

**Title:** The Transformations of Snow White

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[(essay date 1988) *In the following essay, Stone examines transformations of the traditional "Snow White" fable throughout several modes of storytelling--the oral tradition, the print version of the tale that appeared in the Grimms' Kinder- und Hausmärchen, and the Walt Disney film adaptation.*]

The story of Snow White became popular with readers at the first publication of tales by the Grimm brothers [*Kinder- und Hausmärchen*], and retained its favored position as the German tales were translated into other languages. Thus it was already an obvious choice for the Disney brothers (Walter and Roy) when they created their first feature-length cartoon in the early 1930s. The story is now so widely known in North America that we tend to forget that it did not originate with either the Grimms or the Disneys, but in oral tradition.

The intention here is to examine the necessary transformations of a story--in this case Snow White--in the differing media of oral composition, print, and film. My emphasis is on process rather than on content, as I wish to show as objectively as possible how alterations are a natural result of transformation from one medium to another. While it may seem obvious that contextual change results in content modification, both the Grimms and the Disneys have been castigated for altering this tale in order to meet the needs of new expressive forms intended for new audiences. The Grimms, for example, reworked traditional stories for an urbane audience of readers unfamiliar with oral material. Scholars have criticized their modifications as inappropriate and also as dishonest, since they claimed to be offering genuine traditional tales "straight from the lips of the peasants."<sup>1</sup>

The Disney brothers also intended to reach a new audience with the now-familiar Grimm material by reinterpreting the story from print into film. While they made no false claims as to their source, the final film carried Walt Disney's name in place of the Grimms' (Walt Disney Presents *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*).

The apparent dishonesty of both Grimm and Disney brothers has fascinated scholars and popular writers for decades. It is popularly known and accepted that the Disneys fundamentally altered the sense of the Grimm tale,<sup>2</sup> but only recently have the Grimms' modifications and misrepresentations become known beyond the narrow walls

of academe.<sup>3</sup> Alan Dundes frankly identifies the Grimm tale collection as "fakelore," a concept originated by Richard M. Dorson to distinguish material falsely claiming origins in genuine folk tradition. According to Dundes: "It does seem sacrilegious to label the Grimms' celebrated *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* as fakelore, but to the extent that oral materials are rewritten, embellished and elaborated, and then presented as if they were pure, authentic oral tradition, we do indeed have a prima facie case of fakelore."<sup>4</sup>

Dundes goes on to urge folklorists not to reject fakelore as unworthy of serious attention but instead to "study it as folklorists, using the tools of folkloristics."<sup>5</sup> I accept this challenge. Including the Disneys in such an approach allows me to compare the final Grimm and Disney versions of Snow White as well as examples of oral variants.

In recent years folklorists have attempted to clarify the vibrant relations between text, texture, and context, thus providing a useful framework in which to survey variations of Snow White.<sup>6</sup> The text is the basic story of Snow White; its texture is the specific language (visualization in the case of film) of a particular story; context is any relevant personal, social, historical, and other influences. There might be countless oral texts of Snow White, each with its own texture and context. The storytelling event, or actual verbal composition of a story, is extremely sensitive to immediate contexts that might motivate changes in texture. Thus Snow White in oral tradition is multitextural and multicontextual. There is no single "original" or "authentic" oral text. The story would never be told in precisely the same words even by the same person. A unique context for each telling produces different textures, and thus a variety of oral texts.

Print and film, on the contrary, take on a final form combining text and texture in an unchanging unity. Also, the contexts of creating and of receiving are separated so that the readers of the story and the viewers of the film did not share directly and simultaneously in the creation of these versions of Snow White. Thus this particular story in print and film is rigid in text and texture and has no inherent context except when actually created and then received. Unlike oral variants, the printed and filmed tale of Snow White can exist indefinitely in storage, quite free of direct human context.

In considering content I find the literary concept of open and closed texts valuable in exploring Snow White variations.<sup>7</sup> A closed text is one that carefully develops details and connections, leaving readers or viewers little chance for active participation and interpretation. An open text, on the other hand, presents itself in such a way that a full story is told without elaborating every detail of plot, character, or motivation. Thus receivers can take a more active role by making their own connections, by "filling in the gaps." The open or closed nature of the text is influenced by the medium in which it exists. In general, told stories have more possibility for openness than do those in printed and filmed media.

