

Disney Worlds: Culture on the Move

John Van Maanen

In this paper the author looks at »culture-as-product,« what can be learned by what an organization produces, rather than the more conventional view of "culture-as-process," the workings of an organization. The author dismisses the two theories of culture flow: global homogenization and resistance to culture flow as too simple. What he focuses on is the meaning associated with a given product from the perspectives of the sender and the receiver. Using as his example the exporting of Disneyland (a product and a cultural experience) into a culturally distinct context (Tokyo), the author discovers many traits of the flow of culture: it is not one way; it is ongoing and slow; cultural meaning shifts considerably as imports are given new meaning; culture is not only an Integrating device but a differentiating device as well, and people on both sides of the culture flow learn new things about the new culture and about their own culture.

The study of culture — organizational otherwise — has a long and cantankerous history. It is a history full of differing concepts, theories, definitions, disciplinary standards, empirical conceits and orienting strategies. Perhaps the most significant differences are found between those who study culture as a process and those who study culture as a product (cf, Peterson, 1990). The former treats culture as the codes of conduct embedded in or constitutive of the social life of a given group — the "culture" of a nation, tribe, corporation, gang, occupation, village, ethnic enclave and so forth. The later treats culture as the result of group activity — the "culture" expressed by classical music, romantic fiction, soap operas, hip-hop graffiti, Ingmar Bergman films, haute cuisine, nude mud-wrestling and so on. The process view of culture is that of the social sciences, primarily anthropology and sociology. The product view is that of the humanities, particularly the critical schools of literature, history and the arts.

Most cultural studies of work organizations are informed by the culture-as-a-process perspective. The workings of a given organization (or subunit) take precedence and what it is the organization produces is more or less ignored. Organization culture is defined by members only and thus conceptually closed off from those who observe, serve, consume or otherwise interact in some fashion with the studied organization. The focus on social organization and practice over social symbol and product is unfortunate in the sense that while we are given portraits of bright or dull corporate cultures, we learn very little about what such corporate cultures do in the world at large. My interest here is to move a little past conventional representations of organizational culture and consider what might be learned if we were to make use of a culture-as-a-product perspective.

This necessitates first thinking about how culture moves about or flows from place to place and group to group. In commercial spheres, markets are channels for culture flow as the products of one cultural group are offered to members of another group. This assumes that the commodities or services sent forth by organizations have value to their customers beyond whatever function they perform and whatever labor value is tied to their production. Presumably, part of the "added value" that sticks to a given product or service depends on the cultural meaning consumers associate with the product or service. A hamburger, book, or plane ride may carry more meaning than whatever nutrition, intellectual stimulation or transportation they provide.

Sometimes it appears that cultural meaning is all that is being sold. MacCannel (1976) provides some fine examples of this sort of cultural consumption. In his ethnographic account of the contemporary tourist, he argues that the objects of the world are increasingly invested with symbolic capital. So much so that even pure experience can be marketed as a culturally-infused "product" that leaves no physical trace like the "fidelity" of a stereo, the "style" of a

restaurant, the "feel" of a computer, or the "ambiance" of a resort. Goods are sold then on the "experience" they deliver.

If experience associated with commodities is marketable, so too is experience associated with culture. In fact, cultural experience is a hot item in the marketplace today. Cultural experience, following MacCannel's lead, implies the transformation of an original emptiness or skepticism on the part of an individual or group into a feeling or belief that is based on direct involvement in the previously unknown social world. It in no way conveys competence in or acceptance of the new social world marked by the experience — rejection, distaste, amusement, befuddlement are all possible results. But, personal encounters do promote a kind of cultural awareness that was previously lacking.

Examples of such cultural experiences are not hard to locate. Attending a baseball game at Yankee Stadium might serve as a charming cultural experience for a visitor from Finland, the more vitriolic the fans and argumentative the players the better since it would be "more American." Similarly, the showing of Rambo I, II or XIV in Helsinki may provide an audience a not-so-charming cultural experience. Or, to reverse the flow, Americans baking in a Finnish sauna located in Palm Springs may lose a few pounds while gaining a fleeting sense that they have also experienced a bit of life in the land of the midnight sun. Certainly, in most of the world today, few of use are immune from cultural experiences of this sort. What are we to make of them?

Two rough answers can be sketched out. One answer focuses on cultural transmission and the agents or initiators of culture flows. At the limit, this approach suggests that powerful cultural influences continually pound away on the sensibilities of people such that whatever bits and pieces of indigenous culture they hold are eventually ground down. Global homogenization results as the local character of exposed cultures are replaced by transnational symbolic forms originating elsewhere. This is cultural imperialism pure and simple. Homogenization results from a center-to-periphery flow bringing about something of a commercialized world culture. This is a zero-sum game where the loss of culture shows itself most directly in the least organized and powerless communities while the more organized and powerful grow increasingly similar; coming in the end to shape, share and signal the world culture.

The other answer, however, looks to cultural acquisition and the recipients of culture flows. This perspective suggests that those cultural experiences that do not fold easily into local patterns of everyday thought and action are: (1) unmarked entirely and thus without influence; (2) rejected out-of-hand as culturally inappropriate and unattractive; or (3) eventually brought into line through transformations of one sort or other. Culture may still flow from the center outward, but it does not always penetrate. Corruption takes place down the line and the core of a target culture is left untouched. The local core may even be recharged, reinvigorated; its representatives made more aware and assertive of their own values and perspectives as a result of such contact. Everyday life thus colonizes the center rather than vice-versa, reshaping the imported culture to its own tastes and specifications.

The problem for the cultural theorist is that both answers are too simple. Homogenization scenarios trivialize culture by reducing its relevance to something that is thought to be fully under the control of a few and exported to many. Resistance scenarios enshrine culture as local, impenetrable, unique, unfathomable and essentially timeless and omnipresent. Minimally, if we wish to look seriously at culture flows, we must pay close attention to the meaning (and cultural experience) associated with a given product from the perspectives of both those who send it forth and those who (more or less) receive it. This calls for a sort of symbolic double-vision whereby the assumptions of one culture are brought to light by another.

