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Groovin' to ancient Peru

A critical analysis of Disney's The Emperor's New Groove

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ABSTRACT

Disney animated movies have received abundant critical attention over the past 30 years as a quintessentially American manifestation of popular culture and as an expression of corporate and hegemonic ideology. A recent blockbuster film prompts me, as an archaeologist, to consider another aspect of this genre. I am interested in why Disney's *The Emperor's New Groove* explicitly does not name the archaeological society in which its action is situated (Inca Peru), although this is readily recognizable to archaeologists, and the purpose that this sort of unacknowledged cultural plundering serves. I argue that beyond an understandable 'artistic license' with the past (thus Disney did not have to worry about issues of authenticity), this movie (and others of its genre) manifests profound and disturbing objectifications, essentializations, exoticizations and appropriations. These issues implicate current theoretical discussions of simulacra and representation, postmodern spectatorship, placelessness and travel.

KEYWORDS

appropriation ● cultural heritage ● Disney ● hyperreality ● identity ● Peru ● postmodern spectatorship ● simulacra

■ READING DONALD DUCK

Critical studies of the Disney oeuvre are numerous, notably in the fields of Communication, Education, and Cultural Studies (e.g. Aidman, 1999; Bell et al., 1995; Byrne and McQuillan, 1999; Cubitt, 2000; Dorfman and Mattelart, 1971; Giroux, 1999; Picker and Chyng Feng Sun, 2000; Schickel, 1968). One of the earliest and still one of the most influential critiques is *Para Leer el Pato Donald* (How to Read Donald Duck) (Dorfman and Mattelart, 1971), a Chilean indictment of Disney, which was written during the brief freedom of Salvador Allende's socialist government.

Dorfman and Mattelart's decolonizing treatise recognizes and deconstructs an economic and cultural imperialist ideology in Disney's seemingly innocuous comic book characters. They argue that Disney is representing the ideological superstructure of an advanced capitalistic society in which primary and secondary sector productive work is no longer done, but only tertiary sector services. Conflict has no social base but is, rather, the outcome of oppositional individual personalities. For Dorfman and Mattelart, the Disney comics are an instruction guide of how underdeveloped Third World peoples are to have dependent, consumerist relations with the First World centres of international capitalism. 'The situation is such that the only relationship the inhabitant of the center can have with the inhabitant of the periphery is dominated by the exoticism industry . . . tourism [is] based on nostalgia for a lost, pure primitivism . . . a picture postcard for a service sector only world' (Dorfman and Mattelart, 1971: 154, author's translation).

Now, decades later, one can again look at Disney in a Latin American context. Disney has created *The Emperor's New Groove* (henceforth, *Groove*), a feature-length animated movie that archaeologists will readily recognize as set in Inca Peru, but whose action Disney never geographically situates or culturally identifies. This anonymity combined with *Groove's* content (imagery, action, dialogue) go to the heart of issues considered in *Para Leer el Pato Donald*, such as identity, history and authority in our transnational, deterritorialized, decentered and culturally hybrid world. As Appadurai has observed, 'The past is now not a land to return to in a simple politics of memory. It has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios, a kind of temporal central casting, to which recourse can be taken as appropriate, depending on the movie to be made, the scene to be enacted . . . the apparent increasing substitutability of whole periods and postures for one another, in the cultural styles of advanced capitalism, is tied to larger global forces' (Appadurai, 1996: 30–31).

As a quintessential form of American public culture, animated movies may be examined as a site where collective social understandings are created and in which the politics of signification are engaged (see Hall, 1985: 36). The visual signifiers in these animated movies (one of many forms of media) are interpreted uncritically by most viewers in accordance with



a culturally sanctioned hegemony. Speaking of Disney overall, Giroux (1999: 5) argues that its 'power lies, in part, in its ability to tap into the lost hopes, abortive dreams, and utopian potential of popular culture'. Disney's animated movies can be a particularly insidious ideological text because their hegemonic images of the world are easily and, too often, unquestioningly assimilated by audiences, especially the young. In the specific case of *Groove*, ancient people, place and civilization are intentionally unnamed and unrecognizable, at least to their general American audiences, as I demonstrate below.

But *Groove's* animated depictions did not arise out of the blank imaginations of filmmakers in their studio. Rather, these images are the result of conscious manipulations of an archaeologically and ethnohistorically well-known social formation. It is therefore possible and worthwhile to compare and contrast the understandings of the Incas who are anonymously promoted by Disney with the real people who once thrived in their own settlements and who today are represented by archaeological sites. The tremendous box-office and videotape success of *Groove* behooves a critical analysis of the messages constructed by the movie studio and received by the viewing public.

■ METHODOLOGY

The methodology on which this article is based is far different from that which I employ as an archaeologist. The data I report herein are derived from the only source from which these could be available, the actual animated movie. I saw *Groove* in a local movie theater when it first opened in December 2000, and I subsequently purchased the 'Ultimate 2 Disc DVD Edition' (henceforth, deluxe DVD) as soon as that became available. I specifically chose that version as my text because the deluxe DVD contains the movie itself (which, on DVD, is easy to start, stop and track) and a supplementary disk with 'behind-the-scenes' discussions by the movie's director, producer and other key Disney personnel about how the story was developed, visually conceived, animated, musically scored and publicized. I was unable to interview the principals in the Disney offices.

In addition, I tracked and read a substantial amount of information about *Groove* posted on the World Wide Web. These websites varied greatly: the Disney official site; avocational members of The Online Film Critics Society, such as upcomingmovies.com; independents, such as joblo.com, who live precariously on the Internet through their marketing of other businesses' merchandise; and prosperous diversified entertainment networks, such as fangen.net, which recently subsumed thefilmcritiquer.com. Similarly, it is important to appreciate this web diversity of film commentary in the context

of the various forms that film production takes in the USA, such as studio, avant garde, mainstream, independent, conservative, liberal and so on. Disney (and, specifically, Walt Disney Feature Animation) is a conservative mainstream powerhouse studio, albeit with extraordinary visual imagination and superb technology.

Using the Movie Review Query Engine I also compiled a total of 55 published reviews of *Groove*. In addition, I read 95 individually posted reviews of *Groove* on the IMDb (Internet Movie Database) website. I take these 150 reviews to be a random and representative sample of all reviews of *Groove* circulating in the USA.

