appear again and the Narrator is no longer troubled by him
Wedding	Narrator returns home with knowledge of an Other World

Table 1-E (Continued): Propp's Functions as Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A

Each Proppian Function indicates a point in the story that propels the plot to the next function in the sequence. Both the news story and folktale exhibit equal amounts of functions.

Data shows: Table 1-E illustrates the application of Propp’s 31 Folktale Functions in News Story A and Folktale A. Propp’s Functions were found in sequence.

News Stories - Master Myths	Victim	Scapegoat	Hero	Trickster	Other World	Good Mother	Flood
1-Jul	Yes		Yes				
2-Jul	Yes		Yes				
3-Jul			Yes	Yes			
4-Jul	Yes	Yes	Yes				
5-Jul	Yes		Yes				
6-Jul	Yes		Yes				Yes
7-Jul	Yes						
8-Jul	Yes	Yes	Yes				
9-Jul	Yes						
10-Jul			Yes				
11-Jul	Yes		Yes				Yes
12-Jul	Yes		Yes				
13-Jul	Yes		Yes				Yes
14-Jul	Yes						Yes
15-Jul	Yes					Yes	
16-Jul	Yes		Yes			Yes	
17-Jul		Yes		Yes			
18-Jul	Yes		Yes				Yes
19-Jul	Yes						

Table 2: Master Myths as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005. (Continued)

20-Jul	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	
21-Jul	Yes						Yes
22-Jul				Yes			
23-Jul							
24-Jul			Yes			Yes	
25-Jul			Yes				
26-Jul	Yes		Yes				Yes
27-Jul			Yes				Yes
28-Jul	Yes		Yes				
29-Jul	Yes		Yes				
30-Jul	Yes					Yes	
31-Jul	Yes		Yes				
News Stories with Master Myth Function	23 (74%)	4 (13%)	21 (68%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	5 (2%)	8 (3%)

Table 2 (Continued): Master Myths as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

Master Myths as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

The “Victim” and the “Hero” myths most frequently exhibit in the 31 news stories, suggesting that they may be the most common master myths found in the news stories sampled in the local section of the newspaper. The “Hero” and the “Victim” Master Myths appear to be most frequently represented in the local news stories, while the “Other World” and “Good Mother” appear least frequently.

Data Shows: In *Table 2*, 74% of the news stories exhibited the Master Myth of “Victim.” 13% of the news stories exhibit the Master Myth of “Scapegoat.” 68% of the news stories sampled exhibit the Master Myth of “Hero.” 10% of news stories sampled

exhibit the Master Myth of “Trickster.” 0% percent of the news stories sampled exhibit the Master Myth of “Other World.” 2% of news stories sampled exhibit the Master Myth of “Good Mother.” 3% of news stories sampled exhibit the Master Myth of the “Flood.”

Folktale Types as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

The largest percentage of the 31 news stories sampled exhibit characteristics of the “Ordinary Folktale Type.”

Data shows: In *Table 2-A*, 87% of the 31 day sample of news stories exhibit the “Ordinary Folktale Type.” In the sample, 6% of the news stories exhibit the “Animal Tale Type.” The “Jokes and Anecdotes Type” exhibited in 3% of the stories. Of the 31 stories, 27 exhibit characteristics of the “Ordinary Folktale,” which encompasses “Magic,” “Romantic,” “Novelle,” “Stupid,” and “Ogre” tales. This data suggests that there is a strong relationship between the common folktale type and the common news story type, with the news stories exhibiting many of the characteristics of the ordinary folktale type. Of the 31 news stories, 87% exhibit the “Ordinary Folktale Type,” 6% of news stories exhibit the “Animal Tale Type,” and 3% of news stories exhibit the “Jokes & Anecdotes Type.”

Dramatis Personae as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

The frequent appearance of “Hero,” “Helper,” “Villain” and “Donor” as Dramatis Personae coincide with the strong persistence of the “Hero” and “Victim” Master Myths in the news stories. The less frequent appearance of the “Princess” may coincide with the less prevalent “Good Mother” Master Myth in the analyzed news

stories, pointing to an under-representation of female personae.

Data shows: In *Table 2-B*, of the 31 news stories, the Dramatis Persona of “Hero” most frequently exhibits, appearing in 84% of the stories. “Helper” exhibits in 71% percent of news stories. “Villain” and “Donor” each exhibit in 55% percent of the news stories sampled. “Princess” exhibits in 39% of the stories. “False Hero” appears in 16% of stories. “Dispatcher” appears in 10% of stories and “Her Father” exhibits least frequently, in 6% of the news stories.

News Stories-Folktale Types	Ordinary Folktale (Magic/Romantic/Novelle/Stupid Ogre)	Animal Tale	Jokes & Anecdotes
1-Jul		Yes	
2-Jul	Yes		
3-Jul	Yes		
4-Jul	Yes		
5-Jul	Yes		
6-Jul	Yes		
7-Jul	Yes		
8-Jul	Yes		
9-Jul	Yes		
10-Jul	Yes		
11-Jul	Yes		
12-Jul	Yes		
13-Jul	Yes		
14-Jul		Yes	
15-Jul	Yes		
16-Jul	Yes		

Table 2-A: Folktale Types as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005. (Continued)

17-Jul	Yes		
18-Jul	Yes		
19-Jul	Yes		
20-Jul	Yes		
21-Jul	Yes		
22-Jul			Yes
23-Jul			
24-Jul	Yes		
25-Jul	Yes		
26-Jul	Yes		
27-Jul	Yes		
28-Jul	Yes		
29-Jul	Yes		
30-Jul	Yes		
31-Jul	Yes		
News Stories Exhibiting Folktale Types	27 (87%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)

Table 2-A (Continued): Folktale Types as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

The findings suggest a lack of humor as a theme in the local news stories surveyed and little thematic concentration on animals in the local environment. The Ordinary Folktale, which finds magic or marvels in the everyday experience, is a strong theme throughout the 31 local news stories sampled.

Data shows: In Table 2-A, Folktale Types are identified in the 31 day sample. Of the 31 stories sampled, 87% of the local news stories exhibit characteristics of the Ordinary Folktale, involving magic, marvels, romances, and ogres in a local

common-place setting. Of the 31 stories sampled, 6% exhibit characteristics of the Animal Tales, featuring the plights of animals as story themes, and 3% (or one story) exhibit characteristics of Jokes & Anecdotes.

<i>Dramatis Personae</i>	<i>Villain</i>	<i>Donor</i>	<i>Helper</i>	<i>Princess</i>	<i>Her Father</i>	<i>Dispatcher</i>	<i>Hero</i>	<i>False Hero</i>
1-Jul	Yes		Yes				Yes	
2-Jul	Yes		Yes				Yes	
3-Jul		Yes	Yes				Yes	
4-Jul		Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	
5-Jul	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	
6-Jul			Yes	Yes			Yes	
7-Jul	Yes	Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes
8-Jul	Yes						Yes	Yes
9-Jul	Yes			Yes			Yes	
10-Jul		Yes	Yes				Yes	
11-Jul	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	
12-Jul			Yes	Yes			Yes	
13-Jul	Yes		Yes				Yes	
14-Jul		Yes	Yes					
15-Jul							Yes	Yes
16-Jul							Yes	
17-Jul	Yes			Yes				Yes
18-Jul		Yes	Yes				Yes	
19-Jul		Yes	Yes					
20-Jul	Yes		Yes	Yes			Yes	
21-Jul		Yes	Yes					
22-Jul	Yes						Yes	

Table 2-B: Dramatis Personae as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005. (Continued)

23-Jul		Yes	Yes					
24-Jul		Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	
25-Jul			Yes			Yes	Yes	
26-Jul	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
27-Jul	Yes						Yes	
28-Jul	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
29-Jul	Yes	Yes		Yes			Yes	
30-Jul	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
31-Jul	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes
	17 (55%)	17 (55%)	22 (71%)	13 (39%)	2 (6%)	3 (10%)	26 (84%)	5 (16%)

Table 2-B (Continued): Dramatis Personae as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

This data might suggest that characters of “Hero,” “Villain,” and “Donor” may appear most frequently in the local sphere of culture, or that these characters are easily recognizable and quickly rendered in the news writing format.

Data shows: Table 2-B shows the appearance of 8 identified Dramatis Personae across the 31-day sample. The persona of “Hero” appeared most frequently in the sample (84%) while the personae of “Villain” and “Donor” showed equally in 55% of the stories sampled.

