

THREE

DISNEYLAND: A DEGENERATE UTOPIA

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MY REFLECTION on utopia was provoked by fascination with the signifier Ou-topia in which "something" was inscribed by Thomas More on a geographical chart; a name given by him at the beginning of the sixteenth century to a blessed island *between* England and America, *between* the Old and the New World.

The name Utopia is obviously written, through its Greek etymology, as a geographical referent; simultaneously in this writing, in this name, a play on words is also evident: Ou-topia is also Eu-topia, a play on words written by More in the margins of his book entitled *Utopia*. Sometimes, if not always, edges and borders have the precise and concealed function of indicating the center. Outopia can be written Eutopia by substitution of the first letters of the two words. I shall analyze such a play on words, through the play on spaces, as the core of the matrix of utopia. This play on words is also a play on letters which may be read as an indication of the utopian question: Nowhere, or the place of happiness.

Let me say, and this is my first step in another path toward utopia—a path leading my reading astray, a perverted path—that the topographical, political, social spaces articulated by the utopian text *play*, they shrink and swell, they warp, they do not fit exactly together: there are empty places between these spaces. The discourse held on utopia attempts, through the constructed reading of the text, to make the spaces signified by the utopian text coherent and consistent by filling them up with its own signifying substance. When the discourse on

utopia dismantles the parts of the utopian totality in order to explain how utopia is functioning, it prohibits the utopian text to play. The quasi-system of the utopian construction becomes, by this metadiscourse, a real system, a structured whole where space no longer plays. This is the essential critique I make of my former study of utopia.¹ It did not leave the text playing and the only way to restore the utopian text is to displace its inconsistencies, its deficiencies, and its excesses, its quasi-system toward mere fantasy, mere ludicity, to take our pleasure without speculative or practical interest in order to inquire ultimately into the nature of the instantaneous manifestation of this pleasure.

I might say that, in my first attempts on utopia, I tried to formalize what its name indicates—ou-topia, no-where—with the notion of “neutrality” which was also approached by Blanchot and Derrida. Such a notion does not concern origin and *telos*; the question is not that of the neutrality of the institutionalized power, be this power that of the dominant truth. What is in question is not this imaginary representation where utopia unfolds its architectural perfection by fulfilling its wish of escaping the historical determinations. Neutral is the name given to limits, to contradiction itself. It seems that the fate of all theoretical knowledge and of the practice which derives from it is to dissolve contradiction, to solve it in a change that neutralizes it by overtaking it, a change by which the whole reconstitutes itself, in its identity, on every synthetic level it reaches. So the traces of contradiction, of differentiation are nothing else than the determinations of the totality which capitalizes them as its properties. All forms of dialectical thinking and knowledge are apparent in this description.

Is it possible to think of and to formulate the contradiction signified by that notion of neutral? And to keep it working? I try to discern in the utopian texts the traces of contradiction as its *fiction*, opposed to concept or image. Being such a fiction, utopia transforms contradiction into a representation and, in its turn, my own discourse about utopia transformed it into theory. A reading authority, an interpretive power settled down in the nowhere of the limits, occupied this no-place, possessed it in the name of truth, repeating the gesture already accomplished by utopia itself which endlessly recuperates the unbearable neutral with a logic joining together the contradictory terms. To take a paradigmatic example in More's *Utopia* at the very moment when wealth and poverty are negated—utopia is neither rich nor poor—More creates the harmonious image or representation of a society which is at the same time rich and poor, rich to corrupt and dominate its imaginary outside, poor to maintain virtue and to build with its citizens the ethico-religious monument of the State.

Moreover, a discourse on utopia can formulate the critical analysis

of More's *Utopia* and discern, in the synoptic and totalizing image derived from the esthetic *affabulation*, the power of a scheme of pure imagination, to use Kantian language, and in the matrix of that scheme, the communication between concept and history. Without any doubt, a discourse on utopia can attempt to display the "vertical" relationships, formulated in terms of misreading and recognition, which allow the levels of the utopian text to generate each other and to sketch what Lyotard has called a figure in the discourse.² A figurative mode of discourse, utopia as the textual product of utopian practice or fiction is produced, in its turn, by the critical discourse as a possible synthesis of an historical contradiction. The critical-theoretical discourse will show, but always *post festum*, how a representation can have been produced from the negation of contemporary history; history that is the absent referent of the utopian representation. The utopian representation denotes a reality which is not signified by the utopian figure, but whose true signified is the critical discourse given at the end of the representation's own historical time.

