

FUNERAL RITES AND THE UNDERWORLD

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Original Article

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THE UNDERWORLD OF THE RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES: CLIMBING A TREE TO A BIRD'S NEST AND RETURNING TO ONE'S WORLD

The article continues the author's ongoing series of works on the study of the semantics of fairy tale plots. It considers the main plot of the second part of the fairy tale SUS type No. 301 A, B ("Three Underground Kingdoms"), which is relatively independent. Using comparative materials, the author analyzes the relationships between the main components of the plot: the image of a tree and the motif of climbing it; the motif of the hero communicating with the chicks (and all its variants), which reveals the traces of mythological exchange relations of "life force"; the image of a mother bird of prey returning the hero to Earth. When analyzing the latter image at a cross-cultural level, the author reveals its probable origins, going back to the image of the "good serpent" swallowing and regurgitating the hero to help him reincarnate (according to V. Ya. Propp). Overall, this plot, in its prototype, is reconstructed as the desire of the soul of the deceased/neophyte for rebirth. The tendency toward anthropomorphizing the image of the chicks (as girls) observed when comparing motifs can be traced back to the formation of other fairy tale plot lines (the first move of the SUS 301 A, B type, and the SUS No 300 type of tales).

Keywords: *fairy tales, traces of reincarnation ideas, climbing a tree, chicks/children in a nest, flying on a bird, snake bird, plot transformations*

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