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**Canada**

**a tourist's guide to hyperreality**

**Destination: Disney**

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**School of Architecture, McGill University, Montreal**

**April 1995**

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of the degree of Master of Architecture**

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## Abstract

This thesis chronicles an attempt to delve into the murky world of image and semblance, illusion and contrivance. The examination and especially the celebration of image and style--of simulation--throughout recent cultural debate is incisively expressed through the framework of popular culture. Walt Disney World, as a cultural artifact and profit-making commodity, is the consummate model of all the entangled processes of popular culture: a turbulent mélange of aesthetic, ethical, and sociological concerns.

America *is* Disney World; borne of fantasy and ubiquitous iconism. Our cultural atlas reverberates with the energy of cinematic, pulsating and seductive imagery; restrained and unfulfilled by the voyeuristic stance of the pseudo-event.

This study registers a pilgrimage into the shadows of our own creative aspirations: how can we engage in exploring new possibilities for architectural making, addressing imaginatively and ethically the rupture of the fabric symbolically connecting the actor and the drama?

Cette thèse est un compte rendu d'une tentative de pénétrer dans le monde obscur d'image et d'apparence, d'illusion et d'invention. L'examen dans le débat culturel récent, et notamment la célébration de l'image, du style, de la simulation, est exprimé de manière incisive dans la culture populaire. Walt Disney World, en tant qu'indice culturel et marchandise rentable, est la modèle par excellence de tous les processus enchevêtrés de la culture populaire: un mélange turbulent de préoccupations esthétiques, éthiques et sociologiques.

L'Amérique, c'est Disney World, née de la fantaisie et de l'icônisme universel. L'atlas de notre culture résonne de l'énergie vibrante des images cinématiques séduisantes, retenue et inassouvie par la posture voyeuristique de pseudo-événement.

Cette étude décrit un pèlerinage dans les ombres de nos propres aspirations créatrices. Comment pouvons-nous entreprendre d'explorer de nouvelles possibilités d'innovation architecturale, abordant de manière imaginative et éthique la rupture du tissu reliant symboliquement l'acteur et la drame?

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to acknowledge the contributions of Dr. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, who's steadfast energy and insight during this long journey was matched only by his quiet patience and constant support.

I would like to thank all the people with whom I have discussed and argued ideas raised in this paper, but especially my colleagues and friends, Bram David Ratner and Don Gulay, who helped with essential critical discussion on many aspects of this project, and who offered encouragement throughout. I have also appreciated the valuable computer assistance provided by Kimberly Murray.

I am grateful to the Walt Disney Company for their generosity in facilitating research for this thesis at the Magic Kingdom, Epcot Centre and the Disney-MGM Studios Themepark at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. A debt of gratitude is owed to Nicholas Oldsberg of the Canadian Centre for Architecture for graciously making the introductions possible.

...and to the genuine teachers in my life, who, like my grandfather, believed in me and dared me to do the same.

For

**John Charles Gleadall**

.....

**my grandpa, my hero, my friend**

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*Sometimes it suits me better to invent  
A tale from my own heart, more near akin  
To my own passions and habitual thoughts;  
Some variegated story, in the main  
Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts  
Before the very sun that brightens it,  
Mist into air dissolving! Then a wish,  
My last and favourite aspiration, mounts  
With yearning toward some philosophic song  
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;  
With meditations passionate from deep  
Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse  
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre*

(1.221-33) William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*



*The lyre of Orpheus  
opens the door of the  
underworld."*

E.T.A. Hoffmann



*The bent and broken moon,  
Battered and black, as from a  
thousand battles,  
Hangs silent on the purple walls  
of Heaven.*

Joaquin Miller

# blue moon

The beautiful savage emerged from Poseidon's crashing sea and swam ashore; all divine and regal power, all rippling virile urge. From the aqueous depths rose Poseidon's favoured gift to another King, Minos. Sharp was his pleasure and his conceit with the magnificent bull that Minos conspired to offer deceit. Instead of the honoured sacrifice to Poseidon that King had pledged to make, in cunning stealth and darkness he offered another in this bull's place. Hot with anger at this betrayal, Poseidon, in vengeance, conjured up a savage maelstrom to reprise the wretched king.

(In this land the celestial powers of physical transformation and metamorphosis were manifest, for the borders between the divine and mortal spheres of life there were nebulous.) Queen Pasiphaë was thus drawn into the drama, and through Poseidon's mighty power the bull became the object of her lustful desire.

Daedalus, the *artificer*, happened at that time to be in the service of the King, and was commissioned by the Queen, (unknownst to the King), to build for her a *daidalon*, a cow fashioned from wood and covered with copper and hide; moveable, with rolling wheels, and possessing eyes; scintillating and alluring, and capable of enormous deception. The duplicitous cow, with the seductress concealed within, was drawn to the meadow where the bull would be found to graze, and there, beneath the milky moon, the daughter of Perseis, the moon-goddess betrayed her king with the beast.

The god-beast Minotaur, conceived through the union of Pasiphaë's guilty and consuming passion for Poseidon's bull, was the curse of a dark and dreadful scandal, a monstrous hybrid to be banished forever to the centre of the night. The labyrinthian excavation created by Daedalus under the palace was a complexity of cloisters, courts, blind alleys and mazes - the halls of his dungeon a subterranean nautilus, near to the entrance to the Underworld, and fashioned to cage the monster, himself a prisoner of circumstance.]

The myth of Daedalus and the episode of the wooden cow is taken as point of departure: it stands as inspiration and *arché*.<sup>2</sup> Myth holds the mysteries of humanity and the cosmos as poetry, revealed to the poet through an act of discovery (*poiesis*), and expressed through the ethereal and often tenuous balance in the relationship between art and technique. This poetry has a liberating magic, bespeaking a sense of wonder at the human imagination and its inspirations, transcending all rational logic and time. Myth is archetypal storytelling, holding counsel "less as an answer to a question (or problem) than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story which is just unfolding. To seek this counsel one would first have to be able to tell the story. (Quite apart from the fact that a man is receptive to counsel only to the extent that he allows his situation to speak.) Counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom."<sup>3</sup>

The archetypal artist is revered as diviner as well as illusionist, as one who quests for truths which may be attained only through means exceeding one's ordinary capacity. Encountering difficult choices throughout the pursuit, the artist venturer must confront his own aspirations first, coming to terms with himself foremost, and affirming the character of the role he will play through his participation in the ways of nature. What the venturer must perpetually search for is the 'experience' of life in its fullest; not the meaning of life (in terms of rational understanding) but the struggle to realize his spiritual potential--what he seeks is universal: we all endeavor to experience the '*rapture*' of life.<sup>4</sup>

The questions provoked by the myth are universal and timeless. The lessons regarding the relationships between ethics, accountability, responsibility, and the creative imagination are especially relevant to discussions of contemporary architecture. Divorcing ourselves from the orders and the rhythms of the cosmos, we attune our lives more and more to abstract systems and the orders of electronic proportions and motions. Forgetting our inherent place within the universe, we find ourselves, like Daedalus, vulnerable to the tragic fault of self-confidence and the disaster it can bring.

The legend is a testament to Daedalus' demiurgical prowess, and his ability, through his *metis*, to transcend the borders between divine and mortal life. It is also expressive of the dangers inherent in this creative power in the absence of any guiding ethical principles, and the risk of the subversion of this magnificent potential for negative or unnatural purposes.<sup>5</sup>

At the core of this struggle is an ethical exploration into the fine line the poet-artist walks in exercising his creative potential, and this everpresent danger of breaching the natural orders of the world. Genuine creativity and the possibility for the revelation of truth may demand that the limits of those orders be pushed, perhaps challenged, and, although truth may be obtained "by a violent rupture of the barriers that separate man from the gods,"<sup>6</sup> the artist venturer must accept responsibility "not only for the good of the work to be done, but as a man he must concern himself with the purposes that his work will serve."<sup>7</sup>

The work of art is *something other than labour*, the personal and symbolic quality of the exchange preventing the distinguishing of production and consumption as two separate functions.<sup>8</sup> The relation of the artist to his work is not one of *productive force*, since "neither the product, nor the instrument, nor the operation itself can be dissociated from the personal relationship in which they occur."<sup>9</sup> The artist *lives* his work as a relationship of symbolic exchange. A play of ambivalence, through the loss of finality of the subject and object occurs, which is not possible in the products of labour, since they are irreversibly inscribed with the finality of value.<sup>10</sup> The fundamental structure of this praxis is thereby an activity of *use*, of symbolic exchange which does not connote use-value. Playing and acting (as distinguished from *poesis* which designates fabrication), without the emergence of *productivity*, praxis addresses the problems of the best use of things, not their transformation through labour.<sup>11</sup> "From the perspective of use-value, the product is not viewed as a function of the human labour that created it, as crystallized labour. On the contrary, it is a labour that is seen as a function of the product, as appropriate for the satisfaction of a given need of the user."<sup>12</sup>



The *mêtis* of ancient Greek society operated on every cultural level, encompassing a whole range of practical intelligence, especially as manifested in the skills of the craftsman. It was a particular form of intelligence, referring to a specific way of knowing, of thought: a wiley, adaptable, and mutable cunning that implied flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, and various skills.<sup>13</sup>

Mêtis was a type of cognition outside the realm of 'truth' and separate from *epistémé*--knowledge--something nebulous, shadowy, and more akin to intuition, yet synthesized with a mathematical knowledge culled from the artisan's skills with measuring instruments. As a concept, *mêtis* was never clearly revealed or defined, and functioned just below the surface, concealed and immersed in its own operations, conspicuous by its inherently intangible, invisible nature.

The being (god or man) endowed with this magical and demiurgical *technical* power, engaged actively in response to ambiguous and disconcerting discord in the natural harmonies and orders of the world, applying it to situations unamenable to resolution by the rigorous application of mathematical calculation, measurement or logic. The dynamic of this propitiatory action involved a continuous and reciprocating struggle between the liberated, unstable forces of these obstacles and the transfigurative, adaptable cunning of the demiourge, who attempts to achieve reconciliation of these orders by cunningly confronting the foe in the guise of a rival, employing any tactic or stratagem he can imagine.<sup>14</sup>

Empowered with this ambiguous capability of manipulating the natural orders, often perilously, the demiourge created marvelously seductive objects and effects. These were dangerous deceptions and illusions, inspiring fear, admiration and desire, all at the level of *appearance*. It was at this level; symbolic, allegorical, and always reciprocating, that the mythical struggle and reconciliation occurred.<sup>15</sup>



The term *daidala* is indicative of a wide range of these *objects of art*; of wonder, awe and charisma. Invested with a value endowed through the hallowed synthesis of honoured materials and special techniques, these objects became 'animated' *thaumata*, reproducing *life*, with a dynamic and enigmatic power of seduction.<sup>16</sup>

"The artist knows his links upward--channels, however inaccessible and personally demanding, by which he may seek and receive miracles of understanding and accomplishment. Does he also know his links downwards, the disciplines of awareness and transmutation by which even his bestial nature may contribute energies for the elaboration of works of art?"<sup>17</sup>

Symbolic of the potentially savage might of Daedalus' demiurgical powers, the Minotaur "plays on a double theme of violence and truth, light and darkness, menace and hope."<sup>18</sup> The artist/hero, leaving the realm of light toward the threshold of darkness, must confront his inner demons, using everything he discovers within himself to face the challenge. A complex and ethereal interplay, the figure of the Minotaur represents the antithesis of artistic revelation and concealment, the essence of his truths, forever trapped in the eternal oscillation between secrecy and knowledge.

It is in an honest and expressive revealing of something of his own inner secrets and truths that the artist/hero leaves himself most vulnerable, and yet, simultaneously expresses most vividly that which is most authentic and universal in his poetry.

We aspire to understand the *areté* of our archetypal hero/artist; to recognize and acknowledge what is noble and ideal in his character, in relation to the good it can fulfill or actualize out of its unique potential.

Involving himself in the conspiracy to betray Minos, we encounter and must recognize in Daedalus as artist, along with his virtue, a perpetual proximity to the more base, carnal, and sensual aspects of the creative imagination, often the artist's most potent creative inspiration and fuel.



Daedalus' role in the plot can be read as not merely a matter of "cool, technical interest, but as representative of the unchecked plunge of the artist into eroticism. The Artist-nature, searching for universal powers in order to both represent them in works of art and to have their energies at its disposal for creative work, in time encounters the full impact of sexuality. The outcome of this encounter is crucial and may take many forms. Dealing always with form, and if form then why not deeply arousing form, the artist is more likely than most to become a pander and voyeur; pander because he may so easily offer the erotic, voyeur because he drinks deeply of it, studies its ways in order to offer it in intensified forms to a ready public." 19.

The duality of the labyrinth, that mysterious vault, exists in holding the secrets of Daedalus' psyche and, while a treasure cache for creative inspiration, it also imprisons in the artist his greatest fears. The figure of the labyrinth is of both psychological and spiritual emblem as well as material archetype and symbol of order encompassing chaos. The labyrinthine path is better seen as a metaphor for, and *mimesis* of, the circuitous, often difficult processes of life and the quest for knowledge than as some material imitation of manifest form of this mythical marvel, as given in literal representations and the often empty formalism of the garden hedge-maze. The sublime qualities of the labyrinth are more provocatively honoured and remembered as "older, magical levels of consciousness" 20 that were "kept alive by the figure of the labyrinth, the ritual of dancing, the ritual of the way, the ritual of city founding". 21

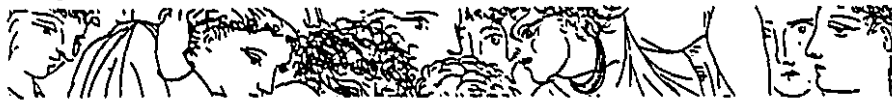
The story continued with the the daughter of the King and Queen, Ariadne("Very Holy Maiden"), having fallen in love with the doomed Theseus, next in a long line of sacrificial youth. On the advice of Daedalus, Ariadne gave to Theseus a sword and a ball of thread. Unravelling the thread as he made his way down through the labyrinth, Theseus slew the Minotaur, escaped out through the tunnels to his beloved princess, and fled Crete, taking Ariadne with him.



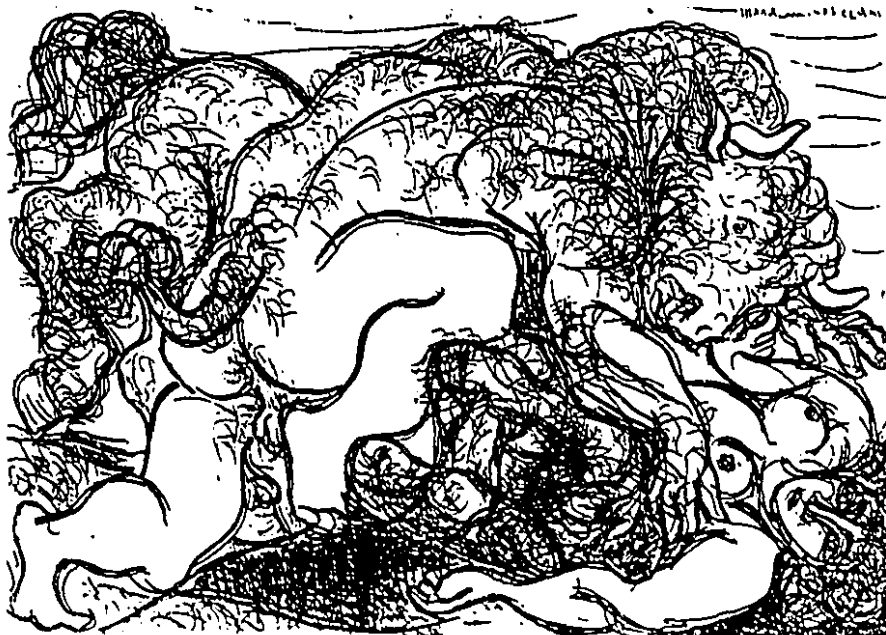
The labyrinth holds, "in symbolic form, the transformation of life through death, and...thus, the intentionally artificial structure of the maze preserves the memory of a dark and threatening natural force which may only be averted in ceremonial reconstruction."<sup>22</sup>

Recalling the mazes marked out in mosaic tiling and ritual dancing patterns, a labyrinth such as was mythically constructed by Daedalus in Ariadne's honour, was a *mimetic* place of *ceremony*, celebration, and later festivity.

The circle of fate, of creative metamorphosis and the transformation of life, has been fulfilled through the myth, for King Minos himself was the product of a beautiful love. Minos had himself been created by the union between the sky-god Zeus, having assumed the form of a magnificent white bull, and the princess Europa, who fed him the delicate blossoms of flowers, climbed upon his back and was borne away into the sea.



It is the work of life to build a maze and also to unlock its secrets. Myth offers a reaffirmation of the ever-presentness of our existence in the world, an attempt to comprehend life in all its oscillations. The value man places on order is expressed through ritual, and the labyrinth suggests "subtleties of meaning and complexities of form--engulfing the spectator or reader and taking him completely in its charge...not by magic, but by considered calculation and design".<sup>23</sup>





## Notes

- 1 This interpretation of the episode of the wooden cow in the myth of Daedalus is the result of research culled from these several renditions of the legend:  
Michael Grant, *Myths of the Greeks and Romans*, (New York: New American Library, 1962), pp. 385-392.  
Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "The Architect's Métier", (*Section A*, vol. 2, no. 5/6, Montreal, 1985).  
Meyer Reinhold, *Past and Present: The Continuity of Classical Myths*, (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972), pp. 173-181.  
Michael Senior, *Greece and Its Myths*, (London: Gollancz, 1978), pp. 250-254.
- 2 My original fascination with the significance of the myth of Daedalus owes much to my reading of "The Architect's Metier, An Exploration into the Myth of Dedalus", by Alberto Pérez-Gómez.
- 3 Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller", *Illuminations*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).
- 4 Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers, "The Hero's Adventure", *The Power of Myth*, (New York: Doubleday, 1988).
- 5 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "The Architect's Métier".
- 6 Roger Lipsey, *Daedalus*, (Dharwad: Institute of Indian Art History, Karnatak University, 1980), p. 55.
- 7 *ibid.*, p. 59.
- 8 Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Telos Press, 1975), p. 98.
- 9 *ibid.*, p. 98.
- 10 *ibid.*, p. 99.
- 11 *ibid.*, p. 101.
- 12 Jean-Pierre Vernant, and Marcel Detienne, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978).
- 13 *ibid.*
- 14 Jean -Pierre Vernant, and Marcel Detienne, *Myth and Thought in Greek Society*, and Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "The Architect's Metier".
- 15 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "The Architect's Metier".
- 16 *ibid.*
- 17 Roger Lipsey, *Daedalus*, p. 56.
- 18 Michael Grant, *Myths of the Greeks and Romans*, p. 389.
- 19 Roger Lipsey, *Daedalus*, p. 62.
- 20 Norbert Miller, "Editorial", *Daidalos*, Berlin, May, 1982.
- 21 *ibid.*
- 22 *ibid.*
- 23 Roger Lipsey, *Daedalus*, p. 68.

*"the world is darkening. The essential episodes of this darkening are: the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the standardization of man, the preeminence of the mediocre."*

The Body's Recollection of Being.  
David-Michael Levin

# postcards

Imagination has always been identified with the knowledge of opposites and the loss of innocence. The Fall of Man was a fall from the *Grace* of rapturous life in the Garden of Eden, and into historical consciousness. The birth of time shattered the harmony of paradise. Burdened with the eternal conflict of his transgression, man was forever marked by the knowledge of his own human mortality, now in disaccord with divine eternity. Banished to an ambivalent world beyond the original garden's gates, outcast man was 'freed' to find his own path of life, to *imagine* possibility, virtuous or evil.

The ethical condition of techné was therefore ambiguous from the very beginning of time. Of the burdens of mortal life, the sin of pride is man's most dangerous arrogance. When Prometheus of Greek mythology stole from the gods and gave to man the gift of fire, he forever tarnished imagination with the stigma of theft, the origin of all of the art of mankind. Instilled with an everlasting quest to invent a world of his own making, man sought to rival the creations of the divine gods. Fabricating images and artifacts and ordering them into *culture*, man also was tempted into erecting images of the gods, and *imagining* himself an omniscient god. |

Far from the vibrant and dynamic *physis* of the universe of ancient Greek civilization, the Enlightenment relinquished all faith in transcendental beings or deities. Marking a radical transformation in world view, Humanism also represented a dramatic shift in the ethical condition of techné. The great 'triumph' of Humanism was man's *productive* self-image as God's replacement as the primary source of meaning in the world. In banishing the gods, human knowledge and reason were held capable of establishing their own foundations. The imagination, once vital in reaffirming the orders and harmonies of the universe, could no longer be assured of a meaningful reconciliatory, revelatory or symbolic role. Nature became taken as merely inanimate matter to be dominated and harnessed, in service of man's material goals. This *instrumental* outlook formed the very foundations of our modern model of production. The immanence of human '*being*' was absolute.