■ ISSUES OF HISTORY, HYPERREALITY AND SIMULACRA

Baudrillard (1995) has written of a disappearance of history and our current disengagement from reality. He hypothesizes that through the acceleration of the incredibly complex elements that comprise contemporary life, we have moved beyond space-time where the real was possible. Acts and facts of political, historical and cultural life hurtle into hyperspace where they are unable to achieve their meaning because the 'referential orbit of things' has been broken. Thus, Baudrillard argues that history is indeterminate and historical narrative is impossible because there now exists the potential for 're-narrativization' of every sequence of meaning. Fragmentation, disarticulation and an abundance of unstable, uncertain information have replaced the grand historical narratives of the past. These features and the loss of a real temporal progression propel our movement out of history and create simulation. We are enamored of instantaneity and this destabilizes our historical, lineal sense of time and its events, thereby disposing us to historicize, archive, memorize, commemorate, rehabilitate and culturally museify everything concerning our past and that of other cultures in what amounts to 'a vanishing of actual history . . . making the past itself into a clone, an artificial double . . . instead of things first passing through history before becoming part of the heritage, they now pass directly into the heritage' (Baudrillard, 2000: 40). Things are linked as if they had meaning, but they are associated only by artificial montage.

Given Baudrillard's totalizing framework, it should not surprise us that he has specifically taken on the Disney enterprise since Walt Disney was the first innovator to create the imaginary as virtual reality on a grand scale (e.g. Disneyland). Baudrillard (1983) argues that Disney is actively seeking to capture the entire real world so as to integrate it into its own synthetic project where the real becomes a theme park and simulacra are built on existing simulacra thereby creating a hyperreal. Baudrillard further accuses Disney of going beyond the erasure of the real and converting it into a dimensionless virtual image. Disney, he observes, seeks to obviate time by



synchronizing all time periods and all cultures into a single atemporal juxtaposition.

In a similar vein, Bryman (1995, 1999a, 1999b) identifies the 'McDisney theme park' in which organizational principles of efficiency, control, calculability, predictability, and rationality reign. Of particular interest for the analysis of *Groove* is how some of these features carry redundantly across domains into more sectors of society, such that Disney attempts to ensure an overwhelmingly positive Disney gaze (Bryman, 1999a: 106), whether at its theme parks, in movie theaters, or in its own suburban development (Celebration, FL). *Groove* presents an exoticized 'Lake Wobegon' where all the men are strong, all the women are beautiful, and all the children are above average. To go to the theater to see a Disney movie is to act upon the expectation of being entertained happily – no matter how implausibly. This predictability is effected by the scripting of Disney attractions in a form so textual as to resemble critical discussions of European travel in the Orient (e.g. Gregory, 1999; Said, 1979). As cinematic travelers, we are primed in advance for our theater experience by Disney merchandise associated with the film, by the film's trailers on television, and by preview film reviews. Disney published a US\$3.49 child's 'Special Collector's Issue' for *Groove* in its Disney Adventures cartoon pocketbook series, providing a 'sneak peak into Disney's new animated movie'. Disney and McDonald's partnered to produce a series of six toys of the main characters in *Groove* (Kuzco, Kuzco as llama, Yzma, Yzma as kitty cat, Kronk, Pacha) for child consumers. We enter the theater and encounter a carefully produced site and sight. *Groove* has been signposted so that its virtual tourists can find the movie's sites and 'locate them within an imaginative landscape where they become meaningful as "sights"' (Gregory, 1999: 116). This scripting is all the easier when the appropriated ancient place is left anonymous – unlike, for instance, the real and assertive Egypt that was encountered by European tourists and that had its own 'dense materiality' (see Gregory, 1999: 145).

Cubitt (2000), too, has written critically about the processes by which the world loses its reality. He has specifically addressed the issue of simulation in terms of Baudrillard's (1983), Eco's (1986) and others' analyses of Disneyland, the epitome of simulation, a place that exists only in order to be photographed, a composite of 'places' simulated from foreign reality. Cubitt (2000) finds commonality in these earlier assessments of Disneyland (visitors are passive; the producers of Disneyland accomplish their goals consistently; Disneyland exemplifies the fake and hyperreal), but he challenges these studies through his own deconstruction of the newer, larger, more corporate, more diversified, more ambitious sister site(s) in and around Orlando, FL. Cubitt argues, for instance, that some of Disney World's animatronic 'cast members' (employees), who are paid (poorly) to espouse a tightly controlled script, improvise narratives and engage in

uncontrolled conversations with 'guests' (customers). Such verbal creativity contravenes Eco's and Baudrillard's representations of an entirely pre-programmed (passive) experience and shows them to be ethnographically incomplete and factually inaccurate. 'Guests', too, may exercise their own creative resistance to the script by breaking Disney's banal rules, for example, picnicking in car lots or not moving at the quick pace and in the direction expected by Disney (here Cubitt's sensitive analysis can be further informed by de Certeau's [1985] exposition of walking as a rhetoric of practice and meaning-making). Reality also defies Disney's attempted successful management of picture perfection as when counter-utopian (counter-Disney) accidents, assaults, injuries, and family squabbles occur on the premises. And, as Cubitt (2000) traces, Disney films have had their financial ups and downs for decades, with the company at times almost crashing.

Cubitt emphasizes that despite the most aggressive of marketing campaigns, it is impossible to predict the public's response to cultural products, further destabilizing the veracity of accounts argued by other simulation theorists. Power and success of corporately managed consumer culture cannot be presumed although, as Bryman (1995: 188) argues, even the most active (versus Disney-passive) and resistant public/audience is confronting vast media conglomerates. It is here that the discussion of simulation may profitably engage Foucault's work on power and return to *Groove*. Foucault (1970: 319) explicitly linked the origins of modernity to the reordering of power, knowledge and the visible. With *Groove* we have the conundrum of postmodernity, where power, knowledge and the visible are still tightly intermeshed, but without reference to a truly visible world: simulation has moved us into the world of simulacra and hyperreality.

Disney's 'disneyfication' of *Groove* can be profitably theorized in terms of Eco's discussion of textuality. *Groove* has a stereotypical narrative and iconographic textual features that have been completely scripted by its authors. The filmmakers employ Eco's 'common frame' to move the story along and Eco's 'intertextual frame' to give it humor. The 'common frame' appears in *Groove*'s stereotyped situations, such as loving gestures between the husband and wife and the wife-as-mother putting their rambunctious children to bed. These kinds of actions are coded by our ordinary quotidian experiences and let us identify with the characters despite the different setting of the action. The 'intertextual frame' is stereotyped, but in reference to some preceding recorded textual tradition (here textual should be understood broadly to encompass various media). We enjoy the film because it is predicated upon common frame universals and clever intertextualities. An example would be when Emperor Kuzco's guardsmen line up and dance in the Irish style of *Riverdance*. Another example would be *Groove*'s scene of a pseudo fast-food diner (of relevance here is Jameson's [1991: 2–3] identification of a "degraded" landscape of schlock and kitsch



... materials [buildings] no longer “quote” ... but incorporate into their very substance’). The incongruities of *Groove* are readily understood by viewers on the basis of our pre-existing cultural knowledge. *Groove* is successful because of its postmodernity ‘where the quotation of the topos is recognized as the only way to cope with the burden of our film encyclopedic expertise’ (Eco, 1986: 209).

