Title: Rarified and Popular Plots
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Readers and audiences have been talking about literary plots at least since Aristotle, but in the past century, the most prominent generalizations have often centered on the plots of popular art; the folkloric tabulations of Aarne and Stith Thompson, the patterns Propp described for Russian folktales, the work of Todorov on Boccacio or Tomashevsky on Sherlock Holmes come to mind. This preference may be due to the higher standards of brevity the populace often imposes. Folk epics and dramas can be very long, but their plots have only occasionally attracted the exciting critical attention. This paper defines plot as the organization of the events, and distinguishes the Fabula, which organizes the events in the world where the characters live, from the Siuzhet, which organizes the events in the account that the audience experiences. The paper will claim that the events in the Fabula have a different nature and structure from events in the Siuzhet, but that in brief folk forms, the Siuzhet tends to track the Fabula so closely that theories ignoring this distinction still work. For large works, it is easier to talk about particular parts, like beginnings and endings.

Popular plots are often distinguished from high plots by their endings. Bollywood movies, Harlequin romances, Grimms fairy tales, etc., have to have happy endings, whereas high art, like The *Divine Comedy*, or *Hamlet*, may or may not. Happy endings are hard to define. They may mean happy for the virtuous and unhappy for the villainous, something legislated almost simultaneously by the Hays Office in Hollywood and the Union of Writers in the Soviet Union. Or they may mean happy for the character at the center of audience attention, who is sometimes a scamp. They may mean achieving wealth, recognition, a spouse, a possession, a conversion, or eternal life. Popularity is linked with a sense of living in an orderly universe, a perception of rules, literary, moral, causal; and a plot's appeal to a high or a low audience depends on its capacity to present an order that its audience needs.