The epistemological conflict of the Enlightenment, between the rival claims of reason and experience, questioned religious dogma and social philosophy as the forms in which values were held. Belief in the idea of transcendent order made way for the "rational" (mathematical) order of Cartesian science, expressing a confidence in knowledge and the immanence of human reason. Although the image was released from its captive role as an intermediary sign for some onto-theological and original source of meaning, it was still bound to the mimetic paradigm (as an unreliable copy). The humanist model in which God had been replaced by man as the source of meaning and value, was secularized through modern technology and the natural sciences until the modern notion of 'subjectivity' recognized the human imagination as capable of dynamic and 'productive' creative activity--a synthesis of sensibility and understanding capable of creating a world of original value and truth. The traditions of positivistic-scientific construction, from Kantian 'production' as a projection of human subjectivity through to man's self-deification, trace the rise of technology and the many implications of our role as technological makers. Inherent in man's self-understanding as a technological maker is *production*, which is by its very nature direction and goal-oriented. The transformation of man's relationship with *making* as something crucial, ontologically, to our very being, results in the modern human condition which is given in the tension between the present (informed by the past as a ground) and our future-orientation: this is our framework.

The radical dissolution of dogmatic foundations ushered in an era in which certainty and utopic vision were replaced with a myriad of secularized values. Released from ethical and epistemological constraints, the creative imagination, as an expression of human will and *desire*, was free to perpetuate the illusions of the absolute order of technology, the Panglossian 'best of all possible worlds' of industry and late capitalist consumerism. Humanism's optimism for the creative power of man to fashion truth, not merely to represent it, was quickly disenchanted by the harsh confrontation with "the increasingly disabling realities of modern existence--the crushed political revolutions, the industrial devastation of nature, the

bureaucratization and mechanization of society promoted by market and monopoly capitalism".<sup>2</sup> The resulting ecological and social malaise effected an erosion of the modern conviction of trust in the productive power of technology as a redemptive and revelatory tool of society. The machinations of technology were exposed as the undiscerning servants of private interest and the modern political perspective on the value of ordering and changing the world, which are essentially about knowledge and power--a technopolitical attitude clearly of domination and not of reconciliation.

This juncture of human experience heralded a turning point in the role of the creative imagination. Only through denial, through negating history and retreating into a private and imaginary world, did it seem possible for the creative human imagination to endure. This disengagement from the corporeal world essentially freed imagination from the imitation of reality, as well as from any abiding responsibility to its incessant transformation. The bargain for this freedom, however, which stems from our condition of alienation within the given order of things, our *crisis of identity*, compels us to build a world for ourselves in the imagination, and has been the enduring ethical task of warding off the dangers of solipsistic thought and action.

Central to discussions of social and conceptual crisis has been the thesis that the powers of reference in symbol and language are in serious decline (if they ever were anything more than illusory). When Husserl proposed a science of the Lebenswelt (our pre-conceptual experience of the life-world) which would restore the pre-scientific experience of the world as the ground of natural and mathematical knowledge, this was his concern.

In existentialism, the crisis of collective faith - universal doubt - was already an important theme. "The sense of the arbitrary as a decisive new dimension of social life was summed up in the concept of the absurd, and situated historically in the suggestion that God had died sometime in the nineteenth century."<sup>3</sup> This collapse of values signalled a collapse not only of religious faith, of ideals, but a faith in intelligibility itself, in *ideas*. The guarantee for an intelligible world,

as well as for stable identities, including the self, has disappeared with God.<sup>4</sup>

The aesthetic possibilities of randomly juxtaposing ordinary, everyday objects, and stripping them of their utilitarian dimension was the fascination of the Surrealists, who believed that relations in meaning were arbitrary (not necessary or intentional), and questioned their grounding in human activity. In the extreme, this emphasis on the coincidental in correspondence suggests a world completely devoid of human intentionality - a mere and random collection of 'things', of empty objects.

Paradoxically unable to transform *reality*, the productive imagination could continue only to form *images*.<sup>5</sup>

*It is as though the critical distance has finally diminished to zero, such that neither the form nor the content being able to substantiate each other any more, the whole apparatus rises into the ether like one great bubble of nothingness.*<sup>6</sup>

The domain of transcendence--of religion and art, of ethics and aesthetics--displaced from the primacy of the cultural world, was banished to the distant arenas of 'theory' and intellectual discourse; no longer was there any faith in their abilities as tools for the revelation of truth and order in the world. Mankind has experienced a *crisis of faith*.

Without definitive distinctions between true and false; the real and the imaginary; the image and its referent; critique is not possible, since all value judgements depend upon reference of the image to an order of meaning outside of itself, an order that is either actual or that has a future possibility.

Contemporary philosophic discussions question our faith in both reason and theory. Rationality itself is questioned as a 'truthful' representation because it is based on **values**, and its intention is toward a rational **end**. The original project of 'theory' was an attempt to symbolize humanity through the connections between knowledge and the interests of the culture; the human interests of a culture being

the ground from which knowledge stems. This 'theory' is a thinking which is a seeing, and its stage is the split between the theatre and the spectator.<sup>7</sup> This theoretical separation was to allow theory to 'step out' (be disinterested) in the Western tradition of the **enframing theory**, in order to have access to true knowledge.

The status of scientific, mathematical reason as holding the authority to convey truth is in question. "The analysis of analysis has revealed that logic could not do what reason had claimed for it - reveal the self-evident truth of its origins."<sup>8</sup> Faith is required for what is relied upon as the basis of truth; analysis a form of simulation fulfilling a need for verification (through restatement and reduplication) that became necessary once analysis and reason had replaced self-evidence as the means by which truth was revealed.<sup>9</sup> The *rational* discourse of truth now seems impossible. In a world of simulation; of hyperreality; of serial reproduction and replication, truth cannot exist: truth is not visible, obvious or apparent. It cannot be confronted. The absolute stance of "Truth" constitutes a position that our world of hyperreality cannot support. The infrastructure of theory--symbolic order (with subject and discourse)--has been dismantled. Without the tension and oppositional structure of critical distance there is no longer a question of transcendence, of cause and effect, of conflict and reconciliation, or the revelation of *essence*. This does not constitute any irony of the subject faced with an objective order, but the 'objective irony of things trapped within their own machinery'.<sup>10</sup>

Technique, once a 'productive force,' has evidently transposed the dynamics of production. The concept of an 'authentic' original with a unique 'aura' has been replaced by the multiplicity of the 'series' through technical reproduction. The symbols of humanist imagery, commanding a unique 'aura' which Benjamin described as the emanation of a unique depth and presence, humanized the 'thing' and engaged the viewer in an ambivalent and reciprocal relationship with the work that provided the work with autonomy. [ ]

An obligation existed at the symbolic level, which bound the subject and the object inextricably together in a complex play that bore witness to a kind of reciprocal transformation.<sup>12</sup> Our world of production--of reproduction and replication, has eliminated this ambivalence. Seriographic technique has eliminated the 'aura' of the original. The 'work' has been reduced to surface, mechanically reproducible and transparent, without depth or presence. The phenomenon of the *artist*, with a unique personality and an innovative imagination, *making* an autonomous, singular and engaging creation vanishes into the anonymous reproductive dynamics of technique. The concept of the original, and with it the idea of origin, has been largely negated in postmodern philosophy.<sup>13</sup> The image, no longer constrained by responsibility to some pre-existing maxim, even the '*truth*' of technology, stands as a series of reproductions avowing no order or original beyond the apparent (the relationship between things and themselves). This *liberation* of the image presents us with a return to the mimetic model in the form of an inversion, a self-parody,<sup>14</sup> which reduces imagination to the imitative, reproductive servant of meaning through which ambiguous images are ends in themselves, objects raised to apothecotic status.

"No more resemblance or lack of resemblance, of God, or human being, but an imminent logic of the operational principle."<sup>15</sup> (Re)production becomes the rule: technique becomes the origin of the sign. Resemblance, no longer connected to the 'other'--no longer the difference between one subject and another--is reduced to an internal, indefinite differentiating of the same. The real can be reproduced any indefinite number of times; it no longer has to be rational, since it is no longer measured against some ideal or negative instance. It is reduced to operation, no longer surrounded by an imaginary, and no longer real--it is the hyperreal, no longer a mirror of being and appearances of the real and its concept.<sup>16</sup>



*Very quickly the work turns back on itself as the manipulation of the signs of Art: It is then that art enters into its indefinite reproduction: all that reduplicates itself, even if it be the everyday and banal reality, falls by the token under the sign of art, and becomes esthetic. Its the same thing for production, which you could say is entering this esthetic reduplication, this phase when, expelling all content and finality, it becomes somehow abstract and non-figurative. It expresses then the pure form of production, it takes upon itself, as art, the value of a finality without purpose. Art and industry can then exchange their signs. Art can become a reproducing machine (Andy Warhol, eg.), without ceasing to be art, since the machine is only a sign. And so, art is everywhere, since art is at the very heart of reality. And so, art is dead, not only because its critical transcendence is gone, but because reality itself, entirely impregnated by an aesthetic which is inseparable from its own structure, has been confused with its own image. Reality no longer has the time to take on the appearance of reality. It no longer surpasses fiction: it captures every dream even before it takes on the appearance of a dream". 17*

This is the '*crisis of representation*',<sup>18</sup> for what has always been at issue for the image has been the capacity for representations to act as visible and intelligible mediations of the 'Real'. The work of art has always thrived on the detectable gap between semblance and reality. This loss of 'aura' is implicit in the principle of mechanical production and the way in which serial production has destroyed the *presence* of the object and its symbolic reference.<sup>19</sup> "The medium is the message,"<sup>20</sup> still quoted as maxim, has been superseded through the rapid and dramatic exploration of possible new dimensions of meaning surrounding the object. Technique, understood not as 'productive force' but as medium (form and principle) has fully dominated the message of the product.<sup>21</sup> Art, having passed entirely through the realm of the mechanical has disappeared into the medium itself, which imposes itself in pure circulation, dissolving all it affects into the singular dimension of information. The entire process of meaning is then reduced to the "ability to produce contrasting reactions to a growing series of adequate stimuli" - *simulation*.<sup>22</sup> The medium has '*finally*' been divested of its affinity with its message which, no longer essentially tied to the subject or the image, is dispersed elusively into the pulsating energies and

rhythmic currents of capricious and self-referential play, passing from one form to another.<sup>23</sup>

The *crisis of identity, the crisis of faith, and the crisis of representation*, which imply the end of ideology and of art, also deny the existence of any ethical or moral opposition: the status of the individual as a separate self from the 'other'; the distinctions between truth and fiction; or the distinctions between the real and the imaginary. While we must acknowledge the collapse of the absolute, and of a universal transcendental (order) ground, it is difficult to submit to a surrender of human creative action and imagination as possible only in the realm of an ethical nihilism, or as completely devoid of any meaning beyond the abstractions of 'rational' intellectual exercise. The modern, and relatively recent interpretation of action, creation - of *praxis* - as ethically neutral or separate from *theory* /philosophy and ethics is symptomatic of the many dilemmas of contemporary society. Ethics, defined as a philosophy or system of human conduct or morals, has a tenuous, if any, bearing or value-link in contemporary vocabulary to definitions of the verbs; to make, to create, or, to act. This can be paralleled in the split or separation (by contemporary definition) of theory and praxis. Praxis; defined as the practical, the practice of, is distinguished from the theoretical; a speculative or conjectural view of something, a plan or scheme existing in the mind only. The modern framework of technology, even in the absence of a universal transcendental ground cannot be viewed as value-neutral.

Man has always been compelled to transform his world, to make--to fabricate. This perpetual quest to know himself and understand his position in and relationship to the world, in order to validate his own existence, provides a release and affords a sense of reciprocity with the world. Man is compelled by an innate "artistic urge, not simply to copy, but to originate, to interpret, to mold."<sup>24</sup>

For Heidegger, man is first and foremost a maker, *Homo faber*, even before he is *Homo sapiens*. Cast into a world not of his making but to which he senses a deep dependence and entanglement, man finds himself surrounded with materials, tools and opportunity for his creative energy. Heidegger describes man's essential condition as 'being-in-the-world' (in-der-Weltleben) and his existence (Dasein) as simply possibility or potentiality. He has no pre-existing 'nature' of essence, but is only what he becomes through the summary of his complete personal projection in and of the world. Man experiences a tragic sense of his own original mortality within the profound mysteries of the 'metamorphosis' of 'life which emanates from a consciousness of his natural discord with the nature of the world he inhabits and the physicality of his own being. It is through this non-coincidence that man experiences the necessary critical distance for reflection, vision, articulation and the creative act.<sup>25</sup> "When he exerts his freedom in creation and self-assertion, recognizing at the same time that he has been cast into the world, and that all values depend on him for their being--then he is resolved to face and overcome his existential dread - he lives 'authentically.'"<sup>26</sup>

*Art does not exist for truth, but for truthfulness; its raison d' être is what it shows "about how the existent feels and imagines existence itself, apart from any and all projects initiated to carry out a life"..<sup>27</sup>*

The work of art is by its very nature privileged as the locus of truth and being, and is distinguished from the 'mere thing' and from the 'useful object' (equipment) in Heidegger's essay on "The Origin of the Work of Art".<sup>28</sup> Always physical in its medium, the work is manifested as art through the poetry of its revealing materiality, while simultaneously disclosing and illuminating symbolic meanings

and responses of the culture. Though a unity is composed within the work, this "setting forth of the earth" and "setting up of a world" are held in constant tension with each other -- "The repose of the work that rests in itself thus has its essence in the intimacy of strife."<sup>29</sup> It is in this strife that *truth* or *being*, in the Heideggerian sense of revelation or 'unconcealment' of what *is*, comes to be. The setting-into-work of truth by the embodied imagination, as expressed by the Greek term *aletheia*, is a truth which implies an unveiling while simultaneously acknowledging that part of itself which remains cloaked--the perpetual oscillation between revelation and concealment. (The truth of Heidegger's embodied imagination must be distinguished from the traditional and absolute truth of religion and science.)

All of the forms of art act as interpreters of reality, through intuition and not through concept. The observing, experiencing subject is granted absolute priority in phenomenology, with action recognized as an immediate constituent. The work of art contributes profoundly to man's realization of authenticity in his existence through a unique expression of the organization and construction of human experience.<sup>30</sup> The creative work of art is a struggle for (re)cognition, for understanding and self-understanding, and therefore, ultimately, an *ethical* act. It is an act of exploration and locating, both corporeal and metaphysical. The *work* of art is also a narrative act--narrative being defined as 'world-building.' It is therefore multi-dimensional, and the origins of these dimensions (building blocks) are not neutral. They carry the burden of proof, of history--orientation is inherent. They determine direction and affect symbolism. To the extent that it is itself 'authentic,' the work of art explores and examines the possibility of meaning or meaninglessness in our existence. These imaginative evocations are acutely expressive of how we see and understand ourselves, and ultimately play a significant role in the transformation of the world. Art validates existence, however meaningful or meaningless it may be, and through this validation, makes life itself tolerable by revealing

this intrinsic and universal potentiality (creativity) as intact, saving us from ultimate cynicism and nihilism.<sup>31</sup>

*Like all other symbolic forms art is not the mere reproduction of a ready-made, given reality. It is one of the ways leading to an objective view of things and of human life. It is not an imitation but a discovery of reality.* <sup>32</sup>

The dissolution of the opposition inherent in the infrastructure of symbolic order has effected the contemporary difficulty in distinguishing between *art* and the production of technological commodities which is at the heart of the modern crisis of art and architecture.

# geosyn chrono us orbits

The work of art is experienced as whole and complete, unique and original. To Ortega,<sup>33</sup> the ideal and not the material, was its only subject. Uplifting and reverent, art participates in a "kind of divine service to truth and beauty that is moral and spiritual in nature...an edifying force that raises man to the ideal."<sup>34</sup> The reproducible image is described, by contrast, as impersonal and fragmented, devoid of the humanizing aura of 'depth',<sup>35</sup> and lacking any of the critical distance essential to contemplation and reflection.

*While "art" refers inevitably to the world in which it is situated, and which it symbolically represents; technology, on the other hand, refers to its own experimental domain, which enables it to manipulate the world through instrumental representation."*<sup>36</sup>

The inventions of phenomenal standards of technological production, advanced and proliferated at a dizzying rate, have captured a place among the processes of art, creating new and fascinating hybrids that are difficult to categorize. The fusion of art and the mechanically reproduced innovations of technique has resulted in a multitude of exciting and unique forms of human creative expression, generally referred to as *popular culture*. The 'real', the worldly, and the sensual are the subjects of the processes of popular culture, which function not through simple imitation, but as a mode of exploration and discovery of reality. Struggling toward the understanding of certain aspects of the 'truth' of human contemporary 'being', yet bound by their material foundations, the processes and products of popular culture prevail, existing in the ambiguous abyss somewhere between the work of art and the mere 'thing'. Tied inextricably to the material world, the products of popular culture are based on the *material* foundations of other arts, and depend upon the signs of their media-materials for communicative power and the generation of

*desire*. Yet, through their captivating innovation and irreverent, imaginative, and dramatic excess, the products of popular culture have often become confused with art. Though their inherent attitudes and approaches may be different, certainly some art crosses over into the realm of popular culture, as some of the products of the processes of popular culture also cross over into the realm of art, blurring the essential distinctions between truth and fiction, art and entertainment.<sup>37</sup>

The criteria for evaluating the aesthetic experience cannot be directly equated with and applied to the popular culture experience, as they function within substantially different capacities. Looking at popular culture as simply a reductive and predictable system of material production is at best myopic.<sup>38</sup> Although a great number of the products of popular culture are as crass, mundane, and uninspired as its critics would contend, its processes are fascinating and provocative, occasionally resulting in genuine innovation and exceptional discoveries and compositions. Insightful and revealing, the examination and especially the celebration of image and style--of simulation--throughout recent cultural debate is incisively expressed through the framework and processes of popular culture. These entangled processes of popular culture are a turbulent *mélange* of aesthetic, ethical, and sociological concerns.

The post-modern paradox of the image is intensively considered through delving deeply *into* the mysteries and mechanics of our mediating consumerist framework, through which the image, indistinguishable and inseparable from reality, presents itself. Mediated, as all our transactions with objective reality are, by culturally conditioned patterns of interpretation and response,<sup>39</sup> popular culture analyzes and describes a culture which entralls man in the "materialist relativism that denies any ultimate authority".<sup>40</sup> In a world without any certainty regarding the possibility of universal meaning, popular culture probes and portrays what exists without making any claims to special knowledge or understanding of this condition or what it is. Popular culture encompasses the expression

and analysis of the *present*, claiming no abiding *historicist* ties--to a given history or the projection toward a possible future. In a world where it is said that none of the conditions for traditional art exist, perhaps popular culture *is* the art of our era.

Popular culture is also a significant cultural *process*, both aesthetic and sociological, which enacts tensions and conflicts with existing values and meanings in our cultural experience.

Engaging in the expression of genuine cultural attitudes and values, popular culture explores and examines the existing reality of a social and cultural context that is perceived as being deficient, while actively producing meaning and "gaining appeal when the status of the values transmitted and affirmed by it has become a problematic, contested domain."<sup>41</sup> The rendering of its substance as intelligible, familiar and meaningful <sup>42</sup> is accomplished by presentation in such a manner that the recipient is able to accomodate that meaning within his own social and cultural context. In this way, popular culture functions as a mode of affirmation of human experience, which is an important element in the motivation of action, the consideration of ethics, and of morality.

Thriving on "tentatively introducing and voicing a socially and culturally disruptive experience,"<sup>43</sup> popular culture presents a strategic move to eventually make sense of and 'socialize' this tension, and thereby gain reassurance for everyday life by reintegrating this tension within the existing interpretations of reality.<sup>44</sup> Its basic structure is a sequence of disruption and reaffirmation,<sup>45</sup> through its foundation in the basic act of semantic recognition--ritual and readability--thereby functioning as a symbolic system. The semantic linkage relied upon for the existence and appreciation of its products is reinforced and foregrounded, but alternately, challenged. It is this challenge or initial break-down in meaning and association (resolved only in the closing phase), provoking a certain required amount of genuine anxiety and disturbance, which initiates emotional engagement. Formula and stereotyping are used as tools in the popular culture process precisely



because existing patterns of perception are to be *challenged*, but not to be completely ruptured.

The participating and interpreting individual brings to the media a defining and ordering principle of experience involving himself in a system of repeatable structure and its expressive symbols. This form of *ritual* involvement (conventionalized, strategic and interpersonal acts of daily exchange in contemporary society)<sup>46</sup> acts to "recompose, resolve or explain a disjunction, an asymmetry, an unknown, through symbolic action."<sup>47</sup> Modelled on the concept of a collective voice, the audience is composed of a diverse group of individuals whose feelings of commonality and unity are demonstrated and stimulated by this symbolic action.<sup>48</sup> The semantic recognition the participant absorbs is experienced as a source of gratification, through a sense of recognition and reassurance and a familiarity with both the rules and patterns of the 'game', as well as the outcome. Through the dynamics of this participant-spectator *play*, we experience an 'extension of reality' which is presented to us in the form of sensory imagery, which, through the dynamic of distancing, allows us to enjoy our experience of participation in the objectifying and externalizing of our fears, desire, and inner conflicts without any 'real' danger or consequences.<sup>49</sup> The many forms of popular culture, through the act of play, function by re-enacting the real or received constraints of the social and public order, in a recomposing operation in which the participant is allowed considerable freedom.<sup>50</sup>

The aesthetics of popular culture are also an aesthetics of reduction, as in the conceptual model of the 'collective voice', where aesthetics are reduced, and even sacrificed (conventionality, formula, and stereotypical identification) in favour of cultural representativeness.