It seems to be current folk wisdom that "the medium is the message." This oft-quoted observation by Marshall McLuhan emphasizes the critical role any medium plays in determining the message of its content.<sup>8</sup> While his own message is not always clearly expressed, he does articulate his basic concept in terms that folklorists can easily comprehend. He explains that his observation that the medium is the message "can, perhaps, be clarified by pointing out that any new technology gradually creates a totally new human environment. Environments are not passive wrappings but active processes."<sup>9</sup> In other words he is not looking at a medium as a product but rather as a process. McLuhan meant to challenge interpreters who rely on content alone to discover the "message" of a story. Like folklorists who see context as a critical creative force, McLuhan insists that the message or meaning can be found in the actual process of creation and dissemination rather than in its textural content.

The story of Snow White would naturally be altered as it passed from one medium to another. The Grimms could not have furnished an esthetically powerful printed version of the oral tale any more than the Disneys could have produced an exact filmed version of the printed Grimm story. The difficulties of accurate translation can be felt in films which have laboriously attempted to reproduce a complex novel, or in careful transcripts of oral texts recorded by professional folklorists. This problem of shifting artistic products from one medium to another has

bedeviled folklorists for generations. In maintaining accuracy of transcription from oral to printed forms, textural and contextual impact must often be sacrificed.<sup>10</sup>

The basic story of a girl's blossoming, apparent death, and miraculous rebirth may persist no matter how it is expressed, but its particular concrete manifestations must vary according to the medium of its expression.

### **Snow White in Oral, Printed, and Filmed Media**

If we consider any medium of narrative creativity as a bridge of communication between creators and receivers, and understand that the structure of any bridge determines the traffic it can bear, then the dynamic concept of "message" or meaning can be seen to extend well beyond content. Each medium has its own requirements and potential for communication, and each--as McLuhan observes--creates a new environment in which the communication takes place.

The fullest and most direct bridge of communication would be the orally composed story of Snow White. In this context both creators and receivers participate simultaneously in the storytelling event,<sup>11</sup> while print and film split the experience of artists and audiences. The oral bridge allows a constant flow of two-way traffic while the bridges of print and film permit only separated flows of traffic, first one way and then the other. In other words, the audience has a far greater opportunity to take part in the telling of a story than is possible while reading a book or viewing a film. This alone could not help but influence the formation of a story in any particular medium.

Since both Grimm and Disney versions could not have come into being without orally composed interpretations of Snow White, let us begin with a consideration of verbal creativity.

### **Snow White in Oral Tradition**

Stories created verbally are continually fluid and adaptable according to time and place, tellers and listeners, and other contextual factors. Some folklorists describe this vibrancy as "emergent quality," meaning that the precise text of any story emerges at the actual event of its telling.<sup>12</sup> At the same time these stories maintain a firm stability that has allowed them to exist for uncountable years of ongoing narration and recreation. Narrated tales balance between traditional stability and individual innovation so long as they remain in oral currency. No one story can be considered original in the sense of either primacy or individual innovation. Every traditional teller of Snow White is as original as any other. The concept of original and authoritative texts is applicable only to print or film.

The oral story of Snow White has been examined by Steven Swann Jones, who searched through more than one hundred traditional texts from printed collections of European, African, Asian, and New World tales.<sup>13</sup> He chose to focus on twenty-four representative texts in order to demonstrate precisely how Snow White manages to exhibit both stability and variability. As he observes: "It is remarkable that a story should travel such great distances, be told by many different peoples, and undergo apparent changes and yet remain recognizably the same tale. I suggest that folktales such as **"Snow White"** are not simply muddled or muddled up the more they are retold by subsequent tellers."<sup>14</sup> He identifies distinctive formalistic elements that provide the unique pattern of Snow White. To simplify his detailed enumeration: these begin with the heroine's expulsion from home, the various threats on her life culminating with apparent death, and her rescue and reawakening.

Jones finds this elemental narrative pattern in all the texts he surveys, though of course the exact expression or texture varies from story to story. For example, a Norwegian variant has a giant's daughter prick her finger and, inspired by red blood on white snow, wish for a daughter with pure white skin and red lips; a Celtic tale features a jealously beautiful queen named Silver-Tree, who threatens the young heroine, Gold-Tree; an Icelandic heroine named Vildridr Fairer-than-Vala escapes to a small house carved of stone and inhabited by only two dwarfs. Each of these texts is equally authentic in terms of its contribution to the larger generalized story type of Snow White (AT 709).<sup>15</sup> It matters not a bit if the French-Canadian "Le Miroir Qui Parle" (The Speaking Mirror) is different in

detail from the Louisiana story of "King Peacock." They are both authentic and easily recognizable variants of Snow White.

