



# The Study of Character and Narrative Function in *The Fall of Gondolin* by J.R.R Tolkien: A Narratology Criticism

Erfin Sugiono<sup>1</sup>, Miftahur Roifah<sup>\*2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Universitas Trunojoyo Madura

\*Corresponding Author: [miftahur.roifah@trunojoyo.ac.id](mailto:miftahur.roifah@trunojoyo.ac.id)

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on narratology in the novel *The Fall of Gondolin* by J.R.R. Tolkien, specifically exploring the character and narrative function. The main objective is to identify and analyze the development of the characters by identifying and analyzing the thirty-one narrative functions present in the story. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive method, using the narrative sections from *The Fall of Gondolin* as the data source. Through this approach, the author describes and explains the narrative functions and character types found in Tolkien's work. The findings of the study reveal fourteen narrative functions: absence, delivery, trickery, reconnaissance, wedding, departure, struggle, rescue, connective incident, beginning counteraction, guidance, receipt of magical agent, villainy, and six types of characters: hero, villain, princess, donor, helper, and dispatcher, as proposed by Vladimir Propp. The study's results demonstrate that the data related to narrative functions can be formulated and used to identify various character types, such as hero, princess, villain, helper, dispatcher, donor, and false hero. These character types can be analyzed by combining the collected data in accordance with the theoretical framework.

**Keywords:** Narratology, Narrative Function, Vladimir Propp, Types of character

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini berfokus pada naratologi dalam novel *The Fall of Gondolin* karya J.R.R. Tolkien, khususnya mengeksplorasi karakter dan fungsi naratif. Tujuan utamanya adalah untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis perkembangan karakter dengan mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis tiga puluh satu fungsi naratif yang ada dalam cerita. Penelitian ini mengadopsi metode deskriptif kualitatif, dengan menggunakan bagian-bagian naratif dari *The Fall of Gondolin* sebagai sumber data. Melalui pendekatan ini, penulis menggambarkan dan menjelaskan fungsi naratif dan tipe karakter yang ditemukan dalam karya Tolkien. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan empat belas fungsi naratif: ketidakhadiran, pengiriman, tipu daya, pengintaian, pernikahan, keberangkatan, perjuangan, penyelamatan, insiden penghubung, awal penanggulangan, bimbingan, penerimaan agen magis, kejahatan, dan enam tipe karakter: pahlawan, penjahat, putri, donor, pembantu, dan pengirim, seperti yang diusulkan oleh Vladimir Propp. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa data yang terkait dengan fungsi naratif dapat dirumuskan dan digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi berbagai tipe karakter, seperti pahlawan, putri, penjahat, pembantu, pengirim, donor, dan pahlawan palsu. Tipe karakter tersebut dapat dianalisis dengan menggabungkan data yang terkumpul sesuai dengan kerangka teori.

**Kata Kunci:** Naratologi, Fungsi Naratif, Vladimir Propp, Jenis Tokoh



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## 1. Introduction

Every story possesses a distinct narrative framework. As Sari (2011) suggests, narratives consistently adhere to a specific structure, setting them apart from other forms of writing. Typically, a narrative text consists of four integral components: orientation, complication, climax, and resolution. Therefore, this is the commonly recognized structure of a narrative text. The same principle applies to characters within a story, as there are

two primary classifications: the protagonist and the antagonist, representing the general character types (Alvinindyta, 2018).

In his theory, Vladimir Propp (1928) explored the characters in a story. He proposed the existence of seven-character spheres, namely the Villain, Princess, Hero, Donor, Provider, Helper, Dispatcher, and False Hero. Propp further elucidated that each of these character spheres encompasses specific functions. It is through these functions that the assignment of characters to their respective spheres is determined. For instance, the function of Wedding (W) designates the character as the Princess, as the Princess is motivated to marry the Hero. Consequently, even if a story primarily focuses on the Hero, researchers cannot attribute the function of Wedding (W) to the Hero. This illustrates that each character sphere possesses a distinct function that is exclusive to that particular sphere and does not overlap with other characters.