To be effective, such a critical discourse on utopia has to lean back against the wall, [the thesis] of a final truth of history, a place from which it is formulated. But what would happen to its authority if the wall cracks and splits?

In other words and to conclude this introduction, I might say that in describing the utopian space in a critical way, my theoretical discourse was formulated in terms of a topic and its fabricated utopian figure consisted in making coherent the spatial inconsistencies which the utopian image structured as a whole. I would not emphasize the topic of the utopian fantasy, which is also a fantasmatic topic since the theoretical discourse about utopia operates [like in dreams, the screen memory] by filling up the gaps and the blanks of the utopian text, of the utopian space, by producing the systematic elements which are necessary to make the text intelligible. This production was possible only *après coup*, in a site supposed to be the true knowledge of the end of history that is the end of utopia as well. The topic of utopian fantasy as well as the fantasmatic topic of the critical-theoretical discourse on utopia rest on that basis.

In trying to analyse Disneyland as a utopian space, I aim at two targets.* First, I mean to show the permanence of some patterns of spatial organization which the history of ideas and myths allows us to call utopian. We find these patterns in the architectural schemes and the

* A more detailed version of this analysis originally appeared in *Utopiques, jeux d'espaces*.—Eds.

texts which can roughly be viewed as utopian, but which also fill a specific function with regard to reality, history, and social relationships. This function is a critical one: it shows, through the picture drawn by the utopian writer or designer, the *differences* between social reality and a projected model of social existence. But the utopian representation possesses this critical power without being aware of it; that is, unconsciously. In a sense, I apply to utopian texts (or spaces) what has been suggested by Lévi-Strauss' methodology of distinguishing models—the conscious representation built by societies to explain and legitimate their specific existences—and structures—the “unconscious” set of transformations that the anthropologist's analysis displays in the models themselves. The critical impact of utopia is not the fact of the model itself, but the differences between the model and reality; these differences being exhibited by the utopian picture. But this critical discourse, which is a latent characteristic of all utopias, is not separated from dominant systems of ideas and values: it expresses itself through the structures, the vocabulary of those systems by which individuals, a social class, decision-making groups represent the real conditions of their existence. It is this latent critique which is unfolded, *post-festum*, by a theory of society, a metadiscourse which, generally speaking, substitutes a rational understanding of the social reality for what it considers to be an ideological system of representation. Utopia is a social theory, the discourse of which has not yet attained theoretical status. In other words, utopia expresses a “possible” intervention of reason in the social field, but a “possible” which remains possible. Utopia is the real, iconic, or textual picture of this “possible.” Therefore, utopia has a two-sided nature. On the one hand, it expresses what is absolutely new, the “possible as such,” what is unthinkable in the common categories of thought used by the peoples of a given time in its history. So it employs fiction, fable to say what it has to say. On the other hand, utopia cannot transcend the common and ordinary language of a period and of a place. It cannot transgress completely the codes by which people make reality significant, by which they interpret reality, that is, the systems of representation of signs, symbols, and values which recreate, as significant for them, the real conditions of their existence. So Disneyland shows us the structure and the functions of utopia in its real topography and through its use by the visitor. From this vantage point, the possible tour which the visitor commences when he comes to Disneyland can be viewed as the narrative which characterizes utopia. The map of Disneyland he buys in order to know how to go from one place to another can play the role of the description; it performs the part of the representational picture which also characterizes utopia.

