



STORIES OF THE STORYTELLING ORGANIZATION: A POSTMODERN ANALYSIS OF DISNEY AS "TAMARA-LAND"

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My purpose is to theorize Walt Disney enterprises as a storytelling organization in which an active-reactive interplay of premodern, modern, and postmodern discourses occurs. A postmodern analysis of these multiple discourses reveals the marginalized voices and excluded stories of a darker side of the Disney legend. *Tamara*, a play that is also a discursive metaphor, is used to demonstrate a plurivocal (multiple story interpretation) theory of competing organizational discourses. Subsequent sections address storytelling organizational theory, analyses of official accounts of Disney enterprises, and less well known, even contrary, accounts. The article concludes with implications for postmodern theory and future storytelling research projects.

PRE-TEXT

Who is better known, Jesus Christ or Mickey Mouse? Walt Disney enterprises is a storytelling organization par excellence. The happy stories organization members tell about themselves are as artfully constructed and as carefully edited as their legendary characters. But just as the question of the Wicked Witch in the film *Sleeping Beauty* ("Mirror, mirror on the wall who is the fairest of them all?") has more than one answer, there are contrary stories about Walt Disney and the so-called Magic Kingdom that do not fit the universal tale of happiness. My purpose was to form a theory about this storytelling organization, use postmodern analyses to re-situate the excluded stories and voices, and then analyze their relationship to the dominant legend of an official, happy, and profitable Disney studios. This research goes behind the artful and managed happy constructions of the Disney storytelling enterprise to reveal a darker side: a

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Walt who was a tyrant, the crafting of an official history out of multifaceted reality constructions, the excluded voices of former employees, and exercises in story surveillance. In the past, management theorists have written stories without attention to plurality and economic context.¹ As writers, researchers are therefore complicit in marketing the happy kingdom stories to their readers. In the “management of writing and writing of management,” the construction and choice of the happy story over competing voices is less a search for the truth than a naive political and economic complicity that marginalizes alternative stories. I demonstrate plurality here by describing *Tamara*, a play that is a discursive metaphor of the storytelling organization. Discursive metaphors “read” story plurivocality—the potential for multiple interpretation—back into the constructions that organizations collectively “write” as their histories. Therefore, the research question here is, What are the collective and historical dynamics of the storytelling organization, viewed as a *Tamara*, as it writes its story onto the employees and the public? Previous research has not explored the multiplicity and contentiousness of collective storytelling processes. This question also speaks to important and timely concerns that organizational theorists are raising regarding the need to craft organization theories on the basis of linguistic (e.g., text, novel, discourse, conversation), rather than mechanistic and organic metaphors (Hatch, 1993; Hazen, 1993; Kilduff, 1993; Thachankary, 1992).

Use of a plurality of stories, voices, and realities, as well as a multiplicity of ways to interpret stories, appears in experimental fictions that the French term *nouveau roman* (Heath, 1972; Zeraffa, 1976). The aim of a *nouveau roman* is to provide multiple forms of discourse. By discourse, I mean the infinite play of differences in meanings mediated through socially constructed hegemonic practices, especially in stories (Boje, 1991a: 107; Clegg, 1989: 178; Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Laclau, 1983, 1988). In this infinite play of differences, some discourses are more hegemonic than others and thus marginalize the other discourses.

In Hollywood, a play called *Tamara* puts the audience in a special relationship with an experimental fiction.² In *Tamara*, Los Angeles’ longest-running play, a dozen characters unfold their stories before a walking, sometimes running, audience. *Tamara* enacts a true story taken from the diary of Aelis Mazoyer. It is Italy, January 10, 1927, in the era of Mussolini. Gabriele d’Annunzio, a poet, patriot, womanizer, and revolutionary who is exceedingly popular with the people, is under virtual house arrest. *Tamara*, an expatriate Polish beauty, aristocrat, and aspiring artist, is summoned from Paris to paint d’Annunzio’s portrait. Instead of remaining stationary, viewing a single stage, the audience fragments into small groups

¹ The management of writing and writing of management metaphor was suggested by a reviewer. It is greatly appreciated.

² *Tamara* is a production of Tamara International, 2035 N. Highland Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90068.

that chase characters from one room to the next, from one floor to the next, even going into bedrooms, kitchens, and other chambers to chase and co-create the stories that interest them the most. If there are a dozen stages and a dozen storytellers, the number of story lines an audience could trace as it chases the wandering discourses of *Tamara* is 12 factorial (479,001,600).

For example, when attending the play I followed the chauffeur from the kitchen to the maid's bedroom; there she met the butler, who had just entered the drawing room. As they completed their scene, they each wandered off into different rooms, leaving the audience, myself included, to choose whom to follow. As I decided which characters to follow, I experienced a very different set of stories than someone following another sequence of characters. No audience member gets to follow all the stories since the action is simultaneous, involving different characters in different rooms and on different floors. At the play, each audience member receives a "passport" to return again and again to try to figure out more of the many intertwined networks of stories. *Tamara* cannot be understood in one visit, even if an audience member and a group of friends go in six different directions and share their story data. Two people can even be in the same room and—if they came there by way of different rooms and character-sequences—each can walk away from the same conversation with entirely different stories.

Finally, there is also an indeterminacy about each character. One thinks one is following a chauffeur, who in one discourse changes the rules and becomes a spy disguised as a chauffeur and who then becomes an aristocrat pretending to be a spy pretending to be a chauffeur. Now, in his love affair with the maid, is he indeed in love with the maid, is he using her to spy on the aristocracy, or is he toying with her as an exploitable subject?

STORYTELLING ORGANIZATION THEORY

Tamara provides a metaphor for a storytelling organization, what Pondy and Mitroff referred to as a "level 7 symbol processing system" as well as a "level 8 multi-cephalous" or "multi-brain" (1979: 4–8) system. Pondy and Mitroff asked the field of management to theorize beyond mechanistic (frameworks, clockworks) and organic (blueprinted growth) systems to language-based organizing models (symbol-processing, multi-brain systems). Recent attempts to move from mechanical to organic metaphors, such as Morgan's (1993) spider plant model, still focus upon hierarchical and mechanistic relations instead of a linguistic theory of organization.³ Deleuze and Guattari (1987) analyzed the rhizome metaphor in a less hierarchical and less linear-causal fashion. Their alternative organic metaphor seeks to extricate roots and foundations, to thwart unities and break dichotomies (such as mechanistic-organic), and to spread out

³ Spider plants are rhizomes with vines creeping horizontally along the surface of the earth, bearing leaves and aerial shoots.

roots and branches, thereby pluralizing and disseminating, producing differences and multiplicities, making new connections (Best & Kellner, 1991: 99).

Still, instead of repairing mechanistic or organic metaphors, I believe it is time to heed Pondy and Mitroff's advice and move to discursive metaphors, such as Lyotard's (1984) "conversation," Bakhtin's (1981) "novel," and Thachankary's (1992) "text." *Tamara* is a discursive metaphor highlighting the plurivocal interpretation of organizational stories in a distributed and historically contextualized meaning network—that is, the meaning of events depends upon the locality, the prior sequence of stories, and the transformation of characters in the wandering discourses.

In previous work, I defined a storytelling organization as "collective storytelling system in which the performance of stories is a key part of members' sense-making and a means to allow them to supplement individual memories with institutional memory" (Boje, 1991a: 106). Gephart, in a study of leader succession, conceptualized the storytelling organization as "constructed in the above succession stories as a tool or program for making sense of events" (1991: 37). In sum, the storytelling organization as seen in *Tamara* is a wandering linguistic framework in which stories are the medium of interpretative exchange. Storytelling organizations exist to tell their collective stories, to live out their collective stories, to be in constant struggle over getting the stories of insiders and outsiders straight (Jones, 1991; Wilkins & Thompson, 1991). At one extreme, the storytelling organization can oppress by subordinating everyone and collapsing everything to one "grand narrative" or "grand story." At the other extreme, the storytelling organization can be a pluralistic construction of a multiplicity of stories, storytellers, and story performance events that are like *Tamara* but are realized differently depending upon the stories in which one is participating.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Stories and Discipline Practices

Stories discipline by defining characters, sequencing plots, and scripting actions. Stories even precede people's birth and linger after their death. By a story, I mean an oral or written performance involving two or more people interpreting past or anticipated experience (Boje, 1991a: 111). In this definition, stories do not require beginnings, middles, or endings, as they do in more formal and restrictive definitions (Bruner, 1990: 43–59; Gephart, 1991: 35). Stories are referenced with a nod of the head, or a brief "You know the full story," or with a code word or two: "His way!" As in *Tamara*, the storyteller and the story listener are co-constructors of each story event as a multiplicity of stories get enacted simultaneously in a multiplicity of sites, of brief encounter, in and around organizations. Even these abbreviated and interrupted story performances yield plurivocity. "The notion of plurivocity, that there are multiple mean-

ings in the story, is very empowering, because it gives organizational participants considerable flexibility to create their own interpretation of what is going on" (Thachankary, 1992: 231).

Because of the opportunity for multiple interpretation, much of management is about judging stories and storytellers and capturing story characters in a panoptic, interconnected network of interpretative-disciplinary relationships. Burrell described discipline as "discrete, regular, generalized and uninterrupted" sets of performances (1988: 227). Foucault called stories "the vigilance of intersecting gazes" (1977: 217). Stories discipline by being explanatory myths, qualitative simplifications, conceptual constructions, and perceptual themes that interpret and frame organizations and characters. The discursive dynamics of the storytelling collective are also revealed in the level of contestation among stories.

In sum, people do not just tell stories: they tell stories to "enact" an account of themselves and their community (Browning, 1991). Stories also shape the course and meaning of human organization. Yet, in recent years only a handful of organization studies have focused on the link between storytelling and organization (Boje, 1991a, 1991b; Browning, 1991; Gephart, 1991; Hawes, 1991; Jones, 1991; Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkin, 1983; Wilkins & Thompson, 1991). Although more research on organizational stories is needed, what is even more urgent is to propose models, such as the *Tamara* metaphor, that focus on the linguistic qualities of human organizations. The beauty of *Tamara* is that the choices surrendered by single-story interpretations of organization are returned in this discursive metaphor for organizational life. Organizations cannot be registered as one story, but instead are a multiplicity, a plurality of stories and story interpretations in struggle with one another. People wander the halls and offices of organizations, simultaneously chasing storylines—and that is the "work" of contemporary organizations. More important, organizational life is more indeterminate, more differentiated, more chaotic, than it is simple, systematic, monological, and hierarchical.

