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Didactic Tales, Formula Tales, and Tall Tales in Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*

The aim of the paper is to provide an alternative view of the Grimms' Kinder- und Hausmärchen *[Children and Household Tales], often erroneously considered to be a collection of fairy tales. Three genres have been selected as concrete case studies: didactic tales, formula tales, and tall tales. By providing both close readings of individual tales, and comparative readings of selected groups of tales, the paper aims to demonstrate how different criteria may be taken into consideration when classifying tales according to genre. A brief discussion of some of the problems concerning genre classification is followed by separate examinations and discussions of didactic tales, formula tales, and tall tales, as well as their respective sub-types. Most of the selected examples from the Grimms' collection demonstrate a tendency to borrow and mix (genre-specific) narrative elements, which simply goes to show that the notion of 'pure' genre is a false one, and that genre classification still requires much scholarly attention.*

Keywords: *Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm,* Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, narrative genre, didactic tale, formula tale, tall tale*

The year 2012, being a bicentenary of the first edition of the first volume of the Grimms' *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812; abbr. *KHM*), seems like the ideal time to re-examine our notions about this "most often translated, most often published, and best-known German-language work of all time" (Rölleke 1988: 109). Though much research has been done into the history of the *KHM*, the Grimms' collecting and editorial practices, the identity of their contributors, and the origins and publication history of individual tales, a significant amount of work still remains. One of the issues that strikes me as being in desperate need of scholarly attention is that of genre. Numerous studies of individual Grimm tales are principally concerned with

fairy tales; this may be ascribed to the fact that it is precisely this genre that is most often associated with the Brothers, and enjoys most popularity. However, the *KHM* is not merely "an anthology of fairy tales" (Tatar 2003: xxxii). On the contrary, the two volumes of the collection are a cornucopia of genres, such as animal tales and fables, anecdotes and folktales, religious tales, cautionary tales, even ghost stories (Bottigheimer 2009: 8, 32). Despite the fact that they outnumber fairy tales (of the 211 texts in the *KHM* Wesselski has counted around sixty 'real' fairy tales; as quoted in Biti 1981: 178, n. 1), genres other than fairy tales have received far less critical attention.

Before I specify the concrete object of this paper, I would like to bring several points regarding the Grimms' collection to the reader's attention. The relationship between oral and written literature, and orality and literacy in general, is still an area which, to a large extent, baffles historians, folklorists, and literary critics alike.[1] Given the fact that it belongs to both oral and literary traditions, the *KHM* seems to be particularly problematic in this respect. I will list several points which add to this problematic status: numerous informants with different social and educational backgrounds as sources for the tales, the fact that the Brothers were indiscriminate when it came to where the stories came from (apart from tales taken from oral informants, they also collected tales from newspapers, chapbooks, other tale collections), their tendency to alter tales to make them closer to their own concept of an ideal folk tale, the practice of combining several variants into one tale, etc. (*cf.* Bottigheimer 2009, Briggs 1993, Zipes 2002). As a result, tales published in the *KHM* present an unusual mix of *Volkmärchen* (oral tales) and *Kunstmärchen* (literary, artistic tales), which prompted some critics to propose new names for this type of tales, such as *Buchmärchen* (book tales) (Zipes 2002: 50), or even *Gattung Grimm* (Grimm genre). This type of duality seems to invite a similar, 'multiple' or interdisciplinary approach. In the case of the *KHM* the most promising combination seems to be that of literary studies and folkloristics.

In this paper I propose to examine three genres, or rather three groups of tales, found in the *KHM* − didactic tales, formula tales, and tall tales. In doing so I hope to demonstrate several points: firstly, the virtual impossibility of definitive and unambiguous placing of concrete narratives into theoretical constructions such as genre categories; secondly, the choice of genres which are to be examined is intended to demonstrate the different possibilities of genre classification, i.e. the

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[1] See for instance: Eric A. Havelock (1986). *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press; Walter Ong. 1982. *Orality and Literacy*. London: Methuen; Rudolf Schenda. 2007. "Semi-Literate and Semi-Oral Processes". *Marvels & Tales* 21 (1): 127-140.

possibilities of placing the same text in different genre categories, depending on which feature is given prominence; finally, I hope to open a space for investigating and discussing the *KHM* tales which are relatively unknown, and for the most part suffer from scholarly neglect (especially in the Croatian context).

(Im)Possibilities of Genre Classification

Given the formal and thematic limitations of this article, I shall refrain from discussing various possibilities of defining genre and its relationship to other literary categories. Suffice it to say that by 'genre' I mean a group of narratives which share a set of common features (formal, thematic, or other) (*cf.* Solar 2001: 131-132).[2] What I would like to discuss are some of the problems that almost inevitably arise from any attempt at drawing up some kind of genre taxonomy.

