Playfully Yours
By Brian Sutton-Smith

This column is about tooling or fooling around with toys.

For about ten years or so I have been the American Psychological Association Media Service Referral member on toys and play, which means that when asked I volunteered to talk “seriously” to journalists and others who want to know what “science” has to say about their concerns about toys or play. As the years went by, however, and the questions grew more asinine, or perhaps as I have grown more asinine (as in the “Golden Ass”), my answers have become increasingly ludic. The highlight for me was when someone asked me what I thought about all these children becoming addicted to video games, and I replied that I thought such addiction was a normal marker for having found a form of recreation or play that was really worthwhile for you. I went on to say that the value of childhood was that as you grew older you gave up one set of addictions for another, and the disadvantage of adulthood was that you died with the addictions that you had.

But the latest brouhaha about toys (and there is usually one or two every year) occurred at the Toy Fair in New York in February of 1992, when Mattel advertised a new doll to be called My Bundle Baby which featured a doll enclosed in a padded pack (a “snuggly”) which could be carried on the back or alternatively on the front to simulate pregnancy, because there was a battery in the bottom of the pack which gave forth a simulation of legs kicking and heart beating inside the pack.

This led to a journalistic paroxysm. Carol Lawson in the New York Times (Feb.6, p.
C1) interviewed various "experts" about the matter (but no "expert" from TASP). Famous pediatrician Brazelton said, "...the doll is a real invasion of the parents' opportunity to share something precious with a child. Why do we need such a toy?" Debra Haffner, executive officer of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States said, "It is going to be very confusing to children. It will leave them with the idea that you can put on pregnancy and take it off when you want to, and that a fetus develops in a pouch outside the body. Kids will think we are like Kangaroos." Famous child psychologist (author of The Hurried Child) David Elkind wondered what would happen when the batteries went out. "Would the baby be dead?" From Cincinnati (see Cincinnati Enquirer editorial of April 15) a group including both right to choice and right to life signatories (sic) published a proclamation in which they asked Mattel to reconsider and not produce and sell the toy. They said: "We believe that the My Bundle Baby simulating pregnancy sends the wrong message to children and youth, conveying the notion that pregnancy is something to play with ... that it is a toy ... it ... reduces the very serious nature of pregnancy to something for play."

At this point I was reminded of TASP member George Eisen's remarkable account of Children and Play in the Holocaust (U. of Mass., 1988) where so many Jewish children reduced the seriousness of being killed to their own play. Surely it seemed to me that a first law of play is that it takes into itself the most serious, the most anxiety producing of phenomena and by thus caricaturing them, makes the players at least temporarily in charge of their circumstances. It empowers them against fate. Play in my currently preferred definition, which fits such ultimate circumstances, is the pretense that life is worth living.

Apparently there is an epidemic of pregnancy in ever younger girls. Apparently also there is increasing commodification, including sexualization of the young. In response some wish to make sure that there is no mention in any way of the joys or pains of being pregnant. There is a group from Loveland (sic again) Cincinnati called "Citizens Against Mind Pollution" who want to get rid of The Simpsons on Fox TV, the cartoons Ren and Stimpy and Rugrats on Nickolodeon and the Kenner toys which involve bodily functions such as farting, vomit and snot. This is the see no evil, hear no evil, etc., enough it too much, point of view. (I go along with the snot.)

Then there is another group who feel that the doll falls short of the full scale education that children really need in the birthing process through videos and books. This is the some is not enough group. Both groups agree that these dolls will increase the valence of pregnancy amongst the young and contribute to rather than fend off contemporary problems.

Then there are some of us, like George Eisen I presume, who would assume that the children's play didn't cause the holocaust and wasn't going to stop it either. And who would suppose that all of this attention to a few toys is more symptomatic of adult anxiety than it is of the imaginative play of children. Sometimes I think we have done an immense disservice by Vygotsky, Berlyne and Piaget who have conditioned most intellectuals to think that play is an epistemological process, when it is largely, as the
Freudians knew, an ontological one. Play has to do with whistling in the dark, keeping up one's courage, and defending oneself against the awfulness of everyday life. It is not the foundation of ordinary education. And yet these various pregnancy angst groups think that it is; that it is a tool and not a toy.

Dr Play's Quiz: Sir Knights of the Circle Table
by Don Lytle

It was fitting that the first European TASP conference along with the International Council for Children's Play was held in an 18th century chateau. Apropos to this setting a ceremony was held on the second night of the conference and knighthood was bestowed upon five TASP members. With court attendants, Jim Christie, George Eisen, Billie Enz, Dan Hilliard, Don Lytle, Anna Nardo and several others in waiting, Sylvia Sparkis Traska, heralded the ceremony to order. Proclamations were read by Margaret Duncan, Individualized coat of arms were presented and Knighthood was bestowed upon Garry Chick, John Loy, Roland Renson, Brian Sutton-Smith, and Rimmert van der Kooij.