Unfortunately we do not know, since the Grimms do not tell us, how many oral texts might have been available in Germanic oral tradition at the time of their collecting activities. We can only assume that the potential variety of details would have provided them with a wealth of material for their single printed text, "Snow White."

The oral medium, then, provides a potentially direct bridge between tellers and listeners that encourages the ongoing re-creation of the story in an infinite variety of emergent texts, each with unique texture and context.

### **Snow White in the Printed Medium**

Stories composed in writing tend to become fixed and unchanging, and authors and readers no longer share simultaneously in the creative event. When texts become attached to specific creators, the notion of originality in the dual senses of primacy and uniqueness come into play. Because a single text entitled "**Snow White**" was included in the Grimm collections, and because the collection itself was original in both meanings of the word, we arrive at the concept of "the Grimm version" as the "authentic" variant of Snow White (excluding oral sources).

If the Grimms had either drawn directly from oral tradition (as they claimed) or completely fabricated their tales, then we might indeed expect to find only one authoritative text for this story. However, the brothers combined both oral and written traditions to produce a new literary form. Apparently they were sincerely committed to re-creating what they conceived as a pre-Christian Teutonic literature. Alan Dundes's article on "fakelore," cited earlier, suggests that countries with a weak sense of nationhood, like Germany in the early nineteenth century, sometimes produced a consciously composed literature deliberately passed on as genuine "folklore."<sup>16</sup>

The Grimms responded to the forces of romantic nationalism by fashioning a unique genre. Interestingly, they offer several variant texts of their "**Snow White**," altering the story somewhat in each of their seventeen editions from 1812 to 1856. The earliest known text is in a manuscript of 1810, sent to Clemens Brentano but never published.<sup>17</sup> Here the handsome queen is the girl's natural mother, who first wishes for her and is then dismayed by her ever-increasing beauty. It is the mother herself who takes Snow White to the forest on the pretext of picking flowers, and abandons her there. Except for some changes of wording the basic story is the one already familiar to us, until we reach the death-rebirth motif at the conclusion. Here it is Snow White's father who finds and removes the coffin, and then orders his royal physicians to revive her by tying her body to ropes connected to the four corners of a room. After this surprising climax we find the more familiar marriage to a prince and the queen's dance of death in heated iron shoes.

In the first published edition of 1812 the natural mother is still the villain, but this time she orders her huntsman to destroy Snow White in the forest, and to return with her lungs and liver as proof. The escape to the dwarfs' house and the three attempts on her life are unchanged, but this time the prince himself carries away the coffin. Two of his disgruntled servants accidentally revive Snow White when they strike her in anger, thus dislodging the apple.

With each edition other minor changes were made, until the final text, which became the "authoritative" version, separated the good and bad aspects of the queen into independent characters. Since the wording of the various texts is much the same, we cannot assume that different oral sources are represented, since these would employ variant wording. Instead it is clear that literary editing is at work. Thus the Grimms have not actually provided the variety of texts that might exist in actual oral tradition, but offer only revisions of one basic text. It is possible that some of the revisions were inspired by additional oral sources encountered over their decades of work, but we cannot know this because none of their original manuscripts before 1809 remain in existence.

The Grimms unknowingly demonstrate the communication problems that can arise when we have only a printed document removed from the context of its creation. As the story was increasingly edited by a single writer it became more his story and less the people's story. And we, long trained to accept only one text as "original,"

consider the Grimm version of Snow White as authoritative. We have no prior printed text that challenges it. But in its transformation from oral to printed media it has lost its emergent quality, despite the appearance of variety in the Grimm editions. Separated from the actual context of composition--here in time as well as in space--we no longer experience the multitextural advantages of narration. Snow White in print becomes frozen into the wording of the 1857 edition.

The medium of print offers a narrower bridge of communication than does narration. Artistic traffic moves in two separate streams, from the authors to the book and then from the book to the readers. There can be no direct interchange, but only subordinate reactions.

### **Snow White in the Filmed Medium**

Films create an even greater separation of makers and viewers, giving the latter even less possibility for interaction. Both story-listening and story-reading give us the opportunity to provide our own visual, oral, emotional, and other elaborations, but film provides these all ready-made for our consumption.

