STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN TRICKSTER TALE

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The purpose of structural analysis is often unappreciated, even by those who could find the greatest benefit in this method.[1] It is clear, I believe, that those of us who see structural analysis as the key which unlocks the central meanings of all shared, complex forms of human culture have not yet succeeded in communicating the critically important role of this method to the majority of students of culture. It is often surprisingly difficult to convince the folklorist, the cultural materialist, the art historian, or the architect that the traditional forms of African-based folk and vernacular culture are highly intricate, multi-dimensional systems of communication worthy of first-rate scholarly attention. Whether the widespread academic preference for drawing simple pictures of complex things springs from a crypto-ethnocentrism on the part of some who view superficially uncomplicated forms of folk culture from the perspective of the supposed "superiority" of hyperspecialized Western cultural forms, or whether the attitude stems primarily from the demands placed on scholars to repeatedly and publicly display elements of empirical truth in simple and palatable form, I cannot say.

An essential role of structuralism is to provide scholars of world culture with a bulwark against the temptation to gloss over and thereby diminish the significance of the cultural achievements of people who have lived in a world of relative material simplicity coupled with a rich mental and social life. If it is to accomplish this aim, structuralist scholarship must be judged by clearly established canons. A keystone among these principles is the rule of ethnographic adequacy. This principle holds that no description of a cultural system is adequate unless it provides the investigator with an understanding such that he could produce culturally appropriate behavior given the same context-specific information provided the native. This principle holds the ethnographer to a level of professionalism seldom actually attained in ethnology, though more closely approximated in linguistics. Its implication is that the student of culture must totally deconstruct the cultural institution under investigation. His goal must be to reveal all of its levels of rule-governed structure and all of its component parts, as well as its major extra-systemic connections and functions.

As anthropologists, folklorists, and linguists, we deal repeatedly with patterns of culture which are realized as many individually distinct forms but which are united through shared systems of cultural cognitive organization. The structure of any such system of communication—whether the system be family relationships, vernacular dwellings, sentences of a dialect, or folktales—is hierarchical and complex. Numerous studies have pointed to the fact that the natures of the structures of such a system are roughly analogous to the structures of sentences. These structures are composed of a hierarchy of constituent parts. Each level plays its own special role in the makeup of the entire shared cognitive structure. Unless the investigator is willing to go to the trouble of unveiling all the various levels and their interrelationships, he will be unable to account for the system in the totality of its formal and functional dimensions. Sooner or later questions raised by the elements he leaves unanalyzed will return to plague him.

Sets of interrelated constituent parts operating at different levels of the structural hierarchy carry different forms of meaning. They also carry semantic, logical, and syntactic components simultaneously. Such systems demand to be unpacked and explained. They carry inherent meanings which range from cultural universals at the higher levels of abstraction, to context-specific communications at the surface levels. Some configurations within these structures provide the native interpreter (mythmaker, poet, architect) with natural vehicles for the development of metaphoric messages and images. So unless the investigator has fully and correctly identified the configurations of structure, he will be unable to account for the productivity of the system in terms of the poetics of its cultural context.

All of this requires of the investigator that he develop what Lévi-Strauss refers to as a mechanical model of the cognitive system. A major component of this model is an analytical vocabulary sufficiently detailed that it can provide a complete and unambiguous discussion of the several constituents of the model and their operations. Unless the investigator fits his technical terminology to the level of complexity of his system, he runs the risk of confounding his readers, and himself as well, through ambiguity. For example, as I have elsewhere tried to show, the use by pioneering investigators of the technical terms *function, motifeme*, and *mytheme* to refer to constituents operating simultaneously at different levels in the structural hierarchy has had the effect of masking certain aspects of the organization of the folktale and myth.[2] The ultimate result, I believe, has been to retard the development of fully adequate structural models of oral narrative. The principle that I have adopted in previous research on the folktale is that, if through comparative study there is reason to believe that a level or pattern of structure is consistently represented in the texts of a genre, then that level or pattern must be formally inserted into a structural model of the genre, and its role explored. It is even better, heuristically at least, to insert potential components not completely understood or analyzed than it is to omit them entirely. If analysis of apparently simple folktales reveals the regular occurrence of complex structural components, then how can we avoid naming and discussing them? The critic's call for simpler structural models must then arise out of a new comparative analysis of the same genre, demonstrating the superfluous

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nature of components of the previous model, or it must be understood as reflecting an unwillingness to do the work involved in understanding the inherent complexities of the system. For my part, omit nothing inherent, and then let Occam's razor govern.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. I will begin by exploring briefly a few of the more significant recent contributions to the development of structural models for the African-based folktale. I will proceed on the assumption that readers are generally familiar with the contributions of Vladimir Propp, Alan Dundes, and Claude Lévi-Strauss.[3] Only recent contributions stemming from the work of these pioneers will be reviewed. It matters little that most of the contributions I will touch on have been made in the study of African, rather than Afro-American, folklore. Both traditions share similar narrative structures. The Afro-American tales which I have dealt with have many analogues in West African oral literature.

The second part of the paper will be devoted to what I feel are several of the more interesting open questions in the development of a fully adequate structural model of the folktale. I will explore, if only briefly, the basic components of a structural model of the folktale, the role of semantics in that model, the place of transformational rules, and the problem of culture-specific metaphoric formulations of structural elements.

Recent Contributions:
1. Hermeneutics

A recent major study on the West African trickster well illustrates the problems involved in the analysis of African (or any) oral literature by even well-read and well-intentioned scholars who undertake comparative analyses without the benefit of structuralist methodology. Robert D. Pelton, a Catholic priest, focuses on the major trickster figures of the Ashanti, Fon, Yoruba, and Dogon in his new book *The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980).

Although Pelton also finds value in the symbolic anthropology of Mary Douglas and Victor Turner, he simply does not consider the majority of published structural interpretations of African oral literature. Indeed, he specifically rejects any form of comparison based on structural models. In considering the value of various approaches in analyzing Ashante Ananse tales, he states, "the story of Ananse and Hate-to-be-contradicted shows that neither motif-analysis nor a purely descriptive morphology will disclose the deepest meanings of Ananse and other tricksters. . . . the very range of the oppositions in this story gives it a depth that a listing of motifs and submotifs cannot exhaust" (p. 28). It is apparent that Pelton is operating under the assumption that the most that structural analysis has to offer is a relatively shallow description of the principal syntagmatic elements of the tale, one which would reveal little that the interested reader could not uncover without resorting to formal analysis. Pelton provides no alternative to structuralism, and therefore neglects detailed comparisons in his exposition of the trickster. What then defines the trickster character and the trickster tale genre? What exactly is shared between the tales of a genre or a culture? Why does each culture select its favorites from among the total repertoire of tale types, and what messages does it abstract from the various tale types it finds most productive? These questions are left unanswered by Pelton. By not basing his comparison on structures, the emphasis is shifted from degrees of sharing among the tales to what is unique about them. Since each plot is ultimately unique, the only thing which unites them is the ludic unpredictability of the trickster character himself. The reader is provided an imaginative but rather amorphous interpretation of the role of the trickster in the life of West African peoples. That interpretation is rather like a list of possible functions (i.e., boundary testing and maintenance, liminality, a force for change), which are variously emphasized by the trickster in the different tales.