The very concept of genre (whether literary or oral) is primarily a construct, designed as an attempt to impose 'order' where none in fact exists. Therefore it is not too surprising that concrete narratives rarely adhere to the rules of genre categories in which they are placed (Lüthi 1986: 108). One might even go so far as to say that the very notion of 'pure' genre is a fiction in its own right, since it, as Röhrich notes, exists in the human mind rather than in real life (1991: 5). The situation is further complicated by the extremely dynamic and unstable nature of genres. For instance, narratives which the contemporary scholar terms 'myths', thus designating their fictionality, probably originated as belief narratives or religious tales.[3] What is more, the concept of a given genre may undergo such radical redefinitions with each new literary period and/or theoretical school, that drawing up a list of features shared by all historical manifestations of that genre seems utterly impossible. An often cited example is that of elegy, a poetic genre which was initially defined according to formal criteria (poems written in specific verse and meter); however, later definitions (starting in the 18th century) placed emphasis on thematic features, such as sorrow, loss and regret (Wellek & Warren 1978: 231-232).[4] Genres are thus

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[2] For detailed discussions on the definition of (literary) genre and genre classification, see: Anis S. Bawarshi & Mary Jo Reiff. 2010. *Genre. An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Parlor Press LLC; David Duff, ed. 2000. *Modern Genre Theory*. London: Longman; John Frow. 2006. *Genre*. London & New York: Routledge.

[3] The word 'myth' derives from the Greek word *mythos*, which is usually translated as speech, speaking, or story (Solar 2001: 211). It is interesting to note that the word is also used to designate "something that many people believe but that does not exist or is false" (Weheimer 2002: 842).

[4] Todorov proposes an elegant solution to some of these problems by distinguishing between 'historical' and 'theoretical' genres: "The first would result from an observation of literary reality; the second from a deduction of a theoretical order" (1987: 13-14).

historically-conditioned categories, which, as Brajović argues, exist as potentially never-ending processes, rather than fixed and stable categories (1995: 136).

Not only do genres change with time, they also "often possess an internal flexibility that makes them mobile and unpredictable at any given time" (Pavel 2003: 201). This dynamic quality of genre is especially prominent within the context of oral literature. On the one hand, the extremely flexible and permeable inter-narrative boundaries allow for a free exchange of (genre-specific) narrative elements (Karanović calls this an interweaving of genres; 1989: 105). On the other hand, the process of oral transmission through which tales are preserved and disseminated, may also bring about an altogether different idea about the meaning and use of a given narrative. What one narrative community regards as an entertaining story or anecdote, may easily function as a fairy tale or cautionary tale in a different community. Furthermore, oral literature presupposes the act of storytelling. This performative element, along with other extra-literary elements points to many other factors that need to be taken into consideration, such as the meaning of the narrative for the storyteller and audience, the relationship between story and storyteller, response from the audience, interaction between storyteller and audience, believability, and attitude toward the story assumed by the storyteller / audience... (Karanović 1989: 97).

Any given text may contain elements of different genres, or be used and interpreted differently in different narrative and cultural communities. Furthermore, it may also be placed into vastly different genre categories, depending on which criteria (formal, thematic, functional) the scholar deems most important, or which genre constituent s/he singles out as the dominant one (Cohen 1991: 88, 94). Most genre classifications are based on theme, length, structure, or worldview expressed in the narrative (Solar 2001: 209-211), but other elements, such as function, style, characters, even the way a given text affects the audience (as in the case of comedies and tragedies, for instance) may also be taken into consideration (Pavel 2003: 204).

Bearing all that has so far been said in mind, one might not be altogether wrong in dismissing any and all attempts at genre classification as a futile endeavor (Oring notes that classifications and terminology often create confusion, rather than clarification; 1996: 123-4). However, although no classification can ever be definitive, final and indisputable, the (open-ended) issue of genre still needs to be raised, if for no other reason than for the sake of practicality (Bošković-Stulli 1958: 127). Finally, the fact that all classifications that we have to date, though numerous and varied, are imperfect, at times even imprecise (133), should provide additional motivation for renewing our efforts in this particular field. Despite its problems and possible drawbacks, genre remains "a crucial interpretative tool" that helps us

"figure out the nature of a literary work," so all those who choose to disregard it do so "at their own risk" (Pavel 2003: 202). Although I admit that genre classification and the terminology that goes with it often seem to create more problems than they actually solve, I still share Pavel's belief that genres remain indispensable for anyone interested in the study of literature (both oral and written).

As Todorov points out, no discussion of genre can ever include all examples of a given genre (i.e. all texts which, supposedly, belong to one and the same genre), but is based on a limited number of select examples (1987: 3-4). My own analysis is also subject to this limitation; my observations and conclusions are therefore valid only in the context of the Grimms' collection, and may not necessarily apply to other tales (whether oral or literary). I now turn my attention to concrete examples of genre found in the *KHM*. Genre categories chosen for discussion demonstrate different possibilities for classification, based on formal (structural) features (formula tales), function (didactic tales), overall tone (or atmosphere) and narrative strategies (tall tales).