■ DEPICTING THE PAST, DEHISTORICIZING THE INCAS

Whether in comic books or on the silver screen, in animated form or ‘realistically’ reconstructed in feature length, as performances of Shakespeare’s own understandings of antiquity or as distinguished television series, such as ‘I, Claudius’, the past is popular and highly marketable among the viewing public (see, especially, Solomon, 2001; Wyke, 1997, 1999). Eco (1986: 62) has quipped pointedly that ‘Americans want and really like responsible historical reconstruction (perhaps because only after a text has been rigorously reconstructed can it be irresponsibly deconstructed)’. History, archaeology and filmmaking are all discourses about the past and, as such, ripe for deconstruction.

Wyke (1997: 12–13), who focuses on ancient Rome, incisively argues that films about the past are a primary source of information for the analysis of the present context of these films’ production. She refers to historical films as ‘a powerful new mode of historiography’ (Wyke, 1997: 13). I think that the greatest power of the historical film genre, to which Wyke refers, resides in its property of market saturation. Countless more people see such a film and, too often, unquestioningly absorb its narration rather than read the scholarly works by historians and archaeologists about the particular society represented. Indeed, Baudrillard has predicted that future spectators will watch movies about ancient Rome as if they were authentic ancient Roman movies.

Where *Groove* diverges strongly from the historical movie genre is that its plot is not presented as history. Rather, as explained by *Groove*’s production team in the deluxe DVD audio commentary, ‘the flick’ has a moral idea, a good message, and a visual look, music and dialogue to support the story whose tone is high comedy. As is typical of all Disney films, *Groove* seeks to present ‘recognizable moments that are universal ... people see themselves up there on the screen’ (Randy Fullmer, producer, speaking on the deluxe DVD). Disney’s two trailers, three television ads and various posters for *Groove* promote a movie in which humor and action are emphasized and the family values of friendship, courage and cooperation are taught. Indeed, this emotional pitch appears to be why Disney scrapped an earlier and more serious version of *Groove*, alternately titled *Kingdom in the Sun* and *Kingdom of the Sun* (henceforth, *Kingdom*).

Disney's prepositional waffling is significant. A kingdom *in* the sun could be any kingdom at all. But a kingdom *of* the sun could only be the Incas if the action of the movie were to remain situated in a mountainous place with llamas (various Inca myths, as compiled by the Spaniards during their conquest of the Inca Empire, indicate the major role of the sun in Inca state ideology and religion; see summary in Urton, 1999: 52–4).

It appears that Disney had decided to go with *in* before scrapping the *Kingdom* project (<http://www.upcomingmovies.com/kingdomofthesun.html>), even committing to an official movie poster for *Kingdom in the Sun*. Nevertheless, Disney apparently could not work out its relationship to the real archaeological past of Peru, since the poster (http://oakbay.sd61.bc.ca/~tkhambanonda/DisneyDreamersClub/Posters_KingdomInTheSun.htm) shows a distinctly Mayan temple.

The production of *Kingdom* suffered from major problems involving disputes between the original directors contracted for the project (Roger Allers and Mark Dindal) and studio discontent with the ambiguity of the 'prince and the pauper' storyline as it was evolving. Roy Disney (the nephew of Walt and Vice Chairman of the Board of the Walt Disney Company and Chairman of Walt Disney Feature Animation) and the studio executives were unenthused about having a young Inca emperor switch roles with a peasant boy as a wicked court official seeks the throne. According to [thefilmcritiquer.com](http://www.thefilmcritiquer.com), as the work-in-progress versions of *Kingdom* were edited together, 'it became obvious that . . . Roger Allers was clueless as to how to fix the film', despite his previous mega-success as Disney's feature animation director for *Aladdin*, *The Lion King* and *The Little Mermaid*. Allers was removed from *Kingdom*. Another factor identified as contributing to *Kingdom's* demise was Roy Disney's lack of enthusiasm. 'Roy Disney revealed while talking to *Empire Online* that *Kingdom* "began life as a pretentious non-spoofy kind of movie about the Inca, the Andes and all of the folklore about Sun Gods. It was really, really boring"' (http://www.thefilmcritiquer.com/the_film_critiquer/Animation_Previews/KingdomintheSun.htm). *Kingdom* was possibly one-third complete, with US\$30 million already spent, when it was shelved. On 1 February 2000 the title of *Kingdom* was officially changed to *The Emperor's New Groove* and a radically new direction (or new groove) was taken. Four years elapsed between the start of *Kingdom* and the release of *Groove*.

In *Groove*, all that remains of the earlier project is the unnamed Inca-based setting, the young emperor (now arrogant) turned into a llama, an evil woman and a relationship with a peasant who is reworked as an older, family man called Pacha. The change in title and plot also prompted Disney to substitute 'Kuzco' as the name of the emperor, previously called Manco Capac (after the legendary first emperor of the Incas) (see the discussion of names below).

The imagery of *Groove* was generated on the basis of a 10-day trip to



Machu Picchu undertaken by a group of 12 people, including the art director, the head of background, the head of special effects and some animators. Randy Fullmer, speaking on the deluxe DVD, explains that at Disney:

usually on most of these features, we try to do some kind of research trip. We really try to immerse ourselves in cultures, in topography, and various elements that will really bring art ideas to a film . . . We experienced what the people were like, looked at a lot of art work, looked at a lot of Incan art, and just really got a sense of what Peru and the South American landscape was about. Also, for this particular movie we had the animators go to a llama farm; they went to the zoo. It was really beneficial for the animators to look at the llamas first-hand, up close, to see how they moved, how they behaved, and to get some of the characteristics and mannerisms from the llamas.

But, for all this professed concern with authenticity, how do the real archaeological Incas and the hyperreal Disney Inca society compare?

The past is always constructed. The Incas are not merely represented by their archaeological sites. Archaeologists, ethnohistorians, historians, the native Quechua descendant community, the Peruvian nation-state, diverse local, national and international players in the tourism industry, and others re-present the Incas. Disney has joined this group. Here I disagree with Cubitt (2000) who writes that Disney's history comes from schoolroom coloring books rather than historians and museums. This is not true in the case of *Groove* where Disney invested considerable time and money in research in order to then create its own cartoon (per)version. Rather, Cubitt and I both agree with Jameson (1991: 46) who says that simulation is not a matter of quotation (which establishes differences) but of assimilation. Assimilation erases differences through dedifferentiation (Lash, 1990: 11–15) or, as Rojek (1993) argues, the distinctions between the 'real' world and simulated world are eroded more than destroyed.