2. Syntagmatic Analysis: French Neo-Proppians

Following the lead of Vladimir Propp and Alan Dundes, two French scholars have contributed to our understanding of the syntagmatic structure of the folktale. In 1970, Claude Bremond published an article on the French folktale in which he suggested two important modifications of Propp's original syntagmatic schema. Instead of giving Propp's "functions," or elemental units of plot, equal weight within the narrative, Bremond suggests that functions are grouped into triads which he calls "elemental sequences." The first function of each sequence states a potential, such as Lack or Task to Accomplish; the second describes the process of actualizing the potentiality, for instance Plan or Deceit; and the third function announces the accomplishment of the original aim, or its failure—i.e., Success, Lack Liquidated, or Failure. Elemental sequences are intertwined or chained together in various ways in folktale narratives to produce plot complexity. Bremond notes that the same event may perform multiple functions from the perspective of either a single actor or for each of two different actors.[4]

Bremond's second modification of the Propp/Dundes theory of syntagmatic analysis is that all plot sequences move in a continuous cycle from a state of deficiency through a state of improvement to a satisfactory state, and through a procedure of degradation back to a state of deficiency once again. Action generally begins either at a satisfactory state or in a state of deficiency. Thus, a single triad of motifemes describes movement either out of a state of deficiency, or into such a state. The European märchen-type tale generally terminates in a satisfactory state for the hero. The tripartite elemental sequence may be complicated by the insertation of one or more secondary sequences, such as tasks, tests, and contests which are embedded into the main plot. Bremond then goes on to classify various sequences of motifemes identified in the French folktale.

In a series of articles, Denise Paulme further develops the theory of the syntagmatic structure of the African folktale, but more relevant to our immediate subject is Paulme's articles on the "Morphologie du conte africain."[5] She begins by pointing out that syntagmatic theory, as developed by Propp, did not go very far towards analysis of the differences between tales. Her aim, like that of Bremond, is to develop a classification of folktales based on differences between their syntagmatic structures. Paulme follows Bremond in the

assumption that each tale is composed of one or more elemental sequences of motifemes, which she describes as propositions involving the substitution of a predicate by its opposite (Lack-Lack Liquidated, etc.). Narrations are made up of sequences of functions, held together by cause and effect.

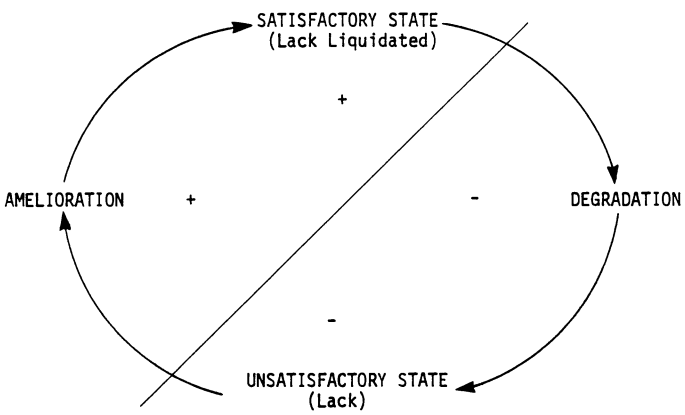
Plots differ from one another in two ways. In simple plots, branching is possible, so that a sequence which begins with a single goal may end in different ways. The creative narrator is free to select from among various possibilities at certain points in the narrative. In addition, complex plots may be composed by the simultaneous intertwining of two or more simple plots. Paulme follows Bremond in assuming that all elemental sequences involve some combination of ascending or descending actions, each terminating in a fixed state of Lack or Success (see Figure 1). Most African narratives involve progress from Lack to its negation, but some involve the reverse process, in which a stable situation is disrupted, ending in punishment or death due to a fault of the actor.

FIGURE 1.

THE CYCLE OF NARRATIVE ACTION

IN THE FOLKTALE

(after Paulme)



Paulme describes three forms of simple plot (Ascending, Descending, and Cyclical) and four complex plots (the Spiral, the Mirror, the Hourglass, and the Complex Type). The Spiral type is one which cycles through several sequences of Lack-Lack Liquidated, but in which each successive state of equilibrium has been raised to a new level, the final state not being the equal of the initial state. Paulme's Mirror plot is identical in form to the Foolish Imitation or Sorcerer's Apprentice Type which elsewhere I have labeled Class II.[6] The Hourglass plot is one in which there is an ascending progression on the part of the Hero, coupled with a simultaneous descending movement on the part of the Anti-Hero, the two having exchanged positions at the end of the narration. The Complex Type is what I refer to as Compound. It is composed through the chaining together of otherwise well-formed simple tales to produce more complex and lengthy forms. Paulme illustrates several variants of each of these types and points out that other forms of plot construction are possible in African folktales.

While the analyses of Bremond and Paulme represent advances over simple syntagmatic analyses of African folktales, such as those of Dundes and Lee Haring,[7] they still leave open questions. Neither description deals with the important problem of the nature of the semantic basis of the tale sequence. Paulme states that the modification of the initial state involves a logical operation supported by semantic content. She does not continue this line of reasoning further, and the reader is left to assume that the semantic component is of a surface nature and unique to each tale.

Neither author comes to grips with the question of a possible rule-governed syntax for the kernel tale. Neither discusses whether the tale type or sub-genre is best viewed analytically from the perspective of a single-character role (Hero, Trickster) or from some more inclusive perspective. If one actor is taken as basic for analytical purposes, what principle are we to adopt to determine which of the characters is the most basic?

