pays only lip service to moral integrity have led to grotesque and barbaric situations that result in the disfigurement of our children and, too often, in self-mutilation.

It is the contradictory manner in which we invest in our children that needs to be related to the contradictory way we invest in our field of children's literature. If the field is to have a value and if our evaluating processes are to have social consequences for the manner in which we cultivate and socialize children, we must represent our position effectively as misrepresented and beleaguered and find ways we can relate to the misrepresented and beleaguered position of the young. Here is where I believe the value in evaluating the value of children's literature may lie.

NOTES

1. Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 43.
2. *Ibid.*, 43–44.
3. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1984), 170.
4. *Ibid.*, 172.
5. Peter Hunt, *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism.* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1.
6. Rod McGillis, "The Delights of Impossibility: No Children, No Books, Only Theory," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 23 (Winter 1998–99): 202.
7. See also Cunningham's review essay "Histories of Childhood," *American Historical Review* (October 1998): 1195–1208.
8. Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 172.
9. *Ibid.*, 173.
10. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 42.
11. Hunt, *Literature for Children*, 7.
12. Mitzi Myers, "Missed Opportunities and Critical Malpractice: New Historicism and Children's Literature," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 13 (1988): 42.

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5 Wanda Gág's Americanization of the Grimms' Fairy Tales

Wanda Gág had a lifelong love affair with the Grimms' fairy tales. They were read to her in German as a child, and she read them as a child. In the introduction to her book *Tales from Grimm*, she wrote:

> The magic of *Märchen* is among my earliest recollections. The dictionary definitions—tale, fable, legend—are all inadequate when I think of my little German *Märchenbuch* and what it held for me. Often, usually at twilight, some grown-up would say "Sit down, Wanda-chen, and I'll read you a *Märchen*." Then, as I settled down in my rocker, ready to abandon myself with the utmost credulity to whatever I might hear, everything was changed, exalted. A tingling, anything-may-happen feeling flowed over me, and I had the sensation of being about to bite into a juicy big pear.[1]

She returned with a certain longing to bite once again into the Grimms' tales during the 1930s. To be specific, from 1932 until her death in 1946 she tried to recapture the magic of the Grimms' fairy tales with the publication of *Tales from Grimm* (1936), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1938), *Three Gay Tales from Grimm* (1943), and *More Tales from Grimm* (1947). In fact, she was literally working on this last illustrated fairy-tale book while on her deathbed, and it was published posthumously under the supervision of her husband, Earle Humphreys.

What drove Gág to focus on the Grimms' tales during this period? What was her particular contribution toward making the fairy tales popular for an American public during the 1930s and 1940s just at a point when anti-German sentiment was once again on the rise? Before I try to answer these questions, I should like to outline briefly the reception of the Grimms' fairy tales in America during the period 1919–1945 to provide a context for Gág's work and her interpretation of the Grimms' tales as writer and illustrator.

Karen Nelson Hoyle give some of the early history of the Grimms' tales in America in her biography of Gág:

> English-language translations of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Kinder und Hausmärchen* abounded before the 1930s in both England and the United States. Translators and illustrators in England interpreted Grimm for English-reading audiences. American publishers then reprinted the same works for several decades. This procedure was cheaper than paying for a new American translator and illustrator. Therefore, the American public read editions translated by Crane or Lucas and illustrated by Englishmen George Cruikshank, Walter Crane, Richard Doyle, Leslie Brooke, or others. These British editions then appeared in American libraries.[2]

In fact, fairy tales had become very popular during the first three decades of the twentieth century in the United States, and such American illustrators as Millicent Sowerby, Johnny Gruelle, and George Soper and talented immigrants such as Louis John Rhead, Eulalie, Kay Nielsen, and Fritz Kredel, along with numerous hack artists, tried their hand at illustrating collections of the Grimms' tales or individual stories. With some rare exceptions, almost all the texts were pirated from British translations of the nineteenth century, and even the exceptions were meager copies of the British books. In short, there were no complete *American* translations of the Grimms' tales, and the majority of the illustrations, except for those by Johnny Gruelle, were strongly influenced by European artists. The imitation of the florid and archaic European writing style and illustration, however, was to undergo a gradual transformation if not challenge in the 1930s. This change was due in large part to the rise of an interest in American folklore, a growing interest in American subjects on the part of American writers for children, librarians, and editors, who were all mainly women, and the rise of patriotism during World War II.

