

media also absolves educators, community activists, politicians, and other cultural workers from assuming roles as critical citizens who need to address the complex relationships between the violence we absorb through the media and the reality of violence we experience in everyday life.

Violence is not simply emanating from the movie theaters of America. Rooted in everyday institutional structures and social relations, violence has become a toxic glue that bonds Americans together while simultaneously preventing them from expanding and building a multiracial and multicultural democracy. Once the brutality of specific forms of representational violence are understood as a threat to democracy itself, it might become possible to address the violence politically and pedagogically, as we would other issues concerning our national identity, public well-being, and social consciousness.

Henry A. Giroux, from
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ANIMATING

THE DISNEYFICATION OF CHILDREN'S CULTURE

YOUTH

Children's culture is a sphere where entertainment, advocacy, and pleasure meet to construct conceptions of what it means to be a child occupying a combination of gender, racial, and class positions in society, positions through which one defines oneself in relation to a myriad of others. As an object of critical analysis, children's culture opens up a space in which children become an important dimension of social theory. While youth culture, especially adolescence, has been a strong component of cultural studies,

while Dole remained silent on the issue. What is the significance of Bob Dole's attack on Hollywood films he had not viewed, or his refusal to address corporate interests aligned with the Republican party that have a big economic stake in the culture of violence?

It may be that Dole's attack signals less a concern with how the culture of violence is represented in this country than with who is going to control those aspects of the cultural sphere that are influential and at the same time unpredictable, given their allegiance to it. Often conflicting dictates of the market and artistic expression. Maybe this explains why Dole can criticize the vulgarity of popular culture while at the same time advocating the defunding of PBS, the National Endowment for the Arts, and other government support for the arts. Conservatives want to homogenize culture rather than diversify it. To diversify culture would demand supporting those institutions or public spheres in which critical knowledge, debate, and dialogue occur. Such interaction is necessary for people to make choices about how power works through culture and about what it means to identify with, challenge, and rewrite the representations that circulate in popular and mass-mediated cultures. This suggests that any debate about the best way to reduce symbolic violence in the culture must be part of a larger discourse about educating people to change the social and economic conditions that produce and sustain such violence. It further suggests addressing how questions of pedagogy and commitment can work to provide a challenge to institutional structures of power that trade in symbolic imagery while refusing to address the limits of the media's potential for error and harm. Social justice is not part of the message that underwrites Dole's concern with media culture and its relationship with the alleged public good. On the contrary, Dole represents an ideological position that advocates abolishing the Department of Education, privatizing public schools, and limiting funding for poor students who want access to higher education. Dole's moral indignation is not merely fueled by political opportunism but also by the imperatives of a political project that engages the cultural public sphere in order to control rather than democratize it.

Unfortunately, Hollywood executives, directors, and celebrities responded to Dole's remarks by primarily focusing on his hypocrisy rather than providing a forum for critically analyzing Hollywood's complicity with and responsibility for addressing the growing culture of violence in the United States. Oliver Stone, the director of *Natural Born Killers*, labeled

Dole's attack "a '90s form of McCarthyism," while actor James Wood compared Dole's actions to the morality crusades that inspired censors of a previous era to attempt to ban *Catcher in the Rye* or *Ulysses*. Such remarks are defensive in the extreme, and exhibit little self-consciousness regarding what Hollywood's role or responsibility might be in shaping popular culture and providing a pedagogical climate in which knowledge, values, desires, and identities are marketed on a daily basis to children and young adults, among others. The relationship between greed and the marketing of violence might inspire Hollywood executives and celebrities to be more attentive to the ravages committed in the name of free markets, or to address their own ethical responsibility as cultural workers who actively circulate ideas and values for popular consumption. Claiming that the film, music, and television industries simply reflect what the public wants represents more than disingenuousness; it also suggests political and ethical cowardice. Neither Dole's one-sided criticism nor Hollywood's defensive posture provides a helpful model for dealing with the culture of violence.

It is hard to imagine how Dole's moralizing and Hollywood's defensiveness address constructively the daily violence that takes place in urban America. While I was writing this chapter in Boston over the hot summer weekend of July 14–15, 1995, the *Boston Globe* reported that eight young people were victims of unrelated shootings in the city: two youths were killed and six others were seriously wounded.⁴ All of these youths lived in the poorest sections of Boston. Beneath these senseless acts of violence is a culture of enormous poverty, human indifference, unemployment, economic hardship, and needless human suffering. It seems that Hollywood executives find in these stories material for reflecting reality while disavowing any responsibility for its causes or their own complicity in reproducing it. At the same time, national leadership sinks to an all-time low as social services are cut and the notion of the critical citizen is subordinated to the virtues of creating a society filled with consuming subjects.

In the coming new information age, it is imperative that various cultural workers and educators raise important questions about what kind of teacher we want cinema to be, with special concern for how the representation of violence works to pose a threat "not only to our national health but to our potential for ever becoming a true participatory democracy."⁵ To simply blame filmmakers and television executives for causing violence in the United States shifts critical attention away from the poisonous roots of the

children's culture has been largely ignored, especially the world of animated films.¹ An examination of children's culture unsettles the notion that the battles over knowledge, values, power, and what it means to be a citizen are to be located exclusively in the schools or in privileged sites of high culture; moreover, it provides a theoretical referent for "remembering" that the individual and collective identities of children and youth are largely shaped politically and pedagogically in the popular visual culture of video games, television, film, and even in leisure sites such as malls and amusement parks. Lacking an interest in children's culture, cultural critics have not paid enough attention to the diverse spheres in which young children become acculturated.² Theoretical indifference has its price politically, since such critics also surrender the responsibility to challenge increasing attempts by corporate moguls and conservative evangelicals to reduce generations of children to either consumers for new commercial markets or Christian soldiers for the evolving Newt Gingrich world order.

Though it appears to be a commonplace assumption, the idea that popular culture provides the basis for persuasive forms of learning for children was impressed upon me with an abrupt urgency during the last few years. As a single father of three nine-year-old boys, I found myself somewhat reluctantly being introduced to the world of Hollywood animation films, and in particular those produced by Disney. Before becoming an observer of this form of children's culture, I accepted the largely unquestioned assumption that animated films stimulate imagination and fantasy, reproduce an aura of innocence and wholesome adventure, and, in general, are "good" for kids. In other words, such films appeared to be vehicles of amusement, a highly regarded and sought-after source of fun and joy for children. However, within a very short period of time, it became clear to me that the relevance of such films exceeded the boundaries of entertainment.³ Needless to say, the significance of animated films operates on many registers, but one of the most persuasive is the role they play as the new "teaching machines." I soon found that for my children, and I suspect for many others, these films possess at least as much cultural authority and legitimacy for teaching specific roles, values, and ideals as more traditional sites of learning such as the public schools, religious institutions, and the family. Disney films combine an ideology of enchantment and aura of innocence in narrating stories that help children understand who they are, what societies are about, and what it means to construct a world of play and fan-

tasy in an adult environment. The commanding legitimacy and cultural authority of such films, in part, stems from their unique form of representation, but such authority is also produced and secured within the pre-dominance of a broadening media apparatus equipped with dazzling technology, sound effects, and imagery, all packaged as entertainment, spin-off commercial products, and "huggable" stories.

The cultural authority of this postmodern media-*scape* rests on its power to usurp traditional sites of learning and its ability to expand the power of culture through an endless stream of signifying practices, which prioritize the pleasures of the image over the intellectual demands of critical inquiry. Moreover, it simultaneously reduces the demands of human agency to the ethos of a facile consumerism. This is a media apparatus in which the past is filtered through an appeal to cultural homogeneity and historical purity that erases complex issues, cultural differences, and social struggles. It incessantly works to construct a commercially saturated and politically reactionary rendering of the ideological and political contours of children's culture. In the television and Hollywood versions of children's culture, cartoon characters become prototypes for a marketing and merchandising blitz, and real-life dramas, whether fictionalized or not, become vehicles for pushing the belief that happiness is synonymous with living in the suburbs with an intact white middle-class family.⁴

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

TRADEMARKING INNOCENCE

I recognized that any attempt to critically take up Disney films rubs against the grain of American popular opinion. After all, "the happiest place on earth" has traditionally gained its popularity in part through a self-proclaimed image of trademark innocence that has protected it from the interrogating gaze of critics. Of course, there is more at work here than a public relations department intent on protecting Disney's claim to fabled goodness and uncompromising morality. There is also the reality of a powerful economic and political empire that in 1994 took in nearly \$5 billion at the box office, \$3.5 billion from Disney's theme parks, and almost \$2 billion from Disney products. Moreover, as this book goes to press, The Walt Disney Company made the biggest deal of the American media industry by investing \$1.9 billion to acquire Capital Cities/ABC.⁵ But Disney is more than a corporate giant; it is also a cultural institution that fiercely struggles to protect its mythical status as a purveyor of American innocence and moral virtue.

