

A MORTAL VISITS THE OTHER WORLD – THE RELATIVITY OF TIME IN ESTONIAN FAIRY TALES

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ABSTRACT

This article* analyses Estonian fairy tales with regard to perceiving supernatural lapses of time, focusing on the tale type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World*, which includes tale types ATU 470, 470A, 471, and 471A. In these tales the mortal finding himself in the world of the dead, heaven or fairyland experiences the accelerated passage of time. Returning to the mundane temporal reality and learning the truth the hero generally dies. The difference in time perception has been caused by the hero's movement in space and between spaces. Three vertical spheres can be detected: 1) the upper world (heaven, paradise); 2) the human world; 3) the netherworld (the world of the dead, hell). Usually, the events of a particular tale take place only in the human world, and either in the upper or the netherworld. The relativity of the passing of time on earth and in the other world makes the tales 'behave' in a peculiar manner as regards genre, bringing to prominence features of representation of time typical of legends or religious tales. Although the tales contain several features that make them close to legends (a concrete place and personal names, the topic of death, dystopic endings, characters belonging to the reality of legends, etc.), based on Estonian material they can be regarded as part of fairy tales.

KEYWORDS: a mortal in the netherworld • relativity of time • Estonian fairy tales • the tale type cluster • genre borders

INTRODUCTION

Tales of living people visiting the other world have been told all over the world. In the Sumerian epic the king Gilgamesh sends his friend and servant Enkidu to the other world to fetch magic items that had been dropped there; Enkidu breaks several prohibitions and has to stay in the other world (tablet XII; *Gilgamesh* 2001: 129–143). The Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and the story of Odysseus' visit to Hades are also widely known.

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There are tale types among fairy tales¹ in which the category of time is a more important factor in shaping the plot of the tale than in case of the other tales. One such tale type cluster² consists of stories about mortals finding themselves in the world of the dead and/or heaven. In the international tale type catalogue (ATU) these form a group of tale types with plots that resemble one another and also share the feature of time passing differently in the world of the living and in the other world. The cluster includes the following tale types known in the Estonian folktale tradition:

- *Friends in Life and Death* (ATU 470) – 29 versions in the Estonian Folklore Archives;
- *The Offended Skull (Don Juan)* (ATU 470A) – 18 versions;
- *The Bridge to the Otherworld* (ATU 471) – 1 version;
- *The Monk and the Bird* (ATU 471A) – 9 versions.

In addition, types not occurring in Estonia whose content suit the same type cluster, are: *The Land Where No One Dies* (ATU 470B) and Latvian local types: *The Long Absence* (AM *471B), *The Maidservant and the Toad* (AM *471B*), *The End of the World* (AM *472*). The following motifs according to Stith Thompson's *Motif-index of Folk-literature* (1989) belong under the present survey: Translation to the otherworld without dying (F 2), No time, no birth, no death in the otherworld (F 172), The supernatural lapse of time in fairyland (F 377), Descent to the lower world of the dead (F 81).

In these tale types humans leave the space where they live to find themselves in heaven or in the world beyond the grave. While the heroes believe they are spending but some hours or days in the other world, it appears on their return home that whole centuries have passed. Upon learning the truth about the time on earth they die immediately.

German folklorist Lutz Röhrich has denominated this group of tales rapture legends (*Entrückungssagen*), the purpose of which is to indicate the timelessness of the otherworld – paradise, hell, the land of the gods, fairies, elves, trolls or the extra-human world in general (Röhrich 1962: 275).

The theme of the supernatural speed of time is also manifested in the *Relativity of Time* (ATU 681) tale type,³ where the king experiences a dream in which he is under the influence of drugs or has his head under water, causing a short moment to feel like eternity. As compared with other folktales, in this tale type its literary versions vastly outnumber the oral ones. (Ting 1981: 208) However, in Estonia this particular tale type does not appear.

The theme occurs in the ancient Indian *Vishnú Purána* (4th century), in which king Raiwata imagined the ages that elapsed during their performance to be but as a moment during the singing of heavenly beings' quisters (*gandharvas*) in God's presence (*Vishnú Purána* 1840: 355).

DESCRIPTION OF THE TALE TYPE CLUSTER

Subsequently expanded description or summaries of the Estonian tale types are given, followed by motifs and examples characteristic of the Estonian folktale tradition. This information is supplemented by some international studies of corresponding tale types with written sources.

