Animating Youth

The Disneyfication of Children's Culture

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The notion that America is at war with meaning has taken on a much greater significance in the last few decades. This can be seen in the heated cultural battles that have been waged in current debates over what should be taught in schools, presented in the media, displayed in museum exhibitions, and housed in public libraries. Beneath the so-called culture wars there exists serious debates and conflicts over more volatile issues involving national identity, abortion rights, cultural differences, family values, sexual orientation, and the meaning of public life.[1] As important as these struggles are in expanding the possibility for public debate and social criticism, they have often diverted attention away from another cultural sphere in the United States, the terrain of children's culture. Children's culture is a sphere where entertainment, advocacy, and pleasure meet to construct conceptions of what it means to be a child occupying a combination of gender, racial, and class positions in society that one defines oneself through in relation to a myriad of others.

Children's culture as an object of critical analysis opens up a space in which children become an important dimension of social theory. While youth culture, especially adolescence, has been a strong component of cultural studies, children's culture, especially the world of animated films, has been largely ignored.[2] An examination of children's culture unsettles the notion that the battles over knowledge, values, power, and what it means to be a citizen are to be located exclusively in the schools or in privileged sites of high culture; moreover, it provides a theoretical referent for "remembering" that the individual and collective identities of children and youth are largely shaped politically and pedagogically in the popular visual culture of video games, television, film, and even in leisure sites such as malls and amusement parks.[3] Lacking an interest in children's culture, cultural studies and other progressive forms of social theory not only ignore the diverse spheres in which children become acculturated, they also surrender the responsibility to challenge increasing attempts by corporate moguls and conservative evangelicals to reduce generations of children to either consumers for new commercial markets or Christian soldiers for the evolving Newt Gingrich world order.

Though it appears to be a commonplace assumption, the idea that popular culture provides the basis for persuasive forms of learning for children has been impressed upon me with an abrupt urgency during the last few years. As a single father of three eight-year-old boys, I found myself somewhat reluctantly being introduced to the world of Hollywood animation films, in particular those produced by Disney. Before becoming an observer of this form of children's culture, I accepted the largely unquestioned assumption that animated films stimulate imagination and fantasy, reproduce an aura of innocence and wholesome adventure,

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and, in general, are good for kids. In other words, such films appeared to be vehicles of amusement, a highly regarded and sought after source of fun and joy for children. However, within a very short period of time, it became clear to me that the relevance of such films exceeded the boundaries of entertainment. Needless to say, the significance of animated films operates on many registers, but one of the most persuasive is the role they play as the new "teaching machines." I soon found that for my children, and I suspect for many others, these films inspire at least as much cultural authority and legitimacy for teaching specific roles, values, and ideals than more traditional sites of learning such as public schools, religious institutions, and the family. Disney films combine an ideology of enchantment and aura of innocence in narrating stories that help children understand who they are, what societies are about, and what it means to construct a world of play and fantasy in an adult environment. The commanding legitimacy and cultural authority of such films stems, in part, from their unique form of representation, but such authority is also produced and secured within the predominance of a broadening media apparatus equipped with dazzling technology, sound effects, and imagery packaged as entertainment, spin-off commercial products, and "huggable" stories.

The cultural authority of this postmodern mediascape rests on its power to usurp traditional sites of learning and its ability to expand the power of culture through an endless stream of signifying practices that prioritize the pleasures of the image over the intellectual demands of critical inquiry. Moreover, it simultaneously reduces the demands of human agency to the ethos of a facile consumerism. This is a media apparatus in which the past is filtered through an appeal to cultural homogeneity and historical purity, which erases complex issues, cultural differences, and social struggles. It incessantly works to construct a commercially saturated and politically reactionary rendering of the ideological and political contours of children's culture. In the television and Hollywood versions of children culture, cartoon characters become prototypes for a marketing and merchandising blitz, and real-life dramas, whether fictionalized or not, become vehicles for pushing the belief that happiness is synonymous to living in the suburbs with an intact white middle-class family.[5]

The significance of animated films as a site of learning is heightened by the widespread recognition that schools and other public sites are increasingly beset by crises of vision, purpose, and motivation. The mass media, especially the world of Hollywood films, on the contrary, constructs a dreamlike world of security, coherence, and childhood innocence where kids find a place to situate themselves in their emotional lives. Unlike the often hard-nosed, joyless reality of schooling, children's films provide a high-tech, visual space where adventure and pleasure meet in a fantasy world of possibilities and a commercial sphere of consumerism and commodification. The educational relevance of animated films became especially clear to me as my kids experienced the vast entertainment and teaching machine embodied by Disney. As I watched a number of Disney films, first in the movie theater and later in video, I became increasingly aware of the necessity to move beyond treating these films as a transparent entertainment to question the diverse representations and messages that constitute Disney's conservative view of the world.

II

I recognized that any attempt to take up Disney films critically rubs against the grain of American popular opinion. After all, "the happiest place on earth" has traditionally gained its popularity in part through a self-proclaimed image of trademark innocence that has protected it from the interrogating gaze of critics. Of course, there is more at work here than a public relations department intent on protecting Disney's claim to fabled goodness and uncompromising morality. There is also the reality of a powerful economic and political empire that in 1994 made $667.7 million in filmed entertainment, $330 million in consumer products, and $528.6 million from its theme parks and resorts.[6] But Disney is more than a corporate giant, it is also a cultural institution that fiercely struggles to protect its mythical status as a purveyor of American innocence and moral virtue.

Quick to mobilize its monolith of legal representatives, public relations spokespersons, and professional cultural critics to safeguard the borders of its "magic kingdom," Disney has aggressively prosecuted violations of its copyright laws and has a legendary reputation for bullying authors who use the Disney archives and refuse to allow Disney to approve their republished work.[7] For example, in its zeal to protect its image and extend its profits, Disney has gone so far as to threaten legal action against three South Florida

day-care centers for using Disney cartoon characters on their exterior walls. In this instance, Disney's role as an aggressive defender of Quaylesque family values was undermined through its aggressive endorsement of property rights. While Disney's reputation as an undisputed moral authority on American values has taken a beating in the last few years, the power of Disney's mythological status cannot be underestimated.

