

CHAPTER TWELVE

Utopic Degeneration: Disneyland

PROPOSITION:

A degenerate utopia is ideology changed into the form of a myth.

REFERENCES:

1. Ideology is the representation of the imaginary relationship individuals maintain with their real conditions of existence.
2. Utopia is an ideological place; utopia is a sort of ideological discourse.
3. Utopia is an ideological place where ideology is put into play; it is a stage for ideological representation.
4. Myth is a narrative that resolves formally a fundamental social contradiction.

COMMENTARY:

In trying to analyze Disneyland as a utopic space, two goals are intended. First, I mean to show the permanence of some patterns of spatial organization that can be qualified as utopic. Not only can they be found in architectural schemata and related works, but they are also in works that fill a specific function with regard to reality, history, and social relations. The patterns I am seeking can all be classed, theoretically and speculatively, as expressions of utopic practice. All contain a neutralizing critical impact, and within ideology the neutralization defines the specific space for building and elaborating social theory. These patterns and functions appear in the topography of *a real space* in California, and by the visitor's real use of it. From this vantage point the even-

tual tour that visitors commence when they come to Disneyland can be viewed as the narrative that characterizes utopia. The map of Disneyland visitors buy in order to know how to go from one place to another can play the role of the description; it performs the part of the representational picture which also characterizes utopia. But this real example is more interesting from another point of view: I would like to show how a utopic structure and utopic functions degenerate, how the utopic representation can be entirely caught in a dominant system of ideas and values and, thus, be changed into a myth or a collective fantasy.

Disneyland is the representation realized in a geographical space of the imaginary relationship that the dominant groups of American society maintain with their real conditions of existence, with the *real* history of the United States, and with the space outside of its borders. Disneyland is a fantasmatic projection of the history of the American nation, of the way in which this history was conceived with regard to other peoples and to the natural world. Disneyland is an immense and displaced metaphor of the system of representations and values unique to American society.

This function has an obvious ideological function. It alienates the visitor by a distorted and fantasmatic representation of daily life, by a fascinating image of the past and the future, of what is estranged and what is familiar: comfort, welfare, consumption, scientific and technological progress, superpower, and morality. These are values obtained by violence and exploitation; here they are projected under the auspices of law and order.

All ideological pressures are brought to the fore here. All the forms and aspects of capitalist alienation and of modern imperialism are represented. Disneyland is the representation of the makeup of contemporary American ideology. Because this place is a stage and place of projection where we can view and test out the ideology of the dominant groups in American society, we might assume that this world built by Walt Disney fulfills the critical function for ideology we noted for utopic production in general.

This is not the case, however, because this "stage" where ideology is put into play and where its critical function comes to operate is really not a stage. The visitors to Disneyland are on stage themselves; they are actors in the performance in which they act. They are captured, like a rat in a maze, and are alienated by their part without being aware of performing a part. In this way, then, Disneyland does not "work" like a projection of ideological representation. Disney's utopia really is not a utopia. Only when a meta-discourse analyzes its map does it become one. Then we can look at the semantic structures. We can

examine how the visitors' tour becomes a narrative, how their itinerary becomes a narrative, how their itinerary becomes "lexical," revealing a reading for the picture as a whole. The divergent systems then emerge, pitted one against the other, and their correlations can be examined. Thus the backstage workings are revealed, and their ideological meanings and repercussions can be pinpointed. It is at this point that a degenerate utopia, changed into text and image, can start to produce. It should tell us what we have known since the development of a theory of political economy and ideology.

In other words, the visitors to Disneyland are put in the place of the ceremonial storyteller. They recite the mythic narrative of the antagonistic origins of society. They go through the contradictions while they visit the complex; they are led from the pirates' cave to an atomic submarine, from Sleeping Beauty's castle to a rocketship. These sets reverse daily life's determinism only to reaffirm it, but legitimated and justified. Their path through the park is the narrative, recounted umpteen times, of the deceptive harmonization of contrary elements, of the fictional solution to conflicting tensions. By "acting out" Disney's utopia, the visitor "realizes" the ideology of America's dominant groups as the mythic founding narrative for their own society.

