THE "FAIREST" OF THE FAIRS:

A HISTORY OF FAIRS, AMUSEMENT PARKS, AND THEME PARKS

by

Jackie Botterill

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APPROVAL

NAME: Jacqueline Botterill

DEGREE: MA

TITLE: THE "FAIREST" OF THE FAIRS: A HISTORY OF FAIRS, AMUSEMENT PARKS, AND THEME PARKS.

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

CHAIR: Prof. Pat Howard

Prof. Catherine Murray
Senior Supervisor
School of Communication, SFU

Prof. Richard Gruneau
Supervisor
School of Communication, SFU

Prof. Beverley Pitman
Geography, SFU

Date: June 25/97
ABSTRACT

Disney theme parks provide a window from which to view contemporary culture. They draw millions of visitors; accumulate large sums of capital; employ thousands; are replicated in several locations; and are connected to other media and recreational pursuits. Yet for all their cultural significance, the parks prove difficult to evaluate. For some they are holy lands; for others fire and brimstone.

Cultural theorist Raymond Williams argues that cultural forms, such as Disney theme parks, are best understood within social historic context. The family tree of the theme park stretches back to pre-modern fairs and carnivals. These community-produced celebrations combined feasting, processions, competitions, plays and acts of symbolic reversal in a ritual, that literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin argues, articulated the rejuvenating powers of nature. The carnival came under attack and began to be commodified in the early modern period as the powers of the church and monarchy were eroded by the rising merchant class. During these changing social relations, some fairground cultural practises died, while others hived off to operate on their own. New practises were spawned; and old practises were retexualized. At the turn of the century, the fair was reintegrated within the modern amusement park. Orchestrated by entertainment entrepreneurs and architects, these sites “manufactured carnival” by employing mechanical rides, simulating spaces, and mocking genteel culture through risqué symbolic and practise. Unable to historically adapt, amusement parks were soon
displaced by theme parks in the post-war period. Produced by an animator and influenced by film and Hollywood, Disney theme parks cleaned up old fair conventions for middle class tastes, surrendered the entire environment to motif, increased merchandizing and forged synergies with other media/leisure/tourist services.

While Disney World and its other manifestations are presently considered “the fairest” of the fairs, the past illustrates that theme parks actually reduce the number of cultural practises which once animated the fairground. This thesis argues that Disney theme parks claim ownership of historic fairground innovations; privatize public symbols and practises; destroy original spaces to produce fantastical reproductions for profit; restrict interaction and discourse to facilitate audience flow and conformity; disguise multiplicity as diversity; and squeeze out competition. The conservative visions of the past and future represented by Disney theme parks are neither static nor inevitable. The Disney corporation is a behemoth, subject to internal conflict and external competition. Disney must continually negotiate its position with the public. Local groups have successfully challenged Disney's right to colonize their space. Alternatives may be found in communities who keep the spirit of carnival alive through “producing” their own public celebratory rituals.
Dedication

For Lorraine and Public Dreams
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Introduction

The Disney theme parks present a very positive view of the past...a past which never really existed.

Alan Bryman

Exchange, interdependence, the struggle for power...have been hidden or banished.

Alexander Wilson

This work seeks to evaluate Disney’s model of the contemporary theme park by tracing its genealogy. My goal is to better understand what theme parks are, what they have been, what they might have been, what they displaced, and why they exist.

Across time and space, people have created a place within which they gathered in large numbers to participate in ritual, entertainment, amusements, and spectacles, while consuming and exchanging foods, goods and services. The theme park is the contemporary manifestation of fairs, carnivals, and amusement parks — a class of cultural phenomena which I will refer to as the amusementscape. The amusementscape, like landscape, is a physical space and has appeared at the seaside, the field, the suburb, the city, as well as other material places. It is also an icon, or image which is rendered within the written word, on the artists’ canvas, as well as a multitude of surfaces. Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1984) analysis of the carnival draws upon this iconic layer, for he formulated his thesis upon the way carnival was rendered within the novels of Rabelais’. The suffix “scape” as Peters has identified, “posits the presence of a unifying principle which enables us to consider part of the countryside or sea as a unity (but) not the world we see”. In this view, the amusementscape is a “social construction, a composition of the world”, as well as a perspective on the world (1948: 2). Appaduria (1991) has noted five dimensions of globalization: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financesscapes, mediascapes, and ideoscapes. This work posits a sixth: the amusementscape, cutting across them all as a constellation of cultural practices over time.

The amusementscape changes over time in relation to broader social relations. Amusementscape is a social tableau and a unique play space unto itself which can influence other social practises. This duality makes for an interesting object of study, for the amusementscape is both immanent and transcendent — both material and imaginary. What unites the fair, carnival, or theme
park as “places” is the emphasis on the articulation of the “other worldly”. The intent of this work is to recover some of the exchange, interdependence, and struggle for power which Disney theme parks have banished from the history of amusementscapes. The purpose is not to spoil contemporary fun, rather to seek ways to enliven it.

Employing an historical perspective, I will map the evolution of the amusementscape from the fair in the Pre-Modern period (roughly 1500-1800), to the amusement park in the Early Modern/Modern period (1844-1960), to the theme park in the Late Modern period (1970-Present). The thesis will explore the processes of cultural creation, commodification, and regulation across these three historic periods, using three primary case studies: St. Bartholomew’s Fair, London, illustrating the Pre-Modern; World’s Fairs and Coney Island, New York, representing the Early Modern/Modern; and Walt Disney World allegorizing the Late Modern.

Across North America, theme parks marshal $14 billion a year from the annual $356 billion entertainment and leisure economy. Theme parks are not just prized for the goods and services they produce, but also for the jobs and economic activity they generate. Like most businesses within the contemporary environment, the theme park sector is concentrated. Of the 600 parks in North America, six garner the lion’s share of profit. What is significant about those top grossing parks are their connections to other media industries, other recreational pursuits, and merchandizing. The most notable theme parks are owned by corporations who possess momentous horizontal holdings in the other cultural industries, particularly film. By far the most successful player in spinning capital from the theme park, and the name most associated with its creation, is the Disney corporation.

Disney parks, Disneyland in California, and Walt Disney World in Florida, attract approximately 40 million people each year to their gate. Fifteen percent of all foreign visitors to the US will visit one of the Disney parks, and 50% of all guests find the experience so pleasurable they return again. The Disney version of the amusementscape has colonizing aspirations. The parks

1 While the exact dates and precise configuration of these periods are subject to debate, a significant number of noteworthy authors who have accepted one or all of these historic splits (Marx, 1957; Weber, 1958; Berman, 1982; Mumford, 1967; Lefebvre, 1991; Harvey, 1990).

2 I do not pretend to document the ways people actually experienced the amusementscape; rather, I attempt to isolate plausible ways in which social experience might be seen as channelled. Audience inferences should be made with caution. For example, there is a tendency to equate high attendance figures with popularity. Yet, given that the market place is biased in particular ways, individuals may participate simply because alternatives have little support, or prove difficult to undertake.
have been replicated with slight variations in Japan and France; and other service industries attempt to copy the Disney formula. The theme parks were once Disney's core business generating over 50% of the company's profit; but they have helped finance diversification into a wide stable of holdings that they now only account for 16% of Disney's $44 billion entertainment and leisure empire which spans from golf courses to children's magazines; from a major television network to cruise ships.

Still, for all their significance within the cultural landscape, Disney parks have only recently been subjected to critical analysis. The Disney corporation has long had an outstanding reputation with the public and is seen as the origin of some of the most cherished stories of contemporary culture. At the same time, the corporation employs many people, contributes taxes to the communities in which the parks are situated, donates to many charities and national events, and turns a good profit for stockholders. For these reasons, Disney's colonization of the cultural sphere is applauded by many, and often supported by regulators. Yet, the acceptance of Disney's version of the amusementscape may not necessarily illustrate its cultural quality. Rather, what it may show is how successful Disney has been at weaving their cultural products into the modern social environment. One of my central concerns is to reveal how the Disney corporation enacts its control of the cultural landscape, and how countervailing forces oppose that control.

Contribution to the Literature

Apart from the critical perspective it can afford, a broad historic tracing of the amusementscape highlights relationships and patterns which single period studies would have difficulty detecting. While there has been a significant amount of literature produced on the Early3 and Late Modern4 period of the amusementscape, and a moderate amount on the Modern5 period, attempts to trace the historic connections between the three periods are rare. Authors focus too heavily on the feudal past or emphasise the "post-modern" "hyper-signification" of contemporary theme parks. Hence, a bifurcation has formed over the historical relationship between the two.

The most comprehensive history of the amusementscape is rendered in the work of Judith Adams, who provides a through exploration of the technology and economics of American

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3 See Bakhtin, 1984; Burke, 1978; Stallybrass and White, 1986.
4 See Eco, 1986; Baudrillard, 1993; Smoodin, 1994; Willis, 1995; Bryman, 1995.
amusement parks. Adams, however confines her study primarily to the modern period. The translation of Bakhtin's Rabelais and his World made the medieval "carnival" a familiar word in the 1980s, yet study has tended to emphasis the revolutionary potential and signifying properties of "carnival", instead of tracing its evolution through the cultural form of the fairground. There has been important work undertaken on world's fairs, theatres, and a growing corpus has developed around the circus; yet few works trace the relationships between these cultural forms, all of which stem from the fairground.

In terms of contemporary critiques, Susan Willis acknowledges the genealogy of the fairground from carnival to Walt Disney World, yet, confines her analysis to Disney. Schickel reflected that the modern amusement park might be a medium of communication, yet only delivers a textual exploration of Disney products. Disney theme parks have become the darlings of contemporary heavy weight critics such as Eco and Baudrillard, yet their bedazzlement by theme park as "sign" has tended to eclipse the theme park as "historically conditioned social practice."

Rightly, given their dominance in the amusement park industry, Disney theme parks have received special treatment. Noteworthy contributions include Fjellman's comprehensive treatment of Walt Disney World and Bryman's detailed Disney and his Worlds. While these works are compelling, they confine the history of the amusementscape to "Distory".

Beyond 'Distory'
In assessing the theme parks, one must enter into debates about popular culture, which have significant historical breadth, and are multifarous and complex. To adequately assess the varying perspectives on culture is beyond the scope of this work. Yet, I would like to touch upon some components of the contemporary debates introduced by the authors who have informed my approach.

Two Foci

There are a multitude of complex debates surrounding cultural meaning which might be simplistically divided into two camps. One group has broadly focused on cultural "meanings produced for people"; the other cultural "meanings produced by people".

Meanings produced for

Those who focus on the meanings produced for people explore the production of the text or the power of the cultural code. Things which bear meanings are generally referred to as texts and would include such forms of communication as books, movies, conversations, speeches, videos, and, I believe theme parks. People who adopt this perspective emphasise the ideology of the text or the meanings which support power. One dominant meaning is generally assigned to the text, and that dominant meaning is seen as encouraging problematic beliefs, values and actions. The production of texts is considered undemocratic. These theorists note the "horror of the text" — the saturation of dominant voices working through them, and the way readers are seduced by messages. It is argued that people are not always aware of the toxic messages imbedded within the texts. People are seen as deriving false pleasure and interacting with the text out of false consciousness, which leaves them unable to recognize the motivation behind the text. Some early theorists of this approach envisioned messages being injected into readers who then followed out the directives of the texts like automatons. There is an emphasis on concentration within the ownership of texts. Texts are seen as largely determined by dominant discourses such as economics, patriarchy, colonialism, heterosexism. Some logical conclusions of this approach are deterministic and instrumental. The emphasis is on the structures which orchestrate meanings, the systems which regulate, and relations which bind. The focus is macro. People who adopt this perspective are often referred to as critical modernists (Murdock and Golding, 1991; Mosco, 1989; Mattelart, 1979; Garnham, 1990; Wasko, 1994).

Meanings produced by

Theorists who have emphasised the power people have in creating their own meanings attend to reception. These critiques note that the audience is active in its interpretation. They reject the notion that readers are injected with meanings pointing out that people come to the text from different subject positions and take different meanings from the text. These researchers emphasize
the diversity of choice in texts and the polysemy of creative works. Readers are seen to possess the ability to alter the text to meet their specific needs. This approach emphasises the pleasure of the text; the enjoyment to be had in playing and creating meaning. It is argued that people are not completely unaware of the motivation behind the text, but possess the power to critique and subvert them — false consciousness is rejected. This line of reasoning might point to the ways in which alienation at work is countered through consumption. There is a rejection of the argument that any force can determine meaning; as well as a severe questioning of any coherent semblage of dominant discourses or meta-narratives working through texts. The demise of the notion of a dominant discourse has been called the “death of history”; for history itself is considered to be constructed as a dominant discourse — a “meta-narrative”. The focus here is the micro, the chaotic, the irrational. Relativism and pluralism are some conclusions of this approach. Agency is highlighted within this perspective. People holding these views are often labelled post-modern.

The productionist view was dominant until the 1970s when it began to lose credibility. By the 1980s it was being severely attacked for its determinist, elitist, universalist, idealistic, essentialist, and generally instrumental view of society and culture. By contrast, the postmodern view emphasised the power of the reader, the chaos and fragmentation of the cultural environment, and the significance of social connections outside of class such as gender and ethnicity. This emphasis eroded the notion that capital was the most significant form of power. This movement declared the death of the working class, history, essentialism, progress, rationality, and the author (including Karl Marx).

Since the late 1980s; however, there has been a backlash against the reader dominant movement (Mosco, 1997). It is acknowledged that post modernist critiques have served to reinvigorate some problematic assumptions of modernist thought, yet the desent of these views into pluralism, relativism, subjectivism, not to mention the supremely abstract and incomprehensible nature of some of the writings in this area is grieved, for it has left scholarship bankrupt to comment and communicate to ordinary citizens the nature of capitalist relations, at the very moment that these relations appear to be reconsolidating and extending.
The celebration of the freedom of the reader and the playfulness and diversity of the contemporary sign-world unfolds in a period when the gap between the rich and poor is increasing, the welfare state is eroding, union representation is bankrupt, the privatization of public resources is in vogue, a globalized economy is being orchestrated, unemployment is chronic, cultural monopolies are growing, and cynicism over the ability to change the course of history is at an all time low.

Synthesis of Two Foci

Hence, there has been an acknowledgement that what is needed within cultural research is an approach which combines the most explanatory elements from both modernist and post-modernist camps. Political economist Vincent Mosco has recently conceded to some components of the active audience thesis; yet notes limitations. “The audience is not passive, but neither are producers dumb.” (Mosco, 1997: 260). Producers need to engage the audience to make a profit. They also need to attend to diversity of opinions and taste. However, diversity is not the natural consequence of the multiplicity of either media units or the audience. Despite different outlets, producers, and packaging media products can be substantially the same. Further, “Audience resistance,” as Modleski (1986) maintains, “is inscribed within limits established by the media industries.” (Mosco, 1997: 261). Mosco concludes by pointing to the work of Raymond Williams as a way to make sense of both the “meanings made by” and the “meanings made for”.

Raymond Williams

Raymond Williams wrote in Britain from the 1950s to the 1980s. Considered one of the founders of the British cultural studies tradition, Williams began from the Marxist foundation that society is unequal and that people are not born equal in terms of their access to education, resources, and channels of expression. His interpretation of the historical method saw an overarching set of social relations which governed the unequal constitution of society. Yet Williams emphasised the

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6 In Europe the top 20 percent of the population earns seven times that of the bottom 20 percent. In the US the rich earn 9 times that of the poor.
7 The country with the lowest poverty rate, Denmark at 6 percent, has the most extensive welfare system.
8 In North America 1/3 of those households in poverty registered someone who was working. The phenomena of the working poor, is significant.
importance of meaning in the creation and reproduction of political relations — the active nature of the inter-relationships between dominant and subordinate classes.

Throughout his long and productive career, Williams was specifically interested in culture and communication technologies. He viewed communication technologies as “cultural forms”. A broad concept, the cultural form encompassed content, social practise, mode, convention, genre, and the supporting institutional structure, thus, avoiding the logical error of drawing a line between cultural production and broader social practices. Williams rejected the notion that the meaning of the text could be derived solely from the text, arguing that the historical context of the text must be included in the analysis.

This erasure of the line between culture and society was one of Williams central contributions. Ken Hischkop notes Williams “literally taught many of us how to think about culture and politics together.” (Quoted in Prendergast, 1995: 16) Williams shattered the privileged domain of culture as the “best which was ever thought or written” by illustrating that culture was a “signifying practice”, a total “way of life”, a “complex of lived relationships” subject to inequalities.

Williams was centrally concerned with the way people connect and make meanings and values. Meanings and values arise out of the complex interaction of the “whole”. Within this “whole” cultural forms are not inert, separate channels, but are social products, constructed through social practice, bearing social consequences. As Williams notes in the Long Revolution:

The literature is there from the beginning as a practice in the society. Indeed, until it and other practices are present, the society cannot be said to have fully formed...We cannot separate literature and art from other kinds of social practice.

(Williams, 1966: 324)

Dissolving the line between society and culture opened new objects to inquiry and encouraged cross-disciplinary methods. The most defining achievement of cultural studies was the blending of literary and social science methods. Books and art became the object of social theory and social practices from sport to eating; from fashion to advertising were open to the excavation of literary methods. Yet, society is not simply a sign, but a cultural discourse — socially produced groups of ideas or ways of thinking that could be found in texts and that demanded to be located within historical structure.
Williams work represents an alternative synthesis of Marxian political economy. Orthodox Marxism at the time, perceived a dialectical split in capitalist relations between two processes, capitalist and ideological production, known respectively as base and superstructure. Williams argued against separation of base from superstructure, and rejected the idea that the base was determining. In the Long Revolution he notes:

It was certainly an error to suppose that values or art-works could be adequately studied without reference to the particular society within which they were expressed, but it is equally an error to suppose that the social explanation is determining, or that the values and works are mere by products.

(1965: 35)

For Williams, culture was not a delayed after thought of the modes of production, but was itself a primary, active and central process in the construction of social reality. Culture was material, intellectual and spiritual. Cultural materialism defined signifying practices as “immanent in the material world...thought and its object constitute not an unbridgable gulf or even logically separate spheres, but together constitute a single substance” (Prendergast, 1995: 18).

Williams continually sought to make room for the expression of the “tenses of the imagination”. He believed a new definition of “general interest” was possible, one which allowed for the “creation of a condition in which the people as a whole participate in the matriculation of meanings and values”. He argued for a “common community” rooted in a cultural politics which was broader “than just a politics of cultural difference or cultural rights”, rooted in a “democracy not as freely competing individuals, but freely co-operating individuals”. Williams encouraged ordinary people to take control over their own lives by, among other means, fully appropriating cultural things, whatever their status in the hierarchy. Williams' emphasis on the “appropriation” of “cultural things” sparked many of the debates. John Fiske (1989a, 1989b), for example would place appropriation of cultural things within the moment of consumption. Eagleton (1990) more forcefully argues that the only way to truly appropriated a cultural product was through assuming control over its production.

Williams held a subtle view of the mechanisms of control. He stressed the way social action and feeling become implicated in the reproduction of power relations. He pointed to the “structure
of feeling” which define specific historical moments and emphasised “feelings and experience” of the life-world where the economic and political turn to thought.

Willing to concede the power of agency in this life-world, Williams’ approach has been coined “culturalist”; which is distinct from “structuralist”, less deterministic or instrumental in its outlook. The culturalist view, then, posits that determining forces could be resisted, that radical individual effort could affect history, and that people could be educated through critical pedagogy.

Additional Perspectives
William’s cultural historical method provides the primary emphasis of my work; yet other authors have contributed useful conceptions which I draw upon in this study. Given the rituals within the amusementescape are acts of cultural creation, I have found the work of both Johan Huizinga (1950) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) to be useful. These authors acknowledge the cultural drive to create and play. Huizinga, an historian, notes that play is older than culture and an essential organizing force. Bakhtin, a critical literary theorist, illustrates the capacity of ordinary people to produce a vibrant culture and that high and low cultures were not in separate domains but in dialogue with one another. Bakhtin judges peasant culture based upon its own merits, illustrating the logic and motivations behind its aesthetics; instead of holding it up to a criterion of high culture by which it has been continually judged inadequate. Yet, Bakhtin’s work (as well as Huzina’s) has been criticised for not acknowledging, as Williams would, the way the process of commodification and industrialization would impinge upon the creative act. Stallybrass and White (1986) charged Bakhtin with essentializing community discourse and Eagleton (1990) found Bakhtin guilty of idealizing the revolutionary potential to the carnival discourse of the low.

Williams placed tremendous weight on history; yet, important work by critical geographers argues that the focus in social theory on the historical method has tended to exclude the dynamics of space — privileging time over space (Soja, 1988). Within the contemporary landscape, capital is said to take on increasing mobility largely because of the ways that new communication technologies have “compressed” time and space (Harvey, 1990). One of the greatest strengths of capital today is its ability to strategize over great distances as the world has become smaller. In this context, there has been increased conflict between local and national/corporate/global relations. Given that the
amusementscape is rooted in a local physical place; these issues are central. We will see in this history the way the meanings surrounding the fairs change in relation to the sites in which they are located.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1 explores the agrarian-based Pre-Modern Period. Society at this time is largely influenced by the changing of the seasons, spiritual and monarchical orders. Labour is rooted in family/guild/craft production of unique goods — reproduced or “mass goods” are rare. Social relations are connected to personal networks, notions of obligation, loyalty and paternalism. A significant amount of time is devoted to the organization of, and participation in, social ritual. The amusementscape is configured as the fair which is tethered to the church and the holiday calendar of Saints and Feast Days. Monarchs and clergy, feast and revel along with peasants and crafts people in a fairground ritual known as carnival. Stories are told through allegory — symbolism is rooted in bodily functions of sustenance, lust, struggle, death and rebirth. The symbolic mascot of the fair is the pig which straddles the line of the old wonder and newly emerging disgust of the rural. Fairs also serve an expanding role in co-ordinating and distributing goods.

Chapter 2 inquires into the social processes which challenge traditional fair merriment during the second half (1650-1800) of the Early Modern period. The reformation, literacy, science, and new class and political formation transform traditional fair practises. The old gentry and newer professional, craft, and merchant classes during this period wrestled for material power and symbolic class distinction. Work moves from the farm to the town. Mass goods take a more prominent place, as does wage labour. The population explodes. Private property and individual ownership moves to the fore. The market finds a fixed home within permanent stores. The Nation state, notions of democracy, and the rational individual are given modern articulation. New technologies such as mechanical time, the compass, and train change people’s perspective to the land and to each other.

As a result of these social pressures, the amusementscape fractures and spawns a series of new cultural forms as cultural practises are reworked to meet changing social circumstances. Some old particles of the fairground take refuge in the garden and the seaside where they are licensed through association to curative landscapes. Theatre leaves its birthplace — the fairground and street — and
becomes civilized and mannered in new indoor environments. Aspects of the fair are employed to narrate the new discourse of ‘nationalism’, realism, and sentimentalism. Other fair antics (circus, carnival) hit the road, employing mobility to search for the audiences needed to secure their survival.

The long revolution towards the modern culminates at the turn of the century, when populations grow significantly, towns become cities and factory and office work eclipse agrarian/craft/family production. The split between work and leisure is cemented. Labour is orchestrated by “Fordist” techniques of assembly-line production and stock-piling of mass goods. Labour is divided. Production is undertaken by unskilled and semi skilled resource, manufacture, and white collar workers who are orchestrated by a management class. New divisions of labour also happen in cultural production. The community relations which had supported the organization of the leisure sphere break down, and entertainment entrepreneurs move in to produce for people what they had once produced for themselves. Public practices are privatized.

Chapter 3 focuses on the uprisings of modern sentiments embodied in the World’s Fairs. The Chicago (1893) World’s Fair is showcased for the innovative conventions it employed, such as modern architecture, sanitation, refined display of technologies, and the midway. The architect and city planner had become the producers of the amusementscape. But the “rational” mind of the architect and planners is kept in check by the demand for amusement, which was orchestrated in the midway. With its mechanical amusements and simulated geography, whose speed reflected the tempo of the times, the midway would be given a permanent home in Amusement parks such as Coney Island. These parks become the rage at the turn of the century leisure. Coney Island, a seaside resort, reintegrates the fragments of the fair into a “manufactured carnival”, touching a resonant chord for a mass of tired, hurried and rootless urban workers.

Within the amusement park the ‘mass’ is provided with a space to let their hair down, poke jabs at the restrictions of genteel culture, get a thrill from technologies of labour put in the service of pleasure, and flirt with one another — all of which seemed more than worth the price of admission. Coney Island is rooted in an ethos of mechanical fun, and is as loud, smelly, and provocative as the New York metropolis which surrounds it. It’s mascot is the elephant, a symbol which intimated both colonial mastery and the idiom that “bigger is better,” a classic American aphorism. Coney is alive with side-shows of freaks, animals, and social “others” such as performing blacks or Indians.
Affordable public transit brings a wide range of people together; yet, techniques for eradicating the urban poor and social outcasts (prostitutes, criminals) begin. The amusementscape becomes walled.

The depression and wars dampen celebratory spaces and the amusementscape lies somewhat dormant during the inter-war period. The advent of cinema and other mass media offer new competition to "lively entertainment". I go on to show how, the post-WWII economic and baby booms revitalise the amusementscape, giving birth to the theme park which caters to the taste of a growing middle class. Animators and movie producers take the wheel of the amusementscape and collide it with television and movie narration and conventions. Drawing upon history and science fiction, the theme park surrenders all available space, including rides, architecture, food, garbage cans, and workers to a series of manufactured cultural motifs. Immaculately clean, efficient, and orderly, the theme park banishes live animals, games of competition, burlesque side-shows, physical and sexual expressions. In their place, are robots, films, and simulations, many sponsored by corporations, are inserted. These exhibits variously invoke the celebration of science and warm nostalgia, hailing audiences to celebrate an optimistic future which is tethered to technological and consumptive bliss. The theme parks are programmed to deliver a uniform cultural experience. The mascot of the most notable of all themeparks is the mouse — symbol of the small and everyday, designed to comfort Mr. Everybody. The amusementscape now belongs to corporations who use the sites to create synergy between a variety of other cultural and real-estate holdings. The theme park’s location in the suburbs, as well as its stiff entrance fees serve to sift out the “undesirables” which had long plagued the fairground. Finally, in chapter 5, I present a synthesis of the historical phases, and provide a critique of the contemporary theme park.

I argue it is a distortion to view the current monopoly capital which structures the amusementscape as “the best ever thought or said”. Disney’s version of the amusementscape has actually reduced the number of activities which once animated the fairground. Disney copies conventions which were already developed, privatizes what were once public practises and symbols, destroys authentic originals to produce commodified simulacra, restricts interaction, squeezes out competition, and presents a conservative view of both the past and future. The brilliance of the Disney corporation lies in this capacity to commodify narrative and cultural practises in contemporary social relations.
Pre-Modern Amusementscape: Fairs/Carnival

Fairs

The amusementscape was originally recognized as the fair. The word fair is derived from the Latin “forum”, or marketplace, or “feriae”, holiday. Fairs draw transient people to an area to take part in festivals, organized games, and trade. Cicero records that in the age of Pythagoras, Greeks gathered to witness the Olympics, take part in festivals, or trade goods and slaves. Under the rule of Constantine the Great in the fourth century, Jews, Gentiles, and Christian traders are said to have gathered around the tree under which Abraham received the angels. Gibbons describes Fairs of the seventh to eleventh century where worshippers and pilgrims gathered to praise Saints and take part in the long festival calendar. It was common in the twelfth century for churches to have accompanying fairs.

When abbeys and cathedrals proved too small to accommodate the influx of travellers drawn to the fairs, temporary tent cities and stalls erupted for lodging and the distribution of goods. A participant at the Sturbridge Fair in Cambridge comments on its marvel:

It is not to be wondered at, if the Town of Cambridge cannot Receive or Entertain the Numbers of People that come to the Fair..the very Barns, and Stables are turn’d into Inns and made as fit as they can to Lodge the meaner Sort of People. People in the Fair,...Eat Drink and Sleep in their booths and tents; and the said booths are so intermingles with Taverns, Coffee Houses, Drinking-Houses, Eating-Houses, Cook-Shops...and so many Butchers, Hagglers from all the Neighbouring Countries come into the Fair every Morning with Beef Mutton, Fowls, Butter, Bread, Cheese, Eggs, and such things, and they go from Tent to Tent, from Door to Door, that there’s no want of any Provisions of any kind, either dres’d or undres’d.

(Walford, 1967: 141)

The “meaner Sort of People” are given shelter and a role within the early fair for it was an event involving the whole community. Mechanisms for dislodging this class of people would be developed over time.
Fairs lent themselves to a variety of purposes: ritual, marking time, exchange of goods and communication, transmission of social convention, and given their relatively open, inclusive structure fairs have long fostered the testing and contesting of social relations.

The bulk of the population in the Middle Ages lived by their wits and the land. Agrarian life was subject to abundance continually won, lost, and taxed away. Within such a culture, taking every opportunity to feast, celebrate, and get drunk made much sense. Fairs provided a place to gossip, to see exotic people and goods, witness the enactment of healing rituals, and hear stories. From a political perspective, feast days were a time of social pay-back. Residues of “bread and circus” flickered through the fairs as political relations rooted in paternalism goaded elites to periodically assuage peasants with feast, drink, and merriment.

Leisure customs were particularly resonant given that “idle” time was jealously sought after. As Cross (1990) points out, the Medieval worker did not possess the immense drive towards productivity the modern worker was to develop. There was little belief in the need to produce more than needed. Stock piling was a modern invention. Even if a craft worker had the opportunity to undertake more work, he was more likely to chose leisure. Individuals were revered not because of their material wealth, but because of their idle time.

But “idle time” was not necessarily “empty” time as it is thought today, rather it was “community” time filled with the enactment of cultural rituals. The enactment of carnival required a significant social investment, direct participation and personal engagement. One of the most powerful components of the carnival is its ability to socially motivate action. The carnival was largely orchestrated by the community and tradition. Elites attended the carnival, but it was not of their making. Historic testimony notes that within the carnival crowd “straw hats greatly outnumbered black”. Some arrangements were undertaken by individuals, families, or fair/feast day organizers; yet, according to Goethe, “the hosts are only hosts, for there are no guests, no spectators, only participants.” Church and monarchy symbols were drawn upon, yet, utilized in unconventional fashion, often to blasphemous ends. “Carnival became the symbol and incarnation of the true folk festival, completely independent of Church, and State but tolerated by them.” (Bakhtin, 1984: 220)
Festivals were community driven and highly prized. Goethe witnessed an Italian carnival noting that the festival was “offered not by some exterior source but by the people to themselves” (Bakhtin, 1984: 246). As a French sociologist once suggested “in traditional societies, a man [sic] lives ‘in remembrance of one festival and in expectation of the next” (Burke, 1978: 179).

Carnival

Early fairs were organized around the expression of “carnival”, which Stallybrass and White define as a “mobile set of symbolic practices, images, discourses, and roles enacted in various public settings which found its creative impetus within the general community” (1986:6-20). Carnival practices were not confined to the fairground alone but erupted at social occasions including “family festivals, like weddings; community festivals, the feast of the patron saint of a town or parish; annual festivals involving most Europeans, like Easter, May Day, Midsummer, the Twelve Days of Christmas, New Year’s, and the Epiphany”; as well as change in leadership and elections (Burke, 1978: 178).

Carnival might be seen as the centralization of the creative element of the fair. Technically a fair is a physical location or a site where people gather. Carnival is what people did or expressed within the fairground site. While a conceptual split might be made between physical location and social practice, in lived experience they are inseparable. In this thesis, therefore, I view the fair and the carnival as they were felt — together in the same moment.

My emphasis is on carnival within European culture. While the carnivals of Italy, Spain, France and central Europe were particularly vibrant — warmer climates permitted their greater frequently and duration — I confine myself to English literature, and carnival as expressed within Britain and America. While other cultures around the world express festivals and have held fairs, it would be problematic to generalize my findings.

Carnival stems from the word ‘carne’ or meat. The carnival symbolic revolves around flesh — the “eaten” flesh; the “lusted” flesh; the flesh of “violence”. These basic processes of sustenance, procreation, and struggle were symbolized and ritualized within the basic carnival practices which included feasts, processions, competitions, and plays. Carnivals often involved acts of reversal and subversion of social codes.
Like the fairground, carnival finds its earliest expression in Ancient times, in the Winter Saturnalia festivals of Grecian culture. Later it falls under the Christian calendar during the season of Lent and Christmas. ‘Carnival’ is personified within ritual as a fat, sexy, jolly man, straddling a keg of wine, goring on a sewer of beef, roaring with laughter. In Straussian contrast his companion, Lent, dressed in black, is a bony, pinched faced woman who hunches and scowls with the fish (Burke, 1978: 183-186). Together Carnival and Lent allude to a central feudal motif of feast and famine; which is vividly rendered in Pieter Bruegel’s: The Fight Between Carnival and Fasting. The carnival was a rich hybrid. Christian sentiments came to layer over pagan rituals. Later, church symbols were shadowed by civic holidays as the nation state rises to ascendance. As Burke notes: “What is clear is that Carnival was polysemous, meaning different things to different people. Christian meanings were superimposed on pagan ones without obliterating them, the result has to be read as a palimpsest” (Burke, 1978: 182).

Carnival Elements

Sustenance
The “came” of carnival was the enactment of the consuming body, the lusting body, and the labouring body. Food, sex, and violence were ritualized. People consumed large quantities of meat, yet pancakes were popular in the Netherlands festivals; and fools were known to eat vast amounts of fire — a gesture of purification (Burke, 1978: 181). According to a 17th Century commentator it was a time of much cooking and eating:

such boiling and broiling, such roasting and toasting, such stewing and brewing, such baking, frying, mincing, cutting, carving, devouring, and gorbellied gormandising, that a man would think people did take in two months provisions at once into their paunches, or that they did ballast their bellies with meat for a voyage to Constantinople, or the West Indies'.

(Burke, 1978: 183)

The utopian vision of the ‘Land of Cockaigne’ popular in the 17th Century had a strong culinary theme, with houses thatched with pancakes, brooks running with milk, and roast pigs running about “with knives conveniently stuck in their backs” (Burke, 1978: 190). In Ben Jonson’s “Bartholomew Fair”, a central character, Busy, dreams in the ‘Land of Cockaigne’ where pigs would run right off the spit into his mouth (Stallybrass and White, 1986:62,69).
Animals not eaten became entertainment: first as exotic spectacles; then later as human effigies dressed as the dandies of the day and positively reinforced by the trainer and crowd to undertake "courtly" or later "civilized" mannerisms. Humanizing an animal might be seen as an act of role reversal, a central carnival practise. Animals were part of the trade and colonial systems. Merchants from abroad brought exotic animals, along with other amazing goods, like elephants, tigers, and monkeys to fascinate rural eyes. Animals became sport in cockfights, bull and bear baiting. They were also subject to direct acts of violence — cats were pelted with stones and dogs heaved into the air from blankets. Pigs bladders were converted into musical instruments, stretched over jugs half full of water, pierced in the centre with a reed moved up and down to produce "a sound not unlike one emitted by a stuck pig" (Burke, 1978: 183). The stretched bladder was also filled with air and bounced about — the origins of the modern party balloon.

Pigs

Stallybrass and White illustrate the powerful symbolic value associated with animals in particular the pig. The ambiguity of the pig's sign is historically rooted, yet offers an early glimpse of the process of retextualization which would be later repeated on a host of "others" including "itinerant performers" "freaks" "Indians" and "blacks". The practice of debasing what is considered disgusting and loathsome is often used to assert social prominence and class distinction.

Pigs were once considered cherished members of the rural community; sharing human skin "pigment", eating human leftovers, and tending to live closer to the house then grazing animals. They are sensitive creatures, and their hide requires them to seek cover. If mud is not available, they will resort to wallowing in their own excrement or urine. They do not transport well like sheep, cattle, and chickens, thus are tethered to the local. Pigs are intelligent and respond to human gestures, which enables relationships to be forged with them. Pigs are originally praised for their ability to clean up messes, as Gervase Markham wrote in 1614, "for to speake truely of the Swine, he is the Husbandmans best scavenge, Huswifes most wholesome sink" (quoted in Stallybrass and White, 1986: 45).

Yet, the transplanting of the pig from countryside to town, was accompanied by a change in the meaning associated with swine. The positive regard for the rural pig was transformed into
loathing within the town. Pigs became a metaphor for all that was low/base, dirty/smelly and not human. Stallybrass and White root this retextualization of the pig sign to the rise of the merchant class who were in need of markers in order to define their class status. The exodus from the farm to the town placed the pig within a new material context. Husbandry practices which forged relationships with animals broke down and the demands of street traffic and increased commercial activity did not mix with livestock. Untethered from the farming context pigs roved, scavenged, and threatened, making them the objects of disdain.

It is precisely because of the contention surrounding pig’s sign, that they became a cherished carnival symbol of subversion. Those who held the most disdain for the pig were the church and the newly emerging bourgeoisie. The church saw the pig as sinful; the bourgeoisie saw the pig as dirty. Carnival theatrics flirt with the difference between pigs and humans. Swine masqueraded as human babies; pigs heads were converted into human masks, pigs were dressed in the attire of the gentlemen. Pigs become lust symbols along with cocks and bears; and engravings and prints of the period picture pigs in sexual poses with humans. The subversion of the sign of the pig mocks the church and bourgeoisie for their disgust of the powerful agrarian order.