These inventive -if not self-serving- chroniclers made the most of their newly acquired and distinctive title of SIR, which must accompany the given names of all Knights. Thus Chick, being submissive and obedient was Servile. Loy who happily has made many interesting albeit accidental discoveries in his career was Serendipity. Renson who was absent yielding to the power of others was Surrender. Sutton-Smith who overindulges in eating, drinking, and then, talking, was Surfeit. Van der Kooij who is the largest of the lot was Sirloin.

Immediately after the formal and most solemn ceremony, a game of "Guess the Sir Knight" occurred. Try to match wits with the cagey court attendants and newly crowned knights who came up with many words that begin with the sound of 'sir' and ended with a common term. For example Brian Sutton-Smith could easily have been the Knight who expresses nonrational thought with incongruous juxtapositions. He would therefore be (is?)surreal (or surrealism)!

Identify the knight who:
1. has an exterior layer.
2. is one who desists from action.
3. is an excessive burden.
4. has sharp, small marginal teeth.
5. rises above to overcome.
6. exceeds and excels
7. more than suffices.
8. is the crowning molding or cornice of a pedestal.
9. encompasses and enclose on all sides.
10. a colorful, grand-scale entertainment with clowns and animals.
11. charges extra to the usual levy.
12. most helpful and assisting.
For the advanced player, here are some words, without a common ending.
Identify the knight who:
13. is an elongated reptile without limbs.
14. goes on roundabout journeys.
15. is a single curved line in mathematics.
16. is thin fleecy, cloudlike
17. practices religious discourse.
18. is very rude and sternly sour.
19. is a crown antler or stag's topmost antler.
20. is a gelatinous organic compound.
21. has a skin disease.
22. is a crystalline, brain substance.
23. is an African wildcat.

For extra credit continue the contest by playing "Sir Knight; Sir Knightly; and Sir Baronet." The object of the Knight version of this game is as we were just playing: come up with any word that begins with the sound of 'sir' as the first syllable. In the version of Knightly players give hints to a word whose second syllable has the sound of 'sir.' And in the case of Baronet, players attempt to produce hints to words that have 'sir' as the third syllable. For example if a player announces "Knightly," and asks who the acid tongued knight is, could you identify him?
As for "Baronet," who is the jailed Knight?

President's Message
by
Garry Chick

Some 28 TASP members attended the joint meeting with the International Council for Children's Play in Sevrès, France in May. Paris in the springtime is indeed special and the conference was blessed with spectacular weather for seeing the sights. Those who watched the French Open or read the news saw that rain was the order of the day soon after we left. My impression is that everyone who attended the meeting was pleased, not only with the setting and the opportunities that it afforded but also with the meeting itself. It was good to be able to commune with our European colleagues and there was talk (but just that) of another joint meeting in the future, perhaps in Vienna. Everyone who attended owes thanks to Ms. Gillian Henry, of the ICCP, for her extraordinary skill and hard work in organizing the conference and keeping things running smoothly. Indeed, she even managed to find several extra bottles of wine to help keep the spirits of a number of us high.
Brian Sutton-Smith, behaving in a most non-retired manner, opened and closed the congress with presentations that were intriguing, humorous, and entertaining but which also led to some hasty scrambling by other speakers. Complacency is an enemy and Brian, knight errant that he is, fearlessly seeks it out and attacks it wherever it may lurk. Other presentations, both by TASP members and ICCP members, were insightful and interesting. All in all, the intellectual vittles were good.

With respect to TASP more generally, there is good news and bad news. First, the good news. Don Lytle was elected Second-Vice President and Jane Granskog and Rimmert van der Kooij were elected to the Executive Council. Congratulations to them. Alan Aycock has accepted the position of Book Review Editor for Play & Culture. He replaces Jim Johnson who shouldered it for nearly five years. Our thanks go to Jim and our congratulations to Alan. The bad news is that Human Kinetics Publishers has decided that they will no longer publish Play & Culture after the current volume, Volume 5, is completed. They were never able to make a profit and recent problems with the TASP membership list led to the decision. Whatever Play & Culture’s ultimate fate may be, recognition and thanks is due Human Kinetics for the wonderful job that they did in producing the journal.