Chart of Total Folktale Functions and Propp’s Functions Compared in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

In *Figure 4*, the total folktale functions closely parallel Propp’s functions. The folktale functions exhibit most frequently in the story labeled News Story 20, and least

frequently in the story labeled News Story 21, as the chart in Figure 4 illustrates.

In the sample, folktale functions are overall most apparent in a July 20 (Thalji, 2005) story from the *Times*: “Awaiting retrial, she's not repentant.” The story is about a “good mother” who is awaiting retrial after being convicted of murdering a man who sexually abused and taunted her mentally handicapped daughter. The story is short, written in a concise, non-narrative style, and it concerns the myth of the good mother, least common in the story samples. Despite this, it clearly exhibits the most folktale functions of all stories surveyed. This data suggests that narrative style, longer story length, and the presence of a commonly exhibiting myth, do not make a news story function more like a folktale functions. In the news story that exhibits the most folktale characteristics, style is the traditional inverted-pyramid, story length is shorter, and a less common myth presents. Also from the 31-day news story sample, the folktale functions were least apparent in July 21 story (Van Sant, Fries, & Sharockman, 2005) “Twisting winds tear at mobile homes,” predominantly a “Flood” and “Victim” story, about people who lost their homes to tornadoes in Largo and Clearwater. The story is longer, and the common “Victim” myth is present, yet this story functions the least like a folktale of all the news stories in the 31-day sample. Story style, length, and the presence of a common myth do not appear to be factors in finding the news story or stories that greatly satisfy the folktale functions in the 31 stories.

Folktale Motifs as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

In *Figure 5*, the 31 news stories are examined for the 22 folktale motifs. The number of Folktale Motifs exhibiting in each story is plotted in the chart. As illustrated

by the chart, the July 20, 2005 news story exhibits the greatest number of Folktale Motifs, with 10 total. The July 21, 2005 news story exhibits the fewest number of Folktale Motifs, with 2 total. These 2 stories score the most and least respective total folktale functions, as illustrated by Figure 4. A strong parallel is drawn between the presence of the Folktale Motif and the appearance of the folktale functions.

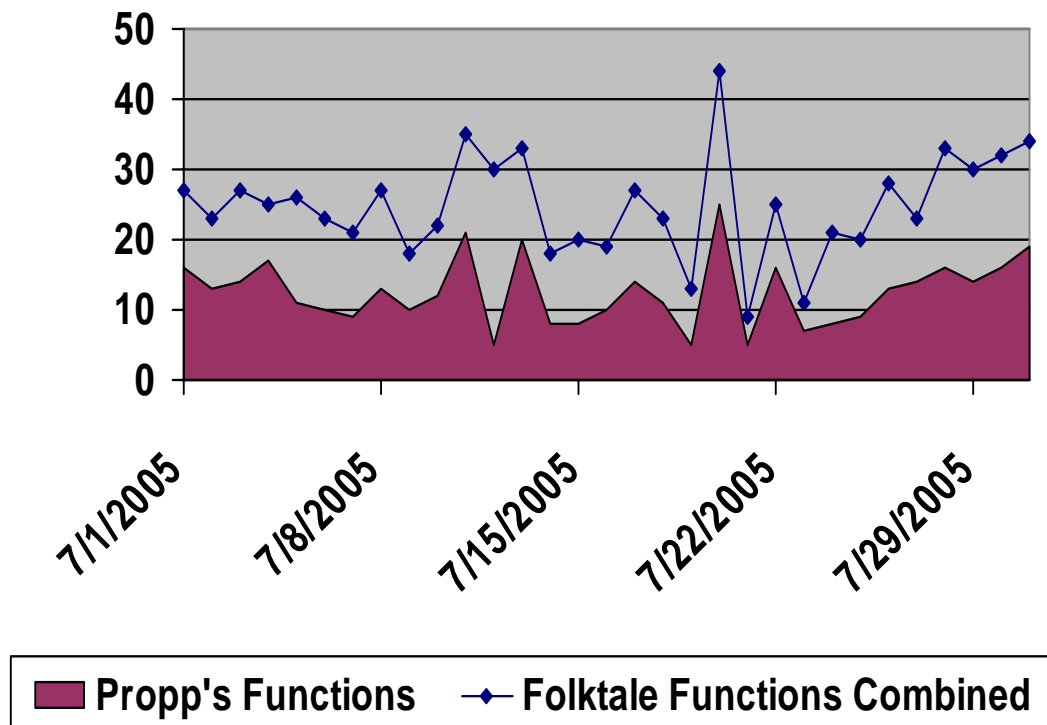


Figure 4: Chart of Total Folktale Functions and Propp’s Functions Compared in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

The figure illustrates data collected from the 31-day local news story sample.

The total number of Proppian folktale functions and folktale functions combined (including the Proppian functions) is quantified for each story in the 31-day sample. The figure shows the comparison between the data for Propp’s Functions and the Folktale Functions combined.

Propp's Functions as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample.

There appears to be a strong correlation between finding the greatest and least number of Propp's Functions and Folktale Functions alongside the greatest and fewest total Folktale Functions within each story. Propp's Functions, then, appear to be a good measure of total Folktale Functions.

Data shows: In *Figure 6*, the 31 news stories are analyzed for evidence of Propp's 31 folktale functions. From the sample, the July 20, 2005 news story exhibits 25, or the greatest number of Propp's Functions. The July 21, 2005 news story exhibits 3, or the fewest number of Propp's Functions. Both stories score similar results when examined for Folktale Motifs in Table 2-C, exhibiting the greatest and least number of Folktale Motifs.

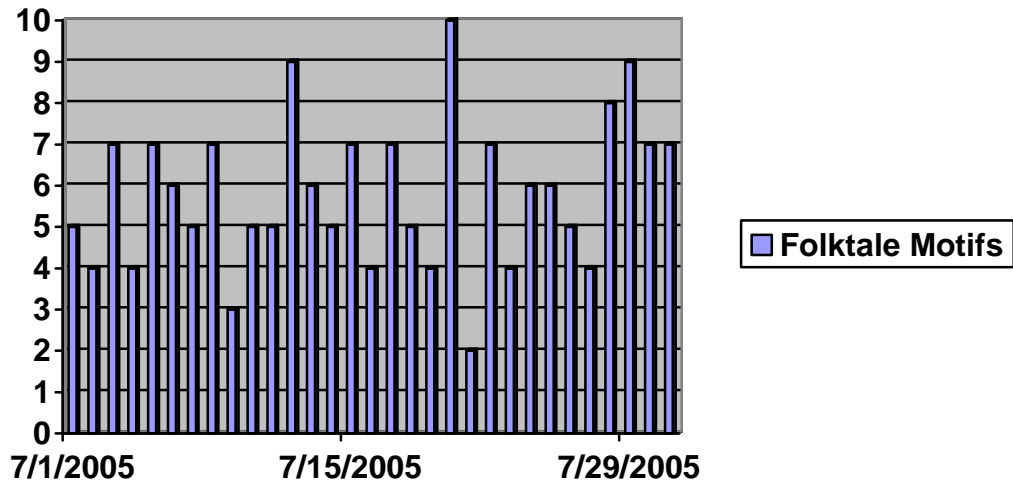


Figure 5: Folktale Motifs as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

Folktale Motifs include:

- Mythological
- Animals
- Tabu
- Magic
- The Dead
- Marvels
- Ogres
- Tests
- The Wise and the Foolish
- Deceptions
- Reversal of Fortune
- Ordaining the Future
- Chance and Fate
- Society
- Rewards and Punishments
- Captives and Fugitives
- Unnatural Cruelty
- Sex
- Religion
- Traits and Character
- Humor
- Miscellaneous Groups and Motifs

31-Day Sample.

The findings from the critical reading of the 31-day sample help explain why certain folktale functions might exhibit most frequently in the news stories, the characteristics of those functions, and implications of the findings to future study of the socio-psychological dynamic of the folktale function in the local news story. Overall, despite brevity and the predominance of the traditional inverted-pyramid structure, the month sample of news stories exhibits many folktale functions and characteristics, which negates the original findings from the first part of the analysis that suggested a correlation between traditional story style and the number of folktale functions found in each news story. A strong correlation between the Proppian functions and the combined folktale functions also becomes apparent in this study, making Propp's Functions appear to be a solid indicator of the overall folktale functions. Finding the Master Myth in each news story does not appear to indicate a prevalence of folktale functions in each news story, however, the most prevalent Folktale Motif from the sampled stories is the Master Myth.