The stage was set for a serious interest in fairy tales particularly in the period during and following World War I. First of all, there was a large increase in the number of bookstores and department stores that opened sections for children's literature. At the same time, public libraries began hiring experts in children's literature and opening children's rooms with commensurate programs of storytelling. Perhaps most important were the developments in the publishing and academic world. *The Horn Book*, a journal that published reviews and essays on children's literature along with advertisements, was founded in 1924 by Bertha and Elinor Whitney, who owned one of the few bookstores in Boston that dealt exclusively with children's books. They were only part of a larger movement. As Hoyle describes the situation:

> By the end of the second date of the 1900s, enthusiasm mounted in children's book circles. Frederic Melcher, an editor of the trade journal *Publishers Weekly*, and Frank K. Mathiews, chief Boy Scout Librarian since 1912, founded *Children's Book Week* in 1919. Louise Seaman became the first full-time children's book editor, appointed in 1919 at Macmillan Publishing House. In 1922 Doubleday Page named May

Massee to a similar post; she moved to Viking in 1933. By 1926, at least eleven children's departments existed in trade publishing houses. These departments made an impact on the number and quality of children's books.[3]

The systematic organization of children's literature was dominated by editors, writers, librarians, and academics, largely on the East Coast, who set themselves up as the arbitrators of good taste and appropriate topics for childhood. As the public sphere of children's literature grew, more people, largely teachers, librarians, and academics, became involved and established regional concepts of proper reading matter for their children. But in the 1930s the tone was largely set by New York and Boston, and the issue of fairy tales, especially the Grimms' tales, and how they were to be read, taught, and told became a hot issue. Many people in America considered fairy tales frivolous, subversive, pagan, escapist, and potentially dangerous for the health and sanity of children—attitudes that mirrored puritanical sentiments in England. In this respect, the East Coast publishers, editors, librarians, and teachers who fought for the acceptance of proper fairy tales were part of a "progressive" movement seeking to "reform" the tales' reputation and to demonstrate that they were not dangerous for the psyche of the American child.

Of course, the most revolutionary breakthrough for the Grimms came in the form of a film and the reproduction of the frames from the film for picture books. I am alluding, of course, to Walt Disney's 1937 animated film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Disney had begun making black-and-white fairy-tale films in 1922 in Kansas City, and by the early 1930s other filmmakers, including his close friend Ub Iwerks, had made important fairy-tale films that were to influence the book publishing industry. Very few critics have remarked on the fact that the "German" fairy tales became fully "contaminated" by American artists and writers during the 1930s, especially in the Disney studios. The features of Snow White and her Prince Charming represent the all-American "healthy" ideals of beauty, prefiguring the Barbie and Ken dolls by a good twenty-five years, and the language and jokes in the film are clearly tied to American idioms and customs. Disney's success in creating his *Snow White* depended on his deep understanding of the dreams and aspirations of Middle America during the 1930s and how Americans received fairy tales. The introduction of music, sight gags, comic diversion, and Technicolor transformed the story of *Snow White* into a typical Broadway or Hollywood musical that had little to do with German folklore.[4] Other American animators followed suit in the late 1930s and early 1940s.[5] What had formally appeared in the collections of fairy tales by the Grimms, Perrault, and Andersen in book form were now mocked and turned into comic entertainment in America.