Disney's image of itself as an icon of U.S. culture is consistently reinforced through the penetration of the Disney empire into every aspect of social life. Operating as a $22 billion empire, Disney shapes children's experiences through a maze of representations and products found in box-office movies, home videos, theme parks, hotels, sports teams, retail stores, classroom instructional films, CDs, television programs, and family restaurants.[8] Through the widespread use of public visual space, Disney promotes a network of power relations that lends itself to the construction of a closed and total world of enchantment allegedly free from the dynamics of ideology, politics, and power.[9] At the same time, Disney goes to great lengths to boost its civic image. Defining itself as a vehicle for education and civic responsibility, Disney sponsors "Teacher of the Year Awards," provides "Doer and Dreamer" scholarships to students, and, more recently has offered financial aid, internships, and educational programs to disadvantaged urban youth through its ice-skating program called "Goals." Intent on defining itself as a purveyor of ideas rather than commodities, Disney is aggressively developing its image as a public service industry. For example, in what can be seen as an extraordinary venture, Disney plans to construct in the next few years a prototype school that one of its brochures proclaims will "serve as a model for education into the next century." The school will be part of a 5,000-acre residential development, which, according to Disney executives, will be designed after "the Main Streets of small town America and reminiscent of Norman Rockwell images."[10] What is interesting here is that Disney no longer simply dispenses the fantasies through which childhood innocence and adventure are produced, experienced, and affirmed. Disney now provides prototypes for families, schools, and communities. Disney's role in America's future is to be understood through a particular construction of the past. French theorist Jean Baudrillard provides an interesting theoretical twist on the scope and power of Disney's influence by arguing that Disneyland is more "real" than fantasy because it now provides the image on which America constructs itself. For Baudrillard, Disneyland functions as a "deterrent" designed to "rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real."

> Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America, which is Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation.[11]

At the risk of taking Baudrillard too literally, examples of the Disneyfication of America abound. For instance, Houston airport models it monorail after the one at Disneyland. Small towns throughout America appropriate a piece of nostalgia by imitating the Victorian architecture of Disneyland's Main Street U.S.A. It seems that the real policy makers are not those who reside in Washington, D.C., but in California, calling themselves the Disney Imagineers. The boundaries between entertainment, education, and commercialization collapse through the sheer omnipotence of Disney's reach into diverse spheres of everyday life. The scope of the Disney empire reveals both shrewd business practices as well as a sharp eye for providing dreams and products through forms of popular culture in which kids are willing to materially and emotionally invest.

Popular audiences tend to reject any link between ideology and the prolific entertainment world of Disney. And yet Disney's pretense to innocence appears to some critics as little more than a promotional mask that covers its aggressive marketing techniques and influence in educating children on the virtues of becoming active consumers. Eric Smooden, editor of *Disney Discourse*, a book critical of Disney's role in American culture, argues that "Disney constructs childhood so as to make it entirely compatible with consumerism."[12] Even more disturbing is the widespread belief that Disney's trademarked innocence renders it unaccountable for the diverse ways in which it shapes the sense of reality it provides for children as they take up specific and often sanitized notions of identity, difference, and history in the seemingly apolitical, cultural universe of the Magic Kingdom. For example, Jon

Wiener argues that Disneyland's version of Main Street U.S.A harkens back to an "image of small towns characterized by cheerful commerce, with barbershop quartets and ice cream sundaes and glorious parades." For Wiener this view not only fictionalizes and trivializes the history or real Main Streets at the turn of the century, it also represents an appropriation of the past to legitimate a present that portrays a world "without tenements or poverty or urban class conflict. . . . It's a native white Protestant dream of a world without blacks or immigrants."[13]

III

I want to venture into the contradictory world of Disney through an analysis of its more recent animated films. These films, all produced since 1989, are important because they have received enormous praise from the dominant press and have achieved blockbuster status. For many children the films represent their first introduction into the world of Disney. Moreover, the financial success and popularity of these films, rivaling many adult features, do not engender the critical analyses often rendered upon adult films.[14] In short, popular audiences are more willing to suspend critical judgment about such children's films. Animated fantasy and entertainment appear to fall outside the world of values, meaning, and knowledge often associated with more pronounced educational forms such as documentaries, art films, or even wide-circulation adult films. Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells capture this sentiment: "Disney audiences, . . . legal institutions, film theorists, cultural critics, and popular audiences all guard the borders of Disney film as 'off limits' to the critical enterprise. In the construction of Disney as a metonym for 'America'—clean, decent, industrious—'the happiest place on earth' has been inscribed in the cultural register of common sense."[15] Given the influence that the Disney ideology has on children, it is imperative for parents, teachers, and other adults to understand how such films attract the attention and shape the values of the children who view them. As a producer of children's culture, Disney should not be given an easy pardon because it is defined as a universal citadel of fun and good cheer. On the contrary, as one of the primary institutions constructing childhood culture in the United States, it warrants healthy suspicion and critical debate. Such a debate should not be limited to the home but should be a central feature of the school and any other critical public sites of learning.

In what follows, I argue that it is important to address Disney's animated films without either condemning Disney as an ideological reactionary corporation deceptively promoting a conservative worldview under the guise of entertainment or celebrating Disney as the Hollywood version of Mr. Rogers doing nothing more than providing sources of joy and happiness to children all over the world. Disney does both. The productive side of Disney lies in its ability to address, in highly successful pedagogical terms, the needs and interests of children. Moreover, its films offer opportunities for children to experience pleasure and to locate themselves in a world that resonates with their desires and interests. Pleasure becomes the defining principle of what Disney produces, and children are the serious subjects and objects of Disney's project. Hence, rather than simply being dismissed, Disney's animated films have to be interrogated as an important site for the production of children's culture. At the same time, Disney's influence and power must be situated within the broader understanding of the company's role as a corporate giant intent on spreading the conservative and commercial values that in fact erode civil society while proclaiming to restructure it.

The role that Disney plays in shaping individual identities and controlling the fields of social meaning through which children negotiate the world is far too complex to be simply set aside as a form of reactionary politics. If educators and other cultural workers are to include the culture of children as an important site of contestation and struggle, then it becomes imperative to analyze how Disney's animated films powerfully influence the way America's cultural landscape is imagined. Disney's scripted view of childhood and society needs to be engaged and challenged as "a historically specific matter of social analysis and intervention" that addresses the meanings its films produce, the roles they legitimate, and the narratives they construct to define American life.[16]

The wide distribution and popular appeal of Disney's animated films provide diverse audiences and viewers the opportunity to challenge assumptions that allow people to suspend judgment regarding Disney's accountability for defining appropriate childhood entertainment. Critically analyzing how Disney films work to construct meanings, induce pleasures, and reproduce ideologically loaded fantasies is not meant to

promote a particular exercise in film criticism. Like any educational institution, Disney's view of the world needs to be taken up in terms of how it narrates children's culture and how it can be held accountable for what it does as a significant cultural public sphere. Of course, Disney's self-proclaimed innocence, inflexibility in dealing with social criticism, and paranoid attitude toward justifying what it does is now legendary and suggests all the more reason why Disney should be both challenged and engaged critically. Moreover, as a multi-billion-dollar company, Disney's corporate and cultural influence is too enormous and far-reaching to allow it to define itself exclusively within the imaginary discourse of innocence, civic pride, and entertainment.[17]