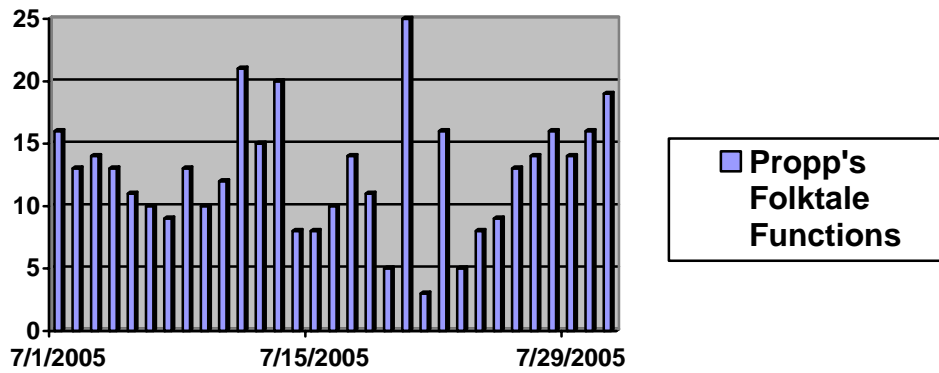


Figure 6: Propp's Functions as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample. July 2005.

(Continued)

Propp's Folktales Functions include:

(Initial Situation)

- Abstentation
- Interdiction
- Violation
- Reconnaissance
- Delivery
- Trickery
- Complicity
- Villainy (Lack)
- Mediation
- Counteraction
- Departure
- First Function of Donor
- Hero's Reaction
- Receipt of Magic Agent
- Spatial Transference
- Struggle
- Branding
- Victory
- Liquidation
- Return
- Pursuit
- Rescue
- Unrecognized Arrival
- Unfounded Claims
- Difficult Task
- Solution
- Recognition
- Exposure
- Transfiguration
- Punishment
- Wedding

Figure 6 (Continued): Propp's Functions as Folktale Functions in 31 Day News Story Sample.

Figure 6 is a bar graph illustration of the number of Proppian folktales that exhibit in each of the 31 stories sampled. The bar graph shows a comparison of the number of Proppian functions in each news story sampled, with variation throughout the sample that suggests variety in seemingly formulaic and repetitive story samples.

Limitations

Any critical reading is largely dependent on the reader and referent, and this evaluation of the story text for folktale functions is dependent on an understanding and application of those functions. In order to find universal symbols like folktale functions in the folktales and news stories sampled, the reader needs to have a comprehensive understanding of myth, folktale types, functions, motifs and dramatis personae. As Joseph Campbell explains: "one knows the tale; it has been told a thousand ways" (Campbell, 1949, p. 387). But how can any reader know, for example, every manifestation of the hero and victim myth in the news story or folktale? Is the hero's and the victim's function really so universal within stories? Part of the folklore's function is its ability to create variant of story through diffusion and retelling in the oral medium (Brunvand, 1998). Is the discovery of hero and victim as a popular myth motif in the local news stories sampled really evidence of universal themes in all news stories, or is this discovery more the product of local culture or personal values? At the end of the critical reading, there are additional questions for research.

In deconstructing the analysis, what may have been unearthed, in this close critical reading of the text, could be nothing more than a reflection of the way this study's

writer sees and evaluates the world through stories. Even a consistent application of structural methodologies in the analysis of the text ultimately ends in one person's interpretation, and application of those methods to the story text. The most consistently coded sample cannot prevent the reader's interpretation of the samples from creeping into the mix. A critical reading, even well defined, is still the product of the reader. The reader provides the ultimate variable in the evaluation of universal themes. One reader's prince, after all, may be another reader's frog.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

This chapter provides an overview of the research and explores the way local news stories might function like folktales, with implications for further investigation into how the folktale might function as a psychodynamic within news stories, and how the local news story may be a less objective and more story-driven form of news writing, with roots in the folklore tradition.

This study concludes that myths, motifs, characters, and themes that are traditional folktale functions are also evidenced in news writing in the local news stories sampled. Within the series of local news stories sampled from July 2005, a prevalence of certain myths, motifs, and persona were discovered.

Summary

The findings from the 35 total stories sampled show that myth is the most popular folktale motif, and that the hero and victim myths are the most popular master myths in the sample. The set of myths was limited to victim, scapegoat, hero, and otherworld. From this set, 34 of the 35 stories sampled exhibited myth as a motif.

The prevalence of the hero and the victim myth in the local news story reinforces Lévi-Strauss' idea of the mythic paradigm. If this mythic paradigm is apparent in the local news stories sampled, is there a subjective theme at work in the selection of local news stories? In the 31 news stories critically read from the sample, the hero and helper personae most frequently presented, hero showing in 26 of the stories and helper in 22 of the stories. These personae support the prevalence of the hero and victim myths in the

stories sampled. Further research of how and why these folktale characteristics present in the stories would only go deeper into the subjective thematic nature of these local news stories. Finding folktale functions in the news stories sampled may simply suggest that there is a consistent folktale theme in news stories that is part of the story tradition of news writing. The various functions of the folktale then, might mirror the various functions of the news story. The presence and prevalence of the folktale functions in the local news stories further suggests that there is a strong relationship between the local selected folktales and the local selected news stories that may extend to the parallel nature of folklore and journalism. This study may imply that journalism performs a socio-psychological role in a local culture similar to the role played by folklore in a local culture, and that the journalist may perform a role similar to that of the folktale-teller.

What this study has attempted to show is how the nature of folklore and the nature of journalism intersect both in text and in function within text, as two storytelling traditions that may satisfy psychological and social needs for meaning-making within a culture. The local news stories and folktales were selected to specifically show how folklore functions in text to provide a sense of meaning and identity within a culture. News writing, as a field of conversational storytelling, is not merely a strong psychological and social force affecting a culture. It is also a form of storytelling that answers a psychological and social need within a culture, much like folklore. As such, it is part of the story-telling genre that traditionally answers the need for meaning-making with traditional story themes.

As Lacan's (2004) work with the psychology of language suggests, stories never provide absolute meaning, but rather temporarily provide sustenance until, as a culture,

we hunger for more. Perhaps this absence of an absolute explanation for things, coupled with the need for an explanation for things, explains why we must produce more stories, and repeat many of the same themes in these stories, whether they are folktales or news stories. This need may explain the periodical nature of news, and the need for the daily supplement of news stories.

The idea of using myth and folktale themes to create context and meaning through repeated application may help explain the presence of a common-stock of folktale functions in the news stories sampled in this study. We English-speakers, for example, understand the universal meanings of words, in part, because we have all agreed to use certain words in certain ways. This repeated or traditional use gives words their meaning. A repeated or traditional use of certain myths, motifs, *dramatis personae*, and Proppian functions in news stories may similarly be explained as employing the common language of story-telling known to the folk tradition. Use of common language and application of common functions in news stories makes them more universally accessible. News writing, after all, is meant to be an accessible medium. It makes sense, then, that this study has found much evidence of the readily accessible themes and common-stock of folktale functions in the examined news stories.

This study explored evidence of the folktale theme and the variation of the folktale theme in news writing employing formal structural methodology. As a critical reading, it examined the inner workings of text, using both structural and post-structural methodologies to uncover some strategies for finding meaning. Exploring the consistent folklore functions of news story text provides one more method of examining meaning and knowing story. At best, this exercise has provided one more way of knowing the tale

that “has been told a thousand ways” (Campbell, 1949).

Recommendations

This analysis provides the foundation for future study that will seek to illustrate how the strong presence of the folktale function in the local news story might act as a socio-psychological dynamic within the local community, contributing to a strong sense of place and identity, and how inversely the weak presence of the folktale function in the local news story might similarly provide a weak sense of place and identity. Further study should also explore how maintaining a strong conventional sense of place and identity through folklore might actually reinforce traditional stereotypes, maintain the status quo, and impede the growth of a community.

The next step in this critical reading of local stories is a discussion with story-producers and story-readers, variants in the storytelling tradition. Editors and writers who directly produced the stories used in this analysis might be approached for their interpretations of the findings. Local readers might be surveyed for their psychological responses to the sampled stories. Readers outside the local sphere should be provided the same survey, to gauge whether psychological response to the stories is an effect of local culture. These additional steps in the critical reading might provide a more complete picture of the way the folktale function in local news stories relates to the local culture. The extent to which folktale functions in the sampled news stories provide the foundation for local lore and tradition should be further evaluated.