As founding editor, I am determined to keep Play & Culture alive and I am optimistic that it can be done. I believe that the current editor, Margaret Duncan, and the other officers of TASP are of the same opinion. The quality of the articles in Play & Culture has been first rate and the journal has been consistently praised. Options that are being explored at the moment include its publication by the Association or being picked up by another publisher. Desk top publishing technology is such that the former is a possibility worthy of consideration and another publisher has already shown strong interest in the journal. A decision will be made before 1993 membership announcements are distributed, that is, around the first of November, 1992.

Finally, I must reiterate part of the message that Rob Lavenda presented in the last newsletter. There were problems in the recent past as membership applications and renewals were not handled in a timely and precise fashion. I have discovered that nearly 40 individuals who paid dues for 1991 did not receive Play & Culture. These individuals will receive memberships for 1992 and it is hoped that they will renew their membership for 1993 and beyond. If anyone paid dues and has failed to receive either their full complement of newsletters or journals, please contact me so that I can correct the situation. I hope that I have caught all of the problems but I may have missed some. Also, please be assured that future membership applications and renewals will be processed quickly and accurately.
Report From Paris
By Dan Hilliard

TASP held its annual meeting in conjunction with the International Council on Children’s Play May 12-15, 1992 at the Centre International d’Estudes Pedagogiques in the Parisian suburb of Sevres. I won’t spend time here on personal impressions, since I’m taking enough space later in the issue with my article on Euro-Disney. Over sixty addresses and papers were delivered, attendance at the sessions was excellent, and there was a high level of interchange between North American and European scholars. As Brian Sutton-Smith said both in his address on Wednesday morning and in his closing remarks on Friday afternoon, there is both an overlap of interests and a tension of perspectives between ICCP and TASP, which seemed to produce a good dynamic. The complete program of the conference is published later in this issue, together with the addresses of all participants. So by all means write anyone on the program whose work interests you.

Special thanks are due to a number of persons whose hard work made the program possible: Andre Michelet, ICCP President for deftly serving as host and, along with Rimmert van der Kooij, planning the program; Gillian Henry, for her preparation of local arrangements and for daily problem solving; TASP program chair Garry Chick, for undertaking the voluminous communication necessary to get us all on the program; and the entire staff of the Centre. Special kudos should go to the food service staff, who prepared a five course meal for 100 each day at noon. “School lunch” this was not! The menu of our most sumptuous feast is printed later in this issue, just because I feel like being ugly (and because John Loy and Rob Lavenda egged me on).

International Organizations

Four institutions or organizations located outside North America and involved in play studies were personally represented at Paris. First is our co-sponsoring organization, the International Council on Children’s Play, Andre Michelet, President, and Rimmert van der Kooij, Secretary (see address list later in this issue). Founded in 1959, the ICCP was the first international organization to promote children’s right to play. Andre Michelet edits a French language review for ICCP entitled L’Education Par Le Jeu Et L’Environnement. Subscription is 120FF per year. It is published by Roland Houdon, at the Centre d’Etudes, 450 rue de Jonquilles, 45770 Saran, France.

Gunther Bauer represented the Institut fur Spielforschung und Spielpadagogik located in Salzburg, Austria (see address list). The phone number there is 0 66 2 88 9 08 371. The Institut is engaged in basic play research. Gunther publishes in German a beautiful journal Homo Ludens: Der Spielende Mensch. Volume 1 was published in January 1991, and volume 2 is due out in October 1992. The cost is 37DM or 296AS, available from Musikverlag Emil Katzbichler, telephone (08051) 2595 or FAX (08051) 64113.

Margalith Akavya attended the conference from Tel Aviv, where she heads the
Educational Center for Games in Israel (see address list). The center was founded in 1991 to promote the development and production of games in Israel and the diaspora, and was recently reviewed in the English language Jerusalem Post, as well as in several Hebrew publications. The center serves both as a museum of toys and games and as a play space for children and adults. The mailing address of the center is PO Box 11193, Tel-Aviv 61111, Israel; telephone and FAX: 03-5238530.

Lastly, one of the presenters at the conference was Phillipe Addor, director of the Swiss Museum of Play in Vevrey, Switzerland. (His address is listed.) The museum has recently shown an exhibit on ball and marble games and is now showing an exhibit on games of chance which will continue through August.

New Books

Jean-Pierre Rossie of Ghent, Belgium, who presented a paper based on his study of play with dolls in Morocco, has published a book on this subject in French entitled Jeux et Jouets Sahariens Et Nord-Africains Poupées, in ICCP’s “Heritages Ludiques” series (see ICCP address above). The book should also be available in English by mid-1993.