The Disney film in particular is exquisitely explicit in its visualization, as well as in its aurally and emotionally manipulative aspects. My own childhood memories are still clear, all the more so since this was my first "moving picture." My aunt Val took me and my younger sister Janet to a downtown theater in Detroit in 1944; in my memory Snow White is still scrubbing the palace steps and singing sweetly about her dream-prince; then she is dashing in terror through the dark forest to escape from her stepmother; and at last she finds the dwarfs' house with its wonderful child-sized furniture and exquisite background details. Even sharper in my mind is the dramatic transformation of the handsome queen into a hideous hag, one of the Disney's stunning elaborations on the Grimm tale. At this point Janet's four-year-old voice still echoes in my ears as she yells "I want to go home!" But we remained to the melodramatic end.

Many years later I found myself in the small archives of Walt Disney Productions in Burbank, California, exploring file folders full of planning transcripts and preliminary sketches from the three years of production (from 1934 to 1937).<sup>18</sup> It is now commonly known and proudly acknowledged by the Disney studio that the film was initially dubbed "Disney's Folly" even by some of those close to the Disney Brothers. People simply could not believe that adults, who formed the large majority of film audiences, would pay to see a long cartoon based on a children's fairy tale. But because of the careful and explicitly detailed work that went into all aspects of the film, it became an overnight success that is rereleased every few years.

The very first transcript I explored was a list of suggestions for characterizations.<sup>19</sup> Snow White was to resemble actress Janet Gaynor, while Douglas Fairbanks was suggested as the model for the prince. Interestingly the Queen had no living models, but was to be a "mixture of Lady Macbeth and the Big Bad Wolf." She is finally developed as "a very majestic, cold, tiger-lady type."<sup>20</sup> The individualized dwarfs were also a challenge to the filmmakers, who swung between extremes of buffoonery and sentimentality, eventually arriving at a compromise. By the end of the first year of planning all the major characterizations were well established, and the seven dwarfs had become central characters.

The only significant changes between 1934 and 1937 were with important secondary characters like the queen's mirror, her huntsman, and the prince. The mirror and the huntsman were shifted between unwilling complicity in the queen's evil plots to acquiescent conspiracy with her, until the former attitude was finally chosen. The prince was even more intriguing in his various manifestations. Initially Walt Disney suggested a key role for him and his horse, who were to be imprisoned in the queen's dungeon and rescued by birds and animals. These sequences eventually disappeared from organizational sessions, only to resurface two decades later in the Disney *Sleeping Beauty*.

The final film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* closely follows the general pattern of the Grimm tale, despite the various changes motivated by visualization. For example, two significant scenes featuring the queen were

modified for increased visual impact: the transformation from a beauty to a hag (in the Grimm tale she merely disguises herself as a peasant) and her fatal plunge over the cliff (instead of dancing to her death in heated iron shoes). These modifications would not exclude the filmed tale from Jones's list of Snow White texts described earlier.

The years of preparatory conferences contributed a number of alternate texts for the filmed rendition of Snow White, each a very faint echo of the variability found in oral tradition. And while an actual audience did not contribute to these preparations, the film was undoubtedly successful because the Disneys had come to know their potential audience from past animated successes. Herbert Gans reminds us that such a projected, ideal audience plays an important though indirect role in such variability: "Every creator is engaged to some extent in a process of communication between himself and his audience, that is, he is creating *something* for *somebody*. This somebody may be the creator himself, other people, or even a nonexistent stereotype, but it becomes an *image* of an audience which the creator develops as part of every creative process."<sup>21</sup>

But of course film viewers see only the final "text" agreed upon by the Disneys and their co-workers; they do not experience textural variability. Like the Grimms' tale, the Disneys' film has no serious challengers to its status as the authoritative film version of the story. (An intriguing but dated parody entitled *Coal Black and the Seven Dwarfs* is known only to film historians.)<sup>22</sup>

In summary, the Disney film isolates creators and receivers, and offers them even less possibility of interaction since it furnishes sights, sounds, and motivations. The filmed text thus provides the narrowest bridge of all, with the most closed text and context. There is only one *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

As we have seen, the conceptual bridge of creative communication narrows progressively from oral to printed to filmed versions of Snow White. As well, the openness of text and texture also becomes more confined. Yet even the film, the most rigid and manipulative interpretation of Snow White, does not prevent viewers from interacting in one way or another. The traffic is always two-way, even when the creative and receptive streams are separate. Because readers and viewers do indeed respond, the neatly drawn lines between the three media considered above lose the sharp definition delineated here.