Two friends (or brothers) promise they will each be a guest at the other's wedding. However, one of them dies and on his wedding day the other goes to his grave to invite him to the wedding celebration. The dead man does come and invites the bridegroom to visit him in return. In the other world the bridegroom listens to three wonderful pieces of music (in some versions he drinks three cups of tea or three small glasses of vodka with the dead man; in some cases they play three games of cards). On returning, the bridegroom discovers that his home has changed to the point of being unrecognizable and that strangers are living there. The man seeks out the priest to find out what has happened. From church records he learns that three hundred years ago a bridegroom disappeared from his wedding. Having learned how much time has passed in this world, the man turns old in a moment and dies; often, he crumbles into dust on the spot so that nothing remains of him. In several versions the man receives the Holy Communion from the priest before he dies.⁵

The oldest recorded text comes from a manuscript found in Germany and dated as coming from the 12th century (Eberhard, Bishop of Bamberg is quoted as the source).

A pious young nobleman is on his way to his own wedding. Close to the church he meets a venerable stranger dressed in white who invites him to his wedding. The next day, a horse arrives to fetch the bridegroom. On his way he sees flowery fields, full of singing birds, past three dwellings where people are making merry. When he arrives, he meets the man who invited him and many people dressed in white who have crowns on their heads. There is no night or day in this place. When the bridegroom returns, the guard at the gate does not recognize him; there is a convent instead of the castle where he used to live. Three hundred years have passed as though they were an hour. People from near and far come to listen to his wondrous tale. The man tells them that he was allowed to return to bring consolation to many. When the man is given a taste of the mortals' bread, he dies. (Christiansen 1959: 189–190)

The German scholar Günther Petschel has published a lengthy monographic article in which he highlights the motifs characteristic of the type, as well as a detailed plot structure together with different versions of the episodes from ca. 25 European nations (Petschel 1971: 113–122). He identifies four main forms within the type:

- a) The first main form is divided as follows: 1) A visit to the other side (the man remains in a single defined place when visiting the deceased friend); 2) A trip to the other world (the protagonist goes through different places, sees several revelatory visions);
- b) Concentrates on the visit of the dead person to the living (the Baltic-Russian ecotype);
- c) Visit at Christmas;
- d) Different combinations. (Ibid.: 123–126)

In Estonian archive versions, the most common central figures of the narrative are either two friends or two brothers, one of whom dies. Very often a dead friend attends the marriage of his living friend, or else the groom, goes to his friend's grave before his marriage ceremony and ends up in the other world. Estonian versions do not generally include heavenly wedding parties; in most cases there is just a party with wonderful

music and heavenly songs by angels or birds. In one version from the Seto region, a bride and a bridegroom go to their parents' graves together and end up in the other world. They drink some vodka and when they return, 300 years have passed.⁶ In another version a mourning widower goes to the grave of his longed-for wife. His wife arrives with angels who play three pieces of music. When he arrives home it turns out that instead of two hours he has been away for 300 years.⁷ The majority of visits to the other world last either 300 years or three human generations, however other time periods occur in some versions: 200, 500 or 1000 years, as well as 33 or 80 years.

The Offended Skull (Don Juan) (ATU 470A, 18 versions)⁸

A man is digging a grave in the churchyard or is walking there. He kicks a skull lying on the ground with his foot and, half in jest, invites it to visit him, usually on Christmas Eve. At the time mentioned a stranger indeed appears at the door. Trying to contain his fear, the man acts as the host to the visitor who invites him to be his guest in return. The man goes for a visit and thinks that he is there (in the other world) for three days (hours), or else listens to three songs of unearthly beauty. Upon returning home he discovers that several centuries have passed. Having learned this, the man crumbles into dust.⁹

One of the characteristic features differentiating between tale types ATU 470 and ATU 470A is the fact that in the story of the dead skull it is a complete stranger who invites the main character to visit him in the other world, while in type ATU 470 it is a dead friend or relative who issues the invitation. Whereas in case of ATU 470 the main event of the tale tends to be the wedding, *The Offended Skull* is rather more connected with Christmas.¹⁰

In the Estonian tradition, Christmas has been closely related to veneration of dead ancestors. The spirits of the dead were expected to visit their former homes; abundant tables were laid for them and saunas were heated.

In the case of ATU 470 the main character is generally a bridegroom, while in type ATU 470A he is simply a man, often a gravedigger. A bridegroom does occur in some versions of *The Offended Skull*, but is not characteristic of the type.

The ATU 470A tale type is exceptional in the overall context of the Estonian fairy tale tradition, with a large number of narratives coming from western Estonia and the Estonian islands.

