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# 'Locus of Control': A Selective Review of Disney Theme Parks

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- 1 In the fifty-five years since Disneyland's opening in Anaheim, California, the characteristic insularity and thematic coherence of the Disney theme parks have made them prominent examples of the "landscapes of power" so often discussed both inside and outside academic circles.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 While Disneyland's opening was met mostly with silence by academics, later responses have been mixed at best, revealing the suspicious attitudes of intellectuals with regard to popular culture: as early as 1958, the comments of screenwriter Julian Halevy on Disneyland would set the tone for later discussions of the parks, as he remarked in *Nation* that the park's "sickening blend of cheap formulas packaged to sell" only "exist[s] for the relief of tension and boredom, as tranquilizers for social anxiety, and ... provide[s] fantasy experiences in which not-so-secret longings are pseudo-satisfied."<sup>2</sup>
- 3 However, other voices soon emerged that found the environment of the park "immensely exciting" rather than oppressive and debilitating.<sup>3</sup> In 1965, Charles Moore's serious treatment of Disneyland's playful theming helped the low-brow theme park enter high-brow discussion, thus paving the way for postmodernism in architecture: then the dean of the Yale School of Architecture, Moore praised the park as "the most important single piece of construction in the West in the past several decades" — a new public arena that responded to the erosion of public space in Los Angeles and allowed visitors to engage in "play-acting, both to be watched or participated in, in a public sphere."<sup>4</sup>
- 4 At the heart of these interpretations of the Disney theme parks lies the issue of who controls the visitor's experience or, more precisely, where the locus of control for this experience really sits. While it originally referred to a person's perceived control over his and her actions and their attribution to personal (or 'internal') or environmental ('external') factors, the term 'locus of control' here applies broadly to the agency and motivations demonstrated by the park's various participants (visitors, employees, and company executives) in shaping and assigning meaning to the park's environment.<sup>5</sup>

- 5 As some critics have shown, the Disney corporation's efforts to shape its environment are not just confined to the park's physical landscape but include an entire array of legislations and infrastructures, allowing the company to contain outside forces and exert greater control over its parks.<sup>6</sup> Beyond such hegemonic interpretations, other critics have placed the locus of control not within the Disney-controlled environment of the parks but within individual visitors as well as the wider socio-economic context of which the parks form only a part. These diverse perspectives show evolving conceptions of the reception processes of mass media, that is how people respond to and consume mass media as well as how the social, economic and material conditions surrounding its reception affect personal interpretations.
- 6 This essay is intended to evaluate how the notions of reception, agency and control apply to both the user and the Disney corporation. We first identify one research trend that draws from semiotics and post-modernism to cast the park as a 'text' whose meaning largely escapes the visitor. In such approaches, the visitor is a passive receptor of the park's hidden ideological message, and the locus of control for the user's experience sits within the park's environment itself. A second approach places the locus of control within individual users, presenting visitors and employees as actively involved in appropriating the park's design, themes and contents. A third, final trend evaluates whether the seemingly autonomous environment of the parks is itself a locus of control — that is, an environment whose design and operations are the exclusive products of the Disney corporation.
- 7 Since we focus on issues of reception and agency, we do not include an exhaustive review of all scholarly approaches to the Disney parks. In particular, approaches whose topics and methods fall outside our scope include discussions of the parks' overall design and contents — most notably their presentation of history and technology.<sup>7</sup>
- 8 Under the European influences of semiotics and post-modernism, American cultural critics have approached the parks as sets of signs and representations arranged into a discourse and intended to blur the distinction between reality and fantasy. These approaches combine the Socratic view of representations as fallacies with a Marxian approach to mass culture, generally depicting the parks as a privileged seat of 'false consciousness' — the embodiment of capitalist domination and consumerism.
- 9 Originating in the works of semiologists Louis Marin, Umberto Eco and sociologist Jean Baudrillard, this trend found new resonance in the United States with Stephen Fjellman's *magnum opus*, the 500-page *Vinyl Leaves*.<sup>8</sup> In keeping with a semiotic approach, Fjellman and his European counterparts tend to present the park as a discourse or a text whose message is ideological in nature.<sup>9</sup> While Marin found that Disneyland exemplifies the American ideology, "the imaginary relationship that the ruling class in American society maintains with its real conditions of existence," Eco saw in Disneyland an "allegory of the consumer society"; Fjellman in turn defines Disney World as "the most ideologically important piece of land in the United States" in that it exposes "[t]he hegemonic meta-message of our time," namely that "the commodity form is natural and inescapable."<sup>10</sup>
- 10 However, it is only under careful analysis that the parks surrender their 'true' meanings, since within their boundaries the signs no longer stand for what they seem to represent: by presenting itself as 'real,' the park's environment blurs the line between 'fake' and 'authentic,' allowing the 'artificial' copy — the signifier — to replace the 'original' model — the signified — entirely. Noting that in the parks "[t]he