Although Inca material remains are abundant and highly visible in the Central Andes, especially in the Cuzco region, their interpretation has long been a source of academic debate. Beginning with the earliest Inca oral testimony to the Spanish conquistadores, the history of the Incas has been a site of competitive discourse and cultural production informed by the present as much as by the past. Thus, competing Inca factions in the defeated empire produced their own 'official' versions of prequest history in order to establish themselves as elite lineages deserving of privilege and able to mediate identity and position in the newly colonial world of Spanish social and political realities (see Urton, 1990). In the early seventeenth century, a literate indigenous Catholic, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (1980), drew on earlier Spanish chronicles and his own sense of social justice to represent the Incas to the Iberian Crown as wise, efficient administrators of a vast territory in contrast to the devastation of Andean

society wrought by the Spaniards. In the early twentieth century, the Incas were reclaimed, revalorized and (re)presented as the greatest of all civilizations by Peru's *indigenista* movement (as exemplary see the oeuvre of Luis E. Valcárcel, in Valcárcel, 1981: 425–55); *incanismo* is still dominant in Cuzco politics and culture (see Silverman, 2002). In the early 1940s the Incas were produced as a benevolent socialist empire (Baudin, 1944) and subsequently, from a less benign Marxist perspective, as an exploitative pre-capitalist state (Patterson, 1991). In the 1940s and 1950s at the height of American culture history the Incas were produced 'factually' in time and space (e.g. Rowe, 1946, 1970). From the 1960s through the present, structuralist-cognitive (e.g. Zuidema, 1964), sociopolitical and, arguably, Andean-reifying (e.g. Morris and Thompson, 1985; Murra, 1975, 1980) paradigms have become important. In the 1980s, a comparative and formalist economic approach gained some popularity (e.g. D'Altroy and Earle, 1985) as attention shifted away from the core to the peripheries of the Inca Empire (e.g. D'Altroy, 1992). In today's ethnically wracked and extraordinarily inegalitarian world, scholarly production of the Incas emphasizes ethnogenesis, social identity and materialized sociopolitical hierarchy in a multiethnic context (e.g. Bauer, 1991, 1992; Covey, 2000; Hayashida, 1999). As Isbell (1995) has acutely observed, the Andean past is 'as you like it' in accordance with one's chosen theoretical framework and ethnographic lens. But, I am not equating the changing paradigms of archaeology with Disney's gaze. It is important to recognize that archaeologists of all theoretical persuasions are talking about the Incas who are known to have existed 500 years ago and whose material remains are unanimously identified. Among scholars, interpretations over state formation and imperial organization vary, but not the definition of Inca. There *are* tangible material remains that can be excavated, notwithstanding the intellectual construction of the past from a labile present perch.

■ ACTS OF ANONYMITY AND ERASURE

As exotic as the llama is, Disney nonetheless Americanizes and culturally domesticates it for the US viewing public. In *Groove*, there is an unremitting insistence on pronouncing the word llama ('yama') as *Jama*, a phonetic appropriation and willful error also committed by every audio commentator on the deluxe DVD. Moreover, despite the animated llama, to the uninformed viewer, there is no indication that Inca Peru is the basis of *Groove's* 'long ago in a faraway land' in which 'there was a prosperous kingdom ruled by a young emperor' – not in the film and not in the extensive credits at its end. Only the audio commentary on the deluxe DVD and technical information on the amazon.com and borders.com websites for the standard DVD version of *Groove* indicate that the making of the movie



involved the 'Animation Team's Research Trip to Peru'. The technical information on amazon.com for the deluxe DVD edition merely indicates that there was 'The Research Trip', but not to where.

Remarkably, it is only by stringing together the DVD's audio commentary about the illustrated research trip that one figures out that Machu Picchu is in Peru, that Machu Picchu is an Inca site, and that *Groove* is based on the Incas. There is never any mention that there was a real Cuzco, the true Inca capital (or that the filmmakers, like all visitors, obligatorily had to spend a night in contemporary Cuzco in order to take the morning train to Machu Picchu). In fact, on the supplemental disk the words 'Machu Picchu', 'Incan art', 'Peru and the South American landscape', and 'a South American country' are said only once and are easily missed.

Pocahontas (released in 1995) is the only Disney animated movie to deal with a true historical event. Disney was quite aware of the risks of making this film and consulted with various Native Americans. Nevertheless, when it came out, *Pocahontas* was strongly criticized for being romanticized, fictionalized, sanitized and nationalized for popular consumption. In the aftermath of *Pocahontas*, it appears that Disney decided to play it safe with *Groove's* Inca Peru, even though foundation myths of the USA were not at stake. This non-confrontational strategy is clear in the following quote from the deluxe DVD's audio commentary.

Notice that Kronk is carrying an aluminum foil doggie-bag llama. Talk about liberating ourselves from historical accuracy. That's the kind of thing that's just fun to put in . . . it also supports the notion that this [movie] is not intended to represent any particular country in South America. If we were gonna do that, we would have approached the film in a completely different way. This is meant to be a fictitious place, fictitious characters, a once-upon-a-time kind of fantasy . . . those elements point out that idea that this is not intended to be taken seriously.

I attribute Disney's cavalier, pick-and-choose approach to the material culture of Peru's ancient past to the primary evolution of *Groove* through visual development ('and see where visuals take us' – audio comment on the deluxe DVD) rather than as written text. Lack of knowledge and its consequent temporal-cultural conflation are the simultaneous result and cause of a blurry Peru as mere background (the settings in which the characters act) for *Groove's* action. The following statement of Colin Stimpson, art director, in the audio commentary of the deluxe DVD, is revelatory of this bricolage.

We looked very closely at a lot of small pottery and little sculpture. There's a cat design that came from a little piece of silverwork and a frog from a piece of sculpture. There's something about small items when blown up big – the proportions are whimsical and fun . . . There's an owl in the background that came from dark pottery. Also, by blowing small things up into huge

scale, the simplicity stays Yes, that's one thing we noticed about the Inca design work, it was always very bold and often the creatures had a rather strange expression, slightly scary and also funny at the same time The front of the palace came from a small gold statue about six inches high. We were just stunned by all the Inca design work we found We saw that tapestries are covered in whacky animal designs and also pottery and goldwork. We just wanted to take that as inspiration and use their designs in other ways.