To this end, a tale is told below of just how one culture attends to the imports of another. The level of analysis is relatively broad, dealing with national or societal culture. The story concerns a common practice of multinational firms, the packing up of an operation or product developed at home and shifting it lock, stock and barrel elsewhere. The hope is always that it will perform as well (or better) in its new surroundings as in the old. Examples are everywhere. Volvo goes to Russia. Honda comes to Detroit. Club Med goes to paradise. My story concerns the exporting of Disneyland, a product (and cultural experience) of some fame, into a new and culturally distinct context.

MICKEY GOES TO TOKYO²

At first glance, Tokyo Disneyland is a physical and social copy of Disneyland in Southern California — a clone created six-thousand miles distant and perhaps something of a cultural bomb dropped on perfect strangers. The castle, the flags, the rides, the entertainment, the orderly waterways and impeccably clean grounds, the ever-smiling ride operators and Disney characters that prance about amusing the old and young alike; even the crowds, the traffic, the smog, the lengthy waits for attractions, the summer heat, the suburban sprawl surrounding the park, all seem in harmony with the spirit and letter of the 35 year old original. Even the gate receipts for this detailed replica met and exceeded expectations from the day the Tokyo park opened. Walt's world travels well it seems. So well, in fact, another version, again a copy, is set to open outside Paris in 1992.

Tokyo Disneyland is perhaps a glimpse of the coming world culture, a commodified, mechanized and highly standardized mass culture built on the Coca-Colonizing forces of western, particularly American, consumer values. The increased traffic in culture and the apparently asymmetric transfer of meaning systems and symbolic forms give way to an empire of signs ruled by those who produce and export the world's most desirable goods and services. This is a sort of context-free reading of the Japanese fascination with American popular culture and the universal desire for the bland sort of cultural experience a visit to Disneyland provokes. Indeed, Disney products and images have long been part of a world culture and are virtually impossible to escape anywhere. In many respects, the Disney corporate logo of the globe with mouse ears is hardly an idle boast.

Context-dependent explanations for the workings of culture flow seem antiquated, downright quaint, when employed to explain the success of Tokyo Disneyland. Thus, when Disney officials expressed an interest in providing some home country attractions like a "Sumurai Land" to replace one of its American attractions or a ride and narrative based on the classic Japanese children's story, "The Little Peach Boy," the Japanese partners in Tokyo Disneyland resisted strenuously and insisted on a duplicate American version, thus retaining (presumably) the cultural purity of the original (Brannon, 1990). The streams of visitors

would then seem to validate the idea that Disney's cultural products and experience work in the same way across two radically dissimilar contexts, effectively and effortlessly transcending cultural boundaries.

Such a situation suggests that the Japanese managers of Disneyland believe they have created a replica and that the imported Disney version retains its original influence and meaning. The market conquers all in this sterling tale of an excellent company and product. However, if we look somewhat closer and in more detail — beyond the sales figures and surface similarities of the two parks — certain interesting contradictions to this presumed unproblematic one-way flow of culture begin to appear. I shall start at headquarters, move briefly to Florida where the second Disneyland was built (thereby providing a degree of choice for the Japanese partners in the amusement trade) and then stop at my destination, Tokyo Disneyland, to consider its cultural position and product.

THE ORIGINAL:

Disneyland first opened its gates in July of 1955. It has been a remarkable economic success and become something of a national institution. Viewed as a product, Disneyland is part movie theater, part tourist site, part shopping mall, part museum, part stage production, part playground, part shrine, part ceremony, part spectacle, part festival, and so on. It has been subject to countless assessments of culture critics who, while not always impressed by its wonders, do manage to agree on a number of unifying themes standing behind the product, themes that seemingly integrate and make meaningful a visit to the park on the part of the millions that crowd the grounds each year.³

Most begin by noting the order, safety and cleanliness at Disneyland and the marked contrast these features bear in relation to contemporary urban life in America (Marin, 1977; Myerhoff, 1983; Schickel, 1968). The rectangular grid of the city is replaced in the park by graceful, curved walkways. Motorists become pedestrians. The drab industrial and metropolitan landscape is replaced by bright colored buildings done up in ebullient and whimsical forms and covered by sumptuous ornaments and thousands of twinkling lights that turn night into day. The crowded, disorderly, fear-inspiring

city scenes of ordinary life are transformed within the park to obedient, friendly queues and the peaceful strolling of people kept secure by unarmed, unobtrusive yet ever-present and smiling park police. Work clothes give way to leisure garb. Adults take the role of children on rides designed to rekindle youthful memories while children take on adult roles by driving snarling miniature automobiles on toy free-ways, exploring deep space and making family decisions about what to do next. The frontier town of yesteryear is no longer dusty, dirty and rather formless but becomes prim, tidy, and "what it should have been" by virtue of its scrubbed, freshly-painted, simple and sweet look.

In the American context, Disneyland is a topsy-turvy world that highlights in its physical and social design a long string of semiotic contrasts that set the park off as a sought after cultural experience for patrons: work/play, adult/child, dirty/clean, poverty/wealth, dangerous/safe, rude/civil, cold/warm, routine/festive and so on (Gottdiener, 1982; King, 1981). These contrasts of America/Disneyland create the differences on which the park's claim to be "the happiest place on earth" rests. To bring off the claim requires the banishment of all signs of decay, crime, confusion, discontent, pain or struggle in the park's design and the reduction wherever possible of social and stylistic diversity on the part of customers and employees alike.