IV

The question of whether Disney's animated films are good for kids has no easy answers and resists simple analysis within the traditional and allegedly nonideological registers of fun and entertainment. Disney's most recent films, which include *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), and *The Lion King* (1994), provide ample opportunities to address how Disney constructs a culture of joy and innocence for children out of the intersection of entertainment, advocacy, pleasure, and consumerism. All these films have been high-profile releases catering to massive audiences. Moreover, their commercial success has not been limited to box-office profits that totaled over $598.8 million in 1994.[18] Successfully connecting the rituals of consumption and moviegoing, Disney's animated films provide a "marketplace of culture," a launching pad for an endless number of products and merchandise that include videocassettes, sound-track albums, kid clothing, furniture, stuffed toys, and new rides at the theme parks.[19] For example, in the video market *Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast* have combined sales of over 34 million videocassettes. Aladdin has earned "$1 billion from box-office income, video sales, and such ancillary baubles as Princess Jasmine dresses and Genie cookie jars."[20] Moreover, produced as a video-interactive game, *Aladdin* sold over 3 million copies in 1993. Similar sales are expected for the video-interactive game version of *The Lion King*, which grossed $253.5 million in profits as of August 24, 1994.[21] Ranked as one of the most profitable films every made, Jessica J. Reiff, an analyst at Oppenheimer and Company, says "the movie will represent $1 billion in profits for Disney over two or three years."[22] Similarly, Disney film characters such as Mickey Mouse, Snow White, Jasmine, Aladdin, and others become prototypes for numerous toys, logos, and games that fill department stores all over the world. Disney theme parks, which made over $3.4 billion in revenues in 1993, produced a sizable portion of their profits through the merchandising of toys based on characters from the animated films. *The Lion King* produced a staggering $1 billion in merchandising profits in 1994 alone, not to mention the profits made from spin-off products from the movie. For example, Disney has shipped over 3 million copies of the sound track from *The Lion King*.[23] Disney's culture of commercialism is big business, and the toys modeled after Disney's animated films provide goods for over 300 Disney Stores worldwide. As a commentator in *Newsweek* recently pointed out, "The merchandise—Mermaid dolls, Aladdin undies, and collectibles like a sculpture of Bambi's Field Mouse—account for a stunning 20 percent of Disney's operating income."[24]

But Disney's attempt to turn children into consumers and to construct commodification as a defining principle of children's culture should not suggest a parallel vulgarity in its willingness to experiment aesthetically with popular forms of representation. Disney has shown enormous inventiveness in its attempts to reconstruct the very grounds on which popular culture is defined and shaped. For example, by defining popular culture as a hybridized sphere that combines genres and forms and often collapses the boundary between high and low culture, Disney has pushed against the grain of aesthetic form and cultural legitimacy. For instance, when *Fantasia* appeared in 1930, it drew the wrath of music critics, who, holding to an elite view of classical music, were outraged that the musical score of the film drew from the canon of high culture. By combining high and low culture in the form of the animated film, Disney opened up new cultural spaces and possibilities for artists and audiences alike. Moreover, as sites of entertainment, Disney's films "work" because they put both children and adults in touch with joy and adventure. They present themselves as places to experience pleasure, even though the pleasure has to be bought.

And yet, Disney's brilliant use of aesthetic forms, musical scores, and inviting characters can only be read in light of the broader conceptions of reality and the predispositions shaped by specific

Disney films within a wider system of dominant representations about gender roles, race, and agency that are endlessly repeated in the visual worlds of television, Hollywood film, and videocassettes.

All four of the recent films mentioned draw upon the talents of songwriters Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, whose skillful arrangements provide the emotional glue of the animation experience. The rousing calypso number, "Under the Sea," in *The Little Mermaid* and "Be Our Guest," the Busby Berkeley-inspired musical sequence in *Beauty and the Beast* are indicative of the musical talent at work in Disney's animated films. Fantasy abounds as Disney's animated films produce a host of exotic and stereotypical villains, heroes, and heroines. The Beast's enchanted castle in *Beauty and the Beast* becomes magical as household objects are transformed into dancing teacups, a talking teapot, and dancing silverware. And yet tied to the magical fantasy and lighthearted musical scores are representations and themes that emulate the repetitive stereotypes characteristic of Disney's view of the childhood culture. For example, while Ursula the large, oozing, black and purple squid in *The Little Mermaid* gushes with evil and irony, the heroine and mermaid, Ariel, appears as a cross between a typical rebellious teenager and a Southern California fashion model. Disney's representations of evil women and good women appear to have been fashioned in the editorial office of *Vogue*. The array of animated objects and animals in these films is of the highest artistic standards, but they do not exist in some ideologically free comfort zone. Their characters are tied to larger narratives about freedom, rites of passage, intolerance, choices, and the brutalities of male chauvinism. These are just some of the many themes explored in Disney's animated films.

But enchantment comes with a high price if one of its effects is to seduce its audience into suspending critical judgment on the dominant ideological messages produced by such films indefinitely. Even though these messages can be read through a variety of significations shaped within different contexts of reception, the dominant assumptions that structure these films restrict the number of cultural meanings that can be brought to bear on these films, especially when the intended audience is mostly children. This should not suggest that the role of the critic in dealing with Disney's animated films is to simply assign them a particular ideological reading. On the contrary, the challenge of such films is to analyze the various themes and assumptions that inform these films, both within and outside the dominant institutional and ideological formations that attempt to constrain how they might be taken up. This allows educators and others to try to understand how such films can become sites of contestation, translation, and exchange that can be read differently. But there is more at stake here than recognizing the plurality of readings such films might animate; there is also the political necessity of analyzing how privileged dominant readings of such texts construct their power-sensitive meanings to generate particular subject positions that define for children specific notions of agency and its possibilities in society.

Contexts mold interpretations; but political, economic, and ideological contexts also produce the texts to be read. A focus on films must be supplemented with an analysis of the institutional practices and social structures that work to shape such texts. This type of analysis does not mean that cultural workers should subscribe to a form of determinism in which cultural texts can be assigned a singular meaning as much as it should suggest pedagogical strategies for understanding how dominant regimes of power work to severely limit the range of views that children might bring to reading Disney's animated films. By making the relationship between power and knowledge visible while simultaneously referencing what is often taken for granted, teachers and critics can use Disney's animated films pedagogically to read within, against, and outside the dominant codes that inform them. There is a double pedagogical movement here. First, there is the need to read Disney's films in relation to their articulation with other dominant text in order to assess their similarities in legitimizing particular ideologies. Second, there is the need on the part of cultural workers to use Disney's thematization of America and America's thematization of Disney as a referent to both expose and disrupt dominant codings—in a space that invites dialogue, debate, and alternative readings. That is, pedagogically, one major challenge is to assess how dominant significations that are repeated over time in these films and reinforced through other popular cultural texts can be taken up as referents for engaging how children define themselves within such representations. The task here is to provide readings of such films that serve as pedagogical referents for engaging children in the context in

which they are shaped, understood, or might be seen.[25]

