

The Moral Meets the Marvellous

Grimms' Didactic Fairy Tales

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Abstract: The paper proposes to examine the notion of didacticism in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and household tales, 1812/15–1857), more specifically didactic fairy tales. The broad discussion of some general issues regarding didactic literature is followed by a study of fairy tales containing superimposed didactic insertions and those in which the didactic agenda is supported by the story structure and content. Fairy tales belonging to ATU 480. The Kind and the Unkind Girls have been selected as an illustration of the latter.

Key words: ATU 480, didacticism, fairy tale, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*

1. Introduction

The term “didactic tale” commonly refers to narratives intended to instruct the reader/listener, especially in terms of how (s)he should conduct him/herself (cf. Bausinger). The lessons inscribed in these tales can be presented implicitly (the consequences of the main characters' behaviour, the ways in which their surrounding responds to their actions) and/or explicitly (concrete instructions on how to behave, i.e. on what is or is not socially and/or morally acceptable, are voiced by the characters or appended to the story in the form of a moral). Utilizing both negative and positive fictional examples, didactic tales illustrate and promote the values and behavioural patterns that a given narrating community deems acceptable, ideally encouraging the reader/listener to adopt them (Hameršak, *Pričalice* 124). In that sense, these narratives promote moral perfectionism, defined by Andrew Miller as the need to perfect oneself not only by “following rules, commandments, laws, guidelines”, but also (in fact, even more so) through exposure to positive/negative examples which are (somewhat simplistically put) either imitated or avoided (3).

Deciding which narratives should be labelled as didactic may prove to be quite problematic, as some didactic potential may be discerned even in narratives which appear to be completely unconcerned with teaching lessons, such as humorous or jocular tales. As Jackie Stallcup argues in her analysis of children's novels penned by the popular British author Roald Dahl, humour, or more specifically, the choice of character traits and modes of behaviour which are singled out for ridicule, may be seen as a means of condemning certain characteristics/behaviour patterns and praising others. In other words, the mockery and punishments (whether literal or metaphorical) ridiculed characters are exposed to may be interpreted as a condemnation of the traits and behaviour patterns they display (Stallcup 44, 46). Even formula tales, which are seemingly interested in little else besides the repetition and accumulation of episodes, characters, etc. (cf. Kujundžić, Wienker-Piepho), may be said to have some

didactic potential. For instance, since the death of the hen in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's story of the same name ("The Death of the Hen", KHM 80) is a direct result of her refusal to share food with the rooster, the tale may, to an extent, be interpreted as a warning against greed and selfishness. However, tales which are (perhaps) unintentionally or even "accidentally" instructive (tales in which lessons appear almost as a side-effect of the story) and those that contain isolated, often superimposed instances of didacticism should be distinguished from tales with an overall didactic thrust, i.e. those in which characters' (un)successful adherence to certain rules and behavioural patterns, and possession/lack of specific traits are essential to the plot (Hameršak, *Pričalice* 119).

To further examine the notion of didacticism within children's literature and the different forms didactic tales may assume, we turn to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's widely popular collection of stories, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and household tales, 1812/15–1857; hereafter *KHM*). The issue of didacticism is especially pertinent to the *KHM* as the Grimms, having identified children as their target audience, began encoding their stories "with morals, messages, and lessons in etiquette" (Tatar, *The Annotated Brothers Grimm* 143, n. 3). As a result of these efforts which permeate the 50-odd-year long editorial history of the collection, which encompasses seven "large" (*Große Ausgabe*) and ten "small" editions (*Kleine Ausgabe*), the *KHM* as a whole is marked by a "strong didactic undercurrent" (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 63) [1]. In other words, some degree of didacticism (including religious instruction) – whether implicit or explicit, "natural" or superimposed – is found in a large number of the 211 tales featured in the Grimms' collection, regardless of genre.

