The Disneyization of Society

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Contents

Preface

In this book, I seek to make a case that more and more aspects of our society are exhibiting features that are associated with the Disney theme parks. The idea of Disneyization springs from a conviction that there are changes to our social world that the Disney theme parks exemplify. Disneyization thus becomes a lens through which the nature of modern society can be viewed, as well as a way of thinking about issues to do with consumption and globalization.

I am by no means the first person to suggest that modern society is increasingly taking on the characteristics of the Disney theme parks, but I discuss this issue in a systematic way rather than make general allusions to the influence of the Disney theme parks. In addition to drawing attention to ways in which the Disney parks may have been influential on a variety of social institutions and practices, I also argue that they exemplify certain developments that were in train before the first park opened (Disneyland in 1955). In other words, the Disney theme parks are emblematic of certain trends that I identify in this book while simultaneously having been influential in their own right.

In attempting to adopt a more systematic approach than merely making general mention of the way in which many social institutions and practices increasingly resemble the Disney theme parks, I outline four aspects or dimensions of what I call 'Disneyization'. Following a general introduction to the idea of Disneyization in Chapter 1, I then outline these four dimensions – theming, hybrid consumption, merchandising, and performative labour – in the succeeding four chapters. In these chapters, I show how each aspect of Disneyization operates in the Disney theme parks and the ways in which it can be discerned beyond the parks' environs in our wider society. In Chapter 6, I suggest that crucial to the successful operation of Disneyization are control and surveillance and I outline the ways in which these are salient to the Disney theme parks and to Disneyized institutions and practices more generally. In the final chapter, I link Disneyization to wider issues to do with consumption and globalization. Here, I raise the question of whether Disneyization should be viewed as a homogenizing trend that creates a standardized world. I coin the idea of a *systemscape* to help deal with this issue. Disneyization is treated as a systemscape in the sense of a set of underlying principles that are diffusing throughout the economy, culture and society, but which allow considerable variation in how they are implemented. Consequently, the forms that Disneyized institutions take on are likely to vary considerably. In this final chapter, I also seek to inject a more critical tone than is usually apparent in the other chapters, by asking how far Disneyization has adverse consequences and implications.

In this book, I have slightly changed the way in which I conceptualize the dimensions of Disneyization from the ways in which they were presented in these three articles. Hybrid consumption was formerly called 'dedifferentiation of consumption'. In addition, performative labour is employed rather than 'emotional labour', which was the term employed in these three earlier publications, because I felt that a slightly less specific term was needed to capture trends in the area of work that I felt could be linked to the Disney theme parks.

Chapter One
Disneyization

Mini Contents

In this book, I make the case that more and more sectors of society and the economy are being infiltrated by a process I call Disneyization. By Disneyization I mean simply:

> the process by which *the principles* of the Disney theme parks are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world.

I see the principles that are described in this book as infiltrating many and a growing number of areas of social, cultural, and economic life. Others have drawn attention to the way in which many areas of modern life are coming to take on the manifestations of a theme park, such as when a *Times* journalist referred to Canary Wharf in London as 'theme park city'.[1] In this book I go beyond such general allusions to the growing influence of the Disney theme parks on social life by delineating, in more precise terms, the specific theme park principles that I see seeping through our society. In other words, the project with which this book is concerned is a more analytic assessment of the manifestation of Disney theme parks' principles than is typically undertaken. At the same time, I will emphasize that we cannot attribute the dispersion of these principles solely to the rise of the Disney theme parks, since they clearly predate the parks themselves. The Disney theme park principles may well have leaked into our social institutions and practices without the aid of the parks themselves. However, it is also likely that the high profile of the parks and the frequency with which they are held up as models in a variety of areas – for theming, for their architecture, for their transformation of shopping into play, for their smiling ever-helpful employees, and so on – have contributed greatly to the circulation of the underlying principles described in this book.