Quick to mobilize its monolith of legal representatives, public relations spokespersons, and professional cultural critics to safeguard the borders of its "magic kingdom," Disney has aggressively prosecuted violations of its copyrights and has a legendary reputation for bullying authors who use the Disney archives and refuse to allow Disney to approve their unpublished work.⁶ For example, in its zeal to protect its image and extend its profits, Disney has gone so far as to threaten legal action against three South Florida day-care centers for using Disney cartoon characters on their exterior walls. In this instance, Disney's role as an aggressive defender of Quayle-esque family values was undermined through its aggressive endorsement of property rights. While Disney's reputation as an undisputed moral authority on United States values has taken a beating in the last few years, the power of Disney's mythological status cannot be underestimated.

Disney's image of itself as an icon of American culture is consistently reinforced through the penetration of the Disney empire into every aspect of social life. Operating as a \$22 billion empire, Disney shapes children's experiences through a maze of representations and products found in box office movies, home videos, theme parks, hotels, sports teams, retail stores, classroom instructional films, CDs, television programs, and family restaurants.⁷ Through the widespread use of public visual space, Disney inserts itself into a network of power relations that promotes the construction of

a closed and total world of enchantment, allegedly free from the dynamics of ideology, politics, and power.⁸ At the same time, Disney goes to great lengths to boost its civic image. Defining itself as a vehicle for education and civic responsibility, Disney has sponsored "Teacher of the Year Awards," provided "Doer and Dreamer" scholarships to students, and, more recently, offered financial aid, internships, and educational programs to disadvantaged urban youth through its ice skating program called "Goals." Intent on defining itself as a purveyor of ideas rather than commodities, Disney is aggressively developing its image as a public service industry. For example, in what can be seen as an extraordinary venture, Disney plans to construct in the next few years a **prototype school** that one of its brochures proclaims will "serve as a model for education into the next century." The school will be part of a five thousand acre residential development, which according to Disney executives will be designed after "the main streets of small-town America and reminiscent of Norman Rockwell images."⁹

What is interesting here is that Disney no longer simply dispenses the fantasies through which childhood innocence and adventure are produced, experienced, and affirmed. Disney now provides model prototypes for families, schools, and communities. From the seedy urban haunts of New York City to the spatial monuments of consumption-shaping Florida, Disney takes full advantage of refiguring the social and cultural landscape while spreading the ideology of its Disney Imagineers. For instance, not only is Disney taking over large properties on West 42nd Street in New York City in order to produce one musical per year, it has also begun building Celebration, a town covering five thousand acres of property in Florida that is designed to accommodate 20,000 citizens. According to Disney, this is a "typical American small town . . . designed to become an international prototype for communities."¹⁰ What Disney leaves out of its upbeat promotional literature is the rather tenuous notion of democracy that informs its view of municipal government since the model of Celebration is "premised upon citizens not having control over the people who plan for them and administer the policies of the city."¹¹ But Disney does more than provide prototypes for up-scale communities; it also makes a claim on the future through its nostalgic view of the past and its construction of public memory as a metonym for the magical kingdom. French theorist Jean Baudrillard provides an interesting theoretical twist

on the scope and power of Disney's influence by arguing that Disneyland is more "real" than fantasy because it now provides the image on which America constructs itself. For Baudrillard, Disneyland functions as a "deterrent" designed to "rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real."

Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America, which is Disneyland (just as prisons are there to conceal the fact that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, which is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation.¹²

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

Popular audiences tend to reject any link between ideology and the prolific entertainment world of Disney. And yet Disney's pretense to innocence appears to some critics as little more than a promotional mask that covers over its aggressive marketing techniques and influence in educating children to the virtues of becoming active consumers. Eric Smooden, editor of *Disney Discourse*, a book critical of Disney's role in American culture, argues that "Disney constructs childhood so as to make it entirely compatible with consumerism."¹³ Even more disturbing is the widespread belief that Disney's trademarked innocence renders it unaccountable for the diverse ways in which it shapes the sense of reality it provides for children as they take up specific and often sanitized notions of identity, difference, and history in the seemingly apolitical cultural universe of "the Magic Kingdom." For example, Jon Wiener argues that Disneyland's

version of Main Street America harkens back to an "image of small towns characterized by cheerful commerce, with barbershop quartets and ice cream sundaes and glorious parades." For Wiener this view not only fictionalizes and trivializes the history of real Main Streets at the turn of the century, it also represents an appropriation of the past to legitimate a present that portrays a world "without tenements or poverty or urban class conflict . . . it is a native white Protestant dream of a world without blacks or immigrants."¹⁴

ANIMATED PEDAGOGY

I want to venture into the contradictory world of Disney through an analysis of its more recent animated films. These films, all produced since 1989, are important because they have received enormous praise from the dominant press and have achieved blockbuster status. For many children they represent their first introduction into the world of Disney. Moreover, the financial success and popularity of these films, surpassing many adult features, do not engender the critical analyses often rendered on adult films. In short, popular audiences are more willing to suspend critical judgement about such children's films.¹⁵ Animated fantasy and entertainment appear to fall outside of the world of values, meaning, and knowledge often associated with more pronounced educational forms such as documentaries, art films, or even wide-circulation adult films. Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells capture this sentiment:

Disney audiences . . . legal institutions, film theorists, cultural critics, and loyal audiences all guard the borders of Disney film as "off limits" to the critical enterprise constructing Disney as a metonym for "America"—clean, decent, industrious—"the happiest place on earth."¹⁶

Given the influence that the Disney ideology has on children, it is imperative for parents, teachers, and other adults to understand how such films attract the attention and shape the values of the children who view and buy them. As a producer of children's culture, Disney should not be given an easy pardon because it is defined as a universal citadel of fun and good cheer. On the contrary, as one of the primary institutions constructing childhood culture in the United States, it warrants healthy suspicion and critical debate. Such a debate should not be limited to the

home, but should be a central feature of the school and any other critical public sites of learning.

In what follows, I will argue that it is important to address Disney's animated films without condemning Disney as an ideological, reactionary corporation deceptively promoting a conservative worldview under the guise of entertainment. It is also important not to simply celebrate Disney as the Hollywood version of Mr. Rogers doing nothing more than providing sources of joy and happiness to children all over the world. Disney does both. The productive side of Disney lies in its ability to address in highly successful pedagogical terms the needs and interests of children. Moreover, its films offer opportunities for children to experience pleasure and to locate themselves in a world that resonates with their desires and interests. Pleasure becomes the defining principle of what Disney produces, and children are the serious subjects and objects of Disney's project. Hence, rather than simply being dismissed, Disney's animated films have to be interrogated as an important site for the production of children's culture. At the same time, Disney's influence and power must be situated within the broader understanding of the company's role as a corporate giant intent on spreading the conservative and commercial values that in fact erode civil society while proclaiming to restructure it.

The role that Disney plays in shaping individual identities and controlling the fields of social meaning through which children negotiate the world is far too complex to be simply set aside as a form of reactionary politics. If educators and other cultural workers are to include the culture of children as an important site of contestation and struggle, then it becomes imperative to analyze how Disney's animated films powerfully influence the way America's cultural landscape is imagined. Disney's scripted view of childhood and society needs to be engaged and challenged as "a historically specific matter of social analysis and intervention" that addresses the meanings its films produce, the roles they legitimate, and the narratives they construct to define American life.¹⁷

The wide distribution and popular appeal of Disney's animated films provides diverse audiences the opportunity for critical viewing. Critically analyzing how Disney films work to construct meanings, induce pleasures, and reproduce ideologically loaded fantasies is not meant to promote a particular exercise in film criticism. Like any educational institution, Disney's view of the world needs to be taken up in terms of how it narrates children's

culture and how it can be held accountable for what it does as a culturally significant public sphere—a space in which ideas, values, audiences, markets, and opinions serve to create different publics and social formations. Of course, Disney's self-proclaimed innocence, inflexibility in dealing with social criticism, and paranoid attitude towards justifying what it does is now legendary and suggest all the more reason why Disney should be both challenged and engaged critically. Moreover, as a multi-billion-dollar company, Disney's corporate and cultural influence is too enormous and far reaching to allow it to define itself exclusively within the imaginary discourse of innocence, civic pride, and entertainment.¹⁸