My son was five years of age when he saw *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* while we were visiting Madrid.<sup>23</sup> He understood not a word of the Spanish dialogue, nor was he familiar with the story in any form, yet he followed the action with complete accuracy due to Disney's explicit visualization. He was disturbed by the wicked queen's death, however, and insisted that we sit through the film again, hoping (though as an experienced moviegoer he knew it was futile) that the story would end differently. It did not, of course, so we had to find a printed text of "that story." The best we could do in Madrid was a simplified picture book with no clear treatment of the queen.

When we returned home I found and read him the Grimm tale, but this was no more satisfactory. I was then asked to tell him the story in my own words, which I did for the next several nights. Finally he informed me that when I told "that story" I was to have the queen fall asleep for one hundred years and then "wake up a nice lady."

By working through all three media and their possibilities he created his own version of the story. He was responding not only to the explicit and implicit content of the story, but also to the differing means in which this content was expressed through film, books, and narration. He created his own multitextual and multitextural tale by experiencing it through a variety of contexts. His text is worthy of the same consideration as those we have surveyed here.

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If the medium is the message, the reaction to that message is still in the minds of individual receivers.<sup>24</sup> As we have seen, each of the means of textual formulation has inherent possibilities and limitations for inviting creative participation. The oral tale, and particularly a *Märchen* like Snow White, has the greatest potential for attracting

such a response, not only because of its emergent quality and the immediacy of its continual re-creation, but also because of its abstract nature. As with abstract, nonrepresentational art, the *Märchen* implies its message rather than explicitly revealing itself. Max Lüthi speaks eloquently about this "open text" aspect of traditional oral tales: "Any attempt at a detailed description gives rise to the feeling that only a fraction of all that could be said has in fact been told. A detailed description lures us into the infinite and shows us the elusive depth of things. Mere naming, on the other hand, automatically transforms things into simple, motionless images. The world is captured in a word; there is no tentative amplification that would make us feel that something has been left out."<sup>25</sup>

For the *Märchen*, more is less. Lüthi reproaches the Grimms for the literary embellishments that pushed them away from the genuine, unselfconscious folk tradition: "they speak of the red eyes and wagging head of the witch and of her long bespectacled nose ([*Kinder- und Hausmärchen, KHM*] Nos. 15, 69, 193). Genuine folktales speak only of an 'ugly old hag,' an 'old witch,' an 'evil witch,' or simply an 'old woman.'"<sup>26</sup> The more detail put in by a creator, the less abstract and open the story. The Disney film, of course, is even more elaborately representational than was the Grimm tale. Yet, as my son has illustrated, the power of the *Märchen* can still be felt, even in an explicit movie like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

When I began formulating this paper, the content of the story of Snow White as interpreted by the Grimms and Disneys was central to my thinking. As I tried to understand more fully how their respective interpretations came into being, the critical impact of the particular medium of presentation became increasingly obvious. Exploring the process of translating Snow White from oral telling to print to film allows us to see the dynamics of human creativity from a wider perspective than that inspired by content analysis alone.

It is not useful to think of the Grimm and Disney versions in terms of faithfulness to any particular sources. More valuable, and considerably more interesting, is a broad conception of human expressive creativity. Both filmed and printed versions of Snow White take on their specific characters as influenced by the interplay of text, texture, and context, and by the dynamics of medium and message.

Linda Dégh reminds us of Lüthi's observation that *Märchen* have survived exploitations and intrusions of all kinds (including those of the Grimms and Disneys) without losing the powerful essence of the ancient oral tales that inspired them: "The common knowledge of the tales is so profound, so deeply ingrained, that, even without the story being told in full, a reference or casual hint is enough to communicate the meaning of the essential message of the tale."<sup>27</sup> She suggests that even an amusing television commercial in which the jealous queen consults her mirror to see the effects of her new beauty soap can call back the powerful death/rebirth principle of the whole of Snow White.<sup>28</sup> Thus any "text" of Snow White, whether full or partial, serious or humorous, contributes to the continued life of this seemingly simple story.

Certainly the context in which Snow White is created affects the texture of its content in oral, printed, and filmed "texts." Still, neither the medium nor the content can fully define the message of Snow White for any active receiver. Each new context simply adds another text for consideration. And this of course includes the medium of the academic essay.<sup>29</sup>

## Notes

1. Linda Dégh, for example, specifies their "embellishments and elaboration of details ... , polishing of rough edges ... ," and the composition "of one perfect tale out of several less complete variants." See Linda Dégh, "Grimm's *Household Tales* and Its Place in the Household: The Social Relevance of a Controversial Classic," *Western Folklore*, 38 (April, 1979), 83-103; also, John M. Ellis, *One Fairy Story Too Many: The Brothers Grimm and Their Tales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Heinz Rölleke, "Die 'stockhessischen' Märchen der 'alten Marie': Das Ende eines Mythos um die frühesten KHM-Aufzeichnungen der Brüder Grimm," *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift*, n.s. 25 (1975), 74-86.