Didactic Tales: Narrative as Moral Compass

As its very name suggests, the group of tales described as 'didactic' includes narratives which aim to instruct the reader. Depending on the strategies employed for achieving didactic purposes, we may distinguish between cautionary (warning) tales, and exemplary tales.[5] Before focusing on each of the two sub-types, I would like to point out that behavioral and moral instructions may be found in a large number of the Grimms' tales which in themselves are not didactic. The haughty princess in the fairy tale "The Frog King" (KHM 1)[6] has to sit through her father's talk on the importance of keeping one's word ("When you make a promise, you must keep it"; Grimm 1983: 4). "The Old Man and His Grandson" (KHM 78), classified by the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index as a realistic tale, does not contain explicit instructions on how to treat one's parents. Nevertheless, the naive actions of the little boy are clearly an indictment of the father's treatment of the grandfather. "Eve's Unequal Children" (KHM 180), an aetiological narrative intended to explain the origin of occupations and social stratification, reinforces the necessity to rely on God and accept His wisdom without question.

The most explicit form of didacticism is perhaps found in fairy tales belonging to a tale type described by the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index of tale types as Kind

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[5]   My own classification of didactic tales is based on Maria Tatar´s (1992).

[6]   The number in the brackets is the ordinal number of a given tale in the Grimms´ collection.

Girls and Unkind Girls (ATU 480).[7] The fact that the 'kind girls' in these stories (obedient, patient, diligent) are richly rewarded while the 'unkind' ones (disobedient, stubborn, lazy) are punished, speaks volumes about character traits and what is considered to be desirable behavior. The link between good / bad character traits and rewards / punishments is made explicit in "The Three Little Men in the Woods" (KHM 13). The three little men are anxious to reward the kind girl for her good manners, for sharing food with them, and sweeping their back yard. In contrast, the rude and arrogant behavior of the unkind girl is met with disapproval: "What shall we give her for being so horrid and having a wicked, envious heart, and never giving anything away" (Grimm 1983: 51). It should come as no surprise that the Grimms, who were so insistent on the educational value of their collection that they described it as an *Erziehungsbuch* (educational manual) (Zipes 2002: 47), would seize every opportunity "to encode the stories with morals, messages, and lessons in etiquette" (Tatar 2004: 143, n. 3).

To reinforce what is considered correct behavior and desirable character traits, cautionary tales depict (often gruesome and tragic) consequences of 'bad' behavior (Uther 2008: 104, Kvideland 2005: 190-91).[8] Since these tales are usually directed at children, the protagonists are also mostly children, who go against the grain and consequently come to a sticky end (Tatar 2003: 192). The opening lines of "Frau Trude" (KHM 43) make it clear that no good can come to those who refuse to obey their parents: "Once there was a little girl who was stubborn and insolent, and disobeyed her parents. How could she possibly have kept out of trouble?" (Grimm 1983: 151). The girl's failure to heed her parents' warnings against going into the forest results in tragedy: the "wicked woman" Frau Trude turns her into a block of wood and throws it on the fire (152). A similar cry against disobedience and willfulness amongst children is found in "The Naughty Child" (KHM 117), where God Himself cannot abide a "naughty child who didn't do what his mother told him" (403). Therefore, God lets the child become sick and die. By portraying such extreme consequences of what is considered unacceptable behavior, cautionary tales aim to "discourage curiosity and willfulness, and promote obedience, conformity, and acceptance of parental authority" (Tatar 1992: 30).

As has already been noted, didactic elements are frequently found in non-didactic narratives. On the other hand, the *KHM* contains several instances of tales

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[7] The ATU abbreviation stands for the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index of tale types (2004a, 2004b; reprinted in 2011) while the number that follows refers to the tale type a given narrative belongs to.

[8] It should be noted that the consequences of disobedience and transgression are to a great extent determined by gender. For an extensive discussion on gender-related prohibitions and punishments, see: Ruth Bottigheimer (1987). *Grimms´ Bad Girls and Bold Boys*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

which were not originally didactic, but which have gradually been transformed into vehicles for reinforcing proper, and discouraging improper behavior. One of the most famous examples is probably the Grimms' rendition of "Little Red Cap" (KHM 26) which, though usually referred to as a fairy tale, conveys important messages regarding (dis)obedience and (im)proper modes of behavior for little girls.[9] To achieve this purpose, the Brothers added explicit warnings, instructions, and morals: "(…) walk properly like a good little girl, and don't leave the path or you'll fall down and break the bottle and there won't be anything for grandmother. And when you get to her house, don't forget to say good morning, and don't go looking in all the corners" (Grimm 1983: 99); "(…) as for Little Red Cap, she said to herself: 'Never again will I leave the path and run off into the wood when my mother tells me not to'" (101). Another well-known example is "The Wolf and the Seven Young Kids" (KHM 5), a tale classified in the ATU index as an animal tale, which graphically shows what happens to children who open the door to strangers.

