STRUCTURE OF MYTH IN AXIE OH'S *THE GIRL WHO FELL BENEATH THE SEA*

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Abstract. This research is about the structure of myth in Axie Oh's *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea*. The research aims to analyze the forms, structures, functions, and types of myth within the text. The theory is grounded in Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale,* which separates narrative into 31 narrative functions, which are specific actions or events performed by characters that drive the story forward. The writer of this thesis research employs a qualitative method, utilizing descriptive and textual analysis of the novel within the framework of structuralism. The finding reveals that the forms of myth are prominently featured through the hero, divine figures, mythical creatures, and magical items. The structure of the myth follows 14 of Vladimir Propp's narrative functions: Initial Situation, Absention, Violation, Counter-action, Departure, Guidance, Villainy, Mediation, First Donor Function, Struggle, Receipt of a Magical Agent, Liquidation, Return, and Wedding which trace Mina's progression from disruption to resolution of the Sea God's curse. These functions act as key drivers, propelling the plot and fostering Mina's character development, particularly her courage and empathy. These findings underscore the novel's roots in Korean folklore, notably the Shim Cheong tale, while resonating with the universal structure of storytelling, enriching our understanding of how traditional myths are reinterpreted in modern literature.

Keywords: forms, function, myth, structure, Vladimir Propp's

INTRODUCTION

Myths have always been a part of life: they are present sometimes in movies, in television shows, and in books (Gimenez, 2020). Myths form the basis of every nation's cultural identity, embedding shared values, origins, and moral lessons into the collective consciousness. Myth as "a symbolic narrative, usually of unknown origin and at least partly traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events and that is especially associated with religious belief" (Shynkaruk et al., 2018). The creation of myths is influenced by a multitude of factors, including historical events, environmental conditions, and spiritual or religious traditions. Mythos is the Greek word for 'plot 'or 'story' (Gijo & George, 2021). It refers to the events and characters that are organized in a story, be it an ancient legend or a modern film. For example, the myth of a hero's journey follows a pattern:

challenge, struggle, and victory. Myths often appear as explanations for celestial events, changing seasons, and human suffering, offering comfort and a sense of order in an unpredictable world. Mythological events are far removed from the present. They symbolize not only the past, but also a special form of creation, the first things that precede the present.

Myths have a deeper meaning and are written in a way to convey them (Zhu, 2023). Myths are generalized images of a symbolic nature that include not only the existing world, but also the desired world, the world of hope, in which the key interests of the tribal group are embodied. Weschcke (2024) stated that all creation myths have certain similarities, but each culture's mythology reflects the nature of reality as perceived by people and, in particular, the "seekers" who sought to explain the nature of the world and humanity's relationship with the forces of the universe and life. As people have limitations in understanding and explaining natural phenomena, they create myths to acquire knowledge that is more easily accepted by society.

This research will reveal how the structure of myth preserves and transforms traditional storytelling patterns into modern storytelling patterns, contributing to our understanding of narrative theory's ongoing relevance in analyzing modern fiction. Based on the statement above, the research question can be formulated:

1. What are the forms of myth in the novel *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea*?
2. What are the structure of myth in the novel *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea*?
3. What are the function of myths in the novel *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea*?
4. What are the types of myth in the novel *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea*?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The patterns of ancient myths are repeated in modern media and literature, with minor adjustments to make them fresh and interesting in the modern context, due to an increased depth of imagination and ability (Evans, 2018). In most religions, there is a central quest by the heroes that becomes the narrative structure of the religious scriptures (Gijo & George, 2021). The narrative study is a vital aspect of literary work, particularly in a novel, a short story, a drama, and a narrative poem (Putri & Nurhadi, 2019)The expert who explained the narrative functions is Vladimir Propp. He wrote the *Morphology of the Folktale* book in 1968 as a reference for researching the narrative function in classic or modern folktales. The characters are always found in every narrative text. Propp separates narrative into thirty-one narrative functions, which are specific actions or events performed by characters that drive the story forward.