Procreation
Another layer of carnival symbolic meaning surrounds ‘carnal desires’. Cross notes that “disproportionate numbers of babies were born nine months following...festivals (1990: 10). Fairs were popular sites for coupling. Actual and mock weddings were carnival staples. In typical carnival reversal, mock weddings matched the mismatched — pigs exchanged vows with clergy; monarchs married hags; men dressed as women ritually bonded with women dressed as men. Sex was symbolized in songs, stories. Discourse layered in double meaning, forbidden in other times and places, was expected at carnival. An example is offered in this popular ditty sung by Florentine key-makers to women situated on balconies above the celebrations:

Our tools are fine, new and useful;
We always carry them with us;
They are good for anything,
If you want to touch them, you can.

(Burke, 1978: 186)
Sex was symbolically enacted in gestures as women were mockingly kidnapped by passionate bears and pigs. Replica horse size penises were displayed in processions, and “it does not seem too far-fetched to interpret long-nosed masks or horned masks as phallic symbols” (Burke, 1978: 187).

**Struggle**

Flesh consumed and lusted was also the flesh of aggression. Burke notes that much aggression was sublimated into ritual. Mock battles were popular, as were the depiction of the uncrowning of authority to make way for new monarchs, who were most often a fool or animal, again highlighting reversal of roles. Other marks of prestige were defaced. Mock military distinctions were paraded around labelled with “for sale” signs. Communal and family grudges worked their way out publicly in physical and linguistic form. Verbal aggression abounded as insults filled the air. Male neighbours were accused of being beaten by their wives. Carnival discourse or ‘Billingsgate’ — which according to Bakhtin encompassed curses, oaths, slang, humor, popular tricks and jokes, scatological forms, in fact all the ‘low’ and ‘dirty’ sorts of folk humor” — was rich at the carnival, as everyone who came into its discursive domain was considered a “horse’s ass” (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 8).

Football and other physical competitions were popular. Aggression beyond the playing field was often “displaced onto objects [sic] which could not easily defend themselves, such as cocks, dogs, cats, and Jews, who were pelted with mud and stones” (Burke, 1978: 187).

Documents record an increase in street murders during carnival in Moscow, Venice and London. Property damage must have also increased, given that people threw “flour, sugar-plums, apples, oranges, stones, and eggs...” and water all over the place and at each other. Precious market goods had to be confined to walled areas of the fair site, an indication that looting might have been present. Pick-pockets found the fair a fertile ground to ply their trade.

Carnival celebrations were not completely free-wheeling, however, but were quite heavily surveilled. Enforcers of the “law” were desired targets for ridicule, but they exerted influence. As Burke notes, it “is was not true that ‘in Carnival, everything is permitted.’” The community probably exerted its own pressure to restrain violence. One can imagine how bystanders or fools, like rodeo clowns, would have made attempts to distract violent perpetrators. The history of a drinking buddy telling another to ‘shake off’ provocation is also undoubtedly very old. Cannetti in his study
of Crowds and Power finds few examples in history or across cultures of crowds which self-destruct in chaos. Crowds usually have an object upon which they vent their violence.

Procession, Competition and Play
The consuming, lusting, and violent body was ritualized within three common carnival elements: The procession mobilized costumed individuals, musicians, and floats. Equestrians also formed part of the line, and often rode their mounts, usually donkeys, backwards. Competition was displayed in physical contests, mental challenges and games of chance. Competitive events included fortune telling, dice and card games, horse and foot races, mock battles, football and tug of war. The third element of carnival, and possibly most central, given other categories fold into it, was the play or farce.

Play is evidenced in the uncrownings and the organization of the King’s abbots of Misrule. This mock power structure was usually enacted by young upper class males who followed the unwritten script of tradition. Play was carried out by puppets, trained animals, live actors, the antics of the fool, and more broadly in the gesture and discourse of everyone involved. According to Goethe’s witness account, “a signal is given to everyone to play the fool and madman as he pleases”.

Standard lines of symbolic distinction change and in the process life becomes theatre, or perhaps more correctly; from the perspective of Irving Goffman (1959) — the theatre of life itself is revealed. Goffman also taught us that it is within the boundary between the “real” and the “fake” that drama plays its folly. Stallybrass and White note the universality of play within the carnival:

Carnival may be seen as a huge play in which the main streets and squares became stages, the city theatre without walls and the inhabitants, the actors and spectators, observing the scene from their balconies. In fact there was not sharp distinction between actors and spectators, since the ladies on their balconies might throw eggs at the crowd below, and the maskers were often licensed to burst into private houses.

(Stallybrass and White, 1986: 182)

A standard tactic of the play was reversal. According to Burke, transposition included acts of people standing on their heads, depictions of cities in the sky, the sun and moon on earth, fish flying, a horse going backwards with its rider facing the tail, and oxen cutting up the butcher.
But reversals, playing on age, sex and social status, became popular: horses rode in the carriage as humans pulled, the sick attended to the healthy, the poor gave alms to the rich, and children parented adults. The image of a small tinkling bell (usually a cow bell), a symbol of warning and marking of time, appears even in the most ancient carnivals as an indispensable accessory (Bakhtin, 1984: 214).

Theatre
The rise of English theatre began on the fairgrounds within miracle and creationist plays. To understand these plays there is need, in Peter Burke's terms, to "think away" the barrier between stage and audience which appears so natural today. The theatrical boundary between play and audience was historically created by an 18th Century reform movement which brought theatre indoors, separated author from performer, turned the lights down to emphasize the stage and not the audience, and socialized individuals into confining their participation to a polite clapping at distinctive and appropriate times.

Fairground theatre spoke the word of the gods, the Saints and the forgiveness of miracles; which instructed and comforted the public in an age of unpredictable illness. The dialogue between performers and the audience was rich. Performers goaded the audience for feedback which came in the form of verbal heckling and the throwing of objects ranging from food to stones. Plays did not have "authors", rather were constructed by the community, and in particular guilds. Tradition dictated themes. Most plays were repetitive and known to the audience. Because everyone knew the script, interaction was increased. Actors were crafts people, hence just as one would negotiate the type of table constructed for one's home, so would one negotiate the construction of drama. People stood, interacted, moved around, and jumped onto the stage or performers jumped off. No one stood in line for performances; there were no seats. People simply buzzed around the drama.

Plays were staged on platforms marked by flags and serenaded by guitars and pipers, which all served to draw a crowd. Healing stories dramatized in the form of plays and tales. Creationist plays educated individuals in the correct way to interpret their origins. One story about the creation of animals saw the unleashing of large numbers of 'beasts' into the audience. Over time miracle plays transformed to mystery plays, which launched the morality tales of modern theatre.
St. Bartholomew’s Fair: Form and Content

A brief sketch of single fair might serve to create an overall impression of the fair. St. Bartholomew’s Fair is selected because it endured seven hundred years as both an imprint and influencer of the London metropolis. While Fairs varied significantly in accordance to region, season, and social significance, there were stubbornly persistent themes. As Burke explains, “As stories wandered from one hero to another so elementary ‘particles’ of ritual wandered from one festival to another.”

Who could be more qualified than a court jester to instigate one of England’s most famous Fairs? The story goes that Rahere, described as a “pleasant witted gentleman”, took ill while on a pilgrimage to Rome and through the daze of fever St. Bartholomew descended instructing him to undertaken pious work in Smithfield, a suburb of London. “Smithfield” might have been a derivation of the colloquial “smooth field”, which described its flat and grassy landscape. This site had long hosted the matches, tournaments, and entertainment of the local elite. In a sense, the fair democratized the site. During the reign of Henry I in 1102 A.D, Rahere, moved by his calling, organized the fair to raise funds to construct a Priory, Hospital and Church, all in honor of St. Bartholomew. Rahere became the lord of the Fair and a judge in the fair’s Piepower Court (Walford, 1967: 166).

The fair was held each year on August 25, the feast day of St. Bartholomew which was a late season festivity which coincided with the annual slaughter of livestock. Being a fair of meat, there is an interesting symbolical lacing to the Saint who had met his martyr death through roasting and was the patron of butchers and tailors. St. Bartholomew’s pigs were sold at booths recognized by the pig heads which marked them. Smithfield came to be the centre of London’s meat trade, but the fair also played host to the bustling textile industry, and within the fair one could acquire cloth, leather, and pewter.

Given that the Fair was flanked by Church, Monastery and Hospital, it materially braided the eternal themes of death and life, because the ill and healthy commingled in large numbers. The ill hoped to benefit from the symbolic potency of the fair, as Saints’ days were thought to possess medicinal properties. There is a sizeable amount of description about the inordinate number of
miracles which took place on the fair grounds. Ritual and human hope are formidable forces and the variables associated with healing multifarious; however, divine intervention and anti-hexing might have been helped by the herbs and remedies brought to the area by foreign traders during the Fair. While the church would eventually come to condemn Saintly cures, healing rituals, miracle plays and other such “superstitions”; the clergy can be seen as symbolically prospering from its association with Saintly stories about miraculous cures.

Not all theatre took place on a stage. The public on the fairground was the continual prey to the antics of the fool who might grab a public hand skipping by, force a silly dance, boot a bum or make a lude gesture pulled from a bag of libertine tricks. Fools of the time were as familiar to the people of the gentry as they were to the town folk, given that they played both the court and the tavern. The crowd undertook acts of foolery on each other, for each other. The “carnivalesque” idiom of the fair is described by this whimsy. Other fairground amusements included jugglers and acrobats who flipped themselves and objects about in the air as stilt walkers passed by. Revelling in each others’ foolishness would be later scripted into the “manufactured carnival” of Coney Island Amusement Parks illustrating its historic appeal.

The display and sale of craft objects and figures sculpted from wax was popular. Effigies, made of straw, were ridiculous characters. These “Voodoo-dolls” abound, serving as representations of the enemies to the fair populist. Most often the dolls were officials, which were ritually burned. These acts might be seen as symbolic destruction of the reigning social order. Puppetry was fashionable; particularly in 1649 when the Puritan rule of Cromwell banished live actors from stages, yet, allowed the puppets to play on. Puppets may have been considered less of a symbolic threat, given that they were “nothing more” than “a piece of cloth over a hand”. In all probability, puppets were able to deliver some of the most biting critique (political satire, Punch and Judy) given that they were protected by the status of mere “foolery”. Fools shared a similar privileged status and remained on the fair site throughout puritan rule. Indeed, “Cromwell himself had in his private service four buffoons” (Burke, 1978: 202). Puppets and fools might be seen as means in which critique finds an outlet within the protected domain of “play”. in times of political suppression. Some might recognize these cultural practises as political safety valves.
Relations between power elites and common folk were based in paternalism, patronage, loyalty and allegiance. Social bonds were characterized as personal, familial and communal in structure. Gossip, a cherished social practice in all ages, was substantive at the fair, for prior to mass education or mass media it played a primary role in socialization. "Mind your own business" held little credence at a time when community and family members felt quite comfortable, if not responsible for, instructing others in the proper conduct of carrying out skills, undertake relationships, birthing and raising children. All cultures require ways to transmit knowledge and practises from one generation to the next, and during this time transmission was undertaken orally and personally. People relied on direct external clues from others to regulate their behaviour. The Fair was a hot bed for gossip exchange, for it was one of the few places where individuals could interact with others not bound to them by region, social status, or kin. How exotic, cosmopolitan, and outside the everyday the fair must have seemed.

In an age prior to newspapers, television and radio, the fairs were mass media forums. Like current media forms, the fair provoked both "official" discourse, and "audience" discourse. The audience was provided ample symbolic meat given that the fair was used as a forum by the elite to propagate their views and reinforce the prevailing social order. The fair was treated as a soap box by the Church, monarch, and legal institutions. Yet, one can bet for every official proclamation, there was a story of political scandal; for every 'paragon' in a church sermon there was a 'sinner'.

Games of competition and chance flourished on the ground of Smithfield. Survival skills at the time required strength and cunning, characteristics which found an outlet in the ritualized physical games displayed before the community. Males acquired a currency rooted in talent and body-knowledge which could be exchanged for social standing within the public arena. Women were exempt from participating in most competitions, yet were forced into the role of handmaidens of social emotion, expressing delight or disgust from the sidelines. Under the watchful eye and encouraging word of the community and family, many couplings between males and females were undertaken, for it was not only the livestock put on display. Games of chance and fortune telling provided a forum for the possibility of magical transformation.

Competitions of the mind were undertaken in the early years of the fair in what was perhaps the precursor of the "public sphere". Scholars came from several different parts of the country to
stand on an embankment and debate until their arguments were proven lacking by other academics who replaced them on the bank. The winner of these mental matches was rewarded a token prize such as a bow with silver tipped arrows. The debates were relatively open and free. Over time such dialogue became prohibited by church and monarch. Scholars could later only continue their talk within the confined arena of the university. Hence while debates did not completely disappear, they were forced into more private arenas addressing smaller elite audiences. They would arise later, however, within the coffee-houses.

The fair assaulted all the senses. Eyes marvelled over goods never seen before. Acrobatic acts, freaks, and forgine traders were all exotic. Judith Adams (1991) makes the salient observation that the torches which lit the fair area served as powerful attractors. Over the years they grew in number until the whole site was ablaze in another worldly ambience. One has to “think away” electricity in order to appreciate how spectacular this must have been to candle burning people. The smell of roasting pig and beef pierced the air, commingling with the smell of the crowd and its excrement. The pig was served hot off the spit, causing saliva to boil and tongues to burn. Tastebuds accustomed to the bland diet of root vegetables, danced as a rich savoury river of fat and flesh flowed by. The soundscape was a cacophony of fiddling, boastful promotion, piping, rattling of shakers, children crying, laughter, adults badgering and livestock baying and squealing. Bodies brushed in close contact; peddlers touched hands in the exchange of goods; entertainers shook, roughhoused and belittled each other and the audience for a laugh; first time embraces locked; backs were slapped in camaraderie; faces punched in anger; hands held in healing rituals — while underfoot, boots sloshed in mud and filth.

The St. Bartholomew’s Fair, along with other early fairs, was difficult to forget. Fair stories were retold gaining richer symbolic potency with each telling. Bodies retained the vivid imprint of experience. Souvenirs, stories and goods became embedded into lives after the fair, where characters met, the seasons were marked, relationships germinated and the social history of a time constructed

Perspectives of the Fair

Social positioning plays a heavy hand in dictating the perspective on meanings attached to a phenomenon. From the castle, fancy house or church window the fair appears to be a debauched site
of drunken, dirty, violent social anarchy. From street level one sees a tradition, a social ritual, rooted in a cosmic and spiritual logic, which makes merriment out of subverting the signs of the powerful. From across the trading table one sees in the fair many potential customers. Viewing the fair as a “cultural form” requires examination each perspective.

From the castle
Fairs such as St. Bartholomew presented local elite with a ripe opportunity to collect taxes and tolls, but were also viewed as potential seed beds of physical, moral, and ideological upheaval:

Festivals meant that peasants came to town and that everyone took to the streets. Men were masked, some were armed. The excitement of the occasion and the heavy consumption of alcohol meant that inhibitions against expressing hostility to the authorities or private individuals would be at their weakest. Add to this a bad harvest, an increase in taxes, an attempt to introduce, or to forbid, the Reformation; the resulting mixture could be explosive.

(Burke, 1978: 188)

Hence from very early in their development, fairs prompted the creation of laws, policies, and licenses — precursors of modern regulation. To control fairs, they began to be licensed:

In the name of order, to quell the sometime eruptions of disorder which took place at the Fairs, the Crown in the Norman period began to licence Fairs to small towns, lords, and individuals.

(Walford, 1967: 19)

The fair was a “marketplace of ideas”. According to Walford, Italian traders, who always played a starring role in exchange festivities, might be seen as encouraging the climate for revolution in France through political posturing undertaken on the Fair grounds:

The French revolution, and the state of France as it is today, may owe their first source to these very times when a Genoese merchant would repair to these Fairs, proud and boastful of his own freedom, and his vote in the General Council, and of a government which owned no royal master; and all this could be said with a sneer at the people over whom the banner of the lilies held despotic sway.

(Walford, 1967: 24)

Fairs raised crises of public health and were banned at various times due to plague. Not only were there few people well enough to take part in festivities — 1/3 of the English population died during the black plague — but to allow the commingling of people would enhance the diffusion of disease. At a period in history rarely noted for its hygienic practices; it is not difficult to imagine a
festival of consumption could greatly mar an area with waste. A Royal Proclamation issued by Charles I in 1625 points to the courtly concern:

The Kings most excellent majesty, out of his Princely and Christian care of his loving subject, that no good means of Providence may be neglected to stay the further spreading of the great infection of the Plague, doth find it necessary to prevent all occasions of public concourse of his people for the present, till it shall please Almighty God of His goodness, to cease the violence of the Contagion which is very dispersed into many parts of the Kingdom already; And therefore remembering that there are at hand two Fairs of Special note and unto which there is usually extraordinary resort out of all parts of the Kingdom...

(Walford, 1967: 44)

Fairs also had their own legal system. As far back as the Bacchus celebrations, the Olympics, and the Greek Church festivities there is evidence of trials held on the spot at Fair grounds. In Medieval England the Courts of Piepowder were composed of a jury of merchants who assembled and passed judgement on the spot. These historic kangaroo courts could only "enforce during Fair time, within Fair grounds, and deal with matters of the Fair". Yet, the separation of the Fair from broader social practices came under attack from the public and competing merchants who complained that the Piepowder Courts abused their rights, and that criminals were not properly tried given the time limits placed on the proceedings. Hence a grant of authority to enforce the law beyond the time and place of Fairs was made in 1779.

The King regularly "cried" legal proclamations at fair. And in at least one graphic instance the fair was the site for the enactment of social justice, with the hanging of a Scottish "rebel", William Wallace. Michael Foucault has argued in his study of discipline and punishment (1977), that the medieval execution acted as a vivid social discourse.

The church generally did not authorize the taking of life during Saints days. Ironically this policy was not rooted in compassion, rather in prosaic economics — executions required work, and work was forbidden during holidays. In 1305 the "law was eager to assure the execution of its vengeance"; hence, the church stood aside, allowing William Wallace of Scotland, a convicted traitor, to be hung on the opening day of St. Bartholomew's fair in front of "jugglers, stilt walkers, peddlers

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9 This passage also provides a stunning example of the paternal and personal discourse of the power relations of the period.
and assorted other members of the public” (Walford, 1967: 172). This hanging set a precedent which gradually took over festivals.

The area of the fair which housed the most entertainment was bordered by Elm hanging trees. Legal doctrine demanded hangings be carried out in traditional locations. The fact that St. Bartholomew’s fair had sprung up around this site, might strike one as a poor planning decision — then again, what might be closer to the truth is that the space of merriment and the space of social justice were not segmented within the Medieval mind. Further, executions were stupendous spectacles, thereby blending well with the crowd formation of the fair. The tendency to view entertainment as light and devoted to pleasant themes is a modern invention which denies the immense fascination and potent communication properties of acts of violence and death.

Wallace was noosed until near death, cut down, disembowelled and his insides burned before his eyes. After being beheaded he was cut into five pieces, which were ushered into separate baskets and delivered to London, Berwick, Newcastle, Aberdeen and Perth — a most formidable form of legal communiqué. This great effort spent to ritually take Wallace’s life, is in keeping with Foucault’s thesis that the Medieval discourse of punishment revolved around the graphic spectacle of the material body. At the end of this legal spectacle, the public is said to have turned its attention back to the festivities of the fair. The on-site graveyard did a steady business in traitors over the course of St. Bartholomew’s Fair.

The very power structures which forced the enactment of Wallace’s grotesque hanging spectacle, denounced the ritualized violence within the fair. Fairs became outlawed, particularly in conservative climates. In 1604 when the King outlawed fair games within a five mile radius of Cambridge:

For the better maintenance safety and quietness of that our said university and all the every the students there, and to remove take away and prevent all occasions that may tend either to the infecting of their bodies or minds, or to withdrawing or alienating the younger sort from the courses of their studies.....command you our said chancellor....inhibit and forbid all manner of unprofitable or idle games plays or exercises to be used or made within our said university and the town there, and within five miles compass of and from the said university and the down...especially bull-baiting, bear-baiting, common plays, publick shews, interludes, comedies and tragedies in the English tongue, games at loggets, nine-holes, and all other sports and games....

(Walford, 1967: 115)
Such an elaborate prohibition illustrates the immense contempt elites held for the social cauldron of the Fairs. There is some material basis upon which this reasoning was made, for instances of fairs and carnivals transforming into “riots and rebellions” are found:

In Basel they long remembered the massacre which took place on Shrove Tuesday 1376...Londoners remembered ‘evil May Day’ 1517, which turned into a riot against foreigners. At Bern in 1513, Carnival had turned into a peasant revolt. During the wars of religion in France, festivals were particularly likely to turn violent. At Romans in Dauphine, the dances and masquerades organised by one of the ‘kingdoms’ for the Carnival of 1580 carried the message that ‘the rich men of the town had enriched themselves at the expense of the poor’, and the occasion turned into a massacre, first in town and then in countryside, where local gentlemen ‘went hunting through the villages, killing the peasants like pigs.’

(Burke, 1978: 204)

These uprisings illustrate that diversion does not always lead to passivity. Spectacle can incite revolution as well as awe.¹⁰

From the street

However, the “riots and rebellions” which occurred at fairs need to be put in historical and social context. Compared to the number of people brutalised or executed at the hands of the monarch and church — the numbers lost to war, starved to death, or who perished from disease — fair carnage is negligible. Further, while the fair-grounds were, at times, sites of social upheaval, larger political forces were most likely the cause. Given the structure of the fair, which brought a mass of transient people of various social standings and nationalities together, what should be emphasized is not the presence of revolt and rebellion, but its low incidence. Historic testimony notes the amazing smoothness under which fairs tended to unfold:

In a Word, the Fair is like a well Fortify’d City, and there is the least Disorder and Confusion that can be seen anywhere, with so great a Concourse of People.

(Walford, 1967: 141).

Some found the fairground better monitored than the community at large:

The Fair is like a well governed city...If a dispute arise between buyer and seller ....on calling out “red coat’ you have instantly one or more come running to you.

(Walford, 1967: 144)

¹⁰ David Harvey points out that “spectacle can also be an essential aspect of revolutionary movements”, noting that Lenin referred to revolution as ‘the festival of the people’ (1990: 88).
Mikhail Bakhtin provides a stunning thesis which attends to the discrepancies between the “official’s” view of the fair and the fair “of the people” (1984: 35). His core thesis is that the carnival is a communal expression of the cosmic logic of life which understands the world as a process of continual creative destruction, a procedure of unending renewal, a project of infinite becoming, a world both devoured and devouring. Within this frame death is separated from the individual and spread over the whole to become the pollinate of the new. Bodily violence is connected to renewal and representations of the abstract are ground into the rawness of the material body. The cosmic logic speaks itself within carnival through acts of reversal, the materiality of grotesque images, the goring, games and play, physical and verbal abuses, and laughter. The expressions of the carnival are viewed both as testimony of cosmic truth and political critique of the forces which attempt to deny it:

As opposed to the official feast, one might say that carnival celebrates temporary liberation from the prevailing truth of the established order; it marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions. Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and complete.

(Bakhtin 1984: 109).

Bakhtin formed his analysis primarily from the study of the literary characters and carnival antics found in the novels of Rabelais. The relationship between a literary text and a lived social history is very complex. Carnival practices can be seen as dramatic performances themselves, making it difficult to conceptually separate them from their symbolic retelling. There is a distinction between the carnival as lived ritual retold through historic documents by historians, and this same ritual as told through the imagination of an author motivated towards literary impact. This is not to set a competition between the historian and the novelist, privileging one over the other; it is rather to acknowledge that these authors compose their work according to different motivations, and that these distinctions should be acknowledged. The references in Rabelais to the excesses of bodily exuberance, the motifs and enactment’s are confirmed in historic literature. If one were to qualify them, they tend to lean towards excess and emotional clarity; motives of good literature and storytelling. And as Bakhtin vividly points out, historical accounts tend to privilege elite perspectives.
While Bakhtin credits Rabelais with intimate and scholastic knowledge of the carnival; this does not close the gap between the fair and the book. Stallybrass and White emphasize that discourses are not homologies. The fair cannot be collapsed “into the literary text and vice versa” (1986: 60). They prefer the aspect of Bakhtin's work which regards Rabelais' novels not as historical tableau's but rather as representing a dialogue of several discourses — a 'heretroglossia' which draws as much upon “classical learning, medicine, theology and the Court” as well as the “low languages of the fair and marketplace” (1986: 60). The historians, as Bakhtin notes in his study have followed “official” documents too closely and have excluded the other voices and perspectives which the novels of Rambelais highlight.

Bakhtin claims he reads Rabelais with “the eyes of his [Rabelais] contemporaries” (1986: 224); in so doing, is able to develop new meaning from carnival motifs which long escaped the historian and literary critic. Rabelais is said to have lived:

as did his contemporaries, in the world of these norms [carnival]; he breathed their atmosphere, used their idiom with assurance, and had no need of constant abstract self control (1984: 213).

The carnival was not about “what I do” and “who I am” as an individual, rather it was situated within the consciousness and rules of the collective:

The heart of the matter is not in the subjective awareness but in the collective consciousness of their eternity, of their earthly, historic immortality as a people and of their continual renewal and growth (Bakhtin, 1984: 250).

Carnival abhors all that is abstract and bordered, for these are illogical to the cosmic wisdom of blending, blurring and regeneration. Bakhtin makes a conceptual break between the “grotesque body” and the “classic body” which are essentially the different connotations the body assumes in “low” and “high” discourses. Stallybrass and White define the distinction between the grotesque and classic body:

The classical statue has no openings or orifices whereas grotesque costume and masks emphasize the gaping mouth, the protuberant belly and buttocks, the feet and the genitals. In this way the grotesque body stands in opposition to the gorgeous individualist conception of the body, which finds its image and legitimation in the classical. The grotesque body is emphasized as a mobile split multiple self, a subject of pleasure in processes of exchange; and it is never closed off from either its social ecosystemic context. The classical body on the

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11 A “high” discourse would evolve from those in positions of social power such as the monarchy, noble and clergy. A “low” discourse would be formulated in the vernacular of the peasant corpus.
The finite, sharp and defined contours of the "classical body" are erased by the excesses of "grotesque body". Private domains such as houses are regarded as public to the carnival crowd; just as the street hosts private acts. The regions of the body are open to invade and be invaded. The open body breathes the cosmos in and out through, among other acts, eating, copulating, drooling, rough-housing, and defecating. "Belly, legs, feet, buttocks and genitals" stressing material weight and orifices (mouth, flared nostrils, anus) as representations of an unending process and movement are given a centre place within the symbolic stage. The head, where 'spirit' and 'reason' reside, is left in the wings. Continually throughout the plays, fool antics, processions, competitions, verbal and physical gestures the other worldly, divine, and abstract are collapsed into the raw material body.

The body of "grotesque realism" is not the isolated body, but the communal body:

The leading themes of these images of bodily life are fertility, growth and a brimming-over abundance. Manifestations of this life refer not to the isolate biological individual, not to the private, egoistic, 'economic man', but to the collective ancestral body of all the people.

Infliction of abuse, according to Bakhtin, was neither taken personally, nor seriously; rather viewed as a progressive force towards transforming the old into the new:

The blows have here a broadened, symbolic, ambivalent meaning; they at once kill and regenerate, put an end to the old life and start the new. The entire episode is filled with a bacchic atmosphere. Every blow dealt to the old helps the new to be born.

Themes of renewal were most profoundly typified by uncrowning and crownings, where old authority was dethroned to make way for the new. The successor — often an animal or harlequin — was symbolic illustration that any "fool" could perform the job. The theme of regeneration glowed blithely behind acts of brutality:

Bloodshed, dismemberment, burning, death, beatings, blows, curses, and abuses— all these elements are steeped in "merry time", time which kills and gives birth, which allows nothing old to be perpetuated and never ceases to generate the new and the youthful.
Within such a paradigm, beatings were often fronted and closed in laughter, and carried out in "gay character". Violence is said to have been undertaken in a cloak of jolly ambivalent, for this was not about inflicting pain, rather much more about rejuvenation.

Games are said to be related to time and the future; hence play a unique role "as a condensed formula of life of the historic process: fortune, misfortune, gain and loss, crowning and uncrowning". For the duration of the match the player is removed from "the bounds of everyday life, [which] liberated them from usual laws and regulations, and replaced established conventions by other lighter conventionalities" (Bakhtin, 1984: 235). The primary motive for undertaking games was neither money, nor the idle passing of time; rather games were to be a training ground for community relations.

Carnival laughter is political, richly layered, and complex, having little to due with happiness:

It is, first of all, a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated 'comic' event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants. The entire world is seen in its droll aspect, in its gay relativity. Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives.

(Bakhtin, 1984: 11-12).

“The ‘coarse’ and familiar speech of the fair and the market place provided a complete and vital repertoire of speech patterns excluded from official discourse which could be used for parody, subversive humor and inversion. “Laughter degrades and materialises” (Bakhtin 1968: 20).

The carnival could be “gay” for it was “sombre and fearless” in its presentation of the brute realities of life. The four laws of eschatology: death, judgment, heaven, and hell; were laughed away with stark symbolism which drew from an agrarian lifeway:

Popular imagery did not reflect the naturalistic, fleeting, meaningless, and scattered aspect of reality but the very process of becoming, its meaning and direction. Hence the universality and sober optimism of this system.

(Bakhtin, 1984: 218)

From the Street Revised: Carnival Critiques
Bakhtin saw radical potential in carnival acts of subversion. This optimism has not been shared by all other commentators. Critics point out that carnival reversal does not so much emphasize the
arbitrary nature of social codes, as accentuate how silly it was to turn “the natural order” upside down. They have further contested the notion of a “unified” and durable peasant symbolic. Bakhtin’s notion of “distinct discursive domains” is seen by Stallybrass and White as essentializing communication:

Sites and domains of discourse, like the theatre or the author’s study or the marketplace, are themselves hierarchized and ranked, emerging out of an historical complex of competing domains and languages each carrying different values and kinds of power (1986: 61).

The releasing of material resources and easing social rules during feast/carnival days might be seen as constituting a gift to the community. As Mauss (1966) notes, most gifts invoke an impulse of fondness towards the giver. In this sense, the festivals bonded more than fractured social relations. Further, it was primarily young elites who orchestrated the court of Misrule, hence some aspects of the carnival ritual might be better seen as the young challenging the old — a changing of the guard rather than a structural break. Power which is able to “take it on the chin” and accept criticism on the symbolic level may actually strengthen its material position. “The supreme ruse of power is to allow itself to be contested ritually in order to consolidate itself more effectively” (Georges Balandier quoted in Stallybrass and White, 1986:14). Burke notes the ‘safety valve’ function the fairs would play. And, Eagleton echoes this sentiment in noting the carnival was a “ritual”, well demarcated from the everyday, and in being sanctioned by political elite had its radical teeth pulled:

Indeed carnival is so vivaciously celebrated that the necessary political criticism is almost too obvious to make. Carnival, after all, is a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony, a contained popular blow-off as disturbing and relatively ineffectual as a revolutionary work of art. As Shakespeare’s Olivia remarks, there is not slander in an allowed fool.

(Eagleton, 1981:148)

From the market
Another criticism launched against Bakhtin’s analysis is its neglect of the progressive market elements of the fair. Cross reminds us how central the fair was as a market: “These annual gatherings of migratory merchants were essential in a rural society, which lacked adequate retail shops or wholesale facilities to market agricultural products” (Cross, 1990: 11).

The early fairground embodied market struggles. Foreign traders had a particularly difficult time at English Fairs in the 1200’s, for the notion of being an individual under the eyes of the law did
not exist. People were judged according to nationality, and could be held accountable for debt and misdeeds carried out by anyone of similar national origins — a problem compounded by the generous definitions given to nationality at the time. Further, if two people of the same nationality were found in arrears, the whole debt was often charged to only one. A foreign trader’s property was often cannibalized by monarch or resident lord should they have the misfortune of dying upon English soil. Traders were carefully regulated throughout the history of Fairs. For example, “under Alfred the Great merchants were restricted to attending only four Fairs a year and could remain in England for not more than 40 days” (Walford, 1976: 19).

Fairs were subject to the regulation of standard practices, being legally bound to meet time restrictions. Early fairs followed the holiday calendar rooted in agrarian cycles and religion. There has been a long history of struggle over “holiday time”. Officials have continually sought to limit holidays; the general public has sought to increase them. In 1552 English Parliament’s attempt to restrict holidays to 27 per year met strong resistance. Romans celebrated a total of 175 holidays. In the 1700 there were 84 holidays per year. In 1751 Fairs were required to follow the rhythm of a revised calendar year (Waldrop, 1967: 47). And by 1800, fairs were well tethered to the mechanical clock, beginning promptly at one o’clock and ending at eleven at night (Starsmore, 1975: 14). Today there are approximately 11 “bank” or statutory holidays. (Cross, 1990: 10)

The duration of fairs was also tightly regulated. In the 1300 it was “cried and published” that Fairs could only last “for as long as they ought to.” In other words, Fairs were encouraged to be undertaken in discrete amounts of time. Those licensed to undertake a Fair had to stipulate the amount of time it would last. Failing to meet the deadline brought Fair organizers under the “Pain” of the King (Walford, 1967: 33).

Schedules also became co-ordinated with Fairs in other regions, so that festivities in Ireland and Wales did not conflict with English Fairs. Traders co-ordinated their efforts to ensure maximum profit was extracted over aggregate markets. Harmony in timing imposed between fairs facilitated greater commercial exchange between distant markets.

David Harvey notes that the ability to control time can “fix certain basic rules of the social game”, empowering those who impose time regulation. Significant changes in temporal and spatial organization also result in “major shifts in systems of representation, cultural forms, and
philosophical sentiment" (Harvey, 1989: 239). The consequences of time regulation can not always be predicted and require a considerable amount of negotiation. For example, we may not have had any holidays at all had people not struggled for them. Officials sanctioned holidays, but controlled them through layering new meanings on top (ie. religious holidays become state holidays).

The carnival mixed symbolic boundaries confusing standard notions of time, place, and social role. Symbolic reversal highlights the unfixed nature of codification. Time and boundaries become fluid as the standard markers which inform the everyday sense of space, duration, and self are disrupted. If we accept Harvey's thesis that social power can be generated from the control of time; then the fact that the carnival could construct its own sense of time and space might explain the immense attention to detail elites took in regulating the number of fairs, their location and duration. The power of carnival time must be placed into context, however. While elites might not have been able to control time within the carnival, they could control the time and space around it.

Other forms of market standardization are found at the fairs. Fairs were required to measure goods according to standard weights, and to refrain from false promotion. Scales were placed in front of the customer so that the honest transaction could be witnessed — seeing was believing. It would take some time before consumers would be trained into accepting market exchange without question. In 1844 an Act was tabled to regulate communication about goods:

the offence of knowingly and fraudulently spreading or conspiring to spread any false rumour, with the intent to enhance or decry the price of any goods or merchandise, or to offence of preventing or endeavouring to prevent by Force or threats any goods, wares, or merchandise being bought at any Fair or Market, but that every such offence shall be inquired of, tried, and punished....

(Walford, 1967: 50)

Fair struggle was not confined just to the traditional elites and peasants. There were outbursts between the public and merchants (the rising elite) over issues of pricing:

At Nottingham, a scuffle took place over the price of cheese. The farmers were asking from 28 to 30 shillings per hundreds this so infuriated people that their violence burst forth like a torrent — cheeses galore were rolled down Wheeler Gate and Peck Lane...

(Walford, 1967: 52)

The fairs were agents of "transformation" bringing together a cross section of "objects and discourses favourable to innovation". The fairs were cosmopolitan — cities were remade to accommodate them. Fairs networked foreign trade, increased the immigrant population, marked
regions, placed silk, velvet, glass, linens, iron, grape vines in front of rural buyers and brought the stories from afar to local ears:

The fair ‘turned the world inside out in its mercantilist aspect just as much, if not more, than it ‘turned the world upside down’ in its popular rituals.

(Stallybrass & White, 1986: 37)

As historians of consumption have illustrated (Leiss et al 1990; Lears, 1983; Marchand, 1986), the body has long been situated by promotional messages as something in need of cosmetic repair. The construction of a discourse of bodily inadequacy fuelled the purchase of products for “enhancement”. The goods brought to the fair contained discourses about how to behave and look. Peasant women marvelled at their reflection in the mirrors brought to the fair, but also noticed the blackness of their teeth and that they lacked the high-heeled shoes, bows, and flowery scent of the fashionable woman peddler who held the mirror for them:

Where Bakhtin emphasized the dirt of the fair the lower bodily stratum, the peddler displays soap, mirrors and items of dental care, commodities of beautification (particularly for women) of a cosmetic nature. Consumption here is not the drunken excess of physical indulgence but rather the subtle intimation of lack in the very display of cosmetic repair.

(Stallybrass and White, 1986: 39)

The early fairs drew a line between “theatrics” and commercial interests. The theatrics and merriment were condemned for drawing attention away from business, and it was difficult to control theatre content. Hence, open theatrics were suppressed “in nearly every decade of the fair’s existence, notably in 1604, 1647, 1678, 1755, and 1769” (Burke, 1978: 187). The length of the fair was also ordered to be shrunk from 14 days to 3 days in 1691 and 1708 because entertainment was thought to be over-running business:

the booths....were of extraordinary largeness, not occupied by dealers in goods, merchandise, etc., proper for a fair, but used chiefly for stage plays, music.

(Starsmore, 1976: 13)

Entertainment was not conceived of nor harnessed as a business. This situation was to change dramatically over time, as the cultural elements of the fair were commodified.