Unlike cautionary or warning stories which instruct by showing what happens when moral boundaries are transgressed, exemplary tales turn to submission and the patient suffering of the hero/ine to promote socially acceptable modes of behavior. In other words, "[i]f the basic narrative unit of the cautionary tale consists of a prohibition and its violation, the fundamental move of the exemplary story involves a command and its fulfillment" (Tatar 1992: 42). While cautionary tales focus on punishment, exemplary tales are interested in rewards; the former thus rely on negative examples to instruct, while the latter provide readers with positive identification models. One of the most extreme examples of protagonists who are rewarded for their suffering and utter self-abnegation, is found in "The Star Talers" (KHM 153). Even though she is bereft of all material possessions, the kind and pious orphan girl "put[s] her trust in God" (Grimm 1983: 494). To be sure, the hunger and cold she suffers once she has given away her last piece of bread and stitch of clothing are abundantly rewarded: "stars began to fall from the sky, and they were shiny talers. (...) She gathered the talers (…) and was rich for the rest of her life" (*ibid.*).

Finally, no discussion of didactic genres would be complete without fables, "short allegorical animal-stories" conveying a "specific moral or behavioral lesson" (Grenby 2008: 10). Since fables portray men, animals, gods, even inanimate objects, the term 'beast' or 'animal fable' is sometimes used to set apart fables featuring anthropomorphized animals (Dithmar 1983: 736). What distinguishes animal

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[9] Of course, to reduce this tale (or any other, for that matter) purely to its didactic function would, as Dundes warns, be "a gross oversimplification", which does not do justice to the complexity of that narrative, or its many variants (1988: 48, n. 33).

fables from other animal tales is their "acknowledged moral purpose" (Thompson 1977: 10). The moral of the story is often put in the mouth of one of the characters, as in "The Wolf and the Man" (KHM 72) ("'You see what a braggart you are!' said the fox. 'It seems to me that your tongue overreached itself'"; Grimm 1983: 264), or added at the end of the story in the form of a sentence, or (less frequently) a paragraph. The following is an example from "The Hare and the Hedgehog" (KHM 187) (Grimm 1983: 577):

> The moral of this story is, in the first place, that nobody, no matter how fancy he thinks he is, should ever make fun of an inferior, even if it's only a hedgehog. In the second place, that if a man wants to get married, he should take a wife of his own kind, who looks exactly the same as he does. So in case you're a hedgehog, make sure your wife is one too, and so forth.

This brief discussion by no means exhausts the possibilities of interpreting (and classifying) genre from a purely functionalist point of view. For instance, in her analysis of the *KHM* tales Maria Tatar identifies a group of narratives which she terms 'consolatory tales'. These, she claims, have been "designed to provide comfort to those whose parents or children have suffered an untimely death" (Tatar 1992: 86). The group includes mainly legends and religious tales, such as "The Shroud" (KHM 109) or "The Old Woman" (KHM 208).

Repetition, Addition, Variation: Formula Tales

The very name of this particular group of narratives, formula tales (ATU 2000-2399), suggests that we are dealing with tales in which "form is all-important" (Thompson 1977: 229). The plot (if one can, in fact, speak of a plot) is often spare and functions merely as a basis for developing a narrative pattern which is then repeated with or without certain variations and/or additions (*ibid.*). Types of formula tales found in the *KHM* include cumulative tales, chain tales, catch tales and endless tales.

The basic requirement of a cumulative tale is the existence of "a simple phrase or clause [which] is repeated over and over again, always with new additions" (Thompson 1977: 230). Given its open-endedness, Röhrich argues that the only "effective way" to end such a tale is to simply kill off everyone involved (1991: 49). The Grimms' "The Louse and the Flea" (KHM 30) is a typical example: the story opens with the louse falling into an eggshell and being scalded. The sorrow-stricken flea begins to "scream at the top of his lungs" (Grimm 1983: 112), and is overheard by an inquisitive door that wishes to know why the flea is screaming. "Because Louse has got scalded" (*ibid.*), goes the reply. The story of the death of

the louse spreads like wildfire: the door tells it to the broom, the broom to the cart, the cart to a rubbish heap, etc. Not only does each new listener become a storyteller in his own right by faithfully repeating everything he heard, but he also adds his own lines to the lament. The final lament runs as follows (113):

> Louse has got scalded.
> Flea is crying,
> Door is creaking,
> Broom is sweeping,
> Cart is running,
> Rubbish Heap is burning.
> Tree is shaking himself.