'We were just stunned by all the Inca design work we found.' The Disney team may have been astounded with their discovery, but 'found' is an imperialist and appropriating action when vernacularly and scientifically a culture is already known. Indeed, this is the complaint frequently levied at Hiram Bingham who 'found' Machu Picchu in 1911, a grand Inca site well-known to local inhabitants. The 'whacky animal designs' are incongruous only to those unfamiliar with their cultural-iconological significance. The appropriation is complete in the team's use of ancient Peruvian art as 'inspiration' for redesign.

Moreover, if we compare the images in *Groove* with their real archaeological prototypes, we see that *Groove's* appropriation of ancient Peruvian art and technology is specific at the same time that it is conflated. Actually, the only aspects of Inca material culture that are used in the film are stone masonry, one particular textile design that becomes a tile floor, and a silver goblet on a table. The other decorative art in the film is derived from various non-Inca and pre-Inca objects. The range of time and archaeological cultures implicated is 3000 years and at least 275,000 km². The non-Inca and pre-Inca originals could only have caught the eye of the research team in Lima's museums (I assume that the research team had to spend a night in Lima before taking a morning flight to Cuzco and also upon their return and that this provided the opportunity to visit museums) and/or in art books. Indeed, given the complex and fast-moving iconography of *Groove* and the deliberate bombardment of the audience with visual stimuli, it is perplexing that the production team states in the deluxe DVD audio commentary that they constantly strove to 'simplify action for clarity and readability' by the audience, so as to not 'overwhelm' the public with images. Here I would argue that we again have an excellent case of hyperreality. The legibility sought by Disney is two-fold: that the plot be easy to follow (which it is) and that the supporting iconography be generically precolumbian or, for the truly uneducated viewer, merely exotic (which it is). In Disney's hands, *Groove* so significantly departs and appropriates from the archaeologically known Inca Empire and other precolumbian civilizations of ancient Peru, that it is a textbook example of hyperreality and simulacra.

Perhaps the best example I can give of Disney's wanton rampage through ancient Peru is the deluxe DVD's audio commentary discussion



about 'this little candleholder', seen in Scene 9, 'A Diabolical Dinner', where Emperor Kuzco is given the potion that turns him into a llama. We are told that it 'was once a character in a very early version of this movie. He was called the huaca. He was a little advisor to the emperor. But, as is the case with the development of the stories, characters come and go and unfortunately he went. But we wanted to preserve his memory in this little cameo here'. Actually, the candleholder is a composite of the early Middle Horizon (c. AD 600) Wari-Tiwanaku frontal face staff god (the candles replace the staffs), the late Middle Horizon (c. AD 900) Lambayeque/Middle Sicán Lord, and an Early Intermediate Period (c. AD 200) Huaraz stone sculpture, all rolled into one and poised atop an elongated base resembling the neck of an Inca arybalus (a vessel for storing liquid; see Fernández Baca, 1973: Plate 5).

Disney's iconographic appropriations characterize the supplemental disk as well. The disk's menu is superimposed on a day-glo rendering of Paracas Necropolis textile imagery from the south coast of Peru, predating the Incas by almost 1500 years. Then, too, there are images imported from outside the Andes that are used in the movie such as the footprinted map derived from Contact Period Mexican codices, the iconic and derogatory contemporary Mexican sombrero, the contemporary Mexican *piñata*, a 'Merlin the magician' character, *Riverdance*, and writing which never existed in the precolumbian Andes.

But, Disney is not making any claims of authenticity for *Groove*. To the contrary, Disney has gone out of its way to culturally de-author and de-authorize the models that served as its artists' inspiration. As such, *Groove* is a virtual gaze, 'not a direct perception but a *received* perception mediated through representation . . . a gaze that travels in an imaginary flânerie through an imaginary elsewhere and an imaginary elsewhere The virtual gaze has a history rooted in all forms of visual representation, . . . but produced most dramatically by photography [and by extension, cinema]' (Friedberg, 1993: 2; emphasis in original). As Friedberg suggests, to go to the movies is to travel in space and time, literally and figuratively.

Yet there is a 'real' behind Disney's representations. *Groove* both represents and is 'Disneythinking' about ancient Peru. Following Baudrillard (1983), the real has collapsed into the hyperreal. 'When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality' (Baudrillard, 1983: 12). Baudrillard (1983), most especially, has argued that we are living in an era of simulation in which the sharp line between reality and illusion has become messy if not erased. Disney's dedifferentiation of distinctions that are traditionally made between retail marketing and amusement, hotels and theme parks, work and play, education and entertainment (Cubitt, 2000, citing Bryman, 1995: 165–68) can be seen as part of the process. But, have our images, communications, and media usurped the

place of reality? Cubitt (2000) argues for a critical and selective use of the concept of simulation and shows it to have an important political aspect. That aspect is manifest in the manipulation of Cuzco today by local, national and international agents of international tourism and economic development (see Silverman, 2002).

■ PLACE AND PLACELESSNESS

Among *Groove's* professional and avocational film critics, more than half thought it relevant to geographically/culturally situate the action between Emperor Kuzco and Pacha. But not all of the localizations were accurate; some were contradictory; and some showed a shocking lack of knowledge. Among the more egregious in the latter category were 'Mayan, or Incan or something . . . at an Aztec jungle diner' (Kerry Douglas Dye, in Leisure-Suit.net); 'some mythical pre-Columbian Central American kingdom' (Joe Baltake, 2000); 'a mythical mountain kingdom that, by appearances, at least, seems to have been inspired by the ancient Aztecs and Mayans' (Jeff Vice, 2000); 'some pseudo-Aztec country' (Vincent Haig in WHSmith.co.uk); and 'Aztec setting . . . Aztec prince' (*The Film Critiquer*, 7 February 1999: http://www.thefilmcritiquer.com/the_film_critiquer/Animation_Previews/Kingdominthesun.htm). The comment that most annoyed me in my survey of reviews was made by the distinguished critic, Roger Ebert (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 15 December 2000). Although he liked the film and correctly set the action in 'a mythical kingdom somewhere in South America', he says that Emperor Kuzco's name 'sound[s] like a discount store', ignorant of the fact that this really was the name of the Inca capital city.