2

Disneyization is portrayed as a globalizing force. In other words, the principles with which it is associated are gradually spreading throughout the globe. The issue of the global diffusion of Disneyizing principles in relation to globalization is discussed in Chapter 7. I recognize that globalization has become simultaneously fashionable and unfashionable: fashionable in the sense that it is a frequently discussed topic in the literature on modern societies; unfashionable in the sense that there has been a sharp reaction to the notion of a world-embracing trend that rides roughshod over local cultures and practices. The issues involved in these considerations are also addressed in Chapter 7.

Chapters 2 to 5 explore the dimensions of Disneyization. These are:

- *theming* – clothing institutions or objects in a narrative that is largely unrelated to the institution or object to which it is applied, such as a casino or restaurant with a Wild West narrative;

- *hybrid consumption* – a general trend whereby the forms of consumption associated with different institutional spheres become interlocked with each other and increasingly difficult to distinguish;[2]

- *merchandising* – the promotion and sale of goods in the form of or bearing copyright images and/or logos, including such products made under licence;

- *performative labour* – the growing tendency for frontline service work to be viewed as a performance, especially one in which the deliberate display of a certain mood is seen as part of the labour involved in service work.[3]

I see these four dimensions as emblematic of the Disney theme parks but also as constituting principles that are pervading many spheres of modern life.

In discussing each dimension, the following issues will be addressed:

- The ways in which that aspect of Disneyization is evident in the Disney theme parks themselves.

- Evidence of the existence of that aspect of Disneyization before the opening of the first Disney theme park – Disneyland in Anaheim, California, in 1955 (see Box 1.1).

- Evidence of the diffusion of that aspect of Disneyization beyond the Disney theme parks.

The second of these three issues is presented to remind us that it is not being suggested that the Disney theme parks were the first context to manifest each of the four aspects of Disneyization. Instead, it is suggested that the Disney theme parks are emblems of the four trends that are discussed. It is almost certainly the case that there has been a process of emulation of the Disney theme park principles due to the immense success, prominence and popularity of the parks. Where appropriate, these processes of imitation will be noted. However, the central point is that the parks exemplify and symbolize the four aspects of Disneyization. In

Box 1.1 The Disney theme parks

Since some readers may not be familiar with the parks, this box contains a listing of all the major Disney theme parks. The parks are organized nowadays as 'resorts', so that Walt Disney World in Orlando, for example, is not a theme park as such but a resort that contains theme parks, as well as many other Disney venues: three water parks, a nightclub area (Pleasure Island), many hotels, restaurants and shops other than those in the parks, and so on. Consequently, the listing that follows is organized by resort and then by year of opening.

Disneyland Resort, Anaheim, California

Magic Kingdom (opened 1955) The original theme park was organized into lands, the main ones being: Adventureland, Frontierland, Tomorrowland, and Fantasyland. Main Street USA is the artery that leads the visitor inexorably towards the lands. As with all Disney theme parks, a land provides the background narrative to the attractions within it.

California Adventure (opened 2001) Divided into lands, themed in terms of California, such as: Pacific Wharf, Bountiful Valley Farm, Condor Flats, and Hollywood Pictures Backlot.

Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando, Florida

Magic Kingdom (opened 1971) More or less identical to the Magic Kingdom in Disneyland (see above).

Epcot Center (opened 1982) This theme park has changed its name slightly on a number of occasions and is now just called Epcot, which stands for Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow. It has two main areas: Future World, containing pavilions dedicated to aspects of science and nature and World Showcase, containing representations of a variety of nations.

Disney-MGM Studios (opened 1989) Divided into lands, themed in terms of the movies and Hollywood, including Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood Boulevard, Studio Courtyard, and the Backlot.

Disney's Animal Kingdom (opened 1998) Divided into lands, themed in terms of animals and their locations, both past and present, including: Africa, Asia, Safari Village, Oasis, and Dinoland, USA.

Tokyo Disney Resort, Japan

Tokyo Disneyland (opened in 1983) More or less identical to the Magic Kingdom in Disneyland (see above), but Frontierland is called Westernland and Main Street USA is called World Bazaar.

(Box 1.1 Continued)

Disney Sea (opened in 2001) Divided into lands with nautical themes, including: Port Discovery, American Waterfront, Mermaid Lagoon, Mysterious Island, and Mediterranean Harbor.