It is crucial to look at the effect of some of the discoveries of this study. What does finding the subjective folktale function in the news story mean for the reader and the

writer, the consumer and producer of news? What does finding the prevalence of certain myth motifs in the news stories mean? Did the journalists who wrote these stories make a conscious decision to use the conventional hero and victim paradigm in their stories? Did the journalists use myths in their stories that they thought their readers would respond favorably to and with interest? These questions cannot be answered in this study. A relational analysis of how writer and reader perceive the folktale functions found in the sampled news stories must be conducted to begin to sketch some answers.

It is also important to investigate further the idea of traditional storytelling in the local news stories. To do this, further study should import some ideas from literary analysis when evaluating the news story text that exhibits a traditional folktale function. It is important to evaluate the traditional role of the journalist and the folktale-teller. Traditional is closely related to conventional. Hilton Als shares some of the dangers of conventional plotlines in a review of theatre:

...by sticking to structural and intellectual conventions---running through the predictable cycle of rage, acceptance, blah, blah, blah, all in one ninety-minute act---Wade sells out her characters for cheap laughs and cloying sentimentality.

Where she could have been a brave playwright, she has settled for being a popular one. (Als, October 10, 2005, p. 92)

The folktale conventions of plot, myth, motif, character and function are apparent in the news stories evaluated in this content analysis. Repeated use of the folktale function in the local news story could result in formulaic story structures that regurgitate popular myths, plots, motifs, characters and functions.

It is here, perhaps, that the line should be drawn between folktale-teller and

journalist. The folktale-teller reinforces the story-telling tradition through repetition of well-worn themes, adapted to a variety of stories. These themes provide context, and their repetition reinforces the idea that things always were this way, and always will be. One role of the folktale-teller, then, is to preserve traditional stories and traditional folktale functions, including these myths, plots, motifs, characters and functions. The journalist, telling the stories of local people, should not be bound by convention to tell the traditional story, using traditional folktale functions. The journalist should endeavor to be a brave storyteller, one less concerned with repeating trusted story themes and devices for mass consumption, and more concerned with telling the story forthrightly and well. Perhaps, this study of the folktale functions in local news stories may be used as a basis for evaluating the differing and complimentary roles of the folktale-teller and the journalist.

Conclusions

This study evaluated the selection of local news story texts for their folklore characteristics to show, in part, an introduction to further research into how folklore might act in the newspaper as part of a culture's socio-psychological dynamic.

The critical reading discovered that there are motifs, types, myths, dramatis personae and Proppian functions characteristic of the folktale in the sampled news stories. The study also discovered the persistence of certain myths and dramatis personae in the sampled news stories to the exclusion of others. The effect of these mythic and folktale functions within the local culture and the relationship between story reader and producer, is a path for additional research.

In showing the paradigmatic nature of journalism and folklore, and how news stories and folktales might be scrutinized using the same structural methodology, the study provided a model for conducting a similar type of conceptual analysis in additional texts. While this study only presented data interpreted in a closed system, without the variable of the referent and interpreter, it did provide a template for applying a structural methodology to other story forms. As an initial inquiry into the plausibility of finding folktale functions in the news, this study has elicited some positive results. The extent to which these functions play a part in the relationship between journalism and culture should be the subject of further investigation.

The purpose of this study was to expand on earlier studies suggesting that “the study of narrative should be at the center of any consideration of news in its cultural context” (Bird & Dardenne, 1988, p. 79). It explored the local news story for evidence of the folktale tradition and compared socio-psychological function of the news story to that of the folktale. Through direct application of the folktale functions to the folk and news story text, this study illustrated how a content analysis might be applied to news writing. Exploring textual evidence of journalism’s folktale functions remains at the heart of this research into the cultural context of storytelling in the local newspaper.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Folktale A

Mermaid Point (Walter's Cove)

Michael Geegan

December 28, 2004

English Period 3

The air hung so heavy with humidity that I could feel its weight suffocating every pore on my body. Although the Sun was just beginning to rise over Tampa Bay, I was already drenched in sweat from my efforts in obtaining fresh seafood.

I had decided the previous night to get up early and drive out to Mermaid's Point and check out the mullet populace for a possible southern-style brunch of fresh fried mullet, cheese grits, and hush puppies. Equipped with my trusty old ten-foot cast net in my white five-gallon plastic bucket, I made my way through the sandspurs and dune flowers to one of the few remaining undeveloped stretches of shoreline.

Everywhere around me were those yuppie-inspired urban dwellings. Complete with swimming pools, security warning signs, perfectly manicured lawns, and the telltale bark of some little neurotic ankle biter no larger than a good size rat.

The smell of salt and mangroves at low tide made me think back to when I used to come to this very spot with my father when I was younger.

I remember how back in those days there was no one living out here among the mosquitoes except an old hermit named Walter. My father remembered his father by the name of Captain Jackson and story has it he washed away in a hurricane one night...bed and all. I really don't know if it's true, and I really don't care. I like the image that it always conjures in my mind when I try to imagine the wind, rain, and the eventual

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hurricane force waves that washed in as he was screaming and trying to hold on for dear life as he was swept into the black torturous night and dragged down to the very depths of Davie Jones' Locker.

His son Walter would never talk about it. He was 20 years old when the storm took the old man and he simply carried on the tradition of renting rowboats and selling bait, fish, and crabs to whomever might come out his way.

Walter's house was a rambling combination of irregular rooms and additions added over time all comprised of everything from driftwood, to wrecked boats, tin roof pieces, tar paper, and a coat of paint. It was raised up on old barnacle encrusted pilings which allowed for the constant rhythm of the tides. There were usually wooden rowboats rocking gently with the waves and slight winds anchored in wait of an anxious fisherman out to try his luck.

I remember Walter standing there on his dock attached to the structures that he called home. He always had his brown dog Salty right beside him. In fact, they were inseparable. That dog would see fish in the water and dive in and get them. We'd sometimes fish for hours without a bite and that damn dog would simply lunge in the water and come up with a mullet in his mouth. In the background was Tampa Bay without any real trace of Tampa yet. Across the bay was still undeveloped with mangroves and seagrapes along the lonely, tropical shoreline. Walter was the kind of scruffy that can only come from living your life outdoors without the luxury of modern day things such as electricity and running water. Walter always smelled like low tide.

Appendix A: (Continued)

The only fresh water available to him was what he caught off the roof and stored in 55-gallon drums. He had them at every corner of his house arranged so that the angle of the roof provided a perfect aqueduct system into his rusty drums.

My father and I always brought him old newspapers and batteries for his transistor radio. Since my father owned a radio and television store we once brought him an old black and white TV that worked on batteries which instantly became his most prized possession. Back then you were lucky to get one or two fuzzy channels but never mind Walter had finally connected with the world around him. Life was simple and unhurried back then. One had time to just be there and take in all the elements around him without worry of the real world calling him back.

Then one time we went out there after Hurricane Donna in 1964, and his house and all trace of it was gone except for a couple of pilings jutting out of the water where his house used to be. We never found out what had happened to him. It was like he never existed. We still threw the net or fished from the shore but it just wasn't the same without Walter being there encouraging us and letting us peer into his way of life and listening to his views about the land and water around him that he loved so much. Walter was one of the original conservationists without knowing it. He was part of what made Mermaid Point so special and Mermaid Point was part of him.

CHAPTER 2

As I walked up and down the shoreline that morning throwing my net at schools of mullet that always seemed to be just out of my reach, I noticed some small ripples and

Appendix A: (Continued)

realized a school had been spooked and were heading right in my direction. I quickly put the salty wet weight line in my mouth and arranged the net in folds with just the right amount of weight dispersed in both hands. I held my breath and walked until they got closer and then let it glide up into the air and over their unsuspecting bodies. I was immediately rewarded with the pleasant sensation of bumps traveling along the line to my excited hands and knew without a doubt I actually had fish in the net.

A smile settled across on my face as I realized I would indeed be having grilled mullet for dinner. Coming here over the years I wasn't always guaranteed something to eat. I slowly hauled in my net and as it dragged along the shoreline I was pleased to see four healthy, fat mullet flopping about at my feet. Mullet used to be so plentiful in this area that you couldn't even sell them but now they are considered a fast disappearing delicacy. It's funny how something is not prized until it is in very low supply or on the verge of extinction.