But Disneyland is more interesting from another point of view which is the second aim of our analysis: to show how a utopian structure and utopian functions degenerate, how the utopian representation can be entirely caught in a dominant system of ideas and values and, thus, be changed into a myth or a collective fantasy. Disneyland is the representation realized in a geographical space of the imaginary relationship which the dominant groups of American society maintain with their real conditions of existence or, more precisely, with the real history of the United States and with the space outside of its borders. Disneyland is a fantasmatic projection of the history of the American nation, of the way in which this history was conceived with regard to other peoples and to the natural world. Disneyland is an immense and displaced metaphor of the system of representations and values unique to American society.³

This projection has the precise function of alienating the visitor by a distorted and fantasmatic representation of daily life, by a fascinating picture of the past and the future, of what is estranged and what is familiar: comfort, welfare, consumption, scientific and technological progress, superpower, and morality. But this projection no longer has its critical impact: yes, to be sure, all the forms of alienation are represented in Disneyland, and we could believe Disneyland is the stage of these representations thanks to which they are known as such and called into critical question. But, in fact, this critical process is not possible in Disneyland in so far as the visitor to Disneyland is not a spectator estranged from the show, distanced from the myth, and liberated from its fascinating grasp. The visitor is on the stage; he performs the play; he is alienated by his part without being aware of performing a part. In "performing" Disney's utopia, the visitor realizes the models and the paradigms of his society in the mythical story by which he imagines his social community has been constructed.

THE LIMIT

One of the most notable features of the utopian picture is its limit: the utopian discourse inscribes the utopian representation in the imaginary space of a map, but at the same time, it makes this inscription in a geographical map impossible. We can make the survey of the blessed island described by Thomas More, but we cannot draw the geographical map in which this survey could take place. The utopian land belongs to "our world," but there is an insuperable gap between our world and utopia. More has given the paradigmatic example of this distance; he explains that when someone asked Raphael: "Where is the island of Utopia?" Raphael gave the precise information, but his words were

hidden by a servant's cough. This mark in the discourse ironically designates the figurative process by signifying one of the conditions of the possibility of representation: it is a semiotic transposition of the frame of a painting.

This gap is a neutral space, the place of the limit between reality and utopia: by this distance which is a zero-point, utopia appears to be not a world beyond, but the reverse side of this world.

In Disneyland, the neutral space of the limit is displayed by three places, each of these having a precise function. (1) The outer limit is the parking area, an open, unlimited space, weakly structured by the geometrical net of the parking lot. The parking area, where the visitor leaves his car, is the limit of the space of his daily life of which the car is one of the most powerful markers. The fact of leaving his car is an overdetermined sign of a codical change; for pragmatic utility, for his adjustment to a certain system of signs and behavior, the visitor substitutes another system of signs and behaviors, the system of playful symbols, the free field of consumption for nothing, the *passeist* and aleatory tour in the show. (2) The intermediary limit is lineal and discontinuous: the row of booths where a monetary substitution takes place. With his money, the visitor buys the Disneyland money, the tickets which allow him to participate in the Disneyland life. Thus, the Disneyland money is less a money than a language; with his real money the visitor buys the signs of the Disneyland vocabulary thanks to which he can perform his part, utter his "speech" or his individual narrative, take his tour in Disneyland. The amount of the exchange of real money for utopian signs determines the importance of his visit, the semantic volume of his tour, the number and the nature of its entertainments, in other words, it indirectly determines the number of syntactic rules which can be set working to coordinate the different signifying units. For example, with six dollars (four years ago), I received ten utopian signs—one A, one B, two C, three D, three E—and I was able to give utterance to a series of alternative narratives. (3) The inner limit is circular, linear, continuous, and articulated. It is the embankment of the Sante Fe and Disneyland Railway with its stations. This last limit is not a border line for the visitor or the "performer," since he does not necessarily use the train to go into Disneyland, but it is a limit for the utopian space which is encircled and closed by it. This limit belongs to the picture, to the representation, or to the map more than it appears as a limit to the traveller and to the tour he takes in the land. When he passes beyond the embankment, he is definitely in Disneyland. What I mean is that this element, the Railway, is a limit *in the map* for a dominant, all seeing eye; it is not a limit for the visitor, the consumer, or performer of

Disneyland; it is the first of the entertainments which he can consume. But, in fact, without being aware of it, the visitor is forced to spell the vocabulary in the right order. In other words, this structure which belongs to the map is a concealed *rule* of behavior for the visitor.