Although the *KHM* contains a large number of generically diverse prose narratives, ranging from animal tales and legends to formula tales and parodies, the genre most commonly associated with the name "Grimm" (to the extent that the two have become almost synonymous) is that of the fairy tale. It is precisely this genre that presents the main focus of our paper. After a brief introductory part which will address some general issues related to didacticism and its connections to children's literature, we turn our attention to the place of fairy tales within the tradition of didactic literature. Our goal is to examine two types of (supposedly) didactic fairy tales: those which contain superimposed, often isolated didactic insertions added by the Grimms, which are not always supported by the narrative logic, and those in which the didactic agenda is supported by both the structure and content. The latter will be discussed on the example of the *KHM* fairy tales classified in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index of international folktales as belonging to the tale type called The Kind and the Unkind Girls (ATU 480).

2. Changing notions of didacticism

Given their moral and educational use, didactic tales are commonly perceived as part of children's literature and a significant factor in the process of socialization. When discussing didactic tales it is therefore important to bear in mind the shifting notions of the child and childhood, as well as the resulting changes in trends in children's literature (Hameršak, *Pričalice* 155, 158; Immele 19). The notions of what children should be taught, i.e. which social norms and values

should be communicated via literature, are shaped by numerous cultural, social and historical factors, even the social status of the implied child reader (cf. Vallone), and as such also subject to change [2]. The concept of didacticism and didactic literature is thus dependent on numerous factors, such as the cultural, social and historical context in which the narratives originate. Since didactic tales inevitably reflect the specific value system of the narrating community, the passing of time and shifting nature of social norms and values, or, alternatively, the tales' transference into different communities, often result in the eradication of their moral and instructive overtones. Consider, for instance, the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast. Some scholars read the first literary versions of this story – Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's 362-page novel published in 1740 and its shorter, 1756 version penned by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont – as a combination of a didactic and consolatory tale intended for young brides-to-be. At a time when arranged marriages were the norm and young women frequently had to marry unknown (often considerably older) suitors, "Beauty and the Beast" may have served to both ease the female readers' fears and anxieties regarding marriage (to a metaphorical beast) and impress upon them the importance of performing their duty through the fictional example of the dutiful fairy-tale heroine who agrees to live with a monster in order to save her father. Furthermore, the underlying reward-and-punishment pattern (the patient, diligent and obedient heroine is rewarded, while her selfish and greedy sisters are punished) clearly illustrates the narrating community's understanding of "(im)proper" behaviour for young women [3]. Since the institution of marriage and the role of women have undergone radical transformations since the days of Madames de Villeneuve and Leprince de Beaumont, the consolatory potential and behavioural and moral lessons of "Beauty and the Beast" do not resonate as strongly (if at all) with contemporary audiences, who seem to be more interested in the romantic and supernatural aspects of the story (as evidenced by the numerous film, stage, literary, TV, etc. adaptations) (Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* 26–27; Warner 273–299; Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 48, 56).

Similarly, the story of the blood-thirsty Bluebeard and his inquisitive wife has also been redefined in terms of its didactic potential. The rendition of the tale published in Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (Tales and stories of the past, 1697) and accompanied by two versed morals [4], was traditionally viewed as a warning tale about the fatal consequences of disobedience and curiosity (Röhrich, *And They Are Still Living* 66; Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door* 7). The notion of curiosity as one of the cardinal female sins (prominent in foundational myths such as those of Eve and Pandora) was further explicated in the centuries following the publication of Perrault's tale, particularly through editions with such telling subtitles as "The Effect of Female Curiosity" or "The Fatal Effects of Curiosity" (Warner 244). However, this "cautionary tale with a moral pointed toward the wife" (Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door* 53) has lost its staying power as a story of a disobedient woman who should be punished for going behind her husband's back (perhaps in both the literal and metaphorical sense – namely, some scholars interpret the breaking of the promise made to the husband and subsequent entrance into the forbidden chamber as a symbol of infidelity and sexual transgression; cf. Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door*).

Contemporary readers (whether male or female) are more likely to be concerned about the gruesome contents of Bluebeard's bloody chamber than the act of ignoring its owner's explicit wishes, deeming the husband's rather than the wife's transgression as the more problematic one (Tatar, *Secrets beyond the Door* 21; Warner 243).