Disneyland Resort Paris, France

Disneyland Park (opened in 1992) More or less identical to the Magic Kingdom in Disneyland (see above), but Tomorrowland is called Discoveryland.
   Walt Disney Studios (opened in 2002) Divided into lands, themed in terms of the movies and Hollywood, including: Frontlot, Backlot, Production Courtyard, and Animation Courtyard.

Hong Kong Disneyland

Phase 1 is due to open in 2005. See://www.info.gov.hk/disneyland/eng.htm

much the same way that Walt Disney did not invent modern animation,[4] he did not did not invent Disneyization through the Disney theme parks. (Hereafter, Walt Disney will be referred to simply as 'Walt' following common practice to distinguish the man from the company he founded and nurtured. 'Disney' will refer to the company.)

Disneyization parallels Ritzer's[5] notion of McDonaldization, which was concerned with the diffusion of the principles associated with the fast-food restaurant. Indeed, the definition of Disneyization offered above is meant to be a slightly ironic but nevertheless serious adaptation of Ritzer's definition of McDonaldization. 'Disneyization' is meant to draw attention to the spread of *principles* exemplified by the Disney theme parks.

In a sense, Disneyization takes up where McDonaldization leaves off. McDonaldization is frequently accused of creating a world of homogeneity and sameness. One of the main foundations for Disneyization is that of increasing the appeal of goods and services and the settings in which they are purveyed in the increasingly homogenized environments that are the products of McDonaldization. In essence, Disneyization is about consumption. Consumption and, in particular, increasing the inclination to consume, is Disneyization's driving force. Disneyization seeks to create variety and difference, where McDonaldization wreaks likeness and similarity. It exchanges the mundane blandness of homogenized consumption experiences with frequently spectacular experiences. In addition, Disneyization seeks to remove consumers' need for the prosaic fulfilling of basic needs and to entice them into consumption beyond mere necessity. To take a simple and somewhat

stereotyped illustration: eating in a standard McDonald's or Burger King may have the advantage of filling a basic need (hunger) cheaply and in a predictable environment,[6] but Disneyized restaurants are likely to provide an experience that gives the impression of being different and even a sense of the dramatic while being in a location that perhaps increases the likelihood that the consumer will engage in other types of consumption, such as pur- chasing merchandise or participating in other activities in a hybrid consumption setting. Hybrid consumption environments themselves frequently take on the characteristics of the spectacular because of the sheer variety of consumption opportunities they offer and especially when accompanied by theming. To a significant extent, then, Disneyization connects with a post-Fordist world of variety and choice in which consumers reign supreme.

Disneyization not Disneyfication

The term 'Disneyization' is a slightly clumsy one and is also somewhat unusual given the preference of many writers and commentators to prefer the more commonly used 'Disneyfication'. My reason for preferring the alternative term is that Disneyfication is typically associated with a statement about the cultural products of the Disney company. To Disneyfy means to translate or transform an object into something superficial and even simplistic. Schickel's portrayal of Disneyfication is one of the most comprehensive, as well as being representative of the kinds of meaning typically attributed to it:

> …that shameless process by which everything the Studio later touched, no matter how unique the vision of the original from which the Studio worked, was reduced to the limited terms Disney and his people could understand. Magic, mystery, individuality … were consistently destroyed when a literary work passed through this machine that had been taught there was only one correct way to draw.[7]

Walz draws attention to similar components in his rendition of Disneyfication: 'Often used pejoratively, [Disneyfication] denotes the company's bowdlerization of literature, myth, and/or history in a simplified, sentimentalized, program-matic way.'[8] Similarly, Ross writes about Disneyfication in terms of 'a process of sanitizing culture or history',[9] while Wasko[10] associates it with sanitization and Americanization.

  For writers like these, the process of Disneyfication is one of rendering the material being worked upon (a fairy tale, a novel, a historical event) into a stan-dardized format that is almost instantly recognizable as being from the Disney stable. In actual fact, this is not strictly true. So successful is the Disney company at what it does, namely applying a distinctive template to stories and legends, par-ticularly when making cartoon feature films that will then be marketed along

with a raft of merchandise, that its style is frequently copied. As a result, audiences are sometimes unsure about what is and is not a Disney film or indeed what is or is not a Disney theme park (a particularly common mistake among Orlando visitors). However, that possibility should not detract from the fact that Disneyfication is widely perceived in terms similar to those outlined above by Schickel, Walz, and other writers.