THE ACCESS TO THE CENTER

Disneyland is a centered space. Main Street USA leads the visitor to the center. But this route toward the central plaza is also the way toward Fantasyland, one of the four districts of Disneyland. So the most obvious axis of Disney's utopia leads the visitor not only from the circular limit or perimeter to the core of the closed space, but also from reality to fantasy. This fantasy is the trademark, the sign, the symbolic image of Disney's utopia. Fantasyland is made up of images, characters, animals of the tales illustrated by Disney in his animated films, magazines, books, and so on. This district is constituted by images; of particular significance is the fact that these images are realized, are made living by their transformation into real materials, wood, stone, plaster . . . and through their animation by men and women disguised as movie or story-book characters. Image is duplicated by reality in two opposite senses: on the one hand, it becomes real, but on the other, reality is changed into image, is grasped by the "imaginary." Thus, the visitor who has left reality outside finds it again, but as a real "*imaginaire*"; a fixed, stereotyped, powerful fantasy. The utopian place to which Main Street USA leads is the fantasmatic return of reality, its hallucinatory presence. This coming back of reality as a fantasy, as an hallucinatory wish-fulfillment, is in fact mediated by a complete system of representations elaborated by Walt Disney which constitutes a rhetorical and iconic code and vocabulary that have been perfectly mastered by the visitor-performer. So this coming back appears to be brought about through a secondary process which is not only the stuff of images and representations molded by wish, but which constitutes the very actuality of the fantasy where wish is caught in its snare. That snare is the collective, totalitarian form taken by the "*imaginaire*" of a society, blocked by its specular self-image. One of the essential functions of the utopian image is to make apparent a wish in a *free* image of itself, in an image which can play in opposition to the fantasy which is an inert, blocked, and recurrent image. Disneyland is on the side of the fantasy and not on that of a free or utopian representation.

Main Street USA is the way of access to the center, to begin the visitor's tour, to narrate his story, to perform his speech. From the center, he can articulate the successive sequences of his narrative by means

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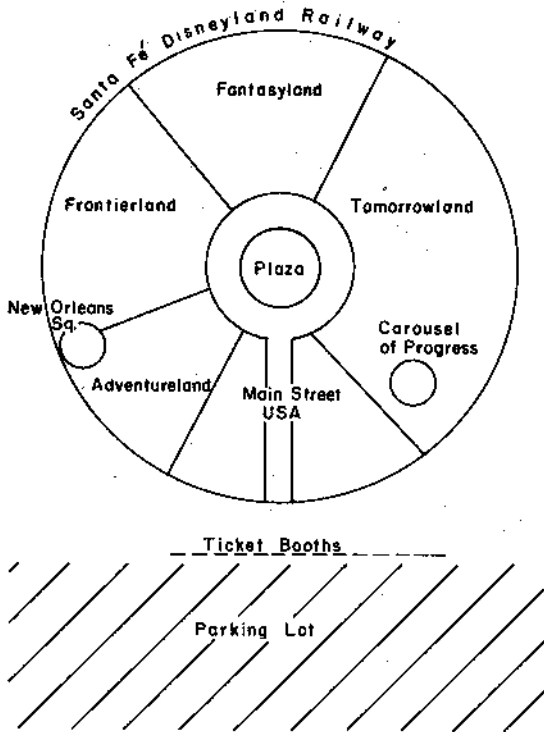


FIGURE 3.1. Disneyland Diagram

of the signs he has received in exchange for his money at the entrance. If we consider Disneyland as a text, Main Street USA is the channel of transmission of the story narrated by the visitor in making his tour. It allows him to communicate. Its function is phatic: it is the most primitive function of the communication since it only permits communication to take place without communicating anything. Thus, Disneyland can be viewed as thousands and thousands of narratives uttered by the visitors. Its text is constituted by this plurality of "lexies," to speak like Barthes, which are exchanged endlessly by the visitors according to the codes (vocabulary and syntax) imposed by the makers of Disneyland.

Now this semiotic function, the condition of possibility of all the messages, all the tours, all the stories told by the visitors, is taken into account structurally in a "lexie" belonging to a superior level, in the diagrammatic scheme of all the possible tours, an open and yet finite totality, the Disneyland map. When we look at this map (figure 3.1), we

acknowledge a feature which we do not perceive when we recite the story in passing from the entrance to the center: the fact that Main Street USA is not only a street, but a "district," a land which separates and links Frontierland and Adventureland on the one hand, and Tomorrowland on the other. For the visitor-performer, Main Street USA is an axis which allows him to begin to tell his story. For the spectator, it is a place in the map which articulates two worlds; this place makes him look at the relations and at the differences between these worlds. But as a route to Fantasyland, it is the axis of the founding principle of Disneyland.