Popular culture is patterned on a model of watching, rather than on a reciprocating model of 'talking'. This implied voyeuristic stance of the typical popular culture experience, can be characterized as an "aesthetics of separation"<sup>51</sup> since it is stimulated, both on a psychological and semantic level, by experiences of separation and

exclusion. This posture is voyeuristic because that which we are watching, we experience from the position of a separated and powerless onlooker. The participant, without direct possibility for responsive action, is a 'witness' to occurrences incongruous to a world supposedly ordered and under moral control.<sup>52</sup>

What is essential to an analysis of popular culture in terms of aesthetic effect, is the phenomenon of this gap or rupture in semantic linkage, and a focus on "the fate of signs that seem to have lost the security of their respective semantic fields and whose fate thus creates a deep anxiety about the validity of a construction of reality which still equates the stability of semantic linkage with moral order."<sup>53</sup> By its general emphasis and intrinsic enthusiasm, popular culture, with the willing collusion of its participants, supports and reinforces an order and stability that its recipients long to have reassurance of and 'faith' in. When this power is compelled to promote and perpetuate the illusions of an absolute order that it can not support, its art becomes tantamount to image making.

What results is more essentially an "*activity of stylization*",<sup>54</sup> through which objects are actively organized with activities and outlooks. Through this process of appropriation, of both items and activities, attendant signs or symbolic meanings are manipulated in order to create consensus regarding their style and function. Rituals of consumption and interaction then establish certain forms of popular culture as vehicles of expression and integration through their rendering as intelligible, familiar, and meaningful by the ingenious use of media materials by their purveyors. Considered as a series of dialogues or relationships between audiences and media materials, perhaps popular culture could be categorized as a form of discourse, particular to our era of late capital consumerism. The processes of *commodification* and *ritual consumption*, inherent in our consumerist framework, transform these stylized objects and activities into expressive forms of culture, often further translating them, into marketplace goods--*profit-making commodities*.<sup>55</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 36-42, 80-82.
- 2 *ibid.*, p. 185.
- 3 Charles Levin, *Shadow and Substance, A Study of Jean Baudrillard and the Collapse of Critical Theory*, (Montreal: McGill University, 1981), p. 40.
- 4 Paul Foss, "despero Ergo Sum", André Frankovitz, editor *Seduced and Abandoned: The Baudrillard Scene*, (New York: Stonemoss Services and Semiotext(e), 1984), p. 13.
- 5 Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, p. 185.
- 6 Foss, "despero Ergo Sum", p. 9.
- 7 Outlined by J. Habermas, in Appendix A: "A General Perspective", in *Knowledge and Human Interests*.
- 8 Peter Eisenmann, "The End of the Classical", *Perspecta*: 21-22, p. 161.
- 9 *ibid.*
- 10 Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, (New York: Semiotext(e), 1988), p. 74
- 11 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).
- 12 Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, (St. Louis, Missouri: Telos Press, 1975), pp. 96-101.
- 13 Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination*, p. 253.
- 14 *ibid.*, p. 255.
- 15 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (New York: Semiotext(e) Inc., 1983), p. 95.
- 16 *ibid.*, p. 3.
- 17 *ibid.*, p. 150-151.
- 18 Jean Baudrillard, *Forget Foucault*, (New York: Semiotext(e) Inc., 1987), p. 70.
- 19 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".
- 20 Marshall McLuhan, *The Medium is the Massage*, (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1967).
- 21 As understood first by Walter Benjamin and later, through Marshall McLuhan.
- 22 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, p. 123.
- 23 *ibid.*
- 24 Rudolph Arnheim, "Film and Reality", *Film as Art*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957).
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- 27 Arturo B. Fallico, *Art and Existentialism*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 87-88.
- 28 Martin Heidegger, "On the Origin of the Work of Art", *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1975).
- 29 *ibid.*
- 30 Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1953), p. 212.
- 31 Arturo B. Fallico, *Art and Existentialism*, pp. 71-88.

- 32 Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 183.
- 33 Jose Ortega y Gasset, "The Dehumanization of Art", *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1948).
- 34 Jim Ferreira, "Cultural Conservatism and Mass Culture: The Case Against Democracy", *Journal of American Culture*, vol. 13, 1990.
- 35 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".
- 36 Dalibor Vesely, "Architecture and the Conflict of Representation", *AA Files*, v. 8, 1985.
- 37 Harold Mendelsohn, *Mass Entertainment*, (New Haven, Connecticut: College and University Press, 1966), pp. 137-156.
- 38 Martin Laba, "Making Sense: Expressiveness, Stylization and the Popular Culture Process", *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 19:4, 1986.
- 39 John Pastier, "The Architecture of Escapism", *AIA Journal*, December 1978.
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- 41 Winnifred Fluck, "Popular Culture as a Mode of Socialization: A Theory about the Social Functions of Popular Culture Forms", *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 21:3, 1987.
- 42 Martin Laba, "Making Sense: Expressiveness, Stylization and the Popular Culture Process".
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- 44 Martin Laba, "Making Sense: Expressiveness, Stylization and the Popular Culture Process".
- 45 Winnifred Fluck, "Popular Culture as a Mode of Socialization: A Theory about the Social Functions of Popular Culture Forms".
- 46 Martin Laba, "Making Sense: Expressiveness, Stylization and the Popular Culture Process".
- 47 *ibid.*
- 48 *ibid.*
- 49 Harold Mendelsohn, *Mass Entertainment*, pp. 88-101.
- 50 Martin Laba, "Making Sense: Expressiveness, Stylization and the Popular Culture Process".
- 51 Winnifred Fluck, "Fiction and Fictionality in Popular Culture: Some Observations on the Aesthetics of Popular Culture", *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 21:4, 1988.
- 52 *ibid.*
- 53 *ibid.*
- 54 Martin Laba, "Making Sense: Expressiveness, Stylization and the Popular Culture Process".
- 55 *ibid.*

*There is a point in the New World where the sunset becomes the death of light, where...sensation...turns into unbearable ease, a point that is no longer a place because in it space can contain all possible spaces and time can contain all possible times, homogeneously and equally. A point in which the modern fable is told of a good nature, of an omnipotent humanity for which everything is possible because the only possibility not contemplated is the limit of death, since the technical is held to have a power in infinite progress for which everything is possible.*

Giovanni Chiaramonte

*We live "in a world where fantasy is more real than reality, where the image has more dignity than its original. We hardly dare face our bewilderment, because our ambiguous experience is so pleasantly iridescent, and the solace of belief in contrived reality is so thoroughly real. We have become eager accessories to the great hoaxes of the age. These are the hoaxes we play on ourselves."*  
1

**"11.5** As Prospero sits in his chair ... he conjures up an image.

*Mirror-image:* This is to be the first of a great many images.

At a later stage the device to "hold" the image will be more defined - here ... for the first time ... it seems to be an image in a mirror held slightly askew from the picture-plane. The mirror is apparently held by dark, almost unseen, black figures - dark-fleshed, ambiguously sexed, naked - they splash in the water of the bath - and they strain and grunt to hold up their large heavy mirror ... as though this first conjured image of Prospero's imagining is tortuously arrived at.

Later this device of mirror and mirror-carriers will be developed and many changes rung from its possibilities. When the image in the mirror is optimistic, the mirror-carriers will be light-skinned, handsome, young ... and the mirror easy and light to lift. When the image is pessimistic, its carriers will be haggard, ugly, misshapen and dark, and the mirror heavy and burdensome. These figures will be more and more revealed until the idea is made concrete that Prospero's imaginings - good and bad, fair and foul - are always 'reflected' in mirrors held by minions - minions and spirits of a Roman/Greek/Renaissance mythology ... as though a mirror was always necessary for Prospero to make his imaginings manifest."<sup>2</sup>

"(Question: Perhaps this sort of artifice can sometimes be seen for what it is - in this case the camera pulling back to see Prospero staring at his mirror-image and we - as audience - comprehending how it is done - as though Prospero can only realize his imagination in a mirror - making us, the audience privy to a greater, more magical world than he is. An opportunity to demonstrate the cinema's illusionism and artifice at the same time.)"<sup>3</sup>

*America.* The very incantation of its sobriquet conjures up images and expectations which evoke an almost hallowed reverence. *America.* Borne of fantasy, nostalgia and utopic yearning. America is larger than life. Neither dream nor reality. America exists as a state of 'being', suspended in a perpetual present. *America.*

The *idea* of America as a utopic construct was propelled by our technological Western civilization into the promise of concrete materialization through a grand obsession with a pioneering impulse. Unlimited opportunity and limitless space offered the hope for an escape from history--from time and space--into a "new world," a democracy truly radicalized. Having assumed, from the outset, the aspect of a utopia that had already been achieved, *America* is without origin, past, or founding truth. America has no *mythical authenticity*. It is the *image* of America, hovering somewhere between expectation and reality, which sustains the *illusion* of a Panglossian best of all possible worlds that can no longer be supported.

America understands itself cinematically, discovering its own unique authenticity in the material foundations of its origins. The very essence of the cinematic technique is movement--*action*--characterizing an automobile culture that has always believed that time and space obstruct human development. Existing as a series of moving postcards, strip malls, and fast, shiny automobiles--snapshots passing by, 16 to 20 per second--the *image of America* is reflected by the pervasive influence of Hollywood, its narrative structure and illusionistic techniques.

The television and the car windshield are our apertures on the world, shaping our perceptions and reinforcing our reductive and commodifying view of nature. Our cinematic dreams inspire much of what western culture creates, dedicated to the perpetual pursuit of fulfillment of that happiness promised in the experience of material achievement.

# terminal al manoe uvres

"From all places it is the same distance to heaven."  
Utopia.

Sir Thomas More

"I mean, man, whither goest thou, America, in thy shiny car in the night? We sat and didn't know what to say, there was nothing to talk about anymore. The only thing to do was go."

On the Road,  
Jack Kerouac.

We inhabit a complex and contradictory world, a world of image and semblance, of illusion and contrivance. Nothing is what it appears to be, yet everything is nothing more than appearances. Everything is strangely similar to the original--the real is no longer what it used to be. We have drifted into a state of simulation, in which truth no longer has meaning or reference. We have entered into a state of the hyperreal.<sup>4</sup>

The radical transformation of the world through the information explosion of the global telecommunications revolution resulted in qualitatively different forms of expression being discovered and explored, interrelated with, and even produced by new technical developments. Information, relative and infinite, is proliferated at such a rate as to make it incomprehensible. With this transformation, information, opinion, fact, fashion and fad flood our senses and our minds. We are inundated by images; seduced by the colourful, dynamic, and vivid images of a consumerism which overshadows and pales reality.

The advent of the technological image signalled the shift from the age of production to our era of reproduction. Serially reproduced images of late capitalist consumerism, all sensual surface and stylistic excess, hold the promise of *experience* symbolized as inherent to them.

Style and sensual, carnal appeal are the gauges for our perception and appreciation of a reality which no longer finds its foundations based on content or even form. The real and the imaginary are confused in a complex operation in which they become indistinguishable, and where the original has been replaced by its own imitation, which openly displays its own artificiality.

The cult(ure) of the image and the mediating role of the electronic communications complex--especially television, radio and newspapers--fundamental to our consumerist framework, permeate every facet of our existence. Innovations associated with the telecommunications complex and the information explosion are progressively oriented toward adaptability, individuality and a subsequently increased subjectivity.

#### Simulate:

1. To assume or have the appearance or form of, without the reality; counterfeit; imitate. 2. To make a pretense of. --adj. Simulated; pretended. [*<L simulatus, pp. of simulare to imitate < similis like*]

**Simulation:** 1. The act of simulating; counterfeit; sham. 2. The taking on of a particular aspect or form.

**Simulacre:** *n. Obs.* An image.

**Simulacrum:** 1. An image. 2. An imaginary, visionary or shadowy semblance. 3. A sham.





Persistent and insistent, mass media representation has reduced the world of our experience to a function of a universal kind of media-language.

We have developed an objectified view of reality, which holds our world as 'standing reserve', systematically quantifying its substance in terms of use-value, and culminating in the commodification of culture and cultural artifacts, and even the *experience* of life. The implications of this outlook and the quest to explore and conquer the 'global theatre' in this era of rapid innovation include world-wide influence; a global eclecticism and collective materialism; and a disengagement from the corporeal world. These are the consequences of a western culture that has reduced the world to a cultural supermarket.

Isolation and a singular disconnection are the hallmarks of the contemporary universal human condition, a world of transitory values and the obliteration of meaning through information.

The traditional and symbolic order of social meaning and appearances have been blurred, reduced to empty imitation. It has become increasingly difficult to define culture in "the traditional sense of the rooting of lifestyles, values and world views."<sup>5</sup> Synchronic to the loss of public space as the domain for collective and meaningful action has been the loss of the identity of the individual as actor, and ultimately, the loss of faith in the potential for embodied participation in public ritual to provide meaningful roles and action for the individual in the collective cultural drama. No longer is there any faith in the individual creative imagination as a tool for meaningful self-expression. It no longer seems possible to tell one's own story.

Man has an essential need for order. The search for enduring and meaningful ties between the actor and the drama is a search for recollection and understanding, for roots and order. Our technological framework of commodification and consumerism has reduced this quest to a nostalgic recollection of a past hope, which can no longer be realized, yet remains, standing as a kind of cultural consciousness.

This is the paradox of the American dream. The inherent contradictions in its image have led to our social and cultural malaise, and signalled the end of its credibility. The radicalization of democratic principles, relativity, and the levelling of values are inherent in the very *idea* of America. The foundations of its image were freedom and escape--escape from known time and space, and freedom from the traditions it held.

A culture's idea of history is related to its idea of the present. When the cultural landscape is a shattered and fragmented plane in which the individual drifts and is ricocheted about; time, space, history and tradition become confused. The response becomes an obsession with grounding--framing, defining and redefining man's very being and his place in the world. Where man perceives himself without adequate order in his world, he will see and find patterns of orderliness, even if he must create them himself. Modelling them on the familiar and the recognizable, the creation of these artificially manufactured images and experiences perpetuates the illusion of an order that cannot be supported.

The theory and practice of architecture are being contracted to a process of production, of a formalism and 'stylization' which has displaced a genuine "*making*" in many ways. The subjugation of materials and the material process to the representation have resulted in an architecture of two-dimensional pastiche, robbed of its essence. Context and siting, both physical and cultural, are frequently sacrificed to the reductive representation of surface and object. The visual orientation of western culture maximizes the sensational at the expense of a rich fabric of tradition and experience, resulting very often in fragments of remembrances--collages, collections, hollow images and allusions.

The cult(ure) of the image, seducing and revelling mankind in the immediacy of desire, acts as an alienating device which restrains mankind from creatively participating in the drama of his own narrative. Finding affirmation for nothing within, we now look outside of ourselves for our the fulfillment of our dreams.

"The time experience of the present age consists above all in an awareness of the moment in which we find ourselves: in an awareness of the present. Everything topical, contemporary, bound together in the present moment is of special significance and value to the man of today, and, filled with this idea, the mere fact of simultaneity acquires new meaning in his eyes. His intellectual world is imbued with the atmosphere of the immediate present, just as that of the Middle Ages was characterized by an other-worldly atmosphere and that of the Enlightenment by a mood of forward-looking expectancy."  
"The Film Age",  
Arnold Hauser



We have become acquiescent tourists. The surrender of the productive powers of the imagination to the anonymous systems and infinitely differentiating stimuli of transmitted technological signals has reduced mankind to passive recipients. Neither making or communicating our own images, we have allowed ourselves to be seduced by *images*, interchangeable consumer items.

The expression, examination, communication, and especially the celebration of image and surface throughout recent cultural debate are incisively addressed through the processes of popular culture. Blurring the boundaries and challenging perceptions, popular culture is continually dissolving the gap between technological and aesthetic culture. Accessible and immediate, with seductive energy and imagery and the vitality of the *present*, the products of popular culture dominate our cultural landscape, accelerating the contradictions which plague society.

*Walt Disney World, standing as a materialized model of all of America, as a cultural artifact and profit-making commodity, with a mythical atmosphere created entirely by its promoters, is the consummate model of all the tangled processes of popular culture: aesthetic, ethical and sociological.*

## Notes

- 1 Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, (New York: Atheneum, 1971), p. 37.
- 2 Peter Greenaway, *Prospero's Books*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1991), pp. 47-49.
- 3 *ibid*, p. 49.
- 4 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), p. 2.
- 5 Alt, John, "Popular Culture and Mass Consumption: The Motorcycle as Cultural Commodity", *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 23, Winter 1989.

*"I quite agree with you," said the Dutchess, "and the moral of that is -- 'Be what you would seem to be' -- or, if you'd like to put it more simply -- 'Never image yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.'"*

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.  
Lewis Carroll

"Park" or "garden" is a term with generic qualities, representing a vast diversity of both private and public spaces. Despite the many transformations in meaning and expression through the ages, the term has always been indicative of the essential qualities, within designated spatial limits, of methodical arrangement and the provocation of sensory exploration.

From Persia's princely *pairidaeza* into the Old Testament Hebrew *pardes*, to the Greek *paradeisos* of "sacred grove" and mythology, the 'paradise garden' later influenced Hebrew, and was extended to cover both the original garden of Eden and the heavenly kingdom. From the Homeric *Odyssey* of destiny at the Elysian fields; the villas of Pliny and Hadrian; *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, the dream-vision journey of Poliphilus; the imaginative medieval fantasy gardens in the epics of poetry and romance; earthly and literary gardens have held a treasured place in the cultural history of human civilization, inspired and celebrated in the exuberance of 'gardens of delight' such as Isola Bella and Villa d'Este and the fantastical reverie of the fortress-villa Orsini at Bomarzo.

From the wonders of pneumatica and labyrinthian legend; the intricacies of knots and conceits; a passion for taming and subduing; from the excesses of geometrical grandeur to the inspiration of the 'genus loci'; scenographia, the picturesque and the sublime; exotica and eclecticism; we can trace, through the garden, the metamorphoses of a culture.

As works of art, gardens have made significant statements about a civilization's highest ideals and cultural achievements. Gardens play a significant role in the transformation of the world through the reciprocal relationship held between their imaginative evocations and our continuing evolution in terms of self-perception and understanding. Through the ordering of our experience of space and time a narrative emerges to speak of man's understanding of his world. The journey through the garden is a sort of pilgrimage through which the narrative is revealed. This is the drama of narration: the active involvement of the participant in the recreation

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of the narrative, the building of a world. The elements of the garden are woven together in a complex narrative that requires exegesis: not merely the uncovering of the designer's intentions or the revealing of his prototypes. The garden, when it rises the status of a work of Art, means more to us than its creator's intentions and has cultural significance far beyond that.

Like all the forms of art, the garden is an expression *and* an interpretation of reality. It has a correspondent function, through a thorough involvement in the organization and construction of human experience, in the *discovery* of reality.<sup>2</sup> The garden represents the work of the human creative impulse for self-expression and exploration, physically invested in the landscape. Temporal, vital and sensual, the portrayal of landscape plays an important role in the evolution of the human experience.

*America*, borne of fantasy, nostalgia and utopic yearning, unfolded through moral drama, a quest for freedom, simplicity, and salvation. Freedom is identified as America's highest goal--time and space as obstacles to be overcome--in a quest to escape both time and space into a world unprecedented, a world wholly new.<sup>3</sup>

The modern obsession with motion has been enacted in the pioneering quest to conquer the wide-open spaces of the landscapes of North America, the 'promised land'. The eminence of the automobile, paramount in our culture, is evidenced by the scars of its sinuous patterns of asphalt and concrete slicing across the countryside, linking and binding the stifling geometric grids and teeming urbanism of the city machine. Travel--movement through space--once provided a universal metaphor for change, but now, we move only through time, measuring our distances in artificial and homogeneous increments.<sup>4</sup> Rationalized development of space and its characterization in terms of function have played vital roles in the specialization of landscapes, and especially of parks, as idealized recreational settings. The material domain of the verdant hinterlands of forest and prairie pioneering spirit, of pastoral retreat and of leisure parks is now occupied by the immaterial *topos* of play--of recreational *strategies* --which dictates their development.<sup>5</sup>

The great exhibitions (Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace Great Exhibition of 1851 is a premiere example), the world's fairs, and the grand garden festivals were part of a lengthy tradition of parks which evolved out of a long-established phenomenon of private collections as much more than exotic and eccentric collections of art and artifact, curiosities and wonders. They were extensive and marvelous showcases of peregrine menagerie both flora and fauna, technical innovation and popular 'gadgetry', living museums of cherished cultural achievement. Beyond the intention of creating a sense of excitement, frivolity and amusement was a sincere desire to *educate* the masses. Visitors were expected to admire, to be impressed, and to learn. These displays received validation by the "public interest shown not just in the artifacts themselves but in all the "spin-off" ancillary products which (re)produced them for immediate consumption: postcards, statuettes, documents, models, catalogues, and books. Any distinction between knowledge and kitsch was dissolved."<sup>6</sup> Cultivated in response to the crowding of the cities, as a distinctly urban phenomenon, these parks were also places of participation; of play and amusement "frankly devoted to the fun, the fantastic, the gay, and the grotesque."<sup>7</sup>

The urban playgrounds of the *amusement* and *theme* park, developed late in the last century, eclipsed the grand exposition and replaced the European model of green space parks and promenades in popularity, recapitulating the metropolitan aura with its machine and automobile technology, noise, frenzied pace and crowding.<sup>8</sup> The theme park "was not a flight from urban life but a journey to an intensified version of it, where one mixed with the same city crowds in a different context, 'catching', an observer commented, 'the full sense of humanity'."<sup>9</sup>

This prevailing prospect was also represented by a wide variety of complex parks and park complexes, ranging from the enshrining of buildings and monuments as cultural artifacts commemorating sites of historic note, to the exploitation and simulation of 'natural' wonders and the wax and anthropological 'cultural museums'.