The spring as the final participant in the narrative chain reacts by gushing so "furiously" that everyone drowns "in the gushing water, the girl, the tree, the rubbish heap, the cart, the broom, the door, the flea, and the louse, the whole lot of them" (*ibid.*). A similar grim picture is found in "The Death of the Hen" (KHM 80): what starts out as a singular misfortune of a hen choking on a kernel gradually escalates into a large-scale tragedy. The story starts in a cumulative vein: in his attempt to fetch water and save Hen from choking, Rooster has to converse with several other characters and perform several tasks (the well demands red silk in exchange for water, while the bride who owns red silk wants her wreath). To describe Rooster's efforts, the narration relies heavily on repetition: "'Rooster, I beg of you, run and bring me water as fast as you can or I'll choke.' Rooster ran to the well as fast as he could, and said: 'Well, you must give me some water. Hen is up on the nuthill, she has swallowed a great big nut and she's going to choke'"; "Bride, I need some red silk. I must take the red silk to the well, the well is to give me some water, I must take water to Hen, who is up on the nuthill where she has swallowed a great big nut and is going to choke" (Grimm 1983: 276). However, after the death of Hen repetitions are almost entirely dropped, and the story assumes the character of a chain tale, i.e. one which discloses a chain of events, usually triggered by seemingly unimportant, often random or accidental acts or events (Uther 2008: 80). On his way to bury Hen, Rooster encounters a series of animals and inanimate objects that wish to join him (Fox, Wolf, Bear, Stag, Lion, straw, coal). However, on crossing a brook the over-crowded wagon slips back into the water, causing the death of the entire party. Being the single survivor, Rooster buries Hen, but soon dies of grief. "So then they were all dead" (Grimm 1983: 277), the story concludes.

Given their similarities, it is arguable whether one might speak of chain tales and cumulative tales as two distinct types in the first place. If we compare "The Death of the Hen" and "The Louse and the Flea", it is clear that the only major

difference between the two is the repetition and addition which form the narrative basis of the "The Louse and the Flea". Both tales rely on a gradual increase in the number of participants in the central event (mourning the louse / Hen), and end in the death of everyone involved. Although some critics recognize only cumulative tales as a distinct generic category (*cf*. Tatar 1992: 186), it is my belief that chain tales and cumulative tales form two separate groups of tales (however, the groups are frequently combined). In the case of cumulative tales, the key feature is the gradual accumulation of narrative elements. Chain tales, on the other hand, rely primarily on repetition. In this respect, cumulative tales often function as a kind of memory game, the aim of which is to correctly repeat everything that has previously been said before adding new sentences / narrative sequences (*cf*. Wienker-Piepho 1993: 1196). It should also be noted that repetitions are frequently found in many short narrative genres, such as fairy tales in which heroes/ines are often faced with three quests, or triple repetitions of a given task. Furthermore, fairy-tale characters frequently repeat incantations, songs or magic formulas (dialogues between the evil queen and the magic mirror in "Snow White", KHM 53, come to mind). It is only when repetitions form the basis of the tale structure that we talk about formula tales.

According to Tatar, the tragedy and violence in tales such as "The Death of the Hen" or "The Louse and the Flea" seem to be an end in themselves; in other words, these stories stage violence simply for the sake of violence (1992: 186). However, not all formula tales feature violence *per se*, nor do they necessarily end in tragedy. On the contrary, the *KHM* features several playful and comic cumulative tales, such as "Two Families" (KHM 140), or "The Fair Katrinelya and Pif Paf Poltree" (KHM 131).[10] The latter tale, which consists entirely of repetitive bits of dialogue, is also a good example of just how irrelevant plot is to the formula tale. Pif Paf Poltree wants to marry Katrinelya and is therefore talking to all members of her family (Father Hollowtree, Mother Milko, Brother Stiff-and-proud, Sister Cheesealeeze), asking their blessing. The brief exchanges between characters all follow the same pattern: 1. the suitor asks for Katrinelya's hand in marriage, 2. the interlocutor replies it is fine with him/her as long as everyone else agrees (this reply is followed by a list of family members), 3. Pif Paf Poltree wishes to know the whereabouts of a family member other than the interlocutor, 4. the answer is followed by an exchange of greetings. The story closes with an exchange between Katrinelya and Pif Paf in which she is trying to guess what he does for a living – to each of her numerous guesses ("A shoemaker?", "A blacksmith?", "A miller?", etc.) he answers by saying

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[10] Both the playfulness and humorous quality of these comic cumulative tales are most evident during live performance. As Thompson points out, it is only through "proper narrating" that these narratives become game-like (1977: 229).

he is something "[b]etter still" (Grimm 1983: 450). While the pretext of courtship may be taken as an indication of some semblance of plot in "The Fair Katrinelya and Pif Paf Poltree", "Two Families" seems to dispense with plot altogether. The 'dialogue' the story consists of is nothing more than a repetition and accumulation of nonsensical names of places (Walpe) and people (Bald, Knock-kneed-pigeon-toed-and-lame) (474-475).