The Limit

One of the most notable features of the utopic figure is its limit: the utopic discourse inscribes the utopic representation in the imaginary space of a map, but at the same time it makes its inscription in a geographical map impossible. There is an insuperable gap between our world and utopia. This separation is usually indicated by a narrative mark in the signifier. We have seen this, for example, in the manuscript that turns out to be the ship's log of a captain who has visited a utopia. The first pages, which contain the blessed island's precise location, have been removed, however. Another example might be the narrator who has suffered a blow knocking him unconscious, only to wake up once on the marvelous island. As well, a servant could have a violent coughing fit just as our narrator reveals the island's coordinates. A voyage to the Perfect City begins only given this sole condition: this empty abyss must commence the tour. In other words, this signifying mark in the text indicates the image-producing operation in the discourse by signaling its condition of possibility. It corresponds to the semiotic transposition brought about by the frame, using a signifier/signified as a detour.

This gap is a neutral space, the place of the limit between reality (the world with its geographic and historical networks) and utopia. It reveals the work of neutralization in utopic practice. Utopia is not only a distant country on the edge of the world; it is also the Other World, the world as “other,” and the “other” as world. Utopia is the reverse image of this world, its photographic negative. Utopia is thus the product of a process by which a specific system complete with spatial and temporal coordinates is changed into another system with its own coordinates, structures, and grammatical rules. This limit is thus an index and zero-point; it is also the bridge to the “other.”

Outer Limit

In Disneyland the neutral space of the limit is displayed by three areas, each having a precise semiotic function. Each of them repeats in its function the representation's frame: the outer limit of the parking area, the intermediary limit of ticket booths, and the inner limit of the route made by the Santa Fe and Disneyland Railway. The first area is an open, unlimited space, weakly structured by the expandable geometrical “net” of the parking lot. There the visitors leave their car; they abandon what brought them to this suburb of Los Angeles. With this gesture we encounter what is tantamount to a shipwreck or a loss of consciousness; this is equivalent to the break in former utopic narratives. Now the visitors are really no more than a possible performance of a certain number of trajectories in the utopic text. They will be an acting narrator and an acted-out discourse within this contemporary “utopia.” They are an “anthropomorphized” surface element in the inscribed text. As they journey, they reactivate signs and markings according to detailed syntactic rules Disneyland's guide pronounces. Given the enormous importance of the private car in the United States, especially in California, the parking lot takes on an even stronger meaning beyond its useful function. The fact of leaving one's car is an overdetermined sign of codical change; for pragmatic utility, for the visitor's adjustment to a certain system of signs and behavior, the system of playful symbols, the free field of consumption for nothing, the *passeist* and aleatory tour *in* the show.

Intermediary Limit

The second area is linear and discontinuous. It is made of ticket booths toward which the visitors are driven in small buses that wind their way through

the parking lot. One must go through these booths in order to enter into Disneyland, because a monetary substitution takes place there. A simple substitution between money and tickets does not occur. The visitors buy Disneyland money, with which they can take part in “utopian” life: they do not purchase goods with “real” money. Rather, the visitors acquire the signs, or at least the signifiers, of the “utopian” vocabulary. As a result, they will lend meaning to the visitor’s varied tours through the amusement park. This, then, is the second exchange and the second shipwreck: the limit neutralizes for a second time. After leaving behind the car, the visitors abandon their money in order to reach the Other World by another way, and by discursive signs other than those of monetary exchange. The first of these new signs that the visitors “pronounce” gives them the right of passage in return. They begin to utter the “utopian” discourse, to take their tour in Disneyland. The amount of the exchange of real money for utopian signs determines the importance of their visit, the semantic volume of their tour, the number and nature of its entertainments—in other words, it indirectly determines the number of syntactic rules that can be set working to coordinate the different signifying units. For example, for several dollars the visitors receive ten “utopian signs”—one A, one B, two C, three D, three E—and are able to give utterance to the following series of potential narratives:

- | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|--|-----------|---|--|
| either/or | { | Horse-Drawn Street Cars
Main Street Vehicles
Main Street Fire Engine
Sleeping Beauty’s Castle
King Arthur’s Carousel | either/or | { | Main Street Cinema
Swiss Family Tree House
Alice in Wonderland
Mark Twain Steamboat
Casey Jr. Circus Train |
| either/or | { | It’s a Small World
Mad Tea Party
Autopia
Shooting Gallery
etc. | either/or | { | Rocket Jets
Indian War Canoes
Space Mountain
etc. |
| either/or | { | Pirates of the Caribbean
Submarine Voyage
Haunted Mansion
etc. | either/or | { | Enchanted Tihi Room
Matterhorn Bobsleds
Jungle Cruise |

Inner Limit

The inner limit is circular, linear, continuous, and articulated. It is the embankment of the Santa Fe and Disneyland Railway with its stations. The visitors cross this final limit through two tunnels leading them into the Other World. This last limit is not a border for the visitors, or the “performers,” since they do not necessarily use the train to go into Disneyland, but it is a limit for the utopian space that is encircled and enclosed by it. One neither enters nor leaves Disneyland by means of it. This limit belongs to the picture, to the representation, or to the map more than it appears as a limit to the travelers and the tour they take on the land. The outer world is completely neutralized through the inscription of this “nowhere.”