Different variants of the same tale may assume different functions, such as conveying important lessons. A famous case in point is the story of Little Red Riding Hood which in its oral form (the so-called "Story of Grandmother", recorded in 1885 – but presumably much older – and published by French folklorist Paul Delarue in 1951; Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* 3) is an entertaining story about a trickster heroine who outsmarts the predator, full of bawdy and scatological elements. In contrast, literary versions of the tale – most notably those published by Perrault and the Grimms – purport to teach lessons about the importance of avoiding various "wolves" in disguise (Perrault) and heeding parental warnings (Grimms). The Grimms seem particularly vigilant in this respect as they not only scatter explicit lessons throughout the story (at the end of the story the heroine herself admits her mistake and confirms that she has in fact learned her lesson: "Little Red Cap thought to herself, Never again will you stray from the path by yourself and go into the forest when your mother has forbidden it"; Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 95), but also add a sequel to the story in which the titular heroine proves that her brush with death has taught her something. Namely, she meets yet another wolf, but manages (with the help of her grandmother) to outsmart him.

Before we turn our attention to concrete examples of (supposedly) didactic tales published in the Grimms' collection, it is worth pointing out that this brief introductory discussion on didacticism is by no means meant to be exhaustive. Rather, our aim is, on the one hand, to illustrate the problematic and shifting nature of didacticism and, on the other, to (hopefully) highlight the fact that the lessons and morals that permeate the Grimms' tales are shaped by the specific historical, social, cultural and political context in which the Brothers lived and worked, their personal value systems and literary and political agendas, as well as the tastes of their intended audiences.

3. Superimposed didacticism

The notion of superimposed didacticism and what might be termed the didactization of essentially non-didactic texts may be traced on the example of a genre that has, through the years, been consistently and persistently transformed into a "moralizing and socializing instrument" (Warner 14) – the fairy tale. Although they probably originated as entertainment for adults, fairy tales gradually entered the (then burgeoning) domain of children's literature at the end of the 17th/beginning of the 18th century. As Marijana Hameršak notes, it was only after children had been established as the primary audience for the fairy tale that the genre's propensity for entertainment started being utilized (and consequently modified) for educational purposes (*Pričalice* 114, 129) and the "marvellous" became intertwined with the "moral". This tendency is to some extent identifiable in the fairy tales of Charles Perrault (even though, as Zohar Shavit points out, his morals are quite ironic, and his audience adults; 13–14) but

is perhaps best exemplified by the writings of Madame Leprince de Beaumont. Recognizing the value of fiction in service of education (Harries 87), Beaumont is often cited as the author of the first overtly didactic tale, "Beauty and the Beast". According to Jack Zipes, the shift from entertainment to education – or, to borrow Maria Tatar's vivid phrase, "from the fireside to the nursery" (*Enchanted Hunters* 167) – coincides with the shift from oral wonder tales (told purely for entertainment purposes) to literary fairy tales (tales with a didactic agenda). Fairy tales thus became a tool of socialization, promoting the specific "mores, values, and manners" of a given narrative community "so that children and adults would become civilized according to the social code of that time" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 3). Even though, as Tatar maintains, didacticism is "alien to the spirit of fairy tales" (*The Classic Fairy Tales* 5), the genre nevertheless continued to develop its newly attained pedagogical character (Warner 211), with new tales being written in an explicitly didactic vein and existing ones embedded with social and moral messages. A prominent place in the latter tradition belongs to none other than the Grimms and their *KHM*.