Table 1. Propp's 31 Narrative Function

No.	Symbol	Function Name	Description
0	α	Initial Situation	A family member is introduced
1	β	Absention	A family member is absent
2	γ	Interdiction	A prohibition is addressed to the hero (or the reverse)
3	δ	Violation	The prohibition is violated
4	ε	Reconnaissance	The villain attempts to gain information
5	ζ	Delivery	The villain gains information about the victim
6	η	Trickery	The villain attempts to deceive the victim
7	θ	Complicity	The victim is deceived
8	A	Villainy	The villain causes harm to a family member; or
8	a	Lack	A family member lacks something or desires something

9	B	Mediation	Misfortune becomes known; hero is dispatched
10	C	Counter-action	Hero (seeker) agrees to counteraction
11	↑	Departure	Hero leaves home
12	D	1st Donor Function	Hero is tested, receives magical agent, or is helped
13	E	Hero's Reaction	Hero reacts to the donor's actions
14	F	Receipt of a Magical Agent	Hero acquires the magical agent
`15	G	Guidance	Hero is led to the object of quest
16	H	Struggle	Hero and villain engage in direct combat
17	I	Branding	Hero is marked (given a brand or sign)
18	J	Victory	Villain is defeated
19	K	Liquidation	Initial misfortune or lack is resolved
20	↓	Return	Hero returns
21	Pr	Pursuit, Chase	Hero is pursued
22	Rs	Rescue	Hero is rescued from pursuit
23	O	Unrecognized Arrival	Hero arrives home unrecognized
24	L	Unfounded Claims	False hero presents unfounded claims
25	M	Difficult Task	A difficult task is proposed to the hero
26	N	Solution	Task is resolved
27	Q	Recognition	Hero is recognized
28	Ex	Exposure	False hero or villain is exposed
29	T	Transfiguration	Hero is given a new appearance
30	U	Punishment	Villain is punished
31	W	Wedding	Hero married and ascends the throne

Propp's approach for this study is useful to provide a method to identify key plot points and character roles, enabling a detailed structural analysis of how the novel adapts and transforms traditional mythic storytelling.

Literature is not created in isolation but is shaped by recurring archetypes, symbols, and narrative patterns that originate in ancient myths and belief systems. Archetypes are models or basic patterns of human personality and character, and can be found in every aspect of life because archetypes emerge and develop from the psychology that exists in every person without being tuned in to it (Afriasti & Litaay, 2022). Symbols serve as an explanation of the story, a single object, a series of objects, a physical representation, a shape, a gesture, a sound, a color, and a scent (Jihan & Litaay, 2023). In his seminal work *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye introduced the concept of four myths or narrative archetypes. *Mythoi* (plural of *mythos*) is a term Frye uses to refer to the four narrative patterns that, he argues, structure myth (Khan, 2022). He proposes four mythoi: mythos of summer, autumn, winter, and spring, which symbolize four literary genres (Naseem, 2023). Northrop Frye suggests that literature can be divided into two main worlds: the world of romance, associated with innocence and idealism, and the world of realism, associated with experience and the complexities of life. Within these two worlds, there are four primary movements: Romance: This movement occurs within the world of innocence, involving idealized characters and idealistic quests. Realism: This movement takes place within the world of experience, focusing on the challenges and complexities of life. Tragedy: This movement is a downward spiral, starting from innocence and leading to a tragic fall, often caused by a fatal flaw or external forces. Comedy: This movement is an upward spiral, beginning with a complicated situation

and culminating in a happy resolution, often involving a return to a state of innocence or a new understanding of the world (Nimavat, 2022).

METHOD
This research design uses a qualitative descriptive design. Qualitative descriptive studies aim to provide a comprehensive summary of events (Ayton, 2023). Qualitative methods rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study employs a structuralism narrative analysis combining Vladimir Propp's 31 Narrative Functions and Northrop Frye's Four Mythoi to examine the plot construction and mythic archetypes in the novel. Structuralism analysis assumes the way a story is told is as important as the content of the story (Mcleod, 2024).

