

Proppian Analysis of Russian Fairy Tales
Sean Housler Russian Fairy Tales, Russian 0090
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The first Proppian analysis will be on "*King Bear*" from Aleksandr Afanas'ev's Russian Fairy Tales. The initial situation of the story begins with a tsar and his wife living together with no children. Following the initial situation the departure of the elder can be seen in the form the tsar leaving his home for a hunt. Shortly after the departure of the tsar for his hunt the King Bear appears and seizes the tsar in the interdiction. The tsar begs for the bear to let him go. This is where the Proppian function, order or command is seen. The King Bear orders the tsar to give him something from his home that the tsar does not know is in his house. The tsar then agreed to accept the command and carried the command out but soon realized what he had not known in his house was two newborn twins that his wife, tsarina had given birth too while he was away on his hunt. Because the tsar did not want to give his twins away he and his wife devised a plan to burry the children underground in a palace where the bear could not get them. Soon after they did this, the tsar and tsarina perished leaving the twins to fend for themselves. The King Bear came for the twins. The function of reconnaissance by the villain to obtain information is seen when the King Bear finds a chisel stuck in the palace wall and demands he tell him where the tsar's

children are. The King Bear then receives information about the hero's children when the chisel then says "take me out into the yard and cast me on the ground; where is stick, do you dig." (Afanas'ev 394) Here the King Bear discovers the children and threatens to eat the children. Propp would view this as an act threat of cannibalism. The bear then carries the children away to his kingdom where while the bear is out foraging for food a bright falcon appears in the form of a magical helper. The hero in the form of the twins is then carried away on the back of the bright falcon. The return of the villain or the King Bear appears and informs the twins because they tried to escape he threatens cannibalism once again. Once again the bear agreed to not eat them and soon after the appearance of another magical helper appears in the form of an eagle. And then once again the hero's climb upon the eagle and are carried through the air on the back of the eagle. The King Bear once again sees the escape of the hero and brings them back to earth and for the third time he threatens cannibalism. Following this a third magical helper appears and the hero's are carried away from the King Bear's palace on the magical helpers back. The bear once again sees the attempted escape of the hero's but this time he pursues the hero. Here is where is where a victory in open battle with

the villain takes place when the magical helper "pasts the bears eyes with dung" (Afanas'ev 396) and also has the hero toss a comb that represents a magical agent that helps the hero on his escape from the villain. This temporarily stops but the bear eventually catches back up to the hero's and magical helper in a continued pursuit by the villain. This is when the hero once again uses another magical agent in the form of a towel to try to stop the villain and this is when the victory over the villain takes place. They arrive at a "magnificent house" where the magical helper offers himself as the magical agent. (Afanas'ev 396) He request the hero's burn him and from his ashes will give them the magical objects they need for their new freedom. Later one hero, Prince Ivan departs for a hunt and returns shortly there after. The departure of the hero then takes place twice more and also the departure of the Princess Maria, the second hero, also takes place. While on her departure the princess is encountered by the villain in the form of a six-headed dragon. The dragon then transforms into the bear and the seizure of the hero takes place and the villain carries off the hero. The return of the hero, Prince Ivan occurs next to find his sister was carried off by the villain. Prince Ivan then departs on his journey to find his sister. Along his way he encounters another

magical helper, Baba Yaga. Baba Yaga then gives Prince Ivan the test of the hero. Prince Ivan accomplishes the test and following Baba Yaga's orders rescues the hero, Princess Maria and lived happily ever after.

The second Proppian analysis is of another story from Afanas'ev's book called "Magic." In the story Magic the initial situation consists of a poor family of a mother, father, and their one son. The father wants to place his son in an apprenticeship where he can pray for them after their death. Propp sees this as a request for a favor after death and also the death of a parent. But because of his poverty this was very difficult. Here is when the first departure of the hero occurs when the father leaves with his son to search many cities trying to find someone to take him in as an apprentice. When they arrive in one of the cities they meet the first magical helper in the form of a man. The man then agrees to take the son in but give the test of the hero to the father. The test was that he must return for his son exactly three years from the hour. Three years had passed and the son flew to the father in the form of a bird. This is can be seen as a magical helper. The father returns to the magician's house where his son is and once again the father is given another test of the hero. The man then passed the test and magical

agent in the form of his son was released to the father. A return of the hero is then seen when the father and son leave to return home. On their journey home they cross a nobleman and the son turns into a dog and acts as a magical agent. The son explicitly tells the father to sell him to the nobleman but remove his collar before he does so. This is another test of the hero. The agent in the form of the dog is then sold by the father and the nobleman purchases the agent. The father then fails to accomplish the test by giving the nobleman the dog collar. The nobleman then leaves with the dog but soon after the dog runs away and the return of the hero as the dog returns to his father and they return home. A while later the boy turns into a bird and this symbolizes him as being a magical helper also. The boy gives his father a test once again failed to accomplish the test of the hero. The bird was bought by another magician but soon escaped and returned home (return of the hero). Another week passed and the son again turned into another magical helper in the form of a horse. The boy gave his father another test of the hero and again for the third time and the father once again fails the test. The horse then escapes from the owner and the hero as a horse begins returning home. The buyer, who was also a magician then turned into a gray wolf and went in pursuit

of the hero. The horse then turned into a magical ring that can be viewed as a magical agent and was used against the villain in open battle. The ring then wins victory in open battle and the villain is defeated.

