Title: Postmodern Folktales: Video Game Narratives Through a Mythical Lens
Author: Shannon Spasova, Dalhousie University

Postmodernist literature, with its focus on freedom from constraint and play, seems like an unlikely place for the fixed elements of a Proppian fairy tale analysis. Similarly, video games' indeterminacy and interactivity put them far out of touch of the tight structure of the traditional fairy tale. In Viktor Pelevin's short story "Prince of Gosplan" (1992), however, the three are put into complex interplay, ultimately calling into question the baggage that seems to accompany the three radically different genres. Pelevin's satire of Soviet culture and literature and their well-known connection to myth (Clark 1981) adds another layer, simultaneously creating a typical postmodernist collage in which each part contributes to while also deconstructing the others. For Pelevin, this ultimately provides the space in which his heroes/players/performers/readers/cocreators can design their own reality/world/game/story/truth.

In this paper, I will examine Pelevin's "Prints Gosplana" both from the perspective of Vladimir Propp's classic *Morphology of the Folktale* and other theories of myth, and modern video game narrative theory in an attempt to define how complementary yet contradictory elements come together to inform Pelevin's postmodernist message. Propp's thirty-one functions, game narrative versus game space, siuzhet versus fabula, and performance versus exposition will be some of the concepts explored. I will also compare with some of Pelevin's other works, including *Shlem uzhasa* (2005), as well as works of other authors, including Boris Akunin's *Kvest* (2008).

Clark, Katerina. *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*. Bloomington, IN: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Howard, Jeff. *Quests: Design, Theory, and History in Games and Narratives*. Wellesley, MA: A. K. Peters, Ltd., 2008.

shannon.spasova@dal.ca