The layout of the park conveys a high degree of thematic integration well known to visitors. Dominating the landscape from the center is Sleeping Beauty's Castle with streets radiating outward, Versailles-like, into the four lands, each representing something of a distinct stage of life: Fantasyland for early childhood where the attractions are small scale and built on mythical, imaginary fables quite familiar to American children; Frontierland for adolescence where Cowboy-and-Indian tales of the Wild West are reenacted and summertime romps recreated on Tom Sawyer's Island; Adventureland for young adulthood where a test of courage against the strange and savage is presented as an Indiana Jones trek up-river into the dark, unexplored territories of the world; and Tomorrowland for adulthood where the dream of science and technology conquers all and personable robots cavort alongside humans.

The castle and hub of the park is reached by

a walk through Main Street, an imaginative (but pickled) recreation of a midwestern railroad town at the Turn of the Century full of quasi-Victorian shops selling modern merchandise. Between Adventureland and Frontierland lies New Orleans Square, which, Walt Disney claimed "is just like the 1850's original Vieux Carre but a lot cleaner" (Lowenthal, 1985:321). And, in the backwoods of Disneyland, sits Bear Country and its reminder of the rural, "hayseed" relatives of the Mom and Pop entrepreneurs who made it to Main Street.

To the American visitor, each of the lands and constituent elements fit rather well-worn and comfortable mythical and historical narratives. Fantasyland, for example, embodies the classic children's literature of the west that has been culturally stripmined by Disney via movies, books, television programs. The verbal and visual images of Perrault, Collodi, Milne, Barrie, Lewis are now thoroughly familiar as Disney's Cinderella, Pinocchio, Winnie-the-Pooh and Peter Pan. In Frontierland, a Frederick Turner version of America is conveyed by its relentless Western Ho imagery of rugged individualism and hardships overcome. Adventureland reminds visitors of the exploration saga of a Stanley and Livingstone sort as they journey through a lush tropical jungle where elephants wave their trunks on cue and headhunting is still in style. The stories are conventional, stereotypic American versions of their world and its inhabitants.

This mythology underlying Disneyland images and narratives is a form of what Myerhoff (1983) usefully labels "Hyperculture," a collective form of expression that overstates and overclarifies some cultural interpretation. There is certainly nothing subtle to Americans about Disneyland. The stories told in and by the park are exaggerated, inflated versions of events, aggrandized to the point of parody. For example, when the summer long bicentennial parade was staged at Disneyland in 1976, who should appear at the head of the parade bearing drums and fife straight from the *Spirit of '76* painting by Willard but the three symbols of the American Revolution, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy.

The imagination provided at Disneyland is complete. Little room is left for the spontaneous or disarrayed. Lavish panegyric productions are staged to evoke both patriotism and nostalgia. Iconography is worked out in minute, common denominator detail such that the par-

taker of gloom in the Haunted Mansion is greeted by willows (for sadness), twisted oaks (for transitory life), dark podlike vehicles (for departure) and black clad attendants (for morticians). Seemingly nothing is left to chance: each rock, tree and plant in the park is numbered and assigned a proper role.

The communicative work that takes place inside the park serves to distinguish Disneyland from other (and earlier) theme parks. In contemporary America, Disneyland emerges as an island of calm sanity and safety in troubled times. The forces of decay are arrested, sexual innuendos are all but banished, liquor is taboo, evil is overcome, the innocent prevail, disorder is tamed, the future is clarified, the past cleaned up, and, in general, the perverse world of doubt, fear and unfair competition outside the gates is held at bay. Turn of the Century amusement parks in America performed much the same kind of symbolic work but the reversals were different, almost an inversion of the symbolic work at Disneyland. Old parks developed from the background of a relatively stern Victorian heritage that stressed self-control, rationalism, industriousness, delayed gratification and thus worked to create feelings of spontaneity, intensified emotion, release, and a scornful, mocking attitude toward the culture outside the park (Kasson, 1978; Harris, 1990).

Two emblematic attractions at Disneyland — also found at Tokyo Disneyland — serve nicely as concrete instances of the hypercultural statements found in the park and will help illustrate and unpack something of the cultural experience the park offers to its American customers. First, consider the tame imagery presented by "It's a Small World," an attraction first built by Disney for the New York World's Fair in 1964 and then rebuilt a year later at Disneyland. The cuteness and adorableness that permeates every amusement in the park is particularly clear in this attraction. The patron enters a castle-like structure through a large and elegant topiary garden of plant life shaped into animal forms. One rides in small boats through a cartoon-like array of moving dolls dressed in native costumes that represent a selected variety of world cultures. The dolls spin and sing repetitively what is surely one of the most nauseating tunes of all time — "It's a Small World After All."

The dolls portray the "Children of the World" in miniature. They are uniform in size, appearance and mannerisms except for marginal

differentiations of race, nationality and dress. The marking is simple and redundant, cultural signs that Americans have long been accustomed to through children's literature, movies, television and comic books. Holland is coded by tulips and bells, Japan by fans and kimonos, India by temples and saris. The faces are however basically Anglo-Saxon, even when intended to signal Chinese, Latino or Arabic. The facial markers are mere hints that point to the possible existence of differences but, since the differences are so slight, they could not possibly be taken to be of serious consequence. A sort of insidious ethnocentrism is obvious in the infantilization of the world's cultures where all human differences are superficial and benign. Americans are notably absent in this display except as passive observers of the scene, blissfully drifting past the world of young, diminutive, ebullient, bright-eyed, innocent and loveable "Others."

If "Small World" is a hypercultural message of simplicity and harmony, of sweet differences and unity in the world, the Adventureland "Jungle Cruise" is less reverential and more expiatory toward some of the world's cultures. The racial themes and imperialist mentality of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century are built into this attraction, from the scenic constructions on the banks of the river, to the words and phrases of the ride operator's animated spiel which accompanies each cruise. The voyage departs next to a pile of plastic human skulls, beneath shields, spears, totems and other symbols of some nameless, but faintly menacing, region beyond white settlement. The adventure consists mostly of short takes of mechanized people of color and wild life as encountered in the river and along its banks. One scene places four members of a safari atop a pole with a horned rhinoceros threatening to impale them from below. The members of the party are three Africans who stare minstrel-like at the animal beneath them, faces glazed with fear and eyes protruding. At the very top of the pole, furthest from the rhino and danger, is perched the white safari leader.