Propp (1928) suggests that prior to examining the characters in a story, readers should identify the Thirty-one Function or Narrative Function. This function represents the motives of the characters and is typically found in folktales or fantasy stories. Folktales are narratives that have been transmitted across generations by ancestors. As Mishra (2020) explains, folklore refers to stories that were originally without known authors and were orally conveyed. Additionally, folktales encompass various genres.

*The Fall of Gondolin* by J.R.R. Tolkien is set in a medieval-like world, reminiscent of the Middle Ages. Tolkien does not explicitly disclose the origins of the story. However, it is evident that the novel incorporates unique creatures that differ from those found in our world (Earth), suggesting a blend of mythological elements with imaginative storytelling. The objective of this research is to identify the narrative functions and character types present in the novel *The Fall of Gondolin*.

Several previous studies have explored the application of Vladimir Propp's theory in analyzing various narratives. Marlia (2017) focused on the movie *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, employing Propp's theory of structuralism. She identified around twelve out of the thirty-one functions in the film and observed that Propp's narratology theory lacked a specification for the minimum number of functions required in a story. Similarly, Sundari (2014) analyzed *Sleeping Beauty* using Propp's theory, finding fourteen functions that represented six spheres of action, but not all thirty-one functions were present. Hellystia (2021) examined the horror film *Sleepy Hollow* and discovered approximately twenty-five functions, while emphasizing that the source material deviated from fantasy folktales. In another study by Wama and Nakatsu (2008), twenty Japanese folktales were analyzed using Propp's methodology, revealing functions mentioned by Propp and identifying four distinct storylines unique to Japanese folklore. Furthermore, Harun and Jamaludin (2016) investigated 269 Malaysian folktales, exploring both the thirty-one functions and character distribution. They identified six types of folktale structures, with mediation being the sole element present across all types. These studies collectively contribute to the understanding and application of Propp's theory in analyzing diverse narratives.

## 2. Method

This research utilizes the descriptive qualitative method. The primary data source is J.R.R. Tolkien's novel *The Fall of Gondolin*. The research focuses on analyzing utterances and dialogues from the novel to gain insights into the complex and subjective nature of literary experiences. The data collection methodology for this study consists of four steps:

- a) Thoroughly reading the novel.
- b) Engaging in an intensive reading, focusing on details aligned with the established theoretical framework. Relevant data points are identified and recorded.
- c) Taking comprehensive notes to capture essential information and insights derived from the novel.
- d) Carefully categorizing the collected data into two forms: Partial data, which includes relevant excerpts or segments supporting the research objectives, and Fix data, which comprises specific, verifiable facts and details from the novel. This meticulous process ensures the acquisition of pertinent and reliable information to support the study's analysis and conclusions.

For instance, in an adventure story, if a main character accidentally discovers ancient technological knowledge,

this may serve as a clue indicating the character will receive indirect assistance, representing a donor or provider function. These identified clues can be compiled as fixed data, forming a collection of clue data.

The data analysis process involves three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and drawing/verifying conclusions.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. The Narrative Function

##### 1) One of the members of a family absents ( $\beta$ ). Absentation

Propp's theory identifies three situations of Absentation in narratives, which occur when the Hero's family is absent. The first situation involves the absence of an older generation member ( $\beta_1$ ), while the second situation is characterized by the death of the Hero's parents ( $\beta_2$ ). The third situation occurs when younger generation members are absent ( $\beta_3$ ). For example, if the Hero's parents are away for various reasons, it falls under the second situation of absence. Applying Propp's framework to a specific story, Tuor's parents' death is categorized as Absentation ( $\beta_2$ ). This event takes place in Dor-lómin, where Melkor's troops attack Tuor's parents' territory, seeking control and searching for a hidden kingdom.