Cultural creation within the amusementscape of the pre-modern period sprang forth from the community and was regulated through tradition and ritual. There may well have been individuals who took a role of leadership in events, but what is unique is that they were not singled out as authors or
owners. In other words, the festivities were publicly produced events. The theatrics of the fairs were highly interactive. While there was an ensemble of symbols and practises around the “carnival” — people carried them out largely on their own. Significant emphasis was placed on bodily competition and games of chance. Rides played a smaller role in the entertainments than they later would.

The amusementscape was open to people from various levels of the social hierarchy and all members of the community took part. Very early in its history, the amusementscape begins to be regulated. Examples of early forms of regulation include the Piedpower courts, the banning of certain cultural activities, and the co-ordination of the time and place of the fairs. The market is present in this early period of the the amusementscape, but it is still largely rooted in unique craft items. The consumer has a role in negotiating the value of a good. The fair is advertised through word of mouth and the regularity of the holiday calendar. As Cross points out: “The slow pace of technological change meant that leisure customs could long survive and be passed on from one generation to another by example and word of mouth.” (1990: 13)

The mercantile seed within the fair introduced rural people into the wonders of commodity exchange. The fairs assisted the emergence of permanent shops which went on to displace mobile merchants and quelled the role of fair trade once so central to society. Industrialization, urbanization and changes in modes of transport made the town a familiar place to rural dwellers. The fair landscape fell increasingly under the spell of the commercial, professional, and craftworker sub-cultures. The events of the Reformation, Renaissance, and Enlightenment served to profoundly refashion the popular culture of which the fairs were a part.
Early Modern Fairground Transition

During 1500 - 1800, which Peter Burke terms the early modern period, the fair/carnival alters significantly. Stallybrass and White describe the change as the suppression of the "grotesque body" and the rise of the "classic body". For Burke the metaphor for change is the "Triumph of Lent" over "Carnival". What these authors are referring to is the triumph of the three hundred year bourgeois struggle to forge and sustain a distinct symbolic and material class position. The bourgeoisie retextualized cultural creations to suit newly emerging class tastes. Traditional amusementscape practise was challenged and stifled by new social arrangements. Cultural practises were increasingly commodified. Yet, the early amusementscape possessed a seductive magic which ensures its survival — albeit in an altered form.

Decline of the Noble — Rise of the Bourgeoisie

The population grew significantly in the early modern period. In 1500, 80 million people made their home in Europe, and there were four cities with 100,000 or more people. By 1800 the population had risen to 190 million, with 23 cities of 100,000 plus — and London had more than one million inhabitants. While these figures point to significant urban growth, the shift was slow. Until well into the 1800 still less than three per cent of the population lived in large towns. Yet the exodus from the rural communities had indeed started in this period. As Rosalind Williams notes, "the rise of the bourgeoisie" which I will speak of throughout this chapter might be better referred to as "the slow shift in dominance from the countryside to town". By 1800 the bourgeoisie, generally known as "those supporting themselves by business, the professionals, or skilled craft" production, comprised approximately ten percent of the population (1982: 32).

There were phenomenal shifts in production, as the market became more organized at the local level, and merchants went on to co-ordinate at the national and international level. The coordination of fairs, begun in the 1300s, continued to facilitate market control over distance. The use
of technology increased, although production, by in large, remained in small workshops. Mechanized factories did not become fully entrenched until the end of the 1800s. The demise of the agrarian labour was steady; but slow. As Gary Cross (1990) points out, family production and craft production was augmented by wage labour for a significant period prior to a complete commodity labour transformation. Yet, this period set the stage for the displacement of the agrarian based feudal order, and the rise of a market and state based society.

To greatly reduce a complex history, during the Early Modern Period mass produced goods became more common. Merchants became more and more affluent and struggled to sell their goods relatively freely. The bourgeoisie demanded a say over their own destiny. New technologies, rapid change, new ideas, and new groups gaining access to power challenged “the great chain of being”. This belief system which linked peasants to land, feudal lord, monarch and God, began to lose credibility. People outside the court walls would no longer accept simply being thrown “left over cake”; hence, when the aristocracy, preoccupied with consumption rituals, went into debt, started to lose wars, and began to heavily tax individuals and challenge the logic of free commercial exchange; the court’s authority over everyday existence (and the market in particular) reached a critical threshold. The situation politically charged social relationships, tipping off a series of revolts and rebellions which would eventually displace monarchical rule with an elected government, in America, 1776 (Boston Tea Party); England, 1642 and 1689; (Cromwell and Bloodless Revolution) and France, 1789 (Nepolianic Revolution).

The idea of the “nation” and “democracy” came to the fore. Spearheaded by Enlightenment thinkers, (Voltaire, Hume) the individual was thought to have rights, freedoms, and a voice within the governance of society. Individuals were considered to possess the ability to contemplate their own destiny rationally, and required the information and education upon which to make choices. Enlightenment thinkers and reformers looked to knowledge as a strategy directed towards individual and social betterment, freeing people from the shackles of superstition and irrationalities. Modes of punishment changed, as the ancients’ regime of justice enacted upon the body was supplanted by the

\[\text{\footnotesize Of course, these rights were bestowed first only to those who owned property.}\]
denial of rights (Foucault, 1977). During this period, the ideology and structure of feeling of the sovereign nation and market, annihilated the authority of the monarchy and church.

Both the reformation of the church and rebellions against the monarch were rooted in a critique of excess. As Rosalind Williams (1982) points out; consumption became implicated within the discourse of morals and politics. The commercial and industrial class felt they possessed the qualities necessary to clean up the indulgent indiscretions of the old order. Ironically, this class also longed for the social status and unlimited line of credit extended to the aristocracy. Thus, there was significant borrowing from the noble class. Money gained the bourgeoisie entry into the leisure rituals of the court. The emergent class offered their daughters to nobles for marriage, purchased the estates of hard pressed nobles, and bought their way into “official positions”. All of these factors dealt a heavy blow to traditional power relations:

Consequently, the concept of aristocracy, which in the Middle Ages signified gentle birth and service to the crown, became more and more equivalent to wealth. The rich could buy nobility, and the nobles had privileges that helped to make them rich.

(Williams, 1982: 33)

New technologies also contributed to radically altered ways of knowing and expectations — four of the most significant being; the compass which enabled the exploration of the globe, gunpowder which blasted through the chivalry of the Medieval battle structure, the mechanical clock which transformed cyclical to linear time, and the printing press which fostered the rise of literacy and contributed to a legacy of social transformations.

The legitimacy of the bourgeoisie’s rule was significantly cemented in their retextualization of fair/carnival practices. Burke breaks the ascendancy of the new bourgeois symbolic realm into two phases. The first 1500-1650, was carried out largely under the auspices of church and state, particularly in England, but proved quite ineffectual in challenging popular cultural practices, which for some time had been quite effective at incorporating new practices. However, this first phase softened the ground for the second more successful wave undertaken during 1650 - 1800. The success of this second wave is perhaps connected to the greater number of lay reformers, increasingly organized commercial class, and higher literacy rates.
Reformation, Reading, And The Thinning Of Carnival

The desire to suppress traditional cultural practices of the fairground and the carnival goes back to the 12th Century, yet becomes increasingly evident during the 1500s, spearheaded by the reformation of the Church. Up to the 1500’s, clergy took part in the popular festivals. Although individuals identified themselves as members of the Christian faith, they continued to worship a pantheon of Saints and fairy sprites. The Church generally did not interfere with healing rituals and was not overly interested in advising people on mannerly conduct. The nailing of Luther’s thesis to the door, and the rise of Protestantism increased reformer zeal, tripping off the long revolution of the carnival. Luther was not particularly opposed to carnival rituals, stating “let them keep their pleasures”. His primary interest was providing access to the word of God, which ironically proved more damaging to fairground carnival practices than all the vehement reformers put together.

While Luther was nonchalant about traditional popular culture; the Calvinists were not. They sought the demise of all forms of idolatry, dance, song, theatre, miracle and mystery plays, religious festivals surrounding Saints Days. Even sermons delivered with too much dramatic flair fell under scorn (Burke, 1978: 208). The reasons behind this turn are too complex to expound here; suffice it to note that the reformation was rooted in opposition to the quite valid critique of the excesses of the Catholic church, hence an ordered, parsimonious, and strict religious practice found not only a place of distinction, but also a modicum of popular support. While the puritans were fevered in their reform efforts, their words were often not heeded. Yet, a significant shift in leisure practices was being achieved:

The Puritans help to create a new locus of leisure by replacing the community or parish with the family as the focus of a more retrained social life.

(Cross, 1990: 32)

Protestantism demonized the carnival, emphasising the festival connection to paganism, false prophecy, superstition, and distraction from the word of God. God spoke the clear word of truth — it was Lucifer who was the “master of illusion”, seeking to befuddle, confuse, and entrap the innocent. It is perhaps understandable from this perspective how the “word play”, double meaning, and fantastic character of the miracle and mystery plays could be considered the “liturgy of the devil” by St. Carlo (Burke, 1978: 209).
Morris Berman's (1981) study of the history of the Scientific Revolution recognizes the vengeance with which reformers, such as Francis Bacon and Rene' Descartes, dealt to the "superstitions" heavily implicated within the carnival and peasant culture lifeways. Science stood in opposition to the organic time of feudal society and the holiday calendar, and praised linear mechanical time founded in efficiency and mathematical precision.

The central symbols of flesh, became for the church ever more saturated with evil:

Festivals were denounced as occasions of sin, more especially drunkenness, gluttony and lechery, and as encouraging servitude to the world, the flesh, and the Devil — especially the flesh.

(Burke, 1978: 212)

As opposed to Protestants, Catholics sought only to reform carnival excesses, and clean up "extremist" beliefs, such as the ability of Saints to cure disease. Yet, the most significant difference between Catholicism and Protestantism might have had less to do with their unique theological posturing, than the mode through which their religious perspectives were communicated.

Literacy

Catholicism would remain rooted in images, ritual, and oral culture: Protestantism founded itself upon the "word" of the lord. Luther emphasised the need to give common people access to the bible — access equated to the possession of written material. In essence, Protestantism might be thought of as a powerful literacy campaign:

By 1500, presses had been set up in more than 250 centres and some 40,000 editions run off, making about twenty million copies at a time when the population of Europe was little more than eighty million.

(Burke, 1978: 250)

Although it is very difficult to access literacy rates at the time, studies of the number of people able to sign formal documents such as wedding certificates provides some clue. It is generally established that literacy rates in Protestant areas were significantly higher than Catholic regions (Burke, 1978: 231). The Scandinavians, the Dutch and the British — all West European Protestants — had the best literacy records in early modern Europe. The typical reader was a Protestant male craft worker who lived in Western Europe. Luther wrote several chap-books which broke the bible down into simple language which would have been accessible with minimal reading skills. He also
insisted that the word of the lord be translated into a multitude of dialects (Burke, 1978: 231). The use of literature fueled the organization and diffusion of attacks on traditional cultural practices, previously sheltered by the stubborn “time bias” of orality.\textsuperscript{13}

Literacy also fueled a new sentiment towards the role of the clergy. The disciples of Christ were common people who took it upon themselves to “preach the word” of the Lord, and for centuries clergies walked in this tradition, requiring few job prerequisites other than devotion and oral panache. But during the Early Modern Period increasing pressure was placed on the need for a learned clergy. Education and literacy brought a social separation — a subjective and symbolic gulf between clergy and parish.

Burke thoughtfully illustrates how the best intentions of the Protestant reformers were thwarted by systemic forces:

The reformers did not want to create a separate purified culture of their own; they wanted to reach the people, to carry everyone with them. In practice, things worked out differently. The reforms affected the educated minority more quickly and more thoroughly than they affected other people and so cut the minority off more and more sharply from popular traditions.

(Burke, 1978: 243)

While Protestant reform encouraged people to read, there was difficulty controlling what was read. As Burke points out “the resilience of popular culture should not be underestimated” (1978: 242). There is good reason to suspect that “the word” most often read was not the lord’s, but rather the growing trade in popular reading materials. Oral culture still held significant sway; for as Raymond Williams points out, in The Long Revolution, the conversion of traditional cultural forms into literature was one of the most powerful engines motivating early print publication.

The material rolling off the presses were vast amounts of what Williams calls “ephemeral” literature. Officials who arrested chap-men selling the little “chap-books” of 32, 24 or 8 pages printed on cheap paper, found popular stories, dream interpretation guides, romances, traditional stories. The ever popular almanac which offered sage advice on “astrological, medical, agricultural, and religious instruction” was also in abundance (Williams, 1965: 257). One of the popular “‘prognosticating Almanacks’ sold on average more than 16,000 copies between 1646 and 1648, and

\textsuperscript{13}Harold Innis (1951) pointed out “time biased” media did not travel nor co-ordinate well over distance.
the ballad, broadsheet and chapbook public must have been at least of the order of 20,000", more than ten times the numbers sold of Paradise Lost (Williams, 1965: 160). While the selling of sheet music and printed stories to the public by singers and storytellers would supplement their income and might be considered an example of how literature worked to enhance live performance; oral art forms had to make room for a desire to read. This desire grew steadily, if unevenly over the Early Modern Period.

Those who read classical literature held disdain for "ephemeral literature". One’s social context, the price of books, and access to formal education could explain differences in reading selection more completely than any "stupidity" or "lack of taste" of readers. Broader social forces lend some individuals to seeking the distraction of "ephemeral literature" over others who seek contemplative "classical literature":

More difficult to analyze is the evident distinction between ways of living which stimulate attention and allow rest, and ways which produce neither attention nor rest, but only an unfocussed restlessness that has somehow to be appeased. These are radical questions about the society as a whole, and my own view is that there are deep reasons in our social organization for the especial prevalence of this mood: in particular the difficulty of living a restlessness through to some of its sources, as well find so many channels blocked.

(Williams, 1965: 172)

Williams notes that broader structural relations serve as a better predictor of reading taste than "inherent" individual choices. From 1650 to 1800, increasing numbers of merchants and "professionals" began to mediate and identify with the emerging "classics". Traditional carnival plays were now thought to "break the rules of reason and good taste" and their symbolism was judged as "excessive irrationalities, and extravagances". Increasing interest in science and affairs of the state competed with traditional ways of knowing. Superstition, beliefs in astrology, the healing properties of saints were no longer feared, rather they were considered silly and unworthy of attention. Ambivalence proved a more powerful disengagement tactic than hatred and banning (Williams, 1965: 240-1).

14 Not much has changed today as Harlequin Romances, Tabloids, and Danielle Steel novels vastly out strip sales of "scholarly publications", "poems" or "reflective novels".
Bourgeoisie

Traditional ways of knowing and acting were not blackened in one burning; rather their displacement varied according to demographic and region. Tradition is stubborn; and the new founded middle class did not construct their position within a vacuum. Old cultural forms did not disappear they simply found new competition. “Cultural changes, in this case as in others, were not so much ‘substitutive’ as ‘additive’”; hence, to the stable of traditional heros, new characters like the smuggler and the entrepreneur emerged and competed for audience attention” (Burke, 1978: 257).

To forge a distinctive class required the creation of a discourse from the “always already” discourse of other classes. Discourses challenge, oppress, and bleed together. The bourgeoisie had to incorporate the voice of the street, in order to debase it and elevate their social position. They could make the discourse of common folk dirty, but they could not completely repress it. The ‘low voice’ is in a sense privileged, given it possesses a more intimate knowledge of the conditions of production and the pleasures of the body:

The classical body [bourgeoisie symbolic] splits precisely along the rigid edge which is its defence against heterogeneity: its closure and purity are quite illusory and it will perpetually rediscover in itself, often with a sense of shock or inner revulsion, the grotesque, the protean and the motley, the ‘neither/nor’, the double negation of high and low which is the very precondition for its social identity.

(Stallybrass & White, 1986: 113)

Hence, those who predicate their subjectivity in opposition to ‘the low’ are continually drawn to what they reject, for it is here that the fecundity of labour and the sensual pleasure of the body are found. It is upon this that Stallybrass and White root a central theme what “is socially peripheral is often symbolically central.” While the bourgeoisie demonized the carnival, it erupted in their dreams, their madness, and their symbols. The hysteric speaks of being haunted by clowns. The poet tells tales of folly. Wallpaper erupts with carnival’s symbols. Artists were haunted by what Pope referred to as the “Smithfield Muse”:

These masks and symbols, the motley paraphernalia of the Smithfield Muse and the Venetian carnival were being systematically severed from their anchorage in the annual calendar of contemporary festive life, from the fixed places and times of the year which sustained them as communal events, and they were being discursively reformed and redistributed to supply most powerful symbolic repertoires for the expression of individual body/subjects - body/subjects of the coffee-house and the cleaned-up theatre, the spa, the pleasure garden, the country house, the ballroom and the assembly room; not those body/subjects of the street, market square, fairground, common and village green.
The emerging bourgeois symbolic is perhaps best understood as a systemic arm of historical class formation. Marx (1957) would illustrate that class distinction was not simply “symbolic”; but also supported by control of the material modes of production. While control over the modes of production was forged through private property ownership, the commodification of labour, and law; the political legitimacy of this system was strongly rooted in the creation of a “democratic” discourse and set of cultural practices which ordained it. This discourse was constructed by the bourgeoisie coming together in public to articulate their position and organize their interests. A home to do so was found within the coffee-houses of the late 1600 to early 1800. The discourse constructed in the coffee-houses served new class interest, as well as supported civic debate and progressivism.

Protestant Ethic(s)

The church condemned the carnival for distracting people from contemplation of the lord; and the English government condemned it for distracting people from productivity. The aspect of Protestantism which Max Weber (1958) articulated as “this-worldly asceticism” became more significant. The forgiveness of sin within the confessional was more strongly rooted in Catholicism which left ultimate judgment to the life after. Protestantism sought to abolish a free ride to heaven. Heaven and hell, forgiveness and redemption were brought down to earth, as one’s daily practices fell ever more under the watchful eye of a God who kept records of earthly misdeeds. The “Protestant ethic” privileged “decency, diligence, gravity, modesty, orderliness, prudence, reason, self control, thrift, and sobriety”. Taken up with relish by a significant proportion of the “petty bourgeoisie”, Protestantism became a component of the ideological engine which gave speed to industrial productivity (Burke, 1978: 213).

The roots of self regulation, rationality, so much a part of the modern subject can be partially found in the Protestant ethic, for it called upon the individual to continually measure and reflect upon her action and thoughts in accordance to an internalized abstract set of rules, which differed profoundly from the tacit knowledge internalized from family, community, and craft social networks. This was a different subjectivity from the “generous, spontaneous” “body grotesque” of
the carnival which tolerated disorder and gave self over to community entertainment, and crowd behavior.

Cross notes, that Puritan values were more pronounced in parts of America than England. Some immigrants brought with them a fiery will to build a new paradise cleansed of the “sin” of the “Old World”. The 18th Century was also influenced by notions of Victorian virtue, strictness of mannered, and civilized conduct. American social history tends to emphasis the impact of the Protestant work ethic and puritan sensibilities, on fuelling the American discourses of progress, productivity, and rationality.

Yet, cultural historian, Jackson Lears, argues there is not one but two Protestant ethics. The most familiar “work” ethic, thoroughly explicated by Weber and modern historians. The less articulated “Other Protestant Ethic,” might provide a clue as to why the fairground survived, and perhaps also capture a reason why people were willing to pay for it.

This “Other Ethic” took root in the ecstatic rituals surrounding Protestant conversion. Conversion implied transformation. Myths and rituals of transformation have a long history and cut across many spiritual discourses including paganism. Transformation is particularly evident in Medieval alchemy projects, and is related to notions of magic and animism: Lears defines the principle:

The “Other Protestant Ethic” sought to close the gap between earth and heaven through the cultivation of intense inner experience; its emphasis on personal transformation through Christian rebirth exalted a more fluid sense of self than available under the strict Calvinist dispensation. Emotional excitement was a means of grace.

(Lears, 1993: 47)

Popular entertainment forms, the market, and the exotic offered seductive paths to emotional excitement. Lears argues that two distinctive discourses developed in America in the Anabellum period: the discourse of the Protestant work ethic rooted in “moralistic or managerial strategies of control” and the “other Protestant ethic” rooted in “dreams of magical transformation” (Lears, 1993: 41). Americans did not choose one discourse over the other, but attempted to maintain a balance between them.

According to Lears, interest in magic does not disappear within the modern period, it simply takes on new meaning:
Rather than referring to a set of rituals for summoning up supernatural powers within a coherent cosmology, the word magic began to imply mere sleight of hand, or a diffuse sense of the marvellous erupting amid the everyday.

(Lears, 1993: 19).

The long history of gambling within America according to Lears is evidence that “belief in luck survived Puritan denunciations of pagan superstition” (Lears, 1993: 44). The edge of rationality on the magical realm can account for the demand for “serious play and truthful fantasy”; and the edge of magic on rationality can begin to apprehend how “treasure-seekers used seerstones, divining rods, and other occult paraphernalia in a busy “scientific” spirit, assembling empirical evidence and following out precise procedures. What is thoughtful about Lears work is that he refuses to simplify the situation as one discourse winning out over the other; but dares to embrace the contradictions which so characterized the modern period.

The Anabellum audience was probably quite aware of the “tricks” which market huxters played on them; but considered the folly fair trade for the magic of performance. Prior to the “star” system, show people were considered craftsmen. It was well known that part of their craft was the trick, in a time prior to the explosion in material wealth and different relations to goods and money: Audience’s felt they had “little to lose” from playing along. Such huxterism was found in the discourse of the heckle, attention strategies, and persuasive patter common to fairground theatric — which was utilized and extended by peddlers — but not passively accepted:

The faith of the medicine-show audience in magical change was no doubt bracketed by a healthy scepticism. We have evidence, from Neil Harris and other imaginative historians of American chicanery, that the audience for many such commercial performances expected to be tricked and was often amused by what Bakhtin might call the “atmosphere of gay deception”.

(Lears, 1993: 43)

Lears offers an explanation of why the “new forms” met popularity: they were able to keep alive a notion of animism and wonder in an increasingly rational and instrumental world. In speaking of the patent medicine men whose patter bears the imprint of the old miracle plays, Lears notes:

Melding mind and body, patent medicine men joined other heterodox healers in keeping popular animism alive amid the spirit-matter dualism of the dominant culture, as they fed their audience’s hopes for self transformation through magical intervention.

(Lears, 1993: 45)
While this chapter has emphasised the suppression of the traditional fairground, there is need to balance this with evidence that fairs also flourished and grew, particularly those which were economically profitable. What appears to be suppression is actually "reorganization". Throughout France in 1903 there were 172 annual fairs, 65 of which dated from before 1850, and in Britain several new fairs erupted, and old fairs expanded. Fairs adapted well to urbanization, increased alongside of new modes of transportation, particularly the train, and became part of the growing 'mass' leisure market.

In the Early Modern period populations exploded, townships grew, God 'died', the nation state and the bourgeoisie rose to prominence, transforming the traditional relations of the amusementscape. New ways of self control and internalized discipline grew in prominence. Public whippings were replaced by manners, decorum, and civility. The Protestant work ethic fuelled and justified increased productivity. Literacy allowed a new avenue for expression which was able to communicate over distances, offering strategic spatial advantage. Print opened up new worlds for readers. And interest, by some, in the affairs of the state grew. Mostly, however, literature simply reworked the old oral tales into printed form; challenging and supplementing the role the "lively arts" had once played in culture. The newly emergent bourgeoisie had to demonize the old fairground for the sake of class distinction, yet the fairground rose up to haunt them in their dreams.

Fairground Fragmentation and Spawning

Many histories explain the explosion of circuses, travelling carnivals, and amusement parks at the turn of the century as something that fed a "hunger" within the population for entertainment. Critics of modernity would argue the enormous transformations from rural to urban living; from personal to impersonal relations; from craft and agrarian to commodified factory labour broke down traditional forms of merriment creating demand for new modes. Yet, these "new modes" of entertainment which fed the "hunger" were not completely new, but rather bore the imprint of old fairground forms which were restructured as commodities and retextualized to meet the demand of new social contexts.
New attitudes towards leisure developed. At the turn of the 17th Century, reformers began to extol the virtues of 'rational' and 'productive' leisure. A new set of leisure practices more suited to bourgeois sentiments were developed. As a result:

Rational enjoyment and classical pleasures developed in a network of locations which not only displaced the carnivalesque topography with alternative constructions of 'rational pleasures' but which grew rapidly alongside the older network and defined itself over against that topography.

(Stallybrass and White, 1986: 106)

Rational pleasures implied a particular manner of conduct. Rosalind Williams makes the important point that the "civility" which accompanied the rise of bourgeois social practices increased consumption. To act in a refined and civilized fashion required the acquisition of particular clothes, appliances, tableware, and assorted other lifestyle goods. The bourgeoisie had a particular penchant for the lifestyles of the aristocracy; yet, to forge distinction, the practices and symbolics of the noble and peasant were subtly retextualized.

Rooted within the bourgeois movement was a current of universalism. While this thrust lead to some of the democratization of leisure practices in the late 1800s; in other instances economic and symbolic structural forces fostered the reproduction of new inequalities. In order to partake in the bourgeois symbolic, one required more than the rich rhetoric of reformers. Material resources were needed. Most of the general public lacked the necessary price of admission, accoutrements, social networks, and transportation necessary to gain entry into some of the cultural practices of the early bourgeoisie. Further, to democratize a cultural practice was not necessarily to make it popular. For example, the bourgeoisie would motivate the creation of parks and nobility would open up their gardens to the public; yet, the working class did not necessarily interpret these sites as sublime. Social context shapes interpretation and the romantic position towards nature was predicated upon a consciousness shaped by hands which never had to toil with the earth for survival. Further, these practices require idle leisure time and education which were not available to the bulk of the population. If we accept Stallybrass and White's thesis, symbolic fragments of traditional popular cultural forms became the clay from which a new bourgeois sub-culture was to forge its conception of leisure. Thus, the new hybrid leisure practices were not completely alien to the rest of the public. The bourgeoisie continued to drink spirits, seek merriment and celebration. The difference in the
practices of the bourgeoisie and everyone else was often merely ideological. When the bourgeoisie drank spirits they were taking a deserved curative respite, but, when common folk drank ale, they were “idle” “drunken” “out of control” “ruffians”.

Traditional cultural forms demanded particular social networks; as those networks broke down so did the forms. Laws also forced the mutating of cultural practices. When livestock are banned from the streets, how are the old cock fights to continue? Common folk often had little choice but to accept the retextualized practices offered within public space. Loss of the old cultural forms was often accompanied by loss of control and participation. The new practices bore a division of labour and positioned people as spectators not players. Cultural practices became increasingly aestheticized and pacified. The audience was not invited to participate actively in cultural practices, but to experience them as spectacles to be contemplated. Crowd behaviour was subordinated to “proper conduct.” Cultural practices no longer had to incorporate all people, only those who could pay the necessary admission. Walls were built around practices to facilitate profit and control. Admission was often accompanied with a contract to “abide by the rules”. Those who failed to conduct themselves in an approved manner could be expelled from the privatized sites of entertainment.

The Amusementscape adapted in the face of these changing social relations. Survival of fairground antics would now depend upon the ability to attract an audience and profit. Parts of the old fairground, like theatre, would leave the amusementscape; and the discourses of the “low”, were repositioned as “classical” art forms in indoor sanctums, for the new bourgeois market. The fairground was pushed out of town and took up residence in the garden and seaside, where it profited from relationship to the curative properties thought to be fostered by these landscapes. The circus and travelling carnival would mobilize fairground antics, a move which kept them alive. Nationalistic dramas arose to symbolize (and naturalize) the conflicts of battle and war.

I will explore in more detail the fragmentation of the amusementscape which took place prior to the turn of the century. To do justice to the fairground fragments in a short treatment, I will break with historic chronology; tracing some of the forms into the present.
Flight to Curative Landscapes

Gardens

Early modern fairgrounds placed particular emphasis on “health”. Fairground stories and miracle plays were largely rooted in narratives about miracle cures. The genre of “health” would continue to weave through the amusementscape as gardens became implicated within the discourse of “health”.

Relationships to nature changed. Peasants knew nature in an intimate way, which escaped the bourgeoisie who were, removed from the toil of the earth. For the peasant, nature was wild and unpredictable, bringing forth bounty as easily as starvation. The peasant response to this Dionysian nature was not to control it but to accept or appease it through ambivalent ritual. In contrast, nature for the aristocracy was supremely controlled. The aristocratic garden was an architectural marvel. Noble gardens of the late 1600s to 1700s were strongly influenced by the Ancient world, echoing Roman and Grecian themes with baths, brooks, bridges, Roman columns, and marble platforms.

Gardens were laid out in strict geological precision, with trees shaped into battalions strategically placed, awaiting the command of attack. Gardens displayed the close bound between strategy, secrets and puzzlement: displaying an intense detailing of labyrinths, literary references, hidden treasure spots, and symbolic sculptures. The clean geometrical shapes of the circle, square, and triangle abound, and were enjoyed from strategic vantage points of dwellings situated high on hills. These gardens surrendered nature to a motif. The bourgeoisie would create a hybrid, softening the hard edge of the elite garden, while aestheticizing the Dionysian peasant garden.

In a period prior to Darwin’s theory of evolution (1850), nature was viewed by the bourgeoisie as a “beautific child of innocence and freedom.” The garden was considered curative, educational, and a source of artistic inspiration. Romanticism viewed nature as a medium to stimulate the mind, invoke positive tranquil meditation, and inspire creative thoughts. Nature and the mind engaged in sublime dialogue. “This congruence of inward and outward, creative transactions between mind and nature, became central to the Romantic imagination” (Hunt and Willis, 1988: 39). Alexander Pope, a significant bourgeoisie poet and reformer of the 1700s, noted the “all gardening is landscape-painting” (Hunt and Willis, 1988: 15). The canvasses of the period contained little other than landscape art.
The English garden was bound to colonial and industrial lifeways. It continually looked abroad and transplanted within its domain flora and fauna from various regions of Europe. Of particular interest during this period was the mystique of the Orient. One wonders, if the idea of simulating other cultural regions within a localized site, which would become wildly popular in the World’s Fairs, Coney Island, and Disney theme parks, did not grow from the British garden. Of course, the right to appropriate another culture stemmed from a colonialist mind-set.

The amusementscape seed was planted in these gardens and later bloomed forth as the Pleasure gardens of the late 1700s to early 1800s. Pleasure gardens such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh, proved quite popular. Attached to taverns and inns, the gardens bestowed “intricate landscaping, elaborate and fanciful structures, extensive illumination, concerts and theatrical presentations, balloon ascensions, and fireworks displays” (Adams, 1991: 4). Within the Pleasure Gardens the public could partake in courtly entertainments, such as the eight-year-old Mozart on harpsichord, or Handel’s notes accompanying fireworks displays. In being attached to drinking establishments, the pleasure gardens might be seen as domesticating the tavern, making the “ale house” acceptable to the bourgeois constitution (Adams, 1991: 9). Pleasure gardens were also part of the democratization of aristocratic leisure pursuits. Prater, an amusement and greenspace park in Vienna, for example, was a gift to the people from Joseph II who in 1766 handed over his family’s hunting ground estate.

Yet, the pomp and ceremony of garden life, as well as the romantic movement, would not survive the stark new symbols and practices of the modern period as machine thrills became the rage. By the late 1800s the pleasure gardens had had their season. Yet, the theming of landscape, which they inspired, would resurface again and again.

Sea-side resort

Gardens were not the only sites considered to possess “curative” powers and of the “muse” properties — the seaside was also considered life affirming. The seaside experienced somewhat of a renaissance in the late 1800s, as rail made access to the ocean more feasible and served to fuel the modern desire for distant experiences. The seaside provided an escape from the stresses of urban living. Beside the ocean, the carnival was at an acceptable distance from the productivity of the town and fairground
practices, generally denounced, could be legitimated through association to the "healing" properties of the brine:

In England the sites of the carnival moved more and more to the coastal periphery, to the seaside... The development of Scarborough, Brighton, Blackpool, Clacton, Margate and other seaside resorts reflects a process of liminality which, in different ways, was taking place across Europe as a whole. The seaside was partially legitimated as a carnivalesque site of pleasure on the grounds of health, since it combined the (largely mythical) medicinal virtues of the spa resorts with tourism and the fairground.

(Stallybrass and White, 1986: 179)

Towards the end of the 1800s the seaside was besieged by the swimming craze, as a mass public took to the beach. The beach was to become a mass recreation site. We will see later that the consolidation of the amusementscape, as the amusement park, would be most vividly articulated in Coney Island, a seaside resort.

Finding Indoor Respectability

Theatre
While the garden and the seaside lured the fair away from the town, the theatrical component of the fairground would be hived off from the fair and take up residence indoors. As an indoor event, theatre assumed a place of "respectability" within the new bourgeoisie culture. The process through which theatre was "civilized" and "privatized" reveals the struggles of cultural creation, regulation and commodification.

Theatrical production underwent a transition from public to private. The old miracle and mystery plays, fair comedies, and marketplace theatre were collaborative ventures (group and craft products) rooted in improvisation. Theatrical companies commissioned a series of playwright/performers, provided a storyline, and set the group to work creating a play. Prior to the 1600s, plays were produced largely by the guilds. Yet, when changes in the organization of labour brought the demise of these collectives, so were the accompanying production networks of community theatre dissolved.

These changes in production were also accompanied by the migration of the theatre from street to the indoor arenas which became the norm by the 1800s. By 1570, the first indoor theatres
appeared on the edges of London. Run by speculators, these theatres were strategically positioned on the outskirts of town to attract travellers to the city core (Williams, 1965: 251).

Theatre also became codified in new ways. Towards the end of the eighteenth century a line was forged between “major” and “minor” theatres. The latter was privileged with monopoly control, and carried the status of “classical” theatre. The eclectic minor theatre, while considered beneath major theatre in size and scope, was not without bourgeois support, for it served as a research and development centre for the major theatres. Major theatres required input, as their tendency to emphasis technical precision and the retelling of “master” plays hampered innovation. This was yet another instance of how the margin is incorporated within culture.

Authorship
The changes in the production of theatre were accompanied by changes in notions of theatrical ownership. The advent of the printing press froze plays on the page and playwrights sought to take a proprietory interest in their creations. Authorship and the separation of performer from performance had found its place within the printed word:

Print encouraged a division of labour between performer, who now sang whatever publishers fed him, and the author of new songs and stories who never saw his public and did not have to perform what he composed.

(Burke, 1978: 255)

Although medium theorists, such as Marshall McLuhan (1962) might argue there is something inherently individualistic about printed work; Raymond Williams’ position that technologies must be viewed within the institutions they unfold, is more instructive here. The rise of authorship and the status of the individual ‘artist’, tells us more about the bourgeois exploitation of the medium, than inherent characteristics of print. Stallybrass and White present the example of Ben Jonson to discuss this rise of “classical” authorship rooted in the desire to forge class distinction.

As previously noted, new discourses must intersect with discourses already given. Jonson sought distinction. He achieved it by designating himself as princely poet, not mere playwright, placing himself within the realm of nobility and the play within the stable of other literary forms. Jonson “believed ideally that there should be a ‘consecution of offices’ between the monarch and the scholar, in which power was exchanged for learning and learning for power.” (Stallybrass and White,
He presented his craft as instructive to both the “low” and the “high”; seeing the author’s role as “the corrector of ignorance and vice”.

Jonson had to illustrate the superiority and therapeutic ethos of his craft to both classes to carve a unique symbolic position. This would require both the debasement of the fair and marketplace theatre, as well as the prevailing discourses of power. In doing this Jonson created a hybrid discourse. Yet, his new found position was fraught with contradiction. So knowledgeable was Jonson of traditional theatre he used it as ammunition for attacking the aristocracy — a tactic which put him in prison for a time. His play “St. Bartholomew’s Fair” was attacked by a fellow poet, Dryden, for representing the “lowest form of humor”. On the other hand, his disdain for the symbolism of the carnival alienated popular audiences: such is the paradox of the “sole” artist who writes only for themselves or some divine inscription in the name of aesthetic purity.

Jonson rejected the sites of the fair, marketplace and the high site of the court, seeking to situate his work within the university and library.

In separating self from the popular festive scene, authorship after Jonson gradually developed in accordance with the ideal of the individual which was emerging within bourgeois culture — the individual, that is, as ‘proprietor of his own person and capacities’, for which he owes nothing to society. Authorship became a visionary embodiment of this ideal to the degree that it represented itself as transcendent to the ‘common’ place of the market. In so far as the author still inhabited the fair, it was increasingly either as an aloof spectator or as spectacle and freak.

(Stallybrass and White, 1986: 77)

Audience

Shifts in production and ownership of theatre were also accompanied by changes in spectatorship. The audience had to be schooled out of crowd mentality and into individual spectatorship. Reformers such as Dryden, Pope, and Swift used characters within plays to make the audience conscious of a new proriety. Audiences were instructed by characters in Dryden’s plays to undertake a civilized posture and distinguish themselves from those “who bounce with Hands and Feet, and cry Play, Play” (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 84-88). Characters stepped out of role to offer advice “on behalf of the literary profession” on the proper conduct of self within the theatre. To quell the “unruly” audience body, Dryden’s strategy was to “make the audience reform and discipline itself by an internal transformation of its collective and individual identity”:
There is no more easily recognizable scene of bourgeois pathos than the crowd in which individual identity is achieved...through the sad realization of not-belonging. That moment, in which the subject is made the outsider to the crowd, an onlooker, compensating for exclusion through the deployment of the discriminating gaze, is at the very root of bourgeois sensibility.