This pure limit, bridgeless except for the two tunnels, is nonetheless broken by a train of the future: the Monorail. Itself enclosing nothing because it is held up by great pylons, it connects Disneyland Hotel with another area within Disneyland, Tomorrowland. Both a limit and its transgression are given. The past shuts in the “utopian island,” the locomotive and winning the West. But the advanced technology of the future breaks the limit to join the blessed and happy island to reality. Technical progress is transgression defined by the rule it breaks. On the very last limit of “Utopia” in this first quick description of its figure and narrative route, the endless tension of neutralization within differentiating space between reality and utopia is clear; it is really a tension between the limit and passing beyond the limit.

Utopia is not only a different world and a world of difference, it is also the difference of the world, the “other” of the world. Neutralizing both the car and money and transforming them into “utopic” equivalencies illustrates this. Instead of driving a car, you are transported in nineteenth-century or twenty-first-century vehicles. Money is exchanged for “utopian monetary signs,” which work less for exchange than for conversion into specific enunciative narrative routes. These routes can be produced on or through the limit I just described as the first mark of the figure of Disneyland. The railway line is semiotically the signifying result of the two neutralizing forms of space the narrator-visitor has traversed: the open, weak, and indefinite structure of the parking lot is opposed to the limited, discontinuous, highly structured ticket booths. This opposition is reconciled by the circular line that closes off a highly structured, continuously closed space, but allows entry every so often. This reconciliation illustrates the ambivalence in this kind of neutralization; there exist both a tension in contra-

diction and possible harmony in the contrary elements. The monorail's transgression should also underscore this ambivalence and even add a temporal dimension to it. The possible synthesis in a complete state of harmony for these contrary spatial elements (surface/line, continuous/discontinuous, open/closed, isotropic/anisotropic, etc.) can be historically determined; it is overdetermined by a tension between past and future, between nineteenth and twenty-first century. The articulation of space is thus supported by a historical opposition that the visitor will pronounce as he journeys through various narrative routes. This overdetermination constitutes the very "framework of his discourse." This is the latent but insistent injunction of an imposed signified: it obliterates the present by enforcing the double pole of the origin and of the end, of the past conquest of the West and the future conquest of "Space."

Access to the Center

Disneyland is a centered space. Main Street USA leads the visitor to the center. But this route toward the center plaza is also the way toward Fantasyland, one of the four districts of Disneyland. So the most obvious axis of Disney's utopia leads the visitor not only from the circular limit or perimeter to the core of the closed space, but also from reality to fantasy. This fantasy is the trademark, the sign, the symbolic image of Disney's utopia.

Fantasyland is made up of images, characters, and animals of the tales illustrated by Disney in his animated films, magazines, books, and other products. This district is constituted by images; of particular significance is the fact that these images are realized, are made living by their transformation into real materials, wood, stone plaster, etc., and through their animation by men and women disguised as movie or storybook characters. Image is duplicated by reality in two opposite senses: on the one hand, it becomes real, but on the other, reality is changed into image. The support for the figure has become the figure. 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."

Thus, the visitor who has left reality outside finds it again, but as a real "imaginary": a fixed, stereotyped, powerful fantasy. The utopian place to which

Main Street USA leads is the fantasmatic return of reality, its hallucinatory presence. This coming back of reality as a fantasy, as a hallucinatory wish-fulfillment, is in fact mediated by a complete system of representations designed by Walt Disney and constituting a rhetorical and iconic code and vocabulary that have been perfectly mastered by the narrator-visitor. So this coming back appears to be brought about through a secondary process that is not only the stuff of images and representations molded by wish, but which constitutes the very actuality of the fantasy where wish is caught in its snare.

But this brings about a rather violent effect on the imaginary by fantasy. The other side of reality is presented (Fantasyland is Disney's privileged place for this), but it emerges in the form of banal, routine images of Disney's films. They are the bankrupt signs of an imagination homogenized by the mass media. The snare I mentioned is the collective, totalitarian form taken by the "imaginary" of a society, blocked by its specular self-image. One of the essential functions of the utopic image is to make apparent a wish in a *free* image of itself, in an image that can play in opposition to the fantasy, which is an inert, blocked, and recurrent image. Disneyland is on the side of the fantasy and not on that of a free or utopic representation.