Disneyland is, of course, made up of thousands on thousands of hypercultural statements. Any one sign may give way to diverse readings but when bundled together the teachings are abundantly clear. The overt messages and themes come back to the same concerns: Friendliness, optimism, the civilization of the frontier, the ultimate victory of good over evil,

the beauty and power of America, the importance of efficiency, cleanliness, order and courtesy, the importance of staying in line (figuratively and literally), the triumph of modern technologies (particularly transportation technologies) and so forth. What is celebrated at Disneyland and what is being taught come together under labels such as patriotism, cultural superiority and the trivialization of differences across the globe. America shines and spreads its light on the world and the exotic is reduced to safe and familiar terms. All this is packaged in a fashion that is thematically consistent, rather banal, closely scrutinized and controlled, and licensed by broad middle-class values of harmony and order.

THE COPY:

The same production is replicated as "The Magic Kingdom" in Orlando, Florida. The second park opened in 1969 and now, with its peripheral attractions, Epcott Center, MGM-Disney Studios and numerous Disney-owned and operated hotels and fun zones adjacent to the park, the total complex in Orlando outdraws Disneyland. Walt Disney World is, in fact, second only to Washington D.C. in the number of tourists it attracts within the United States each year (Birnbaum, 1989; *Time Magazine*, April 25, 1988). Its construction, however, sets Disneyland apart as the "original," giving it the measure of authenticity that only a copy can provide.

The copy is not perfect. The scale is larger and some attractions such as the Matterhorn bobsleds are still found only at Disneyland. The Magic Kingdom lacks the intimacy of Disneyland but when combined with the other tourist sites at Walt Disney World becomes part of an activity menu that lengthens the average visitor stay to a matter of days rather than hours. Modest changes within the park are visible as well. Sleeping Beauty's Castle is replaced by the bigger, more photogenic and splendid version, Cinderella's Castle. Some of the rides like Big Thunder Mountain are longer and slightly more harrowing. Others are thin replicas such as the Pirates of the Caribbean, which is much more elaborate, lengthy and entertaining at Disneyland. Still, despite small changes, the cultural experience for American visitors to the two parks must be much the same. The context does not shift radically nor do visitors seeming-

ly notice much difference — beyond scale — in the two parks (Sehlinger, 1985; Birnbaum, 1987). What the park in Walt Disney World provides, however, is a measure of choice for those about to construct yet another copy of Disneyland.

THE TRANSFORMATION:

Disneyland went international in 1983 with the opening of its Tokyo operation. As noted, on the surface, it claims to be a near perfect replica, of the Disneyland production minus a few of the original's attractions. There are some recognized modifications but these are imports selected from The Magic Kingdom instead of Disneyland (e.g., Cinderella's Castle and the Mickey Mouse Theater). In terms of organizational control, it is as decentralized as they come — the Oriental Land Company, a Japanese development and property management firm, took full control shortly after the park was built and now provides Walt Disney Enterprises with a rough ten-percent cut of Tokyo Disneyland's profits from admissions, food and merchandise sales. A small American management team ("Disnoids") remains in Japan as advisors and consultants to keep the park in tune with Disney doctrine and the firm hires a handful of non-Japanese employees, mainly Americans, as "cast members" (entertainers, crafts people and characters) strategically scattered throughout the park. The question we now raise concerns the flow of culture from the west to the east. To what extent does Tokyo Disneyland mean the same thing to its new patrons as it means to its old?

In a nutshell, Tokyo Disneyland does not work in the same way as its American counterpart. The cultural meaning of the park shifts significantly. This is not to say that the symbols and Disney narratives are meaningless in the Japanese context. Such a view could not begin to explain the popularity of the park which, in 1991, expected to outdraw Disneyland by nearly five million customers (New York Times, February 17, 1971). But, what does appear to be happening is the recontextualization of the American signs so that the Japanese are able to make them their own. This process may be highly general and something of the norm for cultural transformations.

Most observers of modern Japan note the country's penchant for the importation of

things foreign, from public bureaucracies (Westney, 1987) to fashion (Stuart, 1987); to popular sports (Whiting, 1977). In fact, Japan's widescale adoption of things American is now something of a universal cliché. The choice of imports is, however massive, highly selective. From this perspective, the consumption of foreign goods in Japan seems less an act of homage than a way of establishing a national identity by making such imports their own through combining them in a composite of all that the Japanese see as the "best" in the world. Some of this conspicuous consumption correlates with significant increases in per capita disposable income and what appears to be a new and more relaxed attitude among the Japanese toward leisure and play (Fallows, 1989; Emmott, 1989). But, whatever the source of this omnivorous appetite, the Japanese seem unworried that their cultural identity is compromised by such importation.

Not to be overlooked, however, are the subtle, sometimes hidden ways, alien forms are not merely imported across cultural boundaries but, in the very process, turned into something else again and the indigenous and foreign are combined into an idiom more consistent with the host culture than the home culture. Two features of the way Disneyland has been emulated and incorporated in the Japanese context in many different ways. Each suggests that Tokyo Disneyland takes on a rather different meaning for workers and customers alike in its new setting.