An additional open question concerns the nature of the basic motifemic element at the deepest (most abstract) level of its realization within the kernel tale. Bremond apparently assumes that the three motifemic elements of the elemental sequence are of equal structural weight within the kernel tale. Paulme, in describing the modification of the initial state by the substitution of an opposite predicate, appears to assume that the various motifemes (i.e., Lack, Encounter, Trick, Triumphant Test, Lack Liquidated, etc.) are distributed between two sets of super-motifemic constituents: Degradation-Lack and Amelioration-Equilibrium. In both cases the semantic content of these constituents is assumed to be minimal or nonexistent.

3. Syntagmatic Analysis: American Neo-Proppians

To my knowledge, few authors have attempted to come to grips with the questions just raised. Perhaps the approach which promises the most productive answers is the Generative-Transformational approach. This approach was first suggested as appropriate to folktale analysis by Robert A. Georges in his 1970 article on "Structure in Folktales" in *The Conch*.[8] His description of the role of G-T theory in folklore narrative analysis remains perhaps the clearest yet published. Georges' main criticism of earlier syntagmatic studies is that they fail to account for dynamic operations, rather than just states, in narrative structures. G-T grammars begin at the highest level of abstraction in the narrative structure and generate the various types of tales through sets of rules or constraints on elaboration. The product of the generative process within the deep structure is kernel narratives—i.e., strings of basic motifemes. Through the application of transformational rules, these are elaborated into more complex tale forms.

Similar approaches have been suggested for the analysis of African folktales by George Horner and by Oja Arewa and G. M. Shreve.[9] All three generative models resemble one another in that their view of the deep structure is essentially syntagmatic. The deep structure of the folktale consists of strings of constituents at each level within the structure. To their credit, these models articulate the various structural levels in a generative hierarchy.

In Georges' model, semantic content is introduced into the deep structure at the fourth (lowest) level of development. Here motifemic slots, such as Lack, are given semantic content ("There was no water"). All superior levels consist of pure structural pattern only:

1. Move/Countermove
2. Initial Motifemic Cluster/Final Motifemic Cluster
3. Lack, Task, Interdiction + Violation/
Deception + Consequence, Task Accomplished, Lack Liquidated

As in other syntagmatic models, the nature of the logical relations between structural constituents in the deep structure is assumed to be no more complex than mere opposition.

4. Syntagmatic-Paradigmatic-Generative Approach: The LSU School

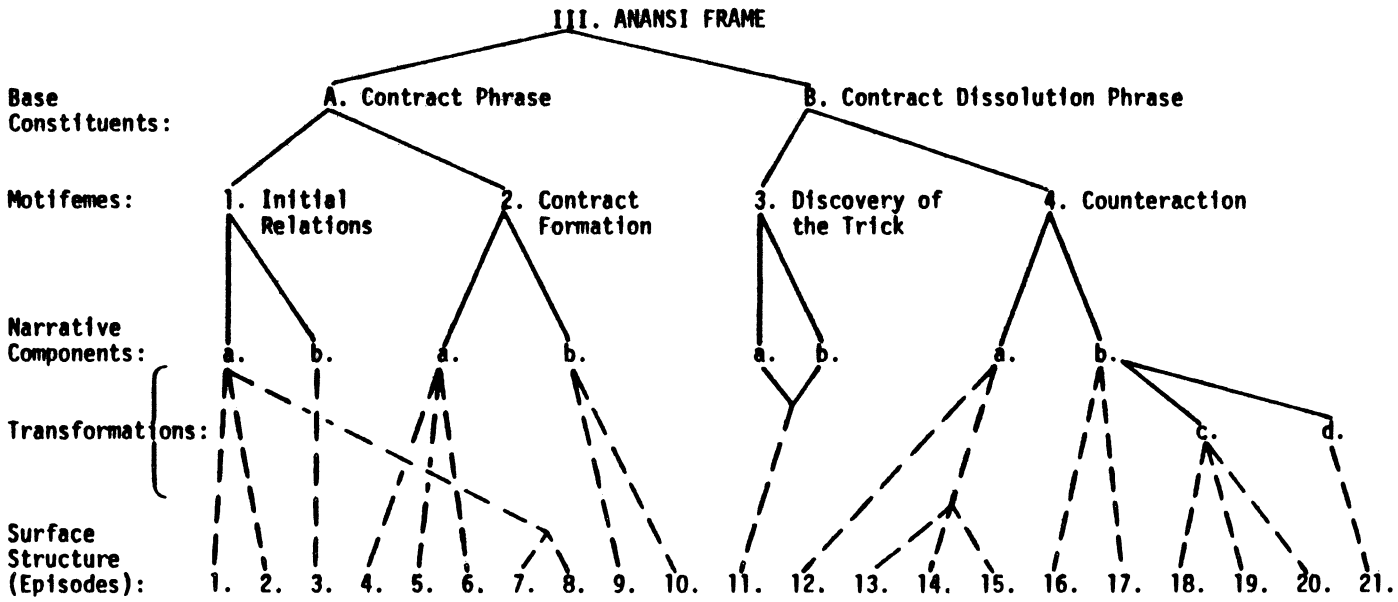
In 1978, I published a monograph in which I attempted to combine the benefits of the Paradigmatic approach originated by Claude Levi-Strauss with the Syntagmatic approach of Propp and Dundes and the Generative-Transformational approach of Noam Chomsky.[10] Like Georges, I viewed the folktale as being composed of a hierarchical series of oppositions in which the constituents of the more abstract levels are repeatedly segmented to generate the output of the next, more concrete levels (see Figure 2). This theory of folktale structure was, however, distinct from the theories of both the French and the American Neo-Proppians.

I assumed, first, that the complete, well-formed folktale is composed of five basic components. The first two (Formulaic Opening and Atemporal Introduction) and the last two (Concluding Element and Formulaic Closing) play no role in the narrative structure of the tale, but they are regularly included in folktale narratives in order to better fit them into the social context. Etiological conclusions, for instance, lie outside of the main structure of the narrative, but function as literary devices which are often considered to play an important didactic role by the tale tellers and their audience. Only the third component, the Narrative Body, contains complex hierarchical structure.

Second, my structural model evolved out of a general semiotic and anthropological theory of the folktale as a universal cultural institution. Following Levi-Strauss, I reasoned that the tale functions as an oral literary device for exploring the logical consequences which flow from the conjunction of two or more pairs of sememic contrasts.[11] Because cognitively established binary oppositions (such as Life/Death, Male/Female, and Consaguinal Kin/Affinal Kin) cannot be easily resolved, the folktale provides a method of interrelating and mediating them. It performs its function by setting out an array of possibilities in narrative form for the appreciation of children and others. Folktales often deal with basic moral-philosophical dilemmas and the cultural norms for handling them. As T. D. Beidelman recently stated, Trickster-based "anomalies serve didactically to stimulate . . . moral imagination so as to understand existential dilemmas which involve choice in conduct and ends."[12]

FIGURE 2.