The Practical Function of the Center

Main Street USA is the way of access to the center, to begin the visitors' tour, to narrate their story, to perform their speech. From the center they can articulate the successive sequences of his narrative by means of the signs they have received in exchange for their money at the entrance. If we consider Disneyland as a text, Main Street USA is the channel of transmission of the story narrated by the visitors in making their tour. It allows them to communicate. Its function is phatic: it is the most primitive function of the communication, since it only permits communication to take place without communicating anything. Thus, Disneyland can be viewed as thousands and thousands of narratives uttered by visitors. Its text is constituted by this plurality of "lexies," to write like Barthes, which are exchanged endlessly by the visitors according to the codes (vocabulary and syntax) imposed by the makers of Disneyland.

Semantic Plurality

Now this semiotic function, the condition of possibility of all the messages, all the tours, all the stories told by the visitors, is taken into account structurally

in a “lexie” belonging to a superior level, in the diagrammatic scheme of all the possible tours, an open and yet finite totality, the Disneyland map. When we look at this map, we acknowledge a feature that we do not perceive when we recite the story in passing from the entrance to the center: the fact that Main Street USA is not only a street, but a “district,” a land that separates and links Frontierland and Adventureland, on the one hand, and Tomorrowland on the other. For the narrator-visitor Main Street USA is an axis that allows him or her to begin to tell a story. For the spectator it is a place on the map that articulates two worlds; this place makes him look at the relations and at the difference between these worlds, without realizing how they are joined. This district is what allows the various other places to exist on the map. With it visibility is *inscribed* into the map. It was at first seen as an *aleatory moment* and *choice to be made*. As *Main Street USA* becomes part of the visitors’ way, the first narrative they compose, we see how it is *the* first way and founding narrative for their own utopia. It transforms reality into its other; fantasy becomes reality, and reality becomes fantasy. Between narrative and description, narration and the map, reality and the imaginary, the functional plurality of Main Street—USA, no less—presents its semiotic polyvalence, the analysis of which I shall undertake.

We can sum up this analysis in the following terms: Main Street USA is a universal operator that articulates and builds up the text of Disneyland on all of its levels. We have discovered three functions of this operator: (1) *phatic*—it allows all the possible stories to be narrated; (2) *referential*—through it, reality becomes a fantasy and an image, a reality; (3) *integrative*—it is the space that divides Disneyland into two parts, left and right, and that relates these two parts to each other. It is at the same time a condition by which the space takes on meaning for the viewer and a condition by which the space can be narrated by the visitor (the actor).

Semantic Polyvalence

These three functions are filled up by a semantic content. Main Street USA is the place where the visitor can buy, in a nineteenth-century American decor, actual and real commodities with his real, actual money. Locus of exchange of meanings and symbols in the imaginary land of Disney, Main Street USA is also the real place of exchange of money and commodity.

It is the locus of the societal truth—consumption—that is the truth for all of Disneyland. With Main Street USA we have a part of the whole that is as good as

the whole, that is equivalent to the whole. The fact that this place is also an evocation of the past is an attempt to reconcile or to exchange, in the space occupied by Main Street USA, the past and the present—that is, an ideal past and a real present.

Actually, it is here on Main Street USA that reality reemerges in a mediated system of collective representations and figures, transformed to the mold of forgotten memories: Disney's special children's world. Recall that the whole operation was built by a cartoon film-maker. But as the cartoons become real, they also deform and disguise reality here on Main Street USA. In USA Today the visitors see themselves and their contemporaries in the shopwindows. Money regains its power; there is nothing utopian here. In Fantasyland they also see their image, but, as it were, transformed by differences in scale, and by formal modifications obeying an imaginary system of representations the society holds in common.

On Main Street private citizens are left to their own devices in their confrontation with their own environment, that of their everyday world. The outside has been placed inside and has thereby gained in evocative power; it has been seized by the trappings of the utopian scene. It has been carefully placed within a framework of brightly painted nineteenth-century houses. Main Street USA actually belongs to one of the particular areas of the western side of Disneyland, Frontierland, because of its decor. It thus also promotes a feeling of historically "winning" the West in heroic fashion. Given the merchandise in the shop windows, however, it seems rather to belong to an area on the eastern side, Tomorrowland, where the most advanced technological products of American science are displayed.