With all of the efforts to clean up Tampa Bay it will never return to what it once was, but hey, you've got to roll with the punches and besides today proved to be one of the luckier outings.

As I stood there mesmerized by the sights and sounds going along all around me a small spider crab nibbled at my big toe making me jump in terror and then laugh at myself. I conjured up images from childhood of some type of creature from the deep hauling me off and devouring me. If only I knew what was in store for me next.

Appendix A: (Continued)

CHAPTER 3

Across the flats from where I was standing, on the southernmost island of the Weedon Island chain there is an island called Ross Island, which was home to one of the early pioneer families of this region. You can still see old barnacle-encrusted poles where their dock used to be, but stories have it that these folks lacked nothing except fresh water and basic supplies. Today, it is known for its raccoons and rattlesnakes.

As I stood there with my hand covering my forehead to block out the glare, I could faintly make out the image of someone excitedly walking up and down the beach waving their arms wildly. It was much too far away to make out much detail but I saw the little figure drag a boat out of the bushes and down to the waterline. I then saw him push the boat into the water and with a final shove jump into it and grab two oars placing them into the oarlocks and start pumping madly in my direction. As I watched the little figure became larger with each stroke I wondered just what this could be all about.

When the little boat was about twenty yards out I could make out a man rowing with long unkempt hair and beard blowing in the breeze. He kept rowing until he reached directly to the unkempt hair and beard blowing in the breeze. He kept rowing until he reached directly to the beach in front of me and just sat there rocking up and down on the small waves and staring at me.

“Hello,” I said and he responded by not responding at all. As I stood there staring at him, a queer feeling came over me. It was like an apparition from long ago that I couldn’t quite put my finger on. The kind of feeling you get when you awake from a

Appendix A: (Continued)

dream that seems so vivid yet when you try to remember it, it slips away from you. All of a sudden, a chill swept over my body as I realized that the figure sitting not more than fifteen feet from me was the hermit Walter from my childhood. My mind struggled to comprehend the situation. My thoughts raced as I strived to assimilate just what was happening. Maybe I was having a flashback from the sixties. Maybe it was just possible for it made more sense than an old hermit from the past suddenly reappearing out of nowhere. I started doubting my sanity. The old hermit looked pretty much like he did back then. I stood there dumbfounded and felt momentarily paralyzed. How could this be? I mean, really. Walter was old when I was a young boy out there tagging after my father. How could he still be alive and surviving out on that little spit of mangroves and sable palms?

“Walter? Walter, is that you?”

“Yes,” he replied. “Where’s your father?”

“My father?” I gasped. “Why, my father has been dead for over forty years. How did you recognize me? It’s been a long time.”

“I remember the way you threw your net,” he said. “A way I’d never seen before or since. You always threw it backwards. Can’t believe it even opens for ya. No sir, can’t believe it even opens.”

“Well, ah, ah, how have you been?” I stuttered as I struggled for something to say. I almost asked him if he needed batteries for his radio and felt embarrassed that I didn’t have any with me.

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“ ’Bout the same,” he replied. “Most of the fish ’bout gone these days ’cept in that little cove of mine over on the island there,” he said as he nodded back towards the island.

I felt the initial fear leaving me as my curiosity got the best of me like it used to when I was young and eager to know just how he lived, what his shack was like on the inside, how it looked and smelled. How his toilet was just a hole in the floor and how the little fishes and crabs seemed to always wait under it for the next feeding (I never actually saw the feeding but the image of it is still engraved in my mind).

CHAPTER 4

A pelican dove into a school of baitfish and I was instantly pulled back into the present moment.

“I remember you had an old dog by the name of Salty. He used to catch fish by diving underwater for them.”

Walter just grinned, reached down, and pulled up an old stained burlap sack and under it was an old dog fast asleep. It was one of those real old dogs, the kind with lots of hair missing and growths all over it. The old dog opened his eyes briefly, glanced at me, and then as if the effort was too much he let his eyelids drop full shut and was instantly back to sleep.

My mouth dropped open. Walter just sat there staring at the old dog. The silence hung like a fog between us! I said, “Surely, you’re not going to tell me that is Salty. That was forty years ago and most dogs are considered lucky if they live past

Appendix A: (Continued)

fifteen.”

I felt a slight tinge of pain and fear building inside me as my breathing became fast and erratic.

“That’s ol’ Salty alright,” said Walter in his casual manner. “Been livin’ out there in that ol’ cove with me ever since them land people done run us off.”

I started to feel cold all over even though the temperature was well into the 90s. I took a couple of deep, slow breaths to try and regain my already badly shaken composure. My head felt like it was spinning and I felt as if I was in a dream. Only it wasn’t a dream. The sun was out in full force. I pinched myself, threw saltwater on my face, rubbed it briskly, shook my body all over, and when I opened my eyes again there was Walter staring at me as if I was something to concerned about.

“Wanna come on over to the cove? There’s plenty of fish there. You ain’t gonna get much here I’ll tell ya that much. Besides, these rich folks don’t cater much to people fishin’ around their docks and shorelines. They think they own everything out here. Climb aboard. I’ll bring ya back when you’re ready.”

My mind locked on two things at exactly the same time. I knew inside I should just get into my truck and drive as fast as possible to escape this apparition.

The other thought centered around adventure and a genuine chance to break from the norm. My curiosity being stronger than any apprehension, I found myself climbing into the little wooden boat with the dirty water sloshing back and forth along the leaky floorboards. Walter just stared and for a moment I noticed a slight gleam of pleasure in

Appendix A: (Continued)

his eyes. He pushed us off with his old paint-scarred paddle, hooked it back into the rusty oarlocks, and slowly turned us around with the current in the direction of his cove.

“What’s the name of your island?” I asked even though I knew it was Ross Island.

“Don’t have no name. I just call it ‘The Cove.’”

CHAPTER 5

I soon found myself drifting in and out of reality. Here I was looking back at my truck and those luxurious homes from an old leaky wooden rowboat with a forgotten recluse and his old dog, both, which should have been dead for decades.

It was like entering a space/time continuum. The sound of the old wooden oars scraping against the rusty oarlocks combined with the sloshing sound of water mesmerized me and a great calm settled over me making my mind crystal clear and totally free from distraction.

I had the distinct feeling that I was meant to be here at this exact time and this exact place. I found myself cherishing these thoughts and felt a surge of excitement building up from within. The seagulls and ospreys were circling and diving into the schools of baitfish that suddenly appeared all around us. Larger fish such as snook and redfish were suddenly visible and the water came alive with the sound of their jumping and snapping as they dove repeatedly into the frantic schools of baitfish in their quest to take full advantage to fill their bellies. I was once again comforted with the reassuring thought that this was the way it was meant to be.

Appendix A: (Continued)

CHAPTER 6

Upon stepping out of the boat onto the beach over at Walter's Cove, I was amazed to see so many multi-colored fiddler crabs scurrying about. It had been so long since I had even seen any that seeing whole schools of them really caught me by surprise. There they were thousands of them running along holding their little pinchers high in the air and running to the shelter of the grass and their little holes, which was their defense.

Walter secured the little boat by dragging it halfway up the beach and taking an old rock with an equally old rope out of it and carefully placing it further up the shore and checking the line for tautness. He looked up at me, smiled and pointed towards a little path going into the thicket.

After walking a few yards, my nostrils were rewarded with a most tantalizing aroma coming from an old driftwood smokehouse. Walter ran past me with a big grin on his face and beard flowing in the wind. I soon discovered when he pulled apart a couple split palm trees that were used as a door that there were layer upon layer of fish and crabs being smoke to perfection. He told me how he cleaned and split the mullet then let them soak in saltwater over night, and then smoked them over green mangrove wood.

It was Walter's only means to make the little money he needed to provide him with all necessary to subsist on his island.

He told me the only thing he really ever bought was coffee, sugar, flour, and kerosene for his lantern. Oh yes, he added that about once a year he bought hooks and fishing line to repair his nets and traps.

Appendix A: (Continued)

I stood amazed and somewhat speechless. Walter's eyes seemed to sparkle as he asked if I was hungry. Before I could even answer he ran off again, this time to an old weather beaten shack that he had obviously erected out of wrecked boats and driftwood complete with palm leaf roof and patches of old canvas.