(Stallybrass and White, 1986: 87)

The taming of the audience was part of a larger “civilizing” mission. Bourdieu pointed out that the social enactment of etiquette was a powerful site within which to forge class distinction. “To offend against polite society was to be driven out of it, and that was that; but equally to offend against God and man, while respecting the polite code, was forgivable” (Williams, 1966, 259). To stand on one’s chair, to yell out one’s opinion, was to act like an animal; and become fraught with internal guilt and embarrassment. As Bourdieu notes “the concessions of politeness always contained political concessions.” (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 88) Those unable to make the concessions remained rooted within the working class context of the football field, where the “unruly” audience body remained for years. The separation between high and low became firmly inscribed on the very bodily behaviours and entertainment choices of the public:

Manners, regulations of the body, thus become a site of a profound interconnection of ideology and subjectivity, a zone of transcoding at once astonishingly trivial and microscopically important

(Bourdieu quoted in Stallybrass and White, 1986: 90)

The temptation universalize this historical transition must be resisted. It would be years before the audience would be bothered by the propaganda of reformers. There was actually a sizeable amount of resistance to the reformer’s position, as the theatre riots which erupted in the 1800s attest. The cherished “Men of Wit and Sense” which Dryden speaks of did not exist except as an ideal. Merchants and newly-found professionals continued to stand on chairs, throw things, and banter in the middle of performances for years. Reforms pitched their message to the cultural whole; yet, this strategy misread the inequalities within society and the result was a sector of the population, with more privileged demographics and proximate regional placement, who proved far more receptive to theatre reforms than others. And lest the impression be made that it was only the “lower” class who engaged in “uncivil” audience behaviour, it should be noted that English theatre for a vast period of its history was considered “brutish” to foreigners, particularly the Italians.
Theatre content
Changes in the production, and spectatorship were accompanied by changes in theatre content. Traditional plays were "the drama of men in their social functions, rather than of men as particular individuals. The miracle plays were "insets to religious rituals" (Williams, 1965: 249), rooted in the persistent desire to keep illness at bay, appease god and nature. Williams notes, the plays of the early fairs were wholly allegorical. Traditional theatrics were rooted in melodrama, farce, and religious allegory richly imbued with externalized emotional expression. The rise of Elizabethan drama with its focus on the individual and changing theatrical convention does not do away with the symbolic of traditional Medieval theatre, simply it adds another layer to it:

...in the later medieval and Elizabethan drama, the mixed convention allows characters to function, with varying degrees of emphasis, both as individuals and as symbolic and social types.

(Williams, 1965: 250)

New forms of theatre evolved out of the Renaissance "high consciousness" of the individual. Theatre takes a turn to "realism" and begins to explore actual lives and times. Raymond Williams reflects on the period:

And both the individual aspiration and the immanent pattern take vigorous life, through the language, from the actual life of the times, until it seems that for this brief period all that is creative in the national life finds expression in this bewildering various and surprising drama (1965: 252).

Yet, this window remained open for only a short period of time. "The real situation, in the eighteenth century, is that of elements of the rising middle-class joining a still fashionable theatre public, at a time when the public tone of the court and aristocracy had itself been modified" (Williams, 1965: 257). This protection of theatre by the monarchy broke down as the new bourgeois moved out of the pit to take seats within the theatre.

Realignments in social relations spoke through theatre in other ways. Spectacle and elaboration for its own sake became increasingly detached from dramatic effect. Tragedy was changed, as 'honour' was abstracted from "social function" in the domain of "proper breeding". Comedy shifted from the genre of farce, to the transgression of manners. The new focus on

15 The Elizabethan court of the late 1500s early 1600s provided a pit where the peasant population could witness cultural acts
"excitements of fashion and appetite" elevated theatre to new levels of "sophistication", and muted reference to the "general human" condition. Sentimental drama fused "comedy and pathos" with moral opinion in the eighteenth century. The continuation of sentimentalism is partially predicated on the ease with which these dramas could be written. The whole of English drama prior to the closing of the theatres in 1642 "narrows towards identification with a single class, in a changing and disintegrating society" (Williams, 1965: 253).

The weakening of the religious and monarchical order complicated thinking about right and wrong, altering the standard course of a narrative:

The ability to take a judgment right through, as in traditional tragedy and comedy, showing sin leading to disintegration and disaster, vice and error to thorough ridicule, rested on a more absolute morality, based either on religious sanctions or the strict standards of an established society, than the new middle class actually had.

(Williams, 1965: 259)

Mobilizing: Clowns and Nationalistic Dramas

Pre-Circus: Hippodrama
Other fragments of the fair became mobile. The advent of the circus and travelling carnivals, hived off portions of the fair, packaged and delivered them to people in varying regions for discrete amounts of time. The Hippodrama, the precursor to the circus, is a prime example of a new bourgeois cultural form. Just as the bourgeoisie sought to negotiate their sense of self and class distinction by negotiating a place between the noble and peasant cultures; the Hippodrama would merge the noble class's penchant for military display and horsemanship with the old street performances of the "lower" classes. This disparate fusion would be largely put in the service of telling national dramas, and feeding the new desire for "up-to-date", "real" information about the politics of space.

The creation of the Hippodrama is credited to Sergeant-Major Philip Astley, a member of the British dragoon regiment, who found he could stand on a horse's back while it circled the ring (Economist, 1988). Moved by his feat, Astley went on to open a show of equestrian acts mixed with street performances in 1769. The genre became known as Hippodrama. Undoubtedly people had stood on moving horses before. Astley's real creative brilliance was not his horsemanship; rather the
way he corralled the act for profit. The street acts including fooling, juggling, stiltwalking, and acrobatics were hardly original, but were plucked from the old communal networks of the street/fair and put in the service of Astley’s entertainment entrepreneurship. Hippodramas started as street and fair performances, moved to tents, and then on to quite opulent amphitheatres. Like theatre, the meanings surrounding street acts changed and were legitimated within the eyes of the bourgeoisie by the opulent parlour.

Staging the eclectic performance of the Hippodrama presented several barriers for Lord Ashtley. Minor theatre, which Hippodrama was considered, was heavily regulated by licence which demanded strict separations of theatrical discipline. Acrobatic acts could be undertaken only with an acrobatics licences, horse acts required an equestrian license and so on. These licences were in the service of “order” and “monopoly”, but from the perspective of impresarios and audiences the divisions made little sense. The licences threatened the multiplicity of traditional cultural forms; hence, inventive ways to get around the strictness of permit were developed. For example, while “burletta”, a form of singing theatre, was permitted within the minor theatre circuit, spoken drama was the privy of the major theatrical houses. The origins of the musical might be found in the subversion of the burletta, which became very liberally defined, as any production which contained the odd song. Licenses also might be seen as contributing to the fusion of cultural forms:

When for example, Philip Astley announced the appearance of a group of acrobats at his Paris amphitheatre during the winter of 1786-87, he was reminded by the Lieutenant General of police that his license extended only to performance on horseback and that the group of Nicolet had the exclusive right to exhibit acrobatics in the capital. Astley neatly circumvented the problem by training eight horses to bear a huge platform, and it was on this platform that his acrobats made their leaps.

(Saxon, 1968: 5)

The Hippodrama provided a forum for the dramatic presentation of national sentiment and “a stage for the emotion of the state”. The equine was honoured in the Hippodrama as “trained horses are considered as actors”. This emphasis on the horse boded well for bourgeoisie and nobles alike, who were eclipsing each other’s consumptive rituals at this time.

The overwhelming prestige of the aristocracy resulted in intense envy among the bourgeois, who felt dissatisfied with their social standing no matter how many material comforts they accumulated.

(Williams, 1982: 33)
The content of the Hippodrama includes “equestrianized versions of Shakespeare’s plays and Scott’s novels; military spectacles based on historical, often current events; and melodramas of the “Gothic” or “troubadour” genre, which generally concluded with mounted knights assaulting the villain’s castle and, after triumphing over the castle and, after triumphing over their opponent’s horsement, setting the castle on fire (Saxon, 1968: 7). The castle stood as a powerful symbol of anti-feudalism, and as the castle burnt so the torch of nationalism was lit.

In staging replicas of actual military battles, Hippodramas might be seen as foreshadowing the newsreel function. Battles were replayed often soon after the time of the actual clash. Battles had long been considered a good source for spectacle. It was not uncommon for individuals to watch actual battles taking place, posing themselves on hills above the battle sites, packing lunches, and discussing manoeuvres and outcomes. Much knowledge about early military conflict must be attributed to the voyeur souls who wrote about their experiences from the sideline. Hippodramas brought the experience of the battle to people without their needing to travel to actual sites. Hippodramas also provided opportunity to celebrate their British nationality. Staged battles were like sporting events, where one was encouraged to cheer on their side.

Any dramas considered unsuitable for the imagination did not receive a place on the Hippodrama stage. An example is Robin Hood, a cherished feudal tale, which ceased to be enacted because reformers saw it as problematic due to its “revelry in crime”. Medieval tales spoke too frankly of the brute realities of agrarian existence, and hence received subtle retextualization to meet the taste of the bourgeois palate. Robin and His Merry Men were replaced by the military hero and the nationalistic sentiment of the love of one’s country and constitution.

The theatres which housed the Hippodrama subtly inscribed proper conduct within their layout, providing seats where one was invited to sit back and passively enjoy the performance. The theatre was lavish, envoking an aristocratic sense. The expansive space required for a combination stage and riding ring far outstripped the amount of space required for the audience. The spectacles staged called for massive resources, with some plays displaying up to 1000 horses.

Hippodramas span a short but important historical moment. Inscribed within this cultural form was bourgeois ascendance and aristocratic eclipse. Hippodramas materialized the transition from empire and war hero; to national sovereignty and entrepreneurial economic power. The Hippodrama
was to die an economic death at the end of the 1800s. While the bourgeoisie relished the large scale
courtly theatrics, they loathed the price. Such grand cultural practice could no longer count on the
financial subsidy of the monarchy, and would require a mass audience, state or business patronage.
The Hippodrama fragmented. Grandiose epic migrated to the theatre where it was scaled down to the
“personal” story size, remaining largely dormant until the advent of moving images and the big
screen enlarged it again. Theatre was financed through the paternalism of both the state and the
upper class. The “low-brow” acts of the street left over from the Hippodrama, were repackaged as
the circus.

Circus
The circus took aspects of Sir Lord Ashtley’s Hippodrama and hit the road. Horses remained part of
the circus, but lost their starring role within a narrative, and were simply relegated to a dancing
chorus or were used as pedestals for human and animal acts. In 1876, the sunset of Hippodrama,
Dutton Cook laments the loss, which he anthropomorphises as being tragic for the horse:

A horse with histrionic instincts and acquirements had something like a charge then (in the
age of the Hippodrama). But now! he can only lament the decline of the equestrian drama.
True, the circus is still open to him; but in the eyes of a well-educated performing horse a
circus must be much what a music-hall is in the opinion of a tragedian devoted to five act
plays.

(Cook, 1876: 189-90)

American circuses are distinguishable from British by their three rings. At the circus the fools
of the court and fairground became clowns. The exotic animals displayed within traditional
fairgrounds are goaded more and more into performing tricks, as their original display allure was not
considered spectacular enough for the growing sophistication of the audience. Humans (most often
women) are also symbolically presented as animals. Aerial acts focused on scantily clad bird women
swaddled in feathers. The orchestration of the circus is given coherence by the ring leader; whose
equine attire (white jodper pants, waist tailcoat, black top hat, and crop) symbolically ties the circus
to the original equine culture of the hippodrama.

The mobile nature of the circus prompted the circus parade, another carnival legacy.
Circuses would travel at night stopping on the outskirts of town and make a grand symbolic entry in
the morning hours. Performers and animals in full regalia, drawing ornately decorated wagons,
mesmerised town folk and created an aura of pageantry for the circus. Yet, the glory of an old carnival-like procession had difficulty surviving in a climate of increased modernization. The procession was eliminated in the 1900s when it proved too costly. The circus parades were found to reduce attendance, for after witnessing the procession for free, town's people were more reluctant to pay for the big top performance. Processions also disrupted regular “business” within the towns, and hence were shunned by local merchants. Yet, the impact of the circus parade left an imprint on the small communities which remembered it, and elements of the circus parade such as the “float”, the “band”, the “clowns” would migrate to civic parades on statutory holidays.

Since their inception in roughly 1771 over 1,100 circuses and menageries have criss-crossed North America. Circuses first travelled by wagons fueled by the power of horses which doubled as performers. Some of the early circus troupes undertook difficult journeys over undeveloped roads to carry on their shows. The primary motivation for these demanding journeys was probably more rooted in economical necessity than the satisfaction of a “natural” impulse for cultural expression or aulteristic pursuits to bring “art” to the people. Like travelling carnivals, circuses would later ride the rails, then automobiles, and there was a spell in the early 1800s when circuses travelled on “show boats”. In North America the golden age of the circus extended from 1871 to 1917, but declined soon after. Today there are less than 12 circuses touring North America.

The circus, and itinerant performers carried both the positive connotation of an exotic and magical outside world, as well as the negative association of “other” and “outsider”. The demands of their unique lifestyle predisposed circus performers to identities quite novel and distinctive from rural audiences. The circus profession tended to isolate the performers. As is typical of isolated groups, the trade developed its own language and syntax. Performers took pride in defining themselves as unique from the status quo.

This contrast between performer and audience, as circus historians such as Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange (1995) have pointed out, created a situation ripe for conflict. Reformers in small communities banished, feuded with, and bestialized travelling performers by connecting them to stories of murder, rape, selling of young women into slave rings, pimping, “homosexuality”, “sexual depravity”, or “unsavoury” and “dirty” lifestyle practices. The familiar processes through which the bourgeoisie had retextualized and villanized the pig are evidenced in the treatment of circus
performers by small town North America. The circus performers' apparent homelessness and transgression of community boundaries might have contributed to inciting an reactive attachment to “place” and “home”, serving to rally the communities’ attacks against performers. As Stallybrass and White note, this process is not rooted in any “natural” inferiority of the social group or practices, but rather may be understood as simply the cultural process of “valuing of one social practice over the other”.

The myths which built up around the circus did not completely lack material substance. Prostitutes did travel with circuses, but there were also prostitutes in the third balcony of the most respected theatre houses throughout the country, and within the very communities which were condemning these practices. The circus became a convenient scapegoat for many social concerns. Fights between performers and community members, in particular youth, were often documented, involving conflicts of personality, and vandalism of property.

In the late 1800s, the relations and practices of the market were still being forged. The lines between “good business practice” and “swindles” had yet to find the “code of good conduct”. The circus was rife with “grifting”, short changing, and hucksterism. Circus historians confirm Lears’ point that the audience of the 1800s was quite aware and tolerant of the swindle as part of the show (Lears, 1990).

Circus performers were also invested with positive connotations. The dream of running away with the circus, escaping the confines of small town relations for the freedom of the road, became a palpable dream of the modern era. Circus labour was revered because it was associated to the family and craft production. These practices of production were being challenged at the time; thereby becoming ripe for nostalgic sentiments. Ironically, many circuses remained rooted in family production for economic survival. The demands of the job were often not remunerated; requiring a dedication few workers would tolerate. Hence, the was built on child labour, with off-spring rewarded with favours or gifts instead of real wages.

The price conscious middle-class audience and demands for “entertainment value” transformed circus practices at the turn of the century. To legitimate the circus before middle-class audiences, and expand the audience to include women and children afraid to enter the “seedy” world of the big top, Ringling Brothers developed the “Sunday School Show”. This self-imposed regulation,
enacted “strict codes of business conduct” and “sexual propriety”. Making the circus “respectable”
proved profitable. Ringling Brothers became acknowledged as a “legitimate business” and was
rewarded with capital and credit that it used to expand into more grand displays and performances.
The cycle of spectacle was instilled: as the circus was able to draw larger more affluent crowds, it
could continually increase the grandeur of its shows; thus fostering higher expectations for “world-
class” shows. When Ringling took over Barnum and Bailey in 1906, its Sunday School Show went on
to set industry standards:

The show-going public came to expect only the biggest and most stupendous acts on offer...From the hundreds of circuses that criss-crossed North America at the turn of the century, only a handful survived--only to face further challenges from the movie industry.

(Carmeli, 1995: 215)

The large and profitable “Sunday School Shows” became industrial monopolies, buying up or
squeezing out smaller circuses. The “Sunday School Show” contributed to the destruction of the
fragile balance between troupes. Regional disparities arose as the “new and improved” larger circuses
took domain over the affluent urban markets; leaving what is referred to in the business as the
“pumpkin patch” or poorer rural communities to the smaller operations. With earning potential
significantly cut, and many small troupes competing for a shrinking pie of profits, the grift became
much more widespread among smaller troops out of the need for economic survival. Ironically, the
increase of the grift coincided with the congealing of “good business practices”, and demise of the
“swindle as entertainment”.

The Wild West
America would find its archetypical nationalistic drama within the frontier myths. Around the
beginning of the nineteenth-century a tradition of transporting and presenting American Indian’s and
their artefacts began. Natives became part of a living museum. In 1827 a group of Iroquois who
stood as monuments in Peale’s Museum in New York, catching P.T. Barnum’s eye. Barnum took the
opportunity to tag them on to the end of circus shows. Barnum also presented Indians along with his
elephant Dumbo in his “dime-museums” which provided a platform for the featuring of “a collection
of animal, mineral, and vegetable curiosities, together with human oddities and variety entertainers”
(McNamara, 1976: 40).
Yet, it was an ex-Indian scout and a series of cheap novels (penny dreadfuls) which would truly popularize the Wild West. William Frederick “Buffalo Bill” Cody travelled throughout the country and made several journeys to Europe presenting the skills of his trade. A typical Cody show would consist of “displays of horsemanship”, “cowboy fun”, “trick shooting”, recreated buffalo hunts, mock capture of the Deadwood Mail Coach by Indians, foot races, and other type of pageantry. The show culminated in a staged finale similar to the circus “spectacles,” usually depicting some historical or legendary event, such as Custer’s Last Stand or the Battle of Little Big Horn. This recreation of battles is reminiscent of the Hippodrama. Cody would travel with a small herd of buffalo and show audiences how to “take one of the beasts down” in a craft of slaughter, which was glorified as a “brave craft” and justified as necessary to make way for the “great railroad” and “American prosperity.” The Indians of the show were revered as possessing wisdom and skills beyond the white man, yet feared as blood thirsty killers and presented as “backward”. The Wild West shows were wildly popular in the late eighteenth century, particularly for Europeans and new urban immigrants who sought symbols to understand the “New World”.

While the Wild West Show raged across the country the Kickapoo Indian medicine shows employed the Indian as a symbol in the service of the pharmaceutical trade. Medicine shows were well known throughout America since the 1600s. Travelling peddlers forged the backbone of the American marketplace; using old fairground theatrics to charm audiences. In his history of peddlers, McNamara documents how a show could be made or broken depending upon the tone of discourse. Peddlers sought to balance their outlandish claims with “hard facts” and “testimony” and sought a tone of voice which was “entertaining” yet “believable”. This is another example of how the discourse of the fair was retextualized to suit a new social context. McNamara describes why the native provided such a good endorsement for medicines:

It was the belief among many white Americans that the Indian was a natural physician, endowed with an iron constitution because he possessed secrets of healing unknown to the white man. This view was reinforced by the fact that a number of Indian botanical had been adopted by white physicians and because the Indian had become a popular symbol of the strength and purity of the New World (1976: 83).

The Kickapoo shows started out as a whim of two mediocre medicine men, Healy and Bigelow; yet, by 1888 the format had evolved into thirty-one shows in Chicago, and a total number
of 100 remained on the road for some years before the turn of the century. With several Indians in their employ, the Kickapoo shows colored their sales with orations, “balloon assents; fireworks at night, street parades, singing, dancing, acrobatics, a chalk talk, a fire-eater”. Healy and Bigelow, devoted followers of Barnum, decorated every square inch of the building’s exterior with an exotic collection of tepees, shields, spears, and other Indian paraphernalia, and invited the public to view their charges in a bizarre re-creation of their native habitat” (McNamara, 1976: 84).

During the turn of the century Indian theatrics migrated to the vaudeville stage; yet, both the Wild West and Kickapoo shows were permanently upstaged by later Western films which simulated an aura of “realism” which live Indians could not compete with.

Carnival Redefined
Carnival became redefined as a series of mobile spectacles — playgrounds of mechanical rides and games of chance. At the end of the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893 organizer Frank C. Bostock decided to transport sections of his popular midway to Coney Island, New York. The moving of the midway for the Chicago Fair to Coney Island prompted the birth of the first travelling carnival. The mobile carnival went on to fill a niche in the country and state fairs which lacked funds necessary to purchase amusement rides and mount shows. Organizers of the country fairs happily agreed to rent space and share audiences with the carnival — a known crowd drawer. Travelling carnivals first took to the road by horse and wagon, then by train, and in 1914 “Smith Greater Shows” became the first midway to travel by truck. The prominent features of the travelling carnival include “riding devices, shows or exhibits, and concessions” (Wilmeth, 1982: 23). Of the approximately 500 carnivals on the road today, the “Royal American Shows” is the largest boasting a “mile-long midway” made up of 145 pieces of equipment which require 80 double-length railroad cars to transport them to their destinations.

Civil holidays and Country Fairs
Another fair fragment came to rest within civic holidays, town and country fairs. These public events drew upon carnival elements such as parades, competitions, and feasting; but, became imbued with new meanings, motivations, and social relations. Unlike the town fairs, civic holidays did not mark a particular place as much as time and abstract unity. Nationalism thread through the public
events of the civic holiday, layering the secular on top of the Christian and pagan sediments. These holidays displaced the celebration of the old holiday calendar. All regions celebrated the civic holiday concurrently; an orchestration of time and meaning which aspired to a new sense of unity. Individuals were invited to think of themselves not as Christians, pagans, nor local community members; rather as proud Britons or Americans.

The country fair made a significant mark in America. Early American fairs carried on the traditional European format. To service rural communities in 1625 Dutch settlers organized fairs for the trading of cattle and hogs on Manhattan Island. Itinerant performers clowned, sang, fiddled, danced the tightrope, and presented puppet shows for the crowds at these fairs which were hardly distinguishable from St. Bartholomew’s Fair until the American revolution (1776) interrupted them.

Within the context of the ensuing peace and a growing population, attention refocused on agricultural production. By the turn of the eighteenth century fairs began cropping up in rural areas serving as media for the exchange of goods and entertainment. Travelling performers at country fairs carried on many of the old street acts, and innovated with new entertainments. The feasting and competitive elements of traditional carnival prevailed, as the picnic feast and communal potluck were taken up with relish. Competition was structured in old forms such as foot and horse races and the catching of pigs; and new forms focused on the site of production, where prizes and ribbons were awarded for the best pies, canned goods, largest azalea, of best breed rooster. “By 1868 there were 1,367 state, country, and district fairs held every year” and today there is an excess of 3,200 annual country fairs. (Wilmeth, 1982: 21)

The country fairs put the amusementscape in the service of technology and disseminated knowledge about industrial techniques. The purpose was not simply to sell John Dere’s new ploughs on site, but to advertise them to a large body of individuals who might seek to purchase them later. The turn to “fair as exhibit” for the wonders of technology foreshadowed the motives of the World’s fairs of the nineteenth century.

Conclusion
Each of the cultural heads cut from the early fairground hydra sought an audience, although they employed different appeals to find one. Pleasure gardens, theatres, the hippodrama, and the seaside
resort, launched appeals to the bourgeois’s quest of “self-recreation” — the desire to take respite from the bustle of the everyday through experience within an opulent or beatific surround. The Wild West Show and the Hippodrama fed the curiosity for national and international political strife, and projected narratives of nationhood onto a public breaking from traditional community networks bonds. The civic holiday materialized the “benevolence” of the nation, at the same time it destroyed the memory of the festival calendar. The country fair transformed the fair into an advertisement, as the exchange of goods was supplemented by the showcasing of technologies and techniques. The circus and the mobile carnival worked on the underside of the bourgeois project to “recreate” self. These art forms appealed at the level of titillation and the arcane desires for exotisism and magic (the “Other Protestant Ethic”). The circus and the carnival remained closely tethered to old fairground antics. Their invasion into communities both frightened and fascinated. Their mobile structure gave them access to markets which might have otherwise gone untapped. While their itinaracy left them vulnerable to attacks of community scapegoating, it also preserved and heightened their magic because they were mysterious and were not around long enough to be closely inspected. They embodied both the fear of not having a sense of rooted place; as well as the desire for the potential to hit the open road. The Sunday School shows formalized voluntary regulation, proving that falling in line with prevailing bourgeois values of cleanliness, order, and wholesome family entertainment could be profitable. Voluntary regulation emerged.

The demise of the Hippodrama marked an end of disorganized exchange for cultural production. Coins, food, or assorted other favours were long exchanged for performances at the fair. The context of this exchange was personal and sporadic. By the 1800 paying a fixed price for cultural event was becoming a norm; just as paying a fixed price for goods in permanent shops became standard practise. The heckling over goods, or the input of audiences’ opinions into performances, was replaced by the “studying” “dreaming” “contemplation” or “silent critique” of goods, services and cultural performances.

The fair had become a not just a site, but good of exchange. Its orchestration was now undertaken by individuals who would see it as their, job, or property business. The street performances and cultural practices produced by the community came to be produced for the community. The structural orchestration of jobs, spatial politics, and control of public space forced
traded-offs, whereby the community gave up active production for individual enjoyment and passive contemplation.

Disciplining the audience for the amusementscape was occurring at the same time as the disciplining of the consumer for early capitalism. “Aggressions and feelings” towards community cultural creation were tamed and redirected to passive reflection of cultural creation on display. While individuals still produced their own cultural practices within the private sphere, their ability to participate in the production of public culture was shut out as entertainment entrepreneurs rose to organize public recreations for audiences.

These entertainment entrepreneurs combined with the ethos of modernity, would transform the amusementscape. The carnival would become increasingly manufactured, the rituals of history would be reduced to amusements, and the rise of mechanical rides would begin.
Mass Leisure: World’s Fairs and Amusement Parks

As capitalism grew to maturity so did the emphasis on standardization, efficiency, rationalization, and routinization. The goal of these strategies was to deliver an uninterrupted flow of production. Change became the definitive element of society. The only “security” of the modern period was “insecurity”, Berman describes the condition:

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world — and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity; it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish (1982: 15).

Community orchestration would fall increasingly into the hands of state organizers and companies. The myth of progress was of central importance to this era. Progress embodies the belief that society was working towards a better day. Progress fuelled productivity, justifying innovation and change. Advertisers pushed the progress myth in print and radio ads (Marchand, 1986). School textbooks and courses emphasised progressive evolution. The period was ripe with optimism about the power of rational planning. Mass produced goods by the turn of the century had become common place. It was within this modern social landscape that the amusementscape would transform into World’s Fairs and Amusement Parks.

World’s Fairs

Progress was “visualized at the World’s Fairs which displayed the wonders of science, industry and a productive population.” World’s Fairs were like a spatial billboard, playing the same messages touted in the press and on radio, about the “good news of modernity”. These fairs brazenly claimed they held “all the wonders of the world” — acting as bastions of civilization like Noah’s ark or the
Titanic, sailing towards the future. From a financial point of view; they were fragile vessels, lasting for only a short period of time (5 months), subject to low attendance, and debt. Yet, their mandates, as endorsed by state and industry, were more concerned with long term profit and politicking. Their mission statements included the stimulation of national prestige, international commerce, new markets, export of goods, and promotion of towns (Decaunt, 1989: 6).

The first World’s Fairs held in Europe — London (1851, 1862), Paris (1855, 1867, 1889, 1900) and Vienna (1873) — established conventions which would continue at American World Fairs. The Crystal Palace of the London World’s Fair emphasized the use of large buildings to house displays. The use of specialized architecture became a touchstone of later fairs. Where ritual and community play had once built the house within which the amusementscape allowed human transgression, it was the modern architect who became responsible for designing the “other-worldly” in material form.

Fairs had traditionally been put in service of the direct exchange of goods; yet, the World’s fairs were more dedicated to the stimulation of consumption, political persuasion, and technological acceptance. At early World’s fairs, visitors were dazzled by the first widespread display of electricity, cars, planes, and contraptions like vacuum cleaners or blenders which would become common household items decades later.

Like the modern period they typified, World’s Fairs were riddled with contradictions. Their attempt to encompass vast space, created disorientation and sensual overload. Critics resented displays which flouted standard forms of judgment, as Baudelaire argued “all aesthetic canons are futile in the face of so many ‘samples of universal beauty’" (1965: 14). The massive scale of the fair was frightening. The urge for completeness and grandeur eclipsed the audience’s capacity to witness it: “it was calculated that to make even a brief tour of the 200 buildings of White City (at the Chicago World Fair) [you] would need about three weeks and would have to cover over 150 miles” (Nelson, 1986: 110).

Patently, World fairs were made for the community, not by the community; implying that the dreams of organizers were not necessarily the dreams of the broader audience. Fair organizers were much more interested in providing the audience with what it “needed” than “what it wanted.” Rationality was seen as being able to deliver utopia: but it didn’t. Most of the displays at the fair
provoked tedium. For others, the sights proved too overwhelming a spectacle. Kasson tells the
story of Hamlin Garland’s mother whom he encouraged to come to the fair from their Dakota
farm:

After a day devoted to the White City, passing from ‘one stupendous vista to another,’ his
mother reeled under its strange magnificence. ‘Take me home,’ she pleaded to her son, bent
on his errand of cultural uplift. ‘I can’t stand any more of it.’
(Kasson, 1978: 22)

The Chicago World’s Fair

Of particular importance in this evolution of the amusementscape was the Chicago World’s Fair, for
it would cement conventions picked up later by the amusement park and theme park. The Chicago
Fair opened May 1, 1893 and went on to become the most successful of the American World’s Fairs.
It succesfully merged “entertainment, engineering and education with a clearly sectored landscape”
(Adams, 1990:19). According to amusement park historian Judith Adams, the Chicago Fair’s
“White City” motif was firmly rooted in the American dream:

The sense of geographic and personal election; the belief in a progressive and redemptive
history; a conviction that the limitless frontier wilderness could, through the improvements
of civilization, be transformed into a City of God in the New World; and the capitalist dogma
that riches could be attained through hard work--these constitute the American dream, a
myth that has dominated and shaped out national history and culture.
(Adams, 1991: 21)

Some of the greatest architects of the day, such as Burnham and Olmsted; who were shaping
skyscrapers, modernity’s cathedrals, in the downtown core, treated the Worlds Fair site as a play pen
for civil engineers, architects, and planners. In keeping with the theme of grandeur and social
aspiration, the chosen style for the buildings was neo-classical. The buildings, 400 in all covering 686
acres, were alabaster white, ornate, decorated with gold, and separated by canals. The buildings
followed a university department model in the sectioning of displays which included the Liberal Arts
Building, Court of Honour, Administration Building, Machinery Building, and Electricity Building.

The massive scale of the buildings outstripped any government’s financial ability. It was
possible to produce the majestic landscape only because of a very cheap, malleable, and clean white
building material known as “staff”. While this material was excellent at creating an illusion; like all
illusions, it was unstable. Before the closing in the fifth month of the fair the buildings began to
disintegrate.
The Chicago Fair was one of the first fairs to consciously control refuse, by controlling the quality of paper and food distributed. The “Engle sanitation system” was employed and handled up to 100 tones per day. This emphasis on hygiene was quite a novel fair convention. Recalling St. Bartholomew’s fair, visitors sloshed in mud, soiled the environment, and communicated disease. Significant emphasis was also placed on providing visitors with service. The “Bureau of Public” offered “comfort, arranged hotels, water fountains, and medical services.” (Kasson, 1978: 39). Informal networks bound by personal obligation had traditionally attempted to attend to people’s needs at fairs; now impersonal organizations would orchestrate these activities.

Along with sanitation and hospitality, the Chicago World’s Fair was applauded for its use of transport. Not only could train and emerging trolleys speed up, and increase the number of people who could attend the Fair; the transport outside was also to inspire transport inside, as innovative ways were devised to direct crowd flow. The inspiration for mechanical rides also came from the revolution in land transport.

The Chicago World’s fair increased emphasis on promotion. While P.T. Barnum was one of the initial innovators of entertainment promotion; the Chicago fair implemented the first large-scale, international advertising campaign. The fair sought to reach out of the local into the global, a frame of mind possible only within the totalizing thought of the modern period.

The buildings, sanitation, and transportation of the fair were the darlings of up and coming city planners and upper-middle class; the general public was charmed by the midway. The Paris Exposition in 1889 was the first World’s Fair to include a section at its centre which offered old carnival entertainment (musicians, jugglers, exotic entertainers) within heavily decorated shacks, stalls; tents, and booths. Due to its central location, the site was coined the midway, and while it frightened the genteel, it was wildly popular with the general public. The Paris Fair also pioneered the use of electricity in the midway to great success.

Fredrick Law, had lobbied for the inclusion of a midway noting that “people were bored by the grand and vast utopia” which incited a “melancholy air.” The fair proved too sterile — hence, Law suggested recreating the old fair with “masquerades, singing children, musicians, colourful peddlers”. Organizers decided to concede to public taste. In contrast to the refinement and grandiose
scale of the White City, the midway was about instant gratification, offering a variety of “short, brief light and frivolous” amusements (Adams, 1990: 68).

Both the Paris and Chicago fairs were exceptions in the history of poor financial performance, typical of World’s Fairs. Their ability to turn modest profits was directly related to their employment of the midway and licensing of concessions, by 1904 such practices became standard. The addition of the midway kept the more lofty aspirations of the World’s Fair firmly tethered to the carnival.

The Chicago midway presented simulated geographies including a “Street in Cairo, Persian Palace, Turkish Village, Japanese Bazaar, Volcano Kilauea, Vienna Cafe, Ice Railway, Egyptian Temple, Hungarian Pavilion and Model of Eiffel Tower” (Weinstein, 1992: 135). These displays allowed one to travel the world without leaving home. The chance of seeing the world, and witnessing the artefacts of other countries provided promoters with the ability to position the fair as “educational” and “cultural” — even though what people were witnessing was wholly fantasy, reduced to a series of stereotypical motifs. Like the Hippodrama, Wild West show, and early English gardens, these displays “celebrated colonial and warrior prowess re-enactment” (Adams, 1990: 43). They also embodied an expression of the heightened speed and totalizing view of the modern.

The bulk of the visitors to the fair were the emergent middle class who neither “went to the first class theatres nor the vaudeville halls, because they feared and distrusted amusements that were proffered intently for their own sake.” Entertainment entrepreneurs had to test the waters of middle-class taste. Concessionaires “cloaked their amusements in educational disguise”. Ultimately, however, “the educational allusions were not supposed to inform or edify but to make consumers feel at ease in a new type of setting where fun came first” (Nasaw, 1993: 73).

The Chicago World’s Fair came at a time of significant transition when the revolutionary concept of a nation “of independent pioneers unfettered by government control in an unlimited frontier was being challenged by rise of capital formation and cities.” To counteract this challenge, the fair sought to reassure the public that its toils were “progressive,” that its national stature was nearing pre-eminence, and that the New Jerusalem was well within its grasp” (Kasson, 1978: 24). Yet, the vision of Jerusalem held by planners, state organizers, industrialists and reformers differed from that of the general public. The elite saw their new Jerusalem within the fair’s displays of
technological virtuosity, opulent architecture, futuristic products, advanced transportation and ordered and cleanly landscapes. The public saw their new Jerusalem in the midway. Progress would have to be made fun. Transcendent architecture and displays of technology would have competition from the hoochy kootchy dancers and old fairground antics.

Amusement Parks

The success of the Chicago World’s Fair midway did not go unnoticed. Anything which had the potential to make money and draw crowds was of intense interest to the entertainment entrepreneur. The entertainment entrepreneur would seek out cultural practises and convert them into commodities. The Midway spawned the next phase of the amusementscape which would come to be known as the amusement park. In short, the amusement park simply extended the midway concept over time and space. At the turn of the century the amusementscape would cease to be known as a fair (market/holiday) and instead known as a park (public place/recreation). This transition from “fair” to “park” is revealing.

From the late 1800s to shortly after the turn of the century, there was a growing emphasis on the creation of spaces for public “recreation.” This movement began in reaction to increasing urban spread. On the West Coast of the United States John Muir, the Sierra Club, and the pictures of Ansel Adams would create a movement to save endangered spaces, and open them to the public. On the east coast, reformers such as Olfstan had urged planners to include green space in their urban design. Central Park in New York, resulted from this emphasis. Attaching the word “park” to the amusementscape allowed entertainment entrepreneurs to profit from association with the “public spaces” movements of the turn of the century. It further highlights the desire of the amusement “park” entrepreneurs to situate their product as an “escape” from the trials and tribulations of the urban cityscape. The transformation from “fair” to “park,” however was only in name. The amusementscape was still a fair (a market); although it now sold entertainments and specialized products. Thus, it is ironic that at a period in history when the amusementscape would be completely enclosed, privatized, and commodified, it should be come to be known as a “park” (or public space).

Amusement parks like Coney Island would, however, play a role in reintegrating the public, through its focus on the “mass”. The creation of the “mass” audience for the park paralleled the
search for economies of scale on the factory floors of the period. If one could flow masses of people
through the amusementscape, then admissions could be brought to a price level affordable to large
numbers of people. The World’s fairs had illustrated that the midway could act as a significant draw.
Amusement Parks like those at Coney Island were similarly predicated upon the economic
philosophy of volume: a few rich might pay a dollar; but hundreds are willing to pay ten cents. This
idea of maximizing volume did much to commodify leisure through democratizing market versions of
recreational pursuits. There was a pent up market of working class people who had experienced
significant increases in their income, but who lacked the full funds and socialization necessary to
undertaken upper-class leisure pursuits.