The data used in this research are narrative textual units taken directly from the novel *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea* by Axie Oh. These consist of phrases, sentences, dialogues, narration, character actions**,** and descriptions that contain elements of myth.

The researcher employed the following techniques for gathering data: An important step in this research involves a careful and repeated reading of Axie Oh's novel, *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea*. Through this careful analysis, the researcher aims to gain a deep understanding of the text, identify key mythological elements, and extract relevant information to support the research objectives. After a detailed reading, the researcher carefully wrote down detailed notes. These notes served as a valuable tool for analyzing the specific structural elements used in the text, assisting in the identification of patterns, symbolism, and thematic relationships.

The steps for data analysis are as follows:

1. **Data Identification**: Relevant textual data from the novel *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea* was identified and selected based on the presence of mythological elements, including narrative structure, symbolic motifs, and thematic functions.
2. **Data Classification**: Each piece of data was categorized according to the four research questions: (1) forms of myth, (2) structure of myth, (3) functions of myth, and (4) types of myth based on Northrop Frye's theory.
3. **Theoretical Mapping**:
   o For structure and function, data were analyzed using Vladimir Propp's 31 narrative functions to trace the progression of the protagonist's journey.
   o For type, Northrop Frye's theory of the four mythoi (comedy, romance, tragedy, irony) was applied to categorize the dominant seasonal myth mode.
4. **Interpretation**: Each data point was paraphrased and interpreted to reveal its symbolic meaning, function in the plot, and relation to myth theory.
5. **Synthesis**: The analysis's results were synthesized to answer the research questions and provide a deeper understanding of how myths are constructed within the novel.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
A. Forms of Myth
1. The Hero
Mina as the main character, makes a transformative journey to the Spirit Realm, in line with the first research question, which seeks to identify mythic forms in the narrative. Mina undertakes sacrifice, courage, and determination, characteristics of mythological heroes who navigate trials to achieve greater goals. *"Take me instead!" I whip out my knife and make a deep slash across my palm, raising it up high above my head. "I will*

be the Sea God's bride. I pledge my life to him!" (Oh, 2022;5). Mina offered herself to replace Shim Cheong, quickly cutting his palm with a knife and raising her arms as an oath to become the bride of the Sea God and give her life to him. Mina's statement and action of cutting off her palm to devote her life to the Sea God encapsulates the archetype of the mythological hero, characterized by selflessness, courage and willingness to confront divine forces for the greater good.

2. God and Goddess

These deities transcend their roles as supernatural beings, becoming reflections of the universal human experience. Their presence deepens the novel's exploration of destiny, death, and self-discovery, making the spiritual world feel both awesome and intimate. The Sea God embodies the unfathomable forces that shape existence. "*Some say the Sea God is a very old man. Some say he's a man in his prime, tall as a tree with a beard as black as slate. And others believe he might even be a dragon himself, made of wind and water."* (Oh, 2022:8) His changing form reflects the fickle nature of fate, inspiring both respect and fear. Shiki, the god of death, symbolizes mortality, an inescapable truth that Mina must face. He represents transformation, showing that acceptance of loss can lead to growth. Her presence adds emotional weight to Mina's journey, reminding the reader of the fragility of life while offering serenity in existence. The Goddess of the Moon and Memory, enigmatic and unknown to Mina, represents forgotten truths and subconscious guidance. Connected to the moon, she becomes a subtle force that illuminates Mina's path.