Struggles of Premodern, Modern, and Postmodern Discourse

In this section, I would like to briefly differentiate premodern, modern, and postmodern discourses. I see two theoretical alternatives: an era-by-era paradigm displacement theory, such as Drucker's theory of modern and postmodern (1957, 1992), and a theory of hegemonic struggle among multiple discourses for dominance and survival, such as Boje and Dennehy (1993) and Clegg (1990) offered. In the era-by-era theory, each era of discourse displaces its predecessor. The modernist era displaced premodernism, and the postmodern era is about to displace modernism. However, in the second theory, which constitutes the thesis of this paper, the basic elements get shifted between foreground and background, without being vanquished. I assume that contemporary organizations demonstrate the active-reactive struggle of premodern, modern, and postmodern discourses. This perspective of struggle and resistance builds on Clegg's

(1989: 191–240) approach by looking at stories as “micropractices” of power and upon Cooper and Burrell’s (1988) contrast between active (spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving) and reactive forces (countervailing, taming, remedial).

My application of Clegg’s “circuits of power” theory is that premodern, modern, and postmodern discourses reorganize and reterritorialize their rivals in ways that reconstruct business as usual. For example, words like diversity, voice, and empowerment are borrowed from rival discourse and then redefined to fit the status quo. Lyotard (1984) also looked at each person as located in the center of a multiplicity of communication circuits or language games. However, instead of focusing on language games, I prefer to follow Clegg and focus on discursive circuits of power. Jameson also supported this discursive struggle theory in which premodern, modern, and postmodern discourses simultaneously co-opt and appropriate one another:

Radical breaks between periods do not generally involve complete changes of content, but rather the restructuration of a certain number of elements already given: features that in an earlier period or system were subordinate now become dominant, and features that had been dominant again become secondary (1983: 123).

In sum, I assume that organizations are not exclusively premodern, modern, or postmodern. For clarity of presentation, in the next subsections I introduce premodern, modern, and postmodern themes separately. The point I am building, however, is the interrelationship, interpenetration, and interplay of multidiscursive struggle.

Premodern discourse. Premodern Western discourse mixes passion and spiritual meditation with preindustrial and even feudal customs and traditions. It does not differentiate a person from his or her social or religious role: spouse, soldier, and so forth (Thachankary, 1992: 225). Premodern discourse is a mythic and nomadic journey, defending artisan craftsmanship, spirituality, family and a strong sense of community over economic rationality. As the capitalist, industrial, and enlightenment discourses associated with modernism became articulated, the premodernists remained steadfast in their defense of traditional alternatives (Toulmin, 1990). Pope Pius XI, for example, continued to resist the notion of labor as a commodity, laissez-faire capitalism, and other economic activity “directed by the arbitrary will of owners without regard for the training and dignity of the workers” (Clune, 1943: 254–255). In the Americas, the native-born continue to defend a more spiritual view of “mother earth” against the advance of European colonization and versions of industrial progress that are no longer environmentally sustainable. The premodern, communal order that preceded the urban, mechanistic, capitalistic society is becoming increasingly popular as an alternative model of living, as exemplified in the “greening of the corporation” movement (Shrivastava, 1993). In feudal Japan, Western-style capitalism was initially considered

too threatening to premodern ethical heritages: modern ideas could lure people away from old customs and make people egotistical (Hirschmeier & Yui, 1975: 201). Modernists attack the evils of premodern practices such as slavery, religious repression, torture, and democratic inequality.

Premodern discourse interpenetrates postmodern discourse. Baudrillard (1987, 1988), Deleuze and Guattari (1972, 1987), and to a lesser extent, Lyotard (1984) have advocated a return to premodern commerce and society, in which tribal cultures lived in more harmony with their natural environments and with each other. Deleuze and Guattari saw the premodern nomadic tribes, which roamed deterritorialized spaces, exalting desire and emancipation while resisting efforts of state and religious powers to subdue them, as a postmodern model. Jameson (1986) argued that people may be imprisoned in modernism in ways that do not allow them to see the validity of premodern stories, which may be viewed as political allegories that transcend Western tastes and challenge dualities that prescribe a separation of political and private, libidinal dynamics. In other words, I, as a white, male, Westerner, listen without the same understanding as someone who has life experience in a premodern, tribal society. Finally, Clegg (1989) drew upon premodern discourses, such as Machiavelli's, to fashion postmodern theories of power. Toulmin's (1990) omega theory frames modernist philosophy as a multicentury detour that connects postmodern philosophies to a rediscovery of their affinities to premodern discourse. Nomadic life in a postmodern world is anticonformist, antitraditional, and "antinormalizing."

Modernist discourse. Modernist discourse sought to tame premodern pagan and mythical passion, contain the feudal corruption of absolute monarchy, and counteract the autocracy of the clergy. Stories of modernist life depict the administered, rationally planned, grand society that harnesses premodern passion, subjectivity, and choice. "Modernism is described as having elevated a faith in reason to a level at which it becomes equated with progress" (Parker, 1992: 3). Cooper and Burrell (1988) described two modernist projects: the "critical" programs of the Italian Renaissance and the Enlightenment and the "systemic," instrumental rationality of Weber's "iron cage of bureaucracy." The systemic program of modernism fashioned the rhetoric of "instrumental rationality" obvious in Bell's (1973) postindustrial society models. In the postindustrial scenario, science and technology would control the premodern world with the disciplines of cybernetics, decision theory, game theory, utility theory, and most recently, transaction costs analysis (Cooper & Burrell, 1988: 93-96). The system, particularly a large-scale one, erected in the interests of technological progress would contain premodern man in the "performativity" machine (Lyotard, 1984) and the panoptic gaze (Foucault, 1977). Habermas defended selected aspects of modernism, stating "I think that instead of giving up modernity and its project as a lost cause, we should learn from the mistakes of those extravagant programs which have tried to negate modernity" (1981: 11). He saw modernism as an unfinished project with

unfulfilled emancipative potential that can still be realized by, for example, refining Marxist forms of criticism to reconstruct the overly rational and exploitative aspects of modernism and develop rational strategies for consensus. Habermas and others associated with the Frankfurt School (Critical Theory) are critics of postmodern theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard, and Lyotard (Best & Kellner, 1991; Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Deetz, 1992). Some postmodernists see nothing salvageable in modernism and focus only on hierarchy, oppression, sustained racial domination, cultural marginalization, environmental deterioration, and sexism (Balsamo, 1987; Ferguson, 1984; Flax, 1990; Hawes, 1992). In sum, modernism is a variety of discourse that is in struggle with premodern and postmodern formulations.

Postmodern discourse. The first approach to postmodern organization based on the idea of an era's displacement of a previous era was developed by Drucker (1957, 1990), who saw postmodern organization as realized in a Cartesian paradigm shift from industrial to postindustrial information networks (1990). However, this formulation can be criticized as being nondiscursive and dualistic. The application of a non-era-based postmodernism to organization theory was begun in a series of articles in *Organization Studies* by Robert Cooper and Gibson Burrell, in 1988. Clegg (1990), in *Modern Organizations*, has done the most to develop a non-era perspective on postmodern organization. Postmodern theorists challenge modernist constructions that elevate the impersonal, functional, and mechanical social order over the personal and in some instances even resurrect premodern spiritual discourses (Best & Kellner, 1991). Postmodernists frequently adopt Nietzsche's concept of "difference"—the recognition of indeterminacy, what Lyotard (1984) called the "search for instabilities"—and Derrida's deconstructive method (1976, 1981).

Again in reaction, postmodern discourse de-centers the human agent and defends living and social bodies against the grand narrative, mechanical harmony, and functional order. Postmodernists attack the modern and proclaim more radical discourses and practices (Best & Kellner, 1991: 30). Best and Kellner accused postmodernists of being one-sided, as pointing out "fragmentation (Lyotard) or implosion (Baudrillard) while neglecting, with some exceptions, to properly conceptualize either totalizing forms of domination or resistance to them" (1991: 223).

There are competing postmodern theories. As Rosenau (1992) theorized, some postmodernists make affirmative assumptions, and others make skeptical assumptions. The former ("affirmatives") posit that it is possible to move beyond exploitation by framing organizations in non-hierarchical and nonpatriarchal metaphors, such as webs and networks. Affirmative postmodern discourse elevates equality, democracy, ecology, and multiplicity and has roots in modern and even premodern models (Toulmin, 1990). Alternatively, there are postmodernists who are very skeptical of all modernist enlightenment and progress discourse. Postmodernism has been described as a politics of alliance in which fragmented movements of environmentalists, blacks, Latinos, native Ameri-

cans, rain forest tribes, gays, public housing communities, and other oppressed groups seek to align their "views from below" (Jameson, 1988: 71). Although the study of these movements reveals postmodern strategies of resistance and escape, many of these movements continue to reproduce hierarchy, authority, and marginalization. Baudrillard (1987, 1988), perhaps the most radical postmodernist, believes postmodernists have lost the race to the modernists, who commodify a "hyperreality" (i.e., simulations piled upon simulations that substitute for reality) and package postmodernism as oppressive practices. For example, characters and symbols from stories, movies, and events are sold on T-shirts and become TV series, books, and theme parks that continue the commodification cycle (Knights & Morgan, 1993). In addition, it is becoming fashionable to critique such projects as total quality management, lean production, and empowerment as neomodernist attempts to put modernism into postmodern language while keeping structures the same (Boje, 1993; Boje & Winsor, 1993; Winsor, 1993; Winsor & Boje, 1993).

In sum, rather than theorize that the premodern era was overtaken by modern and that humankind is now participating in the birth of the postmodern era, I have taken a different track. I have focused on the active-reactive quality of premodern, modern, and postmodern discourses. I believe all three discourses are struggling within the Disney storytelling organization.

METHODS

Data Collection

I began collecting Disney stories in 1989 and spent the entire summer of 1990 at the Disney archives, where I recorded all the stories I could find in Disney's ample supply of audio and video tapes. According to Eliot (1993: xi-xiii), who was denied access to the Disney archives and was escorted off Disney property by security, very few biographers and researchers have ever been granted free access to the archives. I must point out that I was extended every courtesy and was never denied any recording. I was allowed to collect examples of Disney leaders engaged in storytelling by using my handheld tape recorder to sample the archival recordings. Initially, I focused upon Disney leaders engaged in storytelling work in speeches, work interactions, documentary interviews, and seemingly impromptu conversations. In addition to a stock of TV shows, films, and cartoon shorts, the archived record contained CEO discourse. There were many public relations films, a few working meetings, and tapes of stockholder meetings. Often, the executive's role, as Mintzberg (1973) pointed out, is to be the "spokesperson for the organization." I transcribed dialogue segments containing stories (with several lines of before and after text) into a computer database, edited them for accuracy, and line numbered them to keep track of the texts. These steps enabled me to better contextualize the meanings of the stories in the larger conversation units and to do word and sentence fragment searches. The final data set

produced 2,967 lines of text on 116 pages from 21 sources. The storied discourse was then analyzed with the *Readability Plus* program by Scandinavian PC Systems, Inc., which looks at sentence length and word difficulty. I found out, for example, that Walt Disney and Michael Eisner engaged in more storytelling than the CEO who was in office between their tenures, Ron Miller.