Guy Bonhomme has produced a book on the history of tennis in France, from court tennis to the days of the “four musketeers.” Entitled De La Paume au Tennis and full of color illustrations and historical photos, the book is published by Gallimard, ISBN: 2-07-053134-1.

Answers to Dr. Play’s Sir Knights of the Circle Table

1. surface 2. surcease 3. surcharge
4. serrate 5. surmount 6. surpass
7. surplus 8. surbase 9. surround
10. circus/cirque 11. surtax 12. service/servant/servitor

13. serpent 14. circuit/circuitous/circuity/circular
15. circle 16. cirrus 17. sermon
18. surly 19. surroyal 20. sericin
21. serpigo 22. serotonin 23. serval

Knightly = acerb/acerbity
Baronet = incarcerated
CALL FOR PAPERS
1993 MEETING

1993 TASP Annual Meeting
St. Paul, Minnesota
April 22- April 24, 1993

The 1993 TASP annual conference will be held in St. Paul, Minnesota. The location is easily accessible by plane or car and lodging will be relatively inexpensive. The meetings will begin Thursday morning April 22 and continue through Saturday, April 24. Sessions will include such topics as: Play for Wellness; Animal Play; Celebratory Play; Literary Play; and The Changing Play Face. Of special interest will be Performance Play with entertainers and excursions. The Twin Cities area is noted for its fine art and science museums, major professional sports, special events and excellent theater. For example The Prairie Home Companion is located at St. Paul's World Theater. Headquarters for the conference will be the charming, 4 star, St. Paul Hotel located in downtown St. Paul.

The conference planning committee is encouraging different presentational forms including: book discussion groups, where discussants present relevant ideas and assess selected published works; panels, which present differing perspectives of play study issues and/or practices; playshops, emphasizing fun and practical aspects of play study; poster sessions to summarize research; book exhibitions; and paper sessions, with each presenter allowed 20 minutes. TASP members are encouraged to organize sessions around a theme of your choice. Write, e-mail or call Program Chair, Don Lytle with your ideas. (dlytle@AVAX.CSUChico.Edu (NOTE: There are no numbers in the e-mail address) or 916 898-6617/894-5028)

All conference sessions will allow for ample discussion of the presentations. Note that papers accepted must be presented by a listed author who must also be registered for the conference. Pre-registration for the conference is $60 for professionals and $20 for students. The conference room rate is $79 per night for single or double occupancy. Send registration fees and abstracts of no more than 100 words to Don Lytle, Department of Physical Education, California State University, Chico 95929-0330. (Use the enclosed submission form.) The deadline for paper submission is December 11, 1992.
TITLE:

AUTHOR(S):

ABSTRACT (100 word maximum):

AUDIENCE VISUAL NEEDS:  
Slide projector & screen  
Overhead projector & screen  
VCR and monitor  
Other (please specify)  

PRESENTATION/SESSION:  
Book Display  
Paper  
Panel  
Playshop  
Poster  

NAME, PHONE NUMBERS, E-MAIL AND MAILING ADDRESSES FOR ALL AUTHORS:  
(Put lead author first or in alphabetical order)
TUESDAY 12th MAY 1992

PROGRAM

SALLE HATINGUAIS :
09.30 - 10.00 : Congress Opening : Jacques TREFFEL
Welcome & practical details : André MICHELET
10.00 - 10.30 : E. Peter JOHNSEN : The relationship between children’s play and the construct of reality
10.30 - 11.00 : Dieter SPANHEL : The importance of uncumbersome & spontaneous play for the present & future
11.00 - 11.30 : INTERMISSION

SALLE HATINGUAIS :
11.30 - 11.50 : Christian TAILLARD :
Children's ludic behaviour towards scientific and technological games
11.50 - 12.10 : Rosa Mercedes REYES :
The relation play-future in the perspective of certain psychological approaches
12.10 - 12.30 : Françoise CURCHOD :
Arbitrary rule games : research in progress
12.30 - 12.50 : Walter FERRAROTTI :
Play prepares the future, but who prepares play ?
13.00 - 14.30 : LUNCH

SALLE HATINGUAIS :
14.30 - 14.50 : Marie-Thérèse MARCHE :
Cohabitation of technical acts and play in a hospital setting
14.50 - 15.10 : George EISEN :
The influence of the endocrinal system on play behaviour
15.10 - 15.30 : Margarita WOOD :
A play time : “The fight with dragons” a study of time as a dynamic function in the Lowenfeld World (LWT)
15.30 - 15.50 : Rosemary BOLIG :
Play in health carechild life settings
16.00 - 16.30 : INTERMISSION