The third Proppian analysis is on the Russian fairy tale, *Prince Ivan and Byely Polyianin*. The initial situation as with many stories is set in a "certain land" where there "lived a king who had three daughters and one son" (Afanas'ev 475). The king then gets old and dies which represents the death of a parent. After the death of the king other kingdoms try to over take the death kings kingdom. This represents an act of villainy. Prince Ivan then because he is scared shows a call for help when he asks his sisters what he should do to defend the kingdom. Prince Ivan then decides to go into battle with the villains symbolizing the departure of the hero. In battle he has a fight in an open field and defeats many of the villains in an open battle. Prince Ivan then returns home symbolizing the return of the hero where he sleeps for three days. When he awakes he sees an army coming once again symbolizing an act of villainy. Prince Ivan then calls for help asking his sisters what he should do. Prince Ivan decides once again to leave his kingdom for battle (departure of the hero). Prince Ivan encounters the

villains in a second battle in an open field and defeats them once again in a victory in open battle. After the battle Prince Ivan the hero returns. He sleeps for another three days. When he awakes he sees another act of villainy, the army approaching once again. He once again as if he shouldn't have figured out what he needs to do calls for help from his sisters. He then once again in the form of the hero departs for battle. In battle Prince Ivan encounters his third fight of the villain in an open field and once again as the hero almost always does again defeats the army symbolizing a victory in open battle. The hero, Prince Ivan then once again returns home and sleeps for three more days. When he awakens, Prince Ivan departs on a journey where he meets an old man in a hut in a "dark forest." (Afanas'ev 477) This man symbolizes a magical helper. When he meets the old man the man says to Ivan, "Good day, Russian Prince! Whither is God taking you?" (Afanas'ev 477) This is considered a greeting or interrogation of the hero. The magical helper then refers Ivan to go to his brother if he wants to acquire the magical agent. Prince Ivan leaves (departure of the hero) the old mans house. Ivan then meets the brother of the old man and is once again greeted or interrogated by the magical helper. The brother then calls upon other magical

helpers in the form of animals and asks them if they know Byely Polyandin, the person Ivan is seeking. A gray wolf that fought and won a victory in open battle against Baba Yaga said he could lead him to her. Prince Ivan then leaves the brothers house (departure of the hero) and the wolf took him to Byely Polyandin. This is the Proppian function of the hero is led and also the functions of the hero is shown the route to where he will find what he searches for. When Ivan finds Byely Polyandin he is awoken and instead of killing Ivan, he interrogates the hero. The two of them then go into to open battle. Ivan then defeats the villain, Byely Polyandin in a victory of villain in open battle. Instead of killing him, Prince Ivan and Byely Polyandin decide to go fight Baba Yaga (departure of the hero's) where they were met with Baba Yaga's great army (fight in an open field). They then defeat Baba Yaga's army in a victory of the villain in open battle but Baba Yaga escaped into trap door. Ivan then goes after Baba Yaga where he meets "some tailors" and the hero interrogates them. (Afanas'ev 480) He finds out they are working for Baba Yaga and then kills them (victory over the villain). After killing the tailors he comes upon a group of cobblers and interrogates them also. He determines they are working for Baba Yaga also and then kills them as he

did the tailors (victory over the villain). After killing the cobblers Ivan comes upon a "beautiful city" (Afnas'ev 481) where he sees a lovely woman who falls in love with Ivan at the first sight. The woman asks Ivan to come to her room where she then interrogates the hero to as what he is traveling for. Ivan is then told by the woman where Baba Yaga is and Ivan then proceeds to chop Baba Yaga's head off while she sleeps. This is the function of killing the villain without a fight. Prince Ivan then takes the princess from the castle (freeing of the captive) and gives her to Byely Polyanin to be his wife where they are married (wedding). Prince Ivan then leaves Byely Polyanin and his new wife in search for his own wife. This is the function, the departure of the hero. On his journey Prince Ivan meets with the villainous dragon and the dragon is then slew by Prince Ivan (victory over the villain). After Ivan Defeats the dragon he takes the beautiful princess away. This is the second freeing of a captive function. The hero, Prince Ivan and the beautiful princess then return home (return of the hero). When they reach home it is insinuated that the function of a wedding takes place and they then live happily ever after.

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