We can sum up this analysis in the following terms: Main Street USA is a universal operator which articulates and builds up the text of Disneyland on all of its levels. We have discovered three functions of this operator, (1) *phatic*: it allows all the possible stories to be narrated; (2) *referential*: through it, reality becomes a fantasy and an image, a reality; (3) *integrative*: it is the space which divides Disneyland into two parts, left and right, and which relates these two parts to each other. It is at the same time a condition by which the space takes on meaning for the viewer and a condition by which the space can be narrated by the visitor (the actor). These three functions are filled up by a semantic content. Main Street USA is the place where the visitor can buy, in a nineteenth-century American decor, actual and real commodities with his real, actual money. Locus of exchange of meanings and symbols in the imaginary land of Disney, Main Street USA is also the real place of exchange of money and commodity. It is the locus of the societal truth—consumption—which is the truth for all of Disneyland. With Main Street USA, we have a part of the whole which is as good as the whole, which is equivalent to the whole. The fact that this place is also an evocation of the past is an attempt to reconcile or to exchange, in the space occupied by Main Street USA, the past and the present, that is, an ideal past and a real present. *USA Today* appears to be the term referred to and represented; it is the term through which all the contrary poles of the structure are exchanged, in the semantic and economic meanings of the term, or, in other words, through which they are fictively reconciled. And by his narrative, the visitor performs, enacts reconciliation. This is the mythical aspect of Disneyland.

DISNEYLAND'S WORLDS: FROM THE NARRATIVE
TO THE SYSTEM OF READINGS

Let us now leave the narrator-visitor and his *énonciation* to the hazards of his possible tours. As we have seen, the syntax of his "dis-

course-tour" is defined first by his passing through the limits and by his journey to the center. The visitor has learned the codes of the language of Disneyland and has thus been given the possibilities to tell his individual story. Yet, his freedom, the freedom of his *parole* (his tour) is constrained not only by these codes but also by the representation of an imaginary history. This imaginary history is contained in a stereotyped system of representations. In order to utter his own story, the visitor is forced to borrow these representations. He is manipulated by the system, even when he seems to freely choose his tour. Now these remarks allow us to substitute the analysis of the map for a possible narrative and for its performative narration; the analysis of the map or the description not of a *parcours* in time (which is always a narrative) but of a picture, the parts of which coexist in the space of the analogue-model. Methodologically, we assume that the narrative tours constitute a total system and that the map is the structure of this total system. But we have had to justify this substitution by ascertaining that the possible tours in Disneyland are absolutely constrained by the codes which the visitors are given. The interplay of the codes is reduced to nothing. In a real town, in an actual house, there are some codes constraining the freedom or the randomness of the individual routes or passageways, but these codes do not inform the totality of the messages emitted by the inhabitants of the town or the house. By *realizing* a pure model, that is, by making an "abstract" model a reality, the makers of Disneyland have excluded any possibility of code interference, of code interplay. Not only are the different possible tours strictly determined, but the map of Disneyland can be substituted for a visit. In other words, Disneyland is an example of a *langue* reduced to a univocal code, without *parole*, even though its visitors have the feeling of living a personal and unique adventure on their tour. And since this *langue* is a stereotyped fantasy, the visitor is caught in it, without any opportunity to escape. This can be a definition of an ideological conditioning, or of a collective neurosis. But Disneyland provides us with a valuable lesson. If the substitution of the map for the narrative is somehow a necessary condition of the analysis of a town, a house, etc., we must remember not to jumble together the narrative processes by which people live, thus consuming their town or their house and the textual system which gives them the signs, the symbols, and the syntactic rules through which they display and perform these narrative processes. An architectural set is at the same time a set of places, routes, and pathways and a visible, "spectacular" totality. From this point of view, a progressive architecture seems to me to be defined as an attempt to build up a totality in which different codes are competing, are in conflict, are not coherent, in order to give to people living in