I am especially interested in the comments of three reviewers of *Groove*. Writing for the *Toronto Sun* on 15 December 2000 (<http://www.mrqe.com/lookup?emperor%27s+new+groove>), Bob Thompson complained that the 'mythical Inca-like mountain kingdom' was 'barely etched and not-quite realized' by Disney. Similarly, MaryAnn Johanson observed that 'while the film's environment may be pre-Columbian, it could well be almost anywhere – the pseudo-Inca setting is lovely and colorful, but it serves only as a backdrop to an essentially timeless, placeless story *Groove* feels no need to treat its setting with much semblance of reality, which allows all sorts of modernalia, from theme-park roller coasters to roadside diners' (<http://www.flickfilosopher.com>). A pseudonymous 'rogue librarian' perceptively observed on the joblo.com website on 19 December 2000 that *Groove* 'fits into any cultural environment and time period That it's supposed to be Incan/Mayan doesn't matter: it could have been set in Huguenot France or Imperial Russia or 1980s Japan and it would still be the



same story. Which is why it doesn't matter that voices are all Americanized.' *But it does matter.*

In *Place and Placelessness*, Edward Relph (1976: 82) identifies 'an inauthentic attitude to place [which] is essentially no sense of place, for it involves no awareness of the deep and symbolic significances of places and no appreciation of their identities.' Placelessness 'does not acknowledge significance in places' (Relph, 1976: 143). Relph's statement clearly describes the inauthenticity and placelessness of *Groove*. Indeed, Randy Fullmer, the film's producer, stated that as the production team discussed particular details, such as whether or not to show a wheel since the Incas did not use the wheel, 'We realized at the end of that day we were taking this film way too seriously' (*Entertainment Weekly*, 18 August 2000: 92). Disney made a midcourse correction with the result that a non-identifiably familiar, but undeniably ancient, south-of-the-border civilization-cum-pastiche was created.

Placelessness is a symptom of a self-conscious attitude which 'consists especially of a relationship between man and objects in which the objects are created and produced solely for consumption by a mass public' (Relph, 1976: 82). It is in this framework that we should understand the tight linkage between Disney's animated movies (such as *Groove*), Disney's retail marketing around those movies, and Relph's placelessness. Disney, an economic and ideological corporate activist, is manipulating media to deliberately create and encourage placelessness and, by so doing, 'weakening . . . the identity of places to the point where they not only look alike but feel alike and offer the same bland possibilities for experience' (Relph, 1976: 82) – whether Celebration, Florida or Kuzcotopia.

Although *Groove* is placeless, within the movie's action Pacha's village is explicitly placeful. Pacha defends his family's right and desire to live there in words evocative of the keenest anthropological descriptions of sense of place. He says, 'When the sun hits just there, the mountain sings.' The mountain anchors their social life. It is dwelling in its most Heideggerian sense, 'not just living in place but also [the] ways of fusing setting to situation, locality to life-world' (Feld and Basso, 1996: 10). Yet for Emperor Kuzco, who wants to destroy Pacha's village to build his own private estate-resort, the mountain does not sing and, ultimately, one mountain is the same as any other.

The placelessness of *Groove* extends to Disney's appropriation of character names, done without any regard for their cultural significance. As Pratt (1992: 33) realized, the act of naming is an assertion of power: 'the naming, the representing, and the claiming are all one; the naming brings the reality of order into being'. Emperor Kuzco's name is taken from the capital city of the Inca Empire, Cuzco or Cusco (in Spanish)/Qosqo (Quechua). Disney's use of 'K' in Kuzco is particularly notable since the letter does not exist in Spanish and Quechua was an unwritten language,

thereby doubling distancing the emperor's name from the ancient people and site. Pacha is an impossible name for a peasant of the Inca empire. Pacha is an untranslatable, complex, polysemous Andean concept that simultaneously denotes 'earth, world, time, place' (Salomon, 1991: 14). Pacha is 'the world as a given arrangement of time, space and matter' (Salomon, 1991: 15). The concept is found in the names of the legendary builder of imperial Cuzco and ninth Inca emperor, Pachacutec ('he who shakes up the world'), and at the great oracular pilgrimage shrine of Pachacamac (the deity 'World Maker') on the central coast. Chicha (Pacha's wife) is the name of a beer brewed from fermented maize that was a ceremonial-ritual beverage consumed in the prehispanic Andes and still drunk today. Yzma (the evil advisor scheming for the throne) must be Yschma, the name of the late prehispanic central coast polity where Pachacamac was located. Kronk is a completely made up name, though his appearance is clearly derived from running warrior figures painted on north coast Mochica pottery dating to ca. AD 400–600 (see, for example, Donnan and McClelland, 1999: Figure 4.105).

Tenuously, too, I would suggest that it is ethically easier for Disney to profit from Peru's archaeological patrimony by not naming the model for the film's mythical empire. The Peruvian state does not hold a copyright to the reproduction of its stunning ancient heritage. Indeed the National Institute of Culture can barely enforce national laws that prohibit looting and require permits for the temporary export of pre-Columbian works of art. Given that the sale of illegally removed Peruvian antiquities continues unabated on the international art market even though the geographical provenience of these pieces is known, and considering that Peru receives no royalty for the coca in the name Coca-Cola even though its own plant was once an ingredient in the secret formula, there appears to be no hope that Peru can profit from *Groove* in the absence of an explicit acknowledgment of the Incas and Cuzco in the film.

■ STEREOTYPES AND RESPONSIVENESS IN THE DISNEY ENTERPRISE

In *Groove*, Disney's archetypal stereotypes are blatant. During the course of the research trip to Machu Picchu, the production team 'experienced what the people were like', a statement ironically illustrated by a cut-away from posing Quechua Indians in full ethnic dress at the Písaq market (a tourist-attraction town near Cuzco) to a scene in *Groove*, in which Pacha kisses his wife Chicha and picks up his children, a gesture that, at least today, rarely if ever occurs in traditional Andean communities but satisfies Disney's and the US viewer's universalizing ideology of gender roles



(husband-wife), nuclear family (parent-child, sibling-sibling relationships), and domesticity. As Byrne and McQuillan (1999: 59) observe, domesticity (the great discovery of the bourgeois age) is 'a discourse that Disney is really at home with', notwithstanding the pervasive absence of parents, especially a mother, for main characters throughout so many other Disney animations and comics.

The deluxe DVD audio commentary states that Disney regarded showing Chicha pregnant as a breakthrough in animated movies and that Disney executives gave their permission, so long as the expectant Chicha was 'tastefully' drawn. She is so tasteful, in fact, that she appears to be an elegant Classical noblewoman with coiffed hair and toga garment, rather than an Indian peasant woman with braids, chapped cheeks, rough hands, calloused feet and childbirth-distended stomach.

Nor can Disney resist expressing an undercurrent of homophobia. The scene where Pacha gives Kuzco-cum-llama mouth-to-mouth resuscitation can be read on two levels: Pacha's dismay at the llama mouth, replete with flapped out tongue ('Oh gross!' moaned children in the audience when I saw the movie), and the mutual distress of Pacha and Kuzco-as-cognizant male-despite-llama-appearance at the same sex intimacy.