The question of whether Disney's animated films are good for kids has no easy answers and resists simple analysis within the traditional and allegedly nonideological registers of fun and entertainment. Disney's most recent films, which include *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994), and *Pocahontas* (1995), provide ample opportunity to address how Disney constructs a culture of joy and innocence for children out of the intersection of entertainment, advocacy, pleasure, and consumerism. All of these films have been high profile releases catering to massive audiences. Moreover, their commercial success is not limited to box office profits, which totaled over \$700 million in 1995.¹⁹ Successfully connecting the rituals of consumption and movie-going, Disney's animated films provide a "marketplace of culture," a launching pad for an endless number of products and merchandise that include videocassettes, soundtrack albums, children's clothing, furniture, stuffed toys, and new rides at the theme parks.²⁰ For example, in the video market, *Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast* have combined sales of over thirty-four million videocassettes. Moreover, *Aladdin* has earned "\$1 billion from box-office income, video sales and such ancillary baubles as Princess Jasmine dresses and Genie cookie jars."²¹ Moreover, produced as a video interactive game, *Aladdin* sold over three million copies in 1993. Similar sales are expected for the video and interactive game versions of the film *The Lion King*, which grossed \$253.5 million in profits as of August 24, 1994.²² In fact, the first few weeks after *The Lion King* videocassette was released, it had sales of over twenty million, and Disney's stock soared by \$2.25 a share based on first-week revenues of \$350 million. Speaking of one of the most profitable films every made, Jessica J. Reiff, an analyst at Oppenheimer & Company, says "the movie will represent \$1 billion in

profits for Disney over two or three years."¹³ Similarly, Disney characters such as Mickey Mouse, Snow White, Jasmine, Aladdin, and Pocahontas become prototypes for numerous toys, logos, games, and rides that fill department stores all over the world. Disney theme parks, which made over \$3.4 billion in revenues in 1993, produced a sizable portion of their profits through the merchandising of toys based on characters from the animated films. The *Lion King* produced a staggering \$1 billion in such merchandising profits in 1994 alone, not to mention the profits made from still other spinoff products from the movie. For example, Disney has shipped over three million copies of the soundtrack from *The Lion King*.¹⁴ Disney's culture of commercialism is big business, and the toys modeled after Disney's animated films provide goods for over three hundred Disney Stores worldwide. As a commentator in *Newsweek* recently pointed out, "The merchandise—Mermaid dolls, Aladdin undies, and collectibles like a sculpture of Bambi's Field Mouse—account for a stunning 20 percent of Disney's operating income."¹⁵

Disney's biggest promotion campaign to date was put into effect with the summer 1995 release of *Pocahontas*. A record lineup of tie-in merchandise included *Pocahontas* stuffed animals, sheets, pillowcases, toothbrushes, games,occasins, and over "40 different picture and activity books."¹⁶ A consortium of corporations spent an estimated \$125 million on cross-marketing *Pocahontas*. Two well-known examples included Burger King, which was converted into an advertisement for the film and gave away an estimated fifty million *Pocahontas* figurines, and the Mattel Corporation, which marketed over fifty different dolls and toys.

But Disney's attempt to turn children into consumers and to construct commodification as a defining principle of children's culture should not suggest a parallel vulgarity in its willingness to experiment aesthetically with popular forms of representation. Disney has shown enormous inventiveness in its attempts to reconstruct the very grounds on which popular culture is defined and shaped. For example, by defining popular culture as a hybridized sphere that combines genres and forms and often collapses the boundary between high and low culture, Disney has pushed against the grain of aesthetic form and cultural legitimacy. For instance, when *Fantasia* appeared in the 1930s it drew the wrath of music critics, who, holding to an elite view of classical music, were outraged that the musical score of the film drew from the canon of high culture. By combining high and

low culture in the form of the animated film, Disney opened up new cultural spaces and possibilities for artists and audiences alike. Moreover, as sites of entertainment, Disney's films "work" because they put both children and adults in touch with joy and adventure. They present themselves as places to experience pleasure, even when we have to buy it.

And yet, Disney's brilliant use of aesthetic forms, musical scores, and inviting characters can only be "read" in light of the broader conceptions of reality and predispositions employed by specific Disney films. These films themselves must be viewed within a wider system of dominant representations about gender roles, race, and agency that are endlessly repeated in the visual worlds of television, Hollywood film, and videocassettes.

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

effects is to seduce its audience into suspending critical judgment on the dominant ideological messages produced by such films. Even though these messages can be read through a variety of significations shaped within different contexts of reception, the dominant assumptions that structure these films carry enormous weight in restricting the number of cultural meanings that can be brought to bear on them, especially when the intended audience is mostly children.

This should not suggest that the role of the critic in dealing with Disney's animated films is to simply assign them a particular ideological reading. On the contrary, the challenge of such films is to analyze the various themes and assumptions that inform them both within and outside of the dominant institutional and ideological formations that attempt to constrain how they might be taken up. This allows educators and others to try to understand how such films can become sites of contestation, translation, and exchange in order to be read differently. But there is more at stake here than recognizing the plurality of readings such films might animate; there is also the political necessity of analyzing how privileged, dominant readings of such texts construct their power-sensitive meanings to generate particular subject positions that define for children specific notions of agency and its possibilities in society.

Contexts mold interpretations; but political, economic, and ideological contexts also produce the texts to be read. Focusing on films must be supplemented with analyzing the institutional practices and social structures that work to shape such texts. This type of analysis does not mean that cultural workers should subscribe to a form of determinism in which cultural texts can be assigned a singular meaning as much as it should suggest pedagogical strategies for understanding how dominant regimes of power work to severely limit the range of views that children might bring to reading Disney's animated films. By making the relationship between power and knowledge visible while simultaneously referencing what is often taken for granted, teachers and critics can use Disney's animated films pedagogically, by assisting students and others to read such films within, against, and outside of the dominant codes that inform them. There is a double pedagogical movement here. First, there is the need to read Disney's films in relation to their articulation with other dominant texts in order to assess the similarities of such texts in legitimating particular ideologies. Second, there is the need on the part of cultural work-

ers to use Disney's thematization of America and America's thematization of Disney as a referent to both make visible and disrupt dominant codings, but to do so in a space that invites dialogue, debate, and alternative readings. That is, pedagogically one major challenge is to assess how dominant significations which are repeated over time in these films and reinforced through other popular cultural texts can be taken up as a referent for engaging how children define themselves within such representations. The task here is to provide readings of such films that serve as a pedagogical referent for engaging them in the context in which they are shaped, understood, or might be seen.¹⁷ But providing a particular ideological reading of these films should not suggest this is the only possible reading. On the contrary, by providing a theoretical referent for engaging Disney films, it becomes possible to explore pedagogically how children, students, and adults both construct and defend the readings they bring to such films. In other words, taking a position on Disney's films should be seen not as a form of political or pedagogical indoctrination. On the contrary, such an approach demonstrates that any reading of these films is ideological in nature and should be engaged in terms of the context that produces a particular reading, its content, and what it suggests about the values and social relations it endorses. Moreover, engaging such films politically and ideologically provides the pedagogical basis for making such films problematic and thus open to dialogue rather than treating them uncritically as mere entertainment.

READING DISNEY

The construction of gender identity for girls and women represents one of the most controversial issues in Disney's animated films.¹⁸ In both *The Little Mermaid* and *The Lion King*, the female characters are constructed within narrowly defined gender roles. All of the female characters in these films are ultimately subordinate to males, and define their sense of power and desire almost exclusively in terms of dominant male narratives. For instance, modeled after a slightly anorexic Barbie Doll, Ariel, the woman-mermaid in *The Little Mermaid*, at first glance appears to be engaged in a struggle against parental control, motivated by the desire to explore the human world and willing to take a risk in defining the subject and object of her desires. But in the end, the struggle to gain independence from her father, Triton, and the sense of desperate striving that motivates her dissolve when Ariel makes

a Mephistophelian pact with the sea witch, Ursula. In this trade, Ariel gives away her voice to gain a pair of legs so that she can pursue the handsome Prince Eric. While children might be delighted by Ariel's teenage rebelliousness, they are strongly positioned to believe in the end that desire, choice, and empowerment are closely linked to catching and loving handsome men. Bonnie Leadbeater and Gloria Lodato Wilson explore succinctly the pedagogical message at work in the film with their comment:

The 20th-century innocent and appealing video presents a high-spirited role for adolescent girls, but an ultimately subservient role for adult women. Disney's "Little Mermaid" has been granted her wish to be part of the new world of men, but she is still flipping her fins and is not going too far. She stands to explore the world of men. She exhibits her new-found sexual desires. But the sexual ordering of women's roles is unchanged.¹⁹

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

For example, in *Aladdin* the issue of agency and power is centered primarily on the role of the young street tramp, Aladdin. Jasmine, the princess he falls in love with, is simply an object of his immediate desire as well as a social stepping stone. Jasmine's life is almost completely defined by men, and, in the end, her happiness is insured by Aladdin, who finally is given permission to marry her.