referential functions of normal, everyday language have been shattered and the signifier disconnected from the signified," Fjellman remarks that Disney World "juxtapose[s] the real and the fantastic, surrounding us with this mix until it becomes difficult to tell which is which. A kind of euphoric disorientation is supposed to set in as we progressively accept the Disney definition of things."<sup>11</sup> In so defining the park, Fjellman closely follows the conclusions of Eco and Baudrillard, which have made the park a prominent example of man's so-called 'postmodern condition': while Eco identified Disneyland as the epitome of "hyperreality," where "[t]he 'completely real' becomes identified with the 'completely fake,'" Baudrillard saw the park as an example of "simulation," where "the radical negation of the sign as value" leads to a "reversion and death sentence of every reference."<sup>12</sup>

- 11 In a post-Socratic critique of mimesis as illusion, the vivid representations of the theme parks are said to cause "the blunting of visitors' powers of discrimination" between fantasy and reality: while visitors are encouraged to take part in the park's fictional environment, they also engage in real acts of consumption.<sup>13</sup> As Fjellman underlines, the park's stores are "part of show. And we participate only through purchase. Candy is there, in part, to lend verisimilitude to the false-front real stores. It is both commodity and prop."<sup>14</sup> Fjellman's observations closely follow Eco's previous conclusions that "[w]hat is falsified is our will to buy, which we take as real," making Disneyland "the quintessence of consumer ideology."<sup>15</sup> In other words, what the park works at manufacturing and commodifying is the entire mental life of the visitors, as Fjellman remarks: "Fantasy goes on the market, as the last remaining vestige of uncommodified life — the unconscious — is brought into the market system."<sup>16</sup> As they work at naturalizing the dominant ideology of mindless consumption, the parks serve as capitalism's province of 'false consciousness': in so doing, they serve to displace the 'locus of control' for the guest's experience away from individual visitors to the Disney-controlled environment.
- 12 While Fjellman makes a solid point when he suggests that the fantasy landscapes of the parks present themselves as the objective product of collective labor and of specific structures of production (or what Marx called *praxis*), his analysis also shares some of the limitations of the works he draws from. Much of Fjellman's work revolves around the meaning or 'meta-message' that visitors ultimately extract from the park's environment, yet the author provides no convincing model for reception, thereby suggesting that reception is largely an unproblematic activity, neatly separated from production and free of interference of any kind. Indeed, as is common with hegemonic interpretations, very little room is left for individual variation from the normative interpretations identified by the critic: given Eco's proclivity to depict the park as "a place of total passivity" where visitors are required to "behave like [Disneyland's] robots," one is hardly surprised that even an anthropologist such as Fjellman did not feel it necessary to interview visitors, as he himself admits to "never initiat[ing] a research inquiry with a customer while at the parks."<sup>17</sup>
- 13 The semiotic and post-modern approaches that Fjellman draws from also fail to explain how the parks may legitimately be treated as linguistic products or 'texts' to be deciphered or 'read': while Marin explains that 'utopias' work at converting space into a text, geographers such as Gottdiener have legitimately insisted that "urban space can only be considered as a pseudo-text, because it is produced by non-semiotic processes, such as economics and politics, as well as semiotic ones."<sup>18</sup>