3. Myth Creatures

These creatures, deeply rooted in Korean mythology and resonant with universal mythic archetypes, not only enrich the novel's mythological framework but also serve critical narrative functions that shape the protagonist Mina's heroic journey. The dragon, referenced in the Sea God's potential form as "a dragon himself, made of wind and water". *"Beneath the boat moves a massive silver-blue dragon. Its snakelike body circles the boat, the ridges of its scaled back breaking the surface of the water." (Oh, 2022;4).* The Imugi, described as a "powerful water snake" serve as supernatural entities that likely initiate the narrative's central crisis or lack. *"In my soul form, I am a powerful water snake. Like a dragon, but without its magic… Only then can we be elevated from snakes to dragons. (Oh, 2022;85).* In Korean mythology, dragons and Imugis are associated with water, weather, and cosmic authority, often linked to natural disasters like storms or floods when their balance is disrupted. the Sea God's dragon form likely embodies the divine force responsible for the storms or curse afflicting Mina's village

4. Magical Items

In the novel, the Red String of Fate and the Dragon's Pearl are crucial mythical objects that drive the narrative and enrich the mythological framework. The Red String of Fate appears as a ribbon on Mina's palm when she makes her blood oath to the Sea God, acts as a supernatural tool that connects her to a destined person, or guides her towards her ultimate destiny. Its 'floating on air' into the mist, highlighting its role as a divine guide, enabling Mina to overcome uncertainties and trials in the Spirit Realm. The dragon's pearl, which promises that *'your wish will leap'* embodies divine power and is similar to Yeouiju in Korean mythology: the wish-granting orb associated with dragons (Monika, 2020). These pearls most

likely provide Mina with the means to resolve the narrative's major crises, such as the storm that engulfs her village or awakening the 'sleeping' Sea God.

B. Structure of Myth

The following analysis results based on Vladimir Propp's thirty-one narrative functions can be found as 14 narrative structures, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 2. Structure of Myth in *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea*

No.	Fuction	Symbol	Function Name	Description
1	0	α	Initial Situation	Mina is introduced to village life under the curse of the Sea God and the tradition of sacrifice.
2	1	β	Absention	Joon went secretly to the ritual ship to save Shim Cheong. His departure was the trigger for Minas to act.
3	3	δ	Violation	Mina breaks the sacred rule by carrying a knife and joining the ship in order to save Joon.
4	10	C	Counter-action	Mina decided to replace Shim Cheong as the bride of the Sea God.
5	11	↑	Departure	After her vow, Mina is cast into the sea and enters the Spirit Realm.
6	`15	G	Guidance	The Red String of Fate appears and leads her to the Sea God's palace, acting as a guide toward her destined quest.
7	8	A	Villainy	The storm curse caused by imbalance in the Spirit Realm is the central threat that Mina must resolve.
8	9	B	Mediation	Mina learns of the Sea God's suffering and realizes that the curse stems from emotional and spiritual emptiness.
9	12	D	1st Donor Function	Three masked spirits test Mina's identity and sincerity as the "bride." She passes their trials and proves herself worthy.
10	16	H	Struggle	Mina battles sea snakes, symbolizing the physical challenges she must overcome in the Spirit Realm.
11	14	F	Receipt of a Magical Agent	Mina receives the dragon pearl from Shin, granting her a wish to restore balance between worlds.
12	19	K	Liquidation	Mina uses the dragon pearl to revive the Sea God and the Emperor, ending the curse and restoring harmony.
13	20	↓	Return	Mina awakens in her family garden with Shim Cheong, signifying her return to the human world.
14	31	W	Wedding	Mina reunites symbolically with Shin ("Let's go home"), marking a union of love and a hopeful new beginning.

The analysis of narrative functions highlights the pivotal role of myth in structuring the plot, as evidenced by the application of Vladimir Propp's thirty-one narrative functions.

C. Function of Myth

1. Initial Situation (0: α)

Vladimir Propp's Initial Situation (Function 0: α) is not an actual function, but rather an initial narrative element that introduces the setting, characters, and context, often focusing on a family or community. In this novel, the Initial Situation is evident in the opening scene, where Mina's family and village are introduced amidst the backdrop of the curse of the Sea God, which has plagued the land with storms for a century. The narrative begins by showing Mina, her brother Joon, their grandmother, and the village tradition of sacrificing a bride to appease the Sea God. Quote, *"The myths of my people say only a true bride of the Sea God can bring an end to his insatiable wrath,"* summarises the society's beliefs and family dynamics, particularly Mina's close bond with Joon and her awareness of the village's suffering.