Collections, collages, and vaudevillian cabaret, all offered the detailed and elaborate rendering of a *possibility promised* of an 'authentic experience', "just like it would or might have been...", compounded with a carnival atmosphere.

Barkers hawking all manner of side-show sights and experiences, exotic and bizarre feats of humanity and quirks of nature, midway fare, souvenirs, and thrilling rides, vying with the tintinnabulation of laughter and merriment, the resonant whirring and grinding of rotors and gears in a raucous harmony, melted into a wonderful chaos of sensory delight.

The proclaimed 'higher good' of public education and entertainment seemingly justified to their purveyors the essentially fraudulent nature of their very existence, in the words of Oscar Wilde, "lying for the benefit of truth." This deliberate and calculated manipulation of genuine cultural artifacts resulted in the creation of a sophisticated landscape of pastiche. The very artificial nature of their existence as 'park gardens' was demonstrated by their inauthenticity even in terms of landscape, which cannot be considered as the mere sum of a collection of dislocated landscape elements, reconstituted and juxtaposed.

Authenticity and originality of content, as Umberto Eco observed, were not integral to the concept. The philosophy was not, "We are giving you the reproduction so that you will want the original," but rather, "We are giving you the reproduction so that you will no longer feel any need for the original."<sup>10</sup> The permanence of this hybridized type of exhibition, created expressly as a *tourist attraction*, was an attribute evidently capable of overriding the lack of authenticity of the art, artifacts and event attractions, all contrived and manufactured specifically for the park.

Common to all these attractions was the essential element of *complete packaging*, everything neatly and clearly revealed *for* the visitor.

*As evidenced by these revolutionary park emanations, a monumental evolution in the character of travel has impacted on many levels the very nature of our relationship with our world. One way these changes can be traced is through the modulation in our understanding of the word travel, described by "the decline of the traveler and the rise of the tourist. There is a wonderful, but neglected, precision in these words. The old English noun 'travel' (in the sense of a journey) was originally the same word as 'travail' (meaning 'trouble', 'work', or 'torment'). And the word 'travail', in turn, seems to have been derived, through the French, from a popular Latin or Common Romantic word trepalium, which meant a three-staked instrument of torture. To journey--to 'travail', or (later) to travel--then was to do something laborious or troublesome. The traveler was an active man at work.*

*In the early nineteenth century a new word came into the English language which gave a clue to the changed character of world travel, especially from the American point of view. This was the word 'tourist'--at first hyphenated as 'tour-ist'".<sup>11</sup> Current dictionaries now define the tourist as "'a person who makes a pleasure trip' or 'a person who makes a tour, especially for pleasure'. Significantly, too, the word 'tour' in 'tourist' was derived by back-formation from the Latin tornus, which in turn came from the Greek word for a tool describing a circle. The traveler then, was working at something; the tourist was a pleasure-seeker. The traveler was active; he went strenuously in search of people, of adventure, of experience. The tourist is passive; he expects interesting things to happen to him. He goes 'sight-seeing' (a word, by the way, which came about the same time, with its first use recorded in 1847). He expects everything to be done to him and for him."<sup>12</sup>*

*The 'packaged tour', a preplanned itinerary of selected sights, often with accommodations and meals included, inevitably contributed to the ascendance of the tourist. A seductive commodity, the purchase of a 'packaged tour' alleviated the burden of research from the consumer, and placed responsibility for his interesting and pleasant journey in the hands of the travel agent or agency, as did the contrivance of the unique spectacle of the tourist attraction.*

At a time in *America* when rapid industrialization and development were changing physically the face of the continent, a spiritual transformation was also taking place: a feverish fascination with technical innovation and the mechanics of motion. The development of photography, and then of the cinematic technique caused a revolutionary change in the nature of art, these technics being proclaimed as expressive forms of art in their own right. Luminous, captivating, and almost overwhelmingly sensual, the recording arts seemingly provided a more qualitatively direct link between the subject and observer, tracing a direct progression toward a greater and more intense verisimilitude in art. The explosive evolution of cinema, propelling the progression toward greater verisimilitude, has had a profound effect upon the image of America, on our culture, our art, and our identity. Cinema would change the way the 'new world' would come to understand and express itself, and would eventually come to represent America itself, in many respects reflecting the world at the very core of our collective experience and awareness. "It is the movies that mold, more than any other single force, the opinions, the taste, the language, the dress, the behaviour, and even the physical appearance of a public comprising more than 60% of the population of the earth."<sup>13</sup> Although it would be difficult to argue that we know ourselves better than before the advent of film, we certainly know ourselves *differently* and see the world differently.

Contemporary America understands itself cinematically. The very essence of the cinematic experience is mobility, the fluidity of time and space introducing an element of freedom. Time is a constituent element of the spatial organization of the film, which unfolds as a kind of moving architecture whose dimensions are ceaselessly presented, conveying atmosphere and landscape in cadent movement. Animated spatial constructions are formed by the introduction of the instrument of time, linking representation with a 'reality' assumed to be happening in *real* time. In America's purest, and most representative form of expression, the unfolding of experience; of landscape; of possibility; is achieved only through movement. Motion and time become the *limits* of phenomenon.

"Early in the fall of 1960, I received an elaborate colour brochure advertising the Chevrolet for 1961. Inside, the only full-page illustration is a brilliant portrait of a man in the front seat of a deluxe new model. His hard-top convertible (advertised for its unobstructed view) is parked near the edge of what seems to be the Grand Canyon, a background of indescribable beauty. The man is not, however, peering out of the car window at the scenery. Instead he is preoccupied with a contraption in his hand; he is preparing to look into his "Viewmaster," a portable slide viewer using cardboard disks holding tiny colour transparencies of scenic beauty. On the seat beside him are several extra disks. Standing outside the car are his wife and three small children. The eldest of them, a little girl of about ten years old, at whom his wife is looking, is herself preoccupied with a small box camera with which she is preparing to take a picture of her father seated in the car.

Here, if ever, is a parable of twentieth-century America."

The Image.

Daniel Boorstin

"I come from a country, and from a generation, where America and the movies are one and the same thing."

Frederico Fellini

1993 Oscar Awards

With motion propelling the simulation into the real, we confront again and again temporal situations which are continually displaced.

Cinema, first and foremost a plastic art, developed as a result of the dynamic fusion of narrative imagination and technological innovation. The visual image, the 'capturing' of a moment through technique, is physically finite and bounded by margins, perceived as framed, yet, simultaneously as unlimited. The image fixed, frozen in a cell, is static until put into motion, when it is vested with the power (infinitely repetitive) of 'instantaneous materialization' --the making and remaking of a moment, or series of moments.

The technics of film, with its absolute dependence on movement for its vitality, subjugates material and material process to the representation, and also links emotion inextricably to motion--"Stop the most beautiful film you know, make of it at any moment an inert photograph, and you will obtain not even a memory of the emotion that it gave you as a moving picture."<sup>14</sup>



*The film is, moreover, an art evolved from the spiritual foundations of technics and, therefore, all the more in accordance with the problems in store for it. The machine is its origin, its medium and its most suitable subject. Films are 'fabricated' and they remain tied to an apparatus, to the other arts. The machine here stands both between the creative subject and his work and between the receptive subject and his enjoyment of art. The motory, the mechanical, the automatically moving, is the basic phenomenon of the film. Running and racing, travelling and flying, escape and pursuit, the overcoming of spatial obstacles is the cinematic theme par excellence. The film never feels so much in its element as when it has to describe movement, speed and pace. The wonders and mischievous tricks of instruments, automata, and vehicles are among its oldest and most effective subjects.*<sup>15</sup>

With the development and popularization of commercial "movie" culture it was only a matter of time until a radical transformation of the theme park, revealing in its dependence on and celebration of the technics of cinema and the automobile culture would be expressed. It is also interesting to note that the amusement/theme park has always been figuratively evocative to film makers, both in symbol and structure .

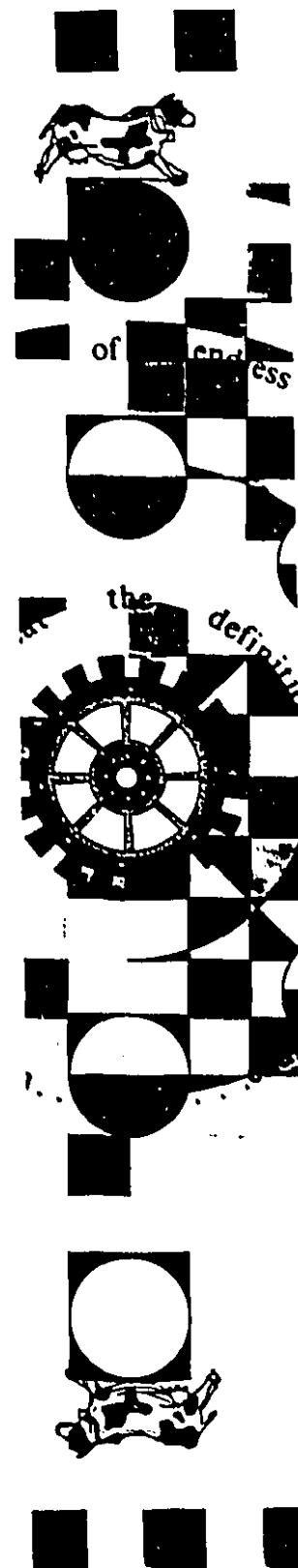


Fantasy, nostalgia and utopic yearning set the tone for a highly controlled entertainment experience in which technical innovation and motorized conveyance as mechanical amusement are both cornerstone and core, perspective and focus are ephemeral and ever-shifting, and even the pastoral and leisure areas of the park are part of a *strategy*.

The term 'theme park' seems dramatically inappropriate to the description of one of these densely layered hybrids of this park genre and its endeavour to create the illusion of a whole, highly improbable and wholly separate world. This complex and vast medium of communication, whose forms are given in the fusion of film: collections of fragments, icons, and images of popular culture; and the garden park; is the most complex of the popular arts, the idealized recreational setting of the *atmospheric park*.

The atmospheric park presents itself increasingly as a vital element in the reproduction and recycling of the image--cultural imagery of society, site (place and landscape), and time (past and future)<sup>16</sup> -- having gained the prominence of a cultural landmark in the North American experience of popular culture. Engaging in a compelling and absorbing mélange of 'pure' popular culture and 'traditional' cultural elements in a vibrant and animated interplay that shatters the distinctions that have characteristically separated these domains, the atmospheric park is a complex mix of art and artifice, image and semblance, illusion and contrivance.

As a cultural artifact and profit-making commodity, Walt Disney World is the consummate model of the processes of popular culture, elucidating the complex relationships that exist between human artistic expression, cultural form, and commercial process. Standing as a series of cultural constructs illuminating the *real* world of our collective experience and awareness, Walt Disney World, having "saturated the media with a mythology created almost entirely by its publicists and the oral testimony of its visitors"<sup>17</sup> is the quintessential tourist attraction.

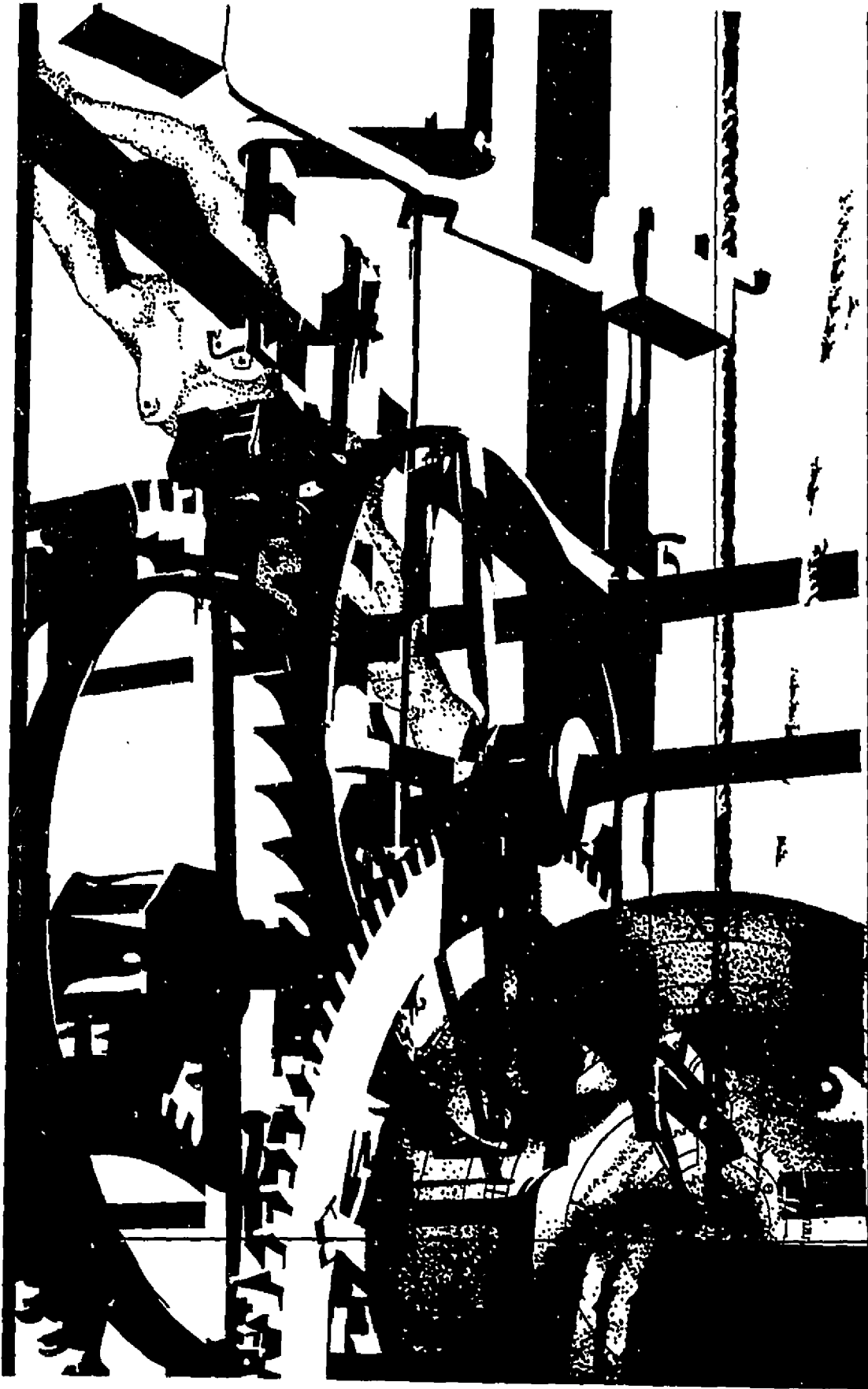


The recent and phenomenal rise of the tourist attraction, throughout the world, is a direct result of the great expansion of tourist traffic. The tourist attraction, as distinguished from previously existing unique physical and cultural features that may have appeal as travel destinations, arises as a wholly artificial construct, often expressly in the interest of the ownership.<sup>18</sup> In its dependence upon wide appeal and the attraction of large numbers of visitors, the tourist attraction is tied integrally to popular culture and the forces of mass consumption, indentured to the ever-shifting fashions and trends within the culture industry. The success of this *cultural commodity* depends upon inventive and veracious insight into the complex interplay that exists between the social needs expressed by the popular culture struggle for new cultural meanings and understanding, and the consumerization of this process through shrewd market researching, production, and mass-marketing of more and newer products in response. The lure of the cultural commodity is achieved through the perceived amelioration of these identified social 'needs', and the commodity then assumes "mythical form by the appearance that the cultural experience symbolized by the commodity is inherent to the commodity."<sup>19</sup>

*Cultural commodities refer to the symbolic experience attainable through the consumption of industrial goods or commercial amusements which are marketed by distinct cultural industries. Cultural commodities, as myriad complexes of symbolic representations, stand as a magnet and beacon, drawing people into the attractions, meanings or potential sensory experience attainable through its models. Cultural commodities embody symbolic representation of the modern search for meaning and experience, and are among the most powerful symbolic forces directing and defining the domain of modern culture.* 20

The successful tourist attraction epitomizes the concept of cultural commodification. The disappearance of the public domain as the space for collective participation and ritual has resulted in a search for meaningful cultural experiences to replace those lost to society. Traditional sources of cultural consciousness and identity have been sacrificed to the mechanisms of consumerism in the perpetual propagation of *life's styles* offered for purchase. With an absence of

meaningful cultural experience in one's "work-place, in politics, and in many everyday life routines, individuals feel able to constitute themselves as intentional and meaningful actors through cultural commodities."<sup>21</sup> The tourist attraction draws people together through a universal language, into a symbolic sense of community in which they collectively share participation in, and witnessing of, a common experience through a significant social and cultural play of spectacle and events, all artfully packaged as entertainment. "In some part, consumers do achieve an experience of freedom, innovation, and social identity with the use of specific cultural commodities. In part, this is because their expectations have already been shaped by the symbolic images communicated by the commodity--they are already socialized, so to speak."<sup>22</sup>



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As the preeminent tourist attraction in the world, Walt Disney World stands as both beacon and magnet,<sup>23</sup> illuminating the collective consciousness of America, and drawing people into the radiance of its aura through the charismatic promises it holds. Built at the junction of television and automobile cultures, Walt Disney World *exists* ambiguously, hovering somewhere between expectation and reality.<sup>24</sup> As a significant cultural landmark, it operates expressly in the service of Walt Disney's interests, having been assembled as a wholly artificial construct with a synthetic image.

A grand experiment, based heavily on the successes of the Disney film empire, Walt Disney World arose out of Walt Disney's yearning to resolve a societal crisis he despaired of; a collapse of the prevalent systems of belief (binding myth, goals, promises) that had been effectively challenged by the forces of mass communication. Born of an enduring popular nostalgia for a vanished imagined past, Disney's dream, as a self-professed moralist and educator, was to create a dynamic and antidotal world--a seamless synthesis of educational and entertainment components--where he could reaffirm selected values and "re-establish faith in both the individualistic myths of the past and the technological possibilities of the future."<sup>25</sup> Rather than suggesting an escape from ordinary life, Walt Disney's strategy found its basis in a belief in the inherently fascinating nature of ordinary life, underscored by a prevalent moral theme.

Throughout his many projects, Disney sustained an obsessive quest for the expression of his personal notion of a *democratic realism*; the rendering of a realistic style, simplicity, and the gently tempered presentation of the familiar,<sup>26</sup> packaged in warm and glowing tones. Such a preoccupation with the intimate detail of the human condition typically results in a presentation of the familiar and the known in a manner which is essentially a *showing* rather than an exploration. The sense of familiarity, continuity, and rhythm which develops through this type of presentation is what involves and sustains the *tourist's* interest. Value, a measure of the presentation's intrinsic allure, is afforded through an acquaintance

## Byzantium

When you wish upon a star  
Makes no difference who you are  
When you wish upon a star  
All your dreams come true

cultivated with the recurring characters, their relationships, and the established patterns of events and relations. Intimacy with the machinations and outcome of the plot contributes to a sense of security.

This compulsion to reproduce and experience patterns of action, sound, environment, and situation is one which fulfills in some measure, a basic human need to repeat emotional experiences. The participant then achieves a sense of gratification through the motions and pretense of the game, participating in the fulfillment of pre-determined, anticipated, and foreseen events and spectacles. The feeling of intimacy and ease imparted by this familiarity reinforces the conventionalized and strategic mechanisms of the symbolic social action--*representing* a re-enacting of the perceived constraints and values of the public social order that it addresses. Recognition and reassurance of the participants' own views through an experience that is both pleasant and entertaining, in a form that is widely accessible and easily appreciable, ensures the popularity of the attractions. Variations *within* the theme are desirable: dissimilitude, however, is disruptive to this type of emotional identification.<sup>27</sup>

Disney's is a simplistic black and white world in vivid technicolour. With a "small, small world" melting pot ethic,<sup>28</sup> this is a world which purports to hold that virtue be rewarded and vice be punished; that the satisfactions of industry are self-evident; that might does not make right; and that unabashed sentimentality should be celebrated. The American folk tradition, with its simple and ingenuous approach, has therefore been found to be an ideal source for appropriation by the processes of popular culture, and especially malleable to a Disney rendering. The art and literature of the folk tradition, with their characteristic mixing of materials,<sup>29</sup> as well as the comic strip (a critical root in the development of cinema), popular songs, pulp fiction, and favourite American magazines, were understandable and accessible sources of inspiration and patterning for co-option to the Disney cause.

Hinging, as most folk and popular culture does, on the basic and ordinary modes of experience, these materials, already extensively

reductive, conventional, and formulaic, could readily be rendered into Disney 'creations'. Deliberate foreshortening and stereotyping, the pervasive conditions of these materials, which are then further sublimated, or *Disneyified*, through a process based on the cinematic method of storyboarding layout, endemic to all of Disney's creations. Character and narrative development are sacrificed and reduced to their basic movements in favour of fastidious and elaborately embellished, highly visual presentations.