SALLE HATINGUAIS :
16.30 - 17.00 : Karlheinz OTTO & Sabine RIEMANN : Past, present and future in children’s play
17.00 - 17.30 : Marcel RUFO : The future : the play of children presenting invalidating illnesses

GRANDE BIBLIOTHEQUE :
18.00 : RECEPTION-BUFFET : Welcome by Mme SELLIER, Director of Centre international d’Études Pédagogiques

SALLE JEAN ZAY :
20.00 : ICCP General Assembly

SALLE STOURLZE :
20.00 : TASP General Assembly

WEDNESDAY 13th MAY 1992

PROGRAM

PLENARY DAY

SALLE HATINGUAIS :
09.30 - 10.30 : ADDRESSES
André MICHELET, President of the ICCP
Robert LAVENTEA, President of TASP
Jacqueline CONSTANCE, representing Roland DROGUET, President National Federation of Toy Industries
Jacques TREFFEL, Inspector General, President of the congress
10.30 - 11.00 : Brian SUTTON-SMITH : The rhetoric of play in the twentieth century
11.00 - 11.30 : INTERMISSION

SALLE HATINGUAIS :
11.30 - 12.00 : Gilles BROUGÈRE : Present desires and future images of play
12.30 - 13.00 : James H. CHRISTIE : Teacher education : a key element in improving school play
13.00 - 14.30 : LUNCH

SALLE HATINGUAIS :
14.30 - 15.00 : Hein RETTER : The significance of games & toys : the changing world of children
15.00 - 15.30 : Don LYTLE : Space travel to Ludonia : a playful lesson of human & cross cultural significance
15.30 - 16.00 : Peter K. SMITH : Play fighting & serious fighting : perspectives on their relationship
16.30 - 17.00 : Waltraut HARTMANN : The influence of a play curriculum in elementary school on the school career and the later development of the pupils
17.00 - 17.30 : Rimmert van der KOOU : Features of future play theories

SALLE HATINGUAIS :
20.30 : Film evening
THURSDAY 14th MAY 1992

PROGRAM

SALLE HATINGUAIAS :
09.30 - 10.00 : Joop HELLENDOORN : Play therapy : a special case of preparing the future
10.00 - 10.30 : Philippe ADDOR : Development through Ludification

10.30 - 11.00 : INTERMISSION

SALLE HATINGUAIAS :
11.00 - 11.20 : Nancy JOHNSTON :
Play : Healing for tomorrow
11.20 - 11.40 : Cheva LOCKER :
Educational therapy for learning dysfunctions through (computer) games
11.40 - 12.00 : Maria Teresa B.P. COUTINHO :
Exploration and play in down syndrome and non delayed children : effects of responsive and nonresponsive toys
12.00 - 12.20 : Sahda MartalDE :
Mental retardation and pre-school : integration through toys
12.20 - 12.40 : Arne TRAGETON :
Sensory-motor & role play development
12.45 - 14.15 : LUNCH
14.15

EXCURSION

CHATEAU DE VERSAILLES
or
MUSEE DES ARTS DECORATIFS and INSTITUT DE FRANCE

18.00

RECEPTION - COCKTAIL
at the INSTITUT DE FRANCE

FRIDAY 15th MAY 1992

PROGRAM

SALLE HATINGUAIAS :
09.00 - 09.30 : Jean Pierre ROSSIE :
The ludic heritage of North Africa and the Sahara : a link between the past, the present and the future
09.30 - 10.00 : Martine MAURRIAS BOUQUET :
Renewal of cultures and human societies through play
10.00 - 10.30 : Erich LÖSCHENKOHL & Mag. Michaela BLEYER :
The conquest of computer-screen worlds by the children : fascination, possibilities & dangers

10.30 - 11.00 : INTERMISSION

SALLE HATINGUAIAS :
11.00 - 11.20 : Ekaterina PROTASSOVA :
Play without common language
11.20 - 11.40 : Gao GOUDOUX :
Portrayals of future identities in children's make believe : the case of feocean girls (Greece)
11.40 - 12.00 : Tomoko SHINNO :
Across cultural comparison of preschool children's play between Britain & Japan
12.00 - 12.20 : Anna K. MANDO :
Academic play
12.20 - 12.40 : Alice MEEKLEY :
The social construction of young children's play
12.45 - 13.00 : Olga POUTIHKAYA :
Principles for the creation of educational games for learning foreign languages
13.00 - 14.30 : LUNCH
14.30 - 15.00 : Kathleen ROSKOS :
Young children's literacy activity in play at child care
15.00 - 15.30 : Ana Maria ARAUJO PEASSINHA :
A comparative study of the play of children from different social and cultural backgrounds
15.30 - 16.00 : Jean PERROT :
Play prepares Santa Claus' future
16.00 : CLOSING ADDRESS :
Brian SUTTON-SMITH
DEJEUNER OFFICIEL DU MERChEDI 13 MAI 1992
CONGRES DU CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL POUR LE JEU DE L'ENFANT