In some cases types ATU 470 and ATU 470A become combined with tales that had previously merged with the religious tale *A Man Invites God to His House* (ATU 751A*) in which a character from the other side has taken on the guise of a beggar looking for a place to stay for the night.

The Monk and the Bird (ATU 471A, 9 versions)¹¹

The main character – a priest, a monk, or an ordinary young man – lingers listening to wonderful birdsong. The man thinks he has heard it for but a moment, but when he returns home it appears that three hundred years have passed.¹²

In the Estonian versions, the average visit to the other world lasts for 300 years, in exceptional cases also 100 or 30 years. In one version a clergyman listened to spirits playing the organ at night and slept for seven human generations. When he woke, the church was in ruins; he went to shop to buy some bread, but it turned out that his currency was not valid anymore. When “he understood that one of the spirits had put him to sleep, the man fell down, just his bones left”.¹³

Lutz Röhrich (1962: 124–145; 274–280) has published the literary versions of the tale type from the Middle Ages in their original languages with thorough comments. The plot is known first and foremost as a mediaeval *exemplum* (IE 3378 – *Monk Felix*), in which the monk listened to the song of a bird for 300 (100, 200) years. When he returned to the monastery to sing mass, the monks no longer recognised him.

The oldest written version of this tale type was recorded in Old French in the early 12th century and comes from Maurice de Sully, Bishop of Paris. In the German area the legend plot from monk Felix was written down in poem form, in Thuring in the second half of the 13th century. In the Protestant space the legend secularized and the character of the monk was replaced with that of a citizen (*bourgeois*). (Röhrich 1962: 124–130, 277, 279)

Röhrich was convinced that the motif of singing birds is of Celtic origin and that this narrative came to the continent from Ireland in the 12th century (*ibid.*: 277). Alan Bruford suggests that this simple story of a man spending years listening to the song of a bird may be one of those cases where it is impossible to be sure whether the ultimate source of Christian variants is in Asian Buddhism or in Celtic paganism. The fact that it is a bird rather than an angel that sings to the monk suggests that it is a pre-Christian source. (Bruford 1994–1995: 7)

The defining feature of tale type ATU 471A is that the hero of the tale (usually a monk or another male character related to the church) does not knowingly end up in the other world, but hears the marvellous singing of birds or angels in the forest – at the boundary of the home world. The heavenly song appears as a revelation to the listener. When he recovers from this, centuries will have passed. The character is generally not led by anyone to the heavenly kingdom or the realm of the dead, but remains (in his own opinion) physically in the same world of earthly beings which, however, has acquired qualities typical of a supernatural world. Obviously the forest here is to be seen as another or different world – the forest is a place that is opposed to the domestic circle of humans (Paulson 1971: 57–78).

The Bridge to Otherworld (ATU 471)¹⁴

A single tale of this tale type has been written down, with the following plot from Viljandi parish in south Estonia:

One after another, three brothers meet an old man in the woods who offers employment to them – they are to herd a sick horse and follow it everywhere. The elder brothers are careless and lay down on the seaside to sleep, while the horse goes across the sea to eat alone; when they come back on the following day it appears that they have been away for a full year. The youngest brother, in contrast, goes

across the sea together with the horse (it appears that he goes to the other world). There he sees wondrous things that the horse explains to him: thin sheep in a lush pasture are people who have been living in riches in the earthly world but go hungry in the other world despite the bounty surrounding them, while fat sheep pasturing in a desert are people who, having starved in the earthly world, gain a rich reward in the other world. The youngest brother falls asleep there (in the other world) and wakes up as an old man: it turns out that five thousand years have gone by. The horse, which actually turns out to be a young man under a magic spell, says that he must remain in the other world. After begging for a long time the magic horse promises to take the man home on the condition that he is not to step on the earth. The man however transgresses and crumbles into dust.¹⁵

In this tale the elder brothers think that they have been drowsing by the sea for a single night yet a whole year has gone by. The youngest brother falls asleep in the fairy tale world across the sea where his sleep lasts more than five thousand times longer than that of his brothers. Such shifts in time and space could probably be explained by (partial) opposition and (partial) intertwining of Self and Other, 'the world of humans' and 'the other world'. The elder brothers are closer to their home, somewhere on the boundary between the home world and the fairyland world while the youngest brother has already reached a strange world beyond the sea. Perhaps the different progression of time here expresses the understanding that the time of the so-called other world enters the human world edgewise, where its influence, however, is weak, accumulating 'on the other side' of this world that can be reached by crossing the sea, the big water (i.e., eternity).