IV

The construction of gender identity for girls and women represents one of the most controversial issues in Disney's animated films.[26] In both *The Little Mermaid* and *The Lion King*, the female characters are constructed within narrowly defined gender roles. All the female characters are ultimately subordinate to males and define their sense of power and desire almost exclusively in terms of dominant male narratives. For instance, modeled after a slightly anorexic Barbie doll, Ariel, the woman-mermaid in *The Little Mermaid*, at first glance appears to be engaged in a struggle against parental control, motivated by the desire to explore the human world and willing to take a risk in defining the subject and object of her desires. But in the end the struggle to gain independence from her father, Triton, and the sense of desperate striving that motivates her, dissolves when Ariel makes a Mephistophelian pact with the sea witch, Ursula. In this trade, Ariel gives away her voice to gain a pair of legs so she can pursue the handsome Prince Eric. Although children might be delighted by Ariel's teenage rebelliousness, they are strongly positioned to believe, in the end, that desire, choice, and empowerment are closely linked to catching and loving handsome men. Bonnie Leadbeater and Gloria Lodato Wilson explore succinctly the pedagogical message at work in the film with their comments:

> The 20th-century innocent and appealing video presents a high-spirited role for adolescent girls, but an ultimately subservient role for adult women. Disney's "Little Mermaid" has been granted her wish to be part of the new world of men, but she is still flipping her fins and is not going too far. She stands to explore the world of men. She exhibits her new-found sexual desires. But the sexual ordering of women's roles is unchanged.[27]

Ariel in this film becomes a metaphor for the traditional housewife-in-the-making narrative. The sea witch Ursula tells Ariel that taking away her voice is not so bad because men don't like women who talk. This message is dramatized when the Prince attempts to bestow the kiss of true love on Ariel even though she has never spoken to him. Within this rigidly defined narrative, womanhood offers Ariel the reward of marrying the right man and renouncing her former life under the sea—a telling cultural model for the universe of female choices and decision making in Disney's worldview. The forging of rigid gender roles in *The Little Mermaid* does not represent an isolated moment in Disney's filmic universe; on the contrary, the power that informs Disney's reproduction of negative stereotypes about women and girls gains force, in part, through the consistent way in which similar messages are circulated and reproduced, in varying degrees, in all of Disney's animated films.

Another example of this can be found in *Aladdin*, where the issue of agency and power is centered primarily on the young street tramp, Aladdin. Jasmine, the princess he falls in love with, is simply an object of his immediate desire as well as a social stepping-stone.

Jasmine's life is almost completely defined by men, and, in the end, her happiness is ensured by Aladdin, who finally is given permission to marry her.

Disney's gender theme becomes a bit more complicated in *Beauty and The Beast*. Belle, the heroine of the film, is portrayed as an independent woman stuck in a provincial village in eighteenth-century France. Seen as odd because she always has her nose in a book, she is pursued by Gaston, the ultimate vain, macho male typical of Hollywood films of the 1980s. To Belle's credit she rejects him, but in the end she gives her love to the Beast who holds her captive in the hopes she will fall in love with him and break the evil spell cast upon him as a young man. Belle not only falls in love with the Beast, she "civilizes" him by instructing him on how to eat properly, control his temper, and dance. Belle becomes a model of etiquette and style as she turns this narcissistic, muscle-bound tyrant into a "new" man—one who is sensitive, caring, and loving. Some critics have labeled Belle a Disney feminist, because she rejects and vilifies Gaston, the ultimate macho man. Less obviously, *Beauty and the Beast* also can be read as a rejection of hypermasculinity and a struggle between the macho sensibilities of Gaston and the reformed sexist, the Beast. In this reading Belle is less the focus of the film than a prop or "mechanism for solving the Beast's dilemma."[28] Whatever subversive qualities Belle personifies in the film, they seem to dissolve when focused on humbling male vanity. In the end, Belle simply becomes another woman whose life is valued for solving a man's problems.

The issue of female subordination returns with a vengeance in *The Lion King*. All the rulers of the animal kingdom are men; this reinforces the assumption that independence and leadership are tied to patriarchal entitlement and high social standing. The dependency that the beloved lion king, Mufasa, engenders from the women of Pride Rock is unaltered after his death, when the evil Scar assumes control of the kingdom. Lacking any sense of outrage, independence, or resistance, the female felines hang around to do Scar's bidding. Given Disney's purported obsession with family values, especially as a consuming unit, it is curious that there are no mothers in these films. The mermaid has a domineering father; Jasmine's father is outwitted by his aides; and Belle has an airhead for a father—so much for strong mothers and resisting women.[29]

Jack Zipes, a leading theorist on fairy tales, claims that Disney's animated films celebrate a masculine type of power, but more importantly he believes that they reproduce "a type of gender stereotyping . . . that [has] an adverse effect on children in contrast to what parents think. . . . Parents think [it's] essentially harmless—and [it's] not harmless."[30] Disney films are seen by enormous numbers of children in both the United States and abroad. As far as the issue of gender is concerned, Disney's view of female agency and empowerment is not simply limited; it borders on being overtly reactionary. Racial stereotyping is another major issue that surfaces in many recent Disney animated films. But the legacy of racism does not begin with the films produced since 1989; on the contrary, there is a long history of racism associated with Disney. This history can be traced back to denigrating images of people of color in films such as *Song of The South*, released in 1946, and *The Jungle Book*, which appeared in 1967.[31] Moreover, racist representations of Native Americans as violent "redskins" were featured in Frontierland in the 1950s.[31] In addition, the main restaurant in Disneyworld's Frontierland featured the real-life figure of a former slave, Aunt Jemima, who would sign autographs for the tourists outside her "Pancake House." Eventually the exhibits and the Native Americans running them were eliminated by Disney executives, because the "Indian" canoe guides wanted to unionize. They were displaced by robotic dancing bears. Complaints from civil-rights groups got rid of the degrading Aunt Jemima spectacle.[33]

Currently, the most controversial example of racist stereotyping facing the Disney publicity machine occurred with the release of *Aladdin* in 1989, although such stereotyping reappeared in 1994 with *The Lion King*. *Aladdin* represents a particularly important example, because it was a high-profile release, the winner of two Academy Awards, and one of the most successful Disney films ever produced. Playing to massive audiences of children, the film's opening song, "Arabian Nights," begins its depiction of Arab culture with a decidedly racist tone. The lyrics of the offending stanza states, "Oh I come from a land, from a faraway place, where the caravan camels roam, where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face. It's barbaric, but hey, it's home." In this characterization, a politics of identity and place associated with Arab culture magnifies popular stereotypes already primed by the media through its portrayal of the Gulf War. Such racist representations are further reproduced in a host of supporting characters who are portrayed as grotesque, violent, and cruel. Yousef Salem, a former spokesperson for the South Bay Islamic Association, characterized the film in the following way:

> All of the bad guys have beards and large, bulbous noses, sinister eyes and heavy accents, and they're wielding swords constantly. Aladdin doesn't have a big nose; he has a small nose. He doesn't have a beard or a turban. He doesn't have an accent. What makes him nice is they've given him this American character. . . . I have a daughter who says she's ashamed to call herself an Arab, and it's because of things like this.[34]

Jack Shaheen, a professor of broadcast journalism at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, along with radio personality Casey Kasem, mobilized a public relations campaign protesting the anti-Arab themes in *Aladdin*. At first the Disney executives ignored the protest, but because of the rising tide of public outrage, they agreed to change one line of the stanza in the subsequent videocassette and worldwide film release; it is worth noting that Disney did not change the lyrics on its popular CD release of the *Aladdin* sound track.[35] It appears that Disney executives were aware of the racist implications of the lyrics when they were first proposed. Howard Ashman, who wrote the main title song, submitted an alternative set of lyrics when he delivered the original verse. The alternative set of lyrics,[66] "where it's flat and immense, and the heat is intense" eventually replaced the original verse, "where they cut off your ear if they don't like your face." Even

though the new lyrics appeared in the videocassette release of *Aladdin*, many Arab groups were disappointed because the verse "It's barbaric, but hey, it's home" was not altered. More importantly, the mispronunciation of Arab names in the film, the racial coding of accents, and the use of nonsensical scrawl as a substitute for an actual written Arabic language were not removed.[36]

Racism in Disney's animated films does not simply appear in negative imagery, it is also reproduced through racially coded language and accents. For example, in *Aladdin*, the "bad" Arabs are portrayed with thick, foreign accents, while the anglicized Jasmine and Aladdin speak in standard Americanized English. A hint of the racism that informs this depiction is provided by Peter Schneider, president of feature animation at Disney, who points out that Aladdin was modeled after Tom Cruise. Racially coded language is also evident in *The Lion King*, where all the members of the royal family speak with posh British accents while Shenzi and Banzai, the despicable hyena storm troopers, speak through the voices of Whoopi Goldberg and Cheech Marin in racially coded accents that take on the nuances of the discourse of decidedly urban black and Latino youth. The use of racially coded language is not new in Disney's films and can be found in an early version of *The Three Little Pigs*, *Song of The South*, and *The Jungle Book*. What is astonishing in these films is that they produce a host of representations and codes in which children are taught that cultural differences that do not bear the imprint of white, middle-class ethnicity are deviant, inferior, unintelligent, and threatening. The racism in these films is defined by both the presence of racist representations and the absence of complex representations of African Americans and other people of color. At the same time, whiteness is universalized through the privileged representation of middle-class social relations, values, and linguistic practices. Moreover, the representational rendering of history, progress, and Western culture bears a colonial legacy that seems perfectly captured by Edward Said's notion of orientalism and its dependency on new images of centrality and newly sanctioned narratives.[30] Cultural differences in Disney's recent films are expressed through a "naturalized" racial hierarchy, one that is antithetical to a viable democratic society. There is nothing innocent in what kids learn about race as portrayed in the "magical world" of Disney.

Another central feature common to all of Disney's recently animated films is the celebration of deeply antidemocratic social relations. Nature and the animal kingdom provide the mechanism for presenting and legitimating caste, royalty, and structural inequality as part of the natural order. The seemingly benign presentation of celluloid dramas in which men rule, strict discipline is imposed through social hierarchies, and leadership is a function of one's social status suggests a yearning for a return to a more rigidly stratified society, one modeled after the British monarchy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Within Disney's animated films, nature provides a metaphor where "harmony is bought at the price of domination. . . . no power or authority is implied except for the natural ordering mechanisms [of nature]."[39] For children, the messages offered in Disney's animated films suggest that social problems such as the history of racism, the genocide of Native Americans, the prevalence of sexism, and the crisis of democracy are simply willed through the laws of nature.

V

Given the corporate reach, cultural influence, and political power that Disney exercises over multiple levels of children's culture, Disney's animated films should be neither ignored nor censored by those who dismiss the conservative ideologies they produce and circulate. I think there are a number of issues to be taken up regarding the forging of a pedagogy and politics in response to Disney's shaping of children's culture. In what follows, I provide in schematic form some tactics whereby cultural workers, educators, and parents might critically engage Disney's influence in shaping the "symbolic environment into which our children are born and in which we all live out our lives."[40]

First, it is crucial that the realm of popular culture that Disney increasingly uses to teach values and sell goods be taken seriously as a site of learning and contestation, especially for children. This means, at the very least, that those cultural texts that dominate children's culture, including Disney's animated films, should be incorporated into schools as serious objects of social knowledge and critical analysis. This would entail a reconsideration of what counts as really useful knowledge in public schools and would offer a new theoretical register for addressing how popular

media is implicated in a range of power/knowledge relationships functioning in children's culture.

Second, parents, community groups, educators, and other concerned individuals must be attentive to the multiple and diverse messages in Disney films to both criticize them when necessary and, more importantly, to reclaim them for more productive ends. At the very least, we must be attentive to the processes whereby meanings are produced in these films, and we must expose the methods that are used to secure particular forms of authority and social relations. At stake pedagogically is the issue of paying "close attention to the ways in which [such films] invite (or indeed seek to prevent) particular meanings and pleasures."[41] In fact, Disney's films appear to assign, quite unapologetically, rigid roles to women and people of color. Similarly, such films generally produce a narrow view of family values coupled with a nostalgic and conservative view of history that should be challenged and transformed. Educators need to take seriously Disney's attempt to shape collective memory, particularly as such attempts are unabashedly defined by one of Disneyland's "imagineers" in the following terms: "What we create is a sort of 'Disney realism,' sort of Utopian in nature, where we carefully program out all the negative, unwanted elements and program in the positive elements."[42] Needless to say, Disney's rendering of entertainment and spectacle, whether expressed in Frontierland, Main Street U.S.A, or in its endless video and film productions, does not merely represent an edited, sanitary, and nostalgic view of history, one free of poverty, class differences, and urban decay; Disney's writing of public memory also aggressively constructs a monolithic notion of national identity that treats subordinate groups as either exotic or irrelevant to American history while simultaneously marketing cultural differences within "histories that corporations can live with."[43] Disney's version of United States history is neither innocent nor easily dismissed as simply entertainment.