Despite their long hours of work — 10 hours a day, six days a week — or perhaps more
because of it; the working class found amusement parks immensely attractive. A typical disposable
income in 1903-05 for a semi-skilled labourer was approximately $13 a month of their $494 annual
income; yet, minimal funds was not a deterrence, as money was saved and borrowed for leisure.
Working class lads would compete over the amount they risked spending on dates. Entertainment
entrepreneurs prospered from servicing the working class whose wages rose significantly from $439
per year in 1890 to $1280 in 1925. Leisure spending followed in line with wage increases, rising
from 3.2% in 1909 to 4.7% in 1929.

Not only did leisure income grow, but so did leisure time. Up to WWI, and in particular after
it, there were growing demands for free time. It was not just the factory worker who had to submit to
tedious work, but also the burgeoning middle class who made up a large portion of New York’s
employed. The early 1900s witnessed an explosion in the service economy, as thousands of white
collar workers filled dull positions in government, financial houses, insurance companies and sales.
Work had ceased to be a form of expression or education and had become simply a “way to make a
living”. For someone to endure work, and submit to its demands, required employers to provide
“free-time” for workers to rejuvenate. There were also needs to justify soldier effort in the war.
Leisure became the rallying cry for reformers finding widespread support among workers, creating the
political pressure necessary to cut the work week to 5.5 days between 1890 and 1925. Weekly hours
worked had dropped by 10 (Adams, 1990: 56).
Vacations would take longer to find widespread acceptance. However, around the turn of the century department stores began to experiment with letting workers take time off during the slow season. It was found that a considerable amount of positive employee morale and public support could be gained for a company through these experiments with vacation-time. Even more important was the discovery that people on vacation spent a good deal of their time (and spent a good deal of money) consuming goods and services. These factors would lead to the consideration of vacations in 1930 and the spreading norm of 2 weeks paid vacation by the 1950s.

Convenient and economical modes of transport, such as the train and trolley, made travelling to cultural events possible for a mass of people. The spread of new media, like radio, telephones, and film gathered people together in new ways; allowing for communication across distances and bringing the distant closer to home. Radio emphasised the “as it happens” aspect of news reporting, adding an unprecedented tempo to the exchange of information. While the newspaper and the Hippodrama had once catered to the desire for international stories, the radio would enable greater attention to the world outside of the local. Yet, these technologies did not suppress the desire to be in a crowd and the experience live celebration in a public place. The explosion of turn of the century amusement parks stand as testimony that the “lively arts” and the desire of the amusementscape had not been killed by modernity and the mass media. While some traditional “lively” leisure practices such as theatre would be displaced by the advent of film and television; the amusementscape had some unique qualities which enabled to compete with other mass media. Its connections to “vacation,” “travel” and “public gathering” gave it a unique advantage, as “pleasure travel has continued to consistently grow throughout history” and vacations continued to grow in prominence (Adams, 1990: 63).

Coney Island
Located in the heart of the archetypal modern metropolis — New York — the Coney Island Amusement parks offer a unique case study of the turn of the century American amusement park. New York, with its cultural dominance encouraged “copy cat” practices throughout America, developing a series of amusement conventions which would be echoed within other parks throughout the land.
Amusement parks exploded onto the scene. In 1909, 20 million men and women visited Coney Island's amusement parks. When adjusted for population this attendance figure was 20% greater than the number of visits to Disneyland or Walt Disney World in 1989 (Nasaw, 1993:3). By 1910, most of the significant urban areas possessed an amusement park. The tally was roughly 2000 parks, nation wide.

If the early modern period had been the rise of ‘Lent’ and the ‘suppression of the carnival; the turn of the century would see ‘carnival’ erupt again. The carnival aesthetic which had been repressed by genteel social norms, was retapped by perceptive amusement entrepreneurs. A “structure of feeling” which invited a “more vigorous, exuberant, daring, sensual, uninhibited, and irreverent” way of being was fostered within amusement parks and dance halls (Kasson, 1978: 6).

By the turn of the century the bourgeoisie project of “self-regulation” reached a crisis. The austere of the genteel lifestyle began to lose its glow as a class of entrepreneurs rose to a position of economic power. The genteel lifestyle required a stringent discipline rooted in the rational, the educated, and cultural. This way of life proved too confining both for those who had to remain disciplined in their day job. Once gain a rising entrepreneurial elite sought to distinguish themselves from the cultural practices associated with “old money”.

New York became the heartbeat for all that was cosmopolitan. The city pulsed with the sound of ragtime and jazz, the cake-walk, the hoochy kootchy, and raising of hemlines. Where traditional carnivals mocked the monarchy and church, Coney Island mocked the decorum of Victorian virtues and sought to transform technologies of production into technologies of pleasure. Frederick Thompson co-creator of Lunaland, one of the four Coney Island amusement parks, claimed his job was to “manufacture carnival”. Kasson notes:

Coney Island in effect declared a moral holiday for all those who entered its gates. Against the values of thrift, sobriety, industry and ambition it encouraged extravagance, gaiety, abandon and revelry. Coney Island signalled the rise of a new mass culture no longer deferential to genteel tastes and values, which demanded a democratic resort of its own. It served as a Feast of Fools of an urban society. 

(Kasson, 1978: 135)

The rise of mass leisure which coincides with Coney Island’s history was predicated upon several fundamental social transitions: population growth, a dominant youth culture; immigration, stabilization of urban production; demands for leisure; rising discretionary income; and improvements
in transportation. The U.S. population over the period of 1870 to 1920 rose from 10 million to 54 million. The composition of this population was skewed towards the young, the non anglo immigrant, and the working class. In 1910, 15-30 year olds comprised 40% of the population. Newspapers at the time discussed the rising numbers of immigrants and critics lamented the number of “black” haired lads in public who were thought to threaten the “Anglo-Saxon way of life:

Coney Island provided more than cheap thrills of electric technology. It offered an opportunity for youthful expression, public affection, the Americanization of immigrant children, a carnivaleque release from the conformity and restraint of late Victorian society and just plain fun for people because of the way in which it mocked the established social order.

(Kasson, 1978: 97).

Improvements in transportation and electricity also contributed to the success of Coney Island amusement parks. The shortened work week reduced the traffic along the trolley lines, which in 1880 had millions invested into them. The electricity for the lines was charged at a flat rate, which was not metered by traffic flow. To encourage the public to use the lines on their days off, entertainment and picnic areas were placed at the end of the lines. Over time, the rate dropped from 35 cents to 5 cents making a trip to Coney affordable even to those with very modest incomes.

Coney was also visited by many of the new “vacationers”. The railroad broke down travel as an elite bastion and allowed ordinary people to travel across the country at modest prices. Train travel spurred the creation of resorts. Urry argues that the meaning of travel was transformed in the modern period. Travelling for religious purposes, adventure, or the “cultivation of self” were replaced with the desire to visually consume and survey the world. One might wonder if media, particularly film, contributed to this growth by presenting a wide range of images to audiences.

The time and space of Coney Island was unique to the traditional fairground. Where the traditional carnival was connected to the holiday calendar of saints and feast days, Coney’s “manufactured” carnival was connected to spaces of licensed freedom away from the workplace — weekends and holidays being its peak attendance times. The overriding purpose of Coney was to make profit off of people’s needs to escape from their labour situations. The parks’ season was also dictated by weather; hence it opened in May and closed in early September.
The space of Coney Island was also unique for several reasons. Firstly, as noted earlier, the site had a history as a place of recreation — having housed meat fairs in the 1600s. Secondly, this was a place where portions of the highly popular Chicago World’s Fair midway would come to rest. Thirdly, Coney was on the seaside; which had long been swaddled in the mystique of “curative properties”. Finally, Coney was right in the heart of a growing urban metropolis.

Like the old fairgrounds, Coney would reintegrate groups of people from a wide variety of social standings. The park was of particular interest to new immigrants who sought cultural knowledge of their new home. Coney Island amusements joined the “upper” and “lower” classes. Reformers who held great disdain for Coney’s “trashy” amusements at the same time appauded those who applauded visited its seaside to gather the “ozone” contained within the sea air which was thought to soothe sooty lungs. The upper-class preferred the new open air resorts, because it was reasoned that sharing indoor spaces with other classes inhibited the spread of disease (Nasaw, 1993: 82).

The freedom that Coney Island appeared to instil held appeal to both the male and the female; the office clerk and their manager. The proximity to the ocean loosened clothing standards and body movements. Coney Island launched the style of the ‘contemporary suit’ which, although quite tame to “modern” eyes, was quite radical in comparison to the floor length skirts and bustles of the day. Beach clothing broke norms of fashion and movement. Kasson contrasts the city to the seaside through brilliantly juxtaposing two pictures: one of a crowd on the streets in New York who are cloaked in black and walking with upright strictness; one of a beach crowd who are noticeably more relaxed and slumped, wearing lighter colors and smiles. Comfortable clothes, and the license to get wrinkled and dirty, no doubt contributed to the feeling of freedom at seaside amusements and the sense of social expansiveness.

Coney Island was not one but four parks. The first was Sea Lion Park built in 1895. As its name attests, the main draw of this park was the forty Sea Lions who carried out assorted tricks. This early park was to contribute a very significant convention to the amusementscape: it was the first park to be fully enclosed. The walls served to keep out undesirables such as the “gamblers, con artists, and prostitutes [who] established themselves largely in the westernmost portion of the beach,” which became known as “the Gut”. The “mealer Sorts of people” who were given refuge in
the traditional fairground had been finally excluded through the erection of a fence and the privatization of the amusementscape.

In 1897, George Tilyou constructed Steeplechase Park, also an enclosed park. Walt Disney later had an idea to run a train around the outer rim of his park which might well have been lifted from Tilyou, who ran his Steeplechase ride around the rim of the park. Enclosure of amusements served both the interests of capital and culture. The 25 cent entrance admission to the 15 acre Steeplechase park served to funnel out the “undesirables”. Its walls symbolically marked the site from the outside world. Tilyou typified the early modern entertainment entrepreneur, trying to “give people what they want” and to socialize people into accepting opportunities for pleasure. Tilyou notes that, “We American’s want either to be thrilled or amused, and we are ready to pay well for either sensation” (Adams, 1990: 43). Amusement entrepreneurs believed people sought to be in the moment, and did not want to be taken up with difficult subject matter or heavy contemplation. Hence, the events of the park were structured around immense variety and were of short duration, since the standard attention span was thought to be 15 minutes. Such a fast pace also facilitated the flow of a vast number of people.

While these philosophies made leisure easier and more accessible, they also appealed to the lowest common denominator, and hence were considered “trashy” and “insubstantial” by reformers and cultural critics. Yet, what was considered “trashy” by some, was considered by others to be a legitimate jab at genteel culture. At the heart of many of the amusements was a carnival spirit of revelry. Embossed within the emblem of Steeplechase park which was jester, a devilish character, who sported a grin displaying a massive amount of teeth. Like carnival laughter, the jester’s merriment danced upon the edge of amusement and horror.

Frederick Thompson and Skip Dundy were creators of a simulated moon ride which George Tilyou brought to Steeplechase Park. Tilyou no doubt saw in Thompson and Dundy a compatible entrepreneurial eye for creating popular amusements. Yet, the enterprising Thompson and Dundy would not be satisfied sharing their talents with Tilyou. Shortly after their arrival to Coney Island, they started to contemplate building their own park, named Luna land, no doubt in honour of their moon simulation ride. Luna land opened in 1902, built upon the site where Sea Lion Park had once stood. The quest for illusion and the appeal of “man-made” amusements soon outstripped the sea
mammals’ ability to entertain the crowds. Thus like the Hippodrama horse, the seals soon faded into history.

A carnivalesque vein would run through Thompson’s amusement park creations in particular. He believed the spell of the park would be broken if people ceased to actively engage in the amusement. Distressed by people sitting idle in the park, Thompson trained park performers, bands and dancers, to provoke the uninvolved visitors and draw them into the spirit of carnival. This emphasis on “interaction” would give the parks a unique position in the mass “mediated” environment.

Thompson would “recognized the powerful entertainment potential of architectural forms.” He used “staff” the cheap foundation material which had also built the Chicago Fair, sculpting forms which defied classical restraint and convention in favour of “release, dynamic motion, overwhelming transformation, exotic illusion.” (Kasson, 1978: 83). Some of the hotels on Coney Island followed this break in architectural convention. For example, the Elephant Hotel was a replica of a pachyderm with lodging within its belly. The Elephant Hotel became the symbol for all that was big, exotic, spectacular, and entertaining and was highly popular.

The final park to open at Coney Island was the opulent Dreamland in 1911, which burned down shortly after its opening. The story of the Coney Island parks reveals the competitive nature of the amusement park industry; for each park tried to out do the next in opulence. Dreamland, which was not hugely successful, had not learned from the lessons of the World’s Fairs and the Pleasure Gardens. It pitched its opulence too high and alienated its audience by appearing inaccessible and sterile.

Particular attention was given to the design of park entrances. An entrance is a symbolic threshold where individuals experience a rite of passage into “another world”. The Coney parks existed in a period when promotional discourse was primitive. The parks became known by word of mouth networks and through strategic location, for television was not available. Further, the primary audience was local. Hence, the parks materially advertise themselves through garish entrances and flashing lights. Hecklers would stand outside and summon people.

Dreamland’s entrance deserves special mention for its grandeur. To gain entry into the park, one had to pass through huge arches suspended by “Creation.” “Creation” was a gigantic
statue of a woman who stood with her head bowed to the crowd, inspecting them as they moved into her inner sanctum. She was bare-chested; her lower half swaddled in Roman like garb. She had the mystique of Michael Angelo’s, David, being cut in the tradition of neo-classical sculpture, evoking the wonders of ancient civilizations, the refinement of classical art — while at the same time she titillating with her nakedness. Dreamworld’s entrance is an example of how the amusement park had begun to seek respectability for its amusements. Unlike the grinning jester of Steeple Chase park, “Creation” signalled that there was culture and refinement behind her gates.

To disrupt every-day routine the parks sought to disorientate crowds. People were invited to lose themselves in the dark of the haunted house, to have the floor shake in the fun house, to be turned upside down on a ride. Crowds happily gave themselves over to this disruption, suspending their seriousness in exchange for a thrill. They viewed the “bizarre” in a unique light. Within the gates of the Coney Island parks, the strange was not only accepted, it was expected.

The use of light within the modern environment changed the context, and hence the meanings associated with the urban landscape. Light both comforted and bedazzled the turn of the century audience. New relations to the cityscape were forged through the use of light. The generators which moved the trolleys to Coney also lit the streets. The middle class and working-class (particularly women), who had avoided the seedy, dark streets of the city were made brave by street lights, which proved to be more of a force in cleaning up crime than the police squad. As pervasively mentioned, the use of light within the amusementscape has a long history. The number of torches at St. Bartholomew’s fair steadily increased throughout the ages. The use of light was brought to new levels of intensity by the light-bulb. Lunaland turned night into day with the use of 250,000 light bulbs — Dreamland later employed a million. Not only did this electric spectacle serve as a security blanket for the middle-class individual who was afraid of the urban dark, but it also contributed to the visual creation of “other” worldly emotion of the fair.

Guide books and promotions were similarly used to promote and “cleanse” the sites within the minds of prospective visitors. Slogans promoted the amusement park as a respectable site: “A

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16 A stunning example of this phenomena was documented at Prater in Vienna. Franz von Gestener in 1823 won over negative public sentiment towards his steam engine by running a prototype of it through Prater, where it was seen not at an impractical menace, rather as a thrilling and whimsical mode of transport (Adams, 1991: 87).
place for your mother, your sister and your sweet heart” (Kasson, 1978: 49). To do so, Coney cloaked its amusements in shrouds of respectable, educational and cultural masks.

Identities within the medieval period were firmly inscribed. Individuals personally knew one another; or knew people by family-name or occupation. Within the modern urban crowd, knowledge of “other” people was unlikely. Community members or extended family could no longer provide assessment of a stranger’s character. Within the modern crowd, a composite sketch of personality and social standing would be drafted through hair color and clothing style alone. Coney Island was frequented by singles, workmates, or small groups of acquaintances, as peers replaced family members as fairground companions.

Henning Bech argues that people turn one another into surfaces in the modern crowd. People are treated as objects upon which “evaluation which can be performed by gaze — i.e. an aesthetic evaluation, according to criteria such as beautiful or disgusting, boring or fascinating” (Henning, 1992: 173). Marx argued that modernization the expanding division of labour and spread of the commodity form, would reduce goods to ‘surfaces’ given the hands of the maker disappear on the final object. The social knowledge of the maker is erased within new social relations.

While the young were told they “should not speak to strangers” — strangers proved interesting to look at. Bauman, drawing upon Walter Benjamin’s concept of the flaneur, describes the spirit of play involved in the sport of people watching;

The urban flaneur is the travelling player...In the dramas he imagines as he wanders, he is the sole mover, script writer, director, discerning viewer and critic. To flaneur means to play the game of playing...the city stroller can go on drawing the strangers around into his private theatre without fear that those drawn inside will claim the rights of the insiders. Social/cognitive spacing has created distances which aesthetic spacing can transgress only playfully, only in the imagination, only inconsequentially.

(Bauman, 1990: 172)

Janet Wolff thoughtfully argues that the flaneur gaze was an “intrinsically masculine subject-position” a “modern hero” who could “move about the public spaces of the city” which were “denied to most women” (Gregory, 1994: 224). While Wolff’s critique holds true for the city proper, it breaks down within the enclosed sites of the amusement park and the shopping plaza, which licensed and encouraged the female gaze, for she was to be targeted as the chief decision maker of domestic sphere consumption and family entertainment.
Extending the Eye: Simulated Landscapes and Side-shows

Coney Island extended the eye to many places, fostering new modes of perspective. Luna land recreated the geographical exotics of the Chicago World’s Fairs; the hootchy kootchy dancers, streets from around the world, and the presentation of alien animals such as elephants and camels. Each of these might be seen as fuelling the modern desire for the exotic, cosmopolitan spectacle of the collapsing of the world. Modernity had fostered new ways of perceiving relations at a distance. The world outside the local had once been seen as frightening; now it just became a spectacle.

The eye was taken to an increasing number of places, which prohibited the body. Gazing upon alien environments, at the bottom of the sea or the moon proved to be significant crowd pleasers.

If one found the lunar or nautical themes tedious, there were disasters replayed daily. Buildings were set ablaze as women jumped out windows, to be heroically caught by nets; bubbling lava from erupting volcanoes oozed close to one’s feet; ships sank regularly to be resurrected for the next day’s show; and two trains would careen towards one another only to have one, in the last second, veer off onto another track. Such close proximity to risk was exhilarating, leaving a heady sense that one had survived a challenge — even if that challenge was wholly simulated and relatively safe.

If the disastrous, alien or exotic all proved wanting, one could turn one’s gaze to the freaks. Fun-house mirrors allowed people to transform themselves into freaks. As well, side-shows featured fat women, dwarfs and assorted others who defied the social norms of the day. Many of these “freaks” were emigrés from the circus, or Barnum’s dime-museums. Some have argued that looking at the freak leaves one secure in one’s social norms. Others argue that the freak opens up a realm of magical potential. In challenging social norms, the freak holds the ability both to affirm, as well as highlight, the arbitrary nature of social norms.

A noteworthy freak side-show was Dr Courney’s babies. Within this display is a perfect blending of science and showmanship — the quintessential merging of the two Protestant Ethics: control and magic. Dr Courney invented the baby incubator in the late 1800s. Unable to sell them to hospitals, he brought the incubators to Coney Island. Poor women unable to afford medical support for their premature babies would bring them to Dr Courney who placed the baby warmers in a room where people would pay to peer at the helpless infants. A series of wet nurses were employed
to provide for the nutritional needs of the infants, and tend to them with great care. This side show was particularly attractive for the young clerical workers who would form bonds with particular infants, cheer them on in their development, or weep at their deaths. Of the 8000 babies who became side show freaks at Coney Island, Dr Courney was able to save 6500 who might have otherwise met their demise.

The spectacle of cruelty was not lost at the amusement park. Animals took the brunt of the violence. King the diving horse was encouraged to jump from a very high platform into a very small tub of water. In defying his nature, King stood as a symbol of the brazen modern subject. King was also a horse, and hence his simulated flight might be seen as a mocking of the old equestrian role of the traditional order, or later hippodrama. And just as St. Bartholomew’s Fair had its hangings; Coney Island would have it electrocution. An elderly elephant, at Luna land was proving bothersome, unwilling to undertake his tricks passively. It was decided to do away with him through feeding him poisoned carrots. The old pachyderm proved to have the resilience of Rasputin and survived. Yet, the botched killing of the animal caused such intense interest among staff that Thompson and Dundy, as the brilliant entertainment entrepreneurs that they were, seized upon the opportunity to “work the crowd”. Hence, the old elephant’s electrocution was advertised to the public and carried out before a large crowd. Here is an example of how the old order still worked through the new, but in an altered form. The graphic punishment of the body was transferred to an animal subject. Killing the elephant was not undertaken to inform the crowd that they should obey the law; rather, it was purely an act of spectacle and entertainment.

At the traditional carnival, the crowd undertook self-mocking. The “manufactured carnival” of Coney, the crowd mocks others. As Kasson notes, Coney transformed “patrons into entertainment”. Nowhere was this more forcefully illustrated than at the exit of the Steeplechase ride. After whirling around the track on a mechanical horse at such high speed that the female on the back of the horse would have grip her male companion, the young couples were required to pass through the “insanitorium” to exit the ride:

Here the unsuspecting but hesitant pair was eyed by a clown and a dwarf while snickers from a large audience could be heard. Suddenly a gust of wind shipped the young lady’s skirt around

17 This inability to control animals was exactly why Walt Disney would banish them from his parks.
her ears while the clown aimed a rod producing an electric shock between the legs of her beau. As he clutched his wounded parts and the lady tried to reassemble her attire, the crowd’s howls increased the couple’s humiliation.

(Adams, 1990: 45)

The clown, the exposure or maiming of the groin and rump, and the laughter of the crowd are all classic elements of the grotesque in the traditional carnival. Think back to Bakhtin’s thesis, which emphasizes the battering of the body, the highlighting of the genitals, and mocking laughter as carnival strategies which attempted to highlight the regenerative properties of the material body.

Within the modern mocking at Coney Island there is a heightened orchestration of social embarrassment. While the traditional fool would wander about and boot a bum sporadically, within manufactured carnival mocking would be routinized, regularized, and strategically exploited for ultimate impact for the greatest number of people. While such manufactured carnival mockery drew upon traditional carnival elements, it lacked an overarching coherent cosmology. The antics of Coney Island were largely plotless and slapstick. Not only did slapstick play well with the new immigrants who spoke different languages, but it might also be seen as connected to the genealogy of the carnival in its rough-house character.

The barrage of images brought by film would force the amusement park to keep up. The intensity of the side-shows, simulated disasters, and panoramas might all be seen as conventions seeking to provide an increasing number of genres for the eyes. The modern desire to have it all and to transcend all space and time barriers might be seen as embodied within the sheer multitude of sites and sensations offered at Coney Island Amusement Parks.

Extending Sensations: Mechanical Rides

If the dioramas, disasters, and side-shows extended the eye, the rides at Coney Island extended the sensations of the body. The rides mechanized old practices and converted technologies of work into technologies of pleasure. The carousel originated in the form of barrels attached to the spokes of a large wooden wheel which was fueled by a mule, had allowing the knights of long ago to practice their jousting moves. Over time the barrels evolved into elaborated horses encrusted with glitter, mirrors, glass, and gold, which moved up and down on a motorized wheel. The roller coaster, making its appearance in 1804 in Paris, was a wheeled version of Russian sledding. The inspiration for running
coasters through tunnels was received from the trolleys which went into the mining shafts. Frederick Thompson had visited an abandoned mining site which had been turned into a ride by an enterprising entrepreneur, and people were lining up to pay 25 cents for a ride. He took this idea back to Luna Land and constructed coasters which went through tunnels. Shoot-the-Chutes ride put the roller coaster on water, as people sat in boats which sped down steep embankments and followed make-shift canals. The prototype for this ride was taken from the logging industry who used flumes to run logs down the sidehill to the ocean or lake for transport by tug. Efforts were also made to document the fun. The Shoot the Chutes had a boat on dry land that people could pose in for photos. This desire to document the fun through the medium of photography illustrates another synergy between modern technologies and cultural practice. Memories of the fair were not only held in the mind, but also in the picture frame.

Spinning wheels were another form which fascinated the mechanical ride designers. George Ferris's "Ferris Wheel" was created specifically for the Chicago fair. With its stark International style frame, the wheel, at 264 feet — three times larger than any other recorded — elevated crowds, providing a fantastic aerial view of the grounds. While visiting the Chicago Fair, George Tilyou saw the potential of the Ferris wheel which had garnered enough money to recoup its $350,000 capital investment by the end its five month run at the World Fair. When Chicago turned down Tilyou's offer, Tilyou resurrected a wheel half the size at Steeple Chase Park; but billed it as the largest in the world. Other wheels included the Human Roulette and the Whirlpool, which were essentially Ferris wheels tipped on their side. What was unique about these wheels is that they ran very fast. Because they lacked seating, people crashed into one another. Similar physical jostling was to be had at the funhouse which tested agility by forcing people to walk through a turning pipe. As early as 1400, individuals were circled in buckets on a ride fashioned after the water wheel at St. Bartholomew's Fair. However, the traditional fairground would devote much less attention to rides, and much more to competition and play. Short of games of chance, acts of physical competition were completely absent within Amusement Parks.

The rides flaunted prevalent modes of conduct. Women's dresses were lifted into the air by blowholes or by the gravitational force of the moving rides. Individuals were thrown into one another's arms. Staging of these events were not random, but carefully constructed with audience
psychology in mind. The crowd was young and shot through with tedium from the factory and office jobs. The shock, surprise, element of risk, and physical jostling might be seen as providing a great release to one’s everyday activities. “The precision and predictability of gears, wheels, and electricity created a fantasyland of disorder, the unexpected, emotional excess, and sensory overload.” (Kasson, 1978: 39)

Opportunities for physical contact serviced the socializing needs of fragmented singles. The park offered an accepted — and fun — area for coupling. Cross argues that audiences were not “passively lured to sites” but actively sought them out as “sites to have reunions and meet friends and family” and spy prospective mates. The “Barrel of Love” had darkened tunnels and close seating arrangements perfect for “spooning” or “petting”. The modern crowd was less likely to verbally intervene within other people’s business, confining critique to a “look” of disapproval. Coney Island folklore holds that individuals were so moved by their experiences that some married right on the spot (Kasson, 1978: 42). Poets have long documented how love shatters everyday perceptions and relations to the world. Hence, it might not be surprising that a site which is devoted to the suppression of the everyday might envoke romantic sentiments.

Critics lamented the loss of traditional recreational pursuits such as parlour games, self-produced music, and sports displaced by Coney. It was thought that “Face to face communities provided important checks on behaviour; by contrast, the anonymous life of the metropolis appeared to leave individuals rootless and unrestrained” (Kasson, 1978: 98). Others argued that Coney promoted irrationality and that the crowd was “ephemeral”, “unstable” and “immoral” (Kasson, 1978: 97). There is a familiar ring to these criticisms as the medieval carnival was similarly charged with fostering many of the same “evils”.

Still others worried that instead of releasing people from the strain of urban life, the parks increased “nerve strain”, or were also too passive, requiring little physical exertion. To counter, reformers sought to root play within “healthy” and “disciplined” practices. The belief in the curative and enhancing properties of the outdoors was carried on in school and park physical fitness programs. The notion that people “paid” for amusement, instead of “working for it” has long been held suspect by modernist critics. Mass amusements were seen as deskilling people. The fleeting,
instant gratification of popular amusements were thought to distract the mind from serious pursuits and reduce attention span (Kasson, 1978).

Fuller critiques of mass leisure, such as those from the Frankfurt school, saw cultural products as servicing the ruling class, offering pseudo choices and illusory freedom. Without meaningful work people would look to escape into the passive excitement of pleasures, and cease attempts to construct their own leisure. Others argue that mass leisure diffused social solidarity. Kasson notes Coney “represented a festival that did not express joy about something, but offered “fun” in a managed celebration for commercial ends”. It was a factory of fun, with standard events producing standard reactions. Modern leisure held no meaning without money and a job (Cross, 1990: 167 - 171).

Coney Island “manufactured the carnival” and in so doing commodified culture using psychological incite, technology, and illusion. Coney Island parks created alternative worlds to the everyday, seeming to license and promote critique of genteel culture. Yet, ultimately these critiques were rooted in taste and not a fundamental challenge to market relations. Social power was increasingly shifting to the new industrialists and entrepreneurs, but the social classes mocked at Coney Island were declining in their influence. The real powerplayers of modern society were not mocked within Coney Island, they were celebrated. Mechanical rides consolidated the belief that technology could provide pleasure not work. In licensing, orchestrating, enclosing, and directing critique within the walls of the “fun house” Coney, offered an escape valve for radical dissent.

Coney informed the up-tight middle-class that they had the right to enjoy a new mass popular culture. Coney kept alive the “magical” possibility of “transformation.” Coney constructed a site which attempted to attend to the psychological and social needs of a population displaced by new modes of production through providing people with escapes from the dull routine to the exotic, opulent, and exhilarating (Kasson, 1978: 73). Coney structured leisure practices acceptable to the new middle class, and provided exotic substitutes for foreign travel for the working class.

The Depression of 1930s brought the heyday of Coney Island to a close. Many of the 2000 early 1900s amusement parks went “bust” during the interwar period — today only about 600 survive. Changes in social norms, relations, and tastes would force the amusement park to continue
to evolve. Yet, it would be another 25 years until a new breed of amusement entrepreneur would add another layer to the amusementscape.
From Amusement Park to Theme park

The first amendment gives you the right to be plastic.
Michael Eisner, CEO Disney Corporation

While the depression and the war(s) would limit both the resources and the will to fuel the continuation of amusement parks in the interwar period, there were other changes taking place. The kiss of death within the modern cultural environment was to be considered “out-dated”. Coney Island was touched by this curse. Mocking genteel culture lost its appeal in the 1930’s as this strata of society was displaced from dominance. The expanding influence of the mass media and the increasing saturation of promotional culture meant that amusementscape entertainments would have to increasingly compete with a multitude of other images and spectacles. Over time the “curative appeal” of the seaside, which was once such an attractive amusement site, decayed as the sea became polluted by industrial waste. Styles also changed. New modes of fashion introduced garments into everyday life which were far less restrictive than the swimming suit attire of the era. Changes in the distribution of age in the population. As the turn of the century as teenagers grew to adults, caused the appeal of some adolescent amusements to wane. Saddled with new families themselves, young people simply did not have the time to undertake leisure to the same extent as in their youth. As the taste for these genres rooted in slap stick and vigour waned, the amusement park seemed unable to adapt. There was significant growth of the middle class who sought to wash away working class distinctions. Hence, the amusement park, largely a working class entertainment, lost its central role within popular culture.

In this chapter I review in more detail the social factors which forced a transition of the amusementscape to its next form: the theme park. After setting out the broader environment of the post-war period, I focus on a case study of Walt Disney and his company. Walt Disney’s name is almost synonomous with the creation of the “theme park”, and two of the most successful, Disneyland and Walt Disney World’s success was largely predicated on Walt Disney’s ability to
orchestrate the amusementscape to appeal to the emergent middle-class by bringing a new sophistication to the amusementscape. Yet, like the entertainment entrepreneurs (George Tilyou, Thompson and Dundy) of Coney Island before him Walt Disney would borrow heavily from the historic conventions of the amusementscape.

Post-War Social Landscape (1945-1973)
In 1948, 300,000 men at arms returned to America and required reincorporating into civilian society. Politically there was a desire to keep the productivity spurred by the war going in times of peace. While the cold war provided one way of prolonging the combat economy through a competition of armament stock-piling, Eisenhower prophetically reasoned that ultimately it would not be arms that would defeat the USSR, but US prosperity and a political and economic system able to provide the American people with material affluence.

Labor practices of the period emphasised mass production of uniform goods, resource extraction, technological assembly-lines and stock-piling. Jobs were highly specialized, broken into single simple tasks measured by the clock, requiring relatively unskilled labor. Due to Henry Ford's employment of scientific management techniques in his automobile factories, the period has come to be known as "Fordist".18

The devastation of the Depression called for the construction of social safety nets, collective bargaining practices, and the adoption of Keynesian economics. The goal of these new institutional arrangements was to mitigate some of the harsh aspects of "laissez-faire" capitalism. In Kenneth Galbraith's estimation this pact "saved capitalists from themselves".19 David Harvey joins other authors in acknowledging the importance of Keynesian economics and Fordism within the post-war period:

I broadly accept the view that the long post-war boom, from 1945 to 1972, was built upon a certain set of labor control practices, technological mixes, consumption habits, and configurations of political-economic power, and that this configuration can reasonably be called Fordist-Keynesian.

(Harvey, 1990: 124)

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19 Quoted in Globe and Mail, 23 Jan 1997. The fact that Keynesian economic in a diffused sense assisted capital might serve as an explanation as to why was tolerated.
Material affluence increased as did the population in the post-war period. Between 1940-1970, in terms of constant 1958 prices, disposable personal income rose 100%, and the babyboom increased the number of children under the age of 15 from just under 33 million [1940] to 59 million [1965], an increase of nearly 80 percent (Adams, 1990: 104). Against this backdrop, the sphere of consumption and leisure expanded. The nuclear family arrived. The perfect nuclear family supported 2 or 3 children (preferably white, one boy, one girl), would purchase a house in the suburbs and a car to travel to work and shopping plaza. The house, children and car were major investments and would require the additional purchase of appropriate clothing, appliances, and maintenance services. For those unable to finance these investments credit, loans, and mortgages were readily available. Father would work, mother would raise the kids and attend to the domestic sphere. “The suburb was to create a spatial segmentation of work and pleasure a duality of male industry and female domesticating” (Adams, 1990: 105).

Expanding the realm of consumption and leisure was to be “democratic” and “accessible to all”. The working class was offered “department store culture” (Woolworths) and cheap leisure options. Older generations raised with “thrift” as a morally praised characteristic; who had experienced economic depression first hand, were considered (particularly by advertisers) stubborn converts to the practices of intensified consumption. Economic prudence was ridiculed as “cheap” “stingy” “old fashion” and unnecessarily “ascetic”. Younger cohorts seeking identity-markers took to the intensified realm of commodity exchange. They also took up the advertisers’ slogans encouraging their seniors to “lighten up”, widening the generation gap. While the realm of family production had once linked kin (for better or worse); the realm of consumption appeared to divide family members into age and stylistic cohorts.

“Riveting Rosies”, the women who laboured at home to keep the war effort going, were forced to give up their jobs to make way for returning veterans. To entice women back to the home, they were invited to be the chief architects of the domestic sphere — the lord and master over colors, styles, consumption and childrearing. The job required long hours, no pay, little recognition, but a lot of wallpaper to choose from.

The social arrangement of the nuclear family by the 1960s had so many exceptions to the rule (divorce, single parents, second marriages, inter-racial marriages, homosexual relationships), that
it lost its potency as a descriptor. Yet, American mythmakers, producers of consumer products, and politicians would forge a love affair with the nuclear family which assured its continued publicity.

The arrangement of cities changed to service new sentiments and the demands of capital. The Main Street and general store were replaced by the shopping plaza in 1923, as goods were increasingly specialized and regrouped. The Plaza was superseded by the mall in the 1960s. The real-estate market exploded as the babyboomer’s parents searched for homes in which to raise their families. Older European models of zoning residential among and above commercial districts were broken as street culture gave way to suburban culture. Lloyd Wright called the suburb the country-wide, city side. “To Andrew Jackson Downing, Frederick Law Olmsted, and other nineteenth-century reformers, the suburb offered deliverance from the unhealthy physical and moral climate of industrial society, a compromise between the metropolis and the frontier” (Wilson, 1994: 123). There was great appeal in the notion of having “one’s own place” in nature. Massive construction of bungalows and split levels was undertaken outside of the city between 1950 and 1970. The porches and the parlours of the 1920 house were replaced by the livingroom and the garage. Wilson notes that the suburb movement ultimately “destroyed the landscape it held as so attractive”.

Experience was opened up by increased mobility. Modernity was about speed, movement, and disregard for anything fixed. A cloistered life was attacked by modern sentiments as entrapment. Turn of the century public transit and trains heightened the pace of the urban environment. The aeroplane and car pushed up the speedometer and exposed great areas of the earth to exploration. Sorkin (1992) notes that mobility is often associated with a sense of optimism. “The open road” became implicated within notions of individualism, freedom and frontier myths. The desire for the “open road” coincided with reaction against urban confinement. The sale of cars increased dramatically, providing people with a mode of transportation which liberated them from the schedules of trains and street cars. The car became the prize item of males, in particular, for it provided “the status which his job increasingly denies, and, more than any other possession or facility to which he has access, it symbolizes living, having a good time, the thing that keeps you working.” (Adams, 1990: 188) Hotels, roadside entertainment, and curiosity shops multiplied on the

20 See Berman (1982).
highway to service the increased traffic. Car camping became a new form of recreation. By 1956 the interstate highway system enabled towns and urban congestion to be bypassed, which, together with other improvements in the highways made the transportation of goods easier and faster. Highways also contributed to greater social segmentation. Those unable to afford a car (most African Americans and urban poor) were closed out of the suburbs, left to forge a space within the inner city, which the middle class now drove over.