Another additional proof of Disney's utopian operation can be found in the name "Main Street USA" itself. "USA": through America's self-contained potential the reconciliation of opposites is performed, but within representation, of course. The past and future, time and space, the playfulness and serious determination to be found on the market, the real and imaginary—all are brought together. Utopia is perfectly present, but remember, only as a representation. Its harmony exists only on a stage. As a result, the work of utopic fiction is embedded and immobilized in an ideological figure. It therefore loses its critical force. The ideology that holds it restricts its play so that it no longer represents the true conflicts men and women imagine themselves having.

Disneyland's Worlds: From the Narrative to the System of Readings

Let us now leave the narrator-visitors and their enunciation to the hazards of their possible tours. The syntax of their "discourse-tour" is defined first by their passing through the limits and by their journey to the center. The visitors have learned the codes of the language of Disneyland and have thus been given the possibilities to tell their individual story, to utter their own "speech." Yet their freedom, the freedom of their own individual narrative, is constrained not only by these codes 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.

These remarks allow me to substitute the analysis of the map for a possible narrative and for its performative narration. The analysis or description of the map would involve not an itinerary in time (which is always a narrative) but of a picture, the parts of which coexist in the space of the analogue-model. Methodologically, we assume that the narrative tours constitute a total system and that the map is the structure of this total system.

The pictorial map includes a left and right, depending on the visitors' place in front of it. The map determines their bearings and gives them a second view; they, of course, occupy the privileged viewpoint. This viewpoint charges the utopic figure as it is ideologically fixed in the narrator's imagination. There is a substitution, however, which determines the price paid for the triggering of the narrative to begin. The visitors—here spectators—*are necessarily outside the pictorial map*; they are also excluded from Disney's utopia in its neutralizing power. He is rather in a "secondary" space that perfectly coincides with utopic space. The map forms the analogue-model of that space. Charging the system—setting it in motion and putting it into play—consists in substituting the paradigmatic model for the possible routes and varied syntagmatic readings. The structure is equivalent to its performance, language to speech, the system of paradigms to the aleatory succession of syntagms. The total analogon can be substituted for the articulation of narrative units and brief "discourse-tours."

It may be that this substitution is necessary in order for the analytic meta-discourse to function. We must remember, however, not to jumble together the narrative processes by which people readily live, thus consuming their town

and their house and textual system that gives them the signs, symbols, and syntactic rules through which they display and perform narrative processes. An architectural set is at the same time a set of places, routes, and pathways and a visible, "specular" totality. Viewed from this perspective, Disneyland displaces the spatial habitability into its "spectacular" representation. It reduces the dynamic organization of the places, the aleatory unity of a possible tour, to a univocal scheme allowing the same redundant behavior. We are thus justified in viewing the map of Disneyland as an analogue-model that assimilates the possible narratives of its space.

The Map of Disneyland

On the left of the map are two districts: Frontierland and Adventureland. Between them is New Orleans Square. Frontierland is the representation of scenes of the final conquest of the West. Here narratives of how the West was won illustrate the ever-increasing American appropriation of land and resources. The frontier has no limit: it is itself transgression. The "semantic" content of this utopic discourse informs us what we had already suspected was constitutive of its general code; the frontier is both closure and transgression. The limit is a pretext for transgression. It is quite amazing that most of the stories in Frontierland involve rides of conquest or exploitation, from Mike Fink's boats and Tom Sawyer's Island rafts to mule-train mines of precious metals and steamboats on the Mississippi. These all involve penetration into and victory over the lands of the first inhabitants, the Indians.

Adventureland is the representation of scenes of wildlife in exotic countries, viewed during a boat trip on a tropical river. If Frontierland signifies the temporal distance of the past history of the American nation, Adventureland signifies the spatial distance of the outside geographical world, the world of natural savagery. It represents the next possible fields of action, because adventure is also a frontier; the primitive cannibals rising on the riverbanks seem to repeat the gestures that the Indians made in Frontierland. These latter, of course, have already been beaten. These two districts represent the distances of history and geography, the distance represented inside America in the first, and the distance represented outside in the second. They are both assimilated because they are shown on the same stage, so to speak; they are thereby neutralized.

We can quickly understand why the map's right side is occupied by a single district. Tomorrowland consists principally of representations of the Future-as-Space, Einsteinian Time-Space, which 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. Tomorrowland also has an excentric center, the Carousel of Progress, a gift of the General Electric Corporation.

Models

We can construct two models that are secondary representations of the map. Figure 33 is a truly analogous diagram, and Figure 34 is a semantic structure articulating more precisely the oppositions.