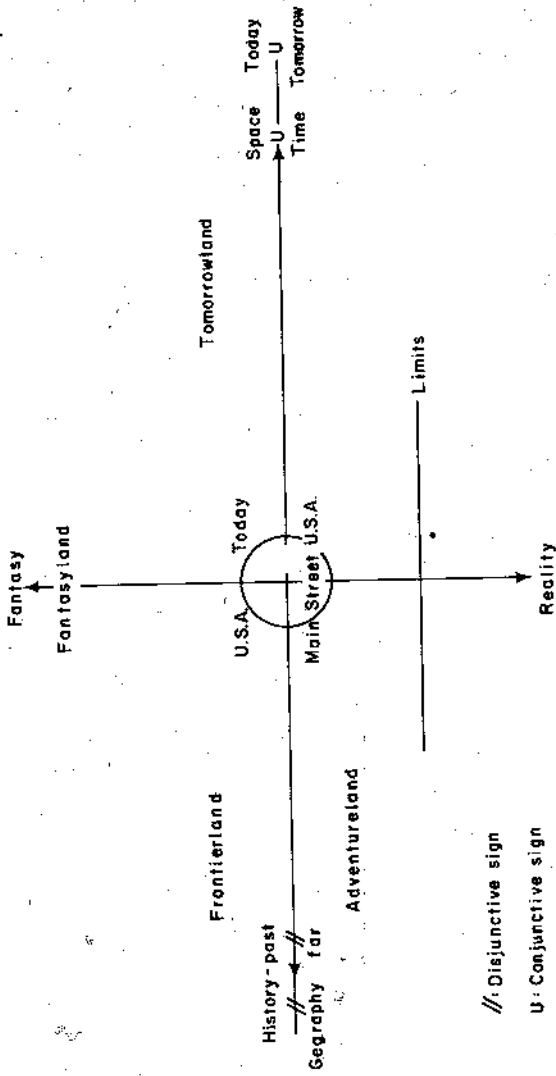


FIGURE 3.2. Semantic Structure of the Map

this totality, and consuming it, an opportunity to perform their specific *parole*, to use the town as a multicoded or overcoded totality, codes subverting each other to the benefit of a poetic *parole*. I mean a totality allowing for behaviors characterized by a factor of unpredictability. Viewed from this perspective, Disneyland is an extra-ordinary dystopia. It displaces the spatial habitability, what we have called its narrativity, into its spectacular representation; it reduces the dynamic organization of the places, the aleatory unity of a possible tour to a univocal scheme allowing only the same redundant behavior. So we are justified in viewing the map of Disneyland as an analogue-model which assimilates the possible narratives of its space.

On the left of the map, two districts: Adventureland and Frontierland. The first is the representation of scenes of wildlife in exotic countries which are viewed during a boat trip on a tropical river. The second is the representation of scenes of the final conquest of the West. The latter district signifies the temporal distance of the past history of the American nation, the former, the spatial distance of the outside geographical world, the world of natural savagery. The two left districts represent the two distances of history and geography, the distance represented inside America in the first, and the distance represented outside in the second.

The right of the map is occupied by a single district: Tomorrowland, which consists principally of representations of the Future-as-Space, Einsteinian Time-Space which realizes the harmonious synthesis of the two-dimensional world represented on the left part as time and space, time as historical, national past and space as strange, exotic primitivism. Tomorrowland is space as time, the universe captured by science and technology. In each of the two parts of Disneyland, we find an eccentric center, New Orleans Square on the left and the Carrousel of Progress, a gift of the General Electric Corporation, on the right. We can construct two models which are secondary representations of the map. The first is a purely analogous diagram, the second, a semantic structure (see figures 3.1 and 3.2).

Consideration of the center of these two models elicits the following remarks: (1) The center in the map is not the center in the semantic structure; in other words, the structure is not a simplified map. In the structure, the center is the sign of the numerous semiotic functions of Main Street USA as a route to the mapped center, an axis converting reality into fantasy, and vice versa, and an axis exchanging a scientific and technological conjunction of space and time for the historico-geographical distance.