2. See, for example, Richard Schickel, *The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art, and Commerce of Walt Disney* (New York: Avon, 1968).
3. See in particular Ellis, *One Fairy Story Too Many* for an enthusiastic attack on the Grimms for their alterations and false claims.
4. Alan Dundes, "Nationalistic Inferiority Complexes and the Fabrication of Fakelore: A Reconsideration of Ossian, the *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*, the *Kalevala*, and Paul Bunyan," *Journal of Folklore Research*, 22 (1985), 9.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
6. For a clear explanation of these terms see Alan Dundes, "Text, Texture, and Context," *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 28 (1964), 251-65.
7. In particular see Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).
8. See in particular Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964). Here he states: "In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium--that is, of any extension of ourselves--results from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology" (p. 7).
9. *Ibid.*, p. vi.
10. For an eloquent exploration of the problem of intermedia translation, see (among others): Dennis Tedlock, *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), and Dell Hymes, *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).
11. Much recent folklore scholarship focuses on the importance of examining stories in their full oral context. See in particular Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland, 1984). Originally published in 1977.
12. For example see *ibid.*, pp. 37-46.
13. Steven Swann Jones, "The Construction of the Folktale: Snow White" (Diss., University of California at Davis, 1979).
14. *Ibid.*, p. 218.
15. Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961), p. 245.
16. Dundes, "Nationalistic Inferiority Complexes and the Fabrication of Fakelore." For a more general examination see also Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
17. For complete English texts of both the 1810 and the 1812 variants of "Snow White" see Alfred David and Mary Elizabeth David, *The Frog King and Other Tales of the Brothers Grimm* (New York: Signet Classics, New American Library of World Literature, 1964), pp. 303-15.

18. A small grant from the University of Winnipeg allowed me to spend several days in 1978 in the archives of Walt Disney Productions in Burbank, California. I am grateful to archivists Paula Sigman and David R. Smith.
19. From a one-page outline dated Oct. 22, 1934.
20. Document entitled: SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS, Transcribed from verbatim [sic] notes on General Continuity as talked by Walt, 12/22/36, p. 1.
21. Herbert J. Gans, "The Creator-Audience Relationship in the Mass Media: An Analysis of Movie Making," in Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (eds.), *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1957), pp. 315-24.
22. I am grateful to Richard J. Leskosky, assistant professor of Cinema Studies at the University of Illinois, for allowing me to view this 1942 Warner Brothers parody in April, 1986.
23. Viewed in Madrid in April of 1976.
24. McLuhan seems to be far less interested in active responses of viewers, regarding them in the main as placid consumers of any media expressions.
25. Max Lüthi, *The European Folktale: Form and Nature*, translated by John D. Niles (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1982), p. 25.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
27. Dégh, "Grimm's *Household Tales*," p. 102.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 102. She further develops the relation of *Märchen* and advertising in "The Magic Tale and Its Magic," in Michael M. Metzger and Katharina Mommsen (eds.), *Fairy Tales as Ways of Knowing* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1981), pp. 54-68 (esp. pp. 66-68).
29. Claude Lévi-Strauss develops this challenging concept in all of his writing. See in particular *Structural Anthropology*, trans. C. Jacobson and B. G. Schoepf (London: Allen Lane, 1968), esp. chaps. 2 and 11.

The comments of L. Danielson, J. Harrell, N. Dancis, and D. Stone have aided greatly in enriching this brief essay.

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SNOW WHITE IS A DRIP, AND I SAY THAT WITH fondness and respect for one of the best-loved children's films of all time. Of all the things we remember so fondly, from the starchy collar on Snow White's gown to the way the dwarfs' bulbous little noses poke over the foot of her bed, the heroine's personality is hardly this classic's greatest selling point. Snow White, after all, is first seen cheerfully scrubbing the stairs of her stepmother's castle, surrounded by a squad of tweeting white birdies.Â What could then be seen in "Snow White" - and what is now much more difficult to keep sight of in retrospect - was the transformation of a one-time novelty into an art form. That "Snow White" remains very much alive today is a tribute to more than Disney's marketing genius.