I cautiously proceeded to the little shack made of scrap wood, branches, mud, and shells. As I peered inside I could see Walter carefully blowing on some ash-covered embers from earlier this morning. The sight of the sparks and smoke circling inside that dimly lit shack reminded me of a miniature tornado on a moonless night.

Walter added some fresh kindling wood and while blowing on it he soon had a respectful little fire going inside that old metal car wheel he used as his fire pit.

He dipped his old blue-speckled, smoke-stained water kettle into a barrel of rainwater which was situated right outside the kitchen opening and placed it on the grate directly above the fire. He then reached into a cloth sack and came out with a handful of ground coffee and threw it into the kettle. I stood there transfixed and time seemed to have stopped as we stood there staring at the kettle waiting for it to boil. I could hear the seagulls in the distance but it didn't seem to have any bearing on what I was doing or thinking. After an unimaginable length of time the smoke from the fire drifted up my nose and into my lungs and only by coughing was I brought back into the present moment. What seemed like an eternity was only enough time for the kettle to get hot. As I was rubbing my eyes and coughing I could make out Walter calmly pouring the coffee into two oversized chipped, tin cups. He handed one to me and I wasted no time getting it

Appendix A: (Continued)

to my mouth and taking large sips even though it was still hot and extremely bitter. I was still cold and shaken from my experience but it sure cured my primal urge. Even now I ask myself where I could have gone in my mind. It's probably better that I did not know what was still waiting for me that morning on that little spit of land with an old hermit and a forty year old dog.

I decided to sit on an old salty tree trunk as I now sipped at my coffee my mind took in all the things Walter had scavenged over the years. From where I sat I could see old boards with faded paint that signified names of doom boats, discarded buoys from long forgotten fishnets or crab traps, shells and bones of every size and description. On the outside walls of his shack were homemade fishing lures, nets in all stages of repair, and an old seagull outboard motor that may have been more at home in a nautical museum.

“Wanna see the cove?” he asked as we finished our coffee.

“Sure,” I said enthusiastically before my mind had a chance to interfere

CHAPTER 7

I followed behind Walter as we made our way down the old, prickly pear pathway that led through the scrub, Walter barefoot and I in my old soggy fishing sneakers. Salty was nowhere in sight and I thought of him fast asleep somewhere near the shade of the old shack. The thought of a dog over forty years was starting to seem natural.

The sky was starting to fill up with rain clouds as is the custom around Tampa Bay and anytime the temperature creeps into the nineties and surrounded by this much

Appendix A: (Continued)

water storms are a common occurrence. You used to almost be able to set your watch by them and if I remember correctly the sky would open at approximately 3:30 on a daily basis give or take a few minutes. After making our way about a quarter mile we rounded a bend and there in front of us lay Walter's Cove complete with clear water and sugar white sand beach. Fish of all sorts were swimming, chasing, jumping, and escaping to and from each other. It was like watching something out of a Tarzan movie filmed at Silver Springs. There were palm trees full of coconuts. Banana and fruit trees. There was even a spring bubbling out of the ground and running into the saltwater of the cove. Birds of all sorts were flying and chattering. I rubbed my eyes to make sure I wasn't dreaming. As my mind started to slip away Walter shook me and said "Kinda nice, ain't it? Got everything I need right here."

My response was a faint smile and nodding my head in the affirmative. Words were beyond expression.

The clouds suddenly became darker and a cool breeze settled over us bringing a much-welcomed relief. I started thinking of my truck back on the other shore, my house, and my job and friends back in the real world. Here I was on an impossibly beautiful cove with someone or something that was not of the normal world. My mind was fighting me over should I leave and return to my precious creature comforts such as browsing the supermarket for a snack du jour and then rushing home to my empty house to check my answering machine that I knew would have no message. On the other hand, I considered just staying out at Walter's Cove and saying the heck with it all. As I stood there

Appendix A: (Continued)

wrestling with my thoughts, Walter was totally relaxed and at peace in his element as he watched the activities going on in his own little piece of the world.

Suddenly, a loud thunderclap made me realize that I, on the other hand, was completely out of my element. The creature comforts won hands down and I had a sudden urge to return to my truck as fast as I could.

CHAPTER 8

Walter sensed it was time to leave and without saying a word turned around and started walking back up the path. One last glance over my shoulder left me with an image of that special cove that I will never forget. We walked past the shack and I could see the smoke as it drifted up from the old wheel tire pit and drifted lazily out of the holes in the roof. The smoke-stained kettle was quiet as it patiently waited on the old steel grate. Across the flats from where we approached the boat for departure I could see all those houses seeming claustrophobically close to one another.

Walter walked over to the smokehouse, reached between the planks and palm leaves and pulled out a perfectly smoked mullet. As I watched him make his way towards me holding that fish by the tail, sadness overcame me. A lonely homesick type sadness like I had never felt before or since. I knew I was leaving a special place apart from the hustle-bustle of the modern world and about to jump right back full throttle into the roller coaster of modern society.

I just let out a built up sigh and climbed into the old boat.

Walter handed me the mullet and told me take it home for later as he picked up the

Appendix A: (Continued)

anchor, placed it inside the boat, pushed us off onto the water and jumped in at the last minute to take his place between the oars. Seeing him there barefooted and scruffy in his torn old clothes completely in his natural state with nature made me realize just how empty my life really was. Here I was with a reject of society who was supposed to be dead riding in a leaky old boat coming from an island with a special cove that shouldn't exist. Walter emitted a calming effect and didn't need to speak because his eyes and vibrations said it all. Walter had presence.

When we reached close to the shoreline where I had been throwing my net that morning I climbed out with my prized mullet tucked under my arm and waded to the beach. By the time I reached landfall I turned to say good-bye but Walter had already turned the boat around and was rowing back to the island. I called out to him but it was as if my words fell on deaf ears. He merely rowed steadily until he once again became a little cork bobbing on the waves.

Thunder clapped harder this time and I hurried to pick up my bundle complete with cast net and a bucket of mullet plus my prized smoked mullet and hurried towards where I had parked my truck. Upon reaching the truck I placed my bundle in the back bed and gazing once again towards the island opened my door and climbed inside. The little boat was nowhere to be seen. Walter had reached his home before the storm. I don't remember how long I sat pondering what had just happened. I sat in the fading shadows of the day with the rain pounding down on the truck and pondered many things including my life and the direction it had taken.

Appendix A: (Continued)

Another lightning strike and I started my truck, put it in gear and drove off into the night. I don't know or remember how long I just drove around in the rain before ending up at my house.

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Appendix B: Folktale B

Peazy and Beanzy

J. Russell Reaver

During the 1950s and 1960s this tale became known to young women who were patients in the Florida State University infirmary. It was told them by an elderly black attendant, who wished to remain anonymous but claimed the story came from Louisiana, where her mother had told it to her. This version was related to me by Virginia Spencer of West Palm Beach as she remembered hearing it. (Reaver, 1987, p. 130)

“Now all you gather ’round ’n’ I’ll tell you ’bout two li’l childrens which was named Peazy ’n’ Beanzy...they was sisters. They had an aunt what lived in the far east and they always wanted to go visit ’er. Now Peazy, who was mean and hateful, decided to go first; so one day she started on her way to visit her aunt.

“Pretty soon she came to a brook which was all stopped up with brush and stones. That old brook would just go ‘Buzzzz’ ’n’ ‘groowllll’ so loud ’cause it couldn’t skip along its way. But Peazy wouldn’t pay no ’tention; she just stepped over it and went on her way.

“On the other side of the brook was a big ole plum tree that was all bent over ’n’ broken down, but would Peazy stop and help it? No, she saw it but just stepped on its branches as she walked ’round.

“Pretty soon she got to her aunt’s house, but that aunt didn’t wanna keep her long.

Appendix B: (Continued)

Peazy was lazy 'n' wouldn't set the table or dust or nuthin'.

“She sez, her aunt sez, ‘Peazy, you might as well go home; you don’t help out your old seek aunt...you don’t wash no dishes or do the chores,’ she sez.

“Now lazy Peazy was glad to leave. She wasn’t gonna stay at her rich aunt’s if she was gonna have ta work. So she left and on her way home she got ohh so hungry. Pretty soon she came to the ole sad plum tree and thair---right down in the middle of it---was a little fire and wood all set up, just like a little oven. And there sat a little cake a’bakin’.