GENERALIZED ANANSI STORY STRUCTURE



Since most normative postulates are semantically complex, the folktale must necessarily deal with more than one set of oppositions if it is to perform its function. These oppositions are conjoined and dramatized through the actions of actors and mediators. The various positive and negative states (Lack/Lack Liquidated, Social Harmony/Social Disharmony) are conjoined by pairs into sets until all possible combinations have been realized or until the mediation process is complete. In paradigmatic perspective, then, the folktale should be viewed as a kind of table of permutations through which the possible combinations of positive and negative states of paired superstructural ideas are interrelated and arrayed lineally. The most basic folktale structure consists of a frame composed of four cells, with each cell representing a unique combination of semantic valence states: +-, --, -+, ++.

All of this implies that somewhere in its most abstract levels of structure, the folktale is not just semantic but polysememic. It pulls together semantically unrelated sets of ideas, reduces them to elemental semantic forms which I call "superstructural ideas," and distributes them by pairs as a framework for plot action. This implies that the deep structure is not best viewed as being composed of a lineal, or syntagmatic, sequence of constituents. It is, rather, a paradigmatic complex in which superstructural ideas are associated with one another in different combinations. Such a complex is conveniently modeled as a set of cells arrayed as in a componential analysis (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3.

TRICKSTER TALE BASE PARADIGM

(Semantic Categories, Superstructural Ideas:)		Category #2 Value Related Actions	
Category #1 Socially Oriented Actions:	[Marked Components:]	Act of Value Acquisition V-	V+
	Disharmonious Acts: D-	1. Initial Relations (Lack, Harmony)	2. Contract Formation & Execution
	D+	3. Discovery of the Trick or Deceit	4. Counteraction. Attempt to Regain Value, etc.

Cells 1 - 4 = Motifemes

A third distinction between the LSU theory of the folktale and those of the Neo-Syntagmatic theorists concerns the nature of syntactic relations within the deep structure of the tale. It is my view that there is a logically complex relationship between the various slots, or semantically loaded constituents (Motifemes), in the deep structure. The model which best accounts for the facts is analogous to the one developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his famous paper on myth analysis.[13] This formula has been analyzed by Pierre and Elli Köngäs Maranda and by Sunday Anozie, and it has been shown to have very wide applicability to human oral literature.[14]

In Lévi-Strauss' model, as it applies to the most elemental level of tale structure, only two character roles are found. At the highest level of abstraction, action always occurs only between two roles, though either may be realized by more than one character at the surface level (twins, for instance). The roles are distinguished from each other structurally. One character (or "term"), called Role A, is always univocal. This role carries but a single relationship to a specified superstructural idea, usually the lack of something of Value (V-) or lack of Social cohesion or contract (S-). The second role, Role B, is ambiguous or bivocal with respect to the same superstructural idea. The role is characterized by first one relationship, say S+, and then its opposite (S-). This role is normally assumed by the trickster or mediator.

The kernel tale is segmented into four basic deep structural constituents, called Motifemes. In the first, Role A suffers Lack, Task, Social Separation, etc. In the second, Role B offers to Liquidate the Lack, or reverse the condition, etc. In the third slot, Role B reverses his intention or violates his contract (by stealing the Value, for instance). In the fourth slot of the Lévi-Strauss frame, a moral is presented, for instance: "The function of (promised) Value is to subvert Dupes by tempting them to place their trust in Tricksters." This last element or motifeme is generally implied but unstated in the tale narrative. In place of a stated moral, the fourth slot may be represented in character action by the initiation of counteraction or the beginning of a new kernel plot. Thus, although only three necessary narrative constituents occur in the deep structural models of both Lévi-Strauss and Bremond, the syntax or logic of the relationships between them is quite different. The syntagmatic models are all based on the changing relationships of a single character role (undergoing degradation to Lack, for instance), while the paradigmatic model of Lévi-Strauss centers on the interrelationships between the two character roles. Many folklorists have noted that action in oral narrative is generally divided into units in which only two roles are involved at one time. The Lévi-Strauss model accounts neatly for this observation.

The paradigmatic model of the deep structure of the folktale (kernel) is substantially more complex than any syntagmatic model. Not only are two character roles and the relations between them inherent to this model, but so are two sets of elemental semantic concepts or superstructural ideas. The significance of this observation is great, but apparently little appreciated by those who study folktales from either the Hermeneutic or the Neo-Proppian positions. I will suggest only one example of its implications. It is generally assumed that the character who plays the trickster in African and Afro-American tales assumes his unique and powerful role by virtue of his crossing and violating boundaries. He gives, or he takes away, by trickery or guile. In most Afro-American tales he is a power broker. It is he who has the power to deceive, for either his own benefit or that of others. In other words, he plays Role B in Lévi-Strauss' model. It should be noted, however, that the trickster can and does assume the other role (A). An example common to both African and Afro-American cultures is found in the tale of "The Gift of Flight."

Anansi or Tortoise, etc. wishes to go to a feast being given by the Sky King or Sky God, etc., but he cannot fly. He wishes for the power of flight. The birds take pity on him and give him feathers or, alternatively, they carry him to the feast. Once there, Trickster disgraces himself through his gluttony or, worse, through some (embedded) trickery

which he employs to obtain all of the food . This, naturally, sours the opinion of the birds towards him. On the way back home they remove his feathers, or drop him, or they abandon him in the Sky God's palace. Falling to earth, he survives in various ways, but seldom unscathed. The variety of the natures of his landings has stimulated numerous concluding etiological explanations in the different versions of this tale. The important thing is that, in this and other Anansi-type tales, Trickster also assumes the role of Dupe, while the birds have become the power brokers (Role B). The significance of these role reversals has not been discussed by students of the trickster to my knowledge. It is of interest that such trickster role reversals are exceptionally common in certain cultures—for instance, among the Coyote trickster tales of the Navahos and other American Indian groups. The preference for different kinds of trickster roles among different cultures raises interesting questions about the function of the trickster, and whether any universal definition of the trickster is possible.

The model of the folktale which I originally described did not include a complete grammatical description. The phrase structure rules for the development of kernel tales were not formalized. The role of the transformational component was only hurriedly sketched in, and the manner in which the surface level (Episodes) was to be mapped into the various structural slots (called Motivemes and narrative Components) was omitted. Finally, the way in which the Lévi-Straussian syntactic model was to be incorporated into the phrase structure rules was not specified with sufficient clarity, raising questions from several reviewers.[15] On the other hand, rather careful consideration was given to the role of the structure of the tale in the social life of Afro-American people.