Disney's gender theme becomes a bit more complicated in *Beauty and the Beast* and *Pocahontas*. Belle, the heroine of *Beauty and the Beast*, is portrayed as

an independent woman stuck in a provincial village in eighteenth-century France. Seen as odd because she always has her nose in a book, she is pursued by Gaston, the ultimate vain, macho male typical of Hollywood films of the 1980s. To Belle's credit she rejects him, but in the end she gives her love to the Beast, who holds her captive in the hopes she will fall in love with him and break the evil spell cast upon him as a young man. Belle not only falls in love with the Beast, she "civilizes" him by instructing him on how to eat properly, control his temper, and dance. Belle becomes a model of etiquette and style as she turns this narcissistic, muscle-bound tyrant into a "new" man, one who is sensitive, caring, and loving. Some critics have labeled Belle a Disney feminist because she rejects and vilifies Gaston, the ultimate macho man. Less obviously, *Beauty and the Beast* also can be read as a rejection of hyper-masculinity and a struggle between the macho sensibilities of Gaston and the reformed sexist, the Beast. In this reading Belle is less the focus of the film than a prop or "mechanism for solving the Beast's dilemma."²⁰ Whatever subversive qualities Belle personifies in the film, they seem to dissolve when focused on humbling male vanity. In the end, Belle simply becomes another woman whose life is valued for solving a man's problems.

Rather than being portrayed as a young adolescent, Pocahontas is made over historically to resemble a shapely, animated, contemporary, high-fashion supermodel. Represented as a woman who is bright, courageous, literate, and politically progressive, she is a far cry from the traditional negative stereotypes of Native Americans portrayed in Hollywood films. But like many of Disney's female protagonists, Pocahontas's character is drawn primarily in relation to the men that surround her. Initially, her identity is defined in resistance to her father's attempts to marry her off to one of the bravest warriors in the tribe. But her coming-of-age identity crisis is largely defined by her love affair with John Smith, a colonialist who happens to be blond and looks like as if he belongs in a Southern California pin-up magazine of male surfers. Pocahontas's character is drawn primarily through her struggle to save her colonial lover, John Smith, from being executed by her father. Pocahontas exudes a kind of sappy romanticism that not only saves John Smith's life, but convinces the crew of the British ship to turn on its greedy captain and return to England. Of course, this is a Hollywood rewrite of history that bleaches colonialism of its genocidal legacy. No mention is made of the fact that John Smith's countrymen would

ultimately ruin Pocahontas's land, bring disease, murder, and poverty to her people, and eventually destroy their religion, economic livelihood, and way of life. In the Disney version of history, colonialism never happened, and the meeting between the old and new worlds simply becomes fodder for reproducing a "love conquers all" narrative. One wonders how this film would have been taken up in the public mind if it had been a film about a Jewish woman who falls in love with a blond, Aryan Nazi, while ignoring any references to the Holocaust.

The issue of female subordination returns with a vengeance in *The Lion King*. All of the rulers of the kingdom are men, reinforcing the assumption that independence and leadership are tied to patriarchal entitlement and high social standing. The dependency that the beloved lion, Simba, Mulana, engenders from the women of Pride Rock is unaltered after his death when the evil Scar assumes control of the kingdom. Lacking any sense of outrage, independence, or resistance, the women inclines hang around to do his bidding. Given Disney's purported obsession with family values, especially as a consuming unit, it is curious as to why there are no strong mothers or fathers in these films.³¹ Not only are powerful mothers absent, but with the exception of Pocahontas's father, all of the father figures in these films are portrayed as either weak or stupid. The mermaid only has a domineering father; Jasmine's father is outwitted by his aids; and Belle has an airhead for a father. All the more reason to ponder why Disney cannot conceive of independent and forceful woman outside of the family unit, since that unit is largely portrayed as dysfunctional.

Jack Zipes, a leading theorist on fairy tales, claims that Disney's animated films celebrate a masculine type of power, but more importantly he believes that they reproduce "a type of gender stereotyping . . . that [has] an adverse effect on children in contrast to what parents think. . . . Parents think they're essentially harmless—and they're not harmless."³² Disney films are seen by enormous numbers of children in both the United States and abroad. As far as the issue of gender is concerned, Disney's view of female agency and empowerment is not simply limited, it borders on being overtly reactionary. Racial stereotyping is another major issue that surfaces in many of the recent Disney animated films. But the legacy of racism does not begin with the films produced since 1989; on the contrary, there is a long history of racism associated with the studio. This history can be traced back to denigrating images of people of color in films such as *Song of the South*, released

in 1946, and *The Jungle Book*, which appeared in 1967.³³ Moreover, racist representations of native Americans as violent "redskins" were featured in Frontierland in the 1950s.³⁴ The main restaurant in Frontierland featured the real-life figure of a former slave, Aunt Jemima, who would sign autographs for the tourists outside of her "Pancake House." Eventually the exhibits and the Native Americans running them were eliminated by Disney executives because the "Indian" canoe guides wanted to unionize. They were displaced by robotic dancing bears. Complaints from civil rights groups got rid of the degrading Aunt Jemima spectacle.³⁵

Recently, the most controversial example of racist stereotyping facing the Disney publicity machine occurred with the release of *Aladdin* in 1992, although such stereotyping also reappeared in 1994 with the release of *The Lion King*. *Aladdin* represents a particularly important example because it was a high profile release, the winner of two Academy Awards, and one of the most successful Disney films ever produced. Playing to massive audiences of children, the film's opening song, "Arabian Nights," begins its depiction of Arab culture with a decidedly racist tone. The lyrics of the offending stanza state: "Oh I come from a land / From a faraway place / Where the caravan camels roam. / Where they cut off your ear / If they don't like your face. / It's barbaric, but hey, it's home." In this characterization, a politics of identity and place associated with Arab culture magnifies popular stereotypes already primed by the media through its portrayal of the Gulf War. Such racist representations are further reproduced in a host of supporting characters who are portrayed as grotesque, violent, and cruel. Yousef Salem, a former spokesperson for the South Bay Islamic Association, characterized the film in the following way:

All of the bad guys have beards and large, bulbous noses, sinister eyes and heavy accents, and they're wielding swords constantly. Aladdin doesn't have a big nose; he has a small nose. He doesn't have a beard or a turban. He doesn't have an accent. What makes him nice is they've given him this American character. . . . I have a daughter who says she's ashamed to be call herself an Arab, and it's because of things like this.³⁶

Jack Shalbeen, a professor of broadcast journalism at Southern Illinois University of Edwardsville, along with radio personality Casey Kasem, mobilized a public relations campaign protesting the anti-Arab themes in

Aladdin. At first the Disney executives ignored the protest, but due to the rising tide of public outrage agreed to change one line of the stanza in the subsequent videocassette and worldwide film release; it is worth noting that Disney did not change the lyrics on its popular CD release of *Aladdin*.¹⁷ It appears that Disney executives were not unaware of the racist implications of the lyrics when they were first proposed. Howard Ashman, who wrote the main title song, submitted an alternative set of lyrics when he delivered the original verse. The alternative set of lyrics, "Where it's flat and immense / And the heat is intense" eventually replaced the original verse, "Where they cut of your ear / If they don't like your face." Though the new lyrics appeared in the videocassette release of *Aladdin*, many Arab groups were disappointed because the verse "It's barbaric, but hey it's home" was not altered. More importantly, the mispronunciation of Arab names in the film, the racial coding of accents, and the use of nonsensical scrawl as a substitute for an actual written Arabic language were not removed.¹⁸

Racism in Disney's animated films does not simply appear in negative imagery; it is also reproduced through racially coded language and accents. For example, *Aladdin* portrays the "bad" Arabs with thick foreign accents, while the Anglicized Jasmine and *Aladdin* speak in standard Americanized English. A hint of the racism that informs this depiction is provided by Peter Schneider, president of feature animation at Disney, who points out that *Aladdin* was modeled after Tom Cruise. Racially coded representations and language are also evident in *The Lion King*. Scar, who is the icon of evil, is portrayed as darker than the good lions. Moreover, racially coded language is evident as all of the members of the royal family speak with posh British accents while Shenzi and Banzai, the despicable hyena storm troopers, speak through the voices of Whoopi Goldberg and Cheech Marin in jive accents that take on the nuances of the discourse of a decidedly urban black and Latino youth. The use of racially coded language is not new in Disney's films and can be found in an early version of *The Three Little Pigs*, *Song of the South*, and *The Jungle Book*.¹⁹ What is astonishing in these films is that they produce a host of representations and codes in which children are taught that cultural differences that do not bear the imprint of white, middle-class ethnicity are deviant, inferior, unintelligent, and a threat to be overcome. The racism in these films is defined by both the presence of racist representations and the absence of complex representations of African-Americans and other people of color.