- 14 Finally, the authors' extreme suspicion with regard to mass culture brings them to reassert a strong divide between low-brow entertainment and high-brow analysis, as their critical interpretations of the parks ultimately serve to disqualify popular practices and receptions as invalid, naïve or even 'distasteful': by depicting the park as 'fake,' scholarly interpretations suggest the existence of an objective reality against which the park may be judged and interpreted. Also, Fjellman takes great pains to distance himself from the decidedly low-brow audience of theme parks as he repeatedly describes some of the park's attractions as "unbearably corny": "However corny the show is — and it verges on the unbearable — the audience appears to enjoy itself."<sup>19</sup> Ultimately, Fjellman seems to have adopted the exoticism and perhaps even the slight contempt that European critics seem to feel for this (then) typically American phenomenon, thereby leaving the vague impression that American visitors are but gullible grown-up children. Baudrillard for instance noted that "the debility, the infantile degeneration of [Disneyland's] imaginary" was meant "to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the 'real' world" while "real childishness is everywhere, particularly among those adults who go there to act the child in order to foster illusions of their real childishness."<sup>20</sup>
- 15 Other critics, relying on micro-sociological approaches, have placed stronger emphasis on users' practices and insiders' tales, depicting the parks as a playground for social interactions and allowing visitors and employees to engage in individual or collective "poaching" strategies (following Michel de Certeau's expression) in the name of personal or group interests.<sup>21</sup> As noted above, as early as 1965, architect Charles Moore saw in Disneyland a public space where people, through playacting, were able to engage in social interactions and "respond to a public environment, which Los Angeles particularly no longer has."<sup>22</sup> Ethnologist Alexander Moore further elaborated on this view in 1980 as he described Disney World as a "playful pilgrimage center" — a place where visitors compensate for the gradual disappearance of the communal experience of "organized religion and obligatory rituals" through collective and ritualized forms of "play," with the park's attractions reenacting "true rites of passage, offered as edifying play in a modern art form."<sup>23</sup>
- 16 In accordance with such interpretations, John Van Maanen, an organization theorist, wrote a series of articles in the early 1990s dealing with the corporate culture and public meanings of Disney theme parks. Rather than a collection of shared representations, Van Maanen seems to view culture as a "toolkit," in Ann Swidler's seminal expression, a "repertoire of strategies" that enables improvised action under variable circumstances.<sup>24</sup> As an audience especially subjected to the messages of the Disney corporation, the Disneyland work-force has allowed Van Maanen to demonstrate how such messages are actively appropriated, as employees typically negotiate their way between recommended instructions, 'on the fly' responses as well as codified acts of collective or individual resistance.
- 17 In his broad overview of the social life of theme park workers, "The Smile Factory: Working at Disneyland," Van Maanen shows how Disneyland's overall organization of labor and training procedures are appropriated and even allow subgroups to emerge with perceived common interests.<sup>25</sup> Despite their apparent social homogeneity, the predominantly middle-class workforce has developed an informal status system based on the perceived autonomy, skill sets, and exposure to guests required for any of the park's given functions, from the "upper class" Disneyland Ambassadors and Tour

Guides down to the “peasants” from Food and Concessions, otherwise derisively known as “peanut pushers,” “coke blokes,” or “soda jerks.”<sup>26</sup> With nearly equal pays across all ‘classes,’ power struggles among the park’s various classes have crystallized based on status symbols, starting with uniforms. For instance, the upper-class Tour Guides, then commonly held as the park’s fashion vanguard with their uniforms of kilts, knee socks and English hats, successfully lobbied against the redesigned outfits of the lower-ranked female ride operators from It’s a Small World, whose more revealing and ‘sexy’ design was perceived as a threat to their status.<sup>27</sup> Patterns of solidarity and resistance also emerge among employees, as older operators undermine their supervisors’ habits of spying on employees by revealing their favorite hiding places to newcomers. Similarly, ride operators share methods for punishing unruly visitors while giving the impression of following standard procedures; such strategies notably include the self-explanatory “seatbelt squeezes,” “seatbelt slaps,” the “‘break-up-the-party’ gambit” as well as the somewhat cruel “‘Sorry-I-didn’t-see-your-hand’ tactic.”<sup>28</sup>