Consider the way Tokyo Disneyland is made comfortable for the Japanese in ways that contrast with its California counterpart. In some ways, the fine tuning of the park's character follows a domestication principle familiar to anthropologists whereby the exotic, alien aspects of foreign objects are set back and de-emphasized, replaced by an intensified concern with the more familiar and culturally sensible aspects (Wallace, 1985; Douglas, 1966). Thus the safe, clean, courteous, efficient aspects of Disneyland fit snugly within the Japanese cultural system and can be highlighted. Disneyland as "the best of America" suits the Japanese customer with its underscored technological wizardry and corporate philosophy emphasizing high quality service. Providing happiness, harmony and hospitality for guests by a staff that is as well-groomed as the tended gardens is certainly consistent with Japanese practices in other consumer locales (Vogel,

1979; Taylor, 1983; Dore, 1987). The legendary sotto voice of the Japanese service provider is merely a slight step away from the "people specialist" of planned exuberance and deferential manners turned out by the University of Disneyland in the United States — at least in theory if not in practice (Van Maanen, 1990). And, "Imagineering," a smart Disney term used to designate the department responsible for the design of park attractions ("the engineers of imagination"), is used in Japan, as in the U.S., without a touch of irony or awareness of contradiction.

If anything, the Japanese have intensified the orderly nature of Disneyland. If Disneyland is clean, Tokyo Disneyland is impeccably clean; if Disneyland is efficient, Tokyo Disneyland puts the original to shame by being absurdly efficient, or, at least, so says *BusinessWeek* (March 12, 1990). While Disneyland is a vision of order, sanitized, homogenized and precise; Tokyo Disneyland is even more so thus creating, in the words of one observer, "a perfect toy replica of the ideal tinkling, sugarcoated society around it, a perfect box within a box" (Iyer, 1988:333). One of the charms of Disneyland to American visitors is the slight but noticeable friction between the seamless perfection of the place and the intractable, individualistic, irredeemable and sometimes intolerable character of the crowd. In the midst of its glittering contraptions and mannerly operatives are customers strolling about wearing "shit happens" or "dirty old man" T-shirts. Tourists in enormous tent dresses and double-knit outfits share space in the monkey car of Casey Jones's Circus Train with tattooed bikers, skinheads and Deadheads. Obese men and women wearing short shorts mingle and queue up with rambunctious teenagers on the make, all to be crammed onto hurling, clockwork bobsleds and sent on their way for a two-minute roller coaster ride. Park police — dressed as U.S. Marshalls or tin-horn cops — chase down the little criminals of Disneyland on Tom Sawyer's Island or Main Street as irate parents screech at their offspring to wipe the chocolate off their faces and keep their hands off the merchandise. For the Disneyland patron, such contrasts give life to the park and provide a degree of narrative tension.

In Tokyo, the shadow between the ideal and reality is not so apparent. Adults and children bend more easily toward the desired harmonious state and out-of-order contrasts are few and far between inside (and, perhaps, outside) the

park. This is a society where the word for different means wrong and "the nail that sticks out is the nail that must be hammered down" (Bayley, 1976; Kamata, 1980, White, 1987). To the extent that there is order in Disneyland, it is welcomed as a contrast to the outside world; order in Tokyo Disneyland is expected and largely taken-for-granted such that the park glides effortlessly rather than lurching self-consciously toward its fabled efficiency. Iyer (1988:317—18) summarizes his visit to Tokyo Disneyland in the following way:

There was no disjunction between the perfect rides and their human riders. Each was as synchronized, as punctual, as clean as the other. Little girls in pretty bonnets, their eyes wide with wonder, stood in lines, as impassive as dolls, while their flawless mothers posed like mannequins under their umbrellas. (They) waited uncomplainingly for a sweet-voiced machine to break the silence and permit them to enter the pavilion — in regimented squads. All the while, another mechanized voice offered tips to ensure that the human element would be just as well planned as the man-made: Do not leave your shopping to the end, and try to leave the park before rush hour, and eat at a sensible hour, and do not, under any circumstance, fail to have a good time.

Such failures to have a good time are rare partly because of the way Tokyo Disneyland has rearranged the model to suit its customers. Despite its claims as a duplicate, a number of quite specific changes have taken place and more are planned. The amusement park itself is considerably larger than Disneyland (124 acres to 74). As a result, it loses some of its uncharacteristic intimacy in a Southern California setting but gives off a feeling of conspicuous spaciousness rather unusual in greater Tokyo where it seems every square inch is fully utilized. Disneyland's fleet of Nautilus-like submarines is missing perhaps because of Japan's deep sensitivity to all things nuclear. There are few outdoor food vendors in the park but over forty sit-down restaurants, about twice the number in Disneyland. It is considered rude to eat while walking about in Japan — the munching of popcorn in the park being apparently the only exception.

Several new attractions have been added in Tokyo, each quite explicit about what culture is, in the final analysis, to be celebrated in the park. One, incongruously called "Meet the World," offers not only a history of Japan but an elaborate defense of the Japanese way. In this regard, it is not unlike Disneyland's "Meet Mr. Lincoln" where visitors are asked at one

point to sing a passionate version of "America the Beautiful" along with the mechanical icon of Honest Abe. In "Meet the World," a sagacious crane guides a young boy and his sister through the past, pausing briefly along the way to make certain points such as the lessons learned by the Japanese cave dwellers ("the importance of banding together") or the significance of the samurai warrior ("we never became a colony") or the importance of early foreign trade ("to carry the seeds offered from across the sea and cultivate them in our own Japanese garden"). Another site-specific attraction in Tokyo Disneyland is the Magic Journeys trip across five continents which culminates, dramatically, in the adventurer's return to "our beloved Japan where our hearts always remain."

Another singular attraction in Tokyo Disneyland is situated inside Cinderella's Castle and produced as a tightly-packed mystery tour through a maze of dark tunnels, fearsome electronic tableaux, and narrow escapes. Groups of about 15 to 20 persons are escorted through this breathless 13 minute adventure in the castle by lively tour guides who, in the climactic moment of the tour, select a single member of the group to do battle with evil. The chosen hero or heroine is provided a nifty laser sword and, backed by inventive special effects and timely coaching from the tour guide, manages to slay the evil sorcerer just in the nick of time. The group is thus spared, free again for further adventures in the park. The attraction ends with a mock-solemn presentation of a medal to the usually bashful group savior who then leads everyone out the exit after passing down an aisle formed by applauding fellow members of the mystery tour.