However, rather than continue with this very narrow empirical approach, I decided to switch to deconstruction methods that would allow me to put the stories into even larger meaning contexts and to explore how themes evolved over time and across accounts. I accomplished those ends by looking from themes across the data set of stories and supplementing this analysis with texts of Disney history assembled by other authors. I also continued my research on the context of these stories from 1989 through July 1993 by researching published books in order to compare official (archived tapes and Disney-sanctioned accounts) to stories told by non-CEO employees of the Disney organization. It was also imperative that I continue to update my analysis, since several important and controversial unofficial studies—those not recognized as official Disney histories—were published during the period of my investigation (Eliot, 1993; Fjellman, 1992; Van Maanen, 1992).

In particular, Eliot's (1993) book presented a research problem. On the one hand, he presents original research into the 1941 Disney strike based upon interviews he conducted with people who were there. On the other hand, I believe he contrives several of his own stories drawing on either circumstantial evidence or psychological readings about Walt Disney (henceforth, Walt) derived from Disney film projects. He presents him, for example, as an alcoholic, either entering or coming out of a nervous breakdown, an anti-Semite who kept Jews out of top Disney positions (1993: xxi), a racist who only employed blacks to shine shoes, an undercover FBI informant for 25 years, a radical right-wing antiunionist, as aligned with known members of organized crime, and as telling stories of communist strike leaders to the House Un-American Activities Committee to shatter the careers of Arthur Babbitt and David Hilberman, who had led the 1941 strike at the studio. Walt systematically fired everyone who engaged in the strike over the next decade (Eliot, 1993: xxii, 265). In these accounts, only the strike, the firings, and the hearings are documented with transcripts from interviews of Disney insiders. A final fact relevant to this study is that Walt Disney had the historical record altered by seeing to it that all references to Babbitt were purged from the Disney archives. I decided to focus on the documented accounts and on stories that presented a different version than other biographies (Miller, 1957; Mosley, 1985; Schickel, 1985; Thomas, 1967).

Deconstruction Method

Some care must be exercised when applying the deconstruction method. Eliot, for example, says he is doing film deconstruction when he

asserts that Walt's personal life was manifested in the themes, characters, and story twists of Disney cartoons and feature films: "Disney's insistence upon creating perfect worlds in his films for children reflected nothing so much as . . . his own nightmarish childhood . . . nightmares of deconstructed reality in a league with the era's leading neo-Freudian Modernists" (1993: 132). My problem with his use of the deconstruction method is that his stories about Walt are not presented side by side with the film texts. The method for making the deconstructed inferences is left to the reader's imagination. How can Eliot read Walt's mind to see his nightmares? Asserting, for example, that in *Mary Poppins*, "the two Banks children, Jan and Michael, evoke images of Walt and Roy in their youth: the obedient, reserved, traumatized offspring of a humorless disciplinarian father and loving, if ineffective mother . . . connects Walt to Elias (complete with pencil mustache) as the benevolent, if unloving head of a household" (Eliot, 1993: 259) seems to me to be more an act of armchair psychology than of deconstruction.

I prefer Derrida's (1974) more rigorous approach to deconstruction as "tamed" by Culler (1982) and applied to previous organization studies (Calas & Smircich, 1988, 1991; Kilduff, 1993; Martin, 1990). As Calas and Smircich (1991) explained, deconstruction emphasizes how words, and in this study, stories, are "polysemous"—have multiple meanings. They further stated that the interpretations derived by any particular community, for example, by organization scholars, are an arbitrary limit imposed upon the writing of managers. Eliot does not tie his deconstruction to any community other than himself or show how Walt's psyche become "storied" into the Disney productions.

To deconstruct is to actually analyze the relations between the dualities in stories—such as the positive and negative, the central and the marginal, the essential and the inessential, the insider and the outsider—to show the ambiguity embedded in them and to show the storytelling practices used to discipline particular meanings. Only collecting the happy side of Disney organization stories, as do the official biographies, and only telling the dark side of Disney stories are both rather one-sided ways to analyze Disney storytelling. My approach was to look at multiple variations of the Disney stories to show how each version covered up a great deal of ambiguity. In this way, I could study how the Disney studios disciplined its storytelling. I redirected my analysis to look at the differences between the CEO and non-CEO stories, even gathering outsider stories of Disney to get at the other side. In taking this turn, I discovered new meaning in stories I recovered from the Disney archives and in additional stories published by Miller (1957), Thomas (1967), Crafton (1982), Mosley (1985), Taylor (1987), Smith and Eisenberg (1987), Kinney (1988), Fjellman (1992), Van Maanen (1992), and Eliot (1993).

In deconstruction, the artificial lines that separate the story from its contexts are challenged to reveal how permeable a story is to its broader environmental and historical contexts. In short, I looked beyond the sto-

ries of the happy executives and the official Disney histories. I began to view each story as one consensus, one totalizing account, one set of universals, one set of essential foundations, and one construction. In deconstruction, I looked for alternative views that overtook the consensus as the multiplicity of local stories struggled with the more official stories. In this way, I began to trace the ways in which the official accounts and the nonofficial accounts played with the same story elements but came away with very different readings.

As the analysis proceeded from 1989 through 1994, totalizing, universalizing, essentializing, and panoptic control became a major analytic construct (see below). I began to see how the stories I grew up accepting about Walt Disney and his Magic Kingdom were being resisted by marginal accounts. I therefore began to shift from a "functionalist" analysis (how stories sell) to a more skeptical one (how one side of a story masks other sides). Instead of affirming storytelling functionality, I increasingly looked for the exploitation, privilege, domination, power, discipline, and control practices of this storytelling organization. There is no mystery to the specific steps in this deconstruction. The only difficult step was to shift my own perspective as an analyst. One misses these details if one is not trained to look for them. To deconstruct the CEO stories, for example, meant reading for hierarchical categories and themes in the stories to see how one term dominated another, how one character commanded another, how one element shadowed the other, how one voice spoke instead of or ahead of the other voices. Much about deconstruction has to do with noticing voice. Who gets a voice in the CEO stories, whose voice is marginal, who gets no voice at all? It also means looking at those stories that are being concealed and marginalized within particular stories. To deconstruct is to challenge the functional and hierarchical role a story assumes within the Disney enterprise. To deconstruct is to unleash accounts that do not fit neatly within the official account of Disney. Deconstruction is not a quantifiable technique. That is my reconstruction story of the method used in this research.

The results are presented in two parts. In the first part, I look at premodern, modern, and postmodern Disney discourse using concepts explained in the theoretical section of the article. In the second part, I analyze voices, marginalizations, totalisms, universalisms, essentialisms, and panoptic surveillance aspects of this storytelling organization.

DISNEY: A STORYTELLING ORGANIZATION IN HISTORICAL FOCUS

Walt Disney studios is an organization founded on storytelling. It is a very successful story-manufacturing and story commodification business (Fjellman, 1992: 299–318) that has been exported to Japan and Europe; it is a media company in the public eye; it is a corporation that has been widely studied by outsiders; and it is a company that routinely documents its own story as part of doing "Disney work." The company's documentation provides a unique opportunity to study storytelling organization dynamics that are more difficult to investigate in other settings.

Disney has created cartoon characters known the world over; Disney theme parks have higher attendance than their competitors, and Walt Disney remains a hero of the American dream. A review of Disney storytelling, however, reveals that many accounts do not fit the official story. Applying the *Tamara* metaphor, parallel storytelling organization processes are at work in and around the Walt Disney enterprise. The official story (e.g., Finch, 1973; Schickel, 1985; Thomas, 1967) is being challenged by stories of animators (Kinney, 1988), script writers (Shows, 1979), historians (Crafton, 1982; Marin, 1983), journalists (Taylor, 1987), postmodern researchers (Fjellman, 1992; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987; Van Maanen, 1992), and unauthorized biographers (Eliot, 1993). The official story elevates Walt Disney as the inventor of animation production, the originator of sound in animation, and a pioneer of many other advances in cartooning. Decades after Walt's death, there is a struggle to validate or invalidate these organizational stories. Michael Eisner, the current Disney CEO, like CEOs before him, transforms or "remythologizes" (Boje, Fedor, & Rowland, 1982; McWhinney & Batista, 1988) the official story to negotiate change in ways that have been "undertheorized" in previous storytelling research (Boje, 1991a, 1991b; Clark, 1972; Martin, Patterson, Harrod, & Siehl, 1980; Martin, Patterson, & Price, 1979; Martin & Siehl, 1983; Wilkins, 1979). In describing how this storytelling organization produces itself in premodern, modern, and postmodern discourse, my point is not to defend an era-by-era theory. Rather, my purpose, as noted in previous sections, was to illustrate the plurivocality of Disney discourse.

Premodern Disney Stories

In premodern discourse, the stories referenced some assumed underlying reality and artists performed their animation and script work without much concern about management. In the early stages of animation, each artist did his own planning, drawing, and inking work within a communal, craft arrangement of apprentices and journeymen. The supervisor was not physically separated from the individual artists, and work was seasonal. In early animation, Felix the Cat and Aesop's Fables, and not Mickey Mouse, were the leading cartoon subjects. Before Disney theme parks existed, premodern families went to medieval fairs, traveling circuses, and community and religious festivals. In 1919, Walt and Iwerks were equal partners in an enterprise called Iwerks-Disney Commercial Artists Company rather than something like Disney-Iwerks, a formulation that, Walt felt, made them sound like an optical firm (Eliot, 1993: 16; Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 8). In 1992, Disney, with the approval of Iwerks, who had taken a job with Kansas City Ad because of poor sales, reorganized without Iwerks and changed the company's name to Laugh-O-Grams. The studio was organized along the apprenticeship and journeyman lines typical of the preindustrialized animation industry. Iwerks still believed, however, that he was Walt's business partner. By 1923, Laugh-O-Grams was insolvent and Walt moved from Kansas City to California to join his brother, Roy. They formed the Disney Brothers partnership, with Iwerks as a 20 per-

cent partner. In 1925, Walt, by most accounts, told his brother and Iwerks that the name of the business was being changed from Disney Brothers Studios to Walt Disney Studios.