From the perspective of this model, two aspects of the Afro-American trickster tale quickly became clear. Though these tales were of several different types, one principal type (called Class I) predominated in almost every collection. I argued that the significance of this type lay in the special role which it played in the daily lives of Afro-Americans. It provided a cultural cognitive model which enabled Afro-Americans to reflect on the moral dilemmas imposed upon them under conditions of servitude and economic bondage. The structure of this tale embodied a syllogism or metaphor which captured a central ethical dilemma of Afro-American life. The syllogism could be read something like this: "Dupe's Trust is to Dupe's Loss, as Trickster's (asocial) cunning Plan is to Trickster's Acquisition of Value." In other words, "Trickster strategies involve the maximization of short-term (economic) gain at the expense of long-term social cohesion." Though neither trickery nor trust is clearly favored in the folktale cycles (the trickster loses as well as wins), the problem of which strategy to adopt was one which constantly outcropped in the lives of people forcibly prevented from developing cooperative social contracts for their own long-range self-improvement. The favoring of a specific structural type can only be accounted for by the clarifying ethical vision it provided in the context of recurring moral and philosophical problems. It is no accident that the climax of the trickster tale is characterized by a double twist which occurs in the instant that the dupe realizes that he has not only lost his value, but that the trickster's friendship was false and motivated only by greed. Unlike the majority of European folktales, Afro-American tales invariably terminate in a condition of disharmony between the two principal actors caused by the violation of an agreement and an unreciprocated exchange of value. These characteristics, clearly represented in the structural model at the motifemic level, are not characteristics which predominate in many tale-telling traditions. Had Africans migrated voluntarily into the New World, and had they found social and economic equality here, the pattern of tale types selected into their repertoire would probably have been substantially different.

Generative-Transformational Analysis of a Folktale

With this all-too-brief background, I will now illustrate my remarks by presenting a structural analysis of the deep structure of a single Afro-American trickster tale. If structural analysis is to be worth the rather considerable effort expended in close reading and formal coding of numerous examples of a genre, it must provide significant benefits. One of those benefits is that it establish for each tale a set of specific and ordered elements which comprise the basis of any point-by-point comparison. It is only through a systematic comparison of all of the principal levels embodied in a corpus of tales that genres and sub-genres may be defined. The comparison of structures establishes precisely those features which the tales have in common and the manner in which they differ.

A side benefit of the structural approach is that it often uncovers covert organizational similarities shared between forms that, at first view, might be assigned to different classes or types. It is not uncommon for shared unity of structure to be masked by surface differences so dramatic that they belie any degree of obvious similarity between the different forms. Yet the unity between them may be strong. This truism is particularly well illustrated in the case of comparative folktale study.

One technical point should be mentioned before I begin my sample analysis. In some of my models I have found it convenient for coding purposes to group together certain classes of actions which the Syntagmatic theorists prefer to distinguish. I refer specifically to the concepts "Degradation" and "Amelioration." These concepts often do not fit comfortably into a binary coding system such as that required for a G-T grammar. In the interpretation of narrative action, it is sometimes difficult to know just when Degradation has occurred, except in reference to some final act of Lack. In my opinion, these concepts are so closely tied to their resultant conditions of state (i.e., Degradation to Lack, and Amelioration to Lack Liquidated, etc.) that at the deepest levels of folktale structure they may be conveniently encoded with the same symbols (for example, V+ and V- for Value-oriented actions). It is in this way that they are encoded at the motifemic level.

Folktale: "Dupe Tiger as Riding Horse"

As an example of my method of analysis, I will begin with

a relatively simple tale. It evidences one of the most popular of all themes in the Afro-American tradition, being found in the French and English West Indies, in the Brer Rabbit tales of the Southeastern United States, and in the Creole French of Louisiana. This tale is transcribed from a modified Jamaican Creole:

I. Here is the tale of Bra Nansi's old riding horse.
II a. Tiger and Anansi were fond of the same girls,
II b. but Tiger was not as cunning as Anansi.
III 1. Tiger was very handsome and he used to visit the two girls every week.
2. Nansi noticed how the two girls were becoming sweet on Tiger.
3. One day Anansi went to the girls' house and said, "Girls, I'll show you that Tiger is only my Father's old riding horse."
4. "How is that?" they said.
5. "Next time I come to call on you, you will see," he said.
6. The next Sunday Tiger visited the girls; they told him what Anansi had said.
7. Tiger flew into a rage and went running in search of Anansi.
8. Tiger arrived at Anansi's house and knocked on the door. He was plenty vexed.
9. Anansi called in a very weak voice, "Yeeeas, Whooo there?"
10. Tiger demanded to be let in.
11. Anansi, lying in bed, told him to enter.
12. Anansi said he would like to offer Tiger tea, but he was feeling so poorly right now he couldn't rise.
13. Tiger asked why Anansi had told the girls that he was only Anansi's Father's old riding horse.
14. Tiger told Anansi that he wanted him to come and tell the girls that what he had said was a untrue.
15. Anansi said, "I never said it, and I would come, but I cyan walk at all."
16. "I'll tell you what," said Tiger, "If I carry you on my back, will you come?"
17. "Well, if you insist, I will do it!" said Anansi.
18. Anansi climbed on Tiger's back, but acted as if he was too weak and would fall off.
19. "You'll have to get my saddle," said Anansi.
20. "O.K., I'll do anything, just so you come," said Tiger.
21. Next, Anansi had Tiger get the bridle.
22. "What you going to with that?" asked Tiger.
23. "That's so if I start to fall, I can catch up," replied Anansi.
24. Tiger started to go, but after a few steps, Anansi fell off.
25. "I can't stay on your back without those little things called spurs," cried Anansi.
26. "O.K., O.K., I don't care what you do, let's get on with it," said Tiger.
27. As they were riding towards the girls' house, they went through a woods.
28. "Hold up here, one minute," said Anansi, "I need to cut a whip so I can let you know when to go slower."
29. Tiger agreed, and finally they got near to the girls' yard.
30. No sooner were they at the girls' yard, than Anansi began whipping Tiger with his whip, and juked him hard with his spurs.
31. Tiger let out a yell, and began to run as fast as he could.
32. Anansi waved to the girls, then jumped off Tiger's back and climbed up onto the veranda.
33. "You see, Tiger is not only my Father's old riding horse, but fi me also."
34. And Tiger was so ashamed, he ran into the woods and didn't return.
IV. (omitted)
V. Jack Mandora, me no choose none.