While it is true that 'Disney has always preferred autocracy to democracy' in its animated movies (Byrne and McQuillan, 1999: 85), it is interesting that in *Groove*, the very familiar democratic act of petitioning for redress of an authority's wrong is ultimately successful. Though the kingship is not toppled, the emperor does reassume power as a more mature and humane ruler. This is clearly progress over some of Disney's other recent animated films which appear to celebrate antidemocratic social relations (see Giroux, 1999: 107). On the other hand, it is important to recognize that Pacha, the happy peasant, felt such loyalty to the office of the emperor that he was willing to help him even though success would mean the destruction of his village (what would Gramsci say!). Thus, the agency and power of peasant-cum-Pacha is severely limited in *Groove* and dependent on the moralization of a particular emperor. Yet it must be acknowledged that here Disney is only portraying what were truly hierarchic relations in the Inca Empire where the agency and power of peasants were severely limited, the Inca state policy of 'reciprocity writ large' notwithstanding (see Murra, 1980: 88).

Remarkably, Disney's notoriously conservative political-business practices underwent internal scrutiny and discussion as a result of the participation of Sting, a major popular culture icon, in the movie's musical score. Mark Dindal's audio commentary about scenes deleted from the movie indicates that in the original ending of *Groove*, Emperor Kuzco built Kuzcotopia at Pacha's village. In this version, Pacha's village was not destroyed, but Kuzco built a giant palace (crowned by a Wari-Tiwanaku sun face) near Pacha's house. Sting objected to that ending and said so.

Rather than being dismissed from the project, as he thought would happen, Dindal and Fullmer decided to listen to him and have Kuzco build a little house appropriate to the community where Pacha lives. Dindal states that they realized their planned ending 'was really socially irresponsible, not ecologically friendly at all'. He credits Sting with 'saving us'. Dindal also says that Sting convinced the Disney team to 'respect indigenous cultures' and not 'force our culture on other cultures'. Dindal's and Fullmer's comments about the revised ending are full of irony since, in acceding to Sting, Disney executives were suggesting that giant theme parks should not be built where local people might not want them and that a powerful contemporary empire (Disney) might well have to be publicly accountable and less culturally imperialist.

■ CONCLUSION

Groove is a delightful animated movie, quick-paced, musical, visually stunning, full of puns. Therefore, it could be argued that its cultural mixings and missings cause no harm. But they do. They are not innocent errors. They are the result of a very particular attitude in the Disney studio that essentializes, exoticizes and objectifies the past and those who created it.

In this article, I have been concerned with *Groove*-as-ideological-symbolism and *Groove*-as-ideological-weapon. Disney's masterful visualizations in *Groove* deploy dominant power endowed by Disney's own economic might. Movies are a facet of the exhibitionary culture typically associated with museums. Movies, too, can present and present the past in tourable, consumable form (e.g. Disney merchandise). As Friedberg (1993: 7) so aptly observes, 'film and television spectatorship has produced a new relation to the past. The past is, now, inexorably bound with images of a constructed past: a confusing blur of "simulated" and "real".' Cinematic spectatorship produces a timelessness; the past is interminably recycled, and ever-accessible (Friedberg, 1993: 9).

Disney's appropriations are exemplary of Jameson's (1984) critique of late capitalist and consumer society, for *Groove* is Jameson's postmodern pastiche – a 'blank parody' of ancient Peru, a 'complacent play of historical allusion' that overtly seeks to hide or deny the 'healthy normality' from which it has 'momentarily borrowed' and diverged. *Groove* effaces history by its 'random cannibalization of all the styles of the past [in a] play of random stylistic allusion' (Jameson, 1984: 65–6; see Appadurai, 1996: 29–30 quoted earlier). *Groove* also exemplifies Jameson's postmodernism in its unreferenced culture of derivative iconographic quotations. In fact, *Groove* could be considered one of Jameson's nostalgia films since the deluxe DVD audio commentary explains that the Disney animators sought to make



Pacha's village 'beautiful with shapes that are round and calm . . . peaceful' – to me, as if trying to recapture the ideal, naive, stable, prosperous small-town America of the 1950s, but in a different setting.

Because *Groove* is based on a real place, time and society, and because the making of the movie involved a research trip to Peru, we also can consider *Groove* to be a form of travel writing and cultural translation. As such it is amenable to critical treatment as applied by, for instance, Said (1979), Pratt (1992), Duncan and Gregory (1999) and Rojek and Urry (1997) to other-toured cultures. The irony should not be lost that Disney – creator of the paradigmatic theme park tourist industry of the late twentieth century – spawned its own real tourists: its production team who went to Peru and came back with photographic, pencilled, and crayoned images of happy contemporary domestic Andean subjects whom they morphed into ancient ones. Like Pratt's (1992: 7) 'seeing-man', their eyes passively surveyed the Cuzco region and possessed it in imagery that was then animated according to their script without any encumbrances from natives, living or dead. Certainly, the Disney team did not 'dwell-in-travel', to use Lury's (1997) term. Rather, theirs was a 'hit-and-run trip' to acquire the objects (Lury, 1997) and first-hand knowledge necessary for the visualization of the movie. In the deluxe DVD's supplemental disk, we see the most important of these trophies – color photographs – prominently displayed in wall panels along the corridors of the Disney studio where *Groove* was produced. In keeping with this line of argumentation, it can also be argued that seeing *Groove* is virtual travel and owning a VHS or DVD copy of *Groove* is a form of 'object of travel' practice, once removed. And yet, to play devil's advocate and to return to my basic contention, Disney's conscious non-identification or non-naming of Peru in *Groove* may well reveal the company's doubts about its clientele's level of global cosmopolitanism (Lury, 1997).

What becomes readily apparent in this critical travel approach is that 'the forces of cultural production and reception are not equal' (Giroux, 1999: 9). It is Disney telling a story about ancient, albeit anonymous, Peru. And because 'these films possess at least as much cultural authority and legitimacy for teaching roles, values, and ideals as more traditional sites of learning . . . , Disney films . . . help children understand who they are, what societies are about The authority of such films in part, stems from their unique form of representation and their ever-growing presence . . . such authority is also produced and secured within a media apparatus equipped with dazzling technology, sound effects, and imagery packaged as entertainment' (Giroux, 1999: 84). The public who receives Disney's message then creates its own images of these (re)presentations based on 'Disneyknowledge'. Moreover, we must consider the poststructuralist critique of how cultural texts, even those as highly polished as Disney's, are never seamless. There exists the possibility of creative misreadings and

misviewings of the film-cum-text that always provide the consumer of the text with space for resignification. Certainly this occurs at Disneyland and Disney World.