Other Tale Types

The plots of the type cluster described above are linked with *The Stone of the Snake* (ATU 672D; 34 archival versions from Estonia)¹⁶ type in which the main character also sleeps for a prolonged period of time. In the international tale type catalogue this tale, whose plot rather reminds us of a legend, has been classified as a fairy tale.

In autumn, a man goes into the woods where he sees snakes licking a stone or a plant. The man follows the snakes' example and goes to the snake cave with them, where he falls asleep to hibernate together with the snakes. (On occasion, the man does not go to the snake cave to hibernate after having licked the stone or a blade of grass, but falls asleep under a bush or a boat.) When he wakes up in the spring, he returns home and, thinking that he has been away for a night only, demands "yesterday's cabbage soup" from his wife. In some versions of the tale the wife has already thought the man to be dead and has remarried.

Often holidays from the folk calendar that are related to snakes, for example St. Matthew's Days (*madisepäev*) both in spring and autumn (February 24, September 21),¹⁷ St. Gertrude's Day (*käädripäev*, March 17),¹⁸ Michaelmas (*mihklipäev*, September 29),¹⁹ Exaltation of the Holy Cross (*viissenjapäev*, September 14),²⁰ occur in this tale type.²¹ Notes about adders overwintering in a heap coiled together has supported the belief widespread among different peoples of a Snake King reigning over its subjects or a

snake with a crest, the eating of whose crest would give a person the ability to speak all languages (Hiimäe 2006: 338).

It is characteristic of the type that the protagonist sleeps throughout the whole winter. A sleep that is extraordinarily long for a human also occurs in the religious tale *The Seven Sleepers* (ATU 766), a tale that brings together different plots in which a person is hit by an extraordinarily long sleep from which he or she is awakened for an important event, for instance, twelve children sleep for 300 years, wake up on the day Jesus is born and become his disciples. In this tale type time has stopped for the sleepers, when they wake up they have aged hardly or not at all. A similar legend has also given its name to The Seven Sleepers Day (*seitsmemagajapäev*, June 27).²²

Some parallels can be drawn with the particular theme of the sleeping warrior legend – a person finds a passage into a cave or mountain and there sees sleeping warriors, knights, monks, soldiers or a king with his escort. When he returns, he realises that a year has passed in the meanwhile. Sometime just entering a cave is enough for a person to sleep for three hundred years. (Mencej 2012: 33)

MOVING IN TIME AND SPACE

In the type cluster under consideration the position of the spaces in relation to one another and also the direction of the characters' movement are significant. The difference in time perception has been caused by the hero's movement in space and between spaces – going through the garden gate, moving up or down the stairs or the like.

Heda Jason (1977: 204–211) has described different dimensions of time in folklore. She distinguishes between three main categories of time: human time, mythic time and fabulous time. The later can be divided into four sub-categories: miraculous time, eschatological time, demonic time, and marvellous time. If in the world of the fairy tale a single, marvellous time reigns, the tale type cluster observed involves relative time shifts or transitions from human time into numinous time. Miraculous time may expand or contract in relation to human time, which has a regular flow (*ibid.*: 210–211). Human time and numinous time differ in their quality and in how they are passing. While a man visiting his dead friend thinks he is away for three hours (or listening to three tunes played on an instrument), actually 300 years have passed on earth – thus, it can be said that numinous time (in the world of the dead) has contracted in relation to human time. Marvellous time passes so slowly that for mortals it may seem to last an eternity; this is indicated by the titles of such stories stored in the Estonian Archives as “Eternal Time” and “In the Cold Grave Forever”.

Three vertical spheres can be detected in tales of the type cluster under consideration:

1. The upper world (heaven, also paradise);
2. The earth – the world of the humans;
3. The netherworld (the world of the dead, also hell).

Usually, the events of a particular tale take place in only two of the three spheres: 1) in the world of the humans, and 2) either in the upper or the netherworld.

Going to the world beyond the grave is usually depicted as going down a staircase or a hole,²³ going up the stairs leads one to heavenly paradise,²⁴ although at times the

vertical direction is not mentioned at all – a bridegroom goes to the grave of his friend and all of a sudden finds himself in the world of the dead.