Extensively planned and fabricated, these images are further embroidered and yet their essences distilled, until what is included and expressed exemplifies largely what is already known and familiar, effectively, excluding the world beyond our immediate range of cognizance.<sup>30</sup>

This is a world constituted and populated by images. The characters and animals of the many tales illustrated throughout the Disney universe of real-life action and nature adventure films, animated movies, magazines, books, cartoon shorts, and other products are transformed into a *reality*.<sup>31</sup> Molded to suit the Disney agenda, these 'personalities' have been divested of their unique and specific animal characteristics, effectively becoming easily identifiable and anthropomorphized caricatures of themselves, endowed instead with more 'value-able' familiar human traits and emotions.

Within the magical realm of Walt Disney World, these images are transformed once again, into *living* images, corporealized in *real* materials. Cast in effigy in wood, stone, plaster, and concrete,<sup>32</sup> images once given a celuloid life are suspended again--petrified images, immortalized as monuments to a venerated image--reversing their order and simultaneously heightening their credibility. Others, both animal and android, are invested with a seemingly more animate existence which includes movement and speech, their mechanically operated robotics (Disney's audio-animatronics) concealed, just beneath their well articulated visible surfaces. And still others are animated, living, breathing, and moving characters, freely mingling throughout the World, their *real-life being* falsified by the human actors disguised within the costumes.

"Image is duplicated by reality in two opposite senses: on the one hand, it becomes real, but on the other hand, reality is changed into image. The support for the figure has become the figure."<sup>33</sup>

*The "Horseman" of Dürer's engraving has not only emerged as the "horseman described," goal of the attempt to make a portrait; it is in reality the horseman. However, going the other way, reality is transformed into an image. The figured element is nothing but its support. The Horseman, Death, or the Devil, has no other reality than its figure: it is a being grasped by the "imaginary".<sup>34</sup>*

- "Thus, the visitor who has left reality outside finds it again, but as a real "imaginary": a fixed, stereotyped, powerful fantasy."<sup>35</sup>



While Disney's forms of expression are often unique and complex hybrids, its molded and manufactured representations are not, and are more accurately characterized as a filtering and packaging operation than as an idealization of the real or original thing.<sup>36</sup> In the enduring search for an infallible formula capable of provoking universal responses in harnessing the power to compel the visitor's attention to the most cherished aspects of its attractions, little respect was shown for the integrity of the source material<sup>37</sup> as a whole and complete work. Excised of anything suggesting the undesirable, or the gritty, ugly side of reality; divested of its unique attributes; the original work was invariably *Disneyfied*:<sup>38</sup> reduced to a servant of the Disney cause. Although Disney himself certainly would have rejected any claim of the prevailing prominence of *form over substance* at Walt Disney World, the evidence is that of extensive formulaic structure, both in the interpretation and presentation of the materials.

#### Mother Goose and Grimm



Beyond this manipulation of source materials into specific and purposeful images, Walt Disney recognized that a complete control over their environment would be necessary in order to maintain these images. Ironically, Disney took masterful advantage of all the tools of the very systems of mass communication, marketing, and hyper-visibility that had been major forces in destroying the world of his nostalgic memory. Disney's dreams to resurrect this world could only be achieved, it was determined, by thorough 'impression management': a structure of systems similar to the foundations on which much of productive America has been built.<sup>39</sup>

Through weekly entertainment on his television show, "The Wonderful World of Walt Disney" (its title changed over the years) from 1945-1983, Disney instilled the notion of his idyllic world in a disillusioned public, huddled in the warm glow of their television sets in what became, internationally, a Sunday evening ritual. Building on the successes of earlier movies, cartoon features, the "True-Life Adventure" nature films, and the popularity of Disneyland in Anaheim, California, (which opened in 1955), the television program also featured anecdotes and updates from Walt Disney himself. In his role as 'benevolent uncle', he offered glimpses of his visions for future projects to an eager and longing public.

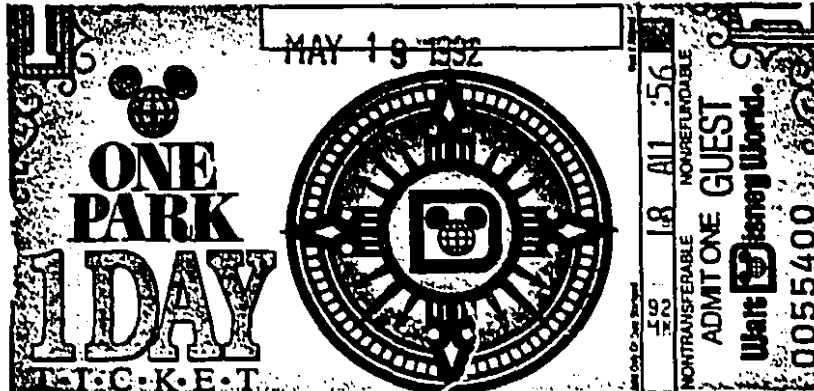
The image for this world was further promoted by explicitly feeding the reciprocating and fortifying connections between the characters and stories of Disney's movies, and their 'real-life' existence in the six 'lands' in the realm of The Magic Kingdom, Walt Disney World's centrepiece attraction. Occasionally, Disney also revealed a little of the backstage magic, which only served to make the mysteries of his many techniques even more tantalizing. In this way, the mythic image of Walt Disney World was carefully developed. By first fabricating a character profile, an exciting impression of it--a very instrumental *personality*--the image could be reinforced and made credible by its public exposure.

Television built the identity of the Walt Disney World image, and then built on that identity, setting its own standards and creating its own demand, using the seductive media-language of television advertising.

The primary visual image for Walt Disney World, necessarily being the simplest and most recognizable, takes many ambiguous and interrelated forms. From logo to trademark to instant universal identification, one striking image stands, symbolizing all that Walt Disney World embodies and represents. A fantastic creature and a fairy tale fantasy, Tinker Bell and Cinderella's castle unite for a fairyland moment, with a glittering burst of stardust from a magic wand. In the tradition begun in the introduction to each television evening, Tinker Bell still flies from Cinderella's castle, now at the start of "Fantasy in the Sky," an elaborate fireworks display.

Walt Disney World Vacation Kingdom opened in 1971, six years after the death of its visionary. The televised opening, featuring a parade and ceremonial gala, was a media extravaganza of extraordinary proportions, capable of instantly solidifying Walt Disney World's image as "the happiest place on earth". In its very first year alone, there were eleven million visitors.

"Come with us now  
--forget your cares.  
Stroll through a memory,  
and set sail on a dream for  
tomorrow."  
Walt Disney World



Beyond the straightforward reinforcement of the cultural imagery of Walt Disney World, television advertising became the primary purveyor of all associated Disney products, linking available merchandise integrally to the '*Disney experience*', through involved advertising strategies and market engineering.

The '*Disney machine*' is a complicated complex of multi-media reinforcement, producing a myriad of highly-valued, widely available commodities, which are diffused extensively beyond the range of the original core area. Disney films and videos, books, character-based toys, clothing, and theme parks all work in a concerted effort to invert the supposition of the ephemeral nature of the tourist attraction and amusement experience as quintessential McLuhanesque settlements existing purely for the purpose of producing transitory experience.<sup>40</sup> The multiplicity, overlapping and dense layering of commodities and 'souvenir' items are extensively involved in an intentional blurring of hierarchy and origin. Were these commodities spawned in support of Walt Disney World and its image, or does Walt Disney World exist to support the multitude of other products? Trapped in this system of mutual dependance, all Disney's images and commodities function symbiotically.

"Henceforth,  
it is the map that precedes  
the territory."  
Simulations.  
Jean Baudrillard

"My consumers,  
are they not my  
producers?"  
James Joyce

This obscuring of boundaries between reality and fantasy is intensified through the perceptual distortion created by the forces of consumerism and commodification. Ideology and ideals become attached to commodities; social intentions and actions, values and cultural experience are perceived as a function of the nature of *things*. Individuals, divested of their social drama as seeking, creating and expressing culture, become trapped in the immediacies of their articulated wants.

It is the result of this depoliticization of the culture of everyday life, the chief control mechanism of mass consumption, that people become the moderately passive recipients of cultural experiences mediated through the factually-perceived symbols of a commodity.<sup>41</sup>

Main Street, USA is the stage-set, cotton candy ambrosia, imaginary background of an idealized small-town Americana, extravagantly detailed and prettily colour co-ordinated so vigorously that the process has been termed 'the Disney effect'. Unlike any real Main Street of the turn of the century ever could have been, this is a *universal* Main Street, an archetype of the nostalgic American imagination. A bustling hub of shop-keeping and restauranteers, from the Town Square to the Central Plaza, Main Street also boasts numerous kinds of old-fashioned transportation, increasing the activity and flow of visitors along the Kingdom's primary axis. Not simply false-fronted facades of shops, their interiors are elaborate and extensive emporiums, full of 'authentic' merchandise, and 'real' reproductions of the real-life reconstructions brought to life throughout the Magic Kingdom.

Thus, there is a commercial reality--the visitor can buy real commodities with real money. Through the promises held of a satisfying, *authentic* Disney experience, desire is induced in the visitor to engage in the commercial activity presented, joining in the play of consumerism in the guise of a meaningful social experience of community with the other visitors. The familiarity of the imagery and the well-established patterns of the events and relations of the experience reconciles the idealized past with the real present.



Placed in the role of an actor in the real commercial drama of Main Street, the visitor is at once witness and participant to the truth of all America.

*Main Street, USA signifies to the visitor that life is an endless exchange and a constant consumption and, reciprocally, that the feudal accumulation of riches, the Spanish hording of treasure, the Old World conception of gold and money, are not only morally criminal, but they are, economically, signs and symptoms of death. The treasure buried in the ground is a dead thing, a corpse. The commodity produced and sold is a living good because it can be consumed.*<sup>42</sup>

This same meaning is further illustrated by an audio-animatronics family in the Carousel of Progress in Tomorrowland, illuminating the myth of technological progress as the servant of mankind in an ever-ameliorated world.

*Here the visitor becomes a spectator, immobilized and passive, seated in front of a circular and moving stage [expressing endless technological progress and its necessity, its fate] that shows successive scenes taken from family life in the nineteenth century, in the beginning of the twentieth century, today, and tomorrow. It is the same family that is presented in these different historical periods; the story of this 'permanent' family is told to visitors, who no longer narrate their own story. History is neutralized; the scenes only change in relation to the increasing quantity of electric implements, the increasing sophistication of the utensil-dominated human environment. The individual is shown to be progressively mastered, dominated by utensility. The scenic symbols of wealth are constructed by the number and variety of the means and tools of consumption. ...the signs of wealth are made up of the utensils' wide applicability and diversity, and not of consumption, as in Main Street. These utensils, rather, represent the means for consumption.*<sup>43</sup>

The 'self-evident' benefits of 'technological progress', while glorified as a utopian advance toward the future, are simultaneously betrayed by their very presentation. Technology has an *instrumental* attachment to, and is perceived as, a function of its commodities. Dramatically revealed is the truth of our consumerist framework: 'technological progress' will bury a desolate mankind under a heap of junk, leaving in its wake social and environmental devastation, and creating, infinitely, its own self-perpetuating demand.

The signs of technology, then, in striving to obscure the distinctions between a technology understood paradigmatically and material commodities, issues a panegyric on the proliferation of material production and consumption of commodities, attempting to further perpetuate the illusions of the myth of technological progress.

This furious and nebulous instrumental activity results in the creation of a nearly universal technological media language, so magnetic and compelling that it is essentially an 'activity of stylization'.<sup>44</sup> Manipulating the processes and products of technology, and their symbolic meanings, in order to create consensus regarding their style and function threatens the very notion of an individual and personal sense of style, essential to the productive, ethical, creative human imagination.

Thinking of ourselves in terms of images rather than ideals is symptomatic of the power of advertising, and of the mass media, to influence even our concept of truth.<sup>45</sup> Bought, sold and traded, images appeal to us when, enticed to project ourselves into the image presented, they flatter our self-perception.

Walt Disney World thrives on a consumer-oriented way of life which promises meaning, enjoyment, and sensory pleasure through the cultural promise of commodities, more than through the rational belief systems of ideology.<sup>46</sup>

# islands

The *idea* of Walt Disney World was initially developed primarily through the television series. As its *image* was crafted and developed (before construction was even underway), Walt Disney created a vivid and concrete illusion. In order to sustain this otherworldly image, Walt Disney World had to remain dislocated from the corporeal world.

Rectifying mistakes made at Disneyland, outside piggy-backing development around Walt Disney World was to be actively hindered. A giant parcel of swampland in central Florida was purchased, 150 times the acreage of the California site,<sup>47</sup> ensuring that secondary developments would be unable to impinge on Disney's project or violate the visual sanctity of the site. The jewel of the World, the Magic Kingdom, occupies only 90 acres of Walt Disney World's 27,800 total acreage,<sup>48</sup> and is set more than four miles from the nearest public roads.

By employing a deliberate *dislocation* as a method of locating, Disney turned his back on the context of the geographical site. Further treating the land as simply generic real estate, a significant manipulation occurred which denied the location's very locality, although the site was carefully chosen for its inherent resources. Self-described as the '*Disney imperative*' (a compulsion to create artificial environments in place of natural environments, fantasy thus becoming reality), through Disney ingenuity and engineering--'*imagineering*'--this placeless, yet permanent world was transformed from swamp to paradise.

Developed out of a feigned *ex nihilo* condition, Walt Disney World has "no history, in the sense of habitation, growth, change and replacement...only a centrally ordained development plan, scientifically phased."<sup>49</sup> This is certainly one of "the most artificial--hence perhaps most human--environments."<sup>50</sup>

The *imaginary* world that is Walt Disney World is an actual three-dimensional *place*. It exists. The metaphysical world of the idea, characterized by physical absence, has converged with the physical world of the real, in a condition of presence.

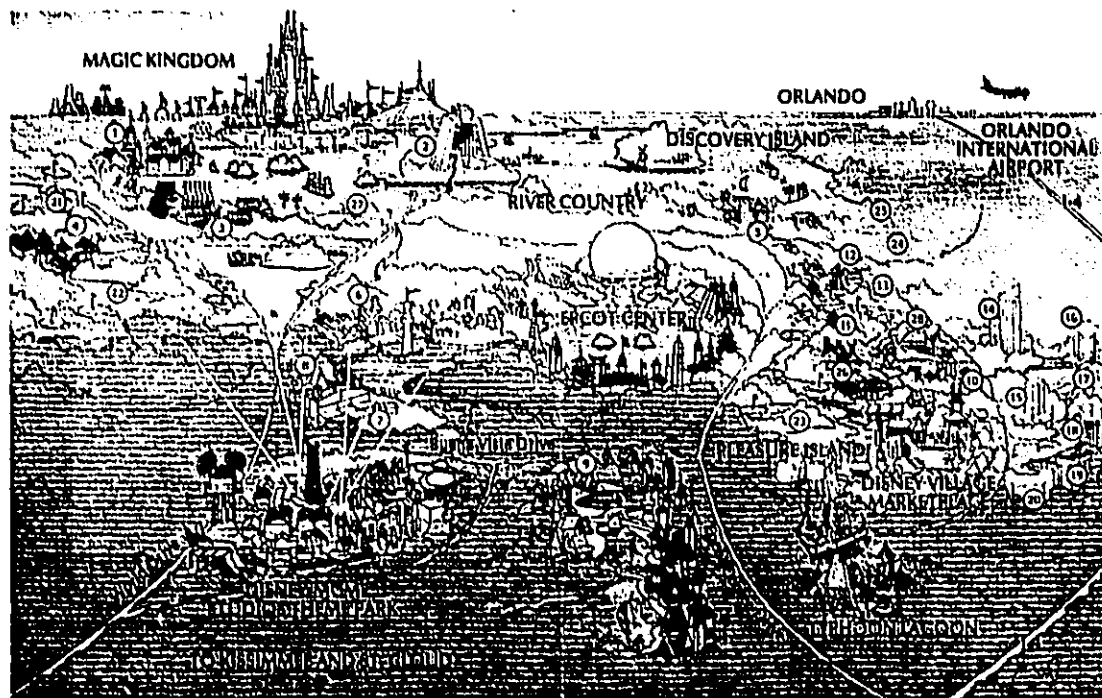
"What is Never Land?" James Barrie asked in *Peter Pan*. "A quite small island, very crammed, with hardly any space between one adventure and another."

The gap between our world and Walt Disney World is seemingly reinforced by limiting representations to those of the past and future, far away and exotic places, historical reality, and fantasy. All are plied with the same material approach and treatment. Yet, the unrepresented present is everywhere. Disney World exists in a condition of the perpetual present.

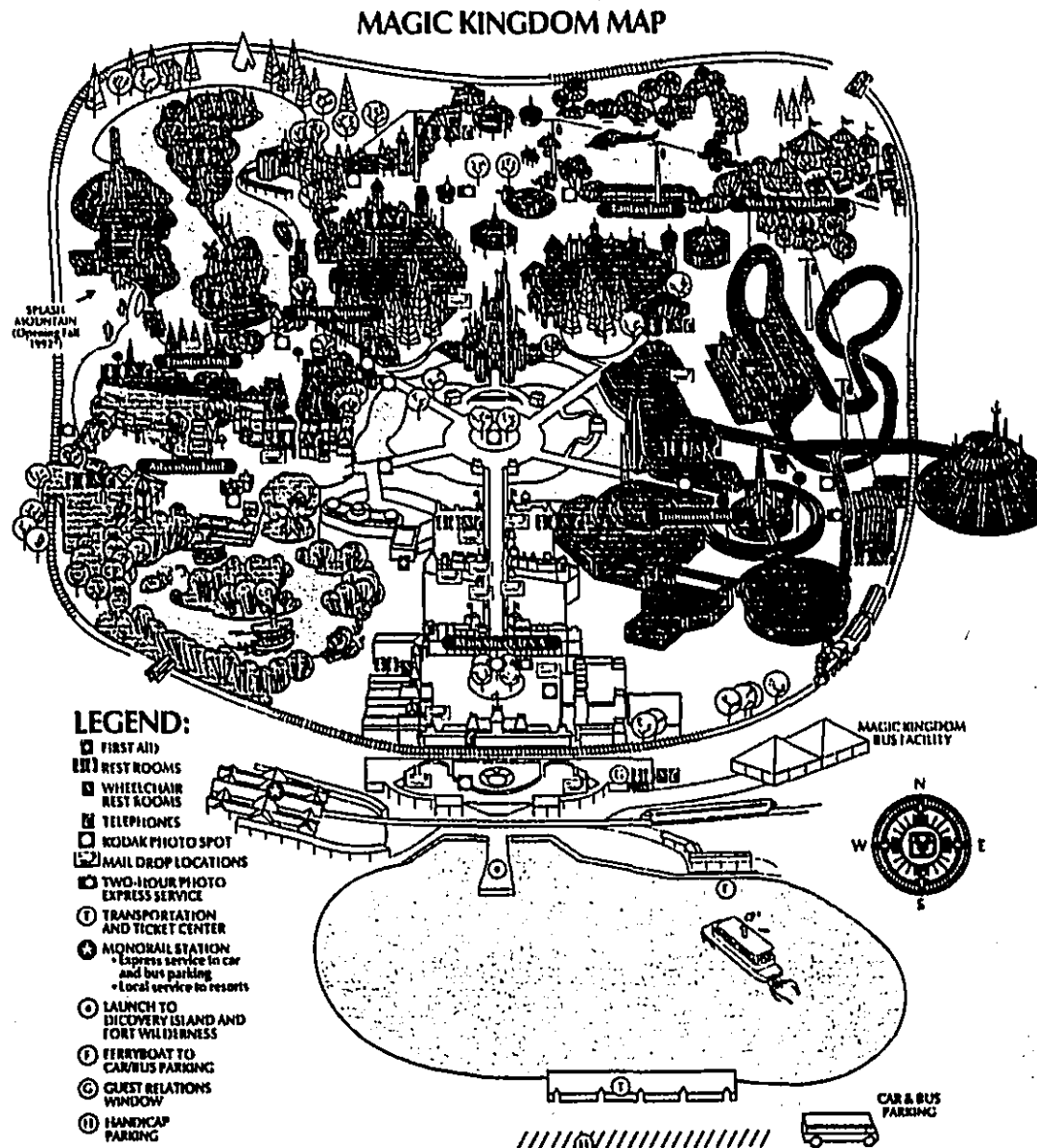
An important dimension of the image of Walt Disney World is its graphic representation in the imaginary space of a map.<sup>51</sup>

Geographical maps of the Walt Disney World environs are deliberately indeterminate, leaving images of the Disney World in the form of trademarks or logos hovering in the woods somewhere just west of Orlando and Kissimmee. With the vast tract of land owned by the Walt Disney Company, its exact bearing in relationship to the limits of the property is fixed only by the coordinates of the regional major highway grid, punctuated by the highlighted nearest exit ramp.

Within the Vacation Kingdom, comprehensive maps are also inexact, usually pictorial representations in the form of a birds-eye view, taken from an impossible vantage point. These present Walt Disney World as a cluster of distinct yet conveniently linked, idyllic communities, lovingly sited in a lush landscape of woods and lakes.