At the same time, whiteness as a form of racial identity is universalized through the privileged representation of middle-class social relations, values, and linguistic practices. Moreover, the representational rendering of history, progress, and Western culture bears a colonial legacy that seems perfectly captured by Edward Said's notion of orientalism and its dependency on new images of centrality and sanctioned narratives.²⁰ Cultural differences in Disney's recent films are expressed through a "naturalized" racial hierarchy, one that is antithetical to a viable democratic society. There is nothing innocent in what kids learn about race as portrayed in the "magical world" of Disney. Even in a film such as *Pocahontas*, where cultural differences are portrayed more positively, there is the suggestion in the end that racial identities must remain separate. *Pocahontas* is one of the few love stories in Disney's animated series in which the lovers do not live together happily ever after. It is also one of the few love stories that brings lovers from different races together.

Another central feature common to many of Disney's recently animated films is the celebration of deeply antidemocratic social relations. Nature and the animal kingdom provide the mechanism for presenting and legitimating caste, royalty, and structural inequality as part of the natural order. The seemingly benign presentation of celluloid dramas in which men rule, strict discipline is imposed through social hierarchies, and leadership is a function of one's social status suggests a yearning for a return to a more rigidly stratified society, one modeled after the British monarchy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Within Disney's animated films, nature provides a metaphor where "harmony is bought at the price of domination. . . . no power or authority is implied except for the natural ordering mechanisms [of nature]."²¹ For children, the messages offered in Disney's animated films suggest that social problems such as the history of racism, the genocide of Native Americans, the prevalence of sexism, and crisis of democracy are simply willed through the laws of nature.

CULTURAL PEDAGOGY AND CHILDREN'S CULTURE

Given the corporate reach, cultural influence, and political power that Disney exercises over multiple levels of children's culture, Disney's animated films should be neither ignored nor censored by those who dismiss the conservative ideologies they produce and circulate. I think there are a number of issues to be taken up regarding the forging of a pedagogy and

engagement rather than a series of sights and sounds that wash over us. This suggests a pedagogical approach to popular culture that engages how a politics of the popular works to mobilize desire, stimulate imagination, and produce forms of identification that can become objects of dialogue and critical investigation. At one level, this necessitates addressing the utopian possibilities in which children often find representations of their hopes and dreams. The pedagogical value of such an approach is that it alerts cultural workers to taking the needs, desires, languages, and experience of children seriously. But this is not meant to merely affirm the necessity for relevance in the curriculum as much as it means recognizing the pedagogical importance of what kids bring with them to the classroom (or any other site of learning) to decentering power in the classroom and expanding the possibility for multiple literacies and agency as part of the learning process.

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

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

But a cultural pedagogy also involves the struggle for more resources for schools and other sites of learning. Providing the conditions for stu-

dents to become the subjects and not simply the objects of pedagogical work by asserting their roles as cultural producers is crucial if students are to become attentive to the workings of power, solidarity, and difference as part of a more comprehensive project for democratic empowerment. Fourth, Disney's all-encompassing reach into the spheres of economics, consumption, and culture suggest that we analyze the studio within a broad and complex range of relations of power. Eric Smoodin argues rightly that the American public needs to "gain a new sense of Disney's importance, because of the manner in which his work in film and television is connected to other projects in urban planning, ecological politics, product merchandising, United States domestic and global policy formation, technological innovation, and constructions of national character."⁴⁸ This suggests undertaking new analyses of Disney which connect rather than separate the various social and cultural formations in which the company actively engages. Clearly, such a dialectical practice not only provides a more theoretically accurate understanding of the reach and influence of Disney's power, it also contributes to forms of analysis that rupture the notion that Disney is primarily about the pedagogy of entertainment.

Questions of ownership, control, and the possibility of public participation in making decisions about how cultural resources are used, to what extent, and for what effect must become a central issue in addressing the world of Disney and other corporate conglomerates that shape cultural policy. It is imperative that educators and other cultural workers critically examine the control, production, and distribution of Disney's animated films as part of a wider circuit of power. Such an approach provides concerned parents and public citizens with relevant information for understanding and addressing how Disney, Inc., exercises its power and influence within the context of a larger cultural strategy and public policy initiative. In this context, Disney's influence in the shaping of children's culture cannot be reduced to critically interpreting the ideas and values promoted in films and other forms of representation. Any viable analysis of Disney must also confront the institutional and political power Disney exercises through its massive control over diverse sectors of the media industry.

The availability, influence, and cultural power of Disney's children's films demand that they become part of a broader political discourse regarding who makes cultural policy. Such issues could be addressed through public debates about how cultural and economic resources can be distributed to

lows, I want to provide in schematic form some suggestions regarding cultural workers, educators, and parents might critically engage Disney in shaping the "symbolic environment into which our children are born and in which we all live out our lives."⁴²

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

Second, parents, community groups, educators, and other concerned individuals must be attentive to the multiple and diverse messages in Disney films in order to both criticize them when necessary and, more importantly, to reclaim them for more productive ends. At the very least, we must be attentive to the processes whereby meanings are produced in these films and how they work to secure particular forms of authority and social relations. At stake pedagogically is the issue of paying "close attention to the ways in which [such films] invite (or indeed seek to prevent) particular meanings and pleasures."⁴³ In fact, Disney's films appear to assign quite unapologetically rigid roles to women and people of color. Similarly, such films generally produce a narrow view of family values coupled with a nostalgic and conservative view of history that should be challenged and transformed. Educators need to take seriously Disney's attempt to shape collective memory, particularly when such attempts are unabashedly defined by one of Disneyland's Imagineers in the following terms: "What we create is a sort of 'Disney realism,' sort of Utopian in nature, where we carefully program out all the negative, unwanted elements and program in the positive elements."⁴⁴ Needless to say, Disney's rendering of entertainment and spectacle, whether expressed in Frontierland, Main Street USA, or in its endless video and film productions, does not merely represent an edited, sanitary, and nostalgic view of history, one that is free of poverty, class differences and urban decay. Disney's writing

identity that treats subordinate groups as either exotic or irrelevant to American history while simultaneously marketing cultural differences within "histories that corporations can live with."⁴⁵ Disney's version of United States history is neither innocent nor can it be dismissed as simple entertainment.

Disney's celluloid view of children's culture strips the past, present, and future of its diverse narratives and its multiple possibilities. But it is precisely such a rendering that needs to be revealed as an historically specific and politically constructed cultural "landscape of power." Positioning and revealing the ideological nature of Disney's world of children's films opens up further opportunities for educators and cultural workers to intervene within such texts to make them mean differently. Rustom Bharuccha puts it well in arguing that "the consumption of . . . images . . . can be subverted through a particular use in which we are compelled to think through images rather than respond to them with a hallucinatory delight."⁴⁶ One rendering of the call to "think through images" is for educators and cultural workers to demonstrate pedagogically and politically that history and its rendering of national identity have to be contested and engaged, even when images parade as innocent film entertainment for children. The images that pervade Disney's production of children's culture along with their claim to public memory need to be challenged and rewritten, "moved about in different ways," and read differently as part of the script of democratic empowerment.⁴⁷ Issues regarding the construction of gender, race, class, caste, and other aspects of self and collective identity are defining principles of Disney's films for children. It is within the drama of animated storytelling that children are often positioned pedagogically to learn what subject positions are open to them as citizens and what positions aren't. Hence, the struggle over children's culture partly must be seen as the struggle over the related discourses of citizenship, national identity, and democracy itself.

Third, if Disney's films are to be viewed as more than narratives of fantasy and escape, becoming sites of reclamation and imagination, which affirm rather than deny the long-standing relationship between entertainment and pedagogy, cultural workers and educators need to insert the political and pedagogical back into the discourse of entertainment. In part, this points to analyzing how entertainment can be rendered as a subject of intellectual



insure that children are exposed to a variety of alternative narratives and representations about themselves and the larger society. When the issue of children's culture is addressed in the schools, it is assumed that this is a commonplace matter of public policy and intervention, but when it is shaped in the commercial sphere the discourse of public intervention gets lost in abstract appeals to the imperatives of the market and free speech. Free speech is only as good as the democratic framework that makes it possible to extend its benefits to a wider range of individuals, groups, and public spheres. Treating Disney as part of a media sphere that needs to be democratized and held accountable for the ways in which it sells power and manufactures social identities needs to be taken up as part of the discourse of pedagogical analysis and public policy intervention. This type of analysis and intervention is perfectly suited for cultural studies, which can employ an interdisciplinary approach to such an undertaking, one that makes the popular the object of serious analysis, makes the pedagogical a defining principle of such work, and inserts the political into the center of its project.⁴⁹

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

monies."⁵⁰ It is precisely by addressing how these hegemonomies operate in particular spaces of power, specific localities, and differentiated transnational locations that progressives will be able to understand more fully the specific agendas and politics at work as Disney is both constructed for and read by different audiences.