Heda Jason points out that the human world and the fairy tale world can lie on a horizontal or a vertical axis. On the horizontal axis the human world is separated from the fairy tale world by a vast empty space. Crossing this distance takes the hero a lot of time, or he uses miraculous means like a flying carpet or magic boots. Jason also notes that crossing such enormous distances constitutes compression of time and space of a kind. On the vertical axis the fairy tale world lies either above or below the human world and can be reached either by climbing a tall tree or going into a deep well. On the vertical axis the distance between the two worlds is small, yet crossing it is dangerous. (Jason 1977: 199–200)

Mirjam Mencej has also analysed the motif of the supernatural passage of time and attempted to determine whether the type of space is crucial for a change in the perception of time. According to Mencej the places of supernatural passage of time are caverns, hills, mountains, graves, forest, water, mills and gardens. All of them are believed to represent a borderline and the liminal space between this world and the other. In the horizontal conceptualization of the world, the forest and water represent a liminal space that divides the inhabited world from the chaotic, dangerous world beyond; according to the vertical structure of space, caves and graves are the places where the earthly abode of humans and the subterranean abode of the dead meet. (Mencej 2012: 36–45)

Generally speaking in the tale types of the type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World* an ordinary person, a bridegroom at the time of his wedding, reaches the other world led by a dead person. In some Estonian archival versions the character does not undertake a long trip to the world of the dead, but the meeting of the living and the dead takes place in a graveyard, on the friend's grave: usually the dead person comes out of the grave and listens to angels singing²⁵ or drinks tea together with the protagonist.²⁶

In an original tale about two brothers from Tarvastu,²⁷ the proud and boasting rich brother does not find himself in the other world and the main character – a quiet and humble younger brother – is not dead.

After their father's death the poor friend finds himself a place to live in the wide world and starts a holy life there. His life was so holy in this lonely place that often one could hear the voice of an angel singing in the chamber. The elder brother is about to get married and goes to invite the younger brother to the wedding; when enters the brother's room he hears the most sweet voice of an angel singing, which right away scares him and makes him listen as if he were a piece of wood. Upon returning home the rich brother discovers that there is a big and splendid palace instead of his house and strangers are living there and that he has been away for three hundred years. Having learned this he crumbles into dust and nothing remains of him.

Although in this tale the world of the living is not contrasted with the world of the dead, the pair of oppositions, profane *versus* sacred, can be found in the chronotope. The events take place in the mundane human world: in the profane world the younger brother finds himself a place to live and turns it sacred with his holy way of living, as the result of which the time and space surrounding him acquire the quality of the

sacred, the supernatural or the otherworldly. Among the binary oppositions on which culture is based that were introduced into theoretical usage by the French structuralist Claude Lévi-Strauss there is the pairing of temporal and atemporal (timeless). Lauri Vahtre who has studied the popular calendar and chronology of Estonians has also called the atemporal or extra-temporal region “a parallel time”. As an example of parallel time, Vahtre gives the period that Estonians call the Time of Souls.²⁸ To the question of where souls were at other times, Vahtre answers that they did not live “before”, “now” or “after”, but rather in that parallel time. (Vahtre 2000: 11–12) In the example given above the younger brother in a sense finds himself in a parallel time that does not function before, now or after.

GENRE BOUNDARIES IN THE TYPE CLUSTER

A different passing of time is an inherent characteristic that all the tale types observed above (ATU 470, 470A, 471, 471A) have in common. In the international catalogue of tale types the plots of the type cluster described above have been classified as fairy tales, yet several characteristics can be found in them that are much more typical of religious legends, legend-like fairy tales, legends and exempla.

The fairy tale motif described by Stith Thompson as M 252 corresponds to the *Friends in Life and Death* tale type – both have a similar sequence of motifs: an agreement between two friends, a dead person’s visit, a living person’s return visit (Petschel 1971: 124–125). The type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World* can have several parallels in religious legends. The Finnish catalogue of belief legends by Simonsuuri and Jauhainen (1998) the tale plots *Friends in Life and Death* and *The Offended Skull* have been classified as religious legends – tale type ATU 470 (in which a dead and a living person are guests at each other’s weddings) thus corresponds to the identical legend type C 1171. The same plot also has similarities with legends C 1176 (in which a living person falls under the influence of a dead person or the devil, is away from home for hundreds of years and crumbles into dust upon returning) and C 500 (friends make an agreement that the one to die first will return to earth to bring news about his life in the beyond). The *Offended Skull* tale type corresponds to legend type C 1166 in the classification of Finnish religious legends. What is somewhat different in another related type version (C 1161) is the punishment of the main character: on his return visit to the dead, the man loses a finger as punishment for being disrespectful towards the skull.