- 18 In a groundbreaking article “‘Real Feelings’: emotional expression and organizational culture,” co-authors Van Maanen and Gideon Kunda focus more specifically on the performative and participatory nature of work at Disneyland.<sup>29</sup> Since social interactions are scripted in advance, they require a performance on the part of the worker — an active process of internalization of scripted lines and even emotions that occasionally generates resistance. Drawing from Hoschild’s theory of “emotional labor,” whereby employees are increasingly required to ‘feel’ certain emotions while engaging in specific tasks, Van Maanen and Kunda show how Disneyland’s corporate and organizational culture requires for the effective delivery of services that certain feelings and emotions be conjured up by employees. For instance, Disney employees are typically required not just to smile, but to smile *sincerely*. As Van Maanen and Kunda note, “[e]mployees are told repeatedly that if they are happy and cheerful at work, so too will be the guests at play.”<sup>30</sup> While the active and willing participation of the employee is necessary, such emotional labor is extremely prescriptive and alienating, to the point that when the emotional toll seems too high, employees simply “go robot” or “fake” desired emotions, thereby opposing “passive resistance” to their supervisors’ control.<sup>31</sup> Above all, the frivolous, Mickey Mouse connotations of the Disney corporation allow such instructions to not be taken too seriously, offering some leeway in how to interpret and apply them. As the “satirical banter, mischievous winkings, and playful exaggeration in the classroom” suggest, “[a]ll [participants] are aware that the label ‘Disneyland’ has both an unserious and artificial connotation and that a full embrace of the Disneyland role would be as deviant as its full rejection.”<sup>32</sup>
- 19 Finally, in “Displacing Disney: Some Notes of the Flow of Culture,” Van Maanen uses the case of Tokyo Disneyland to evaluate local strategies of appropriation of Disney’s so-called global appeal, as Japanese visitors and entrepreneurs actively recontextualize the park and its apparent meaning.<sup>33</sup> In Maanen’s expression, the Japanese park is made to serve as a “differentiating device” meant to instill national pride in the Japanese’s perceived “selective hybridity.”<sup>34</sup> Though it is a near-exact copy of the existing Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World, the ‘displaced’ park, by virtue of its new cultural context, is invested with new meanings and allows for new uses. For instance, the well-publicized self-discipline of Japanese audiences allows visitors to explore at liberty the park’s environment and come within touching distance of elaborate and fragile pieces of equipment that are kept securely remote from guests at the American parks. In the same way, the audience has long enjoyed the Cinderella Castle Mystery Tour, a ‘walk-

through’ attraction unique to the Japanese park, since it requires the audience to closely follow the instructions of the Guide — a requirement that would be inconceivable in the American parks.