Holiday time was reduced to 11 bank holidays a year. Labor militants and reformers had struggled throughout the 1930s and 1940s to increase, not reduce, leisure time. The paid holiday found political support in 1930 and by 1960 the 40 hour work week was the norm. Gary Cross (1993) contemplates why struggles for leisure time became largely displaced by wage struggles. Overtime, pay for productivity, an unthinkable concept for earlier generations, challenged leisure. Cross concludes that the job insecurity of the Depression era thwarted attempts to shorten working hours and closed out alternatives to commodified leisure. He notes that job insecurity:

[T]ended to diminish the value of free time while it reinforced the attraction of money and goods that it could purchase. Unemployment disrupted routines and made free time something more to dread than to long for. It intensified the linkage of status with work, wages, and the goods that money could buy.

(1990: 136)

The search for increased material affluence, made status seeking, and the approval of ones peers important. "Keeping up with the Jones's" became a social benchmark, as aspiration fuelled consumption. One needs only to look at the consumption rituals of the Early Modern courts to realize the relationship between social aspiration and consumption has a very long history (McCracken, 1988; Rosiline Williams, 1982). What was unique about social aspiration in the post-war period, however, was the vast sweep of society which became implicated within this narrative of "see and be seen", "buy and display". Butsch describes this shift as a movement from "time-intensive" to "goods-intensive" recreation; a shift which contributed greatly to the insertion of commodities into cultural practices (Butsch, 1990: 14). While the medieval worker was held in esteem for the amount of idle time they possessed; the post-war worker became coveted for his/her material affluence — the car driven, the sailboat rigging, the ski resorts visited.
So much effort was taken up in the realm of consumption, that "the church and the pub were both shadowed by new family concerns as 20th century leisure became more uniform and private" (Cross, 1990: 190). Leisure time had once been associated with community and political time; but this coupling became unlinked during the modern period. The new emphasis on social aspiration and consumption proved more appealing than official politics. As Jackson Lears succinctly states; "While few make political decisions, the many "manage appearances."\footnote{Now, of course, even the politicians "manage appearances".}

Males took to the golf courses, and forged allegiances at the Rotary, Lions, and Kwanis Clubs. A separate sphere for women emerged in the women's clubs, gardening, bridge, tennis and golf games, and in the sharing of gossip and recipes over coffee at the breakfast-nook. For many women, however, the isolation of the suburbs and car culture drove them mad.

While reformers did much to democratize leisure and forge links to communal networks (schools, neighbourhood parks) — to make something available is not necessarily to make it popular (as has been demonstrated in earlier examples). Organized leisure had to compete with the "pleasure" of commercially produced leisure activities. Told what to do in the workplace; people did not want to be told what to due in their spare time. Reformer leisure pursuits were rooted in a productive ethos of "discipline" "reflection" "challenge" and "dedication" which had difficulty competing with the "ease" "excitement" and "ready availability" of commercial leisure.\footnote{This is not to imply that the market provided people with what they want. The market is biased in particular ways which would makes it impossible for it ever to fulfil all wants and needs. But because of its centralized place in society, the leisure items offered on the market are indeed the more readily available, promoted and structurally sanctioned.} Leisure reformers could appear "preaching", "vanguard" "paternal" and "cynical"; in contrast, the market appeared to simply silently "provide people with what they want" — pleasure (Cross, 1990). The voice of the reformer was squeezed out by the voice of the advertiser.

The commercial mass media became key players in the orchestration of post-war relations; serving as bridges between the realm of production to the realm of consumption (Leiss et al., 1990). The advent of radio and the widespread appearance of televisions\footnote{This is not to imply that the market provided people with what they want. The market is biased in particular ways which would makes it impossible for it ever to fulfil all wants and needs. But because of its centralized place in society, the leisure items offered on the market are indeed the more readily available, promoted and structurally sanctioned.} accelerated the trend towards home entertainment. Critics lamented the loss of self generated and "active" leisure, as people turned towards listening and watching instead of doing.
While home-entertainment (now most often mediated) were attractive to young families and stole some of the glory of the “lively arts”, the vacation still held great appeal. Mass mediated entertainment is often associated with the creation of the “global village”; yet this deflects the significant role air transportation and tourism played in collapsing the world. Innis drew attention to the way communication lines were intertwined with transportation roots. Transportation lines did not cease, but grew in importance, sophistication, and scope with the evolution of communication channels. David Harvey (1990) points out that the increased sophistication of transportation was demanded by the logics of capital accumulation. But it was not just commodities which utilized the transport networks; it was also people. According to the World Trade Organization international tourism has increased every year since 1939. In the late 1950’s, a tourism boom raised the number of international tourists to 60 million.

According to Miles Quest (1990), the increasing availability of air transport was the greatest influence in the growth of the tourist trade. WWII was largely fought from the skies, as large US industries developed around the production of aeroplanes to fuel the war effort. New techniques and designs were developed for building the crafts, and the number of airstrips increased. The war would also developed a fleet of highly trained pilots. By 1954 Boeings 707s were providing affordable transportation to the middle class. Planes of the earlier mass air period were propeller driven, and flew at low levels and moderate speeds, allowing air travel to be considered a scenic adventure. The jets of the 1980’s fostered the notion of “destination” travel due to the high altitudes they travelled at. Traveling became just a mode of getting from one point to another.

The amusementscape had always dependent on the traveller. The expansion of the tourist trade in the post-war period allowed easy travel over great distances, thus removed some of the barriers of entry (for some) to the amusementscape. The association to tourism and “vacations” would also allow the amusementscape to differentiate itself against the growing mass media.

23 Television penetration after 1945/1950 is 9%; by 1954 55%, and in 1960 90%. Less then 3% of household do not have television sets. Fifty percent have two sets.

24 Dallas Smythe (1977) would argue that people were the “commodities” of the mass media; an argument which might also apply to the structure of tourism and leisure.

25 There was a slight decline in this historic trajectory in the early 1990s. Recession and the Gulf War which instilled a fear of terrorism are considered factors contributing to the decline. In 1992 however, the trend returned to its historic track.
Theme parks

It was against the backdrop of the post-war period that Walter Elisa Disney would add the theme park to the history of the amusementscape. What would mark the theme park as unique was its emphasis on control, narration, and strategic integration within a matrix of other mass media and recreational/travel pursuits. The theme park was located in the suburbs, easily accessible from a highway exit, yet, far enough away to retain its "other worldly" emphasis.

Walt Disney would turn media competition to his advantage. As an animator, his talents for constructing "believable illusions", emotive characters, and emotionally pure plots were played out upon the physical locality of the amusementscape, transforming it into a theme park. While the amusement park had created sections of geographical simulation, the theme park surrendered its entire environment to a series of co-ordinated motifs. To appreciate the distinguishing features of the theme park, I will review the history of both Walt Disney and his company.

Pre-Disneyland

Walt Disney was born in Chicago in 1901. The Chicago World's Fair (1893) created a construction boom which attracted Walt's father to the area. For the economic prosperity it brought to the Disney family, the fair was long praised in the household. Young Walt is said to have endured long hours of work which left little time for play with other children. His companions were the barnyard animals of the family farm.

Walt began his career producing cartoons for the Kansas City Film Ad Company. In 1920 he started to document vaudeville, burlesque routines and jokes and built a "gag" library which he would continually add to. He moved West where his brother Roy was an established projectionist. At Laugh-O-Gram Films he animated fairytales with Iwerks who would become a life long collaborator. He joined forces with Roy in 1924 starting the Disney Bros. Studio. Later the name was changed to the Walt Disney Company, when Walt justified it as an enhancement of the company's place in the market.

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26 The conflicts between Walt and his brother over the business, might well be related to the way in which Walt continually sought top billing for a company which was in all respects a collaborative venture.
By the 1920s, producers sought to "position" products to distinguish them from other brands on the shelf. A forceful way of achieving product differentiation was to attach a "face" to the product, providing the consumer with a personality to bond with. This "founding father" marketing strategy was used by many companies, including giants like Ford. Over the years Walt would perfect his avuncular image to encourage brand recognition and position his product as "part of the family".

Alice in Wonderland was the first serious animation venture of the Disney studio; others, included Mickey Mouse, Silly Symphonies, and the Three Pigs. In the 1930s Pluto, Donald Duck and Goofy are added to the roster of characters. These antics of the characters are slapstick, evocative of the taste for rough housing from the early carnivals. Despite the harsh economic climate, studio staff increased from 6 in 1928 to 187 in 1934. Yet, while the staff grew, profits didn't. Few Disney productions made enough money to recoup the effort, largely due to Walt's insistence on pouring profits back into production, and his love affair with new technology.

In the long run, however, Walt's techno-fetishism paid off. For example, Mickey Mouse's popularity might be related to his being one of the first talking cartoon characters. Also, Disney's early use of technicolor became an established industry norm (Neupert, 1994: 110). The ability to command technological innovation has long been a potent strategy to effect market control and financial success. As Neupert points out, commanding cinematic innovations often united aesthetic and economic considerations:

Pioneering use of sound and color, had less to do with the eventual perfection of the animated film than with the attempts of small companies to become big, the need for competing companies to differentiate their products, and the efforts of corporations controlling new technologies to control industry-wide production practices

(1994: 9)

Walt entered Hollywood at a time of increasing emphasis on product tie-ins. Yet, the role merchandising played in keeping the company afloat in its early years is often ignored by critics. The strong personality of Disney's characters and their "cuteness" made them easy to translate into toys and other assorted products. Very early in his career, Walt Disney began to utilize product tie-ins. In 1934 an unbelievable, "fifteen people work[ed] in the New York office handling royalties on
articles manufactured in Mickey’s name.” As Walt said of merchandizing: “That’s where the big profit is.” Richard deCordova is perplexed how “the merchandising of Mickey Mouse toys to children seems to have preceded in the early 1930’s without any criticism from reformers” (1994: 209). These same reformers were critiquing Mickey’s impact on children’s movie audiences. Distressed mothers were phoning the company complaining that Mickey’s “slap stick” encouraged violence. In reaction Disney defanged, domesticated, and rounded out the mouse, and introduced Donald and other characters to take up the gags and juvenile humor. Yet, no one seemed to notice Mickey climbing into the toybox and the wardrobe.

In the 1930s, the company shifted from making shorts to feature length animation. This transition was motivated less by artistic vision and more by economic smarts. A feature animation was a labor intensive enterprise requiring approximately 144,000 drawings to produce 100 minutes. Rising technical costs would encourage economies of scale. The studio’s first feature length animation was Snow White which turned $8 million on release in 1937. Snow White was followed by Pinnochio, Fantasia and Bambi. While the great expense involved in producing Pinnochio and Fantasia was not returned, Bambi saw limited success. Disney nationally advertised Fantasia, an opulent animation set to Strovinski score, as a “special event” and a “great art”. As if foreshadowing contemporary cultural marketing techniques, Disney “suggested that different regions might arrange the segments differently...to appeal to regional tastes and habits” (Smooding, 1994: 19). Ultimately, however, Disney had targeted too high with Fantasia, missing the middle class who sought entertainment and escape more than challenge and enlightenment. Fantasia’s box office flop brought Disney back to basics: a strong story line, enduring characters, and intense emotional escape.

In 1939, Disney purchased a new studio in Burbank, California for $2 million from the profits of Snow White. It covered “several hundred square feet” and, in keeping with Disney taste, was “as severely gay as a World’s Fair model, as immaculate as a hospital, and as functional as a research scientist’s dream laboratory” (Smoodin, 1994: 24). The experience of constructing the

27 Today there are hundreds.
28 Disney would do much to tame the rougher edges of their content; however, it could not be completely eliminated for humor and play lose an edge when subjected to complete restrain and order. To give up on the ‘carnival impulse’ of slapstick could threaten the popularity of Disney products. Further this material is easily translated for global markets, and cheap to produce. Hence, Disney would strategize to service all views, and become a master at
studio coincided with Walt’s interest in creating a park to house his characters. The park was originally humbly conceived as a playground for kids outside of the studio.

Although the brothers were opposed, the company began to sell shares in 1940. The studio strike in 1941 turned Walt particularly bitter and made him conservative in his politics. Dumbo, a story about a deformed elephant who bears the name of P.T. Barnum’s dime store museum packaderm, made a splash during the war period, but by the end of the war the company is in deep debt.

Disney’s sojourn into the production of films for the war effort turned his attention to live drama. He produced Treasure Island and Beaver Valley which became successful, as were Cinderella, Peter Pan and the Living Desert, produced in 1953. When the latter had difficulty finding proper distribution channels, Disney formed his own distribution arm, Buena Vista.

By 1952 Walt’s small playground for children had significantly expanded, to 160 acres of orange grove in Anaheim, California. In an area of year round sunshine, the climate would allow the extension of the duration of the fair to an unprecedented 365 days a year.\footnote{The decision to open the park’s year round was bold and would require Disney organizers to orchestrate park events in such a way as to keep attendance high. Special deals are offered in off season; and high traffic seasons are peppered with special events. This in turn would effect the content and experience of the park.} Unable to find support from brother Roy\footnote{Some of the reluctance from Roy Disney about joining Walt in his plans might be related towards the increasing control and top billing that Walt was seeking within the company at this time. For example the plans for the park coincided with Walt’s founding of Retlaw which incorporated his name.}, Walt founded WED Inc. to plan, design, and administer the park.

The sentiment and tone of Disneyland is often explained within Disney history as stemming from Walt’s aversion to Coney Island. Walt is said to have visited Coney Island with his children in the early 1920’s, and found the parks physically and symbolically disgusting — unsuitable “family” fair. Walt sought to redefine the amusement park and move away from the traditional format, for the “brash” symbolic, and “seedy” atmosphere provided too much for Disney’s sensitive middle class constitution.

To “clean-up” the amusement park, Disney would remove the side-shows, games of chance and animals, and emphasise the theming of landscape and rides. Live mules and ponies were present in the early Frontierland at Disneyland, but when they bolted, ate hats, and turned stubborn, they...
were banished. The freak side-shows were simply too risqué for the modern middle class taste. In place of these carnival relics, technology and robotics were inserted. Walt also ban beer halls and hot dog stands, improved sanitation, and introduced subtle forms of crowd control to the amusementscape. Disney realizes the potency of this aspect of its holdings and has a consultancy arm which assists urban planners and developers in adopting the “Disney way”. The success of this arm of the company is evident in the numerous Disney design motifs and employee management techniques employed throughout the United States and abroad.

The organization and cleanliness of the park holds great appeal for the middle class which visits Disney. Garbage sits for no long than 4 minutes on the ground before it is whisked away. “Staff” the building material for the Chicago World’s Fair provided a cheap material for the construction of expansive architecture. Yet “staff” rotted. Disney’s solution is fibreglass — a clean, hard, malleable building material which can hold brilliant colors and a glossy sheen, just like in the movies.

Disneyland is circled by an earthen berm which separates it from everyday society. Where amusement parks were fenced; theme parks are fortressed — trees and structures are used to blank out all external references. In 1963 Sheraton sought to build a 22-story hotel outside Disneyland. Walt Disney intervened, arguing to the Anaheim city council that “it would undermine the ability of visitors to forget about the outside world.” (Bryman, 1995: 113). The council gave the go ahead for a 16-storey hotel and instituted an ordinance prohibiting tall buildings from being constructed within the vicinity of Disneyland.

Walt gave up on the original architects hired for Disneyland’s design and commissioned animators from his studio dubbing them “imagineers” (Zukin, 1991: 222). We might recall the problems modern architects created at the Chicago World’s Fair, with their grandiose and elitist structures which alienated audiences. Disney’s decision to replace architects by animators illustrates his populist vision.

To fund Disneyland, Walt drew upon his life insurance policy, acquiring sponsorship from GE, Kodak, and Pepsi among others. He also and forged a relationship with the American Broadcast Corporation which gave him $10 million in exchange for a weekly television show, 10% of the
profits of the park, and revenues from the concessions for 10 years. The television program clause in the deal with ABC proved to be a great asset:

The Disneyland series proved very important to the park’s success, acting as a regular advertising medium both before and after the park’s completion. The show also advertised Disney’s upcoming films such as 2000 Leagues Under the Sea; a smash in the 1954-55 season.

(Adams, 1990: 89)

Sleeping Beauty’s Castle and tinkerbell (a pixi-dust fairy which jingled) opened the show. Schultz (1988) makes the interesting observation that when the founding fathers of America wrote the constitution they banished symbols of monarchy from the republic. It is thus a strange irony that Disney would profit so from placing a “castle” at the beginning of his television show and in the centre of his theme parks. One might surmise that the “paternal” structure of the feudal order and its ability to evoke an era of simpler harmony might offer one explanation for the popularity of these symbols. Tinkerbell is another medieval symbol. Not only is she a “fairy” which harkens back to the “sprites” and “fairies” of the pagan era in the Saints days festivals, but she is called “Tinkerbell”. If we recall from Bakhtin’s recreation of the carnival, there was usually a series of bells used in the cultural practises. Bells are associated with the marking of time, warning, and celebration. The choices of these symbols, are not arbitrary but illustrate the conscious lengths to which Disney would go to create culturally resonate products. Walt dredged the symbols of the fairground, dusted off the castle as a monument of the feudal age; found tinkerbell, a pagan fairy tethered to “bells” which were standard carnival noisemakers, and projected them back onto the middle-class nuclear family, where uncoupled from their religious and cultural significance, they became symbols for all that was magical and fantastic. Walt himself served as spokesperson for the show. The Walt Disney Show proved amazingly effective in creating synergy between the television and the theme park.31 This process of feeding similar content through two media allowed for a unique circulation of products and promotion which was to greatly benefit the company.

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31 So successful was the union between television and the theme park that in the 1980s when the company was experiencing significant economic troubles, in part due to the floundering television division, some argued against the demise of Disney’s television production. It was thought that the promotional value of a television presence was great enough for the other components of Disney’s empire that it justified the continuation of the television division despite its poor showing.
On the Walt Disney Show families were introduced to Davey Crockett who later became the star of a successful film, launching a coon skin hat craze. The success of Davey Crockett served as yet another example of the potency of the frontier myth. So potent has this genre been that it has been carried across a series of media, and epochs, represented both in the Wild West Show as live theatre, and in print in the “penny dreadfuls”. From books and live theatre it took to the screen in black and white then color westerns. From there, the frontier myth entered television represented in such shows as Davey Crockett, Bonanza, Gunsmoke. It also came to rest in merchandise as a whole generation of young boys slept in cowboy pajamas. Finally, the frontier myth would find a home at Disneyland. A possible explanation for the durability and popularity of the American frontier myth is that it served as an anchor around which civic pride and nationalism could be rallied when the state was faced with increased modernization and rootlessness.

Disneyland
The budgeted $11 million for the completion of Disneyland escalated to $17 million by opening day, July 1, 1955. Yet, despite its costs, the park would start an era of solid financial prosperity for the Walt Disney Company. Profit margins steadily increased from the opening of Disneyland. In 1952, profits were $.5 million, in 1959 $3.4 million, and $11 million by 1965. The theme park rose to account for 50% of the company’s ever expanding revenues from 1955 to 1970. By 1970 those revenues had reached $167 million. The capital investment for the park was paid off in under a decade. The theme park proved to be the cash cow that Walt Disney’s animation and film industries had never been.

Disneyland is not one land but several themed lands: Adventureland, Tomorrowland, Fantasyland, and Frontierland, Mickey’s Toontown, Critter Country, New Orleans Square, and Rivers of America. The themes of the park drew upon the rich history of folklore, fairytales, American history, children’s literature, and carnival. People enter the park through Main Street USA. The Disneyland Railroad circles the park, and Sleeping Beauty’s Castle rests at the end of the Central Plaza fronting the themed lands. Great care has been taken to assure that fantasy within the park is not disturbed. One land appears to effortlessly unfold into the next, yet unity within the lands is
strictly enforced with stores, rides, garbage cans, restaurants, even food entrained to a uniform ensemble.

Disneyland’s success could not have been predicted based upon opening day, which was a disaster. Many people forged tickets, causing an unexpected overflow of people which could not be properly managed. The eleven original attractions (a fraction of the current 50) were either incomplete or failed to work at all. Unschooled, employees took to their security jobs with too much relish and were rude and bossy to the public. Opening day was so blistering hot, the asphalt melted in the heat. A plumber’s strike prevented the fountains from being completed, stirring up accusations that the lack of water was a strategy to force people to buy drinks in the park. Press coverage was disenchanted:

I attended the so-called press premier of Disneyland, a fiasco the like of which I cannot recall in thirty years of show life. To me it felt like a giant cash register, clicking and clanging, as creatures of Disney magic came tumbling down from their lofty places in my daydreams to peddle and perish their charms with the aggressiveness of so many curbside barkers.

(Quoted in Adams, 1990: 96)

Not long after its inception Disneyland became a media darling. Although Coney Island and the World’s Fairs were written about in the popular press, the attention given to them was minimal compared to the coverage that the Disney theme parks were to receive.

Amusement park owners had warned Disney that his design was problematic. Not only did Disneyland not include the popular rides, the hot-dog stands and beer gardens from the Coney era\textsuperscript{32}: “They criticized...the large amount of open space that wouldn’t generate revenue, and the need for constant, expensive maintenance in the theme parks”(Zukin, 1991: 223). But Disney was appealing to the emergent middle class audience who would seek differentiation in their cultural practices. The cultured green space of the park simulated “the garden” and allowed areas for people to view each other.\textsuperscript{33} People-watching held great appeal for the social aspirant. Disney had a penchant for

\textsuperscript{32} They were excluded because Walt detested their smell.

\textsuperscript{33} This innovation illustrates that Disney was in many ways quite before his time. Western populations are now currently aging at a significant rate. Disney has a new audience which the tourist literature refers to as the “mini mass”. The “mini mass” is the growing number of individuals 55+ who have the time and money to partake in leisure activities. They come to Disney parks not to go on the roller coasters, but to soak up its pastoral landscapes which are swaddled in nostalgia. Euro Disney’s largest attending age cohort were individuals 55+ (33%).
shaping space for what Zukin calls “visual consumption” — a process in which entire environments are shaped into eye candy. No doubt, this ability was related to his animation design experience.

Disney soon learned from his mistakes. After the opening day fiasco, ticketing became tightly controlled. The park originally charged for each attraction, but then books of tickets were used, and finally a single entry fee was introduced. The motivation behind these changes were to ensure greater flow through. Stopping to pay for an attraction contributed to traffic jams at popular rides. The one-price entry fee was used at the World’s Fairs and Coney Island amusement and had become a norm well before Disneyland. While the lines for attractions were long at Disney theme parks, single tickets would have made them even longer. Further, the single entry fee appeared to give the audience a choice. People could go to other attractions, yet most endured the wait for the popular rides.

In Disneyland language, lines are euphemistically referred to as “pre-entertainment” areas. They snake back and forth creating the illusion that they are moving and short. The zig zag formation of these lines puts people in contact with one another, so they can chat away their wait. Many of the rides have long queues hidden within them, again to create the illusion of shortened length. The average one-hour wait for a ride at a Disney park has become a norm.

While the cost of rides and attractions are covered in the single entry fee, food, drink, and souvenirs are extra of course. Since, hauling around lunch around would be tiring, picnic areas are few, and themed edibles are prominently placed within children’s vision. Not surprisingly, most visitors opt for prepared food. Like original fairs, Disneyland promotes the desire for “souvenirs” to materially mark one’s journey to a ritualized space; yet the sheer number of souvenirs at Disney is outstanding.

The mandate to exclude references from the outside world stops also transforms commodity exchange. Bank machines are also themed, in keeping with their location. “Disney bucks”, a currency which may be purchased at the gate on par, is valid only within the park — another way in which commodity exchange is made more fantastical.

While no one overtly tells you where to go, choices are clearly limited to two or three directions. As one manager put it, “choice is tiring”; hence, limiting options is a favour Disney provides its visitors. Most visitors to Disneyland are upper middle class professionals who hold jobs
rooted in the central task of making decisions and prioritizing — how blissful the pre-programmed Disneyland is by comparison.

Upon reaching Disneyland a smiling young chap directs you into a parking slot and points to the entrance. Much of the cueing is non-verbal, a fundamental form of dialogue no doubt useful for handling the non-English visitor. Guided with a point, a wink and a nod, you are reminded to securely lock your car. If you are driven to the entrance you are helped aboard, and told to ensure that your children are safely seated. The emphasis on safety serves to assure conformity. Upon departure you are reminded to take your belongings. Control is always positioned as ‘for your safety’; a potent way to ensure compliance. A brilliant example of how Disney adapted prevailing social practices is found in the way in which the walkways at Disneyland were planned:

When Disneyland opened, its designers waited to see where people actually walked before the layout of paths and parks areas was finalized. The parks actually assimilate the tactical trajectories of its visitors, returning them in the form of strategies. Walking across the grass loses its subversive appeal—its easier and more efficient to keep to the walkways.

(Adams, 1990:68)

Movement through the park is carefully controlled for several reasons. Firstly, approximately 10,000 people move through the space each day and in high season (Christmas) the numbers can reach 50,000. Disney's business is built upon its ability to provide each of these visitors with a “pleasurable”, “safe”, and “uniform” experience. The thematic narratives require one to flow through them in a particular sequence. Hence, the controls that the park places upon movement and behaviour can be justified. Only through following the parks rules and procedures can the most enjoyable time possible be delivered to the maximum number of people.

The buildings of Main Street USA are built to “give a false perspective, with the ground floor being to seven-eighths scale and the first floor to five-eighths scale” to pull one forward to the castle. Sleeping Beauty’s castle is a “weenie”, a “Walt term” used to describe visual lures strategically placed throughout the park to encourage people to fan out across the park in ways which would prevent back-logs.34 Walkways are wide, particularly in high traffic areas. The direction of camera lenses are

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34 Coney Island entrepreneurs had long known that people could be attracted by the smell of the real “weenies” at hot-dog stands and would use them as draw for exhibits. The difference between the amusement park style of attraction was that it was loud and overt; where as in Disneyland more covert strategies were employed. The entry ways also changed over this period. Where Coney Island gates screamed with massive hailing structures like
controlled through clearly laid-out sites for photo opportunities which are so perfect why would one want to snap elsewhere? For hard to get photos like the dramatic descent from Splash Mountain, the pictures are taken for you and offered for sale. The desire to record one’s experience which began in the Coney era, is carried on with greater sophistication at Disney. Public services like washrooms and fountains are plentiful in Disney, all services are arranged not to break with thematic unity, nor interrupt traffic flow. Keeping the guests happy contributes to their return.

The careful lack of interference of one theme from the other increases visual impact. Music and sound, known to stimulate eye response, are used to guide people through motifs. Rides regulate the pace of the narrative and provide an efficient way of moving people through the sights. King argues that rides also control perspective somewhat like a movie camera.

Each car is wired for stereophonic sound and turns electronically so that the occupant sees only what the designer has intended him to see throughout the programmed ‘show’—exactly in the way the movie camera sees. The cars behind are invisible and those ahead obscure, so that these rides have an intimate, private feeling closely connected to film viewing.

(King, 1981:120)

Standardization of practices at Disney encourages standardized responses which are only noticed when they are transgressed. Susan Willis (1993) noted how odd it was to watch some young people freeform dancing in the park. Their movement stood in stark contrast to the surrounding park flow. Similarly, I witnessed untypical Disneyland crowd behaviour on Tom Sawyers Island which is a patch of green space with simulated rocks and relatively unpatrolled caves. Children freed from the behavioural control of lines swarmed upon the simulated rocks and ran in and out of caves with wild abandon. Parents appeared noticeably more relaxed, leaning up against rocks and trees, freed from the responsibility of having to pacify children in the long waits for rides, unburdened from whines given the Island contains only one hidden and meagre canteen.35

Stepping out of bounds within the park quickly brings attention to oneself by the numerous eyes continually surveying the site. Animal characters double as security guards. Rules about attire

“Creation” the large statue at the front of Dreamland, Disney, because it has an extensive promotional network and suburban placement, does not need to advertise the park through its front doors which are simple gates. 35 This unmechanized park in the center of Disneyland fosters other forms of relaxation, as it is rumoured the area is often found littered with assorted drug paraphernalia and condoms at the end of the day.
serve to thematize and unify the crowd. Walking barefoot, or without a shirt is prohibited — these rules are again justified by safety.

The Disney crowd is amazingly homogeneous. Three quarters of visitors are professionals, upper management, or upper middle class. Adults outnumber children 4 to 1. And just as Mainstreet USA harkens to an “anglo” memory, 95% of the visitors are white, 3% black and just 2% Hispanic, an amazingly low incidence given Spanish speakers surpass English speakers in the area in which Disneyland is located.

Walt developed his own “Disney University” training centre which schooled employees into the “Disney way” of covert crowd control. Staff are taught to use euphemistic discourse such as “incident” for accident, to smooth points of contention, as the following chart attests
Inculcation in the “Disney way”, includes a strong dose of Disney history, threaded with affirmations from Walt Disney’s philosophies. The goal is to foster staff adherence to corporate culture, teamwork, and familial bonding. Employees are to think for themselves, but keep their thinking in line with that of the founding father. So successful has training been that employees police one another, and are known to chastise co-workers who deviate from the rules (Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989; Blocklyn, 1988; Findlay, 1992). Staff are young, predominantly white, smartly dressed, and clean cut. There is an old joke that Walt could not have had a front-line job in the theme park because of his moustache. Uniformity fosters conformity of behaviour and provides for standard packaging which ensures each visitor receives “good entertainment value”.

Besides soothing voices, Disney also employs a very old trick of crowd control — novelty and distraction. The strategy works wonderfully to quell and pacify the crowd without force. The number of attractions at Disneyland quickly escalated to 26 and continued to increase over the park’s history. In the first decade of the park $136 million was spend on upgrades. Judith Adams notes that for a theme park to remain attractive to the public it must introduce new rides every second year. Walt Disney cemented this strategy in a philosophy of unending change: “The park...will keep

36 In 1605 at a fair in Palermo, Italy plagued by riots, officials opted not to use “distractions” to divert attention.
growing. The thing will get more beautiful year after year. And it will get better as I find out what the public likes" (Adams, 1990: 94).

This emphasis on never ending novelty, upgrades, and restructuring typifies commodity culture. As noted earlier, the rate of change within modern society is significant. Earlier Amusement parks like Coney Island were driven to extinction because of their inability to adjust their products to meet changing tastes. Continual adding and rearranging stimulates the sense of “newness”, required to extend a product’s lifecycle. Through listening, (however minimally) to public desires and adapting the park accordingly, he was able to construct an interface between popular desires and commercial profits. Disney also undertook futuristic consumer-lead strategies. Early in his career, Walt became fascinated with Gallup polls and employed audience research throughout his working life. Walt sometimes negotiated his vision with the public. For example, he gave in to the public desire for mechanical thrills, but retained his vision by enclosing the rides within theme (Space Mountain, Bobsled, Splash Mountain). Cultural experience within Disneyland was rendered through technology, routinized, efficient, rationalized, and perfectly timed — bearing all the imprints of Fordist practice.

Walt Disney’s real contribution was the way he fed cinema into the fairground format, which served to create a unique hybrid. Cinema and television were to create new forms of narrative expectation which outdated their genealogical predecessors, the circus and amusement park. Cinema was layered on top of historic amusementscape conventions, not the other way around. Through circulating stories first through cinema and television then onto the park, Disney revitalized the fair for modern audiences. This process also increased the circulation of symbolic commodities, and created synergy between media forms. To be even more specific, it was not simply cinema, but the genre of animation which influenced the park’s design. Cartoons construct a “convincing illusion of life” which provides maximum “emotional attachment” and “identification” with the audience. Freed from realism, the genre allows “artistic spectacle” where detail and stylistic flourishes reign. The unity of the theme draws people into an artfully constructed narrative, which as Johnson notes, “added conventional plots to inherently plotless materials” (Johnson, 1981: 186). Ironically, “the more successful Disneyland is in its creation of a fantasy space the less the visitors are aware of its fantastic nature.” (Wilson, 1994: 186).
Many critics comment that the use of thematics finds its legacy within the cinematic tradition in which Walt Disney was trained. The imagineers who scripted the park landscape were animators, and created a series of stage sets which individuals move through (Finch, 1973). Kroker's (1992) description of malls as the "liquid television for the 20th century" can equally apply to Disneyland. Schickel (1986) has argued that Disneyland represents a uniquely new medium. Wilson argues that the rides act like corporate sponsored exhibitions and use the "same techniques, as television advertising" (Wilson, 1994: 126). The average visitor spends one hour per land, the same average time spent with a televised drama. Many argue "Disneyland should be understood as an extension of the cinema." (Yoshimoto, 1994: 187).

To make the park cinematic, Disney extended the theme to the total environment; expanded the repertoire of themes employed, increased the use of technology which allowed greater flow and packaging of themed space; and incorporated film within rides. Screen and seats were synched to the narrative in rides like Star Tours, Captain EO, and Indian Jones, which are widely popular. These rides began to receive Oscar attention in the late 1980s and were bestowed their own award category, illustrating their recognition by the film industry as a unique genre. The creation of synergies between the medium of film and the theme park medium proved very profitable; for one controls the scripting of the myth as well as a ritualized space in which it is enacted. Of the 600 amusement parks in America only 5 or so draw the lions share of profits. Many of these top parks have movie affiliation.37

37 See Amusement Business, "Staying Alive In the '90s: Do Parks without Studio Ties Stand a Chance?,” 1995: 3-4.
Top 10 US Amusement Attractions by Attendance, 1979 and 1990 (in millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
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<tr>
<td>Walt Disney World Resort</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>Walt Disney World Resort</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disneyland Park</td>
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<td>Universal Studios Tour</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Universal Studios Hollywood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Six Flags' Great Adventure</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Knott's Berry Farm</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Busch Gardens' Dark Continent</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Sea World of Florida</td>
<td>3.96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knott's Berry Farm</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Sea World of California</td>
<td>3.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriott's Great America</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Busch Gardens’ Dark Continent</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sea World, Orlando</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Kings Island</td>
<td>3.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cedar Point</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Cedar Point</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kings Island</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Six Flags’ Magic Mountain</td>
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Source: Adams, 1990: 134-135

Not only does the tie-in to the movies create synergies for capital accumulation and market control, the use of themes and narratives are also thought to encourage consumption within the parks. Smoodin makes are argument for the control and consumption narratives shape:

The narrativized space of Disneyland feeds the visitors with those preexisting narratives, in which Disney characters are naturally integrated as characters, not as commodities. The ingenuity of Disney magic lies in its attempt to integrate shopping as part of attractions without destroying the autonomy of the latter; that is, shopping areas are located at strategic points in Disneyland without interrupting the narrative flow created by the park’s spatial organization.

(Smoodin, 1994: 19)

Willis (1993) argues that people buy the iconic characters as a way of participating with the narrative.

While these descriptions of the park are useful, they also understate the contribution of other cultural forms such as the fair. The emphasis in Disney literature on the cinematic nature of the park has served to obscure Walt’s significant historical borrowing.

As the most persuasive salesman of his own products, Disney carried on and expanded the legacies of those who, in the nineteenth century, combined business with spectacle, men like Nikola Tesla who took their inventions on the road to amaze the masses and find wealthy patrons. Moreover Disneyland, that homage to the possibilities of the future, really functioned as a further development of the last century’s gigantic public spectacles—the Chicago Columbia exposition of 1893, for instance—or slightly smaller local affairs organized around holidays and special occasions.
Disney's segmented lands and simulations were nothing new. His use of fantastic architecture was very close to what was constructed at Coney Island. As previously mentioned, the innovation of theming a space was conceived long before Disney within gardens, world fairs, and amusement parks. Many of the motifs and narratives within Disneyland originated from oral and literary history which predate film. Just as Luna Land had employed roving entertainers to keep crowds engaged with the amusements, Disney's animation and characters in costume and interaction with audiences bring a carnival practise to contemporary light. Normally timid children who cry on Santa's knee rush to the plush characters and hug them with glee; illustrating the park's success in constructing a feeling of secure fantasy. But Disney's need to control behaviour within the park also motivated the taming of the carnival practices which erupt around the characters. So gleeful were children's responses to the characters in the early days of the park, their interaction with children was scripted to suppress carnival sentiments and retain decorum. As Schultz notes, character interaction was limited to "posed picture taking, autographing, patting children on the head, and close (almost mechanical) movements — perhaps because the tremendous enthusiasm and energy of the broad interplay with a variety of characters in the early days was perceived as leading to a more participatory, chancery theatre" (Schultz, 1988: 310). Disneyland also employed the same rides as the amusement park era (i.e. wheel rides, simulation rides, water rides). What was unique, however, was the greater attention given to theming and sculpting of line formation. Disneyland is ripe with panoramas and dioramas, antecedents of film. Submarine ride; Pirates of the Caribbean, It's a Small World simply mechanize the diorama; a staple from the Coney era. Coney Island entrepreneurs had started the legacy of providing permanent homes for the orphan cultural products left over from World's Fairs. Walt Disney carried on the tradition with strategic relish. He showcased his "Audio-Animatronic" (talking robots) at the New York World's Fair in 1964-65 and encouraged Pepsi and General Electric to mount exhibits (Small World and Progressland) which he then took back to Disneyland after the fair.

Comedy at Disneyland was "Taylorized". The Disneyland gag which seems off the cuff, the surprise which is so startling, the spectacle so awe inspiring, are all tried-and-true cultural products, quality tested and timed for maximum impact. An employee described Walt as being able to "top a
gag like nobody else” which is a divine ability to twist and sharpen a point so that its direction and timing pierce the human heart” (Smoodin, 1994: 38). Disneyland has brilliantly “managed” expectations. No doubt, the gag library which began to be amassed in the 1920s fortified Walt Disney’s timing talents. Today the Disney library contains:

...all the durable children’s stories ever told. It also contains five hundred joke books and bound files of the notable humorous publications. It contains a battery of steel filing cabinets which hold a million and a half typed and classified jokes, each legally ascribed to the source from which it is set down. There are 124 classifications of such jokes, and each has from five to twenty subclassifications. Plus old Sears and Roebuck catalogues

(Hollister, 1940: 35)

What does the audience get out of these gags? Where carnival laughter sought to debase the monarchy and church, Coney Island mocked genteel culture; but Disneyland mocks the everyday, itself and technology. The guide on the Jungle Cruise makes cracks about the fantastical nature of the robotics displays. Mickey gets pulled around by an out of control lawn mower. Employees on the monorail to EPCOT joke that the acronym refers to “every person comes out tired”. With a wink and a nod, Disneyland lets the audience know it is an original fake. Disneyland provokes a controlled laugh at itself; and in so doing it ironically, Disneyland authenticates itself through its burlesque. Gags are executed so flawlessly that 50% of the park’s gate are return visitors seeking another hit, knowing that their experience will be exactly the same as the first.