On the basis of the Estonian archival versions, the following lists the characteristic features that are common to the types in the type cluster observed.

The Occurrence of Real Place Names

For instance, in a tale from Põltsamaa parish, the events described take place in the village of Sulustvere and the folklore collector has added a lengthy introductory paragraph that describes places related to the plot, such as *Kitse küngas* (Goat Hill) and *Kabeli väratu põllud* (fields of the Chapel Gate) in meticulous detail.²⁹ In addition, tales that start with sentences such as: “In Tõstamaa close to the tavern a couple of people

was living”,³⁰ “Once upon a time in Estonia”,³¹ “Once upon a time a young man went for a walk on the castle hill at Otepää”,³² “Someone hit a skull with his foot on Haljala churchyard”,³³ etc., belong to this group.

Personal Names

The type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World* also contains personal names. Two tales about characters called Ants and Mats and Jüri and Mats have been recorded by the same collector.³⁴ Characters in a third tale are called Mats and Hans.³⁵ As regards the personal names Mats, Ants, Jüts and Hans show that if a brother in a tale is called Mats he is bound to be the person who dies. Perhaps the fact that personified Death has been called Mulla-Madis (Madis (Matthew) of the Earth) in Estonia has been of influence here.

A tale less resembling the others is one in which a man called Norsil Villem (Villem of Norsil) has two sons: Kõrdi Teno (Teno of Porridge) who is tall and able-bodied, and Silgu Samel (Samel of Herring) who is frail and sickly and dies fairly soon.³⁶ These names are considerably more personalised, yet leave a comic impression (at least to today’s readers); these are probably nicknames and not real names. The comical element is being used in a context typical of fairy tales and legend-like tales.

Although personal names – both proper names (Ivan, Ants, Peeter) as well as descriptive names (Snow White, Cinderella) often occur in fairy tales (Järv 2005: 453–454), they first and foremost occur in legends. Risto Järv has studied the personal names occurring in the fairy tale corpus and remarks, in case of tale type ATU 650A, that “similarly to names rather being found in legends, where they are used to underscore credibility, a number of texts belonging to this tale type are reminiscent of legends, being described with a ‘verisimilitude’ nearly typical of fairy tales” (Järv 2005: 551). Järv explains that the use of names is not the main criterion in classifying texts as legends, yet “in the case many personal names are used in the versions of a certain tale type in addition to the presence of other characteristics of legends, the type could rather be classified as a legend” (ibid.: 552).

The Topic of Death and the Other World

In the type cluster observed, elements relating to death and the other side hold a central place. The topic carries a religious load in itself: it is not entertainment value and joy gained from flights of imagination that are foregrounded in these tales; rather, the tale has to support and prove the beliefs occurring in the reality of folklore that becomes a part of the reality of the religious legend.

Dystopic Endings

Fairy tales usually have happy endings – the hero marries and/or gains a large fortune. The plots of the type cluster observed as a rule end with the death of the hero of the tale, thus unhappily. An (unhappy) ending that is in contrast with fairy tales and impossible in them is one of the characteristics typical of legends. Nevertheless, in the case of such types, tales can be found in the Estonian corpus of fairy tales whose plot evolves differently: the bridegroom who has returned home survives.³⁷ In these tales, the bridegroom puts a bit of bread from the wedding table into his pocket when going to visit the deceased friend; when he returns home after a long time (80, 70 or 33 years) he does believe that he has been away for so long for even the bread in his pocket is still fresh.

Here is the bit of bread that I put into my pocket when I went off to Mats's wedding. If seventy years have passed it should be nothing but earth and dust. But it is as fresh and tasty as it was then.³⁸

The man finds an old woman in the house who moves around supporting herself on a stick and claims to be his bride. The man offers the bread to the woman who eats it and becomes young as a result. "When the crone had eaten of the mouthful of bread, she started to crackle and her back turned straight."³⁹ Despite a generation passing, the bride and groom become young again, host a new wedding celebration and live a happy life together. As the narrator says in the end: they may be living even now.⁴⁰

A Communion Host

In the plot with a happy ending the bread has magic power. Throughout ages, bread has been the main food for peasants and held an important symbolic and ritual significance long ago (as it does even now). In addition to this, bread has an important place in magic: let us remember the host that was used as a means of magic.

The type cluster discussed here includes a number of tales in which the bridegroom, who has returned from the realm of the dead, receives a communion host from the priest upon his return and dies or even crumbles into dust after that.