It is almost ironic that the Grimms' fairy tales flowered during the Great Depression in America in films and books. It is also ironic that this period would mark the end of the Grimms' fairy tales as particularly Germanic when the Nazis were doing their best to Aryanize the tales. Their acts of purification were matched by the American culture industry's "contamination"—a contamination that would become worldwide after 1945 in diverse ways. But there is also a logic to this flowering and contamination that I shall discuss in more detail in the next chapter. It was during the dark days of the 1930s that people were looking for some signs of hope, and of course, fairy tales, whether they be written by the Brothers Grimm, Andersen, Perrault, or Tolkien, who wrote *The Hobbit* during this period, tend to be utopian. For the most part, they end happily and reward protagonists who strive diligently and industriously to overcome obstacles to be what they perhaps only intimated. In addition, to a receptive popular audience, that is, readers and viewers looking for hope, the publishing industry and the culture industry in general had begun to realize that books, films, and artifacts that addressed children were highly profitable, and by the 1930s, as already noted, almost every major publishing house in New York was marketing an edition of the Grimms' fairy tales or single Grimms' fairy-tale books. It did not matter how pure the translations were or whether they were "Germanic" in origin. The goal was to produce "harmless" and delightful tales appropriate for children and their parents.

Enter Wanda Gág, who by this time had become a successful artist and illustrator/writer of children's books. Born 1893 in New Ulm, Minnesota, Gág grew up in a German-speaking community and was introduced to the Grimms' tales, *Struwwelpeter (Slovenly Peter)*, and many other German books and customs as a child. She also experienced many torments as the daughter of a free-thinking

painter with seven children whom he could barely feed. After studying at the St. Paul and then the Minneapolis Art Institute, she went to New York in 1917, where she gradually established a reputation as commercial artist, painter, and illustrator. During the 1920s she had wanted to refresh her knowledge of German and had returned to reading the Grimms' fairy tales in German and played with the idea of translating them anew. By the end of the 1920s, thanks to the great success of her most famous children's book, *Millions of Cats* (1928), a unique fairy tale in its own right, she had a direct connection to Coward-McCann, a relatively new publishing house in New York that wanted to enter the field of fairy tales with an edition of the Grimms' tales. In 1932, after an illustration by Gág of Hansel and Gretel in front of the witch's candy house was published in the New York *Herald Tribune* and enjoyed a popular reception, she embarked on a serious plan to translate sixty tales of her choice, the least gory and most amusing, and to publish them with her own illustrations. In a 1935 letter to her friend Alma Scott, she wrote:

> I am translating the original and authentic Grimm's Fairy Tales (about 50 of them). These I plan to distribute among about 3 volumes, *Profusely Illustrated* as the old Story Books used to say. I find this very interesting and, in many cases, difficult, because what can one do with such words as *Kindlein*, *Weibchen*, *Käppchen*, etc? Little child, small wife, wee cap—are just not the same. Some words lend themselves to the *kin*, *ken*, or *let* ending, but all too few have that form. Well, I do the best I can. Mine is to be a *free* translation, true to the spirit rather than the letter, because I want to show just what *Märchen* meant to *me* as a child.[6]

This statement is highly significant because it reveals how much Gág invested herself in the tales as writer and artist and because her view is shared by many other writers and illustrators of fairy tales allegedly written for children. For instance, P. L. Travers, who published her *Mary Poppins* books about the same time Gág was producing her fairy-tale work, has stated: "You do not chop off a section of your imaginative substance and make a book for children for—if you are honest—you have, in fact, no idea where childhood ends and maturity begins. It is all endless and all one."[7] And Astrid Lindgren, who created *Pippi Longstocking* in 1945, has maintained: "I don't write books for children. . . . I write for the child I am myself. I write about things that are dear to me—trees and houses and nature—just to please myself."[8] Gág's tales were not tales for children but projections of her childhood, an endeavor to recapture her home and to recall an idyllic episode in her life. At the same time they are projections into the future, an act of sharing with children whom she never had. As we shall see, they were also part of a debate about the nature of childhood and the nature of fairy tales that continues up through the present. With the help of Anne Carroll Moore, a leading specialist in storytelling and children's literature at the New York Public Library, her sister Flavia, her friend Carl Zigrosser, and her husband Earle Humphreys, Gág worked continuously on the Grimms' project throughout the 1930s and 1940s and ended by translating and illustrating fifty-one tales before her death in 1948.