“ ‘Ohhhh,’ she sez, ‘I’d like some of that cake.’ And so Peazy reached down with her hand to get some and ‘swoooosh!’ came a big black crow a-flying down and picked the whole thing up in its beak...just a-flappin’ off with it.

“Peazy cried, ‘Ohh, I’m so hungry....’ And on and on she walked. Then she came up along to that ole buzzin’ brook and there, all build up on the twigs and rocks was the nicest li’l fire. And right in the middle sat a black fryin’ pan. Peazy smelled and smelled something good, then she saw in that skillet some fish a-fryin’. She sez, ‘Ummmm, I think I’ll just have a piece of that nice fish, it look so good.’ And just as she reached down, that whole brook came unstopped ad the fire ’n’ fish all went floating down that big ditch.

“ ‘Ohhh me oh my... I’s so hungry I thinks I’s gonna die...’ ’n’ Peazy begins to cry and goes to rubbin’ her tummy.

“And finally she gets home, her sides so skinny from hunger that her ribs was a-rubbin’ together. An’ her mother was so mad at her fer bein’ bad to the aunt that she even

Appendix B: (Continued)

made her scat up to bed with no supper.

“Next day Beanzy sez, ‘Maw, why don’ you let me visit Auntie?’ So off goes the secon’ sister to see that good ole aunt.

“When she comes to that brook it’s stopped up all over ag’in. Beanzy steps right over it....But then she stops ’n’ turns ’round and sez, ‘Oh, you poor buzzin’ brook...you wants to run ’n’ play like the other li’l brooks, don’ you?’ So Beanzy pulls loose the sticks ’n’ stones that was clutterin’ it up; then that brook goes merrily runnin’ on.

“Then she comes to that poor plum tree all broke over ’n’ she sez, ‘Poor tree, you wants to grow tall ’n’ straight so you can have lotsa nice fruit, don’ you?’ So she ties up that bent tree with a strip of material she tore right off her dress ’n’ on she goes to see her aunt.

“It was even dark when she got there but she wasn’t scared. Beanzy goes right into the kitchen and sez, ‘Auntie, what can I do to help you? Can’t I set the table or help with the cookin’ or somethin’?’

“So all the time Beanzy kept busy helpin’ her aunt with the chores ’n’ she stayed on one week, then two, and finally a whole month was up and she sez to her auntie, she sez, ‘Auntie, I have to go home now to my mommy ’cause she needs me to help her too. But I’ll come back to see you again soon as I can.’

“ ‘Youse been a dear li’l child, Beanzy,’ she sez. ‘You isn’t lazy at all like your sister Peazy; so I’m gonna give you this bag of money for your present. You is to take it home for your mommy and for you, but don’t give none of it to Peazy, ’cause she’s gonna haf’

Appendix B: (Continued)

to learn how to earn it by workin' like you already know how.'

“So Beanzy thanks her aunt 'n' starts home. Just like her sister Peazy, she sees a li'l cake baking in the middle of the plum tree, but no big crow takes it from her. She looks up 'n' sees a tiniest li'l hummingbird that comes down 'n' sits on her shoulder and sings the prettiest li'l melody while she eats the cake. ‘Ummmm, so good!’ she sez.

“Then just like Peazy she sees some fish a-fryin' when she gets to the brook, and ummmmm, she gets to eat that too.

“Then Beanzy got home. She wasn't hungry 'cause she'd had so much to eat on the way home, 'n' when she showed her mommy that bag full of money they both just danced a jig and her mommy sez, ‘Now ain't you glad I brought you up to be such an unselfish and helpful chile!’

“But mean 'n' hateful Peazy just lay over in the corner a-kickin' up her heels....Bad girl....Now, don' you chilluns be like her!”

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Appendix C: News Story A

Archives: *St. Petersburg Times*

For the sake of his namesake; [SOUTH PINELLAS Edition]
Abbie Vansickle. *St. Petersburg Times*. St. Petersburg, Fla.: Feb 27, 2005.
pg. 1.A

Abstract (Document Summary)

Corrections pursuant to 10-20-Life. That will be day for day.” Cummings and his wife, Diann, watched their son handcuffed, fingerprinted and led away. Dad felt numb. Before he left the courthouse, he knew what he had to do. If it was the missing rifle that so disturbed the judge, Cummings would just have to get it back. He didn’t know that it would make a difference, but it was all he could pin his hopes on. His son said he traded the gun to a drug dealer in Crystal River. At least Dad had somewhere to start; Correctional Institution to visit their son. Often it was Dad. They would sit at a table outside, under rings of barbed wire. Cummings told his son little about his search for the gun, only that he was working hard to get it back. Business at the bait shop was bad and getting worse. Bait shops are about personality, Cummings said. An owner has to earn customers’ trust. Weekends were prime time for sales, but business came second to visiting his son. In his spare time, Cummings would sit at the computer and read appeal briefs and legal documents. He called lawyers, including two in California, asking for advice. He read up on the 10-20-Life law, legislation Florida passed in 1999 to drive down violent crime. Under the law, commit a crime with a gun, you get 10 years in prison. Last May, about a month after [Daniel Cummings] was sentenced, the phone

Appendix C: (Continued)

rang at the bait shop. The caller said he was the drug dealer. He said he didn't have the gun, but he might be able to find it. Cummings explained his son's situation and promised the dealer the family was not working with the Sheriff's Office or anyone else. They only wanted that gun. "I gave that man my word that I would not involve him in this," he said. A month went by, nothing. The dealer called back, said he was still working to find the gun. Cummings thought the dealer was testing him, making sure he could trust him. From June to October, the dealer called about a half dozen times. They never met; they spoke only by phone. In late October, the dealer called with word that the people who had the rifle were ready to deal. They wanted Cummings' daughter, Krystle, to meet them in Crystal River near Copeland Park, an area with a reputation for drugs. Cummings was hesitant, but he agreed to send her. She took \$1,000 in cash and returned with a gun. Cummings took one look and realized it was the wrong one. He and Krystle drove back to Copeland Park, where they found someone who knew the dealer. They told the man they were willing to pay another grand for the right gun. The man said he'd pass on their message. The next afternoon, another call. The people wanted Cummings to meet them at a gas station in Crystal River at dusk. Bring the reward money, Cummings was told, they'll lead you to the gun. Cummings knew it could be another setup, but by then he had put so much into it and talked to the dealer so many times, he felt an odd sense of trust. What choice did he have? He had little to lose except another \$1,000, a pittance compared to the more than \$50,000 he had spent in legal fees. He didn't have the cash on

Appendix C: (Continued)

hand, so asked his father, a retiree. “I told him I was trying to get what Daniel traded away,” Cummings said. His father gave him the \$1,000. Cummings stuffed the cash in his pocket and drove to Crystal River. Two men waiting at the gas station told him to follow in his car. They drove to a dead-end street in a quiet neighborhood. The daylight was nearly gone. Cummings handed over the wad of cash. The men pointed to a clump of bushes about 50 feet away at the end of the street. Over there, they said, the gun is in the bushes. They drove off. He felt around the bushes. His hand grazed something wrapped in plastic. He stuffed it in his trunk and got out of there as quickly as he could. In a Burger King parking lot, he felt safe to open the trunk.

Full Text (2102 words)

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Appendix C: (Continued)

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Appendix C: (Continued)

Howard said. “Just the hard-working young man. Comes from a good family. Dad’s a shrimper, store owner. Family members, number of marriages, zero. Number of children, zero. I’ve had 18-year-old boys that have three children standing in front of me.”

In the courtroom gallery, the young man’s father relaxed. Danny Cummings knew his only son, his namesake, made bad choices in the few months he had spent on his own. A bit of tough love and a few years of probation were just what he needed. The judge’s voice changed sharply. “God knows where that gun is right now,” Howard said. “God knows how many drug dealers’ hands it has gone through. And God knows how dangerous it is.” The rifle had slid into the underbelly of the drug world, the judge said. It probably already had been sawed off. The only thing sadder than ordering a prison term for a young man with no criminal history and a supportive family, Howard said, is to listen to a victim’s family whose loved one was shot by a drug dealer.

“He is sentenced to 10 years in the Department of A 47-year-old shrimper, Cummings runs a bait shop in Inglis, a one-stoplight town on U.S. 19 just north of Citrus County. Diann works for a medical company in Ocala. They knew their son was into trouble after he moved out and rented a house with his girlfriend. Mrs. Cummings noticed first. She remembered her son falling asleep easily at the bait shop. Her husband told her not to worry, he’s just a kid who’s been out late. He didn’t see the signs.