Characters

In the type cluster *The Mortal's Visit to the Other World*, the dead friend belongs to the other side while the friend who is getting married represents the human world. A living person (a friend of the deceased) finds himself in the other world, he is a stranger there, he has no influence on the chronotope, he 'falls victim' to the strange and unknown other world. Jason claims that marvellous beings only exist in the fairy tale world of marvels: the hero meets them outside the world of humans and when he returns home, the marvellous beings disappear, while the supernatural characters of legends can also freely move in the human world (Jason 177: 147–151). Thus it can be claimed that the characters of the type cluster, first and foremost the dead person, rather belong to the

reality (chronotope) of legend where supernatural (demonic, mythological) characters are able to move unhindered in the human world and time (ibid.: 196, 207–209).

In Finnish folkloristics the tales described above have been classified as belief legends. The occurrence of concrete place names and personal names, the topic of death, an unhappy ending and characters usually belonging to the reality of legends allow the plots of the type cluster to be classified as belief legends or religious folktales. The international type catalogue has remained true to previous tradition and preserved the place of the tale types under fairy tales. In addition, the team of the Estonian folktale project⁴¹ decided to leave the four tale types belonging to the type cluster *A Mortal Visits the Other World* in the type register of Estonian fairy tales (Järv et al. 2009) despite the reasons listed above, as plots characteristic of the types have been predominantly developed more lengthily, resulting in fictional tales consisting of several episodes the religious background of which has today receded.

NOTES

1 In this article I use the term ‘fairy tale’ instead of terms ‘tale of magic’ and ‘wonder tale’, see Uther 2004: 6.

2 I use the term ‘tale type cluster’ as the set of tale types with similar topic and plot. For instance, *The Magic Ring* (ATU 560), *Aladdin* (ATU 561) and *The Spirit in the Blue Light* (ATU 562), the versions of which often mix and merge in ways that make it difficult to tell them apart as types, form a separate type cluster. Another example of a type cluster could be the body of tale plots connected with snakes and the Snake King: *The Man Who Understands Animal Languages* (ATU 670), *The Serpent’s Crown* (ATU 672), *The Stone of the Snake* (ATU 672D), *Expelling Snakes* (ATU 672B*), *Testimony of the Serpent* (ATU 672C*), *The White Serpent’s Flesh* (ATU 673) and the Latvian type *The Snake Gives Money* (AM 672E*).

3 For a monographic article about the tale type AT 681, see Ting 1981.

4 See Järv et al. 2009: 574–575, 613. For an encyclopaedic survey about international tale type ATU 470, see Petschel 1987.

5 The published Estonian archive versions of tale type ATU 470 are available in English: “The Heavenly Wedding” (Päär, Türipu 2005: 11–13); in German: “Die Ewigkeit” (Loorits 2004 [1959]: No. 107); and in Estonian: Järv et al. 2009: Nos. 143–144; Peebo, Peegel 1989: No. 80.

6 ERA II 194, 299 (1) < Setomaa, Vilo commune, Pööni village – Ello Kirss < Ode Lumõjärv (1938).

7 H II 19, 49/7 (17) < Tõstamaa parish – Mihkel Kampmann (1889).

8 See Järv et al. 2009: 575, 613. For a survey of international tale type ATU 470A, see Petschel 1981.

9 For the published Estonian archive versions of tale type ATU 470A, see Järv et al. 2009: Nos. 145–146.

10 Connection with Christmas occurs in six Estonian versions.

11 See Järv et al. 2009: 576, 613. For a survey of international tale type ATU 471A, see Wagner 1999.

12 The published Estonian archive versions of tale type ATU 471A are available in German: “Die Erzählung von einem Mönch, dem ein Vöglein sang” (Loorits 2004 [1959]: No. 108); the same version in Estonian: Peebo, Peegel 1989: No. 192. For another Estonian archive version, see Järv et al. 2009: No. 148.

13 ERA II 62, 387/9 (18) < Keila parish – Rudolf Pöldmäe < Mai Köölen, 70 years old (1933).

14 See Järv et al. 2009: 575–576, 613. For a survey of international tale type ATU 471, see Petschel 1979.

15 E 22538/47 < Viljandi parish – H. Pöder (1896). Cf. Järv et al. 2009: No. 147, with the tale type *The Land Where No One Dies* (ATU 470B) in which the young man who has gone to visit the Land of Immortality is forbidden to step on earth; he goes out to help a man whose carriage, which is full of worn-out shoes, has been overturned in a ditch. The coachman, however, turns out to be Death who takes his life then and there. See also Petschel 1996: 760–763.