It is worth repeating that strict boundaries between genres are impossible to draw: many anecdotes rely heavily on repetition, especially those belonging to tale type 1696. What Should I Have Said (Done)?, such as "Clever Hans" (KHM 32) or "Traveling" (KHM 143). "Clever Hans" is a particularly problematic case, as it consists almost entirely of dialogues which follow the same pattern. Thompson claims this is "really a cumulative tale as well as a story of stupidity" (1977: 230). The ultimate decision regarding classification in cases like this always depends on what the interpreter (scholar, researcher) perceives to be the primary criterion (in this case, structure or content). Personally, I would be more inclined to designate both "Clever Hans" and "Traveling" as jests (humorous tales, *Schwankmärchen*), because the repetitions are not nonsensical (as in "Two Families"), and the comedy is based not on the repetitions themselves, but rather on misunderstanding and repeating sentences in inappropriate contexts.

Endless tales, another sub-type of formula tales, feature an indefinite number of repetitions of some simple task, such as counting animals, or carrying them across a stream one at a time (Thompson 1977: 229). The Grimms' collection contains one endless tale, "The Fox and the Geese" (KHM 86). A flock of geese beg the fox to allow them to say their prayers before she gobbles them up. The fox agrees, and the geese start praying: "The first began a long-drawn-out prayer that went 'Ga! ga! ga! ga!' over and over again. And since she went on and on, the second, instead of waiting her turn, started in with her 'Ga! ga!' The third and fourth followed, and soon they were all cackling together" (Grimm 1983: 297). Since we are not told the exact number of geese, the counting / praying pattern could go on indefinitely. Also, it is unclear how long it will take for the geese to say their prayers. The story must therefore remain unfinished: "Our story will resume when they have finished praying, but for the present they are still at it" (*ibid.*).

Finally, the *KHM* contains one catch tale, a narrative which, as its German name suggests (*Vexiermärchen* or *Neckenmärchen*, from the verbs *vexieren* and *necken* which both mean to mock or tease) 'tease' the reader by playing with and eventually disappointing his/her expectations (Uther 2008: 407). The Grimms' "The Golden Key" (KHM 200) is an unfinished catch tale about a poor boy who finds a golden key and a small iron box buried in the snow. The curiosity of the reader is

intensified by describing the boy's own curiosity and excitement at his discovery, and hinting at the possible content of the casket: "'There must be precious things in it,' he thought. 'If only the key fits!'" (Grimm 1983: 614). However, the reader's curiosity remains unsatisfied as the last glance s/he gets of the boy is of him turning the key: "now we'll have to wait until he turns it all the way and opens the lid. Then we'll know what marvels there were in the box" (*ibid.*). Although both "The Fox and the Geese" and "The Golden Key" lack a formal ending, the basis for placing them into different generic categories is the fact that "The Fox and Geese" has the potential of going on indefinitely (we do not know how many geese there are), while disclosing the contents of the casket would bring "The Golden Key" to a swift ending.

Generic categories are often based on external (e.g. length, organizing sentences / lines into paragraphs / stanzas) or internal formal features. However, one should be careful not to overemphasize the importance of certain structural elements – in this case, repetition – as they may be found in other genres, as well. Only when a given structural element becomes the basis for the entire narrative, is it justified to consider it as a possible criterion for genre classification.

Tall Tales: The Art of Boasting

Tall tales (ATU 1875-1999), a special sub-category of anecdotes and jokes, are short humorous narratives which rely heavily on exaggeration. They are most effective when told in the first person, with the narrator disclosing the events as if they had actually happened to him (Thomas 1996: 1265, 1268).[11] Sometimes tall tales are set in an impossible topsy-turvy world such as Ditmarsh, or Cock-a-doodle (Land of Cockaigne, *Schlaraffenland*). As with formula tales, the plot in tall tales is of secondary importance, if, indeed, one can speak of a plot at all. Two prominent examples in the Grimms' collection, "The Tale of Cock-a-doodle" (KHM 158) and "The Ditmarsh Tale of Lies" (KHM 159) are seemingly open-ended lists of absurdities, which can end only when the narrator's creativity and wit have been exhausted.

Although the line between extreme exaggeration and outright lying is a fine one, so-called lying tales or tales of lying (*Lügenmärchen*) are usually perceived as a sub-category of the tall tale. Thompson, for instance, uses the term 'tall tales'

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[11] The use of a masculine pronoun here should not be mistaken for a sign of the author´s disregard for gender-sensitive language. The pronoun simply seems appropriate in this context, since tall tales are typically told by men. In most cases, the narrators are fishermen, hunters, seamen, soldiers, or representatives of other traditionally 'masculine' professions (*cf.* Henningsen 1965).

to refer to all narratives structured around "lies and exaggerations" (1977: 216). Heda Jason also describes tall tales as a more general category encompassing two sub-types: the lying tale and the topsy-turvy-world tale (1977: 43). In my own understanding, tall tales are an umbrella term encompassing various narratives which rely on exaggeration, hyperbolization, nonsense, absurdity, and similar narrative strategies, to entertain and engage their audience and to produce a comic effect. From this point of view, tales of lying are seen as a sub-type of the tall tale. Seeing that boasting (at least in this context) relies on exaggeration and frequently delves into the fantastic (or at least, the improbable) to illustrate the narrator's (supposedly) extraordinary abilities, I consider the boasting tale to be a sub-category of the lying tale.