In their attempt to maximize the didactic potential of the *KHM* stories, the Grimms often create explicit links between character traits of (fairy-tale) protagonists/antagonists and their success/downfall (this is especially true of female characters). The supernatural or, to use Tzvetan Todorov's designation for the specific type of supernatural found in fairy tales, the marvellous, "chooses" the character on which to bestow its assistance, typically by testing him/her first. By highlighting the characters' positive/negative traits, the Grimms create links between character traits/modes of behaviour and outcome (the characters' destinies are presented as direct results of the traits and behaviour patterns they display), indirectly offering up protagonists as models for identification (Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* 6). For instance, the youngest son in "The Golden Goose" (*KHM* 64) is rewarded and "chosen" for success because he proves himself to be magnanimous and kind by sharing his food with a grey dwarf; in contrast, his older brothers who treat the dwarf badly are destined to fail. In a similar vein, "The Water of Life" (*KHM* 97) relies on the reward/punishment pattern to promote/condemn certain character traits and uses the character of the helper (also a dwarf) as a mouthpiece for communicating explicit moral lessons: the hero is rewarded because he has behaved "in a proper manner" (by politely answering the dwarf's question) and was not "arrogant like [his] faithless brothers" (Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 328), who are punished for their rudeness and condescension by being trapped between two mountains. Sometimes, it is the third-person narrator who additionally highlights these links; for instance, in "The Poor Miller's Apprentice and the Cat" (*KHM* 106), the narrator comments on the smugness of the two older apprentices who are convinced that they will inherit the mill: "we shall see what happens to men like that" (351). By having the good, pious, submissive and hard-working Cinderella (*KHM* 21) marry the prince and her two vain, abusive and lazy stepsisters suffer a gruesome punishment (doves peck out their eyes), the story makes it quite clear which character traits should be emulated/rejected. To stress the point even further, the Grimms add explicit instructions on how to behave, uttered by Cinderella's dying mother: "Dear child, be good and pious. Then the dear Lord shall always assist you, and I shall look down from heaven and take care of you" (79). It is worth emphasizing

that the link between (un)desirable character traits and outcome is particularly prominent in the case of female protagonists, who must prove themselves good, obedient, pious and diligent. Such a requirement is significantly less emphasized in the case of male characters, who often “earn” the help of the marvellous even when they do not seem to be particularly deserving and/or even display characteristics deemed unacceptable for female characters, such as laziness (cf. Bottigheimer). This value system is perpetuated and reinforced by all the *KHM* genres, with the notable exception of humorous tales, which turn it on its head by rewarding the traits which are typically condemned, such as laziness, stubbornness and disobedience (Uther, *Handbuch* 517). Only in this type of tale can a lazy girl prosper (“The Three Spinners”, *KHM* 14) or one who has lost everything consider himself lucky (“Lucky Hans”, *KHM* 83).

Additions introduced by the Grimms do not always fit well with the logic of the story. For instance, Maria Tatar points to what she considers to be a significant plot hole in the supposedly didactic tale of “Little Red Cap” (*KHM* 26). Namely, Tatar writes, the heroine’s punishment makes little sense as she does not actively disobey her mother: the bottle of wine that the mother makes such a fuss about does not break, and the dreaded straying from the path is not what brings the girl face to face with the wolf; on the contrary, the straying from the path takes place *after* the fatal encounter and at the suggestion of the wolf (Tatar, *The Classic Fairy Tales* 5). Despite the Brothers’ attempts to convince the reader otherwise, there is actually “no clear causal connection between the violation of the mother’s prohibition and its punishment by the wolf” (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 35–36) [5]. This type of superimposed didacticism (adding explicit morals which are not necessarily supported by the story logic), writes Tatar, is typical of the Grimms’ stories: “Instead of integrating a moral into the plot, [the Grimms] simply superimposed a lesson on a story that, in its original form, often just told how beauty triumphs over ugliness or how the underdog can turn the tables on the privileged” (59).

A similar superimposition is found in the first story in the *KHM*, “The Frog King”. Despite the Grimms’ attempts to add didactic overtones in the form of the king’s musings on the importance of keeping promises (“If you’ve made a promise, you must keep it”, “It’s not proper to scorn someone who helped you when you were in trouble”; Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 3, 4) the story itself does not support this lesson. On the contrary: not only does “The Frog King” fail as a didactic tale about the importance of keeping one’s promises, but the central conflict is actually resolved because the heroine *breaks* her promise. Although she complies with her father’s wishes and unwillingly does the frog’s bidding, the haughty princess cannot bring herself to let the amphibian into her bed and, disgusted by such a proposition, throws him against the wall (it could be argued that the narrative actually teaches a different lesson, that of not admitting males into a young girl’s bed). The breaking of the promise effectively breaks the spell cast on the titular frog king and the deceitful princess is ultimately rewarded for not keeping her word through marriage to a royal suitor.