- 20 More generally, the park is widely presented as a cultural import rather than a cultural export, suggesting that the Japanese were actively involved in its recreation. This has effectively allowed the park to serve as a differentiating device, whereby the Japanese can marvel at the spectacle of their cultural adaptability and superior sense of craft and service. As Maanen says: “The message coming from Japan (for the Japanese) is simply ‘anything you can do, we can do as well (or better).’... Were the park built more specifically to Japanese tastes and cultural aesthetics, it would undercut any contrast to the original in this regard.”<sup>35</sup> This point was elaborated on by Mitsuko Yoshimoto, who remarked that “[t]o the extent that it perfectly fits in with the nativist discourse valorizing the selective hybridity of Japanese culture, Tokyo Disneyland is in fact one of the most powerful manifestations of contemporary Japanese nationalism. ... Far from being a manifestation of American cultural imperialism, Tokyo Disneyland epitomizes the ingenious mechanism of neo-cultural imperialism of Japan.”<sup>36</sup>
- 21 Ultimately, by defining “[t]he happiness trade [as] an interactional one,” Maanen suggests that the success of Disney theme parks cannot be properly accounted for without an interactional approach.<sup>37</sup> In other words, visitors and employees are *actors* in that they actively extract meaning from and adjust to the environment of the park, which is *interpersonal* and *cultural* by nature.
- 22 Finally, macro-socioeconomic analyses have shown that the Walt Disney Company, while actively involved in crafting its own legal and commercial environment, conversely finds itself shaped by the interactions of various political, economic and social groups with differing interests. The experience of coherent narrative universes has also been shown to extend beyond the pristine confines of the parks to other businesses, suggesting that ‘theming’ and ‘Disneyization’ respond to wider socio-economic trends that now largely escape Disney’s control.
- 23 In keeping with such an approach, it appears that, despite its many efforts to the contrary, the Walt Disney Company does not operate entirely under conditions of its own making but rather adjusts to evolutions in its environment. Richard Foglesong has studied the conflicted relationship between the Disney Company and Florida’s various levels of Government — a relationship that he likens to a failing marriage, with passion and commitment eventually giving way to estrangement. A politics professor, Foglesong has defined Disney’s Florida operations at Disney World as a “Vatican with mouse ears”: indeed, under Disney’s persuasive efforts to promote private initiative and innovation in Florida, the state’s house passed a bill in 1967 that granted the company a private charter, allowing the parks to operate an autonomous government with quasi-regalian powers outside the “state and county regulation of buildings, land use, airport and nuclear power plant construction, and even the distribution and sale of alcoholic beverages.”<sup>38</sup> The so-called Reedy Creek Improvement District Act met virtually no resistance in the Florida House as the Disney Company promoted the bill as instrumental to the completion of its ambitious (and eventually shelved) EPCOT project — a real community of 20,000 residents that would serve as a showcase for innovative urban thinking and American technology.
- 24 However, contrary to common perceptions, the Disney Company does not operate in a complete legal, political and competitive vacuum. Disney’s efforts to shape its legal



environment eventually backfired under the lobbying efforts of competitors, as illustrated by the example of the Mag-lev train bill. Approached in 1985 by a consortium of Japanese banks representing the Japanese train industry, Disney was convinced to build a high-speed railway that would connect the Orlando airport directly to its property, allowing visitors to bypass what was then the second most used corridor in the nation. By channeling visitors directly from the airport, the so-called Mag-lev train was expected to make visitors even more reliant on Disney for their transportation, thereby shielding the company from the new competition of neighboring hotels and theme parks such as SeaWorld and Universal Studios. In an effort to repeat its 1967 private charter, the Disney Company introduced a bill in the Florida house meant to protect the project from excessive regulation and speed up the whole process — all with the blessing of local legislators who viewed the proposed train line as a private solution to a public problem. However, worried that the projected line would compromise their business, Universal's team took advantage of the legal process and successfully lobbied senators to surreptitiously introduce provisions in the bill requiring "unfettered public access" at all transit stops, effectively defeating the train's initial purpose to hold visitors captive on Disney property. While politicians thought that the provision made the train line an even superior solution to the problem of local transit, Universal's 'poison pill' effectively killed the deal, with Disney eventually withdrawing its support and money from the project in 1989. As Foglesong emphasizes, "[i]n failing to support Mag-lev, Disney's actions suggested they were public only when they wanted to be: they wear their public hat or their private hat, depending on what best serves their corporate interest."<sup>39</sup>