*"Rían, wife of Huor, dwelt with the people of the house of Hador; but when rumour came to Dor-lómin of the Nirnaeth Arnoediad [the Battle of Unnumbered Tears], and yet she could hear no news of her lord, she became distraught and wandered forth into the wild alone. There she would have perished" (J.R.R.Tolkien, 2018)*

Tuor's parents ultimately died at The Battle of Unnumbered Tears. Some residents who tried to escape were captured and made slaves. Thanks to Tuor's parents sacrifice, Melkor's troops lose track of the Noldor who wanted to escape to the hidden kingdom.

##### 2) The function of Mediation; Misfortune or lack is made known (B). the Connective Incident

Propp explains the concept of the connective incident, a function that introduces the hero into the story. The connective incident is where the hero typically enters the narrative (Propp, 1928). Depending on the type of hero, Seeker-Hero or Victim-Hero, different requirements and objectives are involved. The Seeker-Hero is usually searching for a kidnapped person or responding to a request for help from a third party. On the other hand, the Victim-Hero experiences misfortune and faces challenges such as being expelled from home or confronting slave traders. The focus of this function lies in how the hero can leave their home, regardless of the cost.

*"Thus thou shalt walk under my shadow," said Ulmo. 'But tarry no more; for in the lands of Anar and in the fires of Melkor it will not endure. Wilt thou take up my errand?' (J.R.R.Tolkien, 2018)*

Tuor is a Seeker-Hero, where he goes on a journey based on his own desires and Ulmo's request to save Gondolin. Tuor's way of saving Gondolin is by conveying a message from Ulmo. This message is Tuor's main objective. While the way to save Gondolin is Tuor's wish. When compared with the situation described in Propp (B2). So, what Tuor did had the same pattern. Propp (1928), explains in (B2), the hero dispatched directly. This dispatch is in the form of a command or a request and of course Tuor receives the request from Ulmo.

##### 3) The seekers agree to counteraction (C). Beginning Counteraction

Beginning counteraction is a continuation or paired function of the connective incident. This function can also be called the response from the Seeker (Propp, 1928). So, this function is specifically for Seeker-Hero. So, make it sure that the type of Hero is a Seeker.

*"Thus, thou shalt walk under my shadow," said Ulmo. 'But tarry no more; for in the lands of Anar and in the fires of Melkor it will not endure. Wilt thou take up my errand?' 'I will, Lord,' said Tuor. (J.R.R.Tolkien, 2018)*

Propp's explanation is also quite simple. Where when a Hero is given an order or request. The Hero usually responds with "Permit us to go in search of your princess", etc. (Propp, 1928). Sometimes this form of answer is not vocal, but a volitional decision, of course, precedes the search.

#### 4) The hero leaves home (↑). Departure

In storytelling, Departure and Absentation are distinct functions. Absentation refers to different types of absence, while Departure involves the hero embarking on a long journey and encountering new characters along the way. Departure provides detailed accounts of the hero's adventure, unlike the Return function, which summarizes the journey. To identify the Departure function, the hero's journey should be sufficiently detailed. Additionally, there are two types of heroes: Seeker-Heroes, who embark on a quest or search, and Victim-Heroes, who face various challenges without a specific search objective. Departure represents the hero leaving home, while Victim-Heroes focus on survival rather than searching for something.

In this novel, Tuor actually seems like a victim-hero. It is because the original text does not tell how Tuor lived before meeting Noldoli. But in the story *The Last version*. Original text is a kind of chapter in novel but it does not write as chapter in the novel. Tuor, previously a former slave. His entire family died in the war and he became a slave to the morgoths. After that somehow, he was able to escape and met Noldoli.

*'Thus, thou shalt walk under my shadow,' said Ulmo. 'But tarry no more; for in the lands of Anar and in the fires of Melkor it will not endure. Wilt thou take up my errand?' 'I will, Lord,' said Tuor. (J.R.R.Tolkien, 2018)*

However, if you read it in detail, Tuor is a seeker-hero. First, the Tuor goes on a journey to look for an object. The object is none other than the Gondolin. Propp, does not explain in detail like other functions. For example, Propp does not explain details such as the requirements for seeker-heroes. What Propp said is just a brief example and the difference between two types of heroes. One thing is certain that Tuor became a Seeker-hero because Tuor's adventure began when he decided to look for Gondolin. This creates a reversal with Victim-heroes. Where he just needs to focus on surviving.