Trivialization and sanitization

It is the association of Disneyfication with trivialization and sanitization that is often behind the critiques that are launched against the company and its products. This association lies behind the frequent critiques of Disney's treatments of fairy tales and other stories. A critique by Frances Clarke Sayers provides an example of the kind of concern expressed. She accused Walt of: leaving 'nothing to the imagination of the child';[11] sweetening fairy tales and thereby ruining their effect and purpose; falsifying what life is like, for example, by eliminating conflict; and having scant regard for authors. Similarly, *Pocahontas* has been berated for its colonialist narrative, which they suggest legitimates 'a cultural framework rooted in racism, anti-miscegenation, patriarchy, and capitalism',[12] although not all commentators have interpreted issues of race and gender in the film in this negative light, even though they have been aware of the impact of traditional Disney themes on the story.[13] O'Brien argues that in both *Cinderella* and *The Little Mermaid* the fairy tales on which they are based are distorted to provide a patriarchal reading that is designed to serve corporate marketing goals.[14]

However, it is not just the treatment of fairy tales and children's literature that comes in for such criticism. Haas also writes about Disneyfication, but in the context of the gangster novel in the form of the Disney version of E.L. Doctorow's novel *Billy Bathgate*, which was filmed by Touchstone Pictures, a division of Disney. For Haas, the novel underwent Disneyfication in the sense that the Disney version of the story was 'sanitized' and 'clean and civilized'.[15] Disneyfication is also evident in the themes of patriarchy and innocence that are overlaid on Doctorow's story. Haas argues that the movie was a critical and box office failure because in its Disneyfication, it went against the grain of the conventions of the gangster film. Audiences that were familiar with contemporary gangster films such as *The Untouchables* and *Goodfellas* were unprepared for and dismissive of the alternative template that Disney had imposed.

Walz also discusses Disneyfication in the context of his examination of the work of a former Disney animator, Charlie Thorson who, in 1938, moved from MGM to Warner Bros., leaving two years later.[16] Walz argues that during the period Thorson worked at Warner and indeed during the immediate aftermath following his departure, the Warner Bros. cartoons underwent a temporary Disneyfication. During the period of Thorson's tenure, Bugs Bunny emerged as a

clearly different character from the streetwise, sharp-talking rabbit that was to spring from the pen of later Warner animators like Chuck Jones. In particular, the characters during this phase of temporary Disneyfication are cuter and more sentimentalized than those of the period before Thorson's arrival and after the immediate period following his departure. Walz observes that during this period traditional Disney themes of the kind that will be encountered in later chapters, such as nostalgic yearnings, were in evidence.

A second assault on the world of Disney from the point of view of its trivialization and sanitization of culture can be seen in the controversy surrounding Disney's abortive attempt to launch a new theme park called Disney's America. In 1993, Disney proposed a theme park dedicated to American history to be built at Haymarket, close to the Bull Run/Manassas battlefields in Virginia. The location would also have been 35 miles from Washington, DC. Disney's proposals were subjected to a torrent of criticism from historians and environmentalists. In spite of posturing that it was determined to go ahead even in the face of opposition, the company pulled out of the proposal the following year. While the term Disneyfication was not necessarily employed by contributors to this debate, the kinds of points that were made about the likely impact of the park and its representation of history were more or less exactly the same as those of authors who inveigh against the spread of Disneyfication.