4. Rewards and punishments

Depending on the concrete narratives strategies employed to promote/discourage certain types of behaviour, two sub-types of the didactic tale can be distinguished: cautionary (warning) tales and exemplary tales (cf. Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!*). To reinforce what the narrating society deems appropriate behavioural patterns and moral values, cautionary tales depict the consequences of “inappropriate” behaviour (Kvideland 190–191; Uther, *Handbuch* 104). By relying on negative examples and depicting the often gruesome and horrifying fate that befalls those who behave “badly” (by being disobedient, breaking social rules, etc.) these narratives effectively warn the audience against such modes of behaviour/character traits. In other words, the key strategy employed by this type of narrative is intimidation: they “enunciate a prohibition, stage its violation, and put on display the punishment of the violator”, thus modelling behaviour by “illustrating in elaborate detail the dire consequences of deviant conduct” (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 25). The “vices” most frequently singled out for criticism in the Grimms’ collection (for instance, in stories such as “Mother Trudy”, KHM 43; “The Stubborn Child”, KHM 117) include disobedience (usually prompted by excessive curiosity) and stubbornness (cf. Kujundžić 2012). Since cautionary tales are predicated on what Marc Soriano terms the pedagogy of fear (30), i.e. they scare the audience into obedience, they are sometimes referred to as scare tales (Röhrich, *Folktales and Reality* 48).

Unlike cautionary (warning) tales which focus on the transgression of moral and social boundaries, exemplary tales focus on the commendable behaviour and patient suffering of the protagonist who is presented as a “paragon(...) of virtue” and model for the reader (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 42). While cautionary tales focus on punishments and negative examples (the narrative focus is on characters who should *not* be imitated by the reader/listener – if anything, the reader/listener is encouraged to behave in the exact opposite way), exemplary tales are interested in rewards and positive, imitable examples, presented as identification models for the (child) audience (e.g. the patient, selfless and self-abnegating heroine of the Grimms’ “The Star Coins”, KHM 153).

However, the two modes of instruction – via negative/positive examples – described above are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they may be presented back to back within the same story in order to highlight the message that the narrative aims to communicate. What is perhaps the most explicit form of this type of “double” didacticism is found in stories that belong to the tale type ATU 480. The Kind and the Unkind Girls (for a detailed analysis and extensive list of tales belonging to this type, see Roberts). The contrasting nature of the two girls – the “kind” one being the embodiment of virtue and proper behaviour, and the “unkind” one her polar opposite – is revealed as they are placed in identical situations (they are usually required to help a supernatural character), but act in completely different ways. The fact that the “kind” girl is richly rewarded for her goodness, diligence and the compassionate manner in which she treats the supernatural character (e.g. she does household chores for him/her, shares food with him/her, etc.), while her “unkind” counterpart is punished for her malice, laziness and selfishness, reveals in no uncertain terms what the narrating community considers to be (un)desirable character traits and behaviour patterns.

The tale thus promotes/discourages specific values and behaviours “by instituting a system of rewards for one type of behaviour and punishments for another” (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 56). Seeing that they utilize both negative and positive examples as part of their didactic agenda, reward-and-punishment tales present a kind of blend of the cautionary and exemplary tale.

Three tales in the Grimms’ collection belong to tale type ATU 480: “The Three Little Gnomes in the Forest” (KHM 13), “Mother Holle” (KHM 24) and “Saint Joseph in the Forest” (KHM 201/KL 1). The three little men in the first tale are eager to reward the “kind” girl for her good manners, for sharing food with them and sweeping their back yard (she is made to grow more beautiful every day, given a royal husband and made to have gold coins fall out of her mouth every time she speaks). In contrast, the rude and arrogant behaviour of the “unkind” girl who refuses to share food and do household chores is met with disapproval and punished accordingly (she becomes increasingly uglier, has toads spring out of her mouth whenever she speaks and ultimately dies “a miserable death”; Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 48). The desirability of the traits demonstrated by the “kind” girl are further highlighted through their association with beauty and gold, which usually function as indicators of value of the greatest order within the narrative world of the fairy tale (cf. Lüthi). “Mother Holle” also relies on the distribution of rewards/punishments to express (dis)approval of specific character traits (Jason 145): while the “kind” girl who has proved to be kind-hearted and diligent by serving in the household of the eponymous Holle is showered with gold, her lazy and rude counterpart is covered in pitch from head to toe.