(2) In the semantic structure, Main Street USA appears to be on

different levels, formal and material, semiotic and semantic, a place of *exchange*: exchange of commodities and objects of consumption, but also of significations and symbols. The center of the structure functions at once inside and outside the structure. Inside, it is determined rigorously by the two main correlations of which it is made up—reality and fantasy: historico-geographical distance and space-time. But it is not only an intersecting point of these two semantic axes; somehow it produces them as well. Through it, the contrary poles of the correlations exchange their meaning: reality becomes fantasmatic and fantasy, actual. The remoteness of exotic places and of the American national past becomes the universal space-time of science and technology and this universality becomes American. In the semiotic theory of the narrative, the center is the representation of the dialectical mediation from which springs the narrative solution: it is the image of the inventions determined by the story on its different levels.

(3) It is not without significance that in this case, this image, this representation is named USA and is declined in the present tense. The ultimate meaning of the center is the conversion of history into representation, a conversion by which the utopian space itself is caught in the representation. This representational mediation makes it clear that in the utopian place, commodities are significations and significations are commodities. By the selling of up-to-date consumer goods in the setting of a nineteenth-century street, between the adult reality and the childish fantasy, Walt Disney's utopia converts the commodities into significations. Reciprocally, what is bought there are signs, but these signs are *commodities*.

(4) *The Eccentric Centers*: I shall just describe the Pirates of the Carribean attraction at the New Orleans Square center, in the left part of the map. This place reveals all of its semantic content only in its narration. So the visitor must begin to speak again in order to recite the underground tour, for the syntagmatic organization of his ride displays a primary and essential level of meaning. The first sequence of the narrative discourse is a place where skulls and skeletons are lying on heaps of gold and silver, diamonds and pearls. Next, the visitor goes through a naval battle in his little boat; then he sees off shore the attack of a town launched by the pirates. In the last sequence, the spoils are piled up in the pirate ships, the visitor is cheered by pirates feasting and revelling; and his tour is concluded. The narrative unfolds its moments in a reverse chronological order; the first scene in the tour-narrative is the last scene in the "real" story. And this inversion has an ethical meaning: crime does not pay. The morality of the fable is presented before the reading of the story in order to constrain the comprehension of the fable by a preexisting moral code. The potential force of the narrative, its unpredictability,

is neutralized by the moral code which makes up all of the representation. But if we introduce the story into the structural scheme of the map and especially if we do so by relating it to the structural center, another meaning appears beneath the moral signification. The center, you remember, is a place of exchange of actual products and commodities of *today*: it is a marketplace and a place of consumption. Correlated to the eccentric center of the left part, Main Street USA signifies to the visitor that life is an endless exchange and a constant consumption and, reciprocally, that the feudal accumulation of riches, the Spanish hoarding of treasure, the Old World conception of gold and money are not only morally criminal, but they are, economically, signs and symptoms of death. The treasure buried in the ground is a dead thing, a corpse. The commodity produced and sold is a living good because it can be consumed.

I do not want to overemphasize this point; but in Tomorrowland, on the right side of the map, the same meaning is made obvious by another eccentric center, the Carrousel of Progress. Here, the visitor becomes a spectator, immobilized and passive, seated in front of a circular and moving stage which shows him successive scenes taken from family life in the nineteenth century, the beginning of the twentieth century, today, and tomorrow. It is the *same* family that is presented in these different historical periods; the story of this "permanent" family is told to visitors who no longer narrate their own story. History is neutralized; the scenes only change in relation to the increasing quantity of electric implements, the increasing sophistication of the utensil-dominated human environment. The individual is shown to be progressively mastered, dominated by utensility. The scenic symbols of wealth are constructed by the number and variety of the means and tools of consumption, that is, by the quantity and variation of the technical and scientific mediations of consumption. The circular motion of the stage expresses this endless technological progress, as well as its necessity, its fate. And the specific organization of the space of representation symbolizes the passive satisfaction of endlessly increasing needs.

So the eccentric centers have powerful meaning-effects on Disneyland as a totality and on its districts.