#### 5) The hero acquires the use of a magical agent (F). Receipt of a Magical Agent

According to Propp (1928), Magical Agents, which can be living creatures or objects, often appear suddenly to assist the hero. In Tuor's quest to find the kingdom of Gondolin, he frequently encounters these agents who guide him to his destination. For instance, two Noldors guide Tuor through the Mithrim cave, and later he is aided by a Narwhal, Sealion, and Gnome. These agents appear at opportune moments, fulfilling the function of guidance. Propp explains that such agents appear on their own accord and are provided by a hidden benefactor who supports the hero. The appearance of these magical agents aligns with Propp's explanation (1928).

*"Gelmir and Arminas guided him through the tunnel to a place where they stopped, and he questioned them about Turgon, saying that that name strangely moved him whenever he heard it. To this they gave him no reply, but bade him farewell and went back up the long stairs in the darkness." (J.R.R.Tolkien, 2018)*

The first agents are two Noldors who guide Tuor. The appearance of these two figures occurs when Tuor has just discovered the Gate to the Gondolin. At first Tuor was following the spring water without knowing why and finally he came to a cave. At that time, Tuor met the two Noldors and told Tuor that he had found what he was looking for. Not only that, the two Noldors guided Tuor to get out of the cave. So, is it possible if there can be more than one agent? This will be analyzed further in types of character.

*"Beyond Valinor I have never seen or heard, save that of a certainty there are the dark waters of the Outer Seas, that have no tides, and they are very cool and thin, that no boats can sail upon their bosom or fish swim within their depths, save the enchanted fish of Ulmo and his magic car." (J.R.R.Tolkien, 2018)*

Next is the second agent, after Tuor comes out of the cave. Tuor meets Narwhal and Sealion. Narwhal and Sealion are the second Guides. Logically, when crossing the vast sea, it takes at least a month or even a year, but for Tuor he only traveled like on land, he met Ulmo and was given a vehicle. The vehicle is a car. Based on notes provided by Tolkien. This car is a vehicle similar to a horse-drawn carriage. However, the difference between the carriage usually and Ulmo's is the animal that pulls it. However, these animals and

vehicles are the Magical Agent and Object of the Donor. Making Narwhal one of the Magical Agents in the story.

*“I will send one to thee out of the wrath of Ossë, and thus shalt thou be guided: yea, the last mariner of the last ship that shall seek into the West until the rising of the Star. And this mariner was Voronwë, who told his story to Tuor beside the sea at Vinyamar.” (J.R.R. Tolkien, 2018)*

The last agent is held by a Gnome named Voronwë. Voronwë explained that when Tuor was just sailing around Vinyamar, he met a Gnome named Voronwë. Voronwë is one of the Guides given by Ulmo. Voronwë's task is to take Tuor into Gondolin.

## **6) The spatial transference of the hero to the object of search. (G). Guidance**

According to Propp, there are several situations where spatial transference occurs in storytelling. It can involve the hero being transported to a different location in search of an object. Examples include flying through the air, traveling on land or water, being led or shown the route, using means of communication, or following tracks. In the novel *The Fall of Gondolin*, Tuor is guided by Noldoli (gnomes) through dark passages and later aided by Ulmo, the Lord of Waters. Ulmo helps Tuor through a hidden cave made by the Noldoli. This aligns with Propp's examples. Ulmo's guidance is intentional, while another character, Ivdn, leads the hero indirectly. The novel also depicts Tuor's journey by boat and land, similar to Propp's descriptions. The guidance provided by Ulmo and the Noldoli fulfills the function of guidance (G), and in Tuor's case, it precedes the function of departure (↑) as he embarks on his journey.

## **7) The villain doing reconnaissance (ε). Reconnaissance**

Reconnaissance is a function where the villain gathers information about a place, victims, or valuable objects. Propp provides examples of situations, but his explanation is unclear. The aim of reconnaissance is to obtain information, such as the location of children or valuable items. The obtained information is used in the next function, delivery. If the villain receives answers during reconnaissance, they are included in the delivery function.