The first of the ten “children’s legends” or “religious tales for children” (*Kinderlegenden*), first published in 1819 in the second edition of the Grimms’ collection (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 85), is possibly the least religious of them. Even the Grimms themselves describe “Saint Joseph in the Forest” as essentially “The Three Gnomes in the Forest” *sans* the gnomes (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen* 1108). The tale follows a typical kind-and-unkind-girl pattern, substituting marvellous tester-figures such as the previously mentioned gnomes or the mysterious Holle with a (nominally) religious one. Although Saint Joseph’s humble origins and status as protector of children make him the ideal helper to a poor persecuted girl (Uther, *Handbuch* 408), there is nothing particularly religious about him, the tests he puts the girls to (preparing and sharing food, choosing sleeping quarters, sharing money) or the rewards/punishments he metes out (the “kind” girls are given bags of money, while the “unkind” one is punished first with physical deformity and later with death) (Tatar, *Off with Their Heads!* 85). The only noticeable, religiously-intoned addition to this story – in comparison to the previously mentioned, “non-religious” variants of the same tale type – is the heroine’s piety (the main characteristics of the heroines in the other two tales are their beauty and industriousness), demonstrated by her actions (she prays before going to bed) and the appearance of a guardian angel.

Although the reward-and-punishment pattern is typical of fairy tales, various genres in the *KHM* use it as a framework for evaluating characters’ actions. Built around the juxtaposition between a girl who is the model of virtue and one who is her exact opposite, the realistically-intoned “The Leftovers” (KHM 156, classified in the ATU Index under anecdotes and jokes) uses a system of rewards and

punishments to promote socially desirable behaviour. The diligent and thrifty “kind” girl (her positive traits are evidenced by her ability to use her mistress’ leftovers to spin a dress for herself) is thus chosen over her lazy counterpart to be the bride of a young man, despite her humble social background. Partly based on the reward-and-punishment model, the Grimms’ “The Lazy One and the Industrious One” (KHM 33b), a story found only in the second volume of the first edition of the *KHM* published in 1815 (the story was omitted from subsequent editions because the Grimms considered the embedded structure to be “too contrived”; *The Complete Fairy Tales* 745), is a unique example of a narrative that depicts two partially intertwined plots which function as mirror images of each other and uses a story-within-a-story structure to convey moral lessons to both the protagonists and audience (Uther, *Handbuch* 437). The frame story features two traveling companions: one is faithful and hard-working, the other carefree and pleasure-seeking. After a period of separation, the two are reunited under the gallows where they happen to come across two talking ravens (mirror images of themselves): one cheerful and determined to provide for himself, the other bad-tempered, lazy, and relying on God to provide for him. After a beautiful maiden kisses the industrious raven he turns into a handsome man and reveals that he and his brother had been cursed by their father, and forced to live as ravens until the kiss of a maiden breaks the spell. However, the shabby appearance and overall gloomy disposition of the second raven proves to be too off-putting for any maiden, so the lazy brother ultimately dies in his animal form. The didactic nature of the events they have witnessed is not lost on the traveling companions: “The journeyman who had been living loosely took a lesson from this, and he became industrious and proper and took good care of his companion” (Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 639). The audience is thus presented with two positive (one explicitly rewarded, the other unaffected by the embedded story as he is already a model of virtue) and two negative examples (one punished, the other shamed and frightened into mending his ways). Comparisons between this story, a rare instance of a reward-and-punishment tale featuring male characters (although the reward-and-punishment pattern is limited to the raven sub-plot), and “female” reward-and-punishment stories discussed previously reveal that, in the *KHM*, notions of what it means to be industrious and even, to an extent, what it means to be religious, are gender-coded. While female characters prove their industriousness by serving others (e.g. in “Mother Holle”), male characters in this story achieve the same goal by supporting themselves through their own work, i.e. by being not only hard-working but also self-reliant. Furthermore, male industriousness (or lack of it) has a strong moral and religious dimension as God is said to only help those who help themselves. No such moral dictum exists for female characters. While the lazy raven is punished for his complete lack of initiative and over-dependence on God to provide for him, many female characters in the *KHM* are expected to do just that. Putting all your trust in God and waiting for a miracle is deemed unacceptable for male characters, but seen as a sign of piety in the case of female ones. The (male) raven who expects to be “provided for by heaven” (Grimm, *The Complete Fairy Tales* 638) eventually dies, but the young girl in “The Star Coins” who trusts that “the Good Lord would look after her” (469) is abundantly rewarded (for an in-depth discussion on gender-

coded norms, character traits and behaviour patterns in the *KHM* tales, see Bottigheimer).