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

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



**CHAPTER THREE:
ANIMATING YOUTH:
THE DISNEYFICATION
OF CHILDREN'S CULTURE**

- Artforum 38:7 (March 1995), pp. 63–66, 110; and bell hooks, "Cool Tool," *Artforum* 38:7 (March 1995), pp. 63–66, 110.
48. Cited in Lisa Kennedy, "Natural Born Filmmaker," *Village Voice* (October 25, 1994), p. 32.
49. Rustom Bharacua, "Around Aiyohya," p. 56.
50. Herbert I. Schiller, *Culture Inc.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
51. Dole's speech cited in Adam Pezman, "Hollywood Angered by Dole's Attack on Its 'Evil' Offerings," *Boston Globe*, June 2, 1995, pp. 1, 20. John M. Broder, "Dole Blasts 'Deviancy' in Hollywood Films, Music," *Boston Globe*, June 2, 1995, p. 1.
52. Cited in "Faces of Violence," *Rolling Stone*, No. 710 (June 15, 1995), p. 60.
53. Ellen Goodman, "A New Cast, Same Script," *Boston Globe*, June 8, 1995, p. 18. On the sheer hypocrisy of Dole's remarks, see Derrick Jackson, "Sen. Dole's Amazon of Hypocrisy," *Boston Globe*, June 9, 1995, p. 23.
54. Susan E. Neff, "Two Killed, Six Others Hurt in Rash of Boston Shootings," *Boston Globe* (July 15, 1995), p. 21.
55. Michael Roth, "Violence and the De-Meaning of America," *Tikkun* 9:1 (1994), p. 87.
1. Of course, I recognize that only within the last decade has it become possible to obtain animated films on an everyday basis. Also, animation as a particular representational form has not been adequately theorized. At the same time, I think crucial spheres of children's culture, outside of schooling, have not received the attention they deserve by cultural theorists.
2. Of course, cultural studies has a long tradition of focusing on the related issues of youth subcultures and resistance, particularly in relation to schools and the workplace. But it is only recently that critics have begun to address in more expansive theoretical terms how young children are socialized within the broader parameters and sites that constitute the changing pedagogical conditions of a postmodern/popular culture. The point here is that social critics, including cultural theorists, with few exceptions write social theory according to the presuppositions that everyone is an adult. Jane Flax points to this problem, for instance, in her critique of the overall body of feminist theory. She writes: "For example in [recent work] on feminist theory focusing on mothering and the family, there is

his review of Pulp Fiction argues that:

Although Tarantino wants to shock us with violence, his film is politically correct. There is no nudity and no violence directed against women; in fact a man, the crime boss, gets raped and the only essentially evil people in the film are two sadistic honkies straight out of Deliverance who do the raping. The film celebrates interracial friendship and cultural diversity [my emphasis]; there are strong women and strong Black men, and the director swims against the current of class stereotype.

Alan A. Stone, "Pulp Fiction," *The Boston Review* 20:2 (April/May 1995), pp. 24–25.

This is an amazing analysis, especially since it is a black youth who gets his head blown off in the back of a car, the one black woman who appears in the film is faceless, and the film is laced with racist language. But the silence about racism in this critique is equally matched by a refusal to acknowledge the demeaning portrayal of women. For example, "Honey Bunny" and the drug dealer's wife are respectively portrayed as either drug snorting and reckless or as violent and hysterical sociopaths.

46. Gary Indiana, "Geek Chic," *Artforum* 38:7 (March 1995), pp. 64–65.

47. For an interesting analysis of Tarantino's view on women, see Robin Wood, "Slick Shit,"

35. On the relationship of parody to art forms, see Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

36. Rustom Bharacua, "Around Aiyohya: Aberrations, Enigmas, and Moments of Violence," p. 50.

37. Tarantino quoted in Tony Crawley, "Quentin Tarantino," *Film Review* (November 1994), p. 32.

38. Tarantino cited in Peter McAlevy, "All's Well that Ends Gruesomely," *New York Times Magazine* (December 6, 1992), p. 80.

39. Cited in Peter Biskind, "An Auteur is Born," *Premiere* (November 1994), p. 100.

40. Amy Taubin, "Eight Critics Talk About Violence and the Movies," *The Village Voice Film Special* (December 1, 1992), p. 10.

41. David Kehr, "Eight Critics Talk About Violence and the Movies," *The Village Voice Film Special* (December 1, 1992), p. 8.

42. Cited in Manohla Dargis, "A Bloody Pulp," *Vibe* (October 1995), p. 66.

43. Ice Cube cited in Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels* (New York: Free Press, 1994), pp. 209–210.

44. See Robin Kelley, *ibid.*, especially pages 209–214.

45. bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), p. 177. It certainly escaped Harvard University law professor Alan A. Stone, who in

almost no discussion of children as human beings or mothering as a relation between persons. The modal 'person' in feminist theory still appears to be a self-sufficient individual adult." Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations," in Linda J. Nicholson, Ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 54.

Of course, there are exceptions to this rule; see Lauren Berlant, "The Theory of Infanile Citizenship," *Public Culture* 5:3 (Spring 1993), pp. 395–410; and Francesca Polletta, "Politicizing Childhood: The 1980 Zurich Burns Movement," *Social Text*, No. 33 (1992), pp. 82–102. For a brilliant work on children's culture, see Stephen Kline, *Out of the Garden: Toys and Children's Culture in the Age of TV Marketing* (London: Verso Press, 1995). Representative works also include: Marsha Kinder, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Ellen Seiter, *Sold Separately: Parents and Children in Consumer Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Christine Griffen, *Representations of Youth* (London: Polity Press, 1993); Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Charles R. Ackland, *Youth, Murder, Spectacle* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995).

3. This is not to suggest that I believed that the world of fantasy, amusement, and enter-

tainment could be abstracted from ideology. On the contrary, I simply did not address such ideologies as serious objects of analysis. For a critical engagement of commercialization, popular culture, and children's culture, see Marsha Kinder, *Playing With Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Doug Kellner, *Media Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

4. The reactionary notion that single parents or "broken" families are the source of all social ills has become a staple of both Disney films as well as standard Hollywood studio fare. Two recent Disney examples capitalizing on the virtues of "intact" families would include *I Love Trouble* (1994), which suggests that conflict between competing heterosexuals can only be resolved within marriage; *Angels in the Outfield* (1994), which posits divine intervention on the side of creating an Ozzie and Harriet family for a precocious young baseball fan. In standard Hollywood fare, this theme is pushed to absurd lengths in films such as *Milk Money* (1994), where a prostitute finds happiness and romantic bliss in the promise of family life in the suburbs; and the 1994 film version of *Miracle on 34th Street*, which shamelessly rewrites a legendary film in order to hawk the virtues of child manipulation in construct-

ing a Dan Quayle version of the traditional family.

5. Cited in Bruce Howowitz, "Company Has Cradle-to-Crave Sway," *USATODAY* (September 7, 1995), B1. On the specific practices involved in the merger between Disney and Capital Cities/ABC, see Jack Thomas, "For Viewers, Changes Not Expected to be Big Deal," *Boston Globe* (August 1, 1995), pp. 33, 45, especially the chart on p. 45.

6. There is an ever-growing list of authors who have been pressured by Disney, either through the refusal to allow copyrighted materials to be used or through Disney's reputation, not to publish certain works. Examples can be found in Jon Wiener, "In the Belly of the Mouse: The Dyspeptic Disney Archives," *Lingua Franca* (July/August 1994), pp. 69–72. Also, Jon Wiener, "Murdered Ink," *The Nation* (May 31, 1993), pp. 743–750. One typical example occurred in a book in which one of my own essays on Disney appears. While in the process of editing a book critical of Disney, Laura Sells, Lynda Haas, and Elizabeth Bell requested permission from Disney executives to use the archives. In response, the editors received a letter from one of Disney's legal assistants asking to approve the book. The editors declined and Disney forbade the use of their name in the title of the book, and threatened to sue

if the Disney name were used. Indiana University Press argued that it did not have the resources to fight Disney and the title of the book was changed from *Doing Disney to From Mermaid to Mouse*. In another instance, Routledge decided to omit an essay by David Kunzle on the imperialist messages in Disney's foreign comics in a book entitled *Disney Discourse*. Fearing that Disney would not provide permission for illustrations from the Disney archives, Routledge decided they could not publish the essay without illustrations. Discouraged, Kunzle told Jon Wiener that "I've given up. I'm not doing any more work on Disney. I don't think any university press would take the risk. The problem is not the likelihood of Disney winning in court, it's the threat of having to bear the cost of fighting them." Kunzle cited in Wiener, "In the Belly of the Mouse," p. 72.