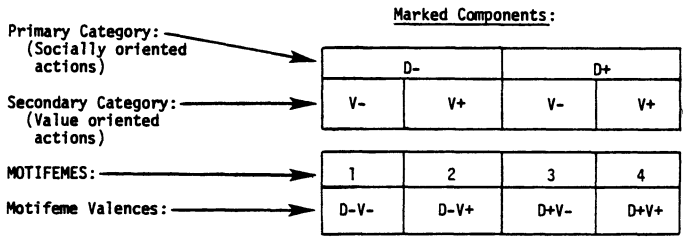
Before beginning my analysis at the deepest level of tale structure, the phrase structure rules, it is first necessary to distinguish between a Narrative and a Tale.[16] As a working definition, Narrative is a story, told orally, which includes at least one well-formed Kernel Tale together with optional material. That material, as described earlier, includes introductory and concluding elements, many of which have traditional form in individual tale-telling communities. Thus, a Tale is completely structural, while a Narrative contains additional material, not structurally relevant.

RULE #1: Narrative $\rightarrow$ (GNE) I + II + III + IV + V.

This rule reads: Narrative is composed of Gross Narrative Elements I (Formulaic Opening), II (Atemporal Introduction), III (Tale), IV (Concluding Element), and V (Formulaic Closing). Only Gross Narrative Element III, the Tale, contains deep structure. Only III is characterized by structural closure, and by a limited number of functional elements. Closure refers to the fact that tales of each type move through a set number of reciprocally positive and negative states to a definite resolution, the characteristics of which are in part predictable from a knowledge of the structure (see Figures 3 and 4).

FIGURE 4.

VALENCES OF THE MOTIFEMES



RULE #2: GNE III $\rightarrow$ Tale(k) 1 + Tale(k) 2 . . . +Tale(k) N.

Each complete Tale is composed of a series of Kernel Tales, including no less than one well-formed Kernel Tale with all essential components.

RULE #3: Tale(k) $\rightarrow$ Contract Formation Phrase + Contract Dissolution Phrase.

The Kernel Tale is subdivided into two principal components, the Contract Formation Phrase and the Contract Dissolution Phrase. These terms apply to Class I Trickster Tales, but not to all folktales. The more general terms employed by Georges are "Move" and "Countermove."

RULE #4: Contract Phrase $\rightarrow$ [M 1] + [M 2].

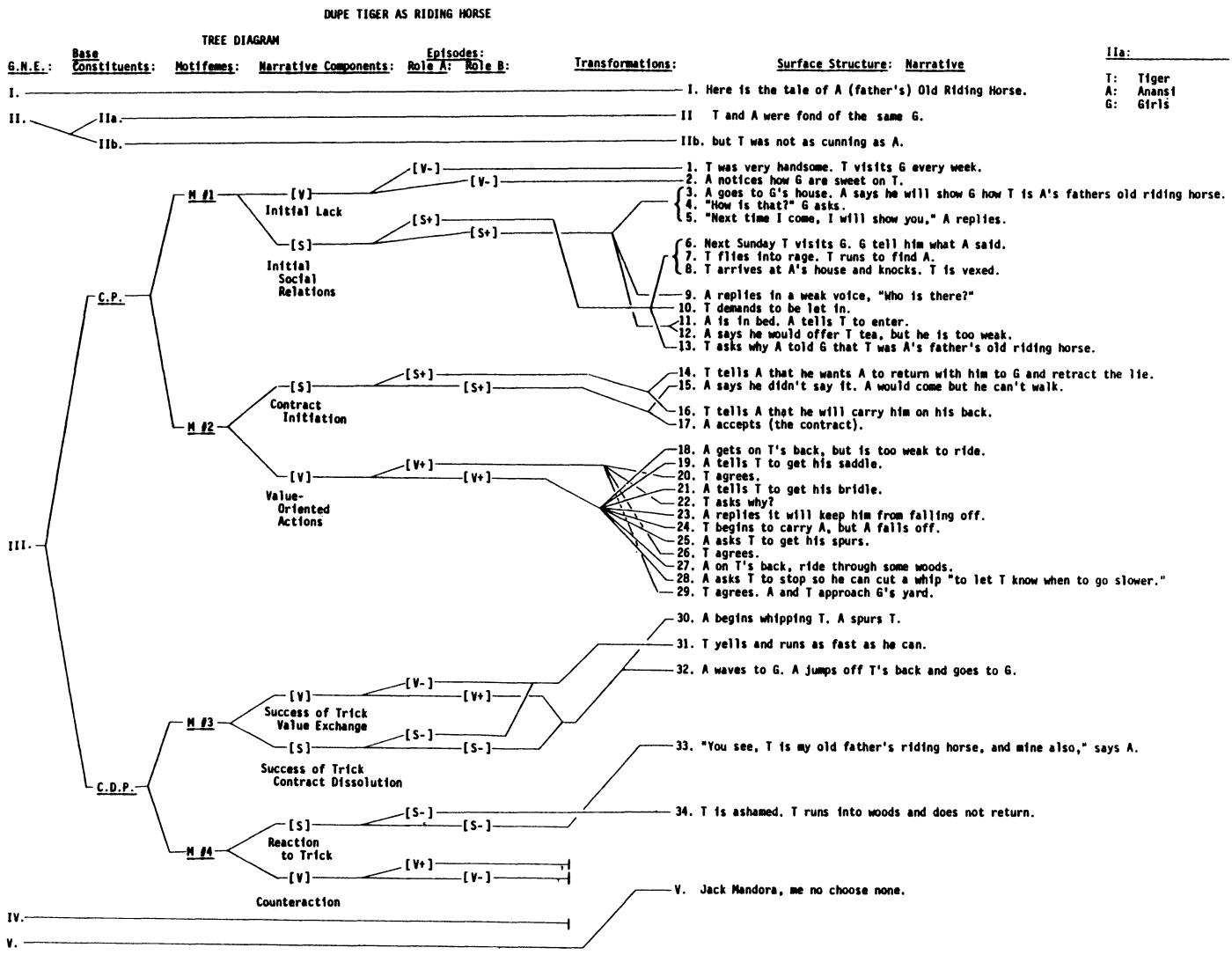
The initial portion of the Tale is bifurcated into two Motifemes. Motifemes are the heart of the complex structure of the Tale. Each well-formed Kernel Tale consists of four Motifemes (see Figure 3). Two character Roles and their functions are defined in semantic form within the Motifemes.