In tales of lying found in the *KHM* the disregard for truth is frequently expressed through explicit references to lies. The narrator of "The Tale of Cock-a-doodle" asks the audience: "Isn't that lies enough for you?" (Grimm 1983: 499), while "The Ditmarsh Tale of Lies" ends with a demand to open a window and "let the lies out" (500). Unlike genres in which supernatural characters and occurrences are perceived as belonging to a separate marvelous realm (e.g. legends), the supernatural, or rather, the unbelievable in tall tales is always firmly rooted in the everyday, which is then (often literally) turned on its head (Röhrich 1991: 53). "The Ditmarsh Tale of Lies" opens with a scene of roasted chickens flying and a millstone swimming across the Rhine. It goes on to inform the reader how four men, one blind, one deaf, one dumb, and one unable to move his feet, caught a rabbit: "The blind one saw the hare running across the field, the dumb one shouted to the lame one [*sic*], and the lame one caught the hare by the collar" (Grimm 1983: 500). A similar hare story is found in "Knoist and His Three Sons" (KHM 138), where the sons – one blind, one lame, and one stark naked – stumble upon a hare: "The blind one shot it, the second caught it, and the naked one put it in his pocket" (473).

While the three examples discussed above cannot be said to have a plot, there are such tall tales in the Grimms' collection which place the "outrageous exaggerations" (Thompson 1977: 214) and slapstick quality characteristic of tall tales (Tatar 2003: 34) within a (loosely defined) framework of a story. "The Flail from Heaven" (KHM 112), a parody of religious tales perverts the motif of the ladder to heaven by having the hero climb a giant tree (which sprouts from a turnip seed, of all things!) to heaven. Curious to learn what it is the angels are doing up there, he is somewhat disappointed to find them in a most mundane activity – namely, threshing oats. The story opens with an equally absurd and impossible situation in which the hero's oxen begin to grow horns, which end up "so big that he couldn't drive through his barn door" (Grimm 1983: 388). The poor farmer in "The

Turnip" (KHM 146) grows a turnip so big "that it filled a whole wagon all by itself, and two oxen were needed to pull it" (484). The enormous vegetable ("the king of turnips", 483) becomes the source of all subsequent mishaps.

Tall tales may also take on the form of a boasting competition (boasting tales), in which the participants come up with impossible examples to prove their laziness. Three princes ("The Three Lazy Sons", KHM 151) go out of their way to convince their father who is the laziest among them (Grimm 1983: 490):

> The eldest said: "Father, then the kingdom is mine, because I'm so lazy that when I'm lying on my back all ready to fall asleep and the rain starts falling in my eyes, I'd sooner stay awake than close them." The second said: "Father, the kingdom is mine, because I'm so lazy that when I sit warming myself by the fire, I'd sooner burn my heels than pull my legs in." The third said: "Father, the kingdom is mine, because I'm so lazy that if I were going to be hanged and the noose were already around my neck, and somebody handed me a sharp knife and said I could cut the rope with it, I'd sooner let them hang me than raise my hand to the rope."

A similar boasting competition, though this time engaged in purely for the sake of boasting (and, one might add, producing comic effect), is the narrative basis of "The Twelve Lazy Servants" (KHM 151*).

As we have seen from selected examples of tall tales, narrative strategies and the effect a narrative has on the audience may also present relevant criteria in defining genre. What is more, by choosing tall tales among numerous genres found in the Grimms' collection, I wanted to stress the role of potential audiences. Tall tales (and tales of lying in particular) are most effective when told to an audience, when the storyteller has the opportunity to modify his story according to the audience's reactions. For instance, should the listeners react in disbelief, he might become even more intent in 'persuading' them that he is telling them the truth, and nothing but the truth. Furthermore, the fact that "The Tale of Cock-a-doodle" and "The Ditmarsh Tale of Lies" are the only *KHM* tales told in the first person, and contain instances of narrators directly addressing their audiences, support the idea that the notion of live performance and interaction between storyteller and listener may also play a significant part in genre classification.