It is hard to image a similar attraction working in either Disneyland or DisneyWorld. Not only would group discipline be lacking such to insure that all members of the tour would start and end together but selecting a sword bearer to do battle with the Evil One would quite likely prove to be a considerable test for a tour guide when meeting with a characteristic American chorus of "me, me, me" coming from children and adults alike. The intimacy, proximity, and physical, almost hands-on, interaction between customers and amusement sources found in Tokyo Disneyland are striking to a visitor accustomed to the invisible security and attention given to damage control so prevalent in the U.S. parks. Tokyo Disneyland

puts its guests within touching distance of many of its attractions such that a customer who wished to could easily deface a cheerful robot, steal a Small World doll, or behead the Mad Hatter. This blissful audience respect for the built environment at Tokyo Disneyland allows ride operators to take more of an exhibitory stance to their attraction than a custodial one which is often the perspective of Disneyland operatives (Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989).

Other distinctly Japanese touches include the white gloves for drivers of the transportation vehicles in the park, a practice drawn from the taxi and bus drivers in Japan; name tags for employees featuring last names rather than first names; a small picnic area just outside the park for families bringing traditional box lunches to the park, a reminder of family customs in Japan and a compromise on the Disney tradition of allowing no food to be brought into the park; subtitles in Japanese for most of the street and attraction signs. All ride soundtracks and spiels are, of course, in Japanese and one American visitor reports considerably more ad-libbing on the part of Japanese ride operators compared to their American counterparts (Brannon, 1990). Such concessions to the Japanese guest contrast with the proclamation of a pure copy. One might argue that such changes are minor adjustments in keeping with the fundamental marketing techniques of both capitalistic societies, namely, tailoring the product to its audience. But, it is also important to keep in mind that even the notion of consumer capitalism in the two contexts varies systematically.

Main Street U.S.A., for example, has become in Tokyo, the World Bazaar. Little remains of the Turn-of-the-Century mid-western town of Walt's slippery memory. The World Bazaar is quite simply an enormous, modern, up-scale shopping mall where many of the products (and possibilities) of the five continents are brought together in a post-modern Disney collage that is distinctly Japanese. Few modest trinkets are on sale at the World Bazaar but instead costly, high status items are offered, all bearing an official Disney label and wrapped in Tokyo Disneyland paper suitable for the gift giving practices of the Japanese as outlined by Brannon (1990). Frontierland's presentation of the continental expansion of the United States has given way to Westernland which is apparently understood only through the Japanese familiarity with the Wild West Imagery of American movies, televi-

sion and pulp fiction. Thus, to the extent that nostalgia, patriotism and historical narratives provide the context of meaning for visitors to Disneyland, visitors to Tokyo Disneyland are made comfortable through devices of their own making. While the structure may appear quite similar, the meaning is not.

This shift in meaning can perhaps best be appreciated by considering some aspects of the emulation process at Tokyo Disneyland that run counter to some of our more benign (or, at least, calming) beliefs about the workings of culture flows. Tokyo Disneyland serves as something of a shrine in Japan to Japan itself, an emblem of the self-validating beliefs as to the cultural values and superiority of the Japanese. Disneyland serves as such an American shrine but it is, of course, America that is celebrated. How is it that a painstaking near-copy of what is undeniably an American institution — like baseball — can function to heighten the self-awareness of the Japanese?

The answer lies in the workings of culture itself for culture is not only an integrating device, but a differentiating device as well, a way of marking boundaries. Tokyo Disneyland does so in a variety of ways. One already mentioned is the outdoing of Disneyland in the order-keeping domain. The message here is simply "anything you can do, we can do as well (or better)." If one of the characteristic features of modern Japan is its drive toward perfection, it has built a Disneyland that surpasses its model in terms of courtesy, size, efficiency, cleanliness and performance. Were the park built more specifically to Japanese tastes and cultural aesthetics, it would undercut any contrast to the original in this regard. While Disneyland is reproduced in considerable detail, it is never deferred to entirely, thus making the consumption of this cultural experience a way of marking the boundaries between Japan and the U.S.. Japan has taken in Disneyland only, it seems, to take it over.

Consider, also, another cultural flow analogous to the way Disneyland itself treats the foreign and exotic. Tokyo Disneyland maintains, indeed amplifies, Self and Other contrasts consistent with Japanese cultural rules. Only Japanese employees wear name tags in the park, the foreign (western employees) do not. Americans hired to play Disney characters such as Snow White, Cinderella, Prince Charming, Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan or The Fairy Godmother are nameless thus merging whatever

personalized identities they may project with that of their named character. Other western employees such as craftsmen (e.g., glass blowers, leather workers), dancers, magicians, musicians and role-playing shop keepers also remain tag-less. Musicians play only American songs — ranging from the Broadway production numbers put on the large stage settings of the park to the twangy country-western tunes played by a small combo in a fake saloon of Westernland. During the Christmas season, songs such as Rudolph the Rednose Reindeer, Silent Night, and the hallelujah chorus of Handel's Messiah are piped throughout the appropriately festooned park as a portly American Santa Claus poses for snapshots with couples and families who wait patiently in long queues for such a photo opportunity. The gaijin (literally, "outside person") ordinarily speak only English while in role which furthers their distinctiveness in the setting. Mary Yoko Brannon (1990) writes of these practices:

"... rather than functioning as facilitators of the Disneyland experience like their Japanese counterparts, gaijin employees are put on display. Gaijin cast members are displayed daily in a group at the place of honor at the front of the Disneyland parade, and gaijin craftsmen are displayed throughout the day at their boxed-in work stations not unlike animals in cages at the zoo."