On a psychological level it is interesting to speculate why Gág spent the last twenty years or so of her life endeavoring to recapture the spirit of the Grimms' fairy tales for children. Was it an attempt to recreate an idyllic childhood that was destroyed by her father's early death when she was only fifteen? Was she seeking to create a utopian New Ulm, the real-life counterpart of which she never really wanted to return to after she left Minnesota for New York? Were the tales that Gág, who did not want to have children, conceived her way of conceiving offspring? Did the themes of the tales, in particular, the overcoming of obstacles to become successful and the reward of the persistent and diligent heroes, reflect her attitude toward life and the path that she herself had taken? After her father's death, her family could barely make ends meet. Her mother was an alcoholic, and as the oldest of seven children, Wanda became the virtual head of the family. She attended the St. Paul and Minneapolis Art Institutes on scholarships and help from friends. Money was always a problem, and Gág led very much an ascetic life and struggled against the odds to become a gifted artist.[9]

On a cultural and social level it is much clearer why she decided to embark on such a serious venture of translating and illustrating the Grimms' tales. Gág was sincerely concerned about transmitting the spirit and value system of the Grimms' tales to children in opposition to the growing tendency to commercialize, bowdlerize, and sanitize the tales during the 1930s. Her introduction to *Tales from Grimm* reveals the careful research that she

had done to prepare herself for her work and especially to adapt the tales for children. As she states:

> At fourteen I was still avidly reading fairy tales and hopefully trying out incantations; but in this sophisticated age of the movies, radio, tabloids, and mystery stories, one cannot set the fairy tale age limit over eleven or twelve. I do not believe in "writing down" to children, but since the stories were originally written to include adults, it seemed advisable to simplify some sections in order that a four-to-twelve age group might be assured of getting the full value of the stories.
>
> By simplification I mean:
>
> (a) freeing hybrid stories of confusing passages
> (b) using repetition for clarity where a mature style does not include it
> (c) employing actual dialogue to sustain or revive interest in places where the narrative is too condensed for children
>
> However, I do not mean writing in words of one or two syllables. True, the *careless* use of large words is confusing for children; but long, even unfamiliar words are relished and easily absorbed by them, provided they have enough color and sound-value.
>
> The tales, coming as they do from many sources, and being composed by such widely different people as peasants and scholars, are written in a great variety of styles and tempos, which I have tried to preserve in every case.[10]

Leaving aside the questions whether one can "appropriately" write for children or actually write for children, we must ask what Gág was trying to preserve. Certainly, since Gág never set foot in Europe and since she was familiar with Germany only through these tales and other books, she could not possibly be preserving anything German or European. In fact, she was not preserving anything. On the contrary, she was creating something new, and this was her imagined conception of what it might be like to be German or European and how American children should receive something European. Her act of preservation was a reconception of what genuine European tales are supposed to be. All this she sought to do through the American language that she learned to speak in New Ulm, colored by anecdotes and information of the old country, and through her artwork. In the final analysis, she added very little to our understanding of the Grimms' tales, nor did she daringly revise or challenge some of their messages and themes. That is, her interpretations of the tales through her revisions are self-projections, as is her artwork, that do not radically alter our conceptions of the Grimms' work. In fact, her adaptations and appropriations are somewhat tame. Nevertheless, there is a quaint appealing quality to her translations that distinguishes them from other translations of this same period. Most of all, her involvement with the Grimms' tales sheds a great deal of light on her own person, her artistic development, and the debate about the contamination or Americanization of fairy tales.

Let us compare the beginning of the British translation in Fritz Kredel's illustrated *Grimms' Fairy Tales* with hers:

> Close to a large forest there lived a woodcutter with his wife and two children. The boy was called Hansel and the girl Gretel. They were always very poor and had very little to live on. And one time when there was famine in the land, he could no longer procure daily bread.
>
> One night when he lay in bed worrying over his troubles, he sighed and said to his wife, "What is to become of us? How are we to feed our poor children when we have nothing for ourselves?[11]

Gág's:

> In a little hut near the edge of a deep, deep forest lived a poor wood chopper with his wife and his two children, Hansel and Gretel.
>
> Times were hard. Work was scarce and the price of food was high. Many people were starving, and our poor wood chopper and his little brood fared as badly as all the rest.
>
> One evening after they had gone to bed, the man said to his wife, "I don't know what will become of us. All the potatoes are gone, every head of cabbage is eaten, and there is only enough rye meal left for a few loaves of bread."[12]

Or compare the ending of *Snow White* in Johnny Gruelle's illustrated edition of 1914, translated by Margaret Hunt, with Gág's:

> But Snow White's wicked step-mother was also bidden to the feast. When she had arrayed herself in beautiful clothes she went before the Looking-glass, and said—
>
> "Looking-glass, Looking-glass, on the wall,
> Who in this land is the fairest of all?"
>
> The glass answered—

"Oh, Queen, of all here the fairest art thou,
But the young Queen is fairer by far as I trow."

Then the wicked woman uttered a curse, and was so wretched, so utterly wretched, that she knew not what to do. At first she would not go to the wedding at all, but she had no peace, and must go to see the young queen. And when she went in she knew Snow-white; and she stood still with rage and fear, and could not stir. But iron slippers had already been put upon the fire, and they were brought in with tongs, and set before her. Then she was forced to put on the red-hot shoes, and dance until she dropped down dead.[13]

Gág's:

But while this was going on in the Prince's castle, something else was happening in that other castle where lived the wicked Queen. She had been invited to a mysterious wedding, so she dressed herself in her festive best and stood in front of her mirror and said:

"Mirror, Mirror, on the wall,
Who's the fairest one of all?"

and the mirror answered:

"Thou art very fair, Oh Queen,
But the fairest ever seen
Is Snow White, alive and well,
Standing 'neath a wedding bell."

When she heard this, the Queen realized that it was Snow White's wedding to which she had been invited. She turned purple with rage, but still she couldn't stay away. It would have been better for her if she had, for when she arrived she was given a pair of red hot shoes with which she had to dance out her wicked life. But as to all the rest—the Prince and his Princess Snow White, and the seven little dwarfs—they all lived happily ever after.[14]

In comparison to most translations of the 1920s and 1930s that tended to reproduce the archaic British English language of the nineteenth century, Gág's style is succinct and idiomatically American, and her images are concrete if not primitive. Her sentences tend to be colloquial, paratactical, and melodic, and she strives for the personal tone of a storyteller sitting across from a child. Most of the tales are reduced in length, and all the redundancies are eliminated. Motivation is explained, and lurid horror is avoided. Although Gág translated freely, as she emphasized, she rarely changed the plots in a radical fashion. In this regard, she remained true to the Grimms in spirit and preserved the basic tendencies of the tales, but she did this with her free-thinking ideas and feminist sensitivity. Her personal or unique touch can be seen in her selection of tales and her splendid ear that endowed phrases and descriptions with a rural American tone and atmosphere. Gág favored tales that depicted heroes and heroines overcoming enormous obstacles with alacrity, such as "The Seven Swabians," "The Soldier and his Magic Helpers," "The Wishing Table, The Gold Donkey, and The Cudgel-in-the-Sack," and "The Hedgehog and the Rabbit." Some of the tales, like "The Six Swans," reflected her own role as caretaker of the Gág family. It is as if she wanted to minimize the difficulties in life through comforting tales in which the small protagonists triumph, but she was never cute or sentimental. On the contrary, she added a droll sense of humor to the tales, and it was humor that often stood the protagonists in good stead.

Gág's illustrations, mainly black-and-white ink line drawings, are for the most part a disappointment, even though they were nontraditional for her time. While pleasing to the eye, they do not add depth to the texts. In fact, they take away from her translations and even contradict them. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, for example, Snow White is more like the seven- or eight-year-old Dorothy of *The Wizard of Oz*, and it is difficult to imagine her being attractive to any prince. Her stepmother is much more alluring than she is. Gág is at her best when she includes landscapes in her illustrations. Her ink drawings have a naive and almost childlike quality to them that makes them soothing but somewhat boring at the same time. There is no dramatic tension in her illustrations, or nothing that adds to our understanding of the possible psychological conflicts or social background of the stories. Gág never probed the tales; she re-created them in her own spirit. She made them into idyllic moments of pleasurable reading and seeing for her readers, children and adults alike. Her longing to recapture the Grimms' tales was actually a utopian projection of possible happiness. The joyful simple figures point toward a simplification of life, a desire for "genuine" living, which was ironically one of the reasons that her work was somewhat pivotal in the debate about fairy tales at that time.