Maps of each of the major attractions are more complete. These are also pictorial representations, though now their features are shown as simple geometric volumes, with the emphasis on colour-coded districts and networks of pathways, highlighting services, special points of interest, and Kodak 'Photo Spots' throughout. As both image and text, the map is also a guide, with a descriptive and narrative function in helping the visitor choose a route from place to place. In contrast to the vague limits of the overall maps of the Walt Disney World Vacation Kingdom, the guidebook maps for Epcot Centre, Disney-MGM Studios Theme Park, and the Magic Kingdom are very rigidly defined.



The Magic Kingdom is very appropriately disconnected from the world it leaves behind by the passage of the visitor through the neutral territory of the Auto Plaza, and into a visibly unlimited sea of parking. This is both the first bridging point and the point of separation. The surrender of the automobile signals this world as a wholly separate world with its own independent internal rules and structures, as distinctly defined by the rigors of entry into the Magic Kingdom.

The disoriented visitor is then retrieved by tram and shuttled to the Disney transportation and ticket centre, where the adventure begins. Separated from his car and then his money, the visitor has thus been freed from the necessary burdens of the outside world. Confronted with the spectacular panorama of the Magic Kingdom as one rides the ferry across the sparkling waters of the Seven Seas Lagoon, the sensation of excitement and anticipation builds, effectively eradicating any lingering thoughts of the outside world.

The inner sanctum of the Magic Kingdom is circumscribed by the Walt Disney World Railway. (The map of the Kingdom aptly falls off abruptly at the outer edge of the Railway's tracks.) Both enclosing and limiting the highly structured interior space, it provides the final point of disorientation from the outside world. Entry is allowed at only two restricted, given 'gates'--two tunnels under the railway. The visitor is guided into the cool shadows beneath the Disney Station, then emerges into the brilliant sunlight in the Town Square on Main Street.

Leading the visitor from the perimeter to the core of the park, Main Street also leads the visitor on a trajectory from reality to fantasy 52 --Cinderella's castle being the trademark and symbolic image of Walt Disney's World.

Within the map of the Magic Kingdom, yet another narrative is revealed. Frontierland and Adventureland, representing the distances of history and geography, illustrate the limitless frontiers available to the pioneering spirit of America, demonstrating ever-increasing opportunities for conquest and appropriation of land and resources.<sup>53</sup>

Tomorrowland "realizes the harmonious synthesis of the two-dimensional world represented on the left part as time and space, time as historical, national past and space as strange, exotic primitivism. Tomorrowland is space as time, the universe captured by the American science and technology of today."<sup>54</sup>

*In nineteenth-century America the most extreme modernism held that man was made by his environment. In twentieth-century America, without abandoning belief that we are made by our environment, we also believe our environment can be made almost wholly by us.* <sup>55</sup>

The Magic Kingdom then assumes the aspect of a sacred or ritual domain, through symbolic and ritual behaviour induced by these systems of cultural commodification, and by the implementation of clever behavioural psychology based on perspective, procession and scale.<sup>56</sup> Although its physical structure takes the form of an archetypal metaphor for creation, the interpretation is strictly material.

Cinematographic sequences and scenographic arrangements compartmentalize and thereby control images and views. Lacking transitional physical and emotional spaces, this mythic founding form is exposed as a series of falsified facades, a movie-set construction of collapsing and overlapping theatrical sets.

Design becomes *collage*. The images of Walt Disney World, hybrid mixtures of motifs, styles and images, are jumbled and recycled in the time-distorting sequences of the new traditions of television viewing and channel surfing.

No longer is the reproduction offered "so that you will have no further need of the original."<sup>57</sup> Itself the very reproduction of an image, Walt Disney World has *become* the original. The displaced original has been demoted to a series of commodities intended to further reinforce the now principle image-commodity. The intent is no longer that of replacing any further need for the displaced original, but that it becomes an instrumental *tool* for reinforcement of the newly proclaimed "*original*." Image and commodity are further equated and interchanged.

The Walt Disney World image is thereby supported and reinforced by the projection of a complex, multidimensional hierarchy of interlocking images, all extensions of and subordinate to the principle image. Although the fabric of the image is artificial and we may readily acknowledge the distinction that exists between what we see and what is really there, we usually assert our predilection for the manifest and compelling images communicated by this strategy. It is successful communication of the believable, vivid, passive and simplified image, specially crafted to evoke a distinct impression and personality, that endows the image with value.<sup>58</sup> The image *serves* the commodity/tourist attraction as much more than symbol. Reality or myth, it *claims* the meaning that it exchanges for and eclipses the truth. These Disney-created images of reality, more powerful than truth and history, are becoming symbols and experiences assimilated and shared by millions of people.

Their images are so powerful, and their (pre-viewing) reinforcement through every medium so pervasive and insistent, that there is little space left for subjective injection and the weaving of personal narration. It is difficult to imagine anything beyond a nominal and residual sense of personal identification impacting the great pastiche of images manufactured and proselytized by the Disney machine.

What the visitor to Disney World encounters is "not the two-dimensional comic strip or movie originals, but only their three-dimensional facsimiles."<sup>59</sup> Regardless of the raw source material (moments in history, fable, folklore), the incisive images created by Disney's manipulation and development of these materials are gradually taking the place of the originals. With its concrete physical form, animated and dramatic theatrical activity with both 'real' and 'lifelike' people, the Disney version *seems* to be the *original* version.<sup>60</sup>

Verisimilitude and invention replace truth and discovery. Disney's images of the world; opulent, vivid and plentiful, seemingly possess the power to heighten our cognition of the world. The vividness of the invention creates a semblance which becomes *illusion*, an image mistaken for reality. The gap between our experience of the imaginary/visionary and reality is blurred.



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*"Bing Crosby's voice stops. The turntable drops down and the record swings into its place in the pile. The purple light goes off. The nickel, which has caused all this mechanism to work, has caused Crosby to sing and an orchestra to play -- this nickel drops from between the contact points into the box where the profits go. The nickel, unlike most money, has actually done a job of work, has been physically responsible for a reaction.*

*Steam spurts from the valve of the coffee urn. The compressor of the ice machine chugs softly for a time and then stops. The electric fan in the corner waves its head slowly back and forth, sweeping the room with a warm breeze. On the highway, on 66, the cars whiz by."*

The Grapes of Wrath.  
John Steinbeck

*The rapidity with which aesthetic experience today is burnt out, the multiplication of stimuli, and the instant circulation of every message by the mass media, seem to demand an artificial intensification of the shock caused by the act of artistic invention. In this perspective it is not the work per se that becomes central, but the collective ritual of its experience, the bewilderment and oscillation induced in the astonished spectator.*<sup>1</sup>

Exalting its own manufactured images and illusions, Disney conspires to further "breach the distinction between the authentic and the imaginary by the use of simulations to provide an experience which then authenticates the imaginary. The imaginary is made real. ...The real and the imaginary are deliberately confused by the provision of an ersatz experience."<sup>2</sup>

The successful tourist attraction is most dynamic in its intention as a single or intertwined series of pseudo-events. As a planned and rehearsed 'happening', the pseudo-event is by nature dramatic, intriguing, intelligible, sociable, and convenient to witness.<sup>3</sup> It is precisely through its inherently factitious nature that the tourist attraction insures itself as infinitely repeatable upon demand. This emphasis on the artificial and the contrived is, with cunning and brutal honesty, exactly what the promoters are offering to a willing and eager 'tourist' market. There is no pretense of any opportunity to experience spontaneous cultural events, but exclusively those specific 'cultural' products manufactured and provided especially for tourist consumption.<sup>4</sup>

By its very nature, the pseudo-event emanates a sense of ambiguity regarding the authenticity of events. This ambiguity, which curiously serves to increase interest in the event, is a result of extensive mediation and promotion of the event until what becomes essential is not the truth of the situation, but its *verisimilitude*.

More interesting, attractive and persuasive than reality, pseudo-events embroider and dramatize experience in an intricate and seductive way, complicating our experiences<sup>5</sup> and spawning "other pseudo-events in geometric progression."<sup>6</sup>

## a chronic le of reverie



As a highly mediated system of information dissemination rooted in electronic communications, the pseudo-event is instrumental in the progressive creation of a single worldwide community of experience. The further an event is brought into the domain of information, the more it has already "begun to dissolve the literal event into analogous events, comparing, evaluating, lifting it piece by piece out of the arena of unique actions and setting it into a museum of preserving documents and mosaics." 7

In this sense, pseudo-events distance man from the immediacy of his experience, inverting McLuhan's global village supposition that electronic communications will eliminate the effects of isolation and distance.<sup>8</sup> Becoming through its own application, "ritualized, with a protocol and rigidity all its own,"<sup>9</sup> the generation of the pseudo-event is a deliberate media strategy; an operation of marketing, packaging, and control, reducing the magnitude of our real experience, and commodifying even the *experience* of life.

The bridging/connecting of image and event (also the nature of cinematics) in the creation of the dynamic pseudo-event is part of the vital strategy of the image: the ultimate creation of an atmosphere of total theatre. As the popular art and theatre of our era, the Magic Kingdom presents and involves the audience (*en masse*) with fantasy that *seems* to be simple yet elaborate, intelligible and tangible.

All the senses are bombarded with intricate and entangling detail. The visitor's eyes are particularly engaged. Overwhelmed by a televisual sensory stimulation, the visitor surrenders to the hallucination. Restrained by this enthrallment from analyzing the content, the visitor responds to the seductive impulses which engulf him and enjoys uncritically the rhythmic experience of image, colour, light, sound, and music.<sup>10</sup>

The excited and expectant visitor, besieged by image and illusion, agrees therefore by necessity, to surrender from the outset to a belief "in the reality of the exhibits, and at the same time has to accept the 'definition of the situation' surveyed by the exhibits,"<sup>11</sup> described and expressed through the Disney principle of *willing suspension of disbelief*.<sup>12</sup>

Main Street, USA is the first realm of experience for all visitors to the Magic Kingdom. The visitor enters, merges with the other visitors, and becomes part of the spectacle. The deliberate naiveté of the imagery contrives to introduce the visitor gradually to his surroundings, apparently allowing the opportunity for orientation and a gentle immersion into this magical world of fantasy and fun. The carnival gaiety and small-town community atmosphere belies the acute and deeper alienation which takes place within the overriding commercial reality of Main Street. The visitor's own authenticity as a consumer is used to manipulate his perception of the distinctions between the real world and the fantasy of the park.

Further throughout his journey, the visitor encounters many situations where, as both theme park attraction and movie factory, studio space and equipment seemingly play a double role, integrating the real world commerce of film and film fantasy. The mixture of movies and theme park also allows Disney the maximum flexibility in alternating the spectator's experience. Since park attractions often give people the illusion of being behind, in, and in front of the camera, audience participation can be used to simultaneously involve and inform visitors while showing off the technical wizardry of a particular show. Interactive entertainments are claimed to be central to the effectiveness of the park's many simulations.

"In many respects, the whole place is a big simulator," one Disney-MGM Studios designer noted. "We let people see both sides of the facade and how it all works by letting them take the roles of actor, technician, director or whatever. This is definitely theatre, but it's as much hands-on as it is sit and watch."<sup>13</sup>

The insidious falsity of the 'behind the scenes-sneak peek' attractions is another dimension of the manipulation of the visitor's perceptions. The visitor does not truly experience or witness the process of film-making, but is, in fact, witness only to staged simulations, demonstrations of the capabilities of the equipment in which a few visitor 'volunteers' may participate, while a very large group of visitors remain audience. Even the 'backstage tour' is a studio simulation.

Revealing the mechanisms behind an illusion often enhances rather than dilutes its power. The visitor here, however, is beguiled into a belief in his status as an 'insider', privy to a look at the wizard's control rooms. What the visitor experiences is the physical manifestation of the *idea* most visitors have as to what a film set must be *like*, rather than the reality of the genuine film set. Walt Disney World's manipulation of this backstage/onstage/in-the-audience continuum is part of a strategy of substituting a particular 'image' of events for the events themselves. This is itself another example of the complexity of the deception.

Immersed in more and more ambiguous situations until it becomes virtually impossible to distinguish between the real and the imaginary, boundaries are simultaneously blurred and intensified.

The visitors to Walt Disney World are on stage themselves, placed in the middle of the action and alienated by their part in it without being aware they are even playing a part. These unwitting *tourists* are thereby caught up in the spectacle of *play* (in the double sense of frolic or game, and of theatre presentation), placed in the theatrical role of the *chorus*; a collective and anonymous group of citizens who do not belong to the narrative--the dramatic presentation--yet are placed in the visibility of the stage. These tourists, coming to the event as spectators to a stage, are foreign to the space of the stage, yet connected to it.

The presence of this chorus in the Walt Disney World theatre completely closes the presentation around itself, and contains the audience within it. Nothing escapes. The illusion is compelling and fully enveloping. Detachment is impossible.

This splits the stage, on stage, into two visible aspects; that which is only seen, and that which is at once, seen and seeing. In this play within a play, the *tourist* chorus members are then actors and spectators simultaneously. They are actors in a drama they cannot act *upon*, distant from, and at a different level from the action. The power they are endowed with in this role, however, is the power of commentary.<sup>14</sup>



Not simply a popular culture phenomenon or an instrument of selected values, Walt Disney World's entertainment component is integrated with a 'utopian' experiment--not just in space-use, but the theatre of spectacle.<sup>15</sup>

Addressing the public need for collective theatricality and participation, the Walt Disney World experience provides the illusion of community, however ephemeral and artificial. Included in this spectacle are chances to respond to a public environment that allows "play-acting, both to be watched and to be participated in, in a public sphere. ...Disney has created a place, indeed a whole public world, full of sequential occurrences, of big and little drama, of hierarchies of importance and excitement, with opportunities to respond at the speed of rocketing bobsleds (or rocketing rockets, for all that) or of horse-drawn street cars."<sup>16</sup>

*Recurring throughout...are episodes in which the visitor is expected to join together with other visitors in enacting the mythic script...ie. the operators on a ride will very often ask the passengers to act in concert for the good of the members.*

*While it would be difficult to see these circumstances as creating anything like genuine community, the effort...is directed toward creating at least the illusion of co-operative Gemeinschaft. ...every visitor is guaranteed a happy and equal fantasy.* <sup>17</sup>

In this world of total order and control, Walt Disney does not offer or allow the possibility for the element of *risk*, an integral and spontaneous aspect of the political experience. It is this experience and the sense of the unknown, potentially dangerous, violent, and chaotic, that makes the city exciting. Instead "Walt Disney balanced this by planning for disorder--replacing the chanciness of modern urban life with futuristic rides and funhouse boat trips. All surprises occurred in the dark. Experiences were safe, coming predictably, one at a time, like the steady crawl of celluloid between the sprockets of a projector."<sup>18</sup> Disney's form of play is that of a 'riskless risk', providing "a sense of imminent danger and the likelihood of disaster without the culmination of either."<sup>19</sup>

Curiously, in this world, "You have to pay for the Public Life."<sup>20</sup>

The continual (re)cycling of 'programmed events' at strict temporal intervals, combined with the geographical proximity of all the attractions, supported by their collapsed movie-set-construction layout ensures the tourist the countenance of an infinitely flexible itinerary within this otherwise rigidly controlled world. The spontaneous flexibility of this ultimate packaged tour seems to provide the visitor with complete freedom of adventure and choice.<sup>21</sup> Armed with the representational 'map' of the tour guide booklet, the visitors are intentionally dispersed and surrendered to shepherding Disney guides. The tourists then both lead themselves and are led through a succession of attractions and exhibits. Yet the visitors do not *really* map their own routes...

The central issue in the Disney experience is the degree to which interpretation is forced, as opposed to the degree to which the visitor has freedom in interpreting, creating and enacting narratives.

The encompassing theatrical presentation takes the form of a closed system--a playing which occurs within a play. Combined with the tightly closed physical theatrical spaces, the internal ground rules of Disney World's abstract theatrical spaces are reinforced. Nothing is able to intrude upon the illusion.

The Disney tourist is thrust into the role of an acting narrator, within the clearly defined confines of the Disney narrative. The control and maintenance of its synergetic environmental illusions takes precedence over consideration for the individual personal experience of the occupants of the space. The visitor, then reduced to "no more than a possible performance of a certain number of trajectories"<sup>22</sup> within the given narrative structure, discovers that "the freedom of their own personal narrative is constrained not only by these codes (of the language of Disney World) but also by the representation of an imaginary history contained in a stereotyped system of representations. In order to utter their own story, the visitor is forced to borrow these representations. They are manipulated by the system, even when they seem to choose their tour freely."<sup>23</sup>



The Disney narrative is not one which involves an itinerary in time. Instead, taking as its form the representation of the map, the narrative is closely related to a picture,<sup>24</sup> more geography than events. Sites throughout the circuit exist not as moments in a narrative *ordeal*, such as would be integral to the re-enactment of an exemplary journey. Its itinerary is not connected to narrative through promenade, but through the linking of a succession of *places*,<sup>25</sup> which act as a *frame* for the representation and the description, which constitutes the narrative. In this play of spaces, the visitor's tour becomes a narrative--their itinerary becomes a narrative, revealing an understanding of the *picture* as a whole, an interpretive reading of the Disney representation, a geographically inscribed reference system for its discourse. Cast in the role of the *ceremonial storyteller*, the visitor enacts, at each stop along the circuit, the morals and founding narratives of America--according to the Disney version. This *mythic* narrative recalls repeatedly the contradictions and conflicts within these narratives, then idealizes and reaffirms them, legitimized and justified.<sup>26</sup>

....fragment about a prisoner painting a landscape on the wall of his cell showing a miniature train entering a tunnel. When his jailers come to get him, he asks them "politely to wait a moment, to allow me to verify something in the little train in my picture. As usual, they started to laugh, because they considered me to be weak-minded. I made myself very tiny, entered into my picture and climbed into the little train, which started moving, then disappeared into the darkness of the tunnel. For a few seconds longer, a bit of flaky smoke could be seen coming out of the round hole. Then this smoke blew away, and with it the picture, and with the picture, my person..." Herman Hess

*It is the discursive figure of the image that is itself the selection of relations of elements in the world, the construction of the world in the form of an analogic model that covers over reality with the network of its lines and surfaces. It also does so with its names, thus providing a transformed equivalent.*<sup>27</sup>

The spectator tourist is drawn into a seemingly creative act, but one which does not result in any fusion of his individuality or creative energy and intention with that of the author. His own individuality is subordinated to the author's intentions. Every tourist creates images in accordance with the representational guidance planned, created, and presented by Disney. There is an imbruity which results from the fragmented nature of the presentations which seemingly provides each viewer with the opportunity to 'fill in the blanks' with personal associations and references. In fact, so thorough and complete is the imagery, that the visitor's behaviour and attention are subordinated to the engrossing presentation.

Those images which lodge in the mind in a narrative sequence do so because the narrative has been strongly focussed on "turning points in highly symbolic gestures and actions, and the memorability of particular phrases and images."<sup>28</sup> The visitor "nonetheless remains an outsider looking at something that while seemingly liberated from the constraints of frame, nevertheless remains framed within the organizer's selection both of the particular assemblage and of the selected era."<sup>29</sup>

The audience does participate actively in this mass entertainment, labouring considerably in a captivated and consuming effort to absorb, objectify, identify, and analogize the presentations.<sup>30</sup> However, the 'tourist' in the experience does not actively involve in generating new and original expressions and interpretations through any possible unique and personal perspective.

Attention is diverted from perceptual and exploratory possibilities and toward binding myths, goals, promises, and descriptions of reality,<sup>31</sup> as given by the presentation.

*The artistic genius, the solitary and pointless player in search of finely-honed absolutes, lost credibility. He was replaced by the acts of a group in search of recognition, involving new players and new spectators. 32*

With no strong sense of *presence* or of *effective action*, passive users abandon critical exploration in favour of the immediate play of unreal images, enjoying and appreciating both the spaces and styles of their performances. "The combination of the primacy of existence, the spectacularization of technology, the uninhibited use of information and the predilection for play"<sup>33</sup> provide an opportunity for participation in the *community of the spectacle--of celebration--*in which "different languages, different forms of expression, different instruments of communication are all compared and integrated."<sup>34</sup>

This celebration of the spectacle, of the performance of images, is simply *fun*. Yet it is a fun torn by *information* from the inventive and socializing power of *story* and *play*.

The *pseudo-event* and *storytelling* are incongruous.