16 This tale type has been excluded from among Finnish folktales due to its resemblance to a legend. In the catalogue of Lauri Simonsuuri and Marjatta Jauhianen (1998) it corresponds to legend type R 31; K 10 has a rather similar plot as well. The same plot has also been recorded as an exemplum: IE 3818 (A peasant falls into a hole where there are snakes and a giant dragon; in order to get food, he licks a magic stone; the man flees, clutching the tail of the dragon).

17 About St. Matthew's Days in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 50–55, 184.

18 About St. Gertrude's Day in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 76.

19 About Michaelmas in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 185–190.

20 About *viissenjapäev* in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 183–184.

21 About the occurrences of folk calendar holidays in Estonian fairy tales, see Kaasik 2008: 51–54.

22 About Seven Sleepers Day in Estonian tradition, see Hiimäe 1998: 148.

23 H II 26, 706/8 (7) < Suure-Jaani parish – Ernst-Heinrich Saabas (1889); E 11898/900 (1) < Tõstamaa parish, Pootsi commune – Otto Schantz (1894); E 11527 (4) < Tõstamaa parish, Pootsi commune – Juhan Hirdt (1894).

24 H II 39, 742/6 (699) < Koeru parish – H. A. Schults (1892).

25 H II 19, 46/7 (17) < Tõstamaa parish – Mihkel Kampmann (1889); H II 55, 194/5 (4) < Helme parish – Matt Tomp (1896).

26 S 20639/42 (18) < Setomaa, Vilo commune, Mitkovitsi-Sagorje village < Vilo commune, Saptja village – Viktor Ruusamägi < Anastasia Paloots (1930); ARS 1, 860 (1) < Tartu town – Olga Sermet (1927).

27 E 36255/60 < Tarvastu parish, Vooru commune – August Anderson (1897).

28 The Time of Souls in the Estonian folk calendar was traditionally the autumn-winter period between Michaelmas and Christmas (see Hiimäe 1998: 197–204).

29 E 4271/4 < Põltsamaa parish – Martin Luu (1892).

30 AES, MT 184, 14/5 < Tõstamaa parish and commune, Väräti village – E. Pöldre < Andrei Kangur, 86 years old (1936).

31 RKM II 288, 488/91 < Russia, Caucasia, Krasnodar krai, Adler rayon; Vesjoloje village < Sulevi village – Johannes Olev (1971); and RKM II 288, 491/4 (the same correspondent). It is worth mentioning that the tale has been recorded in a settlement of emigrants far from Estonia.

32 E 43675/9 (46) < Riga town < Rõngu parish, Aakre village – H. Lell < Peeter Virks (1902).

33 ERA II 153, 23 (11) < Haljala parish – Hermann Länts (1937).

34 ERA II 152, 60/5 (9) < Haljala parish, Aaspere commune, Võipere village < Väike-Maarja parish, Porkuni commune – Julius Aleksander Reepärg < Jaan Muruväli (Mahkvei) (1937), published in Järv et al. 2009: No. 144; H II 38, 116/7 (5) < Haljala parish – J. A. Reepärg < Juhannes Oru, a young boy who had heard these from his grandfather (1892).

35 E 4271/4 < Põltsamaa parish – Martin Luu (1892).

36 H II 36, 485/6 (7) < Vaivara parish – J. Männik (1893).

37 E 34801 (15) < Jüri parish, Kurma commune – Jaan Saalverk (1897); H III 5, 646/50 (1) < Tori parish – Tõnis Tilk (1889); ERA II 152, 60/5 (9) < Haljala parish, Aaspere commune, Võipere village < Väike-Maarja parish, Porkuni commune – J. A. Reepärg < Jaan Muruväli (Mahkvei) (1937); H II 38, 116/7 (5) < Haljala parish – J. A. Reepärg < Juhannes Oru (1892).

38 ERA II 152, 60/5.

39 H II 38, 116/7.

40 ERA II 152, 60/5.

41 About the Estonian folktale project, see Järv et al. 2009: 583–586.

SOURCES

Manuscript collections at the Estonian Folklore Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum:

E – Folklore collection of Matthias Johann Eisen (1880–1934).

ERA – Folklore collection of the Estonian Folklore Archives (1927–1944).

H – Folklore collection of Jakob Hurt (1860–1906).

RKM – Folklore collection of the Department of Folklore at the Estonian Literary Museum (1945–1994).

S – Setu folklore collection of Samuel Sommer (1922–1936).

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