PAVE DE SAUMON AU BEURRE BLANC

PINTADEAUX FLAMBES AU GRAND MARNIER

GRATINÉ DAUPHINOIS

SALADE DE SAISON

PLATEAU DE FROMAGES

SAINT MARC

*****

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GRAVES 1989

CHATEAU HAUT PLANTIER 1990
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Dr. Dan Does Euro-Disney
By Dan Hilliard

First of all, you gotta know where I’m coming from. I’m not a vertigo junkie; I’ve never had a great desire to go skydiving or bungee jumping. So, I’ve never been really excited about theme or amusement parks. I went to Disneyland on family vacation when I was 11 years old and then went back twenty years later. I’ve never been to Disney World. I did go to Six Flags Over Texas quite often as a junior high and high school student, mainly because it was a squeaky clean way to get close to girls. That’s about the extent of my theme park experience. All of this is to say that I’m no theme park aficionado, and I don’t consider myself qualified to critique theme parks on aesthetic grounds.

Also, you need to know that I’ve been on sabbatical this past semester, reading heavily in cultural studies, while trying to study the sport of triathlon and television coverage of the 1992 Olympics. I know some of the jargon gets tedious, but I find that the Gramsci-Hall-Willis-Hargreaves-Grunneau approach resonates with my own intuitive understanding of life in the late 20th century. I’ve been reading about TV and film quite a bit, and obviously the Disney name keeps coming up.

So I was already curious about Euro-Disney. But, living in the nuclear backwater of Central Texas, I hadn’t eaten “micro-wave reindeer” like John Loy. And, since I don’t read French, I couldn’t follow the Left Bank intellectuals’ critique firsthand, but I had read enough secondary accounts to see the phrase “cultural Chernobyl” turn up again and again. Even our local humorist, John Kelso, the poet laureate of Bubbaland (South Austin) wrote about it. He figured the French were really just pissed off that they wouldn’t be allowed to drink wine with their meals while visiting Euro-Disney. Good point. Anyway, before I got to Paris, I was already interested in the Euro-Disney phenomenon. And when Rob Lavenda mentioned it in his presidential address, I knew I had to go see it for myself.

The Trip

On Saturday morning after the conference ended, I attempted to drop my “tourist gaze” and adopt the viewpoint of a suburban Parisian on a day trip to the Euro-Disney theme park. I took public transportation from Sevres to the park, which is located adjacent to the end of the RER Line A at Marne-al-Vallee, about 30 minutes from the center of Paris. The whole trip took about 1 and 1/2 hours — by bus, metro and train. It was an unremarkable trip. Families, couples and small groups joined me on the train, but it wasn’t Disney Rail by any menas. Plenty of people not going to Euro-Disney got on and off the train at each stop between Les Halles and Marne-al-Vallee. In fact, the most interesting aspects of the trip had nothing to do with Disney.

Post-Modern (?) T-Shirts

Please excuse the digression. Having just finished Writing Culture, I’ve become
aware of the extreme linearity of my writing style. So, what follows is a small experiment in non-linear writing. I won't attempt polyvocality just yet -- maybe in the next issue.

OK. Having nothing better to do, I was people watching on the train. A French family -- early thirties couple with 8 year old son -- got on, and the kid's clothing caught my eye. He was wearing a pastel yellow sweat suit, and the top had a design on the front that looked something like this (Figure 1 below).

![Figure 1](image1.png)

![Figure 2](image2.png)

So what? Well, initially, nothing; but after I got to the park, while I was standing in line (endlessly, it seemed) to board the Euro-Disneyland Railroad for a tour around the park, I noticed another shirt. On the back of this shirt was a design (see Figure 2 above).