The rules, information, and explanation which benefit the pseudo-event impedes storytelling,<sup>35</sup> restricting the liberating amplitude of genuine *play*, as the pseudo-event imposes precise, arbitrary, and indisputable rules upon the play.<sup>36</sup> "The game is thereby amputated of its principle point, which is *an uncertain outcome*--the possibility of failure without which the game is no longer fun. The approach is fundamentally contradictory in that it creates the rules of a game that has already been played out--the result has been programmed in advance."<sup>37</sup>

*"Fun" is this quasi-religion's version of "sense of communion", but it is a "fun" that has been wrenched from any close association with ordinary story and play... When our imagery and other entertainment stimuli come wholly from outside ourselves, our internally originated imagery which generates our ordinary playful, story impulses, is much diminished. We are vulnerable to being stuck in what we call boredom... Story and play are among the main builders of essential human abilities and have always been our active solutions to boredom, lassitude, and fragmentation... Yet to tell or write or give a story in whatever form, one must be both imaginatively "in" and "out" of the experience. By immersing pilgrims in "real unreal" effects so that they can no longer be "out" of the experience, no longer see it imaginatively in their minds in order to experience it, Disney eliminates the being "in" it, the empathetic understanding.* 38

"Central to the Disney programme there is a singleminded, undeviating goal which is: to entertain, to please and to provide fun for all those who wish to be placed in the role of *passive* fun lovers. This goal assumes an *active* regulator *in control* of the system, with a *passive*, regulated audience at the receiving end."<sup>39</sup> "In their tone and presentation, exhibits in the Kingdom are generally designed to encourage the passivity of the visitor; Disney has found and packaged the excitement, and the observer is released from any effort necessary to engage in or create the activity,"<sup>40</sup> since, at least within the confines of the park, he has not traveled a great distance to any one exhibit, and he is less likely to expend a great deal of effort, or invest a great deal in his experience of any one exhibit.<sup>41</sup> He is truly a tourist.

"The Disney approach is that of a packaged tour where the packaging is the message--how things are packaged takes emotional and structural precedence over the actual content of the exhibit."<sup>42</sup> The exhibits and attractions seem to exist primarily as formula, structurally similar, and composed of a series of scenes, episodes and happenings--a static sequence of narrative *functions*, strung together in simple and conventional plot structures. History and the future, fantasy and adventure, are all packaged into distinct units, yet seamlessly blended in theme and structure, thereby substituting a particular 'image' of events for the events themselves.

By abandoning a commitment to literal events and consequently transcending the implications of accurate interpretations, Disney achieved a freedom to juxtapose, *play*, and *work* with events at will. The more these liberated 'materials' were infused, point by point with purposeful, systematic meaning and made to yield to the Disney scheme, the more they began to belong more to Disney than to history.<sup>43</sup>

As with all pseudo-images and pseudo-events, the broader the generalizations, the less detailed the *actual* account can be and still maintain its essential plausibility. This molding and filtering into distinct symbols and images strips unique events of their particular motivations and circumstances, dissolving literal events into analogous events. Formulaic distillation of content renders the narrative detail to such an extent that the stories presented are reduced to familiar and recurrent symbolic images. Injected sequentially into the basic plot structure, these images replace the plot with formal and repetitive signs and symbols. Each of Disney's attractions contains physical elements that evoke a specific time, place, and storyline, but their images are organized into brief episodes or '*moving snapshots*'. Although "each unit is well shaped as a minimal sequence, the succession as a whole ultimately goes nowhere."<sup>44</sup>

*"Each segment remains a vignette, a glittering fragment, a caught segment of formal beauty having the drawback of lyrical moments abstracted from continuous narrative."* <sup>45</sup>

*It is the experience of simultaneity of different, spatially separated happenings that puts the audience...into that condition of suspense which moves between space and time and claims the categories of both orders for itself. It is the simultaneous nearness and remoteness of things -- their nearness to one another in time and their distance from one another in space -- that constitutes that spatio-temporal element, that two-dimensionality of time, which is the real medium of the film and the basic category of its world-picture. 46*

The frame for the visitor's experience inside Disney's attractions is both the temporal limit of its beginning and ending, and the spatial boundaries of the visitor's visual limits.

The *action-time* of the visitor's experience, the consciousness of the felt duration of imagined and presented events and experiences, is distinct from, and non-coincidental with the fixed and ordered succession of moments in 'real time'. The temporal illusion is further propelled through montage, the techniques of filmic time subverting the linearity of theatre-time, introducing the freedom of a thoroughly subjective, irregular character.

Throughout the attractions, space is compartmentalized and tied inextricably to the visitor's motion through that theatrical space, the choreography of movement and momentum painstakingly controlled through cinematic pacing, rhythm and syntax.

Like the frame of pictorial art, spatial edges are clearly delineated in the static, unalterably fixed space of the theatre, creating an illusion which is only partial. Within this homogeneous *stage-space*, the viewer's field of vision is practically limitless, restricted only by the limits of the images' *temporal rhythms*--what the eye and mind are capable of absorbing in the brief moments of the space's exposure.

The *action-space*, the visual frame in the Disney attractions, confines the flow of movement within the frame in every direction, contained and shaped by its visual margins--the deliberately ambiguous blackness of space or walls which limit the visitor's perception to the immediate given area. The three-dimensional area of the screen-space, existing just beyond the visible limits, which functions as an imaginary extension of the visual on-screen space, of phenomenal action-space, is denied.

With the elimination of this essential physical and perceptual condition, the concrete reference for all these 'cinematic spaces' is severed.

Each 'theatrical space' floats or drifts, dislocated from every other in a sequential staging of stiff, very contained, and strongly framed fragments, delivered fleetingly and in quick succession as one travels through the exhibit (usually carried by some type of automated vehicle which keeps the group on a strict time schedule and prevents lingering). A system of swivelling, separated cars on a mechanical conveyance mechanism, wired for stereophonic sound, sways and turns, rotating the visitor in a continuous ballet of movements that direct and focus the attention and control locomotion through it.<sup>47</sup> Space itself seems to move, unfolding and collapsing, approaching, receding, turning and dissolving. The obscurity of the cars ahead, and the invisibility of the cars behind give the occupants a private and intimate feeling similar to that of film viewing.<sup>48</sup> Like the experience of film, all the 'travellers' must experience the attraction at the same rate, not more or less slowly than the people around them. The experience cannot be speeded up or slowed down. The visitor can see it more than once, repeating the experience, but cannot leave in the middle either, as he is shuttled through each exhibit in a strict regimen.

The spectator is fixed physically, but not as the subject of aesthetic experience--here he is in permanent motion, identifying with the camera lens (as mind's eye), which shifts perpetually in distance and direction. Yet in this circumstance, new spaces cannot be created with a simple shift in viewpoint, a glimpse of the action from another 'character's' point of view. The 'camera' is *fixed*--its perspective is invariably that of the visitor, as acting narrator, and shifts only in accordance with the narrator's position.

The organization of episodes within this *frame* is one of gaps and forward-leaping, reminiscent of the risky film technique of injecting a physical break into the body of a film. The basic grammar of film syntax cautions against this technique, which constitutes a dangerous threat to the film's narrative, drawing the viewer out of the film



psychologically, and suggesting the more contemplative detachment of a picture. Within the Disney attractions this break is caused by a brief gap in presentation as the tourist's attention is shifted from one episode to the next. The syntax of this episodic organization is founded on cinematic arrangement and juxtapositioning of scenes, foreshadowing events and relationships in great economy. Yet, where the region of *shadow* --the unseen--in film establishes the invisible relationship of one scene to the next, the Disney visitor is presented with a barrage of episodes and jerky *perceptual* movements, as the tourist is impelled through the stage-space of the presentation. This results in a disjunctive shearing of attention *between* episodes, momentarily dissolving control over the direction of the visitor's attention.

The visitor, released from total engagement fleetingly, is then distanced from the presentation, becoming more aware of the apparatus of each episode. Scenery, 'actors', colour and composition, all "objects and changing poses and gestures are revealed not only in their visual artistry, but in their functions, as the hinges of a plot."49

The fusion of theatre and cinema's opposing structures constitutes a complex and hybridized theatrical spectacle. The static space and transitory, but continuous nature of the theatre collides with the dynamic and discontinuous, yet permanent cinematic work. The tourist is exposed to a dizzying, multitude of images and events of ambiguous origin, presented in cinematic *style*, as he is thrust through a series of sequential theatrical spaces, often on amusement park mechanical contrivances, with the manic tempo of channel-surfing.

The modulation and continual shifting of the visitor's perception and experience within the theatrical perspective of this *spectacle* depends upon a critical balancing between composition and its dissolution and therefore "involves the balancing of a psychology of linear tension and the psychology of visual gestalts..."50 The camera, functioning in the placement of the visitor in a dynamic and intentional relationship with the action, assumes an inherent objectivity: "...a camera does not merely see, it sees from."51



The *tourist* finds it virtually impossible to struggle against the influences of the perspective from which this 'reality' is composed,<sup>52</sup> and is swept along within the author's intentions because "the duration of our view, the selection of detail, and the context of juxtaposed shots are all we have to go on, and the camera does not openly declare its biases. It is *uncharacterized*."<sup>53</sup>

*It demonstrates clearly that the technology of the camera is not neutral; it contains its own implicit epistemological, constitutive influences, which are both aesthetic and hermeneutic.*<sup>54</sup>

"From the time-charged space and space-bound time, there follows the fact that the screenplay, in contrast to the theatre play, has no aesthetic existence independent of its performance, and that its characters have no aesthetic existence outside the actors."<sup>55</sup>

Breaking through this cinematic dimension, Disney's characters are given a concrete presence. Further, the *theatre* in which the Disney characters *play* is not limited to the sphere of Walt Disney's World, but extends throughout our universe where their existences take other *material* forms of 'life'.

In pursuing the goal of '*total theatre*', Walt Disney World brings forth a simulation more vivid and tangible than any original could ever be. "Most of the 'original' scenes and characters which Disney[land] reproduces with hyper-realistic accuracy are, of course, the fictional inventions of Walt Disney's own films: Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Peter Pan, etc. But Disney's dream of a plastic fantasyland where the traditionally separated worlds of man, animal, nature and technology could be brought together in a miraculous synthesis"<sup>56</sup> is representative of the materialistic interpretation of the universe which pervades contemporary civilization.

The paradox of this theatre exists in the perfectly repeatable gestures of its animated audio-animatronic characters and presentations, as well as the incredible predictability of the visitors' actions and behaviour. "Disney has achieved the opposite of Artaud's notion "that the theatre is the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, can never be made in the same way twice".<sup>57</sup>

*The dream becomes the paradigm of the whole world picture, in which reality and unreality, logic and fantasy, the banality and sublimation of existence, form an indissoluble and inexplicable unity... Art is seized by a real mania for totality. It seems possible to bring everything into relationship with everything else, everything seems to include within itself the law of the whole... The accent is now on the simultaneity of the contents of consciousness, the immanence of the past in the present, the constant flowing together of the different periods of time...the impossibility of differentiating and defining the media in which the mind moves. 58*

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*"since the world drives to a delirious state of things, we must drive to  
a delirious point of view."*

La transparence du Mal.  
Jean Baudrillard

Disney's phantasmagorical world of total theatre takes on the semblance of a universal carnival--a playful, carefree world, filled with the fantastic, the frivolous, and the delightful. Rich in detail, colour, sound and *sensational* enchantment, this appears to be a bright and rationally organized world brimming with a creative wealth of exuberant, unbridled imagination. Suffused with the radiance of harmony, community, and joy, Walt Disney World offers a haven of pure and innocent fun, infused with the exhilaration of technical and cinematic marvels and roller-coaster-ride-in-the-dark adventure.

In a lively spirit of magic and mirth, the long disconnected realms of plant, animal and technology unite with man and are seamlessly blended in an animated and energetic synthesis with the exotic appearance of a paradisaal garden. Its material syntheses present themselves most frequently in the form of the 'mythically comic', a vehicle of humour in the guise of the marvelous. As individual elements, the form they take is that of benign *caricature*; of imitation, exaggeration, the passive and naively 'figurative'.<sup>1</sup>

The ambrosial climate conceals something more dark and ominous beneath its bright and whimsical facade. Behind the curtains...

The masquerade ball or party is a more accurate motif than the carnival for the world that reveals itself to us upon closer examination. The intoxicating, Dionysian<sup>2</sup> cacophony of sensory stimulation has much in common with the '*grotesque ball*'. The turbid atmosphere is one of cloak and veil revelry: of magical transformations; an openness to the unusual; and the perceived belief in, and anticipation of the the fabulous and supernatural.<sup>3</sup> Total alienation, disorientation, and chaotic dissolution are recurring themes.

The masquerading anonymous, mysterious, and costumed circumstances of the grotesque ball create an atmosphere in which genuine individuality is hidden by material concealments. The participants become *actors*, each arising as "*Personality*", a more vivid and alluring phoenix.

## COLD STOR AGE





The spectator-participant, watching the spectacle from a perceived considerable distance, is taken in hand and thrust into the frenzy, to be summarily swallowed up and carried away within the swirling currents of the extravaganza.

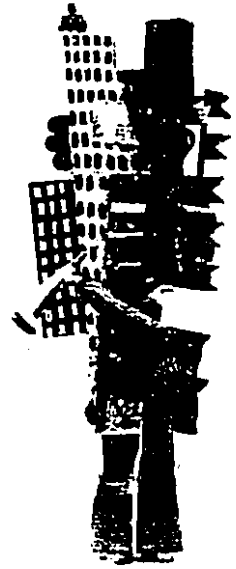
Asserting itself under the "rule of the whirlpool,"<sup>4</sup> a seemingly minor incident triggers a series of turbulent events resulting in total chaos. Reality and illusion merge.

Becoming involved in the spectacle at a time when very specific meaning and intention is attached to events and strategic deceptions produce intertwining realities, the spectator's sense of reality is confused. Alienation ensues. The rupture with reality occurs at a point when the contrast between the visitor's perception of reality and what exists materially challenge and exceed human sensibilities.<sup>5</sup> The hapless tourist, immersed in the spectacle and overwhelmed by phenomenal sensory stimulation, becomes an innocent and unwitting *actor* in the play within the play.

In Disney's *mardi gras*, however, the participant-actors' unique personalities are destroyed, not by the concealment of the mask, but by exposure to the unrelenting glare of *visibility*. While the Disney 'characters' all have recognizable costumes, roles, and scripts, the visitor is stripped of his unique personality and identity, reduced to one of a multitude of nameless, faceless, extras in the play--a drama the tourist cannot effect.

The tourist comes to the drama with a clear and distinct impression. He believes he knows his destination and what to expect.

*Disney World is carefully designed to promote a frontstage view and to suppress backstage information from public awareness. This control over information and behaviour is illustrated in the careful separation of theme areas and in the separation of work from leisure. The costumed employees who work above ground are not seen in areas where their particular dress would destroy the illusion of the theme idea.... this sequestering makes it easy to forget that work is actually going on, so that the park's operation often seems far more effortless than it is; visitors can thus enjoy their leisure without being reminded of the everyday world of work....*



*the human workers spend their efforts processing visitors into and out of the rides while machines proceed with the entertaining.*

*In short, this is a situation in which those visible to the public are interchangeable, replaceable people doing low-skill repetitive jobs, whose main job is to promote the the work of expensive, complex machines that do the actual entertaining. Behind the scenes are the members of the technical elite who create and maintain the machines that maintain the park. 6*

Beneath Walt Disney World's physical surface, in its subterranean corridors, exists a dark and rayless underworld which transforms the whole earthly creation into an immense robot. The lifeblood of this world, these underground excavations are sequestered passages for workers and utility lines, buried recesses holding the mechanical secrets of Disney's vital computers and machinery. The junctions between these two realms, the meeting points of tunnels and surface, are a closely guarded secret.

The Indiana Jones Adventure, a 100 million dollar attraction, is the latest in Disney's growing repertoire. Wedged between the Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse and the Jungle Cruise in Disneyland's Adventureland, it consumes 2.2 million *cubic* feet of priceless and invisible real estate.<sup>7</sup> What is remarkable about this attraction is the seamless way the ride is blended with the pre-ride experience; the submerging of the tourists into this subterranean grotto; and the breaking of physical and visual barriers that had characteristically and invariably separated attractions. The tunnel to the temple is broken frequently by fractures in its ceiling, revealing glimpses of the verdant landscape of the Jungle Cruise. Descending deeply to the temple crypt, the tourist-bearing Jeeps must also cross beneath the the tracks of the Disney railroad.<sup>8</sup> Notable also is Disney's treatment of the visitor within the narrative of the attraction. For the first time, visitors are addressed outrightly, in their genuine roles as *tourists*.

"The story begins near a bend in the Jungle Cruise River, where the abundant tropical foliage serves as a leafy backdrop for Jones, which is set deep in an Indian jungle.

...Waiting audiences soon discover they are part of a group of fortune seekers and tourists who have foolishly descended on the ruin, spurred by press reports about Mara's magical powers.

...By the time you reach the ride, the lengthy pre-ride story has provided a surprising amount of information. You know that Indy's enterprising friend Sallah has organized the tours against the archaeologist's wishes; that there are still many unknown dangers lurking behind every stone idol and twisting vine; and that never, under ANY circumstances should you look into Mara's eyes.

But of course you do--and that's the event that sets the ride in motion."<sup>9</sup>

The *grotesque* is a structure.

Walt Disney World is characterized by suddenness and surprise; by short scenes in quick succession organized around a bare minimum of a plot, leaving little room for summary or elaborate descriptions. Depending more on physical actions and gestures for its form, the structure is gauged not by language, but is characterized by movement--*action*.<sup>10</sup> Psychological experiences are conveyed by projecting their content directly onto the *screen*--the visage of the subject character. The eye of the beholder is thereby substituted for the consciousness of the character. Fusing the dialogue with the physical expressions, the 'human' physiognomy (visual anthropomorphism) is transformed into a huge field of action, in which every subtle physical movement becomes an expressive event.<sup>11</sup> Showing us the 'face' of objects shows us the face of man, for what makes objects expressive are the human expressions projected onto them.<sup>12</sup> The picture that is created--the visual information--is as a poetic composition, coherent, organic, and governed by a definitely and deliberately conceived feeling, not dictated by emotional pressures.<sup>13</sup> It is cleanly and coolly contrived. We encounter these emotions in situations filled with ominous tension and perceived risk, which are characterized and signalled to us by the irregular progression of the narrative and apparent arbitrariness of the narrator.



The narrator provides elaborate speeches and commentaries with events he narrates, which serves to embellish the events and add an "emotional" perspective which ingratiate the reader. In this technique, the narrator may be regarded as the tourist-visitor placed within the narrative, or, more specifically, as man himself. The inner form of the narrative is often parable, with a clearly moral set, making the impact of events greater and more realistic. The obliging visitor is artfully manipulated into the role of the *storyteller*, recounting a story that is, and yet is not his own.<sup>14</sup>

The deliberate imposition of a *seemingly familiar* intermediary gives the participant a sense of security. Disney character guides inspire confidence with their disarming charm. Our experience with them in *their* world is pre-conditioned by their 'character' history in *our* world--we can anticipate how they will act and what will happen to them. Their stories have been told, and we delight in the familiarity of their machinations.

Duplicitous in their double roles as both caricatural *characters* and *human* beings, the human guides belong to both categories simultaneously. Acting as *explicadors* who interpret and explain the action taking place, they also cross repeatedly *through* the theatre's plane. Ostensibly interacting with the characters as freely as with the visitors, the guides even seem to interact with the mechanical dolls (audio-animatronics), alienating the visitors further.



*...there is no way that the visitor can really 'interact' with any of the programmed robots. In addition, the visitor cannot look beneath the 'behaviour' of the presenters, for slips in control, off-hand comments, or similar behaviours, to help make a judgement about the 'truth' or 'realism' of the exhibit...as with real humans. The visitor then has a very "concrete illusion" to contend with; the concreteness comes from the actual presence of the robot, the illusion comes from the way the visitor is being led to react to the robot as if it were a real human or animal....*<sup>15</sup>

When "figures turn into mechanically operated dolls and the lifeless, mechanical sphere enters the animated organic one and thereby alienates our world,"<sup>16</sup> we are confronted with the grotesque.

Even the machines that serve the animated characters adopt human qualities in their 'portrayal' as playthings,<sup>17</sup> increasing the hallucination.

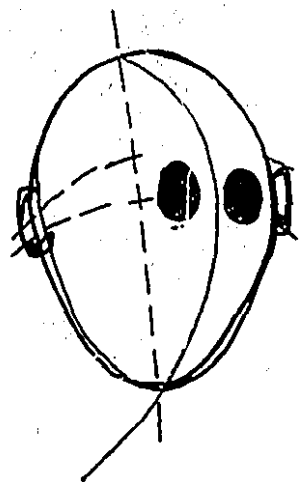
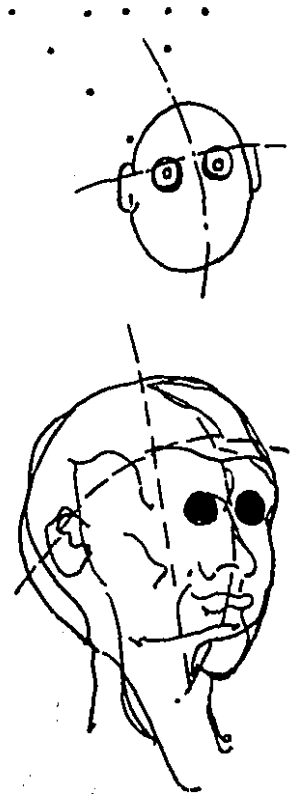
As certain characters in the *play*, the genuine human beings stand in contrast with the stereotyped characters. Thrust into a dreamworld where they cannot truly act or effect the action, the tourist can only 'behave', following the programme as a rational and polite guest. The *acting* tourists submit to the commands they receive, obeying all such impulses as though puppets guided by some alien force, even when they seem to freely make choices.<sup>18</sup> The emphasis is definitely on action-control: the 'appropriate' behaviour of the visitor is paramount.