My thesis is that premodern production practices began to struggle with modernist ones. Early official versions of how four animators left Disney characterize them as disgruntled employees lacking faith in Walt's vision and preferring instead the security offered by a cutthroat distributor, Charles Mintz. In the premodern (or if you prefer, early modern) phase of Disney animation, Mintz suggested and named the cartoon character Oswald the Rabbit to compete with the highly successful Felix the Cat cartoons (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 13). As the story goes, Mintz, trying to get a better price from Walt, hired away most of Walt's animators, except Iwerks, and threatened to produce Oswald the Rabbit at a lower cost in a new firm, saying "Either you come with me at my price, or I'll take your organization away from you. I have your key men signed up" (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 14). In these early days at Disney, Ub Iwerks did 700 drawings a day and, as the genius journeyman, stood between Walt and the junior animators and apprentices.

In early official accounts, Walt and no one else created Mickey Mouse after Mintz stole Oswald the Rabbit. In later versions, "Exactly how that character was created has been the subject of so much myth—often of Walt's own devising—that it is difficult to be certain of the facts" (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 15). The early versions of the official story state that on the way back from New York on a train, Walt drew the mouse that would change the cartoon industry (Miller, 1957; Thomas, 1967). Walt's wife, Lillian, is said to have suggested that Walt change the mouse's name from Mortimer to Mickey. In 1948, Walt recalled how Mickey Mouse "popped out of his mind onto a drawing pad at a time when disaster seemed just around the corner" (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 15). Walt mythologizes Mickey Mouse in the official tale: "a struggling young artist, he [Walt] had befriended a family of mice that took up residence in a waste-paper basket. One particular mouse had, reputedly, become so tame it would climb up onto Walt's drawing board to be fed on scraps of food" (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 15). The personality of Mickey Mouse was based upon the actor Charlie Chaplin, whom Walt greatly admired (Holliss & Sibley, 1988; Marin, 1983). But Dave Iwerks, Ub's son, recalls a quite different version of this story: "It's pretty clear now that Mickey was Ub's character. Even the [Disney archives] concede that Ub created Mickey, although their version has it that Walt stood over Ub's shoulder when he did it. The whole scenario of the train story the studio used to be so fond of is just not right at all" (Eliot, 1993: 36). Ub had taken a sketch of Oswald the Rabbit and rounded the eyes and ears to steal Oswald back from Charles Mintz (Crafton, 1984: 210–215).

Walt had a program to tame his animators' art. Part of the hidden story of the artists' defection to Mintz involved Walt's style of management. As noted, Iwerks was a prolific craftsman who turned out 700 drawings a

day. Walt organized less-skilled artists, mostly women, to do the inking work, at lower wages. Iwerks, an officer in the company with a 20 percent share, was finding it more difficult to work with Walt. For the film *The Skeleton Dances*, for example, Walt wanted Iwerks to animate only the key drawings and let junior animators produce the in-between drawings (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 18). This system was rational, efficient, and less costly, but Iwerks, the craftsman, resisted and drew all the cartoons from beginning to end. Walt began to hire other artists at salaries above Iwerks's. The early official stories depict Iwerks as an employee, rather than an owner, who stabbed Walt in the back by jumping ship. But more recent versions reveal that Iwerks withdrew from the partnership on January 21, 1930, because of many "recent differences with Walt" (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 19). "Ub had become angry when he found that, after he'd left for the night, Walt was going over his work and retiming the exposure sheets for his animation. Everyone who remembers Ub recalls him as a gentle, courteous man, but he deeply resented Walt's interference and made that absolutely clear" (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 18). Another artist, Carl Stallings, also quit. "The fact that two of the most senior personnel appeared to lack confidence in Walt was unsettling to the more junior animators" (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 20). From a premodern perspective, the artists were resisting Walt's efforts to routinize their tasks. Iwerks was not getting recognition for his artistic genius, and Walt was breaking up his work routines and distributing the tasks to others. Roy Disney paid Iwerks \$2,920 for all rights to everything he had ever created in their partnership. Iwerks had his independence, but at the expense of shares that would soon be worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

As in *Tamara*, the story we construct of the premodern Disney studio depends upon the characters we follow from one episode to the next. In addition, the characters transform themselves over time. Stories from several long-term employees dispute the authorship of Mickey Mouse and even the animation and cartooning skills officially attributed to Walt Disney. By most nonofficial accounts, Iwerks, not Walt, had the drawing talent, but Walt was the story creator and business manager. The official Disney stories privilege Walt as sole founder. They do not credit Roy Disney and Ub Iwerks as founding partners in the emerging Magic Kingdom, even though both men devoted most of their lives to building it.⁴ Everything was "Walt Disney Presents," and the storytelling organization crafted the image of Walt (including even his signature) as systematically and

⁴ In 1930, Ub Iwerks, who had received no partnership in the studio and no recognition for his animation art in the creation of Mickey Mouse or his work on the highly successful film *Steamboat Willie*, was offered financial backing to form his own studio by an unfaithful and unscrupulous distributor. The Iwerks and the Disney studios each planned to upstage the other by producing a series of sound and color cartoons with classical music tracks. By 1940, Iwerks had lost the animation studio race, went out of business, and, as he had done many times before, went back to work for Walt Disney. He remained in this role for 30 years.

as collectively as it crafted the images of Mickey and Minnie. Knowledge constructed in the official Disney stories is an act of domination.

Modern Disney Stories

Premodernist discourse is in ongoing struggle with modernist discourse. "In the past the man has been first, in the future the system must be first" (Taylor, 1911: 7). Taylorism can be seen in the struggle between premodern animation craftsmanship and modern, scientifically managed story production. In the early 1900s, before Disney became partners with Iwerks, many animation studios "taylorized" cartoons. Like others in this industry, such as Max Fleischer, Gregory La Cava, Walter Lantz, Paul Terry, Raoul Barre, Charles Bowers, and Edwin Lutz, Walt Disney became an enthusiast of "scientific management." Walt, who by all accounts, suffered from the opportunism and untrustworthiness of both suppliers and artisans, quickly embedded the premodern community within a highly rigid, routinized, and inspected storytelling machine. Walt, while still in Kansas City, read Edwin Lutz's (1920) book on the industrial production of animation, which states "Of all the talents required by anyone going into this branch of art, none is so important as that of the skill to plan the work so that the lowest possible number of drawings need be made for any particular scenario" (Smith, 1978). Walt photostatted the book and studied it every free moment (Eliot, 1993: 18).

Contrary to the gloss of official Disney stories, John Randolph Bray, not Walt Disney, was the Henry Ford of animation (Crafton, 1982). Walt, like other animators, was an imitator of Bray's administrative methods. As Walt and other animation firms taylorized story production, the story-manufacturing system took on more and more importance, and the animators' craft withdrew from center stage. As taylorism colonized the animation industry, there was, according to Crafton (1982): (1) division of management from labor, (2) use of untrained women and children as cheap labor in art departments under the watchful eye of inspectors, (3) a pyramid of functionally managed departments with gang bosses, speed bosses, repair bosses, and inspectors, and finally, (4) the suppression of all individuality via predetermined schedules, formulas, and interchangeable tasks. Uniformity was a virtue, individuality, a fault. Practices were standardized, and animation became a coherent genre by the late 1920s (Crafton, 1982: 259). My point here is that with the rise of modernist production practices, premodern discourse was still contentious.

As animated production practices spread, the studio owners, as system managers, took all the credit for the art, and the artists became increasingly anonymous. In 1938, a huge document, "Organization Diagram: Showing Responsibilities for Inter-Studio Creative and Managed Operation," was promulgated at the Disney studio, completing the rationalization of the once ad hoc system of production and administration (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 34). It stated, for example, the following:

The Unit Director is directly responsible to the Unit Director Supervisor for all the creative results of production from completion of story to the final screen results. . . . He is responsible for delivering to the Animator the correct conception of all footage handed out by him, so that the successive efforts of the Layout Man and the Animator, and other functions, may produce the desired result. He must maintain a complete knowledge of the movement of the Animators with whom he is concerned, so that his production may move through its successive phases of production with a minimum of cost (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 42).

Artists who once felt involved in all phases of production “felt isolated from their colleagues and worked in a creative vacuum” (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 42). By 1942, the former artist colony was being described as “a modern industrial plant laid out with all the precision necessary for the most up-to-date factory . . . it has dignified the artist’s calling” (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 37). Walt would eventually use his rational principles of animated production to manufacture his theme parks, movies, and TV shows (Finch, 1973). The premodern system of apprentices and craftsmen was embedded in the tayloristic machine, and wherever possible, unskilled women were employed to perform specialized inking tasks while male craftsmen and apprentices did the more skilled drawing work. This gender-based system of production was in increasing use throughout the animation industry. Disney even opened up his own animation and art schools on studio grounds to attract enough low-wage apprentices to keep the cost of production to an absolute minimum. The official account constructs these as lean times in which the studio would not have survived without Walt’s tight control.

Premodern discursive moves can be used to sustain modernist practices. Walt, for example, used family metaphors to contest unionization. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, studios throughout the animation industry were being unionized. Opposition to unions was so strong among studio heads that one successful studio, Van Buren, known for *Felix the Cat*, closed its doors for good rather than be unionized. Another, the Fleischer Brothers Studio, moved to Florida, a state less hospitable to unions than California. Even though Walt fired people according to his mood and will and paid wages considered low by industry standards, his studio managed to avoid unionizing the artists. He did this by selling himself as father to the “boys”—his term for the male animators, storymen, and gag writers—and “girls,” his term for the women doing the inking and repetitive drawing work. He sold his employees the story of being “one big happy family.” He reinforced the family metaphor by encouraging his boys and girls to bring in their relatives to work for the “Disney family.” Boys were strongly reprimanded and even fired for cursing in front of the girls. Families require loyalty to the “self-proclaimed father figure to a staff he had personally selected, whose members he insisted were more like a family than employees” (Eliot, 1993: 87). Family members worked all hours of the

day and night for their paternalistic hero. It is interesting, as Eliot points out, that although Walt could drink on the job, curse, and have facial hair, these freedoms were not extended to his "family members." By the time the number of family members had swelled to over 1,000 for work on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, they were lined up in a good tayloristic-design, four boys to a row of desks and rows of girls in other rooms in the overcrowded studio.