- 25 In the *Disneyization of Society*, Alan Bryman, a professor of organization studies, examines how processes commonly identified with the Disney parks have extended to businesses outside the corporation, suggesting that the appeal of narrative universes once characteristic of Disney theme parks may respond to wider social and economic trends.
- 26 Bryman defines Disneyization as "a mode of delivery in the sense of the staging of goods and services. It provides a framework for increasing the allure of goods and services."<sup>40</sup> As such, Disneyization is distinct from what has commonly been referred to as Disneyfication, that is the 'sanitization' and 'trivialization' of cultural items commonly associated with the Disney universe.<sup>41</sup> As a staging device meant to encourage consumption, Disneyization relies on four key processes, starting with theming, that is the application of an 'exotic' theme to enhance the delivery of a service, as exemplified by the likes of Planet Hollywood Restaurants or Rainforest Cafés. A second area of Disneyization is what Bryman calls "hybrid consumption" or "[the] transformation of shopping into play," when "consumption becomes part of the immersion in fantasy."<sup>42</sup> For instance, when checking into an Egypt-themed hotel, clients may to the degree of their choice fantasize themselves as pharaohs. A third distinctive character of Disneyization is the use of 'merchandising,' that is the sale of licensed products and memorabilia whose primary aim is to "leverag[e] additional uses and value out of existing well-known images."<sup>43</sup> Finally, Bryman identifies a fourth area of Disneyization, "performative labor," entailing that employees play a part, thus suggesting that work is merely 'play.' While Bryman differentiates between "structural" and "transferred" Disneyization (that is between principles "merely exemplified" by the Disney corporation and others consciously borrowed from the theme parks), the very notion that processes commonly associated with the Disney



theme parks have found wider resonance suggests that such practices respond to a socio-economic context largely outside Disney's control.<sup>44</sup>

- 27 As Eric Smoodin once suggested, the Walt Disney Company may be best described as a "vast technological system." While their careful arrangement into nested structures suggests totalizing tendencies, the company's diversified products and theme parks should not be treated as singular occurrences but rather as the result of wider social, economic and political conditions necessary for their effective delivery: "Disney has been responsible for a kind of Tennessee Valley Authority of leisure and entertainment. That is, like Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, while celebrated for individual artifacts, Disney was actually the master of vast 'technological systems,' to use Thomas Hughes's term. Those systems involved 'far more than the so-called hardware, devices, machines and processes,' but also the 'transportation, communication, and information networks that interconnect them,' and the array of employees and regulations that make them run."<sup>45</sup> In other words, even though the Disney parks might be read as an attempt to maximize control over the environment in which it conducts its business, the Walt Disney Company remains dependent on outside social, political and commercial actors on which it has but limited influence. As the example of the Mag-lev train suggests, not everyone (and certainly not competitors) has an interest in keeping visitors under Disney's control.
- 28 Spanning from 1958 to 2007, these three theoretical approaches toward the Disney theme parks may be interpreted as successive models for the study of mass culture and the reception processes of mass media. In assigning various degrees of agency to the parks' participants, critics have gradually displaced the locus of control for the parks' meaning, design, and operations from the Disney corporation to the individual user and the company's socio-economic context, paying increasing attention to the audience's interpretive activity and the parks' competitive environment.
- 29 From the 1970s to the early 1990s, semiotic and post-modernist approaches largely assimilated the parks to a "readerly text" (to reprise a term first introduced by Roland Barthes in *S/Z*) — that is, a text whose meaning is fixed and largely predetermined, leaving the visitors mere "receptors" of the park's hidden ideological message.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, by describing visitors as passive or even malleable, such approaches do not conceive of reception as an activity, leaving the meanings ultimately extracted from the park largely unaffected by the personal motives and interests of visitors. 'Culture' (and especially mass culture) is therefore presented as a set of conventional representations quintessentially captured in myths and symbols whose constant repetition serves to keep the dominant ideological order in place. Finally, these studies not only maintain a hierarchy between 'critical' high-brow culture and 'naïve' popular practices, they also serve to legitimize the intellectuals' social utility, since visitors are considered unable to access to the real meanings of the park on their own.
- 30 In the early 1990s, managerial and organizational research, relying on interactional approaches, described meaning-making in the park as a context-dependent activity whose actualization depends on the personal interests of individual actors as well as routinized social behaviors. Here, reception of mass media is at once creative and strategic: it is a cultural activity in the sense that Ann Swidler has defined. Visitors are not 'cultural dopes' but rather actively reconstruct available meanings to elaborate strategies and pursue motives of their own.