2. Absention (1: β)

Absence occurs when a member of a family or community leaves home, either voluntarily or involuntarily, creating a disruption that drives the narrative. Absence creates a void or vulnerability that motivates the hero's actions, marking the first step towards conflict and ultimately the quest.'*My brother stands before me, familiar features twisted in a scowl',* highlighting Joon's absence from the family's midst and the danger he poses. The function of Absence is crucial in Mina's journey, as Joon's departure becomes the starting point in her transition from passive to active participant.

3. Violation (3: δ)

A violation of an Interdiction occurs when a rule or warning, known as an Interdiction, is broken. This *Violation* worsens the situation, as it risks Mina's life and draws attention to Joon's presence, adding to the conflict caused by the Sea God's curse. The Violation of Interdiction is crucial to Mina's journey because it marks her first bold step toward becoming a hero. *"The rules are simple: No warriors. No women, besides the Sea God's bride. No weapons... My hand curls around the knife hidden beneath my short jacket"*, shows Mina's deliberate act of breaking the rule, knowing the danger it brings. By breaking the rule, Mina puts herself in danger to protect Joon, showing her courage and love for her family.

4. Counter-action (10: C)

This function shows the hero taking responsibility to solve the conflict, often after mediation, where the problem becomes clear. Counteraction marks the hero's choice to fight back, starting their active role in the story and leading to later actions. *'Take me instead!' I whip out my knife and make a deep slash across my palm.'* In the novel, the *Counteraction* function occurs when Mina decides to become the Sea God's bride to save her brother Joon, who is in danger for sneaking onto the ritual boat.

5. Derpature (11: ↑)

Departure is a key moment in Mina's journey because it takes her from her familiar village to a strange, magical world where she must face new challenges. The quotation, *"The Spirit Realm is a vast and magical place, but the greatest of all its wonders is the Sea God's city"*, describes Mina's transition from the human world to the Spirit Realm.

6. Guidance (15: G)

This function involves helpers, magical objects, or signs that show the hero the way. Guidance helps the hero move closer to their goal by giving them direction in a new or challenging world. In the novel, the Guidance function is seen when the Red String of Fate leads Mina through the Spirit Realm toward the Sea God's palace after she arrives there. This happens where she enters the Spirit Realm to save her brother Joon and stop the Sea God's curse.*" I follow the ribbon into the white fog"*, shows how the thread directs Mina toward her goal of finding the Sea God. The Red String of Fate, a magical thread tied to Mina's finger, glows and pulls her forward, guiding her through the unfamiliar world.

7. Villainy (8: A)

This function starts the main problem in the story, breaking the balance and pushing the hero to act. Villainy sets up the hero's quest to solve the problem or fill the Lack. In *the*

novel, the *Villainy* function is mainly a *Lack* caused by the Sea God's curse, which sends storms that destroy Mina's village and the human world. The curse happens because Shin is the true Sea God, but he gave his soul to another, and the emperor is missing from his role, creating a *Lack* of balance between the human and Spirit Realms.

8. Mediation (9: B)

This function happens when the hero learns about the problem or harm and is sent or chooses to act to solve the problem. This function shows the hero stepping up to start their quest. The *Mediation* function appears when Mina meets the Sea God and realizes his deep sadness is tied to the curse harming her village. This moment builds on the *Villainy* of the Sea God's curse, which causes storms due to a *Lack* of balance in the Spirit Realm.

9. First Function of the Donor (12: D)

The donor's test checks if the hero deserves help, like a magical object or advice, which they need to solve the story's problem. This function prepares the hero for their quest by showing their character. The First Function of the Donor occurs when Mina encounters three masked figures in the Spirit Realm shortly after her Departure. These figures, later revealed as spirits who assist her, question her identity and purpose as the Sea God's bride, testing her resolve and understanding.

10. Struggle (16: H)

This function shows the hero's bravery in a critical moment. The Struggle tests the hero's strength or resolve, moving them closer to solving the story's problem. The *Struggle* function occurs when Mina faces a group of sea snakes in the Spirit Realm, a dangerous obstacle tied to her quest to end the Sea God's curse.