On May 29, 1941, 293 employees went on strike. The Disney studio's public image as "one big happy, harmonious family" was shattered by a 1,000 picketers and by stories of dysfunction: unfair salaries, poor work conditions, and a parochial code of behavior. Walt's employees were growing skeptical of the family metaphor. The rationalized system of administration was also being challenged. An inner circle was thought to have privileges others were not enjoying. The skepticism was more apparent given the studio's use of such control practices as requiring artists to use time clocks, not just when they arrived and left work, but when they got a drink of water, made a trip to the lavatory, or sharpened a pencil (Eliot, 1993: 126). The employees also challenged the practice of recruiting women to take work at lower pay than men received. Babbitt, for example, saw his \$300-a-week salary as inequitable in comparison to that of his assistant, who only received \$50. When he supported the Cartoonist Guild's union organizing, he was fired. Disney, like other studios, resisted the union movement by forming company unions (the Disney Studio Federation) that were less politically activist and less demanding of wage increases than regional unions, such as the Cartoonist Guild. Finally, at a meeting at the Roosevelt Hotel, 50 percent of the Disney animators signed Cartoonist Guild union cards. Walt threatened to fire anyone who attended any outside union-organizing meetings. He refused to recognize the union, even after the cards were signed. Walt ended his plea for his boys and girls not to go on strike with these words: "Don't forget this—it's the law of the universe that the strong shall survive and the weak must fall by the way; and I don't give a damn what idealistic plan is cooked up, nothing can change that" (Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 43).

Official accounts characterize the strikers as "militant activists" or "misguided boys and girls." Walt believed his family members had betrayed him and fired 20 strikers on the spot (Eliot, 1993: 125–129). He had pictures taken of the strikers on the picket lines and taped them to the wall (Eliot, 1993: 142). His intimidation tactics included having his "ever-faithful girls" report to work in skimpy bathing suits to audition for full-length live-action features that would no longer require the animation work of the boys. Nonanimators who supported the Cartoonist Guild also lost their jobs. Walt denounced Babbitt, Sorrell, and Hilberman, who had organized the Roosevelt Hotel meeting, as communists to the House Un-American Affairs Committee (Eliot, 1993: 188–197; Holliss & Sibley, 1988: 45). Dozens of Disney employees were so angered by Walt's tactics that they never returned to their jobs after the strike. Over the next decade, as

mentioned previously, Walt downsized the animation department and laid off or fired every single person who went out on strike. Babbitt was reinstated into his old job several times by the National Labor Relations Board, but each time Walt fired him. On one occasion, Walt demanded that no member of the studio speak to Babbitt, who finally joined the Marines. "Once Babbitt left, Disney ordered the animator's name permanently removed from the credits of all films he had worked on and any and all related periodicals, books, bios, and public-relations documents" (Eliot, 1993: 186). The official Disney stories do not go into details about this strike.

Premodern and modern discourse are in yet another embedded relationship at Disney studios. The Disney storytelling machine consumes all forms of popular premodern stories, homogenizes them to camouflage and mask their local and regional authorship, and packages the stories and their characters and themes as merchandising and entertainment commodities. The Disney story machine used science and technology to simplify stories (e.g., "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and "Pinocchio") from Germany and other European countries to conform to Walt's vision of Middle America as expressed in Fantasyland, Frontierland, and Adventureland, and, posthumously, Toontown.

Modernism became embedded in the commodification society. Walt discovered commodification by accident. In 1932, Walt Disney studios allowed a merchandiser, George Borgfeldt, to license Mickey and Minnie Mouse and put their images on items for children. Walt soon seized upon merchandising as a source of greatly needed revenue and contracted with Bibb and Lang, a New York publisher, to produce the *Mickey Mouse Book*, which sold 97,938 copies its first year. "At the year's end, more than eighty major U.S. companies, including General Foods, RCA, and National Dairy, were selling millions of dollars of Disney-related merchandise, which resulted in a \$300,000 windfall for the studio" (Eliot, 1993: 65-66). Two-and-a-half-million Mickey Mouse watches were sold the first two years they were produced and images of Disney characters began appearing on everything from toothbrushes to kitchen sinks. As modernism progressed in a variety of industries, commodities could no longer be differentiated by their quality or utility, and to accomplish competitive differentiation, merchandisers appropriated Disney symbols, characters, and story themes. The Disney symbols were manufactured for all manner of products and services for consumers of every age.

Commodification is associated with self-commodification. People were seduced into tinkering with symbols on their bodies, cars, homes, and offices. Training and credentialing by Disney customer service and management training is also a form of self-commodification. Each part of people's bodies and social lives had to be "polished, groomed and controlled" (Fjellman, 1992: 305). Merchandisers use stories of bodies being made less ugly, telephones being a way to "reach out and touch someone," VISA cards making people "become somebody," and "going to Disneyland" as

being the prize for athletic success. Disney, like other corporations, bombards consumers with “story bites” presented in shorter and shorter bursts, even to the point at which they become subliminal seducers for commodities.

The modernist Disney story machine became reconstructed into the Disney theme parks. On July 13, 1955, Walt opened Disneyland to the world. The theme park, a collection of rides and movie sets, is, according to Van Maanen (1992), even more appreciated in Japan than in either the United States or Europe. Disneyland is a modernist machine where people pay to stand in lines and ride on conveyor belts and wheeled carts that follow prescribed cycle times as they view in storyboard sequence particular images of small town, turn-of-the-century, Middle America. The good characters win and the bad ones lose but never curse. Van Maanen (1991) used the term “smile factory” to describe the theme parks with their stage performances by Disney employees, who are called “members of the cast” and who perform for “guests” and wear “costumes.” “The image of smiles (friendly, fun, courteous) being manufactured (e.g., the products of a rigid assembly-line factory) establishes the tensions of a cultural dialogue among Disneyland workers” (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993: 125).

Eisenberg and Goodall (1993: 38–39) also reanalyzed stories from the Smith and Eisenberg (1987) Disney study to point out the contrast in the organization, at the time the theme parks were initiated, between the show and Disney family metaphors. In the show metaphor, employees were “cast members” (not employees), “wearing costumes” (not uniforms), playing their “roles” (not jobs) to “guests” (not consumers) for “box office concerns” requiring a “smile and a clean looking haircut.” In contrast, the “family” metaphor highlighted the “concerned parent” (not an executive) who “takes care of the children” (not the employees), as well as the “brothers and sisters” (not departments or divisions). The family metaphor is very popular among American corporations. “When Disneyland employees went on strike in the mid-1980s, it was as much over the two conflicting contexts of interpretation—whether work was to be seen as drama or family—as anything else” (Eisenberg & Goodall, 1993: 39). Employees of Disney, after some resistance, seem to have bought into the changes in their overall story. (But French workers at EuroDisney met the show metaphor with cynicism and resistance, as is described further below.)

In sum, Disney sustains the modernist production machine to turn images into commodities for mass consumption while cloaking employees in a storybook role as smiling performers in show. The artist’s spirit was tamed, but not defeated, by the time clock. Modernism is embedded within premodern contexts, and, as I shall assert, in postmodern contexts as well.

Postmodern Disney Stories

Walt Disney enterprises is not that postmodern. It is the grand narrator of commodification, but it is still the modernist story machine. For Bau-

drillard (1983, 1987) and Fjellman (1992), two of the few postmodernists to write about Disneyland, the images manufactured there bear no relation to any reality. Whereas premodern exchange was based upon the practical use value of a product or service, and modern exchange was based upon the monetary value of a product or service, the postmodern exchange complicates the relationship between "sign" (subject) and "signified" (object). Both Baudrillard (1983, 1987) and Jameson (1984) focused on how a "creeping of surrealism" has invaded the modern world. With the industrial revolution and, in Disney's case, the taylorizing of the animation and theme park industries, signs are mass-produced with no attention to origin or uniqueness. "The industrial age produces the mirror of production, in which men are induced to believe that their labor (use value) defines their worth (exchange value)" (Denzin, 1986: 196).

Disney is the author of hyperreality but is still the modernist story machine. Baudrillard (1983) saw in Disneyland the manifestation of hyperreality, "which, like a helium-filled Mickey Mouse balloon, lets us go into the hyperreal" (Fjellman, 1992: 301). There are no longer any detectable differences between the story, the story characters, the story scripts, and the reality the stories once represented. People relate to Mickey and the Magic Kingdom as if they were real. "Disneyland functions as an 'imaginary effect' concealing that reality no more exists outside than inside the bounds of the artificial perimeter" (Fjellman, 1992: 301). There are pirate, frontier, future, robot, and castle worlds in which all the exalted values are *simulated* and presented to the Disney guest (Baudrillard, 1983: 25–26). Yet beneath these worlds is a modernist story machine. Culturally, the trend toward simulation is intensifying, with children growing up as Nintendo addicts, soon to become virtual reality addicts. In the Star Tours ride at Disneyland, the signs and symbols of *Star Wars*, the film, have been uncoupled from the historical referents and spirituality of that story and obliterated within a Disney matrix that tricks guests into suspending assessments of reality as they enjoy the shock of the experience. However, the employees who developed the rides and perform in the shows do not see a postmodern, hyperreality of simulation. The reality for Disney workers is "smile or be fired." Intellectuals like Baudrillard (1983: 25ff) see the United States as becoming more and more like Disneyland and Disneyland as "a parody of the world of the imagination" (Baudrillard, 1988: 55). Eisenberg and Goodall also suggested that Disney theme parks, as well as Epcot Center, can be viewed as hyperrealities, "places where the image of having fun is consumed through a commodity purchase" (1993: 177). They also pointed out the intercontextuality of modern and postmodern Disney.

In the nostalgic turn—the postmodern resurrection of premodern tribes and desires—there is still a modernist context to contend with. Baudrillard argued for a return to symbolic society and abandonment of production utility and instrumentality. His rationale for this most radical postmodern shift is that the modernist political economy absorbs and copies all oppositional practices and makes them part of monetary ex-

change. Rather than a shift, I see a struggle. It may be that, in its future, Disney enterprises will evolve a style of theme park storytelling that is less nostalgic escape and hyperreality. For example, a formerly proposed Disney theme park outside Washington, DC, would have aired many voices in its telling of American history. Disney's CEO, Eisner, spoke about this park in November 1993 on the Larry King show on CNN.

We will present, for those 18–20 million annual visitors to Washington, DC, a separate day or half-day trip to “our” [Disney] version of America. Hopefully our version will be patriotic. It is one which shows everything. There will be Civil War battlefield enactments. A recreation of the Monitor and Merimac battle, Disney-style. Part of the park will focus on immigration and Ellis Island, describing America as the melting pot it has become. It is meant to celebrate not only America, but what makes America different from everywhere else in the world.