- 31 Finally, large-scale approaches such as socio-economics or politics in the 2000s have focused on the integration of the Disney corporation and theme parks within their larger social, political and economic environment. While its exposure to a varied audience allows myriad subjective interpretations, mass media is also typically shaped by the objective conditions in which it operates: legal and commercial constraints will, to some degree, influence the actual experience that visitors have of parks.
- 32 While it originally referred to the degree of agency that individuals assume to exert in their daily actions, the term 'locus of control' has here been used to assess how much credit the parks' various participants must be given in shaping and assigning meaning to the parks' environment. As critics shift from micro to macro scales, from personal interactions to the park's dominant ideological order and competitive environment, so is the individual user given more or less important a role in the reception and production of the park's meaning, design and operations.
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## NOTES

1. The expression "landscape of power" is borrowed from sociology professor Sharon Zukin. See: Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
2. Julian Halevy, "Disneyland and Las Vegas," *The Nation*, June 7, 1958, 511-13.
3. Charles W. Moore, "You Have to Pay for The Public Life," in *You Have to Pay for the Public Life: Selected Essays of Charles W. Moore*, ed. Kevin Keim (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2004), 128.
4. Moore, "You Have to Pay for The Public Life," 124-26.
5. The term locus of control was first introduced by psychologist Julian B. Rotter as part of his social-learning theory of personality. Julian B. Rotter, *Social Learning and Clinical Psychology*, (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1954).
6. Zukin, *Landscapes of Power*, 217; Alan Bryman, *Disney and his Worlds* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007), 88-92.
7. For a presentation of the parks' overall design, see: Richard V. Francaviglia, "Main Street U.S.A.: A Comparison/Contrast of Streetscapes in Disneyland and Walt Disney World," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 15, no 1 (June 1981): 141-56; Karal Ann Marling, "Disneyland, 1955: Just Take the Santa Ana Freeway to the American Dream," *American Art* 5, no 1/2 (January, 1991): 169-207; *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance*, ed. Karal Ann Marling (New York: Rizzoli / Flammarion, 1998); Steve Mannheim, *Walt Disney and the Quest for Community* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2003).
- For a discussion of the parks' presentation of history and technology, see for instance: Scott Bukatman, "There's Always Tomorrowland: Disney and the Hypercinematic Experience," *October* 57 (July, 1991): 55-78; .
8. See: Louis Marin, "Dégénérescence utopique : Disneyland," in *Utopiques : jeux d'espace* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1973), 297-324; Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyper Reality: Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), Inc., 1983); Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World And America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).
9. Though it was the first book of this length and scope, the ideas *Vinyl Leaves* presented were not entirely unfamiliar to American scholars, since earlier articles and essays had dealt with the same objects and approaches. Mark Gottdiener, for instance, had already published a semiotic reading of the park, while in 1992 Michael Sorkin edited and published *Variations on a Theme Park*, a book on the "city of simulations, television city, the city as theme park" whose architecture, he remarked, "is almost purely semiotics, playing the game of grafted signification, theme-park building" (p. xiv). *Inside the Mouse*, another book published in 1995, also drew from Marxism and post-modernism to reach conclusions mostly similar to Fjellman's. See: Mark Gottdiener, "Disneyland, A Utopian Urban Space," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 11, no 2 (July, 1982): 139-62; Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992); Jane Kuenz et al., *Inside the Mouse: Work and Play at Disney World, The Project on Disney* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1995).
10. Marin's original reads: "[le] rapport imaginaire que la classe dominante de la société américaine entretient avec ses conditions réelles d'existence." Marin, "Dégénérescence utopique : Disneyland," 298; Eco, *Travels in Hyper Reality*, 48; Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, 9-10.
11. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, 255.