Disney's celluloid view of children's culture strips the past, present, and future of its diverse narratives and its multiple possibilities. But it is precisely such a rendering that needs to be revealed as a historically specific and politically constructed cultural "landscape of power." Positing and revealing the ideological nature of Disney's world of children's films opens up further opportunities for educators and cultural workers to intervene within such texts to give them different meanings. Rustom Bharacuha puts it well in arguing that "the consumption of . . . images . . . can be subverted through a particular use in which we are compelled to think through images rather than respond to them with a hallucinatory delight."[44] One rendering of the call to "think through images" is for educators and cultural workers to demonstrate pedagogically and politically that history and its rendering of national identity have to be contested and engaged, even when images parade as innocent film entertainment for children. The images that pervade Disney's production of children's culture and Disney's claim to public memory need to be challenged and rewritten, "moved about in different ways," and read differently as part of the script of democratic empowerment.[45] Issues regarding the construction of gender, race, class, caste, and other aspects of self-identity and collective identity are defining principles of Disney's films for children. It is within the drama of animated storytelling that children are often positioned pedagogically to learn what subject positions are and are not open to them as citizens. Hence, the struggle over children's culture partly must be seen as the struggle over the related discourses of citizenship, national identity, and democracy.

Third, if Disney's films are to be viewed as more than narratives of fantasy and escape, as sites of reclamation and imagination, which affirm rather than deny the long-standing relationship between entertainment and pedagogy, cultural workers and educators need to insert the political and pedagogical back into the discourse of entertainment. In part, this points to analyzing how entertainment can be rendered as a subject of intellectual engagement rather than as a series of sights and sounds that wash over us. This suggests a pedagogical approach to popular culture that engages how a politics of the popular strives to mobilize desire, stimulate imagination, and produce forms of identification that can become objects of dialogue and critical investigation. At one level, this necessitates addressing the utopian possibilities in which children often find representations of their hopes and dreams. Such an approach is pedagogically valuable because it alerts cultural workers to taking the needs, desires, languages, and experiences of children seriously. But this is not meant to merely affirm the necessity for relevance in the curriculum as much as it means recognizing the pedagogical importance of what kids bring with them to the classroom or any other

site of learning as crucial to decentering power and expanding the possibility for multiple literacies and agencies as part of the learning process.

It is imperative that parents, educators, and cultural workers pay attention to how Disney films and visual media are used and understood differently by diverse groups of children. Not only does this provide the opportunity for parents and others to talk to children about popular culture, it also creates the basis for better understanding how young people identify with these films, what issues need to be addressed, and how such discussions might open up, rather than foreclose, languages of pleasure and criticism. This suggests that we develop new ways of critically understanding and reading electronically produced visual media. Teaching and learning the culture of the book is no longer the staple of what it means to be literate.

Children learn from exposure to popular cultural forms, providing a new cultural register for what it means to be literate. Educators and cultural workers must not only be attentive to the production of popular art forms in the schools. On one level this suggests a cultural pedagogy rooted in cultural practices that utilizes students' knowledge and experience through their use of popular cultural forms. The point here is that students should not merely analyze the representations of electronically mediated popular culture; they must also be able to master the skills and technology to produce it. Put another way, students should gain experience in making films, videos, music, and other forms of cultural production, thus giving students more power over the conditions of knowledge production.

But a cultural pedagogy also involves the struggle for more resources for schools and other sites of learning. Providing the conditions for students and others to become the subject and not simply the object of pedagogical work by asserting their role as cultural producers is crucial if students are to become attentive to the workings of power, solidarity, and difference, and part of more comprehensive project for democratic empowerment.

Fourth, Disney's all-encompassing reach into the spheres of economics, consumption, and culture suggest that we analyze Disney within a broad and complex range of power relations. Eric Smoodin argues rightly that the American public needs to "gain a new sense of Disney's importance, because of the manner in which his work in film and television is connected to other projects in urban planning, ecological politics, product merchandising, United States domestic and global policy formation, technological innovation, and constructions of national character."[46] This suggests undertaking new analyses of Disney that connect, rather than separate, the various social and cultural milieus in which the company actively engages. Clearly, such a dialectical practice not only provides a more theoretically accurate understanding of the reach and influence of Disney's power but also contributes to forms of analysis that rupture the notion that Disney is primarily about the pedagogy of entertainment.

Questions of ownership, control, and the possibility of public participation in making decisions about how cultural resources are used, to what extent, and for what effect must become a central issue in addressing the world of Disney and the other corporate conglomerates that shape cultural policy. In part, teachers, students, and cultural workers must situate the control, production, and distribution of Disney's children's films within larger circuits of power that allow concerned public citizens to co-opt Disney, Inc., as part of a larger cultural strategy and public policy initiative. This form of analysis would combine research about Disney that addresses how such academic and community-based work could produce knowledge and how the issue of cultural power and the shaping of children's culture could be taken up as a matter of public policy.

The availability, influence, and cultural power of Disney's children's films demand that they become part of a broader political discourse regarding who makes cultural policy. As such, issues regarding how and what children learn could be addressed through broader public debates about distribution of cultural and economic resources and controlled to ensure that children are exposed to a variety of alternative narratives, stories, and representations about themselves and the larger society. When the issue of children's culture is shaped in the schools, it is assumed to be a commonplace matter of public policy and intervention, but when it is shaped in the commercial public sphere, the discourse of public intervention gets lost in abstract appeals to the imperatives of the market and free speech. Free speech is only as good as the democratic framework that makes it possible to extend its benefits to a wide range of individuals, groups, and public spheres. Treating Disney as part of a media sphere that needs to be democratized and held accountable for how it sells

power and manufactures social identities needs to be taken up as part of the discourse of pedagogical analysis and public policy intervention. This type of analysis and intervention is perfectly suited for cultural studies, which can employ an interdisciplinary approach to such an undertaking—an approach that makes the popular an object of serious analysis, makes the pedagogical a defining principle of such work, and inserts the political into the center of its project.[47]

This suggests that cultural workers need to readdress the varied interrelations that define both the politics of representation and the discourse of political economy to forge a new form of cultural work that rejects the material/cultural divide. The result would be a renewed understanding of how their modalities mutually inform each other within different contexts and across national boundaries. It is particularly important for cultural workers to understand how Disney films work within a broad network of production and distribution as teaching machines within and across different public cultures and social formations. Within this type of discourse, the messages, forms of emotional investment, and ideologies produced by Disney can be traced through the various circuits of power that both legitimate and insert "the culture of the Magic Kingdom" into multiple and overlapping public spheres. Moreover, such films need to be analyzed not only for what they say but also for how they are used and taken up by adult audiences and groups of children within diverse national and international contexts. That is, cultural workers need to study these films intertextually and from a transnational perspective. Disney does not represent a cultural monolith ignorant of different contexts; on the contrary, its power in part rests with its ability to address different contexts and to be read differently by transnational formations and audiences. Disney engenders what Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan have called "scattered hegemonies."[49] By addressing how these hedgemonies operate in particular spaces of power, specific localities, and differentiated transnational locations, progressives will understand more fully the specific agendas and politics at work as Disney is both constructed for and read by different audiences.