The actions in the first two Motifemes are both characterized by Social Harmony (S+), also symbolized as negative Disharmony (D-). Those in the Contract Dissolution Phrase are both characterized by a lack of Social Harmony (S-, or D+). It is in the Motifemes that the two Superstructural Ideas are combined in binary form and apportioned among the character Roles. In the case of the Trickster Tales, the principal dominant Superstructural Ideas are Social Harmony (S+) and its negation, and Value (V+) with its negation, Lack (V-). Other Superstructural Ideas—Power, for instance—may also be present in these tales and may dominate the Motifemic level of other tale classes.

RULES #5.1 - #5.4: Motifeme(s) #1 - #4 → NC(v) + NC(s).

Rule #5.1 reads: Motifeme #1 is segmented into two identical Narrative Components, a Value Component and a Social Component. Rules #5.2 through #5.4 read similarly. There is, however, one significant distinction between Rules #1 and #3, on one hand, and #2 and #4, on the other. This involves the direction of branching. In the first and third Motifemes, the Value Component is branched to the right (i.e., placed in first position). In the second and fourth Motifemes, the reverse is true (i.e., the Social Component is branched to the right) (see Figure 5). This generalization stems from the observation that most Afro-American trickster tales follow this order. In the fewer number of cases in which the order of the Narrative Components is reversed beneath a Motifeme node, a transformational rule must be written to account for the ordering preference of the narrator. The NC(v), or Value-determining Narrative Component, defines the valences or qualities of Value-oriented action under its appropriate node, and the NC(s) defines the valences of the Social Relations in that Motifeme. The combinations of positive and negative valences are different for each Motifeme.

FIGURE 5.



RULES #6.1 - #6.4: NC(v) → VE R(a) + VE R(b).

The Value-specifying Narrative Component for Motifeme #1 is further segmented into a Value-specifying Episode for Role A and one for Role B. The form of Rule #6 is identical for each of the eight Narrative Components. Only the semantic content differs for each of the Motifemes. For NC(v)1, for instance, that rule is:

RULE #6.1: NC(v)1 → [(a)V-] + [(b)V-].

This may be read: "Dupe (Role A) suffers Lack of Value," and "Trickster (Role B) suffers Lack of Value." Note that the Value or element lacked by Role A is often not the same as that sought by Role B.

RULES #7.1 - #7.4: NC(s) → SE R(a) + SE R(b).

This rule is similar to Rule #6 in that it apportions the Social Relation valences among the two roles, A and B.

RULE #7.1: NC(s)1 → [(a)S+] + [(b)S+].

This is read: "Dupe's relationship to Trickster is positive, or at least not sufficiently negative so that a contract is not acceptable. The same is true for the Trickster."

Both Rules #6 and #7 are recursive in form and apply to all eight Narrative Components. However, because the semantic content, or the combinations of V and S values, differs for each Motifeme, all rules must be written in a complete description.

Rule #8 is analogous to Rule #4. It divides the Contract Dissolution Phase of the Kernel Tale into Motifemes #3 and #4. Rules #5.3, #6.3, and #7.3 then apply to Motifeme #3, and Rules #5.4, etc., to Motifeme #4, resulting in a string of sixteen Episodes which define the Kernel Tale. Those values are listed in their most common order, under the sub-title "Episodes" in Figure 5, which provides a tree diagram of the tale "Dupe Tiger as Riding Horse." Note that several kinds of transformations may be applied to the output of the structural Episodes. They may be further branched into two or more Component Episodes, realized as surface-level sentences in the Tale. They may also be reordered with respect to one another, and they may be deleted. In simple tales consisting of only one Kernel Tale, such as the one illustrated here, deletion of episodes under Motifeme #4 is common, as counteraction is limited or nonexistent. In more complex tales, such as those analyzed in my 1978 monograph, counteraction is common in the Principal Kernel Tale, so deletion is less common. In actual narration, there is considerable freedom in the ordering of the Value and Social Contract Episodes within any single Narrative Component. There is less freedom to reorder surface-level Episodes between Motifemes.

The phase structure rules, # 1 through 8, account for the generation of all deep-structural nodes in the Class I Afro-American Trickster Tale. In other words, the Class I Kernel Trickster Tale is defined by these rules. Note that this is the simplest possible form of the Tale. Kernel Tales and portions of Kernel Tales are synthesized in various ways to produce more complex forms, which are by far more common than simple tales.

Three more eleborate forms of tale may be described. A Complex Tale is one in which one or more subordinate Kernel Tales are embedded into the Primary Kernel Tale. If the Kernel Tales are of the identical type to the Primary Kernel Tale, I call it a Type 1 Complex Tale. If subordinate Kernels with different deep-structure patterns are embedded, it is a Type 2 Complex Tale. Compound Tales are tales in which two or more Primary Kernel Tales are chained together, all of which share a single set of introductory and concluding Gross Narrative Elements. Most tales are of the Complex or Compound types. Experienced raconteurs eschew simple tales in most cases.

Concluding Discussion

It should now be apparent from the above discussion that the identification of polysememic motifemes is the key to the structural analysis of any tale class. The sequence of semantic values in the four motifemes of the kernel tale defines the classes of action which may occur in subordinate nodes. This sequence establishes the gross order of actions which characterize each class of tales.

In the next lower level, that of Narrative Components, the sequence of actions is further defined. It is here that an additional level of content is added to the structure of the tale. This allows us to define a syntagmatic array of eight sequential elements of the Class I Tale:

M #1 V: 1. Initial Statement of Lack
M #1 S: 2. Initial Social Relations (Meeting)
M #2 S: 3. Contract Initiation between Roles A and B
M #2 V: 4. Value-oriented actions on the parts of one or both Roles
M #3 V: 5. Success (or failure) of the Trick: Exchange of Value between the Roles
M #3 S: 6. Success (or failure) of the Trick: Contract Dissolution
M #4 S: 7. Emotional Reaction of the Trick (common but optional)
M #4 V: 8. Value-oriented Counteraction (optional)

The sequence of Narrative Components defines the structurally significant categories of action within the Class I Kernel Tale. The part that the two character roles will play in those action categories is added to the deep structure at the level of (structural) Episodes. This is the output of the Narrative Components. It is here that branching rules must be applied to determine the relative syntagmatic positions of action of each character role within a motifemic slot. Here, too, we see somewhat different sequences of functions, in which the two character roles relate to the Value in slightly different ways. Nevertheless, note that each character goes through a complete cycle of positive and negative valences with respect to the two Superstructural Ideas, Value and

Social Cohesion. This is the structural closure mentioned above. It is my belief that closure is inherent and implied in the semantic-motifemic definition of any structurally defined class of tales. Even though all classes of actions may not occur in every tale, they do occur in a sufficient proportion of Class I Trickster Tales to support this belief.