What do these shirts have in common besides baseball? They are examples of a clothing style that has been very popular among European youth in recent years. My wife and I saw them in "American boutiques" in London in 1987; at least a half-dozen such "American boutiques" can be found in the huge Les Halles shopping mall. (Margaret Duncan take note. There's a definite research possibility here.) The style I have in mind is sportswear decorated by English language messages based on American sports, but the stores that sell them often also sell blue jeans, boots, motorcycle jackets, etc.. What makes these decorations interesting is that they are flagrantly inauthentic. Their misuse of images is apparent to anyone familiar with American sports culture. And they juxtapose images that would never be found on American sports T-shirts. For instance, no American baseball fan would ever say, "Most winning team" (my wife, the English teacher cringes). And the placement of red hearts at first and third base is a baseball absurdity. Not to mention that no baseball player would be caught dead in pastel yellow. Similarly, in the second shirt, the term "knockout" is never used in baseball talk. And while the images ostensibly illustrate the evolution of the catcher's protective headgear, the second mask is labeled "Protective Cup, 1970." Now clearly, what is pictured is a face mask, not a protective cup; protective cup is a piece of equipment, not a player like Steve Yeager; and, perhaps not so clearly, the protective cup was not invented in 1970 -- it had been in use for years when I played Little League in 1959. Who is playing with whom here? Are the clothing manufacturers playing with their non-English-speaking consumers? Are the manufacturers and consumers together spoofing the seriousness of American
sport? Or, are these shirts just another example of the pastiche quality of post-modern style?

The Entertainer

About halfway between Les Halles and Marne-al-Vallee, I forgot all about the kid’s sweatshirt when a street musician boarded the train. He immediately established eye contact with a race-and-gender-mixed group of 6 young people on their way to Euro-Disney and having a good time. He said a few words to them as he passed by, and he set himself up in the middle of our train car. He had a six-string classical guitar with an electric pick-up in it and a microphone mounted cleverly on top. Both guitar and mic were plugged into a small, battery powered amplifier which sat at his feet. He began animatedly strumming the guitar and signing in French. During the first song he directed most of his attention at the previously-mentioned small group, eventually engaging them and getting them to sing along. He followed this with three sing-alongs: “Guantanamera,” “Volare,” and “La Bamba.” By the end almost everyone in the car was laughing, clapping time, and singing on the chorus. It seems that the key to being a street musician is to establish a kind of reciprocity with the audience: if you can get them to publicly respond to your music, you can reasonably press them for a donation. By establishing rapport with his small group of “plants,” this guy succeeded, and he was well-rewarded. He should get an agent to represent him to Disney -- he did a great job of warming up the crowd!

The Place

The Euro Disneyland Park is based closely on the original Disneyland in Anaheim, California. It is divided into five areas. Main Street, USA develops a turn-of-the-century town motif, with shops, historical displays, and restaurants. The main street is also where the parade consisting of Disney characters on floats takes place. Frontierland is based on the Wild West, Adventureland on non-Western themes. Fantasyland is based largely on Disney-adapted fairy tales and contains the “It’s A Small World” ride. Discoveryland is the futuristic area, containing Star Tours, a roller coaster ride based on George Lucas’s Star Wars series. But the themes are only the beginning of Euro Disneyland, and the park is only the beginning of the entire Euro-Disney complex. Inside Euro Disneyland are 6 table service restaurants, 13 counter-service restaurants, 10 snack shops, and countless popcorn and ice cream stands; 36 boutique and souvenir shops; baby care and pet care centers; foreign currency exchanges and ATM machines. Are you getting the picture yet? If not, outside Euro Disneyland proper lies Festival Disney, situated on 18,000 square meters, where more boutiques and restaurants await, along with such evening entertainment as Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, admission 300FF. Surrounding Festival Disney are 7 Disney Resort Hotels -- Disneyland Hotel, Hotel New York, Newport Bay Club, Sequoia Lodge, Hotel Cheyenne, Hotel Santa Fe, and Camp Davy Crockett. Room rates range from 270FF (Davy Crockett campsite) to 8750FF (Disneyland Hotel suite, high season) per night! And I thought Paris was expensive!!
The People

The park was not jammed on this May Saturday afternoon, but it was crowded. Judging by spoken language, the vast majority of the crowd were French, but the Spanish, Italians, British and, especially, Germans were well represented. And there were American, Canadian and Australian Disneyphiles as well. What was striking to me, compared to almost all the other tourist attractions I've visited in Europe and the U.S. was the absence of the Japanese. Perhaps it was just the time of year, or maybe, since they have Tokyo Disneyland they aren't interested in seeing another Disney attraction when they travel in Europe. In any case, they weren't there. I thought about Euro-Disney as a meta-commentary on global economic relations, with the EEC and North American allied against Japan. Too far fetched?

The park's "cast members" are all young, attractive, and multi-lingual. Young people with names like Inge, Muriel and Eric are dressed in Western garb, Victorian garb, etc. to reinforce the themes of the five park areas.