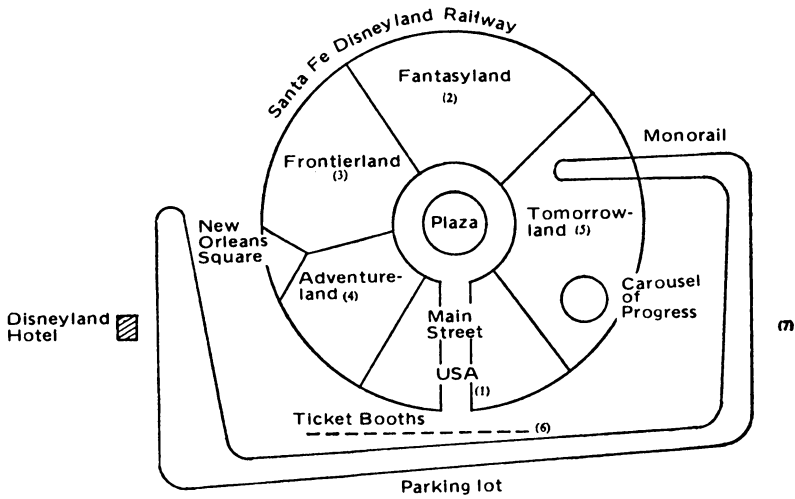


Figure 33. Map-diagram of Disneyland

Consideration of the center of these two models elicits the following remarks: first, the center in the map is not the center in the semantic structure; in other words, the structure is not a simplified map. In the structure the center is the sign of the numerous semiotic functions of Main Street USA as a route to the

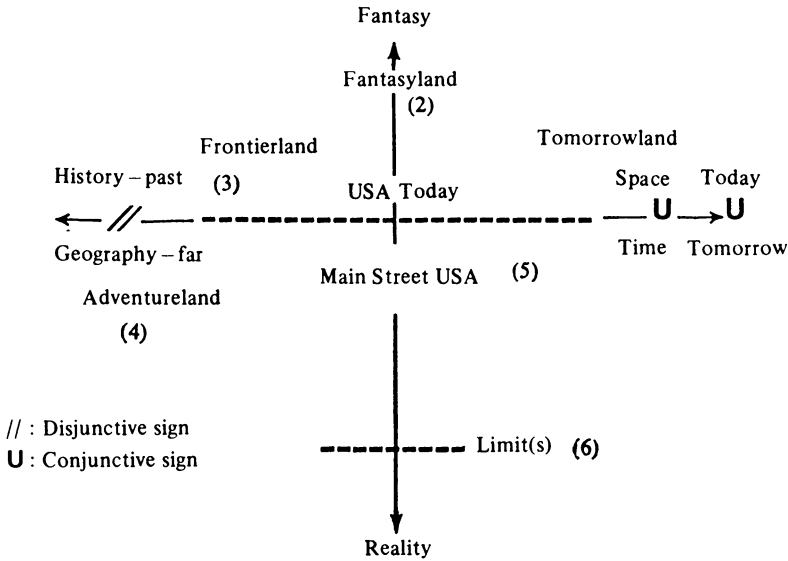


Figure 34. Semantic Structure of the Map

mapped center, an axis exchanging a scientific and technological conjunction of space and time for historico-geographical distance.

Second, in the semantic structure Main Street USA appears to be on different levels, formal and material, semiotic and semantic, a place of exchange and labor: the exchange of commodities and objects of consumption but also of significations and symbols. The center of the structure functions at once inside and outside the structure. Inside it is determined rigorously by the two main correlations of which it is made up, reality and fantasy: historico-geographical distance and space-time.

But it is not only an intersecting point of these two semantic axes; somehow it produces them as well. Through it the contrary poles of the correlations exchange their meaning: reality becomes fantasmatic and fantasy, actuality. The remoteness of exotic places and of the American national past becomes the universal space-time of science and technology, and this universality becomes American. In the semiotic theory of the narrative the center is the representation of the dialectical mediation from which springs the narrative solution: it is the image of the inventions determined by the story on its different levels.

It is not without significance that in this case this image, this representation, is named "USA" and is conjugated in the present tense. The ultimate meaning of the center is the conversion of history into ideology, a conversion by which the utopian space itself is caught in that ideology. It is no less significant, as I bring these particular remarks to a close, that in this structural center of the map another one can also find the existence of an element already noted in the organization of representative pictorial space from the quattrocento to the Impressionists. This central element carries out the conversion of the painting's semantic figures and semiotic functions. Their polyvalence allows for the conversion of time into space and narrative into symbol. The visual, spectacular nature of Disneyland and its center has already convinced us that they are a space for the representation of representation. As such, Disney's utopia should obey the general laws of representation. This representational mediation makes it clear that in the utopian place commodities are significations and significations are commodities. By the selling of up-to-date consumer goods in the setting of a nineteenth-century street, between the adult reality and the childlike fantasy, Walt Disney's utopia converts the commodities into signification. Reciprocally, what is bought there are *signs*, but these signs are *commodities*.