7. This figure comes from Michael Meyer, et al., "Of Mice and Men," *Newsweek* (September 5, 1994), p. 41.

8. The mutually determining relationship of culture and economic power as a dynamic hegemonic process is beautifully captured by Sharon Zukin's work on Disney. She writes:
The domestication of fantasy in visual consumption is inseparable from centralized structures of economic power, just as the earlier power of the state

- illuminated public space—the streets—by artificial lamplight, so the economic power of CBS, Sony, and the Disney Company illuminates private space at home by electronic images. With the means of production so concentrated and the means of consumption so diffused, communication of these images becomes a way of controlling both knowledge and imagination, a form of corporate social control over technology and symbolic expressions of power.”
- In Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 221.
9. Cited in Mark Walsh, “Disney Holds up School as Model for Next Century,” *Education Week*, 13:39 (June 22, 1994), p. 1.
 10. Cited in Tom Vanderbilt, “Mickey goes to Town(s),” *The Nation* 261:6 (August 28/September 4, 1995), p. 197.
 11. Tom Vanderbilt, “Mickey Goes to Town(s),” *The Nation* 261:6 (August 28/September 4, 1995), p. 199.
 12. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), p. 25. Also, see Jean Baudrillard, “Consumer Society,” in Mark Poster, Ed., *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Works* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 29–56.
 13. Eric Smoodin, “How to Read Walt Disney,” *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 18.
 14. Jon Wiener, “Tall Tales and True,” *The Nation* (January 31, 1994), p. 134.
 15. Actually, Disney’s animated films, *The Lion King*, may be the most financially successful film ever made. Disney’s animated films released since 1990 have all been included in the list of the top ten grossing films. For example, *Lion King* ranked first with \$253.5 million; *Aladdin* ranked second with \$217.4 million; and *Beauty and the Beast* ranked seventh, grossing \$145.9 million. See Thomas King, “Creative but Unpolished Top Executive for Hire,” *Wall Street Journal* (August 26, 1994), p. B1.
 16. Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, Laura Sells, “Walt’s in the Movies,” in Elizabeth Bell, et. al., Eds. *From Mouse to Mermaid* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 3.
 17. Barbara Foley, “Subversion and Oppositionality in the Academy,” in Maria Regina Kechi, Ed., *Pedagogy is Politics: Literary Theory and Critical Teaching* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 79.
 18. A number of recent authors address Disney’s imagined landscape as a place of economic and cultural power. See, for example, Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disneyland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Michael Sorkin, “Disney World: The Power of Facade/The Facade of Power,” in Michael Sorkin, Ed., *Variations on a Theme Park* (New York: Noonday Press, 1992); and see the especially impressive, Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).
 19. Cited in Renee Graham, “Can Disney Do It Again?” *Boston Globe, Arts Etc. Section* (June 11, 1995), p. 57. For similar figures see Thomas R. King, “Creative but Unpolished Top Executive for Hire,” *Wall Street Journal* (Friday, August 26, 1994), p. B1; Jeff Giles, “A New Generation of Genies,” *Newsweek* (September 5, 1994), p. 42.
 20. The term “marketplace of culture” comes from Richard de Cordero, “The Mickey in Macy’s Window: Childhood Consumerism and Disney Animation,” in Eric Smoodin, Ed. *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 209. It is worth noting that Disney was one of the first companies to tie the selling of toys to the consuming of movies. Challenging the assumption that toy consumption was limited to seasonal sales, Disney actively pursued creating Mickey Mouse Clubs, advertising its toys in storefront windows, and linking its movies directly to the distribution of children’s toys.
 21. Cited in Richard Corliss, “The Mouse that Roars,” *Time* (June 20, 1994), p. 59.
 22. Cited in Richard Turner, “Walt Disney Presents: Forward to the Future,” *Wall Street Journal* (August 26, 1994), p. B1.
 23. Sallie Hofmeister, “In the Realm of Marketing, the ‘Lion King’ Rules,” *New York Times* (July 12, 1994), p. D1.
 24. For an amazing summation of the merchandizing avalanche that accompanied the movie theater version of *The Lion King*, see Sallie Hofmeister, “In the Realm of Marketing, the ‘Lion King’ Rules,” *New York Times* (July 12, 1994), pp. D1, D17.
 25. Cited in Karen Schoemer, “An Endless Stream of Magic and Moola,” *Newsweek* (September 5, 1994), p. 47.
 26. Tom McNichol, “Pushing ‘Pocahontas,’” *USA Weekend* (June 9–11, 1995), p. 4.
 27. Tony Bennett touches on this issue through his rendering of the concept of reading formation. He argues, “The concept of reading formation is an attempt to think of context as a set of discursive and inter-textual determinations, operating on material and institutional supports, which bear in upon a text not just externally, from the outside in, but internally, shaping it—in the historically concrete forms in which it is available as a text-to-be-read—from the inside out.” See Tony Bennett, “Texts in History: The Determinations

- of Readings and Their Texts," in Derek Attridge, et al., Eds., *Poststructuralism and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 72.
28. Critiques of Disney's portrayal of girls and women can be found in Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, Eds., *From Mouse to Mermaid* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); also see Susan White, "Split Skins: Female Agency and Bodily Mutilation in *The Little Mermaid*," in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins, Eds., *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 187-195.
29. Bonnie J. Leadbeater and Gloria Lodato Wilson, "Flipping Their Fins for a Place to Stand: 19th- and 20th-Century Mermaids," *Youth and Society* 27:4 (June 1993), pp. 466-486.
30. Susan Jefford develops this reading of *Beauty and the Beast* in Susan Jefford, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), p. 150.
31. I would like to thank Valerie Janesick for this insight.
32. Cited in June Casagrande, "The Disney Agenda," (*reviue leading* (March 17-23, 1994), p. 6-7.
33. Upon its release in 1946, *Song of the South* was condemned by the NAACP for its racist representations.
34. For a historical context in which to understand Frontierland, see Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992).
35. These racist episodes are highlighted in Jon Wiener, "Tall Tales and True," *The Nation* (January 31, 1994), pp. 133-135.
36. Yousef Salem cited in Richard Scheinin, "Angry Over 'Aladdin,'" *Washington Post* (January 10, 1993), p. G5.
37. Howard Green, a Disney spokesperson, dismissed the charges of racism as irrelevant, claiming that such criticisms were coming from a small minority and that "most people were happy with [the film]." Cited in Richard Scheinin, "Angry Over 'Aladdin,'" *Washington Post* (January 10, 1993), p. G1.
38. I have taken this criticism from Jack Shaheen, "Animated Racism," *Cineaste* 20:1 (1993), p. 49.
39. See Susan Miller and Greg Rode, who do a rhetorical analysis of *The Jungle Book* and *Song of the South* in their chapter, "The Movie You See: The Movie You Don't: How Disney Do's That Old Time Derision," in Elizabeth Bell, Lynda Haas, and Laura Sells, Eds., *From Mouse to Mermaid* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).
40. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).
41. Susan Willis brilliantly explores this theme in Susan Willis, "Fantasia: Walt Disney's Los Angeles Sins," *Diacritics* Vol. 17 (Summer 1987), pp. 83-96.
42. George Gierber, Larry Gross, Michael Borgan, and Nancy Signorielli, "Growing Up with Television: The Cultural Perspective," in Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann, Eds., *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1995), p. 17.
43. David Buckingham, "Conclusions: Re-Reading Audiences," in David Buckingham, Ed., *Reading Audiences: Young People and the Media* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 211.
44. Cited in Sharon Zukin, *op. cit.*, 1991, p. 222. While this quote refers to Disney's view of its theme parks, it represents an ideological view of history that strongly shapes all of Disney's cultural productions. For a comment on how it affects Disney's rendering of adult films, see Henry A. Giroux, *Disturbing Pleasures* (New York: Routledge, 1994), especially pp. 25-45.
45. Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992), p. 100.
46. Kusum Bharucha, "Around Ayoðhya: Aberrations, Entanglements and Moments of Violence," *Third Text*, No. 24 (Autumn 1993), p. 51.
47. Tony Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 80.
48. Eric Smoodin, "How to Read Walt Disney," Eric Smoodin, Ed., *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 4-5.
49. For an example of such an analysis, see Stanley Aronowitz, *Roll Over Brethren* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993); Henry A. Giroux, *Disturbing Pleasures: Learning Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
50. Interpal Grewal and Garen Kaplan, "Introduction: Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity," in Interpal Grewal and Garen Kaplan, Eds., *Scattered Hegemonies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

CHAPTER FOUR: PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS AND POSTMODERN YOUTH

1. Charles R. Acland, *Youth, Murder, Spectacle: The Cultural Politics of Youth in Crisis* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995), p. 4.
2. James Alan Fox, "A Disturbing Trend in Youth Crime," *Boston Globe*, June 1, 1995, p. 19.
3. Cited in Anthony Flint, "Some See Bombing's Roots in a US Culture of Conflict," *Boston Globe*, June 1, 1995, p. 22.
4. Matthew Arnold, "Sweetness and Light," in *The Complete Prose of Matthew Arnold*, vol. 5, Ed. R.H.