The same general practice is followed at Disneyland where, of course, the roles are reversed and the "Others" are constructed out of different cultural building blocks. Just as blacks are more notable at Disneyland for their absence from the productions and the work force, Koreans are conspicuously absent in Tokyo Disneyland, victims, it seems, of the racial politics of Asia. Villains of the Disney narratives produced in the United States seem always to speak and act with vaguely foreign personae and accents, typically, but not always, Russian or German; evil in Tokyo Disneyland is represented by gaijin witches, goblins and ghosts whose accents are distinctly non-Japanese. Such a practice of sharply separating gaijin from society mirrors other Japanese cultural productions such as the popular television shows devoted to portraying gaijin stupidities (Stuart, 1987) or the practice of limiting the number of baseball players on professional teams to two gaijin players per team (Whiting, 1989). The outsiders may be accorded respect but they are not to come too close for the culture provides no easy space for them.

COMMENTARY

These contrasts in meaning across the two parks could be extended considerably. The point, however, is not to enumerate all the amplifications, deflations, twists or reversals in meaning but to note their pervasive presence. That the Japanese cultural experience in Tokyo Disneyland is akin to a "foreign vacation" with a number of comforting homey touches built into the visit is the perspective I wish to establish. The perfect copy of Disneyland turns out to be anything but perfect at the level of signification. If Disneyland sucks the difference out of differences by presenting an altogether tamed and colonized version of the people of other lands who are, when all is said and done, just like the good folks at home in Los Angeles or Des Moines; Tokyo Disneyland celebrates differences by treating the foreign as exotic, its peoples to be understood only in terms of the fact that they are not Japanese and not, most assuredly, like the good people of Osaka or Kyoto.

In this regard, both parks are isolated by a belief in their own cultural superiority. It would be asking too much perhaps of a commercial enterprise to question such a belief since the corporate aim in both settings is, in crude terms, to build and manage an amusement park such that people will come (and come again) to be run assembly-line fashion through its attractions and stripped of their money. But, in the cracks, Tokyo Disneyland offers some intriguing lessons in culture flow beyond the mere fact of its existence. I have four in mind.

First, the representation of "the best in America" in Japan breaks some new ground and contributes modestly to what might be called post-modernism by combining cultural elements in new ways and then allowing customers and workers alike to develop the logic of their relationship. Thus, Mickey Mouse, a symbol of the infantile and plastic in America, can come to stand for what is delightful and adorable in Japan and used to sell adult apparel and money market accounts. This is not simply a matter of the Japanese appropriating Mickey but rather signals a process by which a selected alien imports are reconstituted and given new meaning.

Second, such cultural flows are on-going matters. Mickey Mouse has been hanging around Japan for a long time and his cultural status has a history. Working out the cultural

meaning of Tokyo Disneyland is also a long term affair. Many of the distinctly Japanese characteristics of the park were absent when the gates were first thrown back. Learning is occurring on both sides of the cultural divide. Interestingly, EuroDisneyland, set to open in 1992 in Marne-La Vallée, 32 kilometers east of Paris, is much less a duplicate of Disneyland in its design than Tokyo. Part of this is due to the insistence of the French government on insuring the park will have a number of decidedly French touches and due, in another part, to Disney's own marketing work and best guesses as to what will play well with the 310 million Europeans within two hours flight time of Paris. A different kind of cultural sensitivity seems to be operating in EuroDisneyland than in Tokyo Disneyland such that the blending of culture may be more noticeable in France than Japan.

Third, not only are cultural meanings worked out rather differently in a new setting compared to the old and such adaptation takes time; but, as culture flows continue, people on both sides of the border become more aware of their own culture (and its contradictions) as well as increasing their awareness of the other culture (and its contradictions). The traffic flow is messy but, as cultures move back and forth, people on both sides may discover new ways to do things and new things to do that might not have been apparent within either culture. People are not passive in relation to culture as if they merely receive it, transmit it, express it. They also create it and new meanings may eventually emerge as cultures interpenetrate one another. The notions of family entertainment, safe thrills and urban leisure will surely never be the same in Japan since Tokyo Disneyland appeared on the scene.⁴ A recent poll in Japan, for example, reported that over fifty percent of Japanese adults when asked "where they experienced their happiest moment in the last year" responded by saying "Tokyo Disneyland" (Iyer, 1988).

Fourth and finally, the view that cultural influences move easily along the tracks of massification — mass media, mass production, mass marketing, mass consumerism — ushering in a global culture which spells the eclipse of national and local cultures is certainly discredited by Tokyo Disneyland. This view is I think naive to the point of banality. While our understanding of cultural flows remains woefully inadequate, we do know that cultural acquisition is a slow, highly selective and

contextually-dependent matter. Culture can not be simply rammed down people's throats. As individual identity and membership distinctions become blurred, culture must be approached more as a rhetorical front than a felt reality. Thus, when a CEO of a multinational corporation refers to his firm as «a family» or when government leaders reach out and try to project the idea of a region as a culture, they may often be regarded as engaging in rhetoric or stating an aspiration that is all too obviously missing in practice. The trick in understanding culture flows would seem to be in finding the level where culture becomes more than an oratorical abstraction and begins to turn on feeling and consciousness. Here, then, is where meaning will be marked and cultural imports embraced, rejected, or, perhaps most commonly, transformed. Put another way, it is where Disney World becomes Disney Worlds.