Walt Disney hid the debt he owes to the historic players of the fairground, positioning himself as an “original creator”, instead of a borrower and modifier. Dipping into the “cultural pool” for ideas is a fundamental staple of cultural creation. What is problematic, is the company’s refusal to acknowledge the way in which it benefits from cultural history; and perhaps even more worrying is Disney’s colonization of what it copies. Disney takes from others, but does not return the favour. Disney is a ruthless protector of symbolic property. So successful has the company been in this area that it hires its expertise out to others, as we see in the alliance Disney has forged with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to regulate, shine up and market the Mountie symbol. Disney takes the issue of copyright very seriously. A much quoted example was the incident of the corporation suing a day-care for painting Disney characters on their wall. A recent example has been the threat of legal action against bakers who sell cakes shaped like Mickey baked in “unofficial” Disney pans.
Early Walt Disney World: Profit, Exclusivity, Prototype Community?
In 1964 as Mary Poppins umbrelaed her way into the hearts of millions of Americans, agents for Walt Disney secretly began to buy up parcels of land in Florida, acquiring 27,443 acres in the Orlando region. Again a successful movie would provide the initial financial impetus for the park. The average price paid for the park site was $200 per acre, totalling of approximately $5.5 million. Disney folklore holds that Walt’s parents had courted in the Florida area; imbuing it with sentimental value for Walt. Conveniently, however, the area also possesses year round sunshine and is the gateway to a lucrative tourist market. Walt who held as a principle the value of “truthfulness”; lied to reporters about the acquisition, So that his name, now associated with big capital, would not drive up the price of land. But in 1965 on the tenth anniversary of Disneyland, official word was released of the planned construction of a sister park.

The motivation for the second park was three fold: Profit, exclusion, and EPCOT. Disneyland had proved so successful that the seduction of a second park closer to Eastern populations was irresistible. Disneyland had quickly become surrounded by hotels, and services which profited from the large numbers of people attracted to the area. Walt loathed the encroachment of adjacent development, stating in public that the infringement tarnished the park’s aesthetic. Privately he was no doubt concerned that others were profiting from his success. Buried deep within a plot of land controlled by Disney, the new Walt Disney World Resort was an assured fiefdom. The park was conceived of as a total resort centre offering a whole gambit of recreational events (golf, camping, birdwatching) in which amusement parks would be just one part.

The nucleus of the resort complex was the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT). EPCOT was conceived as a community where people would live. Walt had become obsessed in the late 1950s with urban planning literature. He reviewed utopian experiments, and travelled throughout the world to sites which had attempted to build infrastructures to encourage “new” social relations. He no doubt assimilated some of the aspirations of the Bauhaus movement in the 1920s which “set out to impose rational order (‘rational’ devised by technological efficiency and machine production) for socially useful goals” (Harvey, 1990: 31). There is a strong intimation of Le Corbusier within Disney’s visions. Walt Disney lived through the age of the Congress of International Modern Architects and the massive rebuilding of urban centres. EPCOT was to be a city
which doubled as a research centre. This vision of rational and ordered living was in keeping with the movements of the day, which saw the city running like an efficient factory, houses as “machine(s) for modern living.” The air in the 1950s was ripe with optimistic planners and developers who constructed “modern” buildings in the Ghettos to try to wash away a long history of segregation, oppression, and poverty. Cities like Brasilia sought to erase history through new construction of infrastructure. Disney might be seen as contributing to these movements. Findlay (1992) has emphasized that Disney’s use of “magical lands” had a major impact on thinking about urban living after 1940.

EPCOT was Walt’s most ambitious contribution to the field of urban design. Walt details the functions of EPCOT:

It will be a planned, controlled community, a showcase for American industry and research, schools, cultural and educational opportunities. In EPCOT there will be no slum areas because we won’t let them develop; there will be no landowners and therefore no voting control. People will rent houses instead of buying them, and at modest rentals. There will be no retirees, because everyone must be employed. One of our requirements is that the people who live in EPCOT must help keep it alive

(Mosley, 1986: 275)

Who would be the chosen people of EPCOT? The notion of people building a community for themselves might denote the reclaiming of history; but how “unalienated” can labor be when it has to meet the lofty mandates of an “American showcase,” as well as pay the rent? As in Disney war films, poverty in EPCOT was seen as something which might be willed away through hard work. Of course there would be no land owners, since Disney already owned the real-estate. While the EPCOT vision was confined to a local universe, it sought to provide a model for a broader one displaying colonial aspirations. In retrospect, Walt Disney’s vision seems contradictory, oppressive, idealistic, and patently unworkable. He would never live to see the completion of EPCOT. A long time smoker, he died in 1966 of cancer, but with his utopian dream still intact. Nihilism and mistrust of utopian projects would erupt less than a decade after Walt’s death when a new structure of feeling began to take shape within society.
Late-Modernity: Shifting Surfaces (1973-1990s)

Daniel Bell characterized a shift in the early 1970s to what he termed a Post-Industrial Society. Frederick Jameson wrote about the Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism. Lyotard wrote the Post-modern Condition, and David Harvey retorted with The Condition of Post-Modernity. Eco and Baudrillard highlighted the increased “simulation” “hypersignification” and “play of signs” within the post-70s cultural context. Featherstone (1990) pointed to the increasing globalization of commodity culture; Wernick (1991) to the expansion of promotional discourse in the presentation of self. The suppressed feminine voice would break through in the provocative work of women such as Spivak and bell hooks. While all of these authors would disagree on the timing, magnitude, and underlying processes propelling this social restructuring, none would deny change in the “structure of feeling” in Western society post-1970. To reduce a very complex series of shifting processes, here are a few of the factors contributing to the changing social forms.

The belief in progress was severely challenged by environmental and global development critiques. Faith in traditional authority was weakened by Vietnam and Watergate. The Berlin wall fell, as did the Soviet Union. The spread of personal computers into the work-place and the home changed the tempo and nature of communications. Optimism which had once fueled the modernist missions of the 1950s came into question:

Charles Jencks dates the symbolic end of modernism and the passage to the post-modern as 3:32 p.m. on 15 July 1972, when the Pruitt-Igoe housing development in St Louis (a prize-winning version of Le Corbusier’s ‘machine for modern living’) was dynamited as an uninhabitable environment for the low income people it housed. (Harvey, 1990: 40)

New communication technologies and production techniques enabled corporations to spread their production throughout the world, and move to “batch” “customized” and “just in time delivery.” These changes in the configuration of the production moved away from the assembly-line, and became known as “Post-Fordist” techniques (Castells, 1989; Harvey, 1990; Thrift, 1987). New integrations between companies created transnational corporations whose profits outstripped many countries total GNP. The liberalization of markets, and the increased emphasis on free-trade increased commodity exchange both domestically and internationally. American economic dominance was challenged by the rise of Japanese economic growth. The growth in speculation capital grew to dizzying heights as people bought bonds with due dates a hundred years in the future.
Public space was increasingly squeezed out by private space. Cash-strapped government, riddled with debt sold off corporations and laid off employees in order to downsize. Private corporations followed suit, undertaking what came to be known as “restructuring”, which became a euphemism for layoffs. The strong economic growth of the post-war period seemed to have reached its end as the time between recessions shortened, and the unemployment period lengthened.

The dominance of the manufacturing and resource sectors began to recede. The service sector was offered up as the area of job renewal even though the wages and union representation in this area were significantly below the manufacturing and resource jobs they were replacing. The entertainment/leisure/tourist sector grew in significance as services.

The heightened mobility of capital made governments stand up and take notice of the potential to accrue jobs and taxes from foreign investment and travel to mitigate local area recessions. Areas began to refashion themselves to invite investment and tourism. Zukin (1991) would document the process of gentrification were by old industrial sites would refurbish with fancy restaurants, shops, and residents to encourage new forms of capital circulation. Urry (1995) and Rojeck (1993) would note similar trends in Britain, as the world seemed to be “theme parking” itself. We will explore in more detail later how the amusementscape has been caught up in this foray. First, however, there is need to explore more closely the history the Disney Corporation after the 1980s, for the expansion of the company during this period is important to our understanding of the trajectory of the amusementscape.

Doug Gomery (1994) presents a good outline of some of the problems the Disney Corporation faced after Walt’s death. After Walt’s death in 1966 to 1971, Roy Disney ran the company, remaining faithful to what Walt had laid out on the drawing boards for the future. There were a number of box office successes, including The Jungle Book (1967), Winnie the Pooh and the Blustery Day (1986), The Love Bug (1969) and The Aristocats (1970). In 1971, Roy opened the Magical Kingdom, in Florida, which essentially replicated Disneyland and renamed it The Magical Kingdom according to the exacting specification of Walt’s drawings.

Transplanting fairground conventions and forms from one site to another was taken to a new level at the Walt Disney World Resort, The moral of the story for this business move is ‘if it works, why change it.’ The Magical Kingdom hub with the familiar lands surrounding it is larger, and taller
than the Disneyland original. In Judith Adams estimation less “intimate” and more “claustrophobic” due to the cloistered sense the opulent structures create. Minor changes such as Liberty Square replaced New Orleans Square, Main Street added Victorian section, Sleeping Beauty’s Castle was replaced in Cinderella’s Castle, and Toontown was reopended as Mickey’s Starland on the mouse’s 65th birthday. The rides were familiar (Big Thunder Mountain Railroad, Splash Mountain, Tom Sawyer’s Island, Space Mountain, Mission to Mars).

Historically the Amusementscape was built in areas which provided easy access and minimal maintenance. The era of the theme park brought about a new attitude towards nature and landscapes. Access could now be constructed, as could the entire landscape on which the park existed. The Florida landscape which Disney had chosen to sculpt its visions in was not very inviting. It was very hot, very humid, very wet, and very muddy. Walt Disney World Resort would embody that sense of “American can-doism”; that conquers the most inhospitable frontiers. If Las Vegas could be constructed in the middle of a desert, then why couldn’t a resort be constructed in the middle of a swam?. To tame nature, Disney would completely reshape the landscape with miles of canals and man-made reservoirs.

To undertake the construction of Walt’s vision the company secured the Reedy Creek Improvement District, setting up its own municipality which administered building regulations, environmental codes, roadways, sewage controls, police, fire departments and so on. In exchange for 30,000 some odd low paying jobs, the state of Florida relinquished control of the area. Building fees were waived. Given the continual construction at the park, Disney no doubt made significant savings: “according to Holleran, the impact fee for a 7,000-room hotel in 1990 would have been $18 million.” (Bryman, 1995: 117). The company managed to secure massive road improvements from the State. While, Florida council members were concerned that the 20 000 people who were to live in EPCOT be given the power to control their own community, the agreement stood. Subsequently, EPCOT would turn out to be a Fair instead of a new community (See Morison, 1983; Wallace, 1985).

The entire Walt Disney World theme park has a basement where costumes, laundries, offices, service areas, computers, garbage and sewage controls are monitored, intensifying the Disneyland strategy of excluding the “backstage” to promote the fantasy more fully than in Disneyland. The mechanism behind the thrills were computers, whose wires and chips are also completely hidden in
the underground bowels of the park. Coney's mechanical rides exposed their guts, Disney's attractions were encased. Again, enclosure might be seen as making the events at Disney appear more magical because the energy and labor which makes them "work" are "hidden within the final product".

The parks at Walt Disney World, in particular EPCOT (soon to be described), make great effort to display the "wonders of the future", yet because visions of the future are tied to corporate sponsors, the destiny displayed tends to be banal and conservative. The futures within EPCOT and Tomorrowland are familiar and not unlike the present, essentially recycling the future presented at the 1964 New York Fair. Banalities such as "virtual-reality games machines, voice-controlled electronic ovens, and computers" were common (Adams, 1990: 135). Wilson notes the Disney parks condemn us to "a recurrent and eternal present." (Smoodin, 1994: 9).

The Magical Kingdom is encased within a parcel of land so large that it is accessible only by jet or the interstate. Because the resorts are buried within Disney "land", Disney guides guests with directions and information they picked up on their car radios. Those without cars or plane fare are excluded. Disney World is a major destination spot in Florida. The liberalization of the air market, improvements in all forms of transportation, people's desire to make more frequent trips of shorter duration, and the strong trend line of growth in the tourist market have lead the "World Tourism Organization to expect tourism to surpass oil as the major item of international trade by the year 2000." (Quentin, 1991: 55)

Walt Disney World visitors, like those who frequent Disneyland are again upper middle class, professional, technical personnel or managers. White and well fed, 71% travel from outside the Florida area and pay $31 a day or $100 for a four day pass. Bob Garfield, a writer for Advertising Age, stopped to ponder the value he and his family received for the price:

[We] purchased entry into the Magic Kingdom, Epcot Center, Disney-MGM Studios and Typhoon Lagoon water park, where we luxuriated in 113 hours and 47 minutes of eating, sleeping in our 'affordable Disney' accommodations, riding on buses and standing in line punctuated by a cumulative 6 hours and 47 minutes of fun, fun, fun. That amounts to $261 c.p.f.h. (cost per fun hour), and it is by no means the most horrifying statistic I can cite

(Garfield, 1991: B5).
Yet, the 30 million who walk through the gate each year, consider it a bargain. If all tourists who have visited the park were to come at once, "that would make [Disney World] the 12th largest country in the world, somewhere between Mexico and Italy" (Smoodin, 1994: 13). In keeping with the theme of "total resort area", also opened at this time were the Contemporary Resort, Polynesian Village, and later Lake Buena Vista communities.

Company profits grew from $12.4 million in 1966 to $26.7 million in 1971, when Roy Disney died. The success of Walt Disney World and the other projects launched by Roy Disney illustrate that Walt's bother was not in his job out of sheer nepotism. His contribution to the company has been severely underestimated.

After Roy's death, Card Walker, head of marketing, took over as president. The film division of the company began to slump which was of great worry. "Walt and Roy had long realized the importance of inter-referential products and the films were very much the centre of that notion. If the films continued to disappoint, there was the risk that the enterprise as a whole would begin to suffer" (Bryman, 1995: 38). The Disney Channel launched in 1981 was unable to draw a large enough subscriber base. The channel forced the cancellation of the Wonderful World of Disney TV series for it was feared the program would cannibalize subscription to the cable channel. The significant promotional value that the theme parks accrued from the Wonderful World of Disney show was lost.

The sharp impact of a slumping film division, and lack of television promotion, illustrate how fragile Disney's carefully planned synergies are. Synergies are generally thought of as capital enhancers, but the reverse can also be so. Without popular content, having all of one's holdings bound together can cause significant problems. The storytelling element is as vital to the success of the theme park as the new rides added each year. This period of economic down-turn illustrates that the parks are built upon a base of intensive capital and media saturation, very vulnerable to down-turns in film and television divisions.

Walker would extend Disney's global reach by adding Toyko Disneyland in 1980. In 1982 he opened EPCOT, at cost of $900 million. EPCOT was a mere ghost of what Walt Disney had originally envisioned. Gone was the living community, a hopeful wish from a bygone era, deemed a financial nightmare. In its place, a permanent World's Fair which advertised corporate products and
global tourism rose. Like the Pruitt-Igoe housing in St Louis, EPCOT would be Disney's own modernist movement. Covering 600 acres, EPCOT in sentiment and size echoes the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. As Adams notes, there was simply a shift in technological emphasis from "railroads, steam engines, electricity and agriculture" to "automobiles, computers, petroleum, food processing, communications and plastics." (Adams, 1990: 113)

EPCOT is divided into two sections: World Showcase and Future World. The World Showcase is made up of several country pavilions, including US, Germany, Japan, Italy, France, China, Great Britain, Canada and Mexico, each distinguished through architecture, landscape, cuisine, and goods representative of the nation. Cultural representations are stereotypical, simplistic, memorable and marketable. Most pavilions contain films, boat rides and galleries.

The "world in a glance" emphasis of the World Showcase at EPCOT has been associated with "time-space compression" and "decontextualization" concepts in post-modern literature. Harvey has likened the way Disney brings together representations from different times and places in one spot as a heightened example of "time-space compression", which is rooted in the needs of capital to speed the circulation of commodities through time and space characteristic of the contemporary period. Decontextualization refers to the way phenomena are lifted out of their context and inserted into others. Exhibits and rides within the Disney theme parks and EPCOT are less interested in accurate context than in convincing illusion. They are cut and pasted from different times, cultures, and geographical areas. On the Jungle Cruise, for example, one passes through "the Congo, Zambezi, Amazon and Irrawaddy rivers" in seven minutes (Fjellman, 1992: 225). Bryman argues it is problematic to associate these tricks of decontextualization and time-space compression solely with the contemporary period. He notes that at the turn of the century, Coney Island and the World Fairs created simulations of city streets from around the globe.

Fjellman claims that the decontextualization of images creates a disorientation which makes it difficult for the audience to maintain a grasp on what is happening. Yet, audience members exhibit a great amount of relaxation, pleasure, comfort, and even boredom with the images. While at the Chicago World's Fairs there is testimony that individuals became overwhelmed with the sites, the contemporary audience, raised on television and a media saturated environment is not troubled by symbols which bleed into one another. Decontextualization might well feed what has been
recognized as a new subject position of the tourist. Tourists at one time were thought to be seeking to authenticate themselves through the experience of a variety of culture, geographers, and artefacts. The “post-tourist” according to Urry (1990) does not aspire to lofty aspirations, rather simply to experience and view a variety of diversions. Feifer notes that the post-tourist is omnivorous: “Now he wants to behold something sacred; now something informative, to broaden him; now something beautiful, to lift him up and make him finer; and now something different, because he’s bored’ (Feifer, 1985:269). It might not be too outlandish to consider the role television, advertising, planned obsolescence and the Disney parks themselves have played in creating this gluttonous subject.

Future World is based upon a series of exhibitions sponsored by Corporations who contributed $300 million or about one-third of the total cost of EPCOT. Exhibits and their players include: “Spaceship Earth,” Bell system; “Universe of Energy, “ Exxon; “Horizons,” General Electric; “World of Motion,” General Motors; “Journey into Imagination” Kodak; “The Land”, Kraft; “The Living Seas”, United technologies, “Wonders of Life”, Metropolitan Life; “Communicon,” AT&T; “Backstage Magic”, Sperry, “American Adventure” Coke and American Express. Given the future is hard to peg, and product lines continually change EPCOT is in a perpetual state of creative destruction which is possibly even more hyper-accelerated than that of the theme parks.

The narratives within these exhibits emphasize the family in consumption. “Horizons” shows the future as it was conceived in the past, and then transports individuals to “FuturePort”. While the technologies and commodities change, the basic structure of the family remains intact. Again, there are new commodities, but no new social relations displayed. The Carousel of Progress follows a similar trajectory tracing a family throughout history. A Kodak Moment before the showing of Captain EO is riddled with family bonding. Kuenz (1992) and Rojeck (1993) have noted the conventionality of the family within displays. The family is always in its “nuclear” arrangement, denying homosexuality, divorce, single parents, or family deaths. Disney is the antithesis of Carnival which ritually celebrated death.

Several others critics have noted that such “omissions” are a strategy used by Disney to shape their intended messages and add a positive hue to their presentations. Dorfman and Mattelart (1975) have
pointed out that there is no labor within Disney comics. Wealth is found lying on the ground or in a treasure chest, and the working class are often presented as criminals. Race wars are firmly buried in the past, as if the end of segregation solved all the problems. There is no Vietnam, no Jackie O, no Watergate, no student revolts, no feminism, no strikes — Exxon has nothing to do with oil spills. Cities are absent, hence images of “productive labor and cultural diversity” are opaque. The “visual monotony of the modern urban society” is replaced with images of the “medieval and renaissance cities” (Byman, 1995: 123). The present is absent. Images are either rooted in a spectacular future just round the corner, or in a nostalgic past. Citizens can sit back and consume.

Yet as we blink and look again, we see that we do not produce our future out of the material reality of the present. That future is served up ready-made, a feast of “new ideas” and “leading-edge technologies.” Once history is reduced to a series of technical innovations, rather than genuine change, the past can be retold as an imperfect rehearsal for the present (as the present is for the future), full of the same old moral lessons that support the prevailing ideologies of today.

(Wilson, 1994: 126)

Mainstreet USA reminds how conveniently nostalgia can be harnessed to consumption (Francaviglia, 1981). Robertson 1990 suggests the growth of wilful, synthetic nostalgia in the late twentieth century is closely connected with consumption. The warm fuzzy feelings created from a past which “never existed and which will never exist” encourage one to hold onto history through the purchase of a material good.

Disney is ripe with nostalgia. According to Chase and Shaw (1989) nostalgia is predicated upon three conditions: linear time; presentation of artefacts of the past; a deficient present. All time within Disney marches forward on a straight line in which society becomes progressively better. The theme park sites are riddled with representations of the past. Disney, profits from the deficiency of the present. Rojek notes the way nostalgia disregards conflict and Giroux how it promotes an innocent and naiveté view. Starbinski (1966) and King (1981) point out that nostalgia facilitates the longing for a return to childhood. Turner (1987) ponders why nostalgia does not bring about a sense of melancholy. Perhaps, lament is assuaged through the way Disney juxtaposes the “narrative of nostalgia next to an optimistic account of the future which was learned through past mistakes.” The past is neutralized through humor and omission. The past is quaint. History is presented as a series of “symbols rather than as representations of coherent standpoints or
movements.” There is no class struggle: “EPCOT discards the history finely of utopian initiatives of the American people in favour of an ideology of growth and development.” (Wilson, 1994: 123). The past in a sense is “someone else’s”; constructed by inventors or entrepreneurs. Corporations unproblematically insert themselves into these narratives.

Exhibits are riddled with the word “we”, which bonds the audience to the sponsor’s message. “They” is used to describe the wondrous strides corporations have made in solving the problems of the past, which assures them a role in the future. While the family farm and the ruggedly individualistic entrepreneur are presented swaddled in nostalgia as the backbone of the country; they disappear in the future as the corporation and biotech engineering take over. An unproblematic line is drawn between the entrepreneur, the family business, and the corporation. As Bryman critiques: “It is not sufficient to depict corporations as legatees of individualism, since corporations do much to stifle competition.” (1995: 144)

Because Disney parks emphasize control, interaction is kept to a minimum. This has been of particular concern to critics of children’s socialization. Disney parks label everything and allow no space for children to exert their imagination (Sayer, 1965). By selecting out the undesirable elements, the world is made hygienic but does not challenge the imagination. The constant bombardment of stimuli squeezes out opportunities for reflection. Hunt and Frankenberg (1990) note that, “in the Disney parks there are few climbing frames and playground-type of activities because they cannot be controlled.” The places within EPCOT which do allow hands on interaction (Wonders of Life and Image Works) are popular with children. However, children’s play-time has its own rhythm and the exhibits can become clogged with children and interrupt flow. Parents are known to drag children from their play for the next important ride or and event to witness. (Bryman, 1995: 103) Schultz regimented play:

We lose the power of play to repeat a story or game never the same way twice. We lose their socializing as well as their inventive power, the resolving of conflicts and points of view, the accommodating of differences and complexity. We lose the willingness to imagine and act on our own, individually and in groups (1988:300).38

38 Schultz (1988) in emphasising his point leans towards postulating a ‘golden age’ of free-form play. Indeed the degree of control Disney places on play is significant — however, tradition also used to co-ordinate play in oral cultures.
In the 1980s, the company essentially stopped growing financially. The start-up costs of EPCOT brought the 1981 net income down ten percent from the previous year, to $121.5 million. The Disney Corporation became ripe for hostile take-over which were prevalent in the early 1980s.

Late-Walt Disney World: Expansion and Synergy

Steinberg, who sought to buy up Disney and cash in through selling its lucrative holdings piece by piece was paid off $325.5 million to cease its take over of the company. The struggle to regain control would end up costing the company nearly $900 million and would not be completed until 1984. A significant proportion of the bail-out money came from the Texas billionaire Bass brothers. In exchange for their contribution, they insisted that Micheal Eisner become the new leader of the corporation. Eisner was parachuted in from Paramount Pictures with a reputation as a keen entertainment businessman. Of interest to the history of the amusementscape, Eisner was also an former architecture student.

To revitalize the company Eisner would:

- extend the company’s movie presence, through new feature length animation’s as well as adult films,
- orchestrate the profitable release of Disney classics to video;
- extend Disney’s television presence;
- squeeze corporate theme park sponsors for more money;
- encourage two branch plant theme parks one in Tokyo, Japan the other in Paris, France; and,
- intensify Disney’s holdings in hotels.

By 1990 Orlando would be second only to New York in the number of its hotel rooms. The steady stream of hotels constructed on the Walt Disney World Resort included: Grand Floridian Beach Resort, Disney Inn, Walt Disney World Village, Caribbean Beach Resort, and the famed Swan and Dolphin. Robert Venturi, the high priest of post-modernist architecture, claims that “Disney World is nearer to what people really want than anything architects have ever given them. It’s a symbolic American Utopia” (Goldberger, 1972: 41). While much is made about the post-modern style of the Dolphin and Swan, the Elephant Hotel on Coney Island stands as a testimony that theming hotels is not a new phenomena. What was unique about the Disney projects are their scope and sheer number.

Eisner emphasised that hotels should be stars — like the movies — and drew from a star studded roster of architects including: Peter Eisemann, Frank Gehry, Aldo Rossi, and Robert Stern. Within the modern period the architect was a sole artistic visionary. To work with Disney, however,
required one to subordinate design ideas to "motif, emblem or logo" and to produce works dedicated to making children laugh. The architects who work on Disney buildings can talk about their only with written consent.

The hotels drew away tourists from Orlando's hotels. Several additional attractions were constructed in Walt Disney World Resort to lure tourists. Disney-MGM Studios was opened in 1989. The connections Disney had to Hollywood would make it difficult for independent tourism entrepreneurs to compete. The traditional Florida waterpark was challenged by three Disney water theme parks (River Country, Typhoon Lagoon, and Blizzard Beach). Adult entertainment had to compete with Pleasure Island's multitude of themed discos. Birdwatching was covered by Discovery Island (somewhat ironic given Disney killed several birds in constructing the resort and transforming their habitat). The process of creating "simulacra's" or "better than the originals" is a salient feature of the parks which have attracted the attention of contemporary critics (Eco, 1986; Baudrillard, 1993). Simulation of landscapes, as we have seen, has a very long history. The drive towards simulation in the parks might be seen as connected to their cinematic roots which foster the creation of a 'larger than life' structure of feeling which informs design. What might be considered unique about Disney simulation is that simulation had classically been employed in the creation of the 'foreign', exotic', and 'unknown' environments; yet, Disney would have great success in simulating the everyday, the common, the already — upgrading it to the spectacular. Disney's Boardwalk brought tamed some games of chance (mostly video games) which had been largely excluded from the theme parks. The simulation of the boardwalk brings the seaside back to the amusementscape. Thus, it is not surprising that this section of the resort is billed as a Coney Island replica, with an "Atlantic City" feel. Yet, the only remnants of the turn of the century park is the use of the name "Luna Land Park". "Carnival" within this section is not "manufactured" as it was in Coney, but "retailed", as the "Disney's Character Carnival" which is a shopping plaza.

Coming attractions include Animal Kingdom is to open in 1998, and a sports complex slated for 1997 to house Disney's growing roster to professional sporting teams (such as the Mighty Ducks). These "world class" attractions make it difficult for smaller enterprises outside of the Disney domain to compete. The economic spin-offs which others were able to derive from their proximity to Disneyland in California, are not possible within Walt Disney World Resort. The
resort would continue to add hotels, water-parks, adult entertainment, and a host of other activities which have dampened the tourist business of the great Orlando area. A stunning example of anti-competition was the discovery that people spend on average 5 days in the Florida area. Disney upped its three day pass to four. With economic prospects dampened, the Orlando area is ripe for drifters. There were a series of highly publicized tourist attacks in 1992 and 1993, which drove even more tourists into the safe sanctuary of the park. Disney creates a corporate processing zone within its own country, stripping locals of their ability to undertake their own enterprise through planting a cultural cash crop.39

The Disney Corporation: Theme park Colonization and Theme park Resistance

Colonization

Disney replaces carnival symbols with modern visions of progress, nation building, technological virtuosity, and the family in consumption. According to Disney the settling of the West and the building of America was undertaken by brave, inventive, resourceful, honest men with strong entrepreneurial vision. America was ‘discovered’ not ‘appropriated’ — nature and natives needed to be tamed for their own good. The past is quaint, clean, and rooted in good neighbourly feelings. The mistakes made in the past were innocent, and are well behind us as today’s corporations have learned from history and are prepared to deliver a future full of blissful consumption for the family. The nuclear family is the bedrock of the nation. The adult’s raison d’être is to be a parent. Beautiful babies are born and couples are in love but without the messiness of sex. Countries and cultures from around the world come together to celebrate in harmony. Carnival revelry is confined to the cinema screen and the shopping mall. Opportunities to interact and experience physical exuberance are carefully orchestrated and delivered in finely timed episodes on programmed technology. Nothing is left to chance.

Not only is the conflict of history underrepresented in the narratives of the theme park, the history of the Disney corporation itself has been heavily mythologized.

39 Abroad, Disney has been recently chastised for contracting child labour in Haiti to manufacture Mickey. See "Group charges Disney with using child labor," Vancouver Sun, Dec 7, 1996, A10.
In 1952 when Walt Disney founded Retlaw (Walter spelt backwards) to incorporate his name, he was no longer just a person, he was also a logo. People incorporate phenomena considered economically valuable, and in need of protection against infringement. Walt took pains to turn his storytelling talents to the presentation of both himself and his business.

There are well over a dozen Walt Disney biographies, and legions of popular press interviews and stories about the man — few heads of state, social reformers, or humanitarians have received as much attention. Most of this library contains basically the same stories. Even the negative stories have a familiar ring. Disney history, particularly as it is relayed in the popular press is a little too stupendous, a little too positive, to pass for a once lived reality. Smoodin comments: “Much of the current media discourse about Disney...seeks to simplify him in the extreme” (Smoodin, 1994: 3). This simplicity is not innocent: it services and is largely orchestrated by the Disney organisation itself.

Disney holds a tight rein on the information it releases. Few people are given access to Disney archives. Schultz claims that the archives have been sanitized, noting that little but promotional “puff” is to be found. Corporate members who speak to the media know how to spin a good tale. The ability of Disney to sell the angle of media stories (not necessarily to throw a positive “spin”) but “frame” them (Gitlin, 1980) might be seen as contributing to the corporation’s superb public image and good-will.

The construction of the Walt myth, particularly by the popular press, has tended to follow the “great man” historiography, which is a narrow approach to history which neglects the support and systemic forces behind the “great man”. More lengthy and accurate bibliographies pay homage to other key players who contributed to the creation of the business: in particular, Walt’s bother Roy, Iwercks and the hundreds of nameless and faceless employees — but also expose the way Walt appropriated historic innovations, symbols, and practises as his own.

Most stories about Walt Disney are so well known they hardly rate retelling, yet, I will run through a few for the odd reader who has managed to escape Disney’s promotional arm. The classic American dream story of the farm boy who makes it rich in the West is retold in the tale of Walt Disney’s arriving in Hollywood with $40 dollars in his pocket. There is the triumph of creativity
over oppression and generation overthrow embodied in the stories about Disney's dastardly father, a failed businessman, who discouraged young Walt's drawing, viewing the pursuit as frivolous.

Another evil influence in Walt's life was the Hollywood entrepreneur Mintz who steals one of Walt's more successful characters, Oswald the Rabbit. Perhaps Mintz was unfair, yet Walt Disney would learn from Mintz protecting intellectual property.

There are the famous stories about divine creative inspiration, rooted in fate, like the story that Mickey is inspired by a mouse which ran across Walt's drawing board. Or, that on a train trip with his wife, Walt heard the train calling "chuga, chuga, mouse", and the whistle blowing "A m-m-m owa-ouse" when pressured to come up with a new character to replace the rabbit Mintz had stolen.

Both of these explanations of Mickey's origins hold more entertainment and promotional value than early tales which conclude that Iwecks a co-animator, had a heavy hand in Mickey's genesis, or that Mickey was formulated based upon a simple marketing calculation. An early Walt Disney, who had yet to fully perfect his public relations strategy, testifies:

I can't say just how the idea came. We wanted another animal. We had had a cat; a mouse naturally came to mind. We felt that the public — especially children — like animals that are 'cute' and little. I think we were rather indebted to Charlie Chaplin for the idea. We wanted something appealing, and we thought of a tiny bit of a mouse that would have something of the wistfulness of Chaplin...a little fellow trying to do the best he could.  

(Carr, 1931: 57)

Disney history is not false; rather it is strategically selective and omits important factors. The stories of happy Disney employees who whistle while they work, obscure the strike by the animators guild in 1941 which left Walt forever bitter towards his employees. In keeping with the political paranoia of the day, Disney dismissed the strike as the evil work of communists who had infiltrated his organisation. Walt's dramatic charge rings hollow in light of the clearly documented evidence that Disney's hirelings were subject to vast hierarchical wage scale discrepancies.\(^\text{40}\) Walt was a perfectionist. Employees would work hours of overtime for no pay so as not to disappoint their boss. Shop floor innovations were considered the property of the company and copyrighted by the Disney enterprise with little remuneration for their creator.

\[^{40}\text{The trend of wage discrepancy has yet to be ameliorated. The bulk of Disney employees are paid $7.50 per hour. In 1995 Michael Eisner, the CEO made $8.78 million plus millions in stock options.}\]
The tales of Walt’s great eye for matching people to the correct position, his reluctance to fire, his encouragement of staff to do their best, the novelty of his productions, nor the admiration many of his employees coexist among the negative aspects of Walt’s personality and “business practices”. Employees also had to endure personal degrading from Walt Disney who was not always the smiling face he presented to the public. But Disney’s charisma and the seduction of being a part of a “creative enterprise” served as justification for enduring oppressive labour practices.

So charismatic a figure was Walt Disney, that he has continued to control even after his death in 1966. Employees are still trained to follow the mantra of Walt. And popular rumours about Walt being frozen somewhere waiting to be thawed for future generations, help the Disney corporation to profit. Rojeck notes the contemporary fascination and recycling of images of “dead stars such as James Dean, Humphrey Bogart, Elvis Presley, Jayne Mansfield, Clark Gable, John F. Kennedy, John Lennon, Sid Vicious, Jim Morrison, and Kurt Cobain” (1995: 163). Recurrence of these images promotes an everlasting vitality and flexibility. Given little distinction is made between the original and the clone, the living person is not required to continue the cult. In fact, the image may become even more potent as a simulacra if the real person does not threaten the promotional construction (Rojeck, 1995:162-164).

The Disney Corporation’s significant control over the cultural landscape and its historic longevity have made it a revered American Institution. Disney’s extension within the cultural environment is staggering. Since 1984, when Eisner took over as CEO, revenues have increased nearly 7 fold to $10 billion and profit clocks in at $1.1 billion. The filmed entertainment division so unsuccessful, in the early 1980s, has been revitalised and in 1994 accounted for nearly half of the corporation’s revenue. The Disney Channel is the second largest pay perview operation in the country with 14 million subscribers. Toy production, which Disney does not undertake itself, is controlled through major licensing deals. Merchandising is distributed through over 400 of its own Disney Stores, and other retail outlets are more than willing to make shelf space for Disney. The 1996 Christmas season saw all major department stores deluge us with Disney’s re-make of 101 Dalmations. In a decade, consumer product revenues have increased from $110 million to $1.8 billion. A long term contract with the fast food giant, “McDonalds”, has been forged. In 1995, Disney was the eighth largest advertiser in the United States spending $444 million dollars; surpassed
only by such giants as Philip Morris, General Motors, Proctor Gamble, Chrysler, Ford, Pepsi and AT&T.  

Film studios include Touchstone and Miramax. Toyko Disney, opened in 1983, has been a continual financial success. After a shaky start, Euro Disney began to turn a profit in 1995, again illustrating Disney’s ability to learn from its mistakes. International revenues topped $2.4 billion in 1994 from a paltry $142 million in 1984.

In 1995 Disney purchased Capital Cities/ABC for $19 billion. Eighty percent control of ESPN came as part of the deal, extending Disney’s televised presence into over 100 countries; which will assist Disney in the marketing of all of its products, particularly its sports teams. Adventures in the theatre market include a stage version of Beauty and the Beast, and the refurbishing of 42nd Street in New York will polish up old theatres like the New Amsterdam for the distribution of Disney drama. Newspapers, children’s comics, family magazines, radio stations, cruise ships and multimedia holdings round out the Disney $44 billion corporate roster. So diversified has the company become, that the theme parks, long the bread and butter, now make up only 16% of the company’s revenues.

The Disney corporation now dominates the amusementscape. As Susan Willis has noted, all Disney products point to one another. This nexus creates significant synergies between Disney products which allows for an increased circulation of capital. A synergy according to the Disney Corporation’s CEO, Michael Eisner, is making 1 + 1 equal 5. Further, Disney has been quite successful in ensuring that the spin-off capital to be made from food and lodging required to experience the amusementscape is not lost to competitors. Thus, synergies not only accrue significant wealth for private stock holders, they create a strangle-hold on the cultural environment.