CHAPTER TWO:

RACISM AND THE AESTHETIC OF HYPER-REAL VIOLENCE: PULP FICTION AND OTHER VISUAL TRAGEDIES

- 1. Edward S. Herman, "The New Racist Onslaught," *Z Magazine* 7:12 (December 1994), p. 24.
- 2. Holly Sklar, "Young and Guilty by Stereotype," *Z Magazine* 6:7/8 (July/August 1993), p. 53.
- 3. This issue is taken up in Christian Parenti, "Urban Militarism," *Z Magazine* 7:6 (June 1994), pp. 47-52.
- 4. Laurie Asseo, "Statistics on Black Crime Victims Released," *Boston Globe*, December 9, 1994, p. 3.
- 5. The media bashing of youth is taken up in great detail in Mike Males, "Bashing Youth: Media Myths About Teenagers," *Extra* (March/April 1994), pp. 8-14.
- 6. "Violence Targets America's Youth," *Centre Daily Times*, July 18, 1994, p. 4.
- 7. Ed Guerrero, "Framing Blackness: The African-American Image in the Cinema of the Nineties," *Cineaste* 20:2 (1993), p. 30.
- 8. Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, "Contested Histories: Eurocentrism, Multiculturalism, and Media," in David Theo Goldberg, Ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1994), p. 319.

- 33. Selective examples of this work include: Carol Becker, Ed., *The Subversive Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, Eds., *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Roger Simon, *Teaching Against the Grain* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1992); David Trend, *Cultural Pedagogy: Art/Education/Politics* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1992); James Schwoch, Mimi White, and Susan Reilly, *Media Knowledge: Readings in Popular Culture, Pedagogy, and Critical Citizenship* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992); Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992). See also Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Jeanne Brady, *Schooling Young Children* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995).
- 34. Stuart Hall, "Race, Culture, and Communications: Looking Backward and Forward at Cultural Studies," *Rethinking Marxism* 5:1 (Spring 1992), p. 11.
- 35. Peter Hitchcock, "The Othering of Cultural Studies," *Third Text*, No. 25 (Winter 1993-1994), p. 12.
- 36. Walter Parkes, "Random Access, Remote Control: the Evolution of Story Telling," *Omni* (January 1994), p. 50.
- 37. Stuart Hall, "Race, Culture, and Communications," p. 14.

- 22. Michael Dyson, "The Politics of Black Masculinity and the Ghetto in Black Film," in Carol Becker, Ed., *The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 155.
- 23. Dyson, "The Politics of Black Masculinity," p. 163.
- 24. Itabari Njeri, "Untangling the Roots of the Violence Around Us—On Screen and Off," *Los Angeles Times Magazine* (August 29, 1993), p. 33.
- 25. Cornel West, "Nihilism in Black America," in Gina Dent, Ed., *Black Popular Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1992), p. 40.
- 26. Itabari Njeri, "Untangling the Roots of the Violence Around Us—On Screen and Off," p. 34.
- 27. Fabienne Worth, "Postmodern Pedagogy in the Multicultural Classroom: For Inappropriate Teachers and Imperfect Spectators," *Cultural Critique*, No. 25 (Fall 1993), p. 27.
- 28. Pierce Hollingsworth, "The New Generation Gaps: Grayng Boomers, Golden Agers, and Generation X," *Food Technology* 47:10 (October 1993), p. 30.
- 29. I have called this elsewhere the pedagogy of commercialism. See Henry A. Giroux, *Disturbing Pleasures: Learning Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 30. For an analysis of the relationship among modernist schooling, pedagogy, and popular culture,

- see Henry A. Giroux and Roger I. Simon, "Popular Culture as a Pedagogy of Pleasure and Meaning," in Henry A. Giroux and Roger Simon, Eds., *Popular Culture, Schooling, & Everyday Life* (Granby, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1989), pp. 30-30; Henry A. Giroux and Roger Simon, "Schooling, Popular Culture, and a Pedagogy of Possibility," in Giroux and Simon, Eds., *Popular Culture, Schooling, & Everyday Life*, pp. 219-236.
- 34. Anyone who has been following the culture wars of the last decade is well aware of the conservative agenda for reordering public and higher education around the commercial goal of promoting economic growth for the nation while simultaneously supporting the values of Western civilization as a common culture designed to undermine the ravages of calls for equity and multiculturalism. For a brilliant analysis of the conservative attack on higher education, see Ellen Messer-Davidow, "Manufacturing the Attack on Liberalized Higher Education," *Social Text*, No. 36 (Fall 1993), pp. 40-80.
- 32. This argument is especially powerful in the work of Edward Said, who frames the reach of culture as a determining pedagogical force against the backdrop of the imperatives of colonialism. See Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

9. George Gerbner, "Miracles of Communication Technology: Powerful Audiences, Diverse Choices, and Other Fairy Tales," *Janet Maski, et al., Eds., Illuminating the Blind Spots* (New York: Ablex, 1993), p. 371. See also George Gerbner, Larry Gross, Michael Morgan, and Nancy Signorielli, "Growing Up with Television: The Cultivation Perspective," in Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann, Eds., *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1993), pp. 17-41.
10. Elizabeth Kolbert, "Television Gets Closer Look As a Factor in Real Violence," *New York Times*, December 4, 1994, p. D20.
11. Anne Nelson, "Colours of Violence," *Index on Censorship* 23:162 (May/June 1994), p. 86.
12. Ruston Bharaculha, "Around Aydolya: Aberrations, Enigmas, and Moments of Violence," *Third Text* No. 24 (Autumn 1993), p. 48.
13. These figures come from a survey done by film critic Vincent Canby. Cited in Carl Nighlingale, *On the Edge* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), pp. 170-171.
14. Vivian Sobchack cited in David McKinney, "Violence: The Strong and the Weak," *Film Quarterly* 46:4 (Summer 1993), pp. 16-22.
15. Ruston Bharaculha, "Around Aydolya: Aberrations, Enigmas, and Moments of Violence," *Third Text* No. 24 (Autumn 1993), pp. 51-52.
16. This issue is explored in Susan Jefford, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994).
17. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking, 1963).
18. For a brilliant analysis of this culture, see David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1994). It is truly amazing the degree to which Goldberg's work is ignored by both the popular press and many academics who write about race, given that his writing far exceeds in both quality and insight most of what is being written about racism and Western culture.
19. See Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez, Eds., *Gender, Race, and Class in Media* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994); Charles Acland, *Youth, Murder, Spectacle: The Cultural Politics of "Youth in Crisis"* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); John Fiske, *Media Matters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
20. In the midst of writing this article, the *New York Times Magazine* of December 18, 1994, appeared with a picture of a black woman on the front cover. The image provided the backdrop for a story on welfare.
21. Jim Naureckas, "Racism Resurgent: How Media Let The Bell Curve's Pseudo-Science Define the Agenda on Race," *Extra!* 8:1 (January/February 1995), p. 12.
22. Holly Sklar, "Young and Guilty by Stereotype," *Z Magazine* 7:8 (July/August, 1993), p. 52.
23. On this issue, see Michael Dyson, *Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End Press, 1997).
24. Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* (New York: Free Press, 1994), p. 526.
25. For a similar critique of the violence in Hollywood films such as *Natural Born Killers*, see "Knocking 'Em Dead At the Box Office: Natural Born Killers," *Border/Lines* No. 34/35 (1994), pp. 10-14.
26. It is worth noting that those positive and complex aspects of African-American life that constitute youth culture are rarely portrayed in Hollywood films. For example, representations that focus on how gangster rap "serves up white America's most cherished gun-slugging mythologies (heroic American dreams) in the form of its worst and blakest nightmares, while it empowers Black imaginations to negate the existential terror of ghetto life (and death) by sheer force of the will" are rarely acknowledged critically in the portrayal of black youth culture in the dominant media. Cited in Nick De Genova, "Gangster Rap and Nihilism in Black America: Some Questions of Life and Death," *Social Text* 13:2 (1995), p. 107.
27. Ernst Bloch, et al., "Adorno's Letter to Walter Benjamin—November 10, 1938," *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: New Left Books, 1977), p. 127.
28. For a brilliant commentary on "bigotry delivered as a joke by white men," see Derrick Z. Jackson, "Laughing off Racism," *Boston Globe*, May 24, 1995, p. 19.
29. Tarantino interviewed in Manthala Dargis, "A Bloody Pulp," *Vibe* (October 1995), p. 66.
30. David Dentby, "A Thugfest," *New York* (October 3, 1994), p. 98.
31. Ruth Conniff, "The Culture of Cruelty," *The Progressive* 56:9 (September 1992), pp. 16-20.
32. Tarantino cited in Godfrey Cheshire, "Hollywood's New Hit Men," *Interview* (September 1994), p. 130.
33. Peter Travers, "Tarantino's Twist," *Rolling Stone*, No. 697 (October 6, 1994), p. 80.
34. Ruston Bharaculha, "Around Aydolya: Aberrations, Enigmas, and Moments of Violence," p. 50.