Finally, I would close by touching on some of the principal characteristics of the three models of folktale deep structure outlined in this paper: the syntagmatic model, the Levi-Straussian formula, and my model, which embodies polysemantic motifemes. You will recall that Levi-Strauss' famous formula—F(a)X : F(b)Y::F(b)X : FYa-1—specifies a universal relationship in dramatic narrative between a univocal role (A) and a second role which promises to liquidate A's Lack, and then, in reversal, actually causes Lack for A. That formula is fully consistent with the roles played by the characters in my model.

The major significant differences between the models I have been discussing are these: The syntagmatic models of Propp, Paulme, and Bremond begin by defining the actions of a single character role with respect to sequences of functions or motifemes (defined as monosemantic notions). Strings of Proppian functions define basic tales, with different motifeme clusters defining different moves of a tale. An example would be: Lack + Lack Liquidated + Interdiction + Violation + Consequence. What unites the entire sequence is unclear from the syntagmatic position. This simple sequence, characteristic of numerous American Indian tales such as the Star Husband Tale, for example, is conceived of as being composed of two independent structural units. Syntagmatic theorists have not attempted to demonstrate that tale sequences such as this are united by more abstract sets of Superstructural Ideas. This particular tale is united by the alternating L + LL + L related actions in which the Value is "being joined in marriage to the stars." The same tale is united by an exchange of social contract valences: S- + S+ + S-, representing the acquiring of a (social) contract and its violation. In my view, the S and V relations are characteristic of the entire tale, not simply portions of it. By selecting monosemantic motifemes such as Lack and Interdiction, the syntagmatic analyst is stating implicitly that only one of the roles of the tale (the girls') has structural predominance. The other role is only implied or given a structurally subordinate role in each specific sequence of motifemes. Tales may be built up of sequences based on different roles, of course.

If the syntagmatic theory gives primacy to single roles, the model of Levi-Strauss gives primacy to only a single Superstructural Idea. While it goes beyond the syntagmatic model in illustrating the relations between two roles, it models that relation on the basis of only one Superstructural Idea at a time. Thus, "Dupe suffers Lack: Trickster offers to Liquidate Lack :: Trickster then causes Lack: thus, the Function of promised Value is to subvert the Dupe." Note that nothing is said about social contract or any other possible Superstructural Idea. In order to incorporate another such Idea into the deep structure of the myth or tale, Levi-Strauss must propose another parallel model.

What I have tried to show is that an expansion of both of these theories is needed if one is to account successfully for the functioning of the deep structure of the folktale. The folktale is really about the interplay of essential ideas. Characters have the function of dramatizing the interrelationships between these ideas in actions, and making them concrete. The Lévi-Straussian model, then, interprets approximately one-half of the entire deep structure of the kernel tale at one time. The only fully successful model of the deep structure of the folktale will be one which combines the features of the polysememic paradigm, the sequencing of actions illustrating that paradigm, a definition of the well-formed kernel tale, and acceptable variations of that kernel. Although I have not here completed this task, I hope that I have helped to point the way.

NOTES

[1]Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the structural analysis of African and Afro-American folktales. Some scholars complain of the over-complexity and "excessive" use of jargon by those who attempt a major deconstruction of a genre such as the African Folktale. Others simply ignore structural analysis as apparently irrelevant. Articles or other works which approach the subject from the standpoint of literary or thematic analysis, and even those which attempt a simple structural analysis of a single level of structure, remain generally immune from such treatment.

[2]Jay Edwards, *The Afro-American Trickster Tale: A Structural Analysis*, Indiana Univ. Folklore Publications Group, Monograph No. 4 (Bloomington: Folklore Publications Group, Indiana Univ., 1978), pp. 9-13.

[3]Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1970); Dundes, *The Morphology of North American Indian Tales* (Helsinki: Folklore Fellows Communications, 1964); Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1958) and *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966).

[4]"Morphology of the French Folktale," *Semiotica*, 2, No. 3 (1970), 250.

[5]*Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 12 (1972), 131-63. See, as background, her "The Theme of Successive Exchanges in African Literature," *L'Homme*, 9 (1969), 5-22, and "Impossible Imitation in African Trickster Tales," in *Forms of Folklore in Africa*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1977), pp. 64-103.

[6]*The Afro-American Trickster Tale*, pp. 57-66.

[7]Dundes, "The Making and Breaking of Friendship as a Structural Frame in African Folktales," in *Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition*, ed. Pierre and Elli Köngäs Maranda (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), pp. 171-89; Haring, "A Characteristic African Folklore Pattern," in *American Folklore*, ed. Richard Dorson (Garden City, NY: Anchor Doubleday, 1972), pp. 165-82.

[8]*The Conch*, 2, No. 2 (1970), 4-17.

[9]Horner, "Structural Analysis of Bulu Folktales," *The Conch*, 2, No. 2 (1970), 18-29; Arewa and Shreve, *The Genesis of Structures in African Narrative*, Studies in African Semiotics, No. 3 (New York: Conch Magazine, 1975).

[10]At the time this monograph was written, I was unaware of the excellent work of Georges, Sunday Anozie, and Arewa and Shreve. My study was limited exclusively to the Afro-American tale and dealt with a narrower selection of folktale types than the articles of several of the above-mentioned authors.

[11]*The Afro-American Trickster Tale*, pp. 23-26.

[12]"The Moral Implications of the Kaguru: Some Thoughts on Tricksters...," *American Ethnologist*, 9, No. 1 (1980), 27-42.

[13]In *Structural Anthropology*, p. 228.

[14]Maranda, "Introduction," in *Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition*, pp. ix-xxxiv; Anozie, "Structuralism in Poetry and Mythology," *The Conch*, 4, No. 1 (1972), 1-22.

[15]Roger Renwick and John Vlach, Rev. of *The Afro-American Trickster Tale, Folklore Forum*, 12, No. 1 (1979), 97-99; John Roberts, Rev. of *The Afro-American Trickster Tale, Journal of American Folklore*, 94 (1981), 392-93; John Thornmeyer and Frank Parker, "The Structural Analysis of Folktales: A Preliminary Model," Paper delivered at the 1981 Linguistic Association of the Southwest meeting, Austin, TX, Oct. 24.

[16]All the major structural components in my model—including slots or nodes, functions, semantic values, and character roles—are capitalized for clarity of identification.