The Citrus County Sheriff’s Office arrested Daniel on June 26, 2003. His crimes were hardly the work of a pro. He broke into a close friend’s house and stole her hunting rifle, a Savage .243. Her name, Candice Miller, was engraved in Old English- style letters

Appendix C: (Continued)

on the side. Only a few people, including Daniel, knew where she kept it. That's the gun he swapped for a few hundred dollars worth of cocaine. Two weeks later, Daniel and some acquaintances broke into another house and stole a safe with money and guns in it. In mid afternoon, he roped the safe to his purple Ford Ranger and dragged it clattering through a subdivision. The rope snapped, and he abandoned the safe along the road. Daniel was arrested and confessed to both crimes. Cummings knew his son had drug connections in Citrus County. Those were the connections Dad needed to find the gun. His 21-year-old daughter, Krystle, provided the first clue. At a bagel shop in Crystal River she ran into a relative of the drug dealer. Krystle said her father was dangling a \$1,000 reward for the gun. The dealer's relative said she would spread the word. Nearly every weekend, Cummings or Diann would drive about 50 miles north to Lancaster. He showed Diann the gun. He called his son. He called Loren Rhoton, the Tampa lawyer handling Daniel's appeal, and said the gun needed to be returned to its owner. Rhoton called the Citrus County Sheriff's Office; on Nov. 1, Detective Dave Coles came to the bait shop to pick up the gun. Coles asked Cummings how he found it. Cummings was vague, said some friends helped him track it down. The detective told Cummings he would return the gun to Candice Miller. He ended up giving it to her mother instead. Miller was gone; she had enlisted in the Army shortly after Cummings confessed.

"I wanted to go away and do something," she said. "In the Army you have to trust the people you're around because you have to go to war with them - you have to trust them."

Appendix C: (Continued)

She and Daniel used to do homework together. Now 21, she knew he was lying when he said he didn't know anything about the break-in. His betrayal tore her up. The appeals court could not rule on new evidence, so Rhoton did not mention the gun in his request to overturn Daniel's sentence. In a unanimous decision issued Dec. 10, the 5th District Court of Appeal said Daniel's 10-year sentence was legal. But Judge Vincent Torpy wrote a separate opinion that criticized the "unduly harsh" prison term for a property crime by a young, first-time offender. He suggested Daniel could have been sentenced as a youthful offender, which would have exempted him from the provisions of 10-20-Life. Now with Torpy's opinion - and the gun retrieved - Rhoton filed the paperwork: He asked Judge Howard for mercy. At the hearing Feb. 16, Rhoton offered the judge an array of reasons to shorten the sentence. In his 10 months in prison, Daniel had worked an extra job, had taken a college course in computers and had a clean discipline record. This for a young man with no prior criminal record, convicted of a nonviolent crime. Danny Cummings testified. He told the judge how he searched for the rifle, how he met with two strangers in Crystal River, bought it back and returned it to its owner. The judge said none of Daniel's exemplary prison record moved him. Nor did the arguments about the clean record. If not for the rifle, Howard said, "I would have denied this motion without hearing."

But the father had lowered himself into the "seamy sewer world" of drugs for his son and brought a weapon back from that world, Howard said. He ordered that Daniel be released from prison and put on probation. Even the court clerk had tears in her eyes. Does law

Appendix C: (Continued)

enforcement applaud Dad's efforts? Yes and no. They're impressed with what he did, but if they had known what he was up to, they would have discouraged him. "We certainly wouldn't recommend anything that would put a citizen in a potentially dangerous situation," Detective Coles said through a sheriff's spokeswoman. Assistant State Attorney Thomas Boll said he was shocked to hear how Danny Cummings found the gun. "He took a real gamble doing that," Boll said. "That was not a safe situation. Got to be impressed with the father. He was willing to go a long way to help his son. "It's incredible that they were able to get it back. We certainly don't advocate for people doing that. It's very risky."

The day after the hearing, a sunny Thursday afternoon, Danny Cummings pulled his white pickup truck into the parking lot at the Citrus County jail, where they kept Daniel until his release paperwork went through. Krystle was there, as was Kiefer, the family's mild-mannered Rottweiler. Danny Cummings dressed up for his son's release. He wore a dress shirt and tasseled shoes. He waited impatiently, not quite believing it was happening. He had spent most of his life's savings, nearly lost his business and knew more about the legal system than he cared to know - "I ain't lived in the last year" - but it was worth it. Shortly before 6 p.m., the jail's metal door swung open and out stepped Daniel, slender and casual in jailhouse plastic flip-flops. Father and son embraced, grinning. "You any smarter?" Danny Cummings said. His son nodded. "I wanna haul a-- away from here." Anywhere you want, Dad said.

Appendix C: (Continued)

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Appendix D: News Story B

Archives: *St. Petersburg Times*

Tougher rules urged for owners of exotic animals; [STATE Edition]

Nicole Johnson. *St. Petersburg Times*. St. Petersburg, Fla.: Mar 9, 2005.

pg. 3

Abstract (Document Summary)

The new rules don't affect current exotic animal owners like [Gini Valbuena], because they are grandfathered into the former rule and regulated by the state. But county officials hope the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will follow their lead and toughen their rules on exotic animals. The conservation commission regulates the licensing, permitting and monitoring of the hundreds of locations where exotic animals are kept across the state. The animals are divided into three classes. Class I, including tigers and venomous snakes, are considered dangerous and can be used only for business or educational purposes. Class II are potentially dangerous, such as coyotes. Class III are not as dangerous and include certain nonvenomous snakes. People must be licensed to keep Class I and Class II animals, which include tigers, chimpanzees, bears, venomous snakes, coyotes or cougars. A permit is required to keep Class III animals, such as certain crocodiles, raccoons and nonvenomous snakes.

Full Text (535 words)

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Appendix D: (Continued)

Like most infants, Kira sleeps in a soft, cushy baby crib a stone's throw away from her mommy. Soon she'll join her sisters in a hammock in a caged room with walls painted like a jungle. A little weird, you say? Not to monkey-mommy Gini Valbuena, who keeps three chimpanzees - Kira, Kenya, 3, and Tanzee, 7 - in her two-bedroom Clearwater home. "I didn't ask for a bike or a doll at Christmas growing up," Valbuena said. "I just wanted to have a monkey." But a recent decision by Pinellas County to require cages containing livestock and some exotic animals to be set back from property lines has suburban exotic animal owners contemplating heading for the hills. Previously, the cages were not regarded as structures and could sit anywhere on a property. Setback requirements will vary depending on zoning classifications, but will range from at least 7 feet for cages in single-family residences to 25 feet for people in agricultural estate districts. The ordinance directly affects people in unincorporated Pinellas. Municipalities have their own laws, said Will Davis, director of the county's environmental management department. The new rules don't affect current exotic animal owners like Valbuena, because they are grandfathered into the former rule and regulated by the state. But county officials hope the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission will follow their lead and toughen their rules on exotic animals. The issue of exotic animals came to a head for Commissioner Ken Welch when he saw a tiger in a cage on the back of a pickup in his St. Petersburg neighborhood. "I made the rest of the commission aware of what I had seen and contacted our animal services department," Welch said of the incident that occurred in September. "I knew we could

Appendix D: (Continued)

not regulate this, and we aren't attempting to." The conservation commission regulates the licensing, permitting and monitoring of the hundreds of locations where exotic animals are kept across the state. The animals are divided into three classes. Class I, including tigers and venomous snakes, are considered dangerous and can be used only for business or educational purposes. Class II are potentially dangerous, such as coyotes. Class III are not as dangerous and include certain nonvenomous snakes.

Last month, the county sent a letter to the conservation commission outlining concerns and recommendations for ways to better regulate these animals. The county suggests requiring exotic animal owners to submit disaster plans to local emergency management departments and to require venomous snake owners to have antivenin. But officials with the wildlife commission say they encourage dialogue with localities, but they maintain their rules are already some of the most stringent in the country. People must be licensed to keep Class I and Class II animals, which include tigers, chimpanzees, bears, venomous snakes, coyotes or cougars. A permit is required to keep Class III animals, such as certain crocodiles, raccoons and nonvenomous snakes.

"Most don't understand what these owners have to go through to possess these animals," said Capt. John West of the Investigation Division of Florida Fish and Wildlife. "It's not willy nilly."

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