I believe the power and Influence of Disney is so pervasive in American society that parents, educators, and others need to find ways to make Disney accountable for what it produces. The recent defeat of the proposed 3,000-acre theme park in Virginia suggests that Disney can be challenged and held accountable for the so-called Disneyfication of American culture. In this case, a coalition of notable historians, community activists, educators, and cultural workers mobilized against the land developers supporting the project, wrote articles against Disney's trivialization of history and its implications for the park, and, in general, aroused public opinion enough to generate an enormous amount of adverse criticism against the Disney project. In this case, what was initially viewed as merely a project for bringing a Disney version of fun and entertainment to hallowed Civil War grounds in historic Virginia was translated and popularized by oppositional groups as a matter of cultural struggle and public policy. And Disney lost.

The Virginia cultural civil war suggests that although it is indisputable that Disney provides both children and adults the pleasures of entertainment, Disney's public responsibility does not end there. Rather than being viewed as a commercial public sphere innocently distributing pleasure to young people, the Disney empire must be seen as a pedagogical and policy-making enterprise actively engaged in the cultural landscaping of national identity and the "schooling" of the minds of young children. This is not to suggest that there is something sinister behind what Disney does as much as to point to the need to address the role of fantasy, desire, and innocence in securing particular ideological interests, legitimating specific social relations, and making a distinct claim on the meaning of public memory. Disney needs to be held accountable not only at the box office but also in political and ethical realms. And if such accountability is to be impressed upon the "magic kingdom," then parents, cultural workers, and others will have to challenge and disrupt the institutional power and the images, representations, and values offered by Disney's teaching machine. The stakes are too high to ignore the challenge and the struggle, even if it means reading Disney's animated films critically.

Notes

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received from Larry Grossberg, Susan Searls, David Trend, and the *Socialist Review* editorial Collective.

1. The literature readily documenting these battles is much too exhaustive to cite here, but for an overview of some of these struggles, particularly as they intersect with the cultural politics of pedagogy, see Henry A. Giroux and Roger Simon, eds., *Popular Culture, Schooling, and Everyday Life* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1989); Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren, eds., *Between Borders* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Henry A. Giroux, *Disturbing Pleasures. Learning Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
2. Of course, I recognize that only within the last decade has it become possible for theorists to obtain animated films on an everyday basis. Also, animation as a particular representational form has not been adequately theorized. At the same time, I think crucial public spheres, such as children's culture, have not received the attention they deserve.
3. Social critics, including cultural theorists, with few exceptions, write social theory according to the presupposition that everyone is an adult. Jane Flax points to this problem, for instance, in her critique of the overall body of feminist theory. She writes, "For example in [recent work] on feminist theory focusing on mothering and the family, there is almost no discussion of children as human beings or mothering as a relation between persons. The modal 'person' in feminist theory still appears to be a self-sufficient individual adult" ("Postmodernism and Gender Relations" in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990], p. 54).

   Of course, there is a body of work being done on children's culture from a critical, left perspective, but it occupies the margins of social theory. Some examples include Ian Hocking, "The Making and Molding of Child Abuse: *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 2 (winter 1991): pp. 253–288; Francesca Polletta, 'Politicizing Childhood: The 1980 Zurich Burns Movement" *Social Text* 10, no. 4 (winter 1992): pp. 82–102; Marilyn Ivy. "Have You Seen Me?. Recovering the Inner Child in Late Twentieth-Century America," *Social Text* 11, no. 4 (winter 1993): pp. 227–252; Carl Nightingale, *On The Edge* (New York: Bask, 1993), Holly Sklar, "Young and Guilty by Stereotype," *Z Magazine* (July/Aug. 1993); and Lauren Berlant, "The Theory of Infantile Citizenship," *Public Culture* 5, no. 3 (spring 1993): pp. 395–410.
4. This is not to suggest that I believed that the world of fantasy, amusement, and entertainment could be abstracted from ideology. On the contrary, I simply did not address such ideologies as serious objects of analysis. For a critical engagement of commercialization, popular culture, and children's culture, see Marsha Kinder, *Playing With Power in Movies, Television and Video Games* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); and Doug Kellner, *Media Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
5. The reactionary notion that single parents or "broken" families are the source of all social ills has become a staple of both Disney films as well as standard Hollywood studio fare. Two recent Disney examples capitalizing on the virtues of "intact" families include *I Love Trouble* (1994), which suggests that conflict between competing heterosexuals can only be resolved within marriage; and *Angels in The Outfield* (1994), which posits divine intervention on the side of creating an Ozzie and Harriet family for a precocious young baseball fan. In standard Hollywood fare, this theme is pushed to absurd lengths in films such as *Milk Money* (1994), where a prostitute finds happiness and romantic bliss in the promise of suburban family life, and the 1994 film version of *Miracle on 34th Street*, which shamelessly rewrites a legendary film to hawk the virtues of child manipulation in constructing a Dan Quayle version of the traditional family.
6. Richard Turner, "Walt Disney Presents: Forward to the Future," *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 26, 1994, p. B1.
7. There is an ever-growing list of authors who have been pressured by Disney either through the refusal to allow copyrighted materials to be used or through Disney's reputation to influence publishers against publishing certain work. Examples can he found in Jon Wiener, "In the Belly of the Mouse: The Dyspeptic Disney Archives," *Lingua France* (July/Aug. 1994) pp. 69–72; and Jon Wiener, "Murdered Ink," *Nation*, May 31, 1993, pp. 743–750. One typical example occurred in a book in which one of my own essays on Disney appears. While editing a book critical of Disney, Laura Sells, Lynda Haas, and Elizabeth Bell requested permission from Disney executives to use the archives. In response, the editors received a letter from one of Disney's legal assistants asking to approve the book. The editors declined, and Disney forbade the use of their name in the title of the book and threatened to sue if the Disney name were used. Indiana University Press argued that it did not have the resources to fight Disney, and the title of the book was changed from *Doing Disney* to *From Mouse to Mermaid*. In another instance, Routledge Publishing decided to omit an essay by David Kunzle on the imperialist messages in Disney's foreign comics in a book titled *Disney's Discourse*. Fearing that Disney would not provide permission for illustrations from the Disney archives, Routledge decided they could not publish the essay without illustrations. Discouraged, Kunzle told Jon Wiener that "I've given up. I'm not doing any more work on Disney. I don't think any university press would take the risk. The problem is not the likelihood of Disney winning in court, it's the threat of having to bear the cost of fighting them." Kunzle is cited in Wiener, "In the Belly of the Mouse," p. 72.
8. This figure comes from Michael Meyer, et al., "Of Mice and Men," *Newsweek* Sept. 5, 1994, p. 41.