*"The world is a madhouse. But the reverse is equally true: the insane appear to be the most reasonable people."* <sup>19</sup>

*The mechanical object is alienated by being brought to life, the human being by being deprived of it. Among the most persistent motifs of the grotesque we find human bodies reduced to puppets, marionettes, and automata, and their faces frozen into masks. ...the mask, instead of covering a living and breathing face, has taken over the role of the face itself. If one were to tear the mask off, the grinning image of the bare skull would come to light.* <sup>20</sup>

The images encountered are the images of a world in the process of dissolution and estrangement, where the greatest alienation is man's estrangement from his fellow man. Its presentation is fundamentally an expression of our anguish, consequent of our tragic failure to orient ourselves in the physical universe ...because it is "*absurd*".<sup>21</sup> The grotesque can only be experienced in the act of *reception*, as a presence sensed--an uneasiness and ambiguity felt. The individual forms of its elements and their detachable contents are enigmatic. Saturated with diverse meanings, they recurrently appear in humorous and caricatural contexts.

Taken as phenomenon, however, the grotesque is clearly distinguished.<sup>22</sup> The familiar world is unmasked, exposing glimpses into the ominous shadows of an arbitrary and sinister chimera.



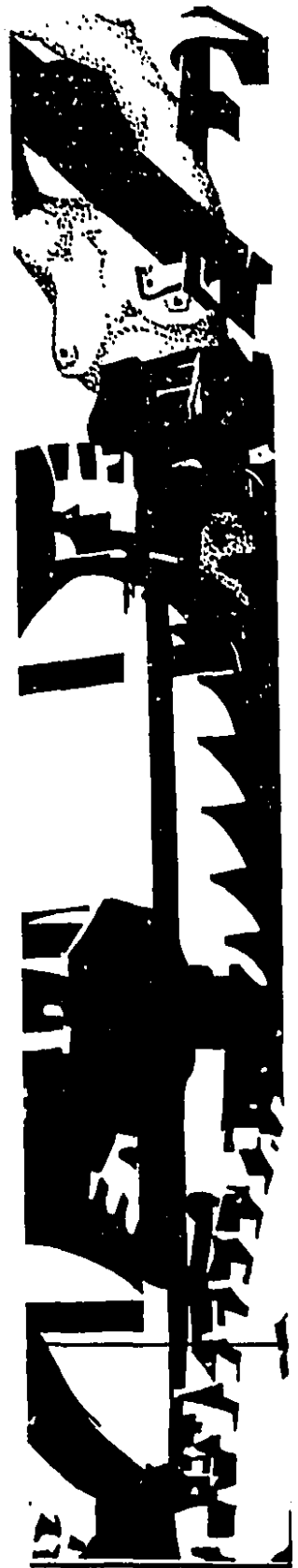
"The grotesque is--and is not--our world."<sup>23</sup>

The violent and clashing contrasts between form and content, the unstable mix of heterogeneous elements, and the explosive force of the paradoxical, present a world which is simultaneously, both ridiculous and terrifying.<sup>24</sup>

Structurally, the tourist-actor is confronted with several alienating and disorientating conditions: "the fusion of realms which we know to be separated; the abolition of the law of statics; the loss of identity; the distortion of 'natural' size and shape; the suspension of the categories of objects (opposition); the destruction of personality; and the fragmentation of the historical order".<sup>25</sup>

The depths of this grotesque world are further revealed in contrast with its opposite, the sublime. The ensuing astonishment induces "that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror' a sense of the mind being filled with what it contemplates, held and transfixed."<sup>26</sup> Rather than guiding our view towards the sublime's ideal of a loftier and supernatural world, the grotesque reveals a dark and diabolical, Cimmerian crypt. This antithetical relationship demonstrates a contrast that permits no *reconciliation*.<sup>27</sup> The sublime fills the soul with emotion and passion, inducing a fear of pain or death as a precondition to it. The grotesque, in contrast, is cold and emotionless, instilling a fear of life itself, and emptying the soul.

Recognizing and revealing this phenomenon is a somewhat wicked enterprise in itself. Apparently meaningful things are shown to have no meaning. Familiar objects begin to look strange.<sup>28</sup> "The ambiguous way we are affected by it results from our awareness that the familiar, apparently harmonious world is alienated under the impact of abysmal forces which break it up and shatter its coherence."<sup>29</sup> Our confidence in our world is shaken by the dynamic and *grotesque* exposé of the catastrophic futility of our enduring *faith* in contemporary traditional and symbolic orders of social meaning and appearances.



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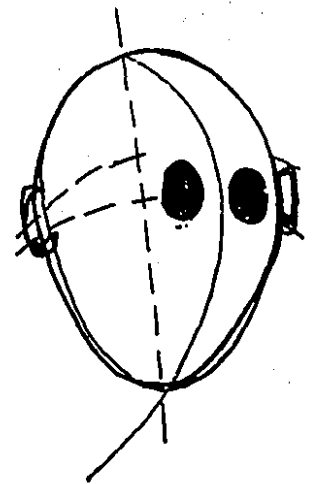
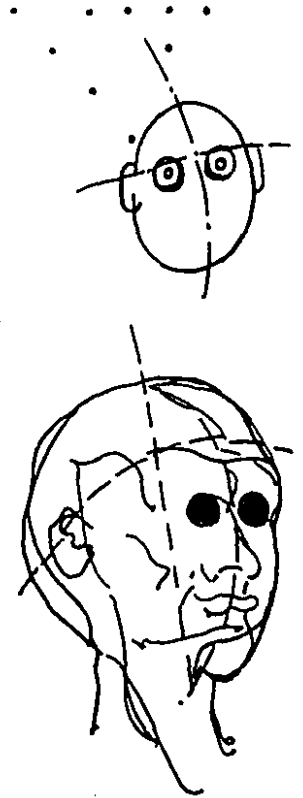
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"Annihilation of the evil figure resolves the conflict. It is a simple childish rather than childlike world: divide into obvious good and evil, denounce and destroy the evil, watch goodness triumph 'with a smile and a song'." 33

"This is a fatal step in a period without religion, which yearns to be convinced of the omnipotence of contemporary man's science, or rather of its magic."<sup>34</sup> Walt Disney World demonstrates *technology*, and the concomitant potential 'horror of robots' --the malice of objects--and also the mysterious natural world, shown to be subdued, tamed and cultivated in the service of an omniscient mankind. The technological dream has been fulfilled, imitation has reached its apex, and man now takes his destined station--occupying centre stage, in a *final* eclipse of the *theatre*.



We have been seduced, and abandoned -- brought to a point of fascination that leaves us hovering on the brink of awe. A state of bewilderment and oscillation has been induced in we, astonished *tourists*. The sense of *awe* and *wonder* we were intended to be inspired with has been usurped and replaced by the *hyperreal*.

We are seduced by appearances, *fascinated* by image, left without reconciliation or fulfillment, with no *essential* truth, only a nostalgic cosmology of sensibility.

"Such an experience of awe would come from our direct and unqualified perception of the powers of nature, of our own fragility in the meeting of these forces, and our skill in creating the technological and social tools that enable us to come to a point of meeting. Awe of this sort is empowering to the person who experiences it, partly because it involves a recognition of one's self in relation to these forces of nature."<sup>35</sup>

Walt Disney World is simply a *wish*, caught in fantasy's snare:<sup>36</sup> "it lets us smile and suspect that nothing is what it seems, yet what *seems* to be is, so that we find what appears to be our unity in Disney's enveloping "real unreal". Total nostalgic ease--our psychopathic concept of earthly heaven--has always been one exclusive aim of our steady, expansionist pride."<sup>37</sup>



"It triggered in me a bleak sense of the paradoxical power and insignificance of humanness in and under such technology."<sup>38</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1963), pp. 31, 53, 61.
- 2 Dionysian atmosphere, but without the sensual and erotic connotations.
- 3 Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, p. 116.
- 4 Vischer, F. T., "Asthetik" in Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, p. 115.
- 5 Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, p. 118.
- 6 Johnson, David, "Disney World as Structure and Symbol: Recreating the American Experience", *Journal of Popular Culture*, Winter 1989.
- 7 Hodgins, Paul, "Disney adventure features Indiana Jones", *The Toronto Star*, April 1, 1995.
- 8 *ibid.*
- 9 *ibid.*
- 10 Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, p. 39.
- 11 Panofsky, Erwin, "Style and Medium in the Motion Pictures", ed. Daniel Talbot, *Film: An Anthology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).
- 12 Belazs, Bela, "Theory of the Film", ed. Daniel Talbot, *Film: An Anthology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).
- 13 Langer, Susan, "A Note on the Film", ed. Daniel Talbot, *Film: An Anthology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).
- 14 Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, pp. 62-63.
- 15 Johnson, David, "Disney World as Structure and Symbol: Recreating the American Experience".
- 16 Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, p. 195.
- 17 Berland, David I., "Disney and Freud: Walt Meets the Id", *Journal of Popular Culture*, Winter 1989.
- 18 Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, pp. 42-43.
- 19 *ibid*, p. 61.
- 20 *ibid*, pp. 183-184.
- 21 *ibid*, p. 185.
- 22 *ibid*, p. 181.
- 23 *ibid*, p. 37.
- 24 *ibid*, p. 53.
- 25 *ibid*, p. 185.
- 26 Burke, Edmund, "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful", Second Edition, 1759, in Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics From Classical Greece to the Present*, (Tscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1975), p. 194.
- 27 Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*, p. 59.
- 28 *ibid*, p. 61.
- 29 *ibid*, p. 37.
- 30 *ibid*, p. 186.

- 31    ibid.
- 32    ibid, p. 188.
- 33    Real, Michael, *Mass Mediated Culture*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 59.
- 34    Michelis, P. A., "Space-Time and Contemporary Architecture", ed. Daniel Talbot, *Film: An Anthology*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).
- 35    Schultz, John, "The Fabulous Presumption of Disney World: Magic Kingdom in the Wilderness", *The Georgia Review*, vol. 42, Summer 1988.
- 36    Marin, Louis, *Utopics: Spatial Play*, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1983, p. 246.
- 37    Schultz, John, "The Fabulous Presumption of Disney World: Magic Kingdom in the Wilderness".
- 38    ibid.

*"...we are all little more than puppets, unless we believe..."*

The Private Affairs of Bel Ami.

From the myths of the gods wielding magical powers to tamper with the natural orders of the world, inflicting both bliss and destruction on mankind, to the everlasting fascination with creating mechanical gadgets and mannequins, android machines and audio-animatronic dolls 'who' think, talk and interact with him, man has always been impelled to create images of himself. Through this metaphorical deification can be traced the very idea of humanity, which is changing so rapidly that it can be projected to the very disappearance of man. From a belief in *myth*, to humanism's establishment of *fact*, to our contemporary struggle with the realization that facts are no more than *assumptions*, humankind has passed into another, dark and unknown phase. This is an era characterized by a subconscious disorientation concerning the nature of time and space, and man's relationship with both. Time and space have merged into one single entity: the *present*.

The *experience* of time is characterized by a discordance which is resolved and brought into concord by the invention of the *plot*; the harmonious synthesis of disparate elements of the human world. Rather than describing the world in the terms of "seeing-as", narrative redescribes the world, in terms of "as if". In our condition of simultaneity, mankind must search for a more poetic role of the imagination, creating meaning by responding to man's intrinsic desire to express himself, and the contemporary difficulty in telling one's story.

Imagination is ultimately the activity of symbols, narrative, and metaphor, creating new meanings which arise out of the *synthesis* and *transformation* of given images and interpretations. These new, unique and poetic meanings are liberating; transporting man to alternate spaces of *possibility*, exploring and interpreting new ways of 'being' in the world, which transcend the limits of our actual world. These perceived new worlds inspire man to *action*, offering freedom to understand the world in unique ways and to engage in forms of action which carry the potential of its transformation.

# hovering on the brink

"The need to speak, even if one has nothing to say, becomes more pressing when one has nothing to say, just as the will to live becomes more urgent when life has lost its meaning."

The Ecstasy of  
Communication.  
Jean Baudrillard

Mankind is at a critical juncture in his existence, faced with the simultaneous realization of his own creative potentiality, and his daunting proclivity for environmental and human catastrophe. The very *existence* of humanity is challenged by our own technological framework. Faced with the recognition of the enormity of his own technical power, man also must acknowledge his own insignificance in and under its potential.

The processes of late capital consumerism are rapidly dissolving the gap between technological and aesthetic culture. The overwhelming domination of the secondary in art has led to fragmentation, *fascination* and the contemporary difficulty in distinguishing between the work of art and the production of technological products. The *work* of art and architecture is being reduced to the service of objects; an empty and formal production of surface, consumer goods and images, revealing nothing of truth or unconcealment of essences.

The products of this technological 'machinery' do not merely reflect the way we see ourselves, but alter the very way we understand ourselves, and our essential relationship with our world. The catastrophic outcome of a humanized nature has created a world intolerable to man. The ambivalent condition of our post, postmodern world is currently addressed with a technopolitical attitude, clearly of domination and not reconciliation. It is the shadows of our own creative aspirations that we must explore.

The essence of architecture is locating; ordering and positioning, both physically and metaphysically. Architecture is also spatial play--the ordering and organization of experience. Architecture is a narrative expression giving form and substance to our temporal experience--the articulation and situation of human action. As the physical *representation* of narrative, architecture entails a deliberate construction of a stage, more than just a space for public ritual, it is the simultaneous articulation of a moral and spatial order, linking representation with reality.

Public space has been transformed. The body of the city can no longer be seen as a whole, but exists as a collection of strange objects and fragments. Yet man must have order.

Every society participates in a collective symbolic or mythic imagination which may no longer exist in the real experience of its citizens. Where man cannot identify patterns of order and stability in the everyday reality of his society, he will find them. If he must, he will manufacture them. When the social order and public space become too vast and fragmented to be perceived meaningfully, the individual projects, against the chaos of his world, a new mythopoeic simplification. This search for affirmation, emulating the foundations of a nostalgic remembrance, perpetuates the illusions of an order which cannot be supported. Rather than functioning to preserve that order, a pattern of identification is staged which simply mirrors that order, taking the appearance of a picture, fixed and fake. Human experience and action, collective and transcendent, cannot be assumed. This artificial affirmation, prostituted to the service of its purveyors, traps a disoriented society within the mechanics of a system that seems to be self-perpetuating, offering merely the cultural experience of collective delusions.

It is the irrevocable responsibility of architecture to recognize the necessity to engage in critical analysis and discussion of our current cultural crisis from within its own framework. Only by delving deeply into the mysteries and mechanics of our shared technological framework in a continuing search can we hope to come to a greater understanding and awareness of its workings.

Mankind must have an awareness of and assume responsibility for the current crisis of our condition. Challenging our vision of the world as standing reserve, a mechanistic view which is reductivist in nature, and commodifies even the experience of *life*, we must search for (re)cognition; an empathetic outlook based on reconciliation and not domination. Finding new ways to articulate and express the essential questions, we must individually take a personal and ethical stand, seeking to *affirm* life, through positive transformations which address the discordant nature of man's contemporary existence.

Commentary and critique are valuable tools in addressing the distance between the individual and the the world of his experience. The reading or re-enactment of given narrative involves a (re)cognition of the *life* of meaning in its symbols, creating new meaning through the creative and transformative synthesis of a sequence of events or fragments into a *story*.

For Heidegger, human-being-in-the-world involves a process of temporalization. Interpreting our actions in terms of a recollected past and a projected future into a sequence of natural time endows them with meaning.

The productive imagination involves both innovation and tradition: the poetic creation of the uniquely original by its revealing reference to the established form -- *reconciliation*.

"The figure a poem makes...It assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs a course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life--not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but a momentary stay against confusion. It has denouement. It has an outcome that though unforeseen was predestined from the first image of the original mood."  
"The Figure a Poem Makes"  
Robert Frost

*I dream of journeys repeatedly:  
Of flying like a bat deep into a narrowing tunnel,  
Of driving alone, without luggage, out a long peninsula,  
The road lined with snow-laden second growth,  
A fine dry snow ticking the windshield,  
Alternate snow and sleet, no on-coming traffic,  
And no lights behind, in the blurred side-mirror,  
The road changing from glazed tarface to a rubble of stone,  
Ending at last in a hopeless sand-rut,  
Where the car stalls,  
Churning in a snowdrift  
Until the headlights darken.*

The Far Field  
Theodore Roethke



*"The tick tock of our watches is so mechanically jerky that we no longer have ears subtle enough to hear the passage of time."*

The Poetics of Space.  
Gaston Bachelard

"Every now and then Superman feels a need to be alone with his memories, and he flies off to an inaccessible mountain range where, in the heart of the rock, protected by a huge steel door, is the Fortress of Solitude.

Here Superman keeps his robots, completely faithful copies of himself, miracles of electronic technology which, from time to time, he sends out into the world to fulfill a pardonable desire for ubiquity. And the robots are incredible, because their resemblance to reality is absolute; they are not mechanical men, all cogs and beeps, but perfect 'copies' of human beings, with skin, voice, movements, and the ability to make decisions. For Superman the Fortress is a museum of memories Everything that has happened in his adventurous life is recorded here in perfect copies or preserved in a miniaturized form of the original.

Thus, he keeps the city of Kandor, a survival from the destruction of the planet Krypton under a glass bell...."\*

Prologue:

A satellite placed in a geosynchronous orbit 22,300 miles above the equator, will remain stationary with respect to the earth, permitting sending and receiving antennas to be permanently aimed at it. Transponders on the satellite receive Earth signals, amplify them, and retransmit them.

Enter, stage-left: the talking head--

Daedalus, man and technician  
geometer of heaven's dance.  
metamorphosis  
of mortal and divine:  
the merging of textures  
to falsify time.  
Kodachrome illusions  
of mirror and of glass.

blue  
moon:  
COLD  
STOR  
AGE

\*Faith in Fakes.  
Umberto Eco

Scenario:

the voyeur's obsession,  
inventor's prophecy:  
a chronical of reverie--  
the hourglass of an epoch  
midway to the moon.

;it may be, maybe, haply, mayhap;  
if [humanly] possible,  
[wind and] weather permitting,  
everything being equal, as luck  
may have it, God willing

Deo volente

:the plot develops  
reel to reel.  
lunar eclipse - equinox.

The machine: a mirror  
of lens and aperture  
of double form; monstrous, dark.

The hybrid beast, the brute within  
to Zeus -- be vengeance thyne.

Evil is a thunderhead;  
concavity of vision.

Voyage into midnight  
a galaxy uncharted--

Image:

a dance with masks.

:once upon a time; in a time, in due time,  
in season, in the fullness of time, some  
fine day.

:in the time of, when; from time immemorial;  
meantime, meanwhile; in the meantime, in  
the interim, from day to day, from hour  
to hour; hourly, always.

Flash frame: the celestial sphere.  
The man in the moon dreams  
life as a postcard--  
blue...flat...cold.

-tilt shot:

TIME IS SORROW.

(e)lapse(d)

While the freeze frame calculates  
the trajectory of the dive,  
deep within the glass shot  
--the pond dissolves.

Soliloquy:  
to trace within a soul, burning  
the spirals of the heavens, turning.

Memory:  
an apostrophe  
etched upon a soul.

[teletranscription]

The chorus is a dance for dolls,  
of endless repetition:  
rehearsal at eleven. of  
endless repetition--  
(repeat the definition)  
endless repetition...  
endless repetition...

The music box dancer gyrates  
to the pendulum of time  
while  
the dragon and the jester,  
(inextricably bound).....

The chorus is a dance for dolls.  
A trilogy of puppetry--  
the labyrinth within.

The chorus is a dance for dolls,  
of endless repetition,  
of endless repetition.

...endless repetition...  
the truth is cast  
in a wooden cow,  
its shadow her cocoon.

The chorus is a dance for dolls,  
of endless repetition...

the beast: to be abolished?  
(the portrait lens is polished).

To rival creation  
incurable a folly--  
[match cut]  
mosaic of a rising tide  
treadmill of transcendence.

"cut to the dream sequence"  
reverie descending.

swallowed.  
like Jonah by the whale:  
a prisoner of circumstance/  
the vortex of the night...  
...gravity zero...

fade to black and white

persona:  
from the Latin for "mask"  
the psychological image of  
the character  
that is created,  
especially in relationship  
to other levels of  
reality.

DEUS EX MACHINA (de~ e's eks mak e~ ne)  
:in classical drama, a god brought to the stage in a mechanical  
contrivance to intervene in a difficult situation.

DEUS EX MACHINA  
:any unexpected or improbable person or event introduced in  
a play, story, etc. to untangle the plot.

DEUS EX MACHINA  
:FROM LATIN -- A GOD  
FROM A MACHINE.

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Anna Pavlova as Giselle, 1911

Anna Pavlova as a Sylphide in "Chopiana", 1910

### *Byzantium...*

Mickey and Minnie Mouse postcard, Walt Disney Company

"Mother Goose and Grimm", Mike Peters, 1993

Walt Disney World Admission Ticket

### *Islands...*

Walt Disney World Map, Walt Disney Company, 1992

Magic Kingdom Map, Walt Disney Company, 1992

### *a chronicle of reverie...*

Margaret Illman in "Giselle", 1992

Cinderella's Castle

Léonide Massine as the Chinese Conjuror in "Parade", 1917

## **COLD STORAGE**

Managers and the horse from "Parade", 1917

Léonide Massine as the Chinese Conjuror in "Parade", 1917