The Excentric Centers

The districts on the right and left of the diagram have secondary centers, themselves connected in a meaningful way. New Orleans Square on the left and the Carousel of Progress on the right both are metaphórico-metonymic elements of the subsets of which they are a part. The first brings together two attractions (recall that the left side of the map is composed of two distant districts semantically and topographically separated in geography and history): the Pirates of the Caribbean and the Haunted Mansion, an idea taken from one of Poe's tales. The second attraction shows a series of domestic scenes from the nineteenth century to the present, and already now the future, whose moral proves the progressive satisfaction of human needs by technology and science. Space and time are reconciled. The people from the past become those of tomorrow; the modest "original" farm is slowly transformed into a duplex somewhere between two heavens, one of stellar space, the other situated under the magical lights of the city. These attractions, two among many, seem to condense in them the signification of the worlds of which they are a part.

The Fantasy of Primitive Accumulation

The attraction Pirates of the Caribbean reveals all of its semantic content only in its narration. So the visitor must begin to speak again in order to recite the underground tour, for the syntagmatic organization of his ride displays a primary and essential level of meaning. The first sequence of the narrative discourse is a place where skulls and skeletons are lying on heaps of gold and silver, diamonds and pearls. Next the visitor goes through a naval battle in his little boat; then he sees from off-shore the pirates attack a town. In the last sequence the spoils are piled up in the pirate ships, the visitor is cheered by pirates feasting and reveling, and the tour is concluded. The narrative unfolds its moments in a reverse chronological order; the first scene in the tour-narrative is the last scene in the "real" story. And this inversion has an ethical meaning: crime does not pay. The morality of the fable is presented before the reading of the story in order to constrain the comprehension of the fable by a preexisting moral code. The potential force of the narrative, its unpredictability, is neutralized by the moral code that makes up all of the representation. Similar remarks could be made for the Haunted Mansion.

Moral Economy and Economic Morals

But if we introduce the story into the structural scheme of the map, and especially if we do so by relating it to the structural center, another meaning appears beneath the moral signification. The center, you remember, is a place of exchange of actual products and commodities of today: it is a marketplace and a place of consumption. Correlated to the excentric center of the left part, 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 hoarding 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.

The Myth of Technological Progress

I do not want to overemphasize this point; but in Tomorrowland, on the right side of the map, the same meaning is made obvious by another excentric center,

the Carousel of Progress. Here, the visitor becomes a spectator, immobilized and passive, seated in front of a circular and moving stage 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—that is, by the quantity and variation of the technical and scientific mediations of consumption. The circular motion of the stage expresses this endless technological progress as well as its necessity, its fate. And the specific organization of the space of representation symbolizes the passive satisfaction of endlessly increasing needs. There is absolutely no reference made to money and even less to its deathlike accumulation. Here the wealth that is shown to the visitor is of a different order than monetary signs or precious metals. Rather, it is exhibited by the growing complexity of the utensil world increasingly filling up the human environment. It demonstrates, actually, the utensil’s mastery of mankind. Men and women adapt perfectly to this environment and “act” mechanically. The signs of wealth are made up of the utensils’ wide applicability and diversity, and not of consumption, as we saw on Main Street USA. These utensils, rather, represent the means for consumption, the chronological and scientific mediation for consumption.

The excentric centers, I mentioned, are metaphorico-metonymic elements of a whole. We will be able to demonstrate more clearly one very important relation structuring Disney’s utopia due to the meaning-effects they produce as subgroups of larger ensembles. This relation governs in a complex way machines and living creatures, technology and culture, and, finally, nature and culture.

Machines and Living Creatures

The left side of the map illustrates both the culture supplied by Americans to nineteenth-century America and the one produced at the same time by adult, civilized, male, white people in exotic and remote countries. The living beings of Adventureland and Frontierland (and, even more so, the pirates and New Orleans Square ghosts) are only reproductions of reality. The cave in the Pirates

of the Caribbean is the Platonic cave in which simulacra walk about. The difference, however, resides in the fact that visitors observe themselves and not their own shadows. This is actually no real difference, however, because they are only quasi-living. They seem real, but just as in Plato, the puppets' masters are hiding.