9. The mutually determining relationship of culture and economic power as a dynamic hegemonic process is beautifully captured by Sharon Zukin's work on Disney. She writes, "The domestication of fantasy in visual consumption is inseparable from centralized structures of economic power. Just as the earlier power of the state illuminated public space—the streets—by artificial lamplight, so the economic power of CBS, Sony, and the Disney Company illuminates private space at home by electronic images. With the means of production so concentrated and the means of consumption so diffused, communication of these images becomes a way of controlling both knowledge and imagination, a form of corporate social control over technology and symbolic expressions of power." *Landscapes of Power From Detroit to DisneyWorld* (Berkeley: University or California Press, 1991), p. 221.
10. Mark Walsh, "Disney Holds Up School as Model for Next Century," *Education Week*, 13, no. 39, June 22, 1994, p. 1.
11. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiolext(e), 1903), p. 25. See also Jean Baudrillard, "Consumer Society," *Jean Baudrillard.. Selected Works*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 29–56.
12. Eric Smoodin, "How to Read Walt Disney," *Disney Discourse: Producing The Magic Kingdom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 18.
13. Jon Wiener, "Tall Tales and True" *Nation* Jan. 31, 1994, p. 134.
14. Actually, Disney's animated film *The Lion King* may be the most financially successful film ever made. All of Disney's animated films released since 1990 have been included in the top ten grossing films. For example, *The Lion King* ranked number one with $253.5 million; *Aladdin* ranked number two with $217.4 million; and *Beauty and The Beast* ranked number seven, grossing $145.9 million (see Thomas King, "Creative but Unpolished Top Executive for Hire," *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 20, 1994, p. B1).
15. Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, "Walt's in the Movies" in *From Mouse to Mermaid*, ed. Elizabeth Bell et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 4.
16. Barbara Foley, "Subversion and Oppositionality in the Academy," in *Pedagogy Is Politics: Literary Theory and Critical Teaching*, ed. Maria-Regina Kecht (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 79.
17. Several recent authors address Disney's imagined landscape as a place of economic and cultural power. See, for example, Zukin; Michael Sorkin, "Disney World: The Power of Facade/the Facade of Power," in *Variations on a Theme Park*, ed. Michael Sorkin (New York: Noonday, 1992); and Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992).
18. Cited in King, p. B1; and Jeff Giles, "A New Generation of Genies," *Newsweek*, Sept. 5, 1994, p. 42.
19. The term "marketplace of culture" comes from Richard de Cordova, "The Mickey in Macy's Window: Childhood Consumerism and Disney Animation," in Smoodin, p. 209. Disney was one of the first companies to tie the selling of toys to the consumption of movies. Challenging the assumption that toy consumption is limited to seasonal sales, Disney actively pursued creating Mickey Mouse Clubs, advertising its toys in storefront windows, and linking its movies directly to the distribution of children's toys.
20. Richard Corliss, "The Mouse that Roars," *Time*, June 20, 1994, p. 59.
21. Turner, p. B1.
22. Sallie Hofmeister, "In the Realm of Marketing, the 'Lion King' Rules." New York Times, July 12, 1994, p. D1.
23. For an amazing summary of the merchandising avalanche that accompanied the movie theater version of *The Lion King*, see Hofmeister, pp. D1, D17.
24. Karen Schoemer, "An Endless Stream of Magic and Moola," *Newsweek*, Sept. 5, 1994, p. 47.
25. Tony Bennett touches on this issue through an explication of his rendering of the concept of reading formation. He argues that "the concept of reading formation is an attempt to think context as a set of discursive and intertextual determinations, operating on material and institutional supports, which bear in upon a text not just externally, from the outside in, but internally, shaping it—in the historically concrete forms in which it is available as a text-to-be-read—from the inside out" ("Texts in History: The Determinations of Readings and Their Texts," in *Poststructuralism and the Question of History*, ed. Derek Atridge et al. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], p. 72).
26. Critiques of Disney's portrayal of girls and women can be found in Elizabeth Bell et al.; see also Susan White, "Split Skins: Female Agency and Bodily Mutilation *The Little Mermaid*," in *Film Theory Goes to the Movies*, ed. Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 182–195.
27. Bonnie J. Leadbeater and Gloria Lodato Wilson. "Flipping Their Fins for a Place to Stand: 19th- and 20th-Century Mermaids," *Youth and Society* 27, no. 4 (June 1993): pp. 466–486.
28. Susan Jefford develops this reading of *Beauty and The Beast* in *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p. 150.
29. I would like to thank Valerie Janesick for this insight.
30. June Casagrande, "The Disney Agenda," *Creative Loafing*, Mar. 17–23, 1994, p. 6–7.

31. Upon its release in 1946, *Song of the South* was condemned by the NAACP for its racist representations.
32. For a historical context in which to understand Frontierland, see Fjellman.
33. These racist episodes are highlighted in Wiener, "Tall Tales and True" pp. 133–135.
34. Yousef Salem, cited in Richard Scheinin, "Angry Over Aladdin" *Washington Post*, Jan. 10, 1993, p. G5.
35. Howard Green, a Disney spokesperson, dismissed the charges of racism as irrelevant, claiming that such criticisms were coming from a small minority and that "most people were happy with [the film]" Richard Scheinin, "Angry over 'Aladdin" *Washington Post*, Jan. 10, 1993, GI.
36. This criticism was offered by Jack Shaheen, "Animated Racism," *Cineaste* 20, no. 1 (1993): p. 49.
37. See Susan Miller and Greg Rodes's rhetorical analysis of *The Jungle Book* and *Song of the South* in their chapter, "The Movie You See, The Movie You Don't: How Disney Do's That Old Time Derision," in Bell et al.
38. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).
39. Susan Willis brilliantly explores this theme in "Fantasia: Walt Disney's Los Angeles Suite," *Diacritics* 17 (summer 1987): pp. 83–96.
40. George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Borgan, and Nancy Signorielli, "Growing Up with Television: The Cultivation Perspective," in *Media Effects. Advances in Theory and Research*, ed. Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995), p. 17.
41. David Buckingham, "Conclusion: Re-Reading Audiences," in *Reading Audiences: Young People and the Media*, ed. David Buckingham (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 211.
42. Zukin, p. 222. While this quote refers to Disney's view of its theme parks, it represents an ideological view of history that strongly shapes all of Disney's cultural productions. For a comment on how it affects Disney's rendering of adult films, see Giroux. *Disturbing Pleasures*, especially pp. 25–45.
43. Fjellman, p. 400.
44. Rustom Bharacuha, "Around Ayodhya: Aberrations, Enigmas, and Moments of Violence,: *Third Text* 24 (autumn 1993): p. 51.
45. Bennett, p. 80.
46. Smoodin, pp. 4–5.
47. For an example of such an analysis see Stanley Aronowitz, *Roll Over Beethoven* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993); cf. Giroux.
48. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity," in *Scattered Hegemonies*, ed. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).