12. Eco, *Travels in Hyper Reality*, 7; Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 6. Baudrillard's original reads: "[la simulation] part de la négation radicale du signe comme valeur, part du signe comme réversion et mise à mort de toute référence." Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1981), 16.
13. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, 256.
14. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, 165.
15. Eco, *Travels in Hyper Reality*, 43.
16. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, 300.
17. Eco, *Travels in Hyper Reality*, 48; Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, 18.
18. Marin explains: "le 'contenu' de l'utopie, c'est l'organisation de l'espace comme texte ; le texte utopique, sa structuration formelle et ses procès opérationnels, c'est la constitution du discours comme un espace." Marin, "Dégénérescence utopique : Disneyland," 24; Gottdiener, "Disneyland, A Utopian Urban Space," 144.
19. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, 72.
20. Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 25. The original reads: "L'imaginaire de Disneyland n'est ni vrai ni faux, c'est une machine de dissuasion mise en scène pour régénérer en contre-champ la fiction du réel. D'où la débilité de cet imaginaire, sa dégénérescence infantile. Ce monde se veut enfantin pour faire croire que les adultes sont ailleurs, dans le monde 'réel', et pour cacher que la véritable infantilité est partout, et c'est celle des adultes eux-mêmes qui viennent jouer ici à l'enfant pour faire illusions sur leur infantilité réelle." Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, 24.
21. Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 1. *Arts de faire*, ed. Luce Giard (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), xxxvi, 240.
22. Moore, "You Have to Pay for The Public Life," 126.
23. Alexander Moore, "Walt Disney World: Bounded Ritual Space and the Playful Pilgrimage Center," *Anthropological Quarterly* 53, no 4 (October, 1980): 207, 213.
24. Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51, no 2 (avril 1, 1986): 273.
25. John Van Maanen, "The Smile Factory: Working at Disneyland," in *Reframing Organizational Culture*, eds Peter J. Frost et al. (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991), 58-77.
26. Van Maanen, "The Smile Factory," 61-2.
27. Van Maanen, "The Smile Factory," 62-3.
28. Van Maanen, "The Smile Factory," 71.
29. John Van Maanen et al., "Real Feelings: Emotional Expressions and Organization Culture," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 11 (1989): 43-102.
30. Van Maanen et al., "Real Feelings," 64.
31. Van Maanen et al., "Real Feelings," 68-70.
32. Van Maanen et al., "Real Feelings," 65.
33. John Van Maanen, "Displacing Disney: Some Notes on the Flow of Culture," *Qualitative Sociology* 15, no 1 (1992): 5-35.
34. Van Maanen, "Displacing Disney," 22; Mitsuko Yoshimoto, "Images of Empire: Tokyo Disneyland and Japanese Cultural Imperialism," in *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*, ed. Eric Smoodin (New York: Routledge, 1994), 197.
35. Van Maanen, "Displacing Disney," 22.
36. Yoshimoto, "Images of Empire: Tokyo Disneyland and Japanese Cultural Imperialism," 197. E.A. Raz gives a similar account of 'selective hybridity' in the area of organizational culture at Tokyo Disneyland. As Raz notes: "The process of hybridization consisted of selective insertion — namely, incorporation as well as rejection — yet no practice or ideology were actually invented for that purpose. Moreover, the 'American' and the 'Japanese' were combined in TDL [Tokyo Disneyland] in a manner that maintained their boundaries. The Disney Way [an in-house training program directly imported from the American parks] became the hallmark of part-timers and

front-line employees, while the socialization of regular workers destined for promotion remained typically Japanese." Aviad E. Raz, "The Hybridization of Organizational Culture in Tokyo Disneyland" 5, "o 2 (1999): 258-59.

37. Van Maanen, "The Smile Factory," 59.

38. Richard E. Foglesong, *Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 71.

39. Foglesong, *Married to the Mouse*, 124.

40. Alan Bryman, *The Disneyization of Society* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 159.

41. Bryman, *The Disneyization of Society*, 5.

42. Bryman, *Disney and his Worlds*, 159.

43. Bryman, *The Disneyization of Society*, 79.

44. Bryman, *The Disneyization of Society*, 12.

45. Eric Smoodin, "How to Read Walt Disney," in *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*, ed. Eric Smoodin (New York: Routledge, 1994), 3.

46. Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1976).

## ABSTRACTS

Long held as the province of capitalist domination, the Disney parks have recently seen other trends of analysis emerge, providing renewed emphasis on user activity and the parks' competitive environment. In this article, we identify three trends of research toward the Disney theme parks, with the 'locus of control' for the parks' meaning, design, and operations placed successively within the Disney-controlled environment of the park, within the user, and, lastly, within the park's wider socio-economic context.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** Disneyland, Walt Disney Company, theme parks, popular culture, reception

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