There is some evidence that Disney is reluctantly revising its stories to fit particular cultural contexts. Van Maanen (1992) contrasted the theme parks in the United States with those in Japan and Paris. He reported Eisner as saying, in *Business Week*, “Everything we imported that works in the U.S., works here [Tokyo Disneyland]” (Van Maanen, 1992: 9–10), thus putting the official spin on the Disney story. At Disney theme parks, all signs of decay, crime, confusion, discontent, pain, sexual innuendo, liquor, and struggle are banished (Van Maanen, 1992: 10–12). There are “an insidious ethnocentrism,” “infantilization of the world’s cultures,” “Africans who stare minstrel-like,” and an “imperialist mentality of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.” These are among thousands of what Baudrillard would term “hyperculture” statements, signs that, taken together, have very decipherable and overt messages. Differences emerge, however, as the story moves overseas. The Japanese have intensified the efficiency, cleanliness, and safety aspects of Disneyland because it fits their preference for order and harmony. Their version of Disney is more modernist than that of U.S. parks or the EuroDisney park.

There are also concessions to Japanese culture. For example, Main Street U.S.A., an exhibit at Disneyland and Disney World, has been replaced by a World Bazaar, the robot President Lincoln has been replaced by a robot crane, Mickey Mouse has more stylish image, and non-Japanese employees are not allowed to wear name tags so that the *gaijin* can be distinguished from the Japanese. The name tag marginalization of others, especially Koreans, is not unlike the ways blacks are marginalized to non-show positions in U.S. Disney theme parks (Van Maanen, 1992: 23).

EuroDisney, has its special French touches, such as admission of the national origins of the various European children’s stories used as themes, but what is more interesting is how the Europeans have resisted Disney managerial controls. Europeans do not like fast-food restaurants with tables and chairs bolted to the floor. French intellectuals refer to EuroDisney as a “cultural Chernobyl” and call Disney employment “gum-chewing jobs,” a reference to the low pay, low skill, and rapid turnover. French

women employed by Disney were infuriated by the dress code stating that "appropriate undergarments be worn at all times, without transparent, wild colors, or fancy designs" and that "Skirts must be 4 cm above the knee" (Van Maanen, 1992: 27). Lawsuits were filed against and eggs hurled at Eisner to protest Disney's nonnegotiable contract clauses. Van Maanen makes a point most relevant to storytelling organization theory: the well-defended story that "Disney creativity and imagination" were unbeatable and that Disney's management never backed down helped to contain the contract squabbles just described.

They have faced considerable resistance before and have what most business observers regard as a winning track record. There is in fact a rather widespread (if begrudging) sense among those wise in the Disney way that the company's shrewd use of corporate law and its reputation of being "legally unbeatable" will carry over to France thus enabling it to operate more or less as it does elsewhere (Van Maanen, 1992: 28-29).

Revisions to the official Disney stories and story characters are being resisted by those schooled in Disney ways. The revisions are slower in Japan, where the tayloristic queuing, automated movements of masses of people, and batched rides and assembly line processes are more a part of the fun than they are at EuroDisney. Over time, the storytelling organization of EuroDisney will have to revise its legends, change its parks, and upgrade the Victorian capitalistic values that are "signed into" its American-exports theme parks and into the modernist aspects of the Disney enterprise as a whole. In the CNN talk show with Eisner cited above, the first question was from a viewer questioning Disney's decision to open a theme park outside Paris.

Eisner: Everyone has 64 reasons for the apparent failure of EuroDisney.

King: Is Paris too sophisticated?

Eisner: No. We feel that we found the perfect place. It is within 20 minutes of both De Gaulle Airport and the mass transit train. It is only when, on December 17 standing in the snow, that one thinks: Maybe Spain would be nicer? Maybe Greece would be nicer? Paris is a great vacation spot, but not necessarily for families. There has always been a love-hate relationship with the English and the French. The English are having a great time. The English press is going wild about Mickey Mouse stubbing his toe.

The point of this section of analysis has been to show the premodern, modern, and postmodern discursive, interpenetrated struggles of Disney enterprises. The Magic Kingdom still has a mixture of the three discourses, and the ingredients of the Disney recipe differ in parks around the world.

DISNEY: OFFICIAL DISCOURSE, SUBVERSIVE VOICES, AND POSTMODERN TALES

In this section, I present official Disney discourse (Walt's official stories) and then subversive voices (Disney employees with another side of

the story). This presentation will be followed by my own analysis of Disney storytelling, highlighting its cacophony and discord rather than the managed harmony of the official story.

Voices

Postmodernists, according to Rosenau, “question the attribution of privilege or special status to any voice, authors, or a specific person or perspectives” (1992: xiv). Walt, in the official Disney discourse, rarely allowed any voice other than his own to be heard. He was the official spokesperson for Disney enterprises. Walt even referred to his wife, Lilly, as “Mrs. Disney.” He may have done so out of the formality of his generation, but the term was a signal of possession nonetheless. Walt took ownership of everything about Disney enterprises. The musicians and composers of the music for Disney’s movies and shorts were referred to as “my musicians”; cartoonists were “my artists.” “My brother, my uncle, my father, my daughter, my pal” are all references Walt made, giving no personal name to any of the people thus referenced. Certainly no one of them was ever the voice of Disney’s storytelling organization. There is one exception to Walt’s possession of people and their talents: his characters. Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy, José Carioca (a parrot) were all allowed voices in the Disney organization—mostly because they were the organization. Walt recognized this. Eisner, in contrast, has given identity to other human voices. George Lucas, Michael Jackson, and Walt all have stories as actors and participants in the Disney organization. Whereas Walt used personal experience narratives, Eisner tends to tell third-person stories.

The following excerpt from a transcript of a stockholders’ meeting shows Eisner invoking the Disney legend in a way that brings in others’ voices:

In 1923, Walt arrived in Hollywood with drawing materials under his arm, \$40 in his pocket, and a dream. Waiting for him at Union Station was his brother Roy, who would dedicate his life to making Walt’s dream come true. Together with their wives, Lilly and Edna, working alongside them at night around the kitchen table, they struggled to keep a tiny studio alive.

Eisner further emphasized the Disney legend by voicing what Walt might have felt about a decision:

No one was more sensitive to change nor more attuned to its possibilities than Disney himself. I believe that Walt would take great pride in announcing with me today that our company has concluded an arrangement with George Lucas, whose film-making innovations have created the Indiana Jones and Star Wars series of movies. . . . I don’t know if Walt would be more pleased with this announcement because George today comes closest to the creative level of Walt himself or because George as a child was there 39 years ago at the opening day of Disneyland. . . . In Disney’s business the fundamental idea can

apply to a motion picture, a Disney Channel, or network TV show, a new pavilion, a theme park attraction, or a merchandise offering.

On another occasion Eisner gave voice to the “guest’s” side of a proposed change:

Actually on the 30th Anniversary night, I came down here with Frank [Wells] and the writer from the *New York Times* and I was proudly telling about all the things we were doing at Disneyland and I got to the George Lucas–Star Wars rides and having heard from Dick and other people the [most] attractive attraction which Disneyland ever had was during Inner Space, I told her we were replacing it. We’re going to put in this great Star Wars attraction with technology that has never been seen before. It’s gonna be the attraction that’s going to replace that “dog,” Inner Space. She said, “How can you say—that dog? That’s the most brilliant attraction ever at Disney. Walt Disney himself designed it. How can you ruin Disney?” She then dragged me to go over on it. We rode it twice. She called me a monster. And I haven’t told anybody it’s a dog. So it’s not my fault. I just want you to know that it’s not gonna be as good as the Star Wars attraction will be.

Eisner speaks for Walt and at the same time includes voices and personalities that Walt did not allow to speak. The theme of struggling to include more voices in Disney stories and decisions is not limited to Walt. It is replicated in Jeffrey Katzenberg, who joined the Walt Disney Company as head of Walt Disney Studios when Eisner took over in 1984. David Hoberman, an accomplished and creative Disney Studio producer and executive, finally emerged from the shadow of his micromanaging, workaholic, boss, Katzenberg. Hoberman had a reputation for expressing his opinion and challenging Katzenberg and Eisner on creative decisions. According to Hoberman, “Over the last 18 months, we have been able to include more voices in the process” (Ciron, 1993). The working relationship between Katzenberg and Hoberman, as well as Eisner’s reinterpretations of Walt in stockholders’ meetings, indicated an ongoing struggle between a modernist, single-voiced account of Disney and a more postmodern, multivoiced account.

Marginalizations

Jack Kinney’s (1988) stories of Walt’s leadership style give insight into how Walt constructed his cartoon machine. Kinney, a marginalized character at Disney, an artist who did not get to sign his own work, offers one of the very few glimpses of the nonofficial side of Walt. Walt had a stenographer record story meetings. A typical story performance session could last from one to three hours and involve as many as 20 people. Walt not only gauged the story plots for salability but also assessed the neatness of the boards. By Kinney’s account, Disney enterprises paid less than fair market value for art that is now sold for millions. A single frame of a thousand-frame cartoon drawn by Kinney commands thousands of dollars.

Looking at Kinney's story allows deconstruction of Walt and Disney's side of the Disney monologue.

Walt's animated films did not carry screen credits. According to Kinney (1988: 9), most members of the general public thought Walt wrote the stories, made the drawings, and did the layout, voices, and sound effects. Jack Kinney worked for Walt from 1931 until 1957, and he was among the legions who drew thousands of cartoons for hundreds of films; however, both in and out of Walt's organization, these artists had no voice.

There is an official discourse and there are many marginalized discourses in every organization. In the official story of the Roy and Walt partnership, Roy has no character and no voice. In Walt's accounts, he alone developed the business. Eisner, however, does give Roy a voice.

It was a lovely spring evening in Paris. Roy Disney, Sr., and Jack Cutting had just finished a fine dinner and were taking a stroll. They talked of various subjects related to the studio, mixed with general small talk. They were relaxed and in a reminiscent mood, and finally Jack asked, "Roy, now that Walt is gone, why don't you take some of the credit for the development of the studio since the early days?" Roy stopped Jack with a hand on his arm and said, "Let me tell you a story. When Walt and I first started in business, we had a little studio on Vermont Avenue—really a storefront, with a gold-leaf sign on the front window reading Disney Brothers Productions. As we prospered, we needed larger quarters and we found them in a building on Hyperion Avenue, close to our original store. One evening when Walt and I were discussing our move, Walt said to me, 'Roy, when we move to Hyperion, I'm going to have a large neon sign erected, reading Walt Disney Studios, Home of Mickey Mouse and Silly Symphonies.' He looked at me as if expecting an argument. I said, 'If that's the way you want it.' And Walt said, 'That's the way I want it and that's the way it will be!' And that's the way it was. So you see, Jack, I think it's a little late now, and besides, that's the way Walt would have wanted it" (Kinney, 1988: 198).

In the official story, Ub Iwerks and Roy Disney are marginal characters, as are cartoonists like Kinney, scriptwriters like Charles Shows, and story creators like Babbitt, Sorrell, and Hilberman. The official account makes Walt the inventor of Mickey Mouse and even animation, when by other accounts it was Ub Iwerks who did the early artwork and perhaps even created the famous Disney signature. The point here is not that the Disney version is untrue, but that it marginalizes and eliminates many characters with stories worth telling.