Key here is how Gág's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was prompted and held up in opposition to Walt Disney's 1937 animated film by the same name. Hoyle writes:

> Despite a preponderance of rave reviews of the movie in the media, most children's librarians and book reviewers responded negatively to the movie and the accompanying Disney books. These editions dismayed some librarians because Disney took so many liberties with the story. He infuriated [Anne Carroll] Moore, who used all three of her powerful roles—as head of children's work at the New York Public Library, board member of the prestigious *Horn Book*, and reviewer for the *New York Herald Tribune Books*—to make scathing remarks about the Disney books. . . . She not only wrote negative reviews but actively sought a correct version of the fairy tale for children, and Wanda Gág was the logical choice. Gág's *Tales from Grimm*, published only two years earlier, was familiar to readers, but "Snow White" was not part of that volume. Moore personally pressured Coward-McCann to produce a version of the fairy tale.[15]

It is not so important to establish whether Gág's or Disney's version of "Snow White" is more or less appropriate for children or more or less valid as an adaptation and interpretation of the Grimms' tale. What is significant is the debate itself about the impossibility of the possible: Moore and others thought it was possible to make a *correct* version of a fairy tale for children, something which is inherently impossible because nobody knows what a genuine, authentic, or correct fairy tale is. The assumption was—and still is—that we know what is appropriate for children, that we know children, and that we know exactly what effects a tale will have on a child. Karín Lesnik-Oberstein has pointed out, however, that "children's fiction can be seen not only as an expression of constriction and regulation of the child for the adult's sake, but also as an expression of a paradoxical wish to resolve the self-imposed and self-defined separations: efforts to remain in touch with, and deal with, the anxieties of ignorance and knowledge, of being and becoming, of presence and absence for their own sake."[16] Both within literature and films for children, the figures of the young and childhood are constructed ideologically and aesthetically to explore the creators' own views, needs, and desires. There is no negotiation with the child because fiction and film are projections if not impositions that the young readers/viewers encounter and deal with in their own way, a way that is often already conditioned by the society and culture in which they live.

Disney and Gág cared more about their own concerns in creating their Snow Whites than the concerns of children. Disney was absorbed in his own artwork and wanted to produce a magnificent film that would make a name for himself and make the Disney name into a world trademark. He did not want to make a film just for the young but for the family, and he had no concern in producing an authentic version of a Grimm fairy tale. The fairy tale was a vehicle for him to celebrate his skills in animation and the skills of his co-creators. If there was anything radically new about his film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, it lay in his demonstrating to the world how fairy-tale reading matter could be transformed into a conventionally delightful musical about sentimental love. Gág was engaged virtually to counter the Disney version by her friends to show what poetic license Disney had taken and how he had contaminated the Grimms' true version. Though she sticks close to the Grimm text, she is unaware that there is no one authentic Grimm text, because the Grimms themselves rewrote their tale several times and "contaminated" some other texts. What Gág successfully does is to represent the figure of Snow White as a spunky, virginal, domesticated girl who looks after seven diminutive darling elves and needs looking after herself. It is tempting to ask how she imagined herself in the story, whether she imagined her own mother as dead kind mother or obsessed witch. It is tempting to ask whether she saw herself as being released from looking after the sibling dwarfs by the prince who will take her away and enable her to paint and draw to her heart's content in his castle in the country.

Of course, one could ask some of the same tempting questions about Disney's life and how he projected himself into the story and projected visions of childhood and idyllic life through cinematic images and colloquial language. In the end, however, both Disney and Gág did the exact *same* thing: they Americanized the Grimms' tale and exploited the figure of Snow White for personal and professional purposes. Snow White is nothing but a pawn in their hands, and ironically, this may account for the great appeal of Disney's film and Gág's prose narrative. Such appeal is perhaps inherent in the story itself.