Raymond Williams situates cultural production within a broader web of social relations. From this perspective it is apparent that privatized cultural industries such as Disney act like any other industry, seeking continual growth, market and labour control. Concentration of power is a method of market control. Political economists have long illustrated the cultural industries propensity towards concentration. Concentration within the cultural industries funnels wealth into the hands of

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41 Advertising Age, February 12, 1996
the few; can stifle diversity and access; and privilege particular perspectives, challenging democratic principles (Mosco, 1997).

Cultural goods motivated by capital, rather than aesthetic, moral, or social considerations, tend to be shaped in particular ways. For example, reproduction is often chosen over originality, goods are targeted to affluent groups, and populated markets. Cultural industries prosper not necessarily because they provide the best and most desired goods and services, rather because they are able to intensify market control. To be clear about this argument, it is not that cultural industries do not uphold aesthetic standards nor that they do not abide by some moral or social considerations — but profit is their primary motive. According to Mosco, concentration within the media institutions has reached a new phase:

...take-overs have raised the specter of monopolisation to a new order of magnitude as one or a few integrated conglomerates might gain substantial control over the production and flows of communication, information and entertainment.

(1997: 158)

There was a time when the state was concerned with the impact of media concentration. In 1965 when Westinghouse attempted to buy ABC the deal with struck down by state regulators who argued that a major corporation’s control of a national network would threaten the quality of information delivered. Disney’s 1995 take-over of ABC was undertaken with no concern from regulators. The “watch-dog” media blitzed the story but focused largely on the impact of the merger for stock holders.

Regulators today are more likely to encourage media concentration for the good of the “market”, than to deny corporations the right to merge and align. The health of the market, and the health of society are seen as one in the same. Regulation through market competition is in vogue, even though increasing strategic alliances and licensing deals see many companies putting competition aside to work together for mutual benefit. Market regulated environments have produced oligopolies, as, if not more, powerful than any state regulated monopoly. While businesses do not want state control, they still continue to seek state funds for infrastructure such as roads, airports, education for workers. Universality is reduced within the regulatory arena to

42 Mighty Ducks, 25% share of California Angels.
“affordability”. Corporations argue for exemptions from regulation through claiming the freedom will allow them to lower costs to consumers. Yet, the price of media and cultural products continues to rise. Regulators emphasis privatization, liberalization, and deregulation.\textsuperscript{43} This regulatory environment has been very fertile for the Disney corporation.

Resistance

Jeffrey Chester of the Centre for Media Education notes that without “a public outcry” these oligopolies will continue to grow. The theme park, which intrudes most heavily into lived communities, might offer the greatest potential to initiate “public outcry”. The case of Disney America, a proposed Virginia theme park which was cancelled due to controversy, provides an interesting example of a backlash against Disney’s version of the amusementscape.

In the Eighties, the desire to create new theme park traffic has placed several new theme park projects on the company’s drawing board. Yet, four were thwarted, illustrating there are real limits to “theme parking” the world. In 1988, plans for Disney-MGM Studio Backlot in Burbank, California met opposition from Tinsel Town. Resistance came largely from other corporations not wanting Disney to muscle in on their business. Port Disney was to have launched in the summer of 1994 on the shores of Long Beach, but met opposition from environmentalists who were able to lobby on the argument that the construction of the seaside park would bring more harm to the area — economically and environmentally — than good. Strong environmental laws in California provided the environmentalists with the legal support necessary to back their resistance. Westcot, the Californian echo of EPCOT proposed for a site near Disneyland, fell victim to internal conflicts about financial viability and appropriate allocation of Disney resources. Yet, it is the conflict surrounding Disney America, which was most widely publicized. The story provides an interesting illustration of the struggle over the rights to control landscape.

In typical Disney fashion, secret agents began to eye a 3000 acre site near Haymarket and Piedmont Virginia for its new park. Prior to Disney moving in, a significant amount of homework had been undertaken. Population density maps, tourist traffic flow, real-estate prices, and projected growth were extensively studied.

\textsuperscript{43} As Mosco (1997) thoughtfully points out, deregulation is not the absence of regulation simply a shift towards
America Disney would take the process of nostalgia to new levels. Blue prints at Disney headquarters visualized the site as housing nine playlands representing American historic experiences from the 1600 to 1945. The playlands included: Cross-roads a mid-nineteenth century town "selling 1990s souvenirs and offering inn accommodations" (Synnott, 1994: 54). Two antique steam trains offered transport to Presidents' Square where Audio-Animatronic statesmen talked to the audience. Disney offered a Native-American version of a Powhatan Indian Village. Civil War Fort was to offer battle recreations; We The People recreated the settling of Ellis Island; Enterprise, was a factory town "where visitor can take a roller-coaster ride on the Industrial Revolution through an early twentieth century steel mill". Victory Field was Disney's version of a World War II army airfield; State Fair a nostalgic simulation of the country fair; Family Farm would remake early agriculture. Each one of the planned lands was predicated upon nostalgia, and highlighted Disney's ability to turn a history of conflict into a history of harmony.

This plan was ambitious. By 2010 the playlands were to cover 405 acres and be joined by 2281 residential units, 1340 guest rooms, 300 campsites, 1.9 million square feet commercial space, two golf courses, a 37 acre water park — equal in scope to the Walt Disney World Resort.

Costing an estimated $650 million, the project was to be sold to Virginia decision-makers on its ability to create 3000 direct jobs and 16,000 indirect jobs. While these promises of economic prosperity were grand, they proved to be a bit of an overkill in an area which had an unemployment rate of 3%, and a population in Haymarket, Virginia of 483. This community would have seen their tax coffers enriched by the $47 million a year. Disney America was projected to draw 8 million visitors annually. This flow was argued to hold significant business opportunities for the area, even though numerous visitors already visited the area.

To push their product, Disney launched a lobbying campaign worth $400,000. While this figure may seem insignificant; it was an investment that paid off several fold. Not only did it win Disney approval for the site from the local legislature, but it also garnered them $163.3 million in subsidies, $131.4 of which was earmarked for road improvement and construction.
Yet, opposition to the decision by state legislators and interest groups came from several fronts. Scholars rejected Disney’s commercialised history. Karal Ann Marling noted that the “pure L.A., TV, high-tech shop-‘til-you-drop 1950s glitz” of Disney creations would have a negative impact on the historic sites in the area which included the 5100 acre Manassas Nation Battlefield Park which drew 130,000 visitors annually (Marling, 1991: 206). James McPherson noted that: “Inevitably—tragically—urban sprawl will reach for miles in every direction, all along the key roads intersecting the region, destroying the character and cheapening the historical attractions that do not actually get bulldozed” (Quoted in Synott, 1995: 46).

There was an irony too rich to ignore at the thought of destroying acres of farm land in order to create a farming simulacra. American Farmland Trust estimated that the park would threaten 6 000 real American farms and 1.2 million acres of agriculture. A simulacra as defined by Harvey is “a state of such near perfect replication that the difference between the original and the copy becomes almost impossible to spot (Harvey, 1990: 289). Authentic battle sites would be excavated to make way for playland sites. Dale Bumpers claimed it was the federal government’s “duty to consider the potential impact of Disney on scores of historical sites scattered throughout the farms and hillsides of Virginia Piedmont” (1994: B5). National Trust of Historic Preservation placed Virginia Piedmont at the top of its 1994 list of America’s Most Endangered Historical Places.

The Piedmont Environmental Council made up of 70 organisations and 5000 families, raised over $1 million and lobbied against the park, saying it would cause increased air pollution, water impurities, traffic gridlock’s (estimated to triple), and urban sprawl. Civil war buffs joined the protest, as did well-to-do local landowners who felt the park would have a negative impact on property prices. On 17 September 1994, 3000 individuals marched in protest. Several media reports sided with the community groups and the story received international coverage.

Eisner, Disney’s CEO, was somewhat shocked at the lack of acceptance of the park. In retaliation the corporation took a “you can’t stop progress” position emphasising that the area already attracted 30 million day trippers (again precisely why Disney was there) a year and that it would be impossible to stem the tide of urbanization in an area that close to the bustling Washington metropolis. In retaliation, Eisner used the first amendment to defend his commercial interests, noting that constitution gave him the “right to be plastic” (Eisner quoted in, Powers, 1994: A18).
While these oppositional voices to America Disney were successful there were other powerful actors implicated in the conflict, internal to the company. While Disney parks remained the number one draw in America, attendance at Walt Disney World decreased in 1990 from 33,700,000 to 28,900,000. Competition from Universal Studios and Paramount’s Six Flags had cut into profits. Lack of significant growth and losses from Euro Disney created anxiety among stockholders about the future of the parks. Stock holders and Wall Street analysts were well aware of the declining attendance at the theme parks, and may well have preferred that Disney work on its existing parks, rather than invest in extension. The public outcry in combination with shareholder anxiety created a situation too uncomfortable for the construction of the park to be carried out. On 28 September 1994, Disney management announced it would seek another site for its park (Anderson, 1994: 3).

What happened to Disney in Virginia is illustrative of political processes of late-modern capital. The conflict connects to what has been isolated by authors as the “theming of land” to attract tourists and investment. (Urry, 1995; Rojeck, 1993; Zukin, 1991) Local and state organizers actively seek to accentuate the positive aspects of their communities to attract capital investment. When corporations come to town, they are likely to be welcomed by politicians for they offer the golden egg of jobs and taxes. Disney’s lobbyists did not build their case upon their ability to provide a “superior form of cultural product” (having proudly announced that they would produce only “plastic”), rather they emphasised the economic prosperity the park would bring to the region. John Galbraith notes this strategy is typical within a within which the work and income commodities provide override their relationship to want, needs, or use:

The modern politician, quite regardless of party or political faith, never speaks of a need to produce more goods and services. Plenitude is here assumed. Reference is always to the jobs provided. Everyday political expression corrects the basic economic theory, emphasizing not the goods created, or the service rendered, but the employment provided; not the wants satisfied but the income made available.

(Galbraith, 1997, p. xxi)

But such assumptions can be challenged by historians, environmentalists, local business people, and community members. Not only do social movement have to oppose corporate power, but also the state power which support it. Ironically, aided by internal corporate struggles, as well as those among shareholders, Disney was stopped. We see within this Disney case the unorthodox
nature of contemporary social resistance. Opposition to the Virginia park was not a working class struggle, rather an eclectic collision of scholars, environmentalists, property owners, and small business proprietors. What united these people was a threat to losing control over the shape of their landscape.

Harvey recognizes these politics as systemic to relations within the post-modern period, but he does not see the potential to alter the historical course of capital within localized opposition. Harvey describes localized resistance as:

relatively empowered to organize in place but disempowered when it comes to organizing over space. In clinging, often of necessity, to a place-bound identity, however, such oppositional movements become a part of the very fragmentation which a mobile capitalism and flexible accumulation can feed upon. Regional resistances, the struggle for local autonomy, place-bound organization, may be excellent bases for political action, but they cannot bear the burden of radical historical change alone.

(Harvey, 1990: 303)

Within a grander theoretical debate, Harvey's discounting localized politics makes sense. Harvey is attacking Foucault's premise that contemporary capital can be undone through localized movements. Harvey disagrees, because localized groups cannot coordinate their politics over space. And indeed he is correct, for this struggle did not stop Disney from building more theme parks; it simply pushed them somewhere else.

While I take Harvey's point, I am distressed by the relatively small space for resistance Harvey appears to allow for local politics. I might ask Harvey what he proposes as an alternative? Should we neglect the struggle of those individuals who dare to stand up against monopoly capital, in a period of political apathy? Is there no potential for local groups to span space? No room for local groups to learn from others?

The social relations preserved in the Virginia victory over Disney's model of the amusementscape are far from equal. Yet, distinctions need to be made between greater and lesser evils. Disney's failed to attain corporate control of the area, stopping further environmental destruction and colonization of economic diversity. The Eisner era of, Disney's 'plastic history' was rejected. Despite its largely middle-class and economically interested make-up, local resistance
prevented corporate ascendancy. Should the point be counted, even if it was fellow capitalists scoring on their own net?
It may perhaps seem ... an unnecessary complication to investigate the genesis of each historical formation. But since every historical phenomenon, human attitudes as much as social institutions, did actually once develop, how can modes of thought prove either simple or adequate in explaining these phenomena if, by a kind of artificial abstraction, they isolate the phenomena from their natural, historical flow, deprive them of their character as movement and process, and try to understand them as static formations without regard to the way in which they have come into being and change?

Norbert Elias

The inspiration for this study is drawn from Raymond Williams. Williams places cultural forms within the ‘natural’, historical flow of social history. This analysis has revealed the way cultural practises rise to dominate over time and space and are challenged, marginalized, outlawed, assimilated, reclaimed, or adapted.

Williams rejects both the economic determinism of culture and the “iron clad laws of history”, while acknowledging the power of agency. In so doing, it might not be too much of a stretch to see these strains of his thought as providing some inspiration for the post modernist rejection of a unified history. Yet, unlike the post-modernists, the strength of Williams work would come from his refusal to declare the “death of history”. Williams used history as his method. History to Williams was neither a “scientific fact” nor a “narrative”, rather a set of ‘lived relations’, which most often revealed themselves as bound in struggle. While acknowledging the multiple voices within history, as well as the active and indeterminate nature of culture, Williams’ studies continued to reveal how the relations of capital could be seen to impinge upon creative expression. This impingement would come in many forms, but it could also be resisted. This history of the amusementscape has attempted to show more fully how Disney’s version depends on a particular moment of capital and impinges upon and is resisted within the contemporary cultural landscape.

Gathering Historical Processes

For the sake of overview, I have gathered together some of the historical moments of each of the three period to provide a summary survey of change. The table below presents “Social
characteristics" which review some overriding traits within the three historical moments. Historical processes, layer, blur, borrow, and proceed unevenly over long periods of time which often makes it impossible to isolate a definitive origin or epoch break, suggesting that the fields outlined below should be considered only as the broadest of conceptual guides.

Historical Moments of the Amusementscape

Social Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place:</th>
<th>Pre-Modern</th>
<th>Early Modern/Modern</th>
<th>Late-Modern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production base:</td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>town</td>
<td>city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestration:</td>
<td>agrarian</td>
<td>industrial</td>
<td>service/symbolic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State formation:</td>
<td>church/monarchy/Colonial</td>
<td>company/state</td>
<td>corporation/media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging voice:</td>
<td>tradition/church</td>
<td>Nation</td>
<td>Trans-national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations:</td>
<td>communal</td>
<td>reformer/sponsor</td>
<td>advertiser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity:</td>
<td>birth/craft</td>
<td>impersonal</td>
<td>corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market:</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>production</td>
<td>with face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication:</td>
<td>oral</td>
<td>national</td>
<td>consumption/pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group:</td>
<td>family/guild</td>
<td>mass mediated</td>
<td>global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self:</td>
<td>animistic</td>
<td>class</td>
<td>promotional culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power:</td>
<td>force</td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>fragment/other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amusementscape Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form:</th>
<th>Pre-Modern</th>
<th>Early Modern/Modern</th>
<th>Late-Modern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Case Study</td>
<td>Fair St. Bartholomew's Fair, London</td>
<td>Amusement park Coney Island, New York</td>
<td>Theme Park Walt Disney World Resort Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place:</td>
<td>Street</td>
<td>Seaside</td>
<td>Suburb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary:</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Semi-open</td>
<td>Enclosed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time:</td>
<td>religious calendar</td>
<td>seasonal</td>
<td>year round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation:</td>
<td>religious festival/exchange of goods</td>
<td>profit/civilizing/amusement</td>
<td>dividends/jobs/pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose:</td>
<td>expression</td>
<td>education/culture</td>
<td>entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience:</td>
<td>pilgrim/peasant</td>
<td>working class</td>
<td>middle class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orchestration:</td>
<td>community</td>
<td>monopoly</td>
<td>oligopoly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport:</td>
<td>foot/horses</td>
<td>trolley</td>
<td>car/plane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode:</td>
<td>allegory</td>
<td>fact</td>
<td>hyper-reality/simulacra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product:</td>
<td>made by</td>
<td>made for</td>
<td>consumer/promotion lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mocks:</td>
<td>church/monarch</td>
<td>genteel culture</td>
<td>everyday/technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal symbol:</td>
<td>pig</td>
<td>elephant</td>
<td>mouse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The forgoing chapter will summarize the shifts of the three broad social processes of cultural creation, commodification and regulation, as I see them unfolding across the three historic periods. I will use this synthesis to provide the basis of my critique of Disney’s version of the amusementscape. Finally, I will point to the limits and prospect of resistance.

Cultural Creation
The pre-modern amusementscape is shaped by the community and tradition. The site had its own discourse and unique practises. According to Bakhtin, the motive behind this cultural expression is the desire to express the cruel but rejuvenating powers of nature. A wide variety of cultural practises are undertaken including physical and mental competitions, plays, processions, puppets, oral stories, fortune telling, games of chance, live musicians, exotic animals. People made noise, teased one another, hurled insults, interacted with stage plays, and came in costume. Symbols were rooted in the flesh: the lusting, struggling, and hungry body. The pig with its skin like man, its ample flesh, and procreative capacity was the chosen symbol of the tupsy turvey world of carnival. People revelled in reversing the great chain of being; making that which is sacred, profane. The fair took place largely within the streets and public fields, and the ritual transgressed private and public space. This transgression is part of the “other worldly” ambience of the fairground which was created by turning the world upside down and violating standard codes of conduct.

By contrast, cultural creation within the modern amusementscape came to be shaped by the architect, who within this period was recognized as the artistic visionaries of the urban landscape. Some architects and city planners of this period aspired towards soulless modernist visions which alienated the general public. The public choses the midway over the architectural grandeur of the Chicago World’s Fair. But the midway was quickly recognized as a profit making centre; and transplanted to Coney Island, marking the rise of the amusement park. Fantastical architecture, bright lights, provocative entrances all served to mark the space as a point of interest for all.

The amusement park grew alongside the expansion of public transit. Theatrics and amusements become more commodified during this period by the use of standardized fees. Enclosing the amusement park behind a wall facilitated its commodification, while providing a means to keep out the “unsavoury element of society”. Still, the old fairground antics remain behind the wall, albeit
in modified form to meet the modern palate. Examples of old antics include the freak shows, oddities, depiction's of cruelty, mocking of genteel culture, gambling, risqué inferences, and physical exuberance (now delivered through mechanical rides). The difference in the modern version of the fair antics, however, was that they no longer expressed a coherent cosmology. The amusement park was not an articulation of a ritual of nature, rather, it was “manufactured carnival” designed for fun and profit. The community was removed from the act of production and placed into the act of consumption.

The constructors of the amusement parks introduced many innovative conventions. Great attention is paid to the “landscape” and the arrangement of rides and shows to keep the crowd moving and entertained. Perhaps due to is sheer size, and lack of shared purpose, the modern crowd was corralled and directed. Entrepreneurs devised ways to engage and control the audience through garish and eye-catching displays, barking, roving entertainers. Fantasy architecture, simulated exotic geographies, theatrical lights, and satire of genteel culture contribute to the “other worldly” ambience.

There is a modern emphasis on mobility and travel through new frontiers such as space, under water, or exotic cultures. Mechanical rides, the park’s staple, transform the technologies of the workplace into technologies of leisure, as work machines are converted into pleasure rides and the factory is transformed into the fun house. The parks recreate disasters to satisfy the prurient view. At the same time, greater attention is paid to cleanliness, organization, and public amenities. Electricity is exploited to create both a sense of theatrics and safety. The parks provided a safe space for camaraderie among strangers. Amusements are cloaked in educational and cultural disguise. Purpose is seen as necessary to attracting people.

Cultural creation within the theme park became more and more influenced by animators, and movie producers. The emphasis turns to technical perfection, exacting orchestration of environment, and extensive use of themes. Post-war theme parks, such as Disneyland, are sectioned into coherent lands. The images from fairytales, fantasies, science fiction, and history are rendered as a series of movie sets which people walk through. Environmental enclosure and scripting is taken to new heights within the theme park. All references to the outside world are carefully controlled. Nature is disciplined, and fully transformed into a design for “visual
consumption.” Mechanical rides which once exposed their guts in the amusement park are controlled by computers and secondary to themes. Dioramas are updated with movies, hydraulics, and digital sound. Buildings are monuments to theme. To prevent the architects’ artistic vision from escaping the public, Disney demands their contracted architects to make “children laugh”. Transportation assists in efficiently moving people through the park and exhibits. The environment is immaculate, the staff is uniform and polite, and behaviour and appearance of visitors is monitored. Robotics and technologies are utilized to mediate and create cultural events. Symbols include technological progress, nation building, and the family in consumption. The primary activities of the park are rides, exhibits and shopping.

Interaction is kept to a minimum because it is difficult to control. In Disneyland, for example, while employees costumed as the characters from Disney narratives walk around the park (patting children’s heads and posing for pictures) their interaction with the public is scripted to prevent carnival exuberance. All reference to the wild and chaotic forces of nature are erased. While the castle and the fairytales of carnival days remain, they are rendered nostalgic — stripped of ambiguity and coarse symbolism and promoted as “fantasy” disconnected from the history in which they were produced. Out of context, they hold the potential to appear to audiences not as part of human history and struggle, but as “other worldly” and “divine”.

Disney discourse also provides employees with a method to understand the function of the park, and to encourage “guests” to understand it in the same way. Swearing and reference to ludeness are prohibited in the parks. The side-shows, freaks or Bakhtin’s cruel powers of nature are confined safely to the cartoon and movie screen. The contemporary post-war theme park is linked to other recreational activities, media, and consumer goods. The “other worldly” is constructed through excluding all reference to the world outside the park and focusing on fantasy, nostalgia, and positive images of the future.

Commodification
Serious commercial exchange at the pre-modern fair is confined to the trader’s table. Buyers negotiate prices with sellers. Goods are largely one of a kind, and many are not available locally. Fairs specialize in particular goods such as meat, cloth, or pewter, special souvenirs are offered to
mark the fair in people’s memories. Traders are subject to regulation. There is a distinction made between the “market” and “theatrics”. Most the cultural practises are undertaken without the exchange of money; however, performances are sometimes rewarded for their talents through loose change or food and drink. These exchanges are voluntary. Theatrical production is largely supported by the guilds. Fools, and other professional performers survive by playing both the fair and the castle. The site is not walled, and there is no entrance fee is charged — the experience itself is not commodified. Special performances, however, were often held in tents; and the charge of a token admission was not unheard of.

The modern amusement park charges set rates for entertainments. The line between market and theatrics is erased. People are employed to carry out the theatrics. They are paid for their labour and the surplus accrues to the owners of the amusement parks. The bulk of profit is made through charging for side-shows, rides, and food. Prices are relatively cheap to attract volume sales. Some souvenirs and mass produced goods are available on site, but the majority of capital is made through charging for entertainments. The sole circuit of capital circulation is the park itself. Parks are owned and organized by one or two entrepreneurs.

By contrast, the late-modern theme park is privately owned and organized to produce profits for shareholder. There is one unit price for entry. The opportunity to buy merchandise and food is made available and promoted throughout the park and in tourist literature. The park is promoted through other media such as television, magazines, newspapers, the internet. The park also promotes other media. Theatrics or entertainments as they are known now are connected to several other circuits of capital. The theme park packages itself in many different ways to target different groups (families, seniors, business people). Packages encourage the use of Disney lodging, facilities, and its other recreational pursuits. The bulk of money is now made from the sale of merchandise, food and lodging. Disney produces most of its own goods. What it does not own, the corporation controls in licensing agreements are drafted to obtain the best deal and least amount of market leakage. Sponsors from other corporations provide money and exhibits for the chance to advertise their name and products in the park. National governments from around the world contribute to the sites at the park to promote tourism. Services such as weddings, conventions, birthday parties are offered for sale. Special events are offered to bolster attendance. Disney recognizes all official
holidays and scripts rituals around them. The corporation colonizes space, and has replicated its theme park with, slight regional variation, in locations throughout the world in bids to capture lucrative tourist markets or create tourist flow. The park also commodifies its expertise, selling its employee and site management knowledge to other businesses.

Regulation
The fair has always been patrolled by some form of authority. Regulation within the pre-modern amusementscape included licensing, control of traders, and control over the exchange of goods and services. For a time, fairs were internally regulated by their own courts. Fair were banned to protect public health, because elites had difficulty controlling and accepting the cultural practises of the fair. Community relations and traditions also offered a powerful organizational force. The monarchy and the holiday calendar the controlled time and duration of the fairs. The payment of taxes and tithes was expected.

Later, regulation in the modern amusementscape is largely controlled by external forces. The mechanisms regulating society outside of the amusementscape are employed within its gates. As a business, the park is subject to the regulation of competition. As noted within the development of Coney Island amusement parks, the sites evolve from employees leaving one park to start their own, or new comers entering the market with more opulent parks in an attempt to steal business. Forms of voluntary regulation are used to make the site hospitable and welcoming for visitors. The amusement park conforms to city by-laws in relation to building practices, noise and health ordinance. The Coney Parks made entry in a period when their were great efforts undertaken to “clean-up” local politics is New York. While one might acknowledge the influence of this “clean-up” upon Coney’s business practises, corruption is also known to be a stubborn phenomena to remove, and Coney did not aspire to operating “above and beyond” legal norms. In other words whether the parks actually followed the laws, and whether regulation was carried out and upheld is questionable. Owners no doubt would seek ways around these restrictions which impinged on their profit motives. The media also entered the picture as a regulatory force, for journalists could make some of the park’s practises public. Most coverage, however, was congratulatory. Regulation also came from the workplace which restricted the amount of leisure time available to people, dictated
when they could leisure and controlled their disposable income. The modern crowd also came with an impersonal sense of itself, and new sets of more internalised behavior and manners emerged.

Theme parks of late-modern amusementscape are now almost entirely self-regulated. As noted in the examples of both Walt Disney World and the cancelled Virginia theme park, Disney is subject to municipal bylaws and zoning. Yet, municipalities are often likely to encourage the parks, due to the jobs and taxes they would bring to the area. Through employing its powerful public relations arm and drawing upon its track record, the theme park is sanctioned to conduct its own affairs largely unfettered. The park controls its own building requirements, waste removal, and security. The Disney corporation goes above and beyond standard requirements, and profits from doing so. So advanced are its buildings, sewage and transportation systems that they are sold as models to other organizations.

Theme park management anticipates public problems. It takes public health and safety very seriously for financial success and reputation depends upon it. Individuals who take issue with the park can undertake legal action; yet great amount of care is taken to deflect any legal claims against the organization. Legal suits which are initiated are most often settled silently and out of court.

Disney theme parks operate within a broader social environment which encourages market competition as a form of regulation. Disney profits from this emphasis. Competition to Disney theme parks is minimal because Disney has so successfully cornered the market that only a few other big players offer competition. The videogame producer Sega as well as Lego toys have entered into the theme park business; although their parks are on a scale which has yet to present a problem to theme parks with movie ties. Further, Disney includes videogame parlours within its theme parks. Disney also carefully controls its market. Disney is more likely to work with its competition then against it. Significant economic clout allows the corporation to buy up competitors and diversify into other cultural areas.

The park is carefully designed to prevent problems. As noted, the walk ways are designed to maximize park flow and avoid disruption. Employees are trained in the fine are of “conflict resolution”. Disney simply does away with any potential problem areas. The entire site is under care surveillance in a way that no one would notice until they step out of bounds. The crowds at the park
tend to be relatively passive and willingly stand in lines for hours in order to obtain the “Disney experience”. Regulation at Disney has become internalized.

Disney’s Contribution to the Amusementscape

Disney version of the amusementscape presents a problematized notion of the “other worldly”. Its creative visions have to continually negotiate their place among commodities and corporate interests. In its quest to comfort its middle class guests, the parks focus on the everyday. In an effort not to offend, mocking is reduced to self irony. To appease sponsors and sell merchandise, modern technologies and goods are inserted throughout the park. Large sections of the theme park are nothing more than a shopping mall. Finally, because Disney’s structure of symbolism works in the interest of the corporation and corporate ascendancy, its displays are essentially conservative. The market element has always been a part of the amusementscape. What is unique about the contemporary environment is that the whole site and experience of it has been commodified, by covert insertion of products and shopping areas within the theatrics and themes.

Disney has produced less innovation in the creation of amusementscape conventions than previous generations. In essence, Disney theme parks simply layer new and reworked narratives on top of old conventions. The use of theme assists Disney in appropriating other’s innovations as their own.

The theme park has made its mark by removing the burlesque elements of the turn of the century amusement parks. In so doing it biased towards the middle class and eliminated many traditional practises and discourses. Some traditional antics proved difficult to commodify or render mechanical (games, competitions), others were difficult to control (live performers, animal acts), and still others required a level of audience participation which would be difficult to organize. In place of puppetry, games, live story telling, side-shows, or animal display, Disney’s audience are offered more spectacles, more mechanical rides and exhibits. The past remains only as a nostalgic symbol.

Disney works hard to make multiplicity and reproduction appear as diversity. Many cultural practises billed as different are essentially the same. For example, Space Mountain, and the Bobsled are different in name only. They are both basically roller coasters, which deliver physical thrill without exertion. The practises of the park are monotonous: you are either sitting on a ride, being
wheeled through an exhibit, standing in line, or walking. What does change is the series of images around you. The experience is not unlike walking around in a television set.

Choice at Disney is also elusive. While it appears that one has free reign in the park, movements and behavior are carefully channelled and monitored. People agree to behave in the park for their own safety and to experience the utmost of the Disney environment. However, there are limits to Disney’s control, as the condoms and needles on Tom Sawyer Island attest. Disney provides people with the discourse to locate meaning. People don’t have to use Disney discourse, but communication within the park is facilitated more easily if one does.

It is difficult to assess Disney’s brand of cultural control for it is so brilliantly woven into historical social practises. An example might prove useful to understand this process. The amusementscape has long been a site where people couple. The number of births and marriages increased during festival time in early history. The modern amusement park worked with this social predilection, creating rides and events which supported coupling through tossing people together, overt references to sensuality and romance. Coney Island folklore attests to a number of weddings held within the parks. While amusement parks would construct environments for coupling to encourage attendance, Disney would seek to target the public’s association of the parks with romance. Disney provides packaged wedding, hotels for guests, catered food, dresses, assistants. The theme park offers itself up as a cathedral for matrimony — people can unite in Cinderella’s castle, for a price. Due to its promotional efforts, and exploitation of cultural practises, Disney theme parks are ranked as the number one honeymoon destination in America. Given that people often like to return to their honeymoon spot for anniversaries, Disney can also attract return visitors.

No one is forced to go to Disneyland. Disney might be best seen as enacting its control through quite “natural” business practise. Disney’s version of the amusementscape is popular with those who can afford this brand of narrow, hyper, hygienic, spectacular leisure. The Disney brand employs reworked symbols of the marginal and lower classes and assimilates them into middle class leisure pursuits. It also commodifies practises and spaces which were previously public.

In essence, Disney sells back to us what was once ours. It rips up a natural bird sanctuary in order to make a bird park. It seeks to demolish a historic battle field to produce an amusement site themed as a battle field. This emphasis on the unique signification of the simulacra (replacement of
an original with a reproduction) has sometimes obscured how brilliantly this practise serves the commodification of environments. Disney is a master at using narrative to colonize space. Disney spaces are often more enjoyable than the original, because they are carefully scripted to be accessible and entertaining.

Disney charges us for the experience of being together in a celebratory crowd. Disney theme parks attempt to create unity, yet, given the resources necessary to attend the parks, and the bias of its symbols that unity is exclusive. The parks draw largely a white, middle class professional and managerial audience. The theme world is not a unity of diverse and heterogeneous peoples.

Disney copyrights public stories and images. It feeds old stories through new technologies. It replicates historical innovations and conventions and thematizes them so that it might call them "Disney originals." As was illustrated in Walt Disney World, Disney did not force competitors to close down, it simply started to offer the competitors' products. People chose Disney water parks instead of the traditional Orlando water parks because the water parks were networked into their overall Disney entertainment experience and packaged into the Disney tours. Disney carefully monitored areas where capital might leak from tourists pockets to other enterprises, and ensured all of its guests wants and needs were available at the resort.

The profits garnered at the parks are not evenly distributed within the corporation. The CEO made $8.75 million in 1995 plus millions in stock options. Employees had to go on strike for $7.50 an hour and to prevent their health benefits from being cut off.

Disney attends to public movements, the timing of vacations, changing demographics, and uses this information to package the amusementscape in a way which makes it easy to attend. Disney assures adequate transportation routes, and proper promotion. Disney makes the difficult decisions for its visitors and assures a safe and quality entertainment experience. The corporation provides quality control, and includes a steady stream of new attractions to keep us coming back for more.

Disney employs the symbols of the carnival and folk history to add vibrancy to the mechanical processing of its audience. Zukin's recognition that the landscapes of the poor are sculpted for the rich. We might think back to Stallybrass and White's insight that the socially marginal is often symbolically central. While Disney was able to successfully eradicate carnival
practise, the symbols of carnival would ooze up within his creative work and hold great appeal with his middle class audience.

Disney's theme park is paradoxical. It produces goods of pleasure, even "guilty pleasure", at the same time it controls, monopolizes and stifles alternatives. Disney does not prevent us from undertaking other leisure pursuits, rather it leads us to believe that a trip to Disneyland is a natural part of family life.

Beyond the Walls

Disney's domination of the amusementscape is very subtle, supported by broader social relations, carefully scripted, and brilliantly executed, but never complete. Disney's cultural presentations contain contradictions which threaten to undo them.

Disney's bias towards the American dream and patriotism is difficult to maintain within a contemporary environment of inner-city poverty, the memory of Vietnam, and the erosion of the middle class, the configuration of the family. Disney dreams are challenged by the dreams of ecology, the dreams of feminists, the dreams of ethnic groups, the dreams of locals like Virginians.

Struggles within the corporation itself — fights about directions and visions — hold the potential to work against the empire. Monopoly does not necessary equate with success; and often the larger a corporation gets the more chaos it is prone to. Other media monopolies have experienced difficulty, for example Time/Warner. Competition from other sectors also threaten the theme park business. As the spaces of the world become increasingly subject to commodity control it has become more and more difficult for Disney to find spaces to expand into without ruffling the feathers of the business which are already in control those areas. Disney is also now so extended, that it must also be careful not to cannibalize its own business.

As the Virginia Disney theme park case illustrates, Disney is not always welcome within the communities regardless of how many jobs it might provide. Other communities are aware of what happened in Orlando. We have noted the way in which the regulatory environment tends to favour dominant interests. Yet, social movements made up of a broad constituency of people of different social standings and concerns can unite into a powerful force which can stop or contribute to
rechannel the expansion of the theme parks. As mentioned, I think it is precisely because theme parks are located in physical places that they are most likely to upset local groups for their disruption in the activities of a community are significant. This is significant in a historical period of struggle between local and national/global interests (Harvey, 1990).

Finally, unlike the view Harvey holds of the futility of local resistance, I believe the experience of participating in a community created festival can challenge the corporatist version of the amusementscape. What defined carnival was the act of community self-creation and expression. Reconnection of people to the carnival can explain by example what a cave of shadows Disney’s version of the amusementscape is.

Public Dreams, is a non-profit Vancouver-based collective that carries out local festivals in an effort to keep the act of community self-creation alive. Public Dreams organizes theatrical performances in public parks, undertakes a yearly Halloween carnival of procession, puppetry and fireworks, and co-ordinates a lantern festival in the spring.

What is unique about Public Dreams is that they continue traditional fairground art forms (stilt walking, juggling, fire throwing, puppetry, story telling) some of which are on the verge of being lost to history. They also offer free leisure options in public spaces. But perhaps their most significant contribution is to engage the community’s creative and productive capacities. Engagement here is not just the consumption and interpretation, but also direct play and production. Instead of generating events for the community, Public Dreams creates a framework within which communities produce their own celebration.

Public workshops are held to provide people with the support and resources necessary to make the masks and lanterns for the events. Competitions are incorporated into some of the events to allow people to display their talents before the community. For the Halloween procession, residents along the parade route decorate their yards and employ antics to provoke the audience.

Given a venue to express their creativity, people engage in the events with much relish and add their own drums, noisemakers, costumes and dancing. Festivals are long anticipated and because they are temporary, possess an opulent sense of rarity and specialness which year round theme parks

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44 I predict that we will see Disney expending much more effort in the future to obtain consent from historians,
cannot reproduce. A heterogeneous section of the public attends events because they are free and held in public spaces.45

Public Dreams are very different from Disneyland's brand of fantasies. Instead of engaging people as consumers, they are engaged as active producers — instead of manufacturing pleasures for us, Public Dreams help us to reconnect with the magic of carnival inside us.

We cannot return to the pre-modern fair, nor should we desire to do so. The seduction in looking romantically at the early period of the amusementscape and connecting it to a pristine unoppressed "golden age" of community solidarity must be resisted. As Williams notes, "The greatest danger is to have fantasies about a past consciousness which, if it could only be revived and given a few contemporary trimmings, would transform the present." (Heath and Skirrow, 1995: 367) It must be remembered that tradition played a significantly restrictive role in the pre-modern amusementscape.

What we should take from the past, however is the knowledge that the amusementscape has been community produced throughout its history. A community-produced amusementscape are more vital, interactive and diverse than the Disney theme parks. Many of the things which seem to be cherished most about Disneyland are the public resources which have been privatized. The amusementscape can be regained through our reclaiming cultural production.

45 The public spaces chosen for events are most often neighbourhoods with fewer resources.
Bibliography