*“Falling then into such fear the Noldoli soon after left him and he fared alone amid the hills, and they would prove ill afterwards, for 'Melko has many eyes. 'Now it was so chanced that not long after Meglin went to the hills for the getting of ore, and straying in the mountains alone was taken by some of the Orcs prowling there, and they would do him evil and terrible harm, knowing him to be a man of the Gondothlim. alone was taken by some of the Orcs prowling there, and they would do him evil and terrible harm, knowing him to be a man of the Gondothlim.” (J.R.R. Tolkien, 2018)*

On Tuor's journey, Melkor is often mentioned as having spies, and strangely, on Tuor's journey he doesn't meet any Melko. Victim is clearly seen in the character Meglin. He was quite unlucky after accidentally meeting a herd of orcs. Of course, at this time the orcs were scouting out the location of Gondolin's kingdom and accidentally met Meglin. This is the main idea from the reconnaissance of “The Fall of Gondolin”. Next, Meglin was brought by the leader of the Orcs, namely Balrog. With several promises such as Tuor's death and possession of Idril. Meglin agrees to collaborate with the Melkors. This situation is said to be exactly the same as the situation above.

## **8) The villain attempts to deceive his victim to get him or his belongings (η). Trickery**

This function was discovered when Villainy tried to persuade Victim in order to take possession of him or his belongings. There are three situations first, the villain uses persuasion (η1) such as a witch tries to have a ring accepted. Second, by direct application of magical meanings (η2), for example the stepmother gives a sleeping pill to her stepdaughter. Lastly, using other means of deception or coercion, which is like a trap or pressure (Propp, 1928).

*“Then the Orcs were wroth, and having heard these matters were yet for slaying him there ...; but Meglin catching at a straw said: 'Think ye not that ye would rather please your master if ye bore to his feet so noble a captive, that he might hear my tidings of himself and judge of their verity? 'Now the end of this was that Melko aided by the cunning of Meglin devised a plan for the overthrow of Gondolin. For this Meglin's reward*

*was to be a great captaincy among the Orcs – yet Melko purposed not in his heart to fulfill such a promise – but Tuor and Eärendel should Melko burn, and Idril be given to Meglin's arms – and such promises was that evil one fain to redeem. Yet as meed of treachery did Melko threaten Meglin with the torment of the Balrogs.” (J.R.R.Tolkien, 2018)*

In Propp's theory, the described situation involves Meglin seeking stones but getting caught by orcs. Meglin offers a proposal to the orcs, revealing Gondolin's secrets in exchange for his desires. It may seem like persuasion, but it's actually trickery. Meglin, with higher status in Gondolin, becomes powerless outside and is manipulated by the Balrog. The Balrog offers promises that Meglin can't refuse, using threats as a form of persuasion. This showcases the Villain's persuasive tactics.

### **9) The villain receives information about the victim. (ζ). Delivery**

This function is useful for questions and answers that occur between the villain and the victim. Villains are also not required to ask questions directly, such as:

*“The stepmother does not directly ask about her stepdaughter, the mirror answers her: “There is no doubt of your beauty; but you have a stepdaughter, living with knights in the deep forest, and she is even more beautiful.” (Propp, 1928)*

Meglin is the victim, this is because in a short note in Sketch (p. 124) it is said that when Meglin was captured by the Orcs in the mountains "Now it so chanced that not long after Meglin went to the hills for the getting of ore, and straying in the mountains alone were taken by some of the Orcs prowling there". Generally, finding this function will mostly appear in the dialog. But this novel has little dialogue.

### **10) The villain causes harm to a member of the family (A). Villainy**

Villainy is the function of the main character but the evil version or what is usually called the antagonist. Usually, to find this character by looking for a character who wants to harm the main character and his family. Propp also explained that there are 19 situations that allow this character to appear.