The vast majority of US movie-goers are 'accidental' tourists or 'post-tourists' who will never see the appropriated models for themselves. Indeed, there may be nothing but appropriated models and copies of copies. In the case of a movie such as *Groove*, which is actually sited in a foreign, albeit fictionalized, land, the issue is all the more sensitive if we accept the (chilling) statement made by Michael Ovitz (cited in Giroux, 1999: 26), former Disney executive, that 'Disney isn't a company as much as it is a nation-state with its own ideas and attitudes'. As various critics have observed, the Disney ideology is aggressively politically conservative, corporatist and global. Disney is not just American popular culture, it is a world culture and mainstay of the global economy (theme parks, merchandise, media conglomerates, and the employment and revenues these generate). In this regard, Disney fits very well into Appadurai's (1996: 35–6) concept of 'mediascape'. I agree with Dorfman and Mattelart (1971: 133) that 'by invading the past (and the future) with the same structures of the present, Disney takes possession – in the name of its social class – of the whole of human history' (my translation).

I have noted above the well-known litany of Disney's celluloid 'sins': sexism, political conservatism, homophobia, racism, cultural imperialism, class denigration and so on. Cindy Fuchs has explicitly referred to the 'perennial bugaboos' of Disney animators in her review of *Groove* (*Philadelphia City Paper*, 14–21 December 2000). And 30 years ago Dorfman and Mattelart (1971: 69) excoriated Disney's 'nourishment in international stereotypes', specifically criticizing Disney's pre-*Groove* comic book treatment of Peru.

Who can deny that the Peruvian (in Inca-Blinca) is somnolent, sells pottery, sits on his haunches, eats hot peppers, has a millennial culture . . . Disney does not invent these caricatures, but does exploit them to their maximum efficacy. Disney encloses all of these places of the world into a deeply rooted vision of the dominant (national and international) classes. Disney gives this vision coherency and justifies the social system on which it is based. Mass culture media uses these cliches to dilute the everyday life of the people. [Thus,] the only way a Mexican recognizes and knows Peru is by means of Disney's prejudice which means that Peru can't define itself, can only be that, can't escape this situation of proto-typicalness, is prisoner of its own exoticism . . . Disney sensationalizes. (Dorfman and Mattelart, 1971: 69–70, my translation)

However, Disney is not monolithic and unchanging. I have shown that there are many Disney ideologies, each with its own consequences. There is the expansive, corporatist, bottom-line, labor exploitative, money-making Disney that is blueprinting the USA in its image using intermeshed



economic might and political wherewithall to carry out its agenda. There is the equally well-known conservative Disney that pushes family values and the 'American way of life' which, in Disney's hands, is homophobic, capitalist, traditionally gendered and autocratic. There is the related imperialist Disney that is aggressively opening foreign markets for its diversified products. There is also the tentatively or calculatedly enlightened Disney, which subtly permits a message of ecological balance to be aired in *Groove* and which is currently promoting wildlife reserves. In this article, we have seen examples of all of these Disney ideologies. As Giroux has noted, 'Disney culture, like all cultural formations, is riddled with contradictions . . . Disney culture offers potentially subversive moments and pleasures in a range of contradictory and complex experiences' (Giroux, 1999: 5).

The easy conflation of time, space and society created by Disney and accepted by viewers of *Groove* is explicable as a result of the style of this movie, which is homogenizing and iterates the Bob Hope and Bing Crosby 'Road to [Wherever]' feature films in their shared genre of riotous action, quick-witted story line, music and brilliant color. The differences that make the invented societies worth animating are, at the same time, minimized or inconsequentialized in fulfillment of the dominant Manichean moral of the movies: good versus evil, cooperation versus individualism.

Disney appears obsessed with remaking a pristine, innocent past (Bryman, 1995). But there is a fundamental difference between Disney's recent animated movies about mythical, never-existed people or places, such as *Hercules* (ancient Greece), *Aladdin* (ancient Islamic Iraq), *Mulan* (ancient China) and *Atlantis* (ancient sunken continent), and movies such as *Groove* (and *Road to El Dorado* by DreamWorks, 2000), which concern ancient societies about which there are archaeological, historical and ethno-historical data. Walt Disney once said, 'We just make the picture, and let the professors tell us what they mean' (quoted in Bell et al., 1995: 1). This is disingenuous. As others have argued and as I have reframed in this article, conscious ideologies are at work behind Disney's seemingly ahistorical and apolitical movies. Indeed, Schickel (1968: 227) observed that Walt Disney appropriated, 'but that process nearly always robbed the work at hand of its uniqueness, of its soul . . . In its place he put jokes and songs and fright effects . . . He came always as a conqueror . . . It is a trait, as many have observed, that many Americans share when they venture into foreign lands hoping to do good but equipped only with knowhow instead of sympathy and respect for alien traditions' (Schickel, 1968: 227). In *Groove*, we clearly see the validity of this criticism.

Perhaps most alarming about the educational value professed by the Disney enterprise is that in this genre of animated films Disney 'makes a claim on the future through its nostalgic view of past' (Giroux, 1999: 88). This is true not only in Disney's Norman Rockwellized America, but for

every real country that has served as a model for the transnational media corporation's creative animation genius. There should have been nothing boring to Roy Disney about making an animated version of the Inca Empire and its myths, replete as it would have been with artistically legitimate inaccuracies. And, indeed, a tremendous amount of archaeological research is obvious in the movie, most notable – in my opinion – in the hilarious 'bride scene' which must be based on some knowledge of the *aclla* (chosen women; see Silverblatt, 1987) as well as female motifs painted on Inca pottery (see Fernández Baca, 1973: Figs. 323–9, 333–4, 336). In fictionalizing Cuzco-Machu Picchu to the point of anonymity, Disney has not told a story about some mythical kingdom that never existed, rather Disney has denied the Inca Empire which did. Whereas the genre of historical movie, with all the faults of veracity that its films have, contributes positively to knowledge and curiosity about the past, such cannot be the result of *Groove* because the movie is explicitly set in a mythical kingdom. Moreover, the form or medium of *Groove* (animation) must necessarily influence our perception of its content. Cartoon animation fictionalizes as well as trivializes history into entertainment and unreality to a far greater degree than movies with human actors whose very tangibility supports the veracity of the story being told.

Why is this important? Ultimately, the answer can be expressed best by quoting Walter Benjamin's (1968: 255) fifth thesis on the philosophy of history: 'every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably'.

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