Totalisms

A totalism is a historical account that privileges one relatively narrow point of view. To deconstruct, I looked at the stories that are not told as part of the grand story of Disney. Part of Walt's dominating voice at Disney enterprises is its official history. By history, I mean a recounting of

events as seen and enacted by participant observers. The official Disney story is a commodification as well as a control device. It is a postmodern commodification because Walt is himself one of the characters of Disney, the way that Mickey Mouse is a character of Disney. It is modernist to the extent that it is produced by the micromanaging story machine. Walt's story is also a control device because it embellishes the Disney philosophy and conveys a code of behavior while obscuring other story constructions.

For Ron Miller, the CEO of Walt Disney Studios after Walt's death, the ghost of Walt remained at the helm. In the many committees that proliferated during Miller's administration, people would often say: "What would Walt have done?" They would tell the story of how Walt handled a similar situation and then do it that way. People called Disney studios the Mouse Museum, referring to both the perpetuation of traditional Walt-midwestern "PG" values and to their miserly deals—people working on Disney film projects got paid less than industry standards. During Miller's term, Walt's story as told at Disney took on a life of its own. There was no room at the top of Disney for both Ron and Walt.

When I look at Eisner's approach to totalisms, I see more paradoxical accounts. The paradox is that Eisner can, in the same discourse, both reference Walt's history and attack Walt's strategy as out of date. Such statements do not make Eisner a postmodern man, but they do reveal an alternative to the totalizing discourse as well as a challenging dialogue with that discourse. For example, Eisner will invoke Walt's legend and then challenge it. Here Eisner discusses how there were no scripts at Disney for animated films before he took over:

I couldn't follow it. I'd go down there and they'd go through the storyboards. And you go through one storyboard and they'd bring in another storyboard. And I'd sit there for hours and I couldn't remember what was in the first storyboard. And it was a hard process for me to deal with. I'd been used to working in the script area.

And I was a little critical of some of our animated films that had been done before Walt died. Because I think there were great scenes but a lot of scenes put together. But sometimes the art of the story [as he motions his hands back and forth in an arc in the air] didn't follow the way I was used to thinking about stories, or what I learned in school about the construction of—the stories and all that. And I'd keep thinking about this.

And every time I'd say: "How was it done in the past?" And I'd hear about Walt. He'd just be there and he'd jump up and down and he'd go back and forth between things and so forth. And Roy Disney [Jr.] told me a story about how he [Walt] sat on his bed when he had the flu or the mumps or something and told the entire story of Pinocchio in the bed. *And I finally discovered they did have a script* (emphasis in original).

And the script was in Walt Disney's head. We didn't have Walt Disney. And therefore we didn't have a single mind, tracking the entire movie. We had [a] committee of minds. And that was the problem. And now we do scripts.

Eisner is telling his story in a way that deconstructs the Walt Disney story. He is pulling on one of the strings of the story's fabric, and in the process, unraveling the grand account. Eisner is also using the stories he hears about Walt as an inquiry into the Disney system. Tactics aside, Disney administration still espouses an approach best described as modernist.

Eisner is not a postmodern man. Rather, he opens up the modernist account that Disney enterprises has been living out for many generations to other interpretations. Observers can get some sense of the struggling discourses of a harmonious, happy, and total Disney and contrary local accounts in the following interaction between an anonymous employee and Eisner described on the Larry King program identified above.

Caller: Many of the theme parks' minor decisions are made at the vice-president level, but when filtered down to us, they do not make a lot of practical sense when dealing with a customer. How can you empower hourly employees to make things better at the park?

Eisner: I read every, or summations of every, letter we get at the park. We are constantly on top of how to improve this process so that all customers are satisfied. The caller has a valid comment and one I will continue to look at.

The history of animation at Disney still does not give much voice to the many artists and technicians who made the studio or developed the techniques. Kinney's (1988) version of the story of the animators describes how they lived in the most marginal quarters, away from the main lot in a dilapidated apartment building, and did not get their names on their work. Alternative accounts of the nonanimation side of the business include those of Shows (1979) and Schickel (1985). Finally, John Taylor's (1987) account, *Storming the Magic Kingdom*, relates multifaceted stories of how Disney changed as the leadership passed from Walt to Miller and then to Eisner.

Universalisms

A universal is a grand principle, a sweeping statement designed to gloss over differences in other accounts. Walt advocated, for example, that Disney stay with the "G" movie market. He felt that it would be bad for business to get his cartoons, TV show, and theme park associated with "R" films, even though it was clear that the youth market was increasingly repelled by the idea of being caught dead at a "PG" let alone a "G" movie, the staple of Disney. The following quote gives a story of a story. Eisner, speaking at the 1984 stockholders' meeting, is recounting a portion of a speech that Walt once gave.

When I was 21, I went broke for the first time. I slept in chair cushions in my studio in Kansas City and ate cold beans out of the can. I took another look at my dream and set out to Hollywood. Foolish? Not as a youngster. An older person might have had too much common sense to do it. Sometimes I wonder if common sense isn't another way of saying, fear. And fear

too often spells failure. In the lexicon of youth there is no such word as fail. Remember the story about the boy who wanted to march in the circus parade. The band master needed a trombonist so the boy signed up. He hadn't marched a block before the band master demanded, "Why didn't you tell me you couldn't play the trombone?" The boy said, "How would I know? I never tried it before."

Of course the speech was given by Walt Disney and it was entitled: "Take a Chance." Walt was already a grandfather at that time and concluded the speech this way:

"If I am no longer young in age I hope to stay young enough in spirit never to fear failure, young enough still to take a chance and march in the parade."

The universals here are the ways in which Eisner reshapes the story of Walt to fit his particular vision of Disney, the corporation; how it reacts to change, how Disney the man would have welcomed the creative genius of George Lucas, and how the Disney spirit lives on in the merchandise. Eisner is reshaping the "grand narrative" to send Disney down a new path. He is opening the doors of the Disney museum and letting new curators rearrange the exhibits. It is still the same story, but the base of participation is being widened by Eisner.

Walt had a universal vision of a vast empire; he saw his cartoons, characters, TV shows, and films as culminating in a theme park. The theme park was based on Walt's vision of a small midwestern town, the one he knew as a boy. Disneyland is Walt's archetype of an ideal American town. All facets of the Disney operation "synergized." The cartoons and movies produced the characters that became theme rides and exhibits and walking characters in the theme park. The TV show, movies, and cartoons sold the Disney characters and the TV series sold the concept of a theme park. As was noted in the postmodern section above, adapting this vision to European tastes has proven problematic and expensive.

Essentialisms

An essentialism is similar to a universal except that it is a micro theory, an appeal to a fundamental essential of human character. Several essentialisms have already emerged in the accounts of Walt discussed here. Walt had the character to "accept the risk," "make the change," "act like a young man," "be the creative genius." These characteristics were held out to the employees, investors, and general public as norms.

In alternative accounts of Walt, such as those of Kinney and Shows, Walt is referred to as Der Fuhrer and Mr. Fear. A set of drawings called "the Seven Faces of Walt" circulated in the office (Kinney, 1988: 157). Walt was Simon Legree, Der Fuhrer, the Bountiful Angel, Mr. Nice Guy, Ebenezer Scrooge, Beelzebub the Devil, and of course Mickey Mouse, with a dollar sign as the "s" in "mouse" ("mou\$e"). Jones (1991) suggested that employees create stories and characterizations that may not match an organizational culture to relieve stress. Disney was stressful because it presented a strong ideational system in which people did not believe they

were allowed to speak up about the oppression they were enduring. Again, a struggle among discourses is demonstrated.

In most nonofficial accounts, Walt is said to have ruled with an iron fist. If an employee disagreed with Walt, he or she could get fired. Employees who broke a rule of Walt's would be fired. Everything was owned by Walt Disney Productions. Walt was everything, including all people.

Frustrated by the noise of a lawn mower outside the conference room window . . . Harry, a Disney executive, opened it and yelled at the top of his voice, "Shut off that goddamned machine and get the hell away from here, you stupid son-of-a-bitch!"

The roar of the power mower stopped abruptly. Once again, all was quiet. The Disney executives resumed their meeting.

Ten minutes later the session was interrupted again by a phone call. It was Disney [Walt]. His tone was stern. He ordered Harry to come to his office "at once."

"Harry," Walt growled, appraising him, "I understand you just raised hell with one of my gardeners."

"I'm sorry, Walt," Harry shifted uneasily. "I guess I lost my cool."

Walt glared at him. "That old man has been with me twenty-two years," he snapped, "and if I ever hear of you cussing him out again—I'll fire your ass!"

"I'm sorry, Walt," Harry murmured, shaken. "It won't happen again—I promise." And he started toward the door.

But Walt stopped him in his tracks. "And another thing," he barked, "Always remember this—I'm the only son-of-a-bitch around this studio!" (Shows, 1979: 70)

The official essentialisms are opposed by contrary essentialisms from alternative transcripts. Walt was, in alternative accounts, very intense and moody and not above using scare tactics in his meetings. He had strong likes and dislikes and held a grudge forever. What is interesting about this observation and the next story is the contrast between the grand story of Disney and the public personification of Walt as the nice guy who made it big by being creative and enterprising. It is like dealing with a family that denies that they have a perfectionist, workaholic member who often uses temper to keep the family in line. Schaef and Fassel (1988) wrote about the ways in which organizations exhibit process addictions and behave much the same as substance-abusing families.

Walt roamed his domain with a hard-heeled stride that, along with his distinctive cough, warned us of his arrival. He'd crash through the door, stride to a chair, sit down, and tap his fingers on the arm until one of the guys grabbed a pointer and proceeded to tell the story.

He'd usually allow the guy to finish, then all the boys would hold their breath until he started talking. We studied him the way he studied the boards. If he coughed, you knew you'd lost his attention. A slow tap meant he was just thinking, but a fast tap meant he was losing his cool. . . . If you had

something good, Walt usually said he liked it right out. Then everybody could relax and get on with the meeting. Sometimes he could be very enthusiastic, and all the guys would fly high around the room and pitch in to use his suggestions for tightening the stuff up, then help move the boards into the director's room and into production.

If he didn't like it, he'd want to get out before any more money was spent. He'd stomp from the room, leaving the poor guys responsible with egg on their faces (Kinney, 1988: 151).

Suddenly I heard the unit door bang open, and with a few coughs, Walt made his appearance, quickly sitting in front of the boards and immediately starting to drum his fingers on the chair arm. This was a surefire tip that he was in one of his gorilla moods. Frowning at the empty chairs, he lit a cigarette and said, "Okay, Jack, let's get going. What are you waiting for?"