I should like to suggest that Snow White appeals to both children and adults because she embodies the embattled child, abandoned by

her mother, disregarded by her father, persecuted by a stepmother, used by male dwarfs, and revived from death by a prince. As a fictional figure, Snow White reflects and recalls how adults are engaged in determining the welfare and fate of children. It is a tale about hierarchical conflicts and the powerlessness of the child. Snow White must fend for herself, defend herself, but she is not in charge of her destiny. She needs a miracle, as most children continually need miracles in their daily lives to intercede on their behalf. Not that children are victims or are constantly victimized. But their lives are framed by adults who seek to play out their lives through children.

Disney and Gág do nothing much to alter our vision of children or childhood in their contaminated versions of "Snow White." As I have suggested, the tale is "Americanized" through the language and images in their works. Above all, Snow White has something of the clean-cut, rosy red, virginal features that were often associated with young girls of the 1930s in America, and it is interesting that both Disney and Gág grew up in the Midwest, for they tend to represent girls as they should be according to the ethics and morals of the Midwest. But Gág, who regarded herself as a feminist, was much more aware of the tensions that girls from her neck of the woods felt about conforming to what girls and boys should be. In contrast to Disney, she was a liberal thinker with clear socialist inclinations and contributed to left-wing publications. She lived with Earle Humphreys, who did some labor organizing, many years before she finally married him. She had great empathy for children and for the Wanda Gág of memory. Her liberal sentiments were voiced strongly in a 1939 article, "I Like Fairy Tales," published in *The Horn Book*:

> Every child goes through many phases of development, each phase with its own needs and interests. I know I should now feel bitterly cheated if, as a child, I had been deprived of all fairy lore; and it does not seem to me that we have the right to deprive any child of its rightful heritage of Fairyland. In fact, I believe it is *just* the modern children who need it, since their lives are already overbalanced on the side of steel and stone and machinery—and nowadays, one might well add, bombs, gas-masks and machine guns.[17]

One of her most successful "Americanized" Grimms' tales that reveals her social and political inclinations is "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." It not only illustrates how Gág positioned herself as child protagonist to defend the rights of the young but might also serve as a parable for the manner in which children must fend for themselves in the adult world. To my knowledge, nobody has realized what great liberties Gág took in writing this tale. In German, the title is "De Gaudeif un sien Meester," or "The Thief and his Master," and it appears in Münster dialect in the Grimms' collection. The tale begins as follows:

> Jan wanted his son to learn a trade. Therefore, he went to church and prayed to the Lord to tell him what would be best for his son. The sexton was standing behind the altar and said, "Thieving, thieving."
>
> So Jan went to his son and told him he had to learn how to be a thief because the Lord wanted it that way. He then set out with his son to look for a man who knew something about thieving. After they had traveled for a long time, they finally reached a great forest, where they found a cottage with an old woman inside.[18]

The son learns all sorts of thievery and witchcraft, but the jealous master wants to keep him in his service and prevent him from living with his father and exercising his powers. One day the master's daughter inadvertently takes the bridle off the young thief, who had been turned into a horse:

> The horse became a sparrow and flew out the door. Then the master thief also became a sparrow and flew after him. They met and held a contest in midair, but the master lost and fell into the water, where he turned himself into a fish, and they held another contest. Once again the master lost, and he turned himself into a rooster, while the boy changed himself into a fox and bit the master's head off. So the master died, and he has remained dead up to this very day.[19]

The initial setting in Gág's "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" is very different:

> A man found himself in need of a helper for his workshop, and one day as he was walking along the outskirts of a little hamlet he met a boy with a bundle slung over his shoulder. Stopping him, the man said, "Good morning, my lad. I am looking for an apprentice. Have you a master?"
>
> "No," said the boy. "I have just this morning said good-bye to my mother and am now off to find myself a trade."
>
> "Good," said the man. "You look as though you might be just the lad I need. But wait, do you know anything about reading and writing?"

"Oh yes!" said the boy.