5. Concluding remarks

In this paper, we examined the trends found within what might (almost paradoxically) be termed didactic fairy tales in the Grimms' collection. Firstly, we focused on the Grimms' editorial strategies of creating links between characters' traits and behaviour and their fates, and adding didactic insertions such as morals to their (fairy) tales, even in cases when these are not supported by the narrative logic. Secondly, we used the example of the Grimms' fairy tales belonging to tale type ATU 480 to discuss narratives in which the didactic agenda is supported on the level of structure (the reward-and-punishment pattern) and content (characters' adherence to/departure from social/moral norms and values drives the narrative). The rich and diverse topic of didacticism in the Grimms' collection is by no means exhausted by these two examples. Future research might therefore examine strategies of didacticization, or the relationship between didactic tales and other genres, particularly moral and religious tales, which also have a strong didactic undercurrent. Other possible lines of inquiry include the comparison between different versions of same tale types (some of which may or may not be didactic) and especially comparisons between different editions of the same *KHM* story, with the aim of closely examining the Grimms' editorial strategies, ideology and (didactic) agenda.

Notes

[1] For more on the editorial history of the *KHM* see, e.g. Bottigheimer, Briggs, Rölleke, Tatar (*Hard Facts*), Zipes (*The Brothers Grimm*).

[2] For a more detailed discussion on didacticism and ideology in children's literature, the reader is referred to, e.g. Gillespie, Hameršak (*Pričalice*), Miller, Myers, Shavit, Tatar (*Off with Their Heads!*), Wilkie-Stibbs. For a more extensive discussion on the history of childhood and changing notions of the child, see, e.g. Ariés, Hameršak ("History, Literature and Childhood"), Heywood.

[3] The didactic potential of the tale is by no means exhausted in the heroine's relationship with her father/future husband. Jack Zipes, for instance, suggests the possibility of reading the sudden impoverishment of Beauty's family as punishment for their social pretensions and arrogance. The modest and industrious heroine who (unlike her siblings) does not actively attempt to improve her stature and seems generally unconcerned with material gain, is the one who eventually marries into a higher class. The tragic fate of the sisters who are petrified and forced to bear witness to Beauty's happiness, Zipes writes, may be read as "a warning to all those bourgeois upstarts who forgot their place in society and could not control their ambition" (*Breaking the Magic Spell* 9).

[4] The first moral, in particular, is seen as an indictment of curiosity: "Curiosity, in spite of its charm,/Too often causes a great deal of harm./A thousand new cases arise each day./With due respect, ladies, the thrill is slight,/For as soon as you're satisfied, it goes away./And the price one pays is never right" (Perrault 19). However, as Tatar notes, the second moral (addressing contemporary concerns) undermines the first one (perhaps only applicable to days of "long ago") by portraying husbands as docile and women as the possible "masters" of the house (*Secrets beyond the Door* 24–25): "Provided one has

common sense/And learns to study complex text,/It's easy to trace the evidence/Of long ago in this tale's events./No longer are husbands so terrible,/Or insist on having the impossible./Though he may be jealous and dissatisfied,/He tries to do as he's obliged./And whatever color his beard may be,/It's difficult to know who the master be" (Perrault 20).

[5] Despite these flaws in the story's logic, the effect of Perrault's and the Grimms' didactic transformations of what was originally a "hopeful oral tale about the initiation of a young girl" (Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations* 7) is so great that many scholars, most notably Marianne Rumpf, categorize "Little Red Cap" not as a fairy tale (in the ATU Index it is classified under Tales of Magic – ATU 333. Little Red Riding Hood), but as a cautionary or warning tale.

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Abbreviations

ATU = Aarne-Thompson-Uther Index

KHM = *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (Children's and household tales)

KL = *Kinderlegende* (Children's legends)