Concluding Remarks

As we have seen from selected examples of the *KHM* tales, even stories which seem to be clear-cut in terms of genre contain elements characteristic of other genre categories (didacticism in fairy tales or animal tales, repetitive patterns in jests, etc.). Also, the choice of genre category in which a given narrative is placed depends to a large extent on the scholar and his/her particular interest or theoretical

background. By examining three different genres found in the Grimms' collection, I have tried to demonstrate how different criteria can become relevant in determining genre, for instance: function (didactic tales), inner structure (formulaic tales), (im)possibility of oral performance, the attitude the storyteller assumes toward the content, narrative strategies, or effect of the narrative on the audience (tall tales). However, there are other genres which require similar treatment: animal tales, jests, folk tales, and religious tales, to name a few. The need to re-examine the issue of the *KHM* seems even more pressing in light of the fact that several tales still need to be classified (they are not included in the ATU index). This article is merely a proposition as to how one might go about re-examining the stories in the *KHM*, and hopefully a stimulus and invitation for further research into the genres and tales which have so far dwelt in the shadows of fairy tales.

Let me conclude by proposing another possible approach to the issue of genre in the *KHM*, one which ideally presupposes a joining of efforts between folkloristics and literary studies, suggested in the introductory part. During the Brothers' lives, seven 'large' (*große Ausgabe*; intended for a scholarly audience) and ten 'small' editions (*kleine Ausgabe*; intended for children) of the *KHM* were published. Throughout these editions (fifty-odd years of publishing history), the Grimms (Wilhelm, in particular) kept revising, editing, even deleting certain tales (*cf*. Zipes 2002: 47). It would be interesting to compare different editions of individual tales to see whether these editorial changes had any effect on genre. A further step might take one beyond the boundaries imposed by the *KHM*; namely, one might compare a select Grimm tale with other variants of the same tale in order to observe whether or not (and if so, why and how) one and the same tale type assumes different genre roles in different cultural and historical contexts.

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Zagreb

Poučne priče, formulne priče i lagarije u zbirci *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* braće Grimm

Cilj je ovoga rada ponuditi alternativni uvid u zbirku braće Grimm Kinder- und Hausmärchen *[Dječje i kućne bajke], za koju se uglavnom pogrešno drži da sadrži isključivo bajke. Za konkretna razmatranja i analizu odabrana su tri slabije poznata prozna žanra: poučne priče, formulne priče i lagarije. Pomnim čitanjem relevantnih tekstova iz Grimmove zbirke te komparacijom odabranih žanrovskih skupina, rad nastoji pokazati višestruke mogućnosti žanrovske klasifikacije. Najprije se donosi kraći pregled nekih od problema vezanih uz žanrovsku klasifikaciju, s posebnim naglaskom na svojevrsnoj arbitrarnosti odabira kriterija prema kojima će se pojedini tekstovi svrstavati u žanrovske kategorije. Slijede zasebne rasprave odabranih kategorija i njihovih podvrsta. S obzirom na to da većina primarnih tekstova uključenih u analizu pokazuje sklonost posuđivanju i miješanju narativnih elemenata svojstvenih drugim žanrovima, možemo zaključiti da je ideja 'čistoga' žanra isključivo teorijski koncept, te da je sama problematika žanra i književne klasifikacije općenito još uvijek nedovoljno istražena.*

Ključne riječi: *Jacob i Wilhelm Grimm,* Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, kraći prozni žanr, poučne priče, formulne priče, lagarije*

Didaktische und formelhafte Geschichten sowie Lügengeschichten in den *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* der Gebrüder Grimm

Im vorliegenden Beitrag wird eine alternative Sicht der Grimmschen Sammlung Kinder- und Hausmärchen *dargeboten, die auf die sehr verbreitete und dennoch irreführende Behauptung rekurriert, es handle sich hierbei ausschließlich um eine Märchensammlung. Den Untersuchungsrahmen bilden drei weniger bekannte Prosagenres: didaktische und formelhafte Geschichten sowie Lügengeschichten. Eine Analyse ausgewählter Texte der Grimmschen Sammlung enthüllt, dass diese Eigenschaften mehrerer Genres miteinander verbinden. Einführend wird ein kurzer Überblick über einige Probleme der Genreklassifikation dargeboten, wobei insbesondere die Arbitrarität der Kriterienauswahl angesprochen wird. Im Anschluss werden die ausgewählten Genres mitsamt ihren Unterkategorien detailliert erläutert. Die Beobachtung, dass die Mehrzahl der hier untersuchten Primärtexte zur Entlehnung und Vermischung von narrativen Konstrukten aus anderen Gattungen neigt, legt den Schluss nahe, dass zum einen die Idee der ,reinen' Gattung ein ausschließlich theoretisches Konzept darstellt und zum anderen die Problematik der Bestimmung von Gattungen und ihrer Klassifikation noch immer nicht hinreichend erforscht ist.*

Schlüsselwörter: *Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm, Kinder- und Hausmärchen, Kurzprosa, didaktische Geschichten, formelhafte Geschichten, Lügengeschichten*