"Too bad!" said the man. "You won't do after all. I have no use for anyone who can read and write."

"Pardon me?" said the boy. "If it was *reading* and *writing* you were talking about, I misunderstood you. I thought you asked if I knew anything about *eating* and *fighting*—those two things I am able to do well, but as to reading and writing, that is something I know nothing about."

"Well!" cried the man. "Then you are just that fellow I want. Come with me to my workshop, and I will show you what to do.[20]

In time the clever young boy learns that the man is a sorcerer, and says to himself: "Sorcery—that is a trade I would dearly love to master! . . . A mouthful of good chants and charms would never come amiss to a poor fellow like me, and with them I might even be able to do some good in the world."[21] So the boy secretly reads the sorcerer's books and practices magic while the sorcerer is away on trips. One day, however, the sorcerer discovers that the boy is his equal and is afraid that he might use the tricks of his trade to help people. So he tries to beat him to a pulp. But the boy changes himself into a bird and then a large fish, while the sorcerer transforms himself into a tiny kernel of grain and rolls into a small crack in a stone to avoid the fish. In turn, the clever boy changes himself into a rooster and eats the kernel up.

"That was the end of the wicked sorcerer, and the boy became the owner of the magic workshop. And wasn't it fine that all the powers and ingredients which had been used for evil by the sorcerer were now in the hands of a boy who could use them only for the good of man and beast?"[22]

Is this "freely translated" tale what Anne Carroll Moore and other editors, librarians, and teachers would call an appropriate or correct fairy tale for children? Gág completely contaminated the Grimms' version, and in effect, wrote a kind of autobiographical fairy tale about a young person who learns from an adult and at the same time opposes the constraints of the adult world to master art. In her struggle against the oppressive adult world, she kills off the adult, as in the case of the Grimms' tale, but in Gág's tale, there is no father left, and we do not know where the mother is. The young man is left alone to do good in the world with his art.

But Gág's tale is not just about herself; it is also about her vision of how the young must negotiate their place in the world. Written on behalf of herself, it is a tale also written in behalf of children in which the young boy becomes a fictional figure struggling to determine his own worth in equal relationship with humans and the animal world. Gág's vision here is clearly utopian, and even if she "contaminated" their so-called original messages by addressing American concerns and her own personal needs, her adaptations of the Grimms' tales still reveal what the value of fairy tales may be for young readers and viewers who continue to need creative alternatives to the complex demands and constrictions that they encounter in their daily lives.

NOTES

1. Wanda Gág, *Tales from Grimm* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1936), vii.
2. Karen Nelson Hoyle, *Wanda Gág* (New York: Twayne, 1994), 58.
3. *Ibid.*, 31.
4. For a more thorough discussion of the *Snow White* film, see the chapter "Breaking the Disney Spell" in my book *Fairy Tale as Myth/Myth as Fairy Tale* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 72–95.
5. See Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: New American Library, 1980). There is also an important videocassette, *Cartoon Crazys Fairy Tales*, Northampton Partners, 1999. This cassette contains some of the best animated fairy tales of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.
6. Alma Scott, *Wanda Gág: The Story of an Artist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), 177.
7. Johnathan Cott, *Pipers at the Gates of Dawn: The Wisdom of Children's Literature* (New York: Viking, 1984), xxii.
8. *Ibid.*, 75.
9. For a short but insightful biography, see Michel Patrick Hearn, "Wanda Gág," *Dictionary of Literary Biography: American Writers for Children, 1900–1960*, ed. John Cech, vol. 22 (Detroit: Gale, 1983), 179–91.
10. Gág, *Tales from Grimm*, ix–x.
11. *Grimms Fairy Tales*, trans. Mrs. E. V. Lucas, Lucy Crane, and Marian Edwardes, illustr. Fritz Kredel (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1955), 330.
12. Gág, *Tales from Grimm*, 4–5.
13. *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, trans. Margaret Hunt, illustr. John B. Gruelle (New York: Cupples & Leon, 1914), 271.
14. Wanda Gág, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1938), 42–43.
15. Hoyle, *Wanda Gág*, 73.