The eternal time in fairytales. (The dissemination of the Land of Youth theme in various cultures)

Abstract:

Sigmund Freud stated that man is pushed in life by two essential, contrasting desires: Life (Libido or Eros) and Death (Thanatos). The second, the fatal drive will endlessly keep him searching for the eternal life. It is, nevertheless, impossible to stop the passing of time because of its subjectivity and relativity. But there were paradoxal travellers whose journey to the Land of Youth proved that their search was pointless and that you cannot escape Death. Their only gain was a time suspension, a fall into atemporality, a costly pause in time. Because what seemed a beautiful dream at the beginning became a torment when the hero started missing his world. Returning to it, accelerated the forgotten time and brought back the burden of death. This theme firstly appeared in the Mesopotamian myth of Gilgamesh, the one who has seen all or the searcher of immortality; in the biblical Book of Isaiah, whose journey lasted 32 years but who still returned home untouched by time; in Japanese mythology there is Urashima Tarō, a fisherman who visits the land of the Sea King and spends four hundred years there. The Celtic mythology thrives in such examples because there are two heroes who visit the People of the Sidhe in Tir na nOg: Brain and Oisin (The Voyage of Bran, son of Febal and Oisin in the land of Youth). Washington Irving tells the fascinating story of a man, Rip Van Winkle, who falls asleep in the forest before the War of Independence and wakes up only after. The Romanian fairy Tinereţe fără bătrâneţe şi viaţă fără de moarte/ Youth Everlasting and Life without Endhas a special position among these representations because it is the only story in which the hero is waited and slapped by Death at the end of time itself. Moreover it is totally unknown among European folk culture. Youth Everlasting and Life without End is a bildungsroman, a story about growing and searching for one's identity in the world, or it is what Noica calls a coming into being fairytale (fiintare), an ontological story.

Keywords: *Thanatos, Land of Youth, forgotten time, Youth Everlasting and Life without End, bildungsroman.*