11. Receipt of a Magical Agent (14: F)

The magical agent helps the hero face obstacles and move closer to success. The Receipt of a Magical Agent occurs when Mina receives the dragon's pearl from Shin after he remembers his memories. She uses the pearl to return the emperor and end the curse, fitting Propp's idea that a magical agent helps the hero succeed.

12. Liquidation (19: K)

Liquidation is a key moment that ends the story's trouble, leading to the hero's success. This quote *"'I wish for the world to be as it should be,' I whisper, 'the emperor restored to his rightful place, and Shin to be as he once was, the Sea God and protector of our people'"* shows Mina uses the dragon's pearl to restore the emperor to his rightful role and Shin as the true Sea God, ending the curse that caused storms in the human world. By restoring the emperor, Mina stops the curse, saving her village and fulfilling her quest

13. Return (20: ↓)

Return shows the hero re-entering their familiar world, often changed by their journey, and sets up the story's conclusion, like recognition or reward. The *Return* function occurs when Mina wakes up in her family's garden in the human world after her time in the Spirit Realm, where she worked to end the Sea God's curse. he quotation, *"I wake to sunlight in my eyes. I'm lying at the edge of the pond in my family's garden, with*

Shim Cheong beside me. Everything appears as it was a month ago", shows Mina returning to her village, accompanied by Shim Cheong. The return to a familiar place, with the world appearing unchanged, marks Mina's transition back from her heroic quest.

14. Wedding (31: W)
The wedding function is represented symbolically when Mina and Shin, a key ally and romantic interest, choose to start a new life together after Mina ends the Sea God's curse. The quotation, *"'Mina.' Shin waits, holding one hand toward me. I take it, and with a smile, I tell him, 'Let's go home'"* shows Mina accepting Shin's hand, symbolizing their bond and commitment to a shared future. While not a literal wedding, their partnership reflects a union of trust and love, fulfilling Propp's function as a happy resolution.

D. Types of Myth
Summer is the most representative season for *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea* as it encapsulates the core narrative of the novel: Mina's heroic journey through the mythological world to resolve a cosmic crisis. The novel's emphasis on adventure, supernatural trials, and transformative triumphs is evident in Mina's vows, her ordeal, the use of magical agents, and the revelation of Shin as a Sea God that aligns with the idealised qualities of a summer-like Romance. Comedy (spring) serves as a significant secondary archetype in *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea*, enriching the novel's resolution with themes of reconciliation, romantic union, and cosmic harmony, yet remaining subordinate to the dominant romance-driven quest that defines the story's core.

CONCLUSION/KESIMPULAN
An analysis of Axie Oh's *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea* reveals various forms of mythology that shape the narrative and character development, which resonate with the novel's exploration of destiny, sacrifice, and transformation. Structurally, the analysis of *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea* by Axie Oh reveals that the narrative structure of the main character, Mina, is closely aligned with the classic hero's journey as outlined in Vladimir Propp's theory of thirty-one narrative functions. Of these, at least fourteen main functions can be identified in Mina's journey. Key moments such as Mina's departure, trials, and triumphs that highlight the heroic quest are complemented by Northrop Frye's myths of Romance and Comedy, which frame the narrative as a blend of adventure and reconciliation. Overall, *The Girl Who Fell Beneath the Sea* blends the richness of Korean mythology with the universal patterns of world myths. Through Propp's structural approach and Frye's classification of myths, the work demonstrates that myths are not just narrative embellishments but an important framework in shaping meaning, conflict, and resolution in the story.

This study may serve as a reference for literary analyses that combine structural narrative theory with mythological perspectives in contemporary fiction. For future research, the following suggestions are proposed: (1) Researchers may expand the scope by incorporating other critical approaches, such as psychological or feminist literary criticism, to further explore the complexity of Mina's character. (2) A comparative

study could be conducted with other novels that employ mythology as a narrative foundation to examine the cross-cultural application of Propp's functions.

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