NOTES

- 1 A considerably more elaborate treatment of both the theory and data appearing in this paper is found in Van Maanen and Laurent (forthcoming). My excuse for putting forth this modified and abbreviated version is simply that I think the case materials are interesting and instructive on their own. It is true, too, that twice-told tales are often better than once-told tales. Finally, I blame the editor of this special issue, Juha Kinnunen, for encouraging me on this task.
- 2 The analysis that follows in the text is based on a number of methods none of which are to be found in any respectable method textbook. Some are altogether opportunistic and retrospective such as my 2—1/2 year work stint as a ride operator at Disneyland in the late 1960s; periodic visits to the U.S. parks with my family in tow; and, most recently, a threeday visit to Tokyo Disneyland devoted to checking out the "findings" reported here. While this sort of emotional recall and research-in-reverse are not recommended as a general fieldwork strategy, both techniques did prove valuable in this case and allowed a certain amount of representational fine-tuning to develop in their wake. Mary Yoko Brannon helped mastermind my flying visit to Tokyo Disneyland in December, 1990 and deserves a good deal of credit for whatever success was obtained. Former Tokyo Disneyland skyway operator and current University of Tokyo sociology student, Yoji Inowa, proved a skillful translator and guide in and out of the park. Importantly, there is a good deal written about Disneyland, DisneyWorld, Tokyo Disneyland, and EuroDisneyland. I have drawn liberally from these materials as noted. A small part of the materials reported here were presented at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings in Washington D.C. on November 16, 1989 for a session titled «The Magic Kingdom» and organized by Maria Lydia Spinelli. See, Van Maanen (1989).

- 3 Among the more engaging and challenging interpretations of the myth, magic and mystery of Disneyland not mentioned in the text include: Britton (1989), Eco (1986: 20—56), Moore (1980), Real (1977: 44—90), Shearing and Stenning (1985), Spinelli (1987 and Wolf (1979). This is but a drop in a very large bucket.
- 4 On this point, a sort of global tidal wave is seemingly building since the amusement trade is growing very rapidly at the moment. Nine parks (including EuroDisneyland) are scheduled to open in Europe over the next few years. Japan has recently opened Sanrio Puroland («Hello Kitty») and Tokyo Sesame Street. Sonyland is not far off in the future. Korea's Lotte World opened outside Seoul in March, 1990. The current scramble to break the bank in the theme park business is reminiscent of the amusement boom that struck the United States just after Disneyland first opened to wild (and unanticipated) success. The boom was short-lived. Most of the parks built during that period have long since closed their gates. See, Kyriazi (1981).

REFERENCES

- Bayley, D. (1976) *Forces of order*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Britton, D. (1989) The dark side of Disneyland. *Art Issues*. 4, 5, 13—22, 3—17.
- Brannon, M.Y. (1990) "Bwana Mickey:" Constructing cultural consumption at Tokyo Disneyland. Unpublished paper. School of Management, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Birnbaum, S. (1989) *Steve Birnbaum's guide of Disneyland*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Dore, R. (1987) *Taking Japan seriously*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Douglas, M. (1966) *Purity and danger*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Eco, U. (1986) *Travels in hyperreality*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Emmott, B. (1989) *The sun also sets*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Fallows, J. (1989) *More like us*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Gottdiener, M. (1982) Disneyland: A utopian urban space. *Urban Life*. 11, 139—162.
- Harris, N. (1990) *Cultural excursions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Iyer, P. (1988) *Video nights in Kathmandu*. New York: Vintage.
- Kamata, S. (1980) *Japan in the Passing Lane*. New York: Random House.
- Kasson, J.F. (1978) *Amusing the millions*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- King, M.J. (1981) Disneyland and Walt Disney World: Traditional values in futuristic form. *Journal of Popular Culture*. 15, 116—140.
- Kyriazi, G. (1981) *The great American amusement parks*. Los Angeles: Castle Books.
- Lowenthal, D. (1985) *The past is a foreign country*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press.
- MacCannel, D. (1976) *The tourist*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Marin, L. (1977) Disneyland: A degenerate utopia. *Glyph I*. John Hopkins Textual Studies. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 50—66.
- Moore, A. (1980) Walt Disney's World: Bounded ritual and the playful pilgrimage center. *Anthropological Quarterly*. 53, 207—218.
- Myerhoff, B. (1983) The tamed and colonized imagination in Disneyland. Unpublished paper. Department of Anthropology, University of Southern California.
- Peterson, R. (1990) Symbols and social life. *Contemporary Sociology*. 19, 498—500.
- Real, M. (1977) *Mass-mediated culture*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Schickel, R. (1968) *The Disney version*. New York: Simon Schuster (revised, 1985).
- Sehlinger, B. (1985) *The unofficial guide to Disneyland*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Shearing, C.D. and P.C. Stenning (1985) From the panopticon to Disney World. in r. Ericson (Ed.) *Perspectives in criminal law*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 335—349.
- Spinelli, M-L (1987) Disneyland and Old Sturbridge Village. Paper presented to the Northeastern Anthropological Association. Amherst, Massachusetts.
- Stuart, P.M. (1987) *Nihonsense*. Tokyo: The Japan Times.
- Taylor, J. (1983) *Shadows of the rising sun*. New York: William Morrow.
- Van Maanen, J. (1990) The smile factory. Unpublished paper. MIT.
- Van Maanen, J. (1989) Whistle while you work. Paper presented at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meetings, November 16, Washington DC.
- Van Maanen, J. and Kunda, G. (1989) Real feelings. In B. Staw and L.L. Cummings (Eds.) *Research in organization behavior*, Vol. 11. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 43—104.
- Van Maanen, J. and Laurent, A. (forthcoming) The flow of culture: Notes on globalization and the multinational corporation. In E. Westney and S. Ghoshal (Eds.) *Organization Theory and the Multinational Corporation*. London: Macmillan.
- Vogel, E.F. (1979) *Japan As Number One*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Wallace, F.A.C. (1985) Rethinking technology "and" culture. Paper prepared for the Mellon Seminar on Technology and Culture. University of Pennsylvania, Department of Anthropology.
- Westney, D.E. (1987) *Imitation and Innovation*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- White, M. (1987) *The Japanese educational challenge*. New York: Free Press.
- Whiting, R. (1977) *The chrysanthemum and the bat*. New York: Vintage.
- Whiting, R. (1989) *You gotta have Wa*. New York: Vintage.
- Wolfe, J.C. (1979) *Disney World: America's vision of utopia*. *Alternative Futures*, 2, 72—77.