Two factors lay behind historians' opposition to the plan. One was that the proposed park was to be located on almost sacred ground, an area of immense symbolic significance for the American people. The other, which is more salient to the present discussion, was to do with doubts about Disney's ability to get across American history in anything other than a trivialized and sanitized way. As Synnott notes, Disney's treatment of American history in theme park attractions such as *American Adventure* in Epcot and *Hall of Presidents* in the Magic Kingdom (both in Walt Disney World, Orlando – hereafter referred to simply as Disney World), which was widely viewed among historians as banal, was very much associated with this lack of faith in Disney versions of history.[17] Even Michael Eisner, Disney's chief executive, acknowledged in his autobiography that historians believed that the company 'couldn't be trusted to depict American history in ways that were sufficiently complex, subtle, and inclusive.'[18] Fears about the handling of such complex and sensitive issues as the treatment of Native Americans and of slavery, which had been the subject of considerable criticism in *American Adventure* in particular, loomed especially large. For Giroux, Disney's capitulation was evidence that the 'Disnification of American culture' could be resisted and challenged.[19]

A further example of this kind of unwanted historical portrayal can be seen in Colonial Williamsburg, the living history museum that celebrates the lives of upper-class Virginians of the colonial period. Prior to the revision of the museum in the 1970s by 'new historians', Colonial Williamsburg was frequently criticized

for its omission of conflicts and inequalities, in much the same way that Disney representations of history tend to be criticised for the omission of inequality and tensions. As Handler and Gable note, the museum of this period was frequently depicted as too much like a theme park. Indeed, as one commentator put it, Colonial Williamsburg was 'a too-cute, too-contrived Disneyesque re-creation of what was once the capital of the British colony of Virginia. A historical theme park'.[20] The new historians sought to inject a heavy dose of realism and authenticity into the museum. However, Handler and Gable, as well as other commentators such as Huxtable, [21] still point to systematic omissions from its presentation of history, which is typically regarded as having been purged of undesirable features of the time.

For present purposes, the crucial point is that the kind of history presented at Colonial Williamsburg was precisely the kind of history that was deemed undesirable – one that lacked a sense of the diverse and conflictful nature of the period, a history that was too influenced by a Disney view of how American history should be presented to the masses. Thus, even though Disney's influence on the representation of history was merely that it provided the inspiration prior to the incursions of the new historians, it was widely seen as symbolizing the kind of history that was not wanted. The historians and others fighting Disney's America theme park took the earlier phases of Colonial Williamsburg as their image of the kind of historical havoc that Disney might wreak, even though the company was merely a symbol of sanitized history rather than its manufacturer.

What we see here is a tendency for Disneyfication to be applied to the cultural realm in the form of stories and the depiction of history. Sometimes, authors attribute Disneyfication to other kinds of phenomena. Thus, Ross writes that when he left New York City to live for a year in Disney's new town, Celebration in Florida, he was conscious of the fact that he 'left behind a town frothing with offense at the Disneyfication of Times Square.'[22] Giroux similarly writes of the 'Disnification' of this area of the city.[23] These are direct references to the transformation that Disney has wrought on the area through its location of a flagship Disney Store and its refurbishment of the New Amsterdam Theater in which shows based on Disney feature films (*Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*) are shown. Prior to Disney's arrival, Times Square had become a tawdry and dangerous area replete with sex shops, prostitution and drug transactions. It had become an area that many New Yorkers chose to avoid unless they were looking for the less than salubrious trade that was rife there. Disney's arrival and its colonization of the area cleansed Times Square and encouraged a host of restaurants and retail outlets to open. It became a tourist and consumer enclave within the city. While Giroux acknowledges that the transformation may have had benefits in terms of bringing a wider range of entertainment opportunities to the area for native New Yorkers and tourists alike, he also sees it as evidence of Disney's proclivities for sanitization. In addition, he argues that the regenerated Times Square provides

the company with a further opportunity to promote its image and to roll out further its homogenizing view of the world and the corporation's licensed wares.

The tone of such accounts is almost relentlessly negative. Even Walz's account, which recognizes the quality of much of Thorson's cartoon work, also acknowledges that the cartoons of his Warner period are considerably tamer and less sharply perceptive than the animation that took place in the years after Thorson's departure when his influence on the studio had begun to diminish.[24] However, it is precisely the negative tone that is the problem, because Disneyfication has become a synonym for depthless products. It has become difficult to discuss the impacts of Walt Disney and his company in a neutral tone when employing Disneyfication as shorthand for discussing the nature of those impacts. Moreover, the emphasis tends to be upon cultural products like stories and historical representations rather than upon wider changes in culture and the economy. The mention of the Disneyfication (or Disnification) of Times Square by writers like Ross and Giroux calls attention to the influence of Disney in the area but does little more than that. There is even a vagueness about the term. The focus in Walz's definition of Disneyfication as involving sentimentalization, simplification and a programmed way of doing things is only partly followed through in the analysis of the Warner cartoons, where the emphasis is on such features as the cuteness of the characters, which have only a loose connection with the definition.