*“Now therefore Melko's goblins held all the gate and a large part of the walls on either side, when numbers of the Swallow and those of the Rainbow were thrust to doom.” (J.R.R.Tolkien, 2018)*

The destruction of the Gondolin Kingdom was caused by a monster attack. This monster is controlled or under the command of one of the Valar. He was referred to as Melkor who would later be replaced as Morgoth. The two names only change terms or names, it doesn't mean there are two characters. They are one. This character will later become the Villainy in the story by mobilizing his troops to destroy the Kingdom.

### **11) Wedding**

Function W in Propp's theory is the Wedding Function, where the hero marries a princess. There are six situations explained by Propp, including the hero marrying the princess for his achievements or receiving compensation instead of the princess. In the case of Tuor in *The Fall of Gondolin*, he marries Idril, the princess, and becomes the king of Gondolin, fitting the pattern (Wxy). However, Tuor does not immediately ascend the throne, making situations (Wx) and (Wy) impossible.

### **12) Rescue of the hero from pursuit (Rs). Rescue**

There are various types of tales within the rescue function, some following familiar patterns and others introducing new elements. Propp's explanation lacks specific details about recurring villains. The rescue function consists of 10 situations, and one of them, "The hero flees, placing obstacles in the path of his pursuer (Rs2)," aligns well with the available evidence. This situation typically occurs during the rising action of the story, adding excitement and tension. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fall of Gondolin*, Tuor prepares for the rescue by gathering the people and obstructing the pursuers. They encounter obstacles and make their escape towards the Encircling Mountains. Galdor, a leader, emphasizes the urgency of reaching safety. During the escape, Galdor and Glorfindel fight against Orcs, and Thorondor, the King of Eagles, intervenes, leading to the defeat of Melkor's forces.

### 13) The hero is pursued (Pr). Chase, Pursuit

The Pursuit function in storytelling involves the hero being chased. According to Propp, there are 7 possible situations within Pursuit. One of these situations is when the pursuer attempts to kill the hero, such as pounding a dead tooth into his head. In the novel, the Pursuit function occurs twice. First, at the beginning of the story when Tuor escapes from slavery, and secondly during the Destruction of Gondolin and the subsequent escape. However, the first example cannot serve as direct evidence of the Pursuit function since it combines multiple functions. Tuor's pursuit at the beginning highlights his misfortune and positions him as a Victim-Hero. In line with the Rescue function, the true pursuit revolves around Tuor's escape for the survival of his family, with the added element of being saved by someone else. This person's appearance combines elements of the Rescue function.

#### 3.2. Types of Character

Propp's analysis of folktales reveals interesting patterns in character roles. Characters are defined by their specific actions, such as donors and helpers. Characters can also fulfill multiple roles and undergo transformations. The roles of grateful animals and the witch showcase the fluidity of character functions. Sometimes, a single action can be distributed among multiple characters. Propp's analysis emphasizes evaluating characters based on their deeds and functions rather than their intentions or emotions. In the novel, Tuor serves as the hero, while Meglin is a victim rather than a true villain. Idril represents the princess role, and finding helpers is challenging due to the involvement of multiple characters. Ulmo acts as both a donor and a dispatcher in the story.

### 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to identify the narrative functions present in "The Fall of Gondolin" and determine the characters that drive the story's development. After careful evaluation, a total of 28 data points were collected from the novel. The researcher employed Propp's (1928) theory to analyze the narrative functions and seven-character types, supplemented by various philosophical interpretations to aid in interpreting complex data. Out of the 31 narrative functions identified, 15 were found in the data, including Absentation, Wedding, Trickery, Delivery, Reconnaissance, Villainy, Connective Incident, Beginning Counteraction, Rescue, Pursuit, Struggle, Receipt of a Magical Agent, and Departure.

The research findings indicate the presence of 13 narrative functions represented by 28 instances in the data. However, it is important to note that Propp did not claim that every folktale encompasses all of these functions. The presence or absence of certain functions may be influenced by cultural factors or the genre of the story, in this case, fantasy fiction and high fantasy. By utilizing these 13 narrative functions, six distinct character types were identified: Hero, Princess, Villain, Donor, Dispatcher, and Helper.

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