We shall conclude our analysis with the following brief remarks. The left side of the map illustrates both the culture supplied by Americans to nineteenth-century America, and the one produced, at the same time, by adult, civilized, male, white people in exotic and remote countries. The living beings of Adventureland and Frontierland are only reproductions of reality. All that is living is an artifact; Nature is a simulacrum. Nature is a wild, primitive, savage world, but this world is only the appearance taken on by the machine in the utopian play. In

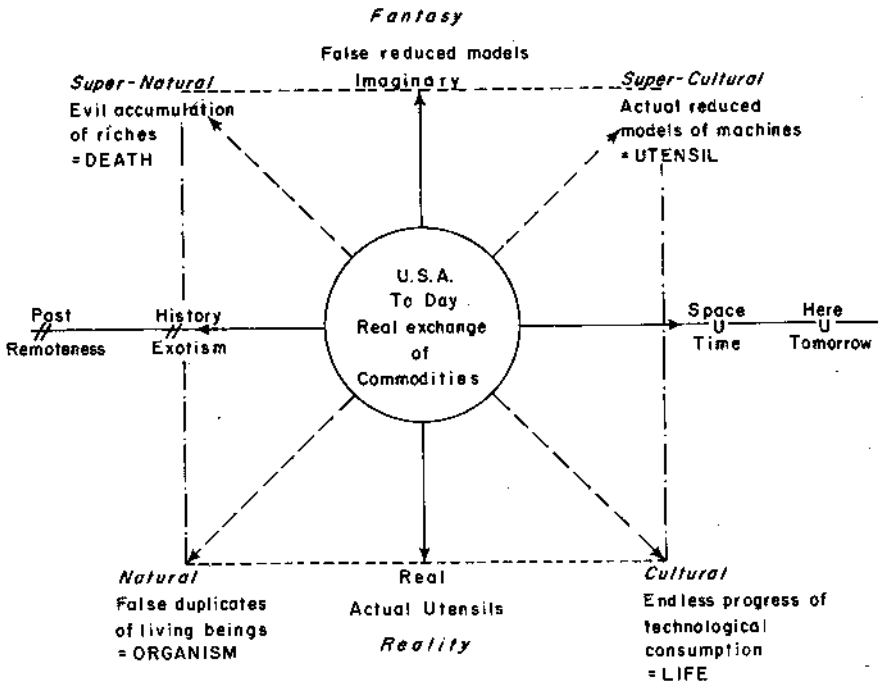


FIGURE 3.3. Semantic Structure of the Ideological Representation in Disneyland Utopia

other words, what is signified by the left part of the map is this assumption that the Machine is the truth, the actuality of the living. Mechanism and a mechanistic conception of the world, which are basic tenets of the utopian mode of thinking from the sixteenth century until today, are at work in Disneyland, no longer as a form of knowledge but as a disguised apparatus which can be taken for its contrary, the natural life.

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

pervading, and man is twice removed from Nature and science. Nature, which he sees, is a representation, the reverse side of which is a machine. Machines that he uses and with which he sometimes plays are the reduced models of a machinery which seizes him and which plays with him.

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

The function of Disney's utopia is to represent the exchange of the first and second realms of Natural Life and Scientific Technique and to express the ideology of this exchange on the stage and in the decor of utopia. Disneyland's ideological exchange can be illustrated by an elaboration of the semantic structure of the map (see figure 3.3).

Five years ago, I concluded my first visit to Disneyland by making the following statements:

- Axioms:*
1. An ideology is a system of representations of the imaginary relationships which individuals have with their real living conditions.
 2. Utopia is an ideological locus: it belongs to the ideological discourse.
 3. Utopia is an ideological locus where ideology is put into play and called into question. Utopia is the stage where an ideology is performed or represented.
 4. A myth is a narration which fantastically "resolves" a fundamental contradiction in a given society.

Theorem: A degenerate utopia is a fragment of the ideological discourse realized in the form of a myth or a collective fantasy.

It seems to me, today, that these statements articulate only one side of the utopian problem, a side that relies on some questionable philosophical presuppositions, as I attempted to show at the beginning of this essay. Perhaps I was not aware five years ago that my own discourse in the past and, in a sense, the paper I publish today are also degenerate utopias, critical myths, theoretical fantasies. Perhaps I was not fully aware that science, theory have to get out of their Disneylands to discover their utopias.

NOTES

1. *Utopiques, jeux d'espaces* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, Collection Critique, 1973).

2. See Jean-François Lyotard, *Discours, Figure* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1971).

3. However, today I would be more careful: these statements are perhaps like the statements of an anthropologist visiting his research field for the first time. They may be characteristic of a foreigner reading the "Other" by superimposing upon it his own set of values and notions.