In other words, the problem for a social scientist confronting a discussion of the wider impact of the Disney company and the emblematic aspects of its operations is that the term with the widest currency – Disneyfication – has become tainted with a largely negative view of the company and its influence. Moreover, Disneyfication has largely become associated with a particular stance on that impact, namely that it is mainly to do with sanitization and trivialization. Even then, the brief coverage of a few definitions suggests that it does not have a singular meaning and is not necessarily applied in a consistent or rigorous way.

There are exceptions to this last point. Warren writes about the Disneyfication of the metropolis and as such is concerned with the way in which the Disney parks have been taken to represent 'a whole approach to urban planning'.[25] Disneyfication is not explicitly defined, but can be inferred from the components of the Disney city. First, it is a social order which is controlled by an all-powerful organization. Second, we find a breach between production and consumption which is achieved 'through the visual removal of all hint of production and the blanketing of consumption with layers of fantasy so that residents are blinkered from seeing the actual labor processes that condition and define their lives'.[26] Third, it is only residents' capacity to consume that is viewed as, in any sense, significant or important. Warren shows that in addition to the emulation of planning principles that can be discerned in the Disney theme parks, Disney representatives have sometimes acted as urban planning consultants, as in the case

of the redesign of Seattle's civic centre. She demonstrates how the Disneyfication of Seattle was resisted by locals in this particular instance.

This is an interesting analysis that is somewhat different from the other treatments of Disneyfication, most notably in its less negative tone and in its application of the idea to the built environment in a more systematic way than was seen in the brief allusions above to the Disneyfication of Times Square. However, I have opted not to use the term Disneyfication in this book because I wanted one that was not accompanied by negative baggage and also one that had not been employed in other contexts and would allow me to generate a discussion of the spread of the principles associated with the Disney theme parks.

Reflections on Disneyization

Disneyization seems to fit the requirements outlined in the previous paragraph, in spite of its inelegance. I cannot claim that it has never been used before. For example, in a news article on Las Vegas, Warren Bates, a journalist, has written: 'Distributors of adult materials on the Las Vegas strip have accused local legislators who have sought to stem their activities of attempting to further the "Disneyization of Las Vegas"'.[27] This reference draws attention to the practice on the famous Las Vegas 'strip' (the main thoroughfare in Las Vegas where most of the city's more famous casino-hotels are located) of distributing leaflets that advertise outlets for sex shows and similar 'attractions'. However, as will be discussed in later chapters, since the late 1980s Las Vegas hotels have sought to reposition themselves as playgrounds, not just for adults but also for children by including theme park attractions. This is what Bates is referring to as the 'Disneyization of Las Vegas'. Thrusting leaflets advertising pornography and sex shows into bypassers' hands is inconsistent with this reorientation. Las Vegas has often been referred to as an adult Disneyland, but for the author of this news item, Disneyization means making it appropriate to children as well as adults.

Another use of the term is in an article on 'Disneyitis' in *The New Yorker* by Brendan Gill in which he argues that architecture in the US is increasingly becoming 'Disneyized'. He draws attention to several examples such as Helmut Jahn's State of Illinois Center in Chicago. For Gill, the Center is part of the trend whereby 'public buildings as well as private ones bear the stamp of toyland'.[28] Indeed, he argues that the use of a term like 'Center' rather than 'state office building' is meant to be redolent of pleasure in contrast to the grim realities of bureaucratic routine and humdrumness that are likely to take place in a state office building. In a sense, Gill misses a further Disney-related point here: the use of a term that is meant to say what something is, while simultaneously saying something else about it, is typical of Disney-speak, that special language of 'cast members' (workers) and 'guests' (paying visitors) that will be a topic for later discussion (Box 1.2). Using terms in this way may be yet a further way in which Disney influences our perceptions.