Nothing is true, however. All that is living is an artifact. "Nature" is a simulacrum. Nature is a wild, primitive, savage world, but this world is only the appearance taken on by the machine in the utopian play. This monster is a *thauma*, a Daedalian wonder. There is, however, a certain truth that must be separated from all the artifacts and automatic movement. What is signified by the left part of the map is the assumption that *the machine is the truth, the actuality of the living*. Mechanism and mechanistic concept of the world, which we noted in More's original utopia, are at work in Disney's degenerate utopia; in More this idea coincided with the emergence of industrial capitalism. It is also true, however, that instead of this mechanism being presented to the Utopians as knowledge so that they may admire God the Creator and Artisan, here it is a dissimulated and disguised apparatus that can be taken for its contrary, natural life.

The Reduced Model

On the right side of the map the underlying truth of the left side becomes obvious. In Tomorrowland machines are everywhere: from the atomic submarine to the moon rocket. The concealed meaning of the left side is now revealed thanks to the mediating center, Main Street USA. But these machines are neither true nor false; they are not, as in the left part, false reproductions. Instead, they are scaled-down models of the actual machines. We have false duplicates of living beings and concealed mechanistic springs on the left, obvious machines and true models on the right. Real nature is an appearance, and the reduced model of the machine is reality. Disney's utopia performs an operation of exchange between biological nature and mechanistic technology. Appearance and reality crisscross, and both are neutralized.

The utopic force of the neutral wears out in such an environment. The ideology of representation and machine is all-pervading, and man is twice removed from nature and science. Nature, which he sees, is a representation, the reverse side of which is a machine. Machines that he uses and with which he sometimes plays are the reduced models of a machinery that seizes him and plays with him.

We find the same function of the reduced models, but on a different plane, in Fantasyland. This district is constituted by the real-realized images of the tales animated by Walt Disney. Fantasyland is the return of reality in a regressive and hallucinatory form. This imaginary *real* is a reproduction of the scenes the visitor has seen in the pirates' cave and in the haunted mansion, but it is a regressive reproduction on a tiny, child-size scale. We find the same fantasies of death, superpower, violence, destruction, and annihilation, but as reduced models of the attractions of the left side. Reduced models like those of Tomorrowland, but reduced models of death, strangeness, exoticism in the imaginary; they are the opposite of the reduced models of the right side, which show life, consumption, and techniques in their images. The realm of the living in life-size is the realm of natural appearance in its historical past, geographic, anthropological remoteness. Here, also, the realm of the machine as a reduced model is the cultural truth of the American way of life, here and now, looking at itself as a universal way of living.

The function of Disney's utopia is to represent the exchange of the first and second realms of natural life and scientific technology and to express the ideology of this exchange on the stage and in the decor of utopia.

Disneyland's ideological exchange can be illustrated by an elaboration of the semantic structure of the map (see Figure 35).

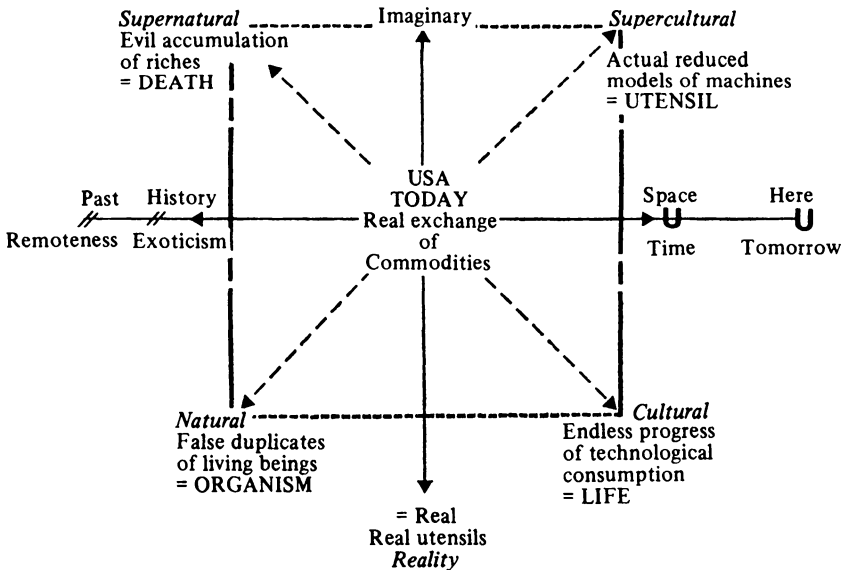


Figure 35. Semantic structure of the ideological representation in Disneyland