So I started telling the story . . . as each of the various groups gathered, they realized that "man was in the forest" (a line from *Bambi*) as they quietly seated themselves (Kinney, 1988: 93).

Walt's Panoptic Gaze

Foucault (1977: 175–180) defined the panoptic gaze as a multiple, automatic, continuous, hierarchical, and anonymous power functioning in a network of relations from top to bottom, from bottom to top, as well as laterally, to hold an enterprise together. Walt made it a habit to keep his plans in his head and assemble each project part by part, team by team, while keeping central control. Walt was the king of his *Sleeping Beauty* Castle, and everyone who worked for him was his subject. There was not much middle management. The studio's hierarchy, an ideal flat structure, had just enough layers to be efficient and to leave Walt in control. Walt, by all accounts (Kinney, 1988; Shows, 1979), ruled by fear. But at the heart of Walt's panoptic device was storyboarding.

It all began around 1931, when Webb Smith, not Walt Disney, pioneered the process of storyboarding. This story is excluded from the official accounts. Smith, it seems, was an excellent artist, but a bit messy for Walt's taste. He had the habit of sketching gag sequences instead of writing them down and would then toss the sketches in what looked to others like a confused mess all over the floor of his office. To avoid Walt's penalties for being untidy, Smith took to pinning his sketches on the walls. Walt was initially quite furious, proclaiming that "the holes will ruin the walls, that I spent good money redecorating" (Kinney, 1988: 62; Schickel, 1985: 148). Walt demanded a clean and tidy place, with a place for everyone, and everyone kept in their place. Smith then began pinning his rough sketches to two-by-eight-foot and later four-by-six-foot boards. He could easily reposition the sketches until the continuity of the story scenes had been achieved. Scene backgrounds and dialogue could then be pinned to the sketches. Hundreds of drawings on Webb's storyboards would get repositioned until the story was ready for telling at a story meet-

ing. The idea spread, with Walt's advocacy, and every story meeting, every project, and over the years every film, theme ride, and layout was storyboarded. A group could work with a storyboard, perfect the story, and use the boards to coordinate production. Walt took the process a step further. It is no surprise that storytelling is itself a valued commodity at Disney, an organization that commodifies stories by buying options for children's stories at low prices, putting stories through the Disney machine, producing them as cartoons or movies, and then doing related merchandising and theme park exhibition.

Walt, it seems, was an obsessive snoop. He made it his habit to roam the halls at night so he could take a peek at the progress of every project in his domain. Unit managers would also snoop and report to Walt. Walt could roam his kingdom, survey projects through the storyboards, and thereby oversee the workings of each departmental cell. Biographies such as Kinney's report that Disney people learned to internalize the gaze. Whether or not Walt had visited the night before, inspected what they were doing, and was getting ready to raise hell, they behaved as if he had done so. This internalization shows the workings of what Foucault refers to as Bentham's principle: power should be visible and unverifiable (Foucault, 1977: 203). Actually, Disney's cage of surveillance was less than perfect. People knew the signs of Walt's gazing rituals: Chesterfield cigarette butts would be everywhere since he was a chain smoker. Walt could also not resist messing with the boards.

CONCLUSIONS AND POSTTEXT

Disney studios today is not a very postmodern organization. It is, in many ways, just as authoritarian, micromanaged, and surveillance-oriented as it was when Walt built tayloristic animation practices into it. It is postmodern in small ways, such as the attempts to include other voices, create dialogue across discourses, and in general offset the official stories of Walt and his empire with alternative accounts. The Disney organization is also somewhat postmodern, from the perspective of Jean Baudrillard's theory of the hyperreality of our contemporary culture—a culture of fragmented symbols in which it is still chic to put Mickey Mouse on consumer products and create simulations of America in yet another theme park. For Disney to make a substantial postmodern turn, the one grand story of the one system must become scattered and fragmented into a multiplicity of local stories that are in discursive struggle with each other. Disney may not be ready to surrender ownership of either the Disney legend or Walt-as-a-character to postmodern deconstructionists. There is still considerable material to exploit in Walt's stories. A number of theoretical implications follow from this study.

The analysis suggests that organizations are not exclusively premodern, modern, or postmodern but composed of fragmented, competing discourses. The analyst's task is telling the "collective story" experienced by a sociologically constructed category of people that is placed in the con-

text of larger sociocultural and historical forces (Richardson, 1988: 200–201). The theory and research challenge is to ascertain the dialogue across these fragmented discourses. Organizations have not made the complete turn from premodernist authoritarian craft and apprenticeship systems to modernist command and control bureaucracies or to postmodern multivoiced and differentiated concerns. There are organizations that still have child labor and in which being an employee is not that different from being a slave. Discursive practices in the U.S. Supreme Court and in universities have not changed in centuries. In addition, organizations such as Ben & Jerry's and the Body Shop are developing a discourse of environmental harmony and environmental sustainability that is not unlike the philosophy of native Americans. Habermas (1981) defended the democratic ideals of the modernist project against the challenges of antimodernists. An organization with absolutely no modernist discourse might be the worst nightmare. One theoretical challenge is to get beyond the duality of mechanistic-organic and modernist-postmodernist conceptualizations. This study supports Jameson's (1983: 123) observation that organizations do not follow a course of era-to-era displacement, but rather, that discursive elements shift in emphasis and in priority. Organizations can be theorized as simultaneous discourses.

Such a theory picks up Pondy and Mitroff's (1979) challenge to researchers to continue to develop language-based models of organization. The problem with mechanistic and organic models is that they do not conceptualize people as thinking and discoursing beings. Eisenberg and Goodall (1993: 127–129) suggested that scholars view organizations as "monologues" or "dialogues." In a monologue, people read their context as one story, usually viewed from the perspective of a dominant group wielding the most power (May, 1988). In a dialogue, the story has multiple voices, and the diversities of countercultural perspectives are included. The organization is retheorized as ongoing dialogues among various subcultures (May, 1988: 137). Since the dialogues construct plurivocal meaning and interpretations, there is no finality to the meaning-making (Bakhtin, 1986). Complicity arises when organizations (and subcultures) channel ambiguity, inconsistencies, dissensus, and differences outside their boundaries (Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1991: 8). This control over interpretive ambiguity is often manipulated to support the interests of management (Eisenberg, 1984). Dialogue has a downside when it creates a unilateral consensus. Disney's dialogues have become complicit (Conquergood, 1992) in this way because Walt's dominant interpretation of meaning is something that Disney people still find difficult to challenge. Eisenberg and Goodall pointed out that "for this reason, an organizational culture is necessarily a conflicted environment, a site of multiple meanings engaged in a constant struggle for interpretive control" (1993: 137).

The implication for storytelling research is to focus upon the storytelling work that people perform. This task was relatively easy to perform in the case of Disney since part of the organization's work process is to doc-

ument its storytelling. The advantage of observing in situ storytelling behavior is that a researcher can begin to peek beneath the managerial and public relations stories and look at the storytelling organization processes. Pioneering story research by Calas and Smircich (1993), for example, puts the voices of silenced third-world workers alongside the transcripts of international management texts, as a device to discursively balance the telling of the collective story. Thachankary (1992) used a hermeneutic method to observe what people actually do, rather than what they say they do. At Disney, an impression of happy harmony marginalizes alternative voices and contrary accounts. There are organizational advantages to elevating the executive version of reality over competing constructions. People have a straightforward recipe for their performance, provided, for instance, by the family and show themes. However, to theorize Disney as a diverse and struggling set of interpretative subcultures, one needs to study the struggle itself. This opportunity is missed when researchers study stories as abstracted artifacts or measurements of something else. Stories are part of the interpretative struggle and everyday sense-making (Boje, 1991a). As in *Tamara*, transformations in Walt's storied character over time and between wandering audiences represent the work of the storytelling organization.

In the *Tamara* metaphor, the storytelling organization consists of many struggling stories, each a particular framing of reality being chased by wandering and fragmented audiences. In its plurivocality, each story masks a diversity and a multiplicity of voices. As organizations evolve, new voices tell the organizational story lines, often changing the meaning of the stories or invoking change within the organization by revising the old stories. Lyotard (1984) assigned to postmodernism the task of breaking up the grand narratives, disintegrating the one story into a mass of individual or localized accounts, and moving to a more discursive metaphor, such as conversation, in order to focus on the language and discourse of social systems. Lyotard introduced conversation as a root metaphor for organization studies.

From this point of view, an institution differs from a conversation in that it always requires supplementary constraints for statements to be declared admissible within its bounds. The constraints function to filter discursive potentials, interrupting possible connections in the communication networks: there are things that should not be said. They also privilege certain classes of statements (sometimes only one) whose predominance characterizes the discourse of the particular institution: there are things that should be said, and there are ways of saying them. Thus: [sic] orders in the army, prayer in church, denotation in the schools, narration in families, questions in philosophy, performativity in businesses. Bureaucratization is the outer limit of this tendency (Lyotard, 1984: 17).

Although the Disney organization filters discursive potentials, Lyotard reminds us not to reify the discursive metaphor. Disney imposes some lim-

its on its language practices but also experiments with challenging those limits. Disney provides space for some alternative stories. Like *Tamara*, Disney is replete with discontinuity in the story lines and disruption in the scenes.

The storytelling organization is also a language game of discipline. The storytelling organization of Disney plays different games of discipline to produce "Disney-knowledge," "enact" its environments, and frame its decisions over competing scripts to create theme parks, movies, cartoons, and other commodities. In deconstruction, socially constructed stories open to reveal their multiple meanings. Instead of a grand narrative, all this deconstruction leads storytelling organizations to be retheorized as a plurality of differences, a history of differences erupting into yet more differences. A single discourse can weave a multiplicity of stories into a storytelling.

The commonsense consensus of practices becomes routinized in the storytelling organization. Conversational practices, accounts, and worldviews, be they premodern, modern, or postmodern, become habit forming. In the discipline of the storytelling organization, this system is reified and stands outside of the people who do the storytelling work. The regime of story sense-making represses alternative images of environment, past, and future. *Tamara* is open conversation as a multiplicity of minor narratives; small stories collectively and dynamically constitute, transform, and reform the storytelling organization. Instead of one character acting one story line, there is diversity, multiplicity, and difference. Walt's official story and singular worldview dominate, socialize, and marginalize others' experience. If one is a radical or a rebel, one seeks to alter the narrative theme and transform the culture constructed from the "sacred" story. All three discourses, premodern, modern, and postmodern, are now intertwined in the *Tamara*-land of contemporary organization.

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