Box 1.2 Disney language

The Disney theme parks are very much associated with the generation of a distinctive language to describe (some would say mask) different groups and activities. Many of the terms can be seen in terms of a performance metaphor, an observation that has important links with the issues addressed in Chapter 5. Here are some common Disney terms and their equivalents:

Everyday term	Disney-speak
theme park visitor/customer	guest
employee	cast member
frontline employee	host or hostess
public areas	onstage
restricted areas	backstage
theme park ride or show	attraction
hiring for a job	casting
job	role
foreman	lead
uniform	costume
job interview	audition
crowd	audience
accident	incident
queue/line	pre-entertainment area
attraction designer	imagineer
talking robot	audio-animatronic figure

Sources: Bryman (1995: 108); Disney Institute (2001: 81); Koenig (1994)

Nor should we be surprised at writers pointing out the influence of Disney. Edward Ball, writing in *Village Voice*, has called Disney 'America's urban laboratory, the clinic whose concoctions are exported around the world.'[29] In a sense, it is not the company as such that is the laboratory but its theme parks. It is these which have had such a profound influence and have led architects to enthuse about their design.[30] However we should not get too carried away with talk of Disney and the influence of the company and its theme parks. It is crucial to remember that Disneyization is not about the influence of Disney but about the spread of the principles that its theme parks exemplify. The four dimensions of Disneyization can be shown to predate Disneyland – hence my insistence on presenting in each chapter, evidence of Disneyization that precedes the opening of this first Disney theme park.

In spite of the occasional use of the term in contexts like the Las Vegas leaflet, Disneyization seemed to be a term that had fewer connotations and implications

than Disneyfication. It therefore appeared more like a *tabula rasa* onto which my particular spin, that is, to depict the term as concerned with the spread of the principles with which the Disney theme parks are associated, could be etched. Moreover, although Warren[31] is a rare exception, expositions of Disneyfication rarely explore the principles underlying the features that they expose and are not usually concerned with wider issues to do with Disney's influence in the wider culture (as opposed to its impact on particular texts like fairy tales). In this book, I seek to show that Disneyization is to do with the four underlying principles that were briefly outlined above. Disneyization is therefore to do with the myriad ways in which features associated with the Disney theme parks seep into the economy and into the consumer culture of our times.

What some of these allusions also suggest is that Disney and its theme parks are often treated as reference points. When Wolf observes that everyone wants their brand to be like Disney's,[32] or when commentators express admiration for its product synergies, what we are seeing is a clear notion that Disney, and its theme parks in particular, provide a highly sought after template for the service sector. Thus, while some of the time in this book I will draw attention to the way in which Walt capitalized upon pre-existing trends or features in planning Disneyland, it is also undoubtedly the case that the Disney theme parks are themselves much copied.

A distinction may usefully be drawn between *structural* and *transferred Disneyization*.[33] The former is to do with a collection of underlying changes that are merely exemplified by the Disney theme parks. Transferred Disneyization occurs when the principles associated with the Disney theme parks are reassigned to another sphere, such as a shopping mall. Thus, two separate sets of processes may be at work in the spread of Disneyization: the first set concerns the fact that there are several changes in society of which the Disney theme parks are exemplars; the second set recognizes the success of the Disney theme parks and the likelihood that many of their ingredients can be (and often are) copied and relocated. A similar distinction could be relevant to McDonaldization too in terms of its underlying principles, but that is beyond the scope of this book. In practice, it is likely to be difficult to distinguish between concrete cases of Disneyization in terms of which process – structural or transferred – has taken place, but the distinction is instructive in that it reminds us that the Disney theme parks are much copied.

Conclusion

In this introductory chapter, I have set out what I mean by Disneyization in very general terms. Disneyization is meant to be distinguishable from Disneyfication, which has come to be seen as a distinctive approach to literature and history that entails a crude simplification that also cleanses the object being Disneyfied of unpleasantness. While 'Disneyization' suffers from the fact that it has also been