One final thing I noticed about the crowd was that there were far more adults than children. Brian Sutton-Smith had alerted us earlier in the week to the distinction between children's play (preparation for the future) and adult play (accomodation to the present), and it is well to keep in mind that, while the Disney empire is associated with children's entertainment, the theme park is an adult attraction, too. But adults and children seem to enjoy the park in different ways. Adults seem most interested in the rides, exhibits and shops. While kids certainly enjoy the rides, they are crazy about the Disney characters. The Disney parade down Main Street drew an enormous, cheering crowd. And whenever a Disney character appeared -- whether Mickey, Goofy, or Chewbacca -- children rushed for autographs, photos, etc.

Interpreting Euro-Disney

The "cultural Chernobyl" phrase kept turning over in my mind throughout the day, as I asked myself wether Euro-Disney was evidence of American mass cultural domination on a global scale. I had to conclude that overtly, the theme park itself was not. With the exception of Discoveryland, which draws heavily on recent American popular culture through Star Wars and Michael Jackson as Captain EO, the various "lands" are fantasy worlds of the past. One can easily imagine how the resort complex could represent American domination and claims of economic-cultural superiority, but I didn't have a chance to visit it.

I decided to take the "It's A Small World" ride, since it relates to world system themes. For those unfamiliar with the ride, you travel around the world by boat, and in each area of the world, children in traditional costumes sing "It's A Small World After All." The overt theme is that children are our future and that children's love and understanding of one another will unite the world. I was pleased to see that the children sang in French, Spanish and German, as well as in English; but, my ears didn't detect any Japaese, and the African children didn't seem to be singing at all.
The ending of the ride put an interesting twist on the overall theme. The boat passed under an arch with the hills of Hollywood in the background and entered a grand ballroom. Here, all the children of the world were dancing together. They were still in their traditional costumes, but these were all made of white silk. Does this mean that American cultural hegemony will lead to global affluence -- Walt Rostow defeats Immanuel Wallerstein, or is it just a fantasy ball, a la Cinderella?

These few rather overt themes aside, let me give you two ideas concerning subtextual themes at the park. Clearly, if there is a message about modern America at the park, it is: "The business of America is business." As I mentioned before, shops and restaurants far outnumber rides and exhibits, and even the historical exhibits on Main Street pose as businesses. And we're not talking about just T-shirts and mouse ears here. Certainly, there is ample opportunity to buy toys and souvenirs. But the Disney name is also attached to "collectibles," fashion, jewelry, and much more. And if you're headed for Adventureland, you have to have travel clothing, which can be obtained at "Le Girafe Curieuse," Disney's version of Banana Republic. There seems to be no end to the way Disney products can be marketed.

I spent a lot of time standing in line that day, and one of the things I did to pass the time was to contemplate the meaning of standing in line. And I observed the behavior of my "linemates." What I found was that people standing in line were remarkably compliant. They talked, took photos, looked out at the park. They exchanged knowing looks of exasperation. But few people dropped out of line, and there were no overt hostilities. The only ones I saw bucking the system were young people. As I waited to ride "Big Thunder Mountain," a roller coaster ride based on a runaway mine train theme, two French boys about 12 years old subtly sneaked forward in the line. Every time there was a turn in the line (and there were lots of turns, see below) they moved up a couple of spots. They started their wait behind me, but got on the ride fifty of more persons ahead of me. At the Star Tours ride, a group of 6 French boys and girls aged 9-12 used a different tactic to accomplish the same end. They engaged in pushing and shoving, and whenever their horseplay produced space, they moved up in line. Two middle-aged women who were watching after them were sucked along in their draft. In neither case did I observe anyone trying to stop these kids.

On a crowded day, standing in line is one of the main activities at Euro Disneyland, and I think it has metasocial significance. I stood in line for well over an hour to ride "Big Thunder Mountain," which lasted 3 minutes and 40 seconds. And I stood in line for 47 minutes to ride "Star Tours," which lasted just over 4 minutes. It occurred to me that these lines/rides offer a commentary on life in the bureaucratic, corporate, late capitalist world. First, note that the line-to-ride ratio is remarkably similar to the work-to-vacation ratio: 50 weeks of marking time in exchange for 2 weeks of exhilaration. Second, one is never able to see, feel, or know exactly where one is in line. You move from outdoors to indoors, around corners, and up and down levels. At any given point, you are able to see only a fraction of your "linemates." Does this represent the alienation and lack of communitas inherent in modern bureaucracy? Finally, standing in line is juxtaposed with consumption. When you've at last reached the head of the
line and received your brief reward, you can retire to the shops and restaurants before standing in line again. To paraphrase James Spradley, after standing in line so long, "you owe yourself a drink" (though only non-alcoholic ones are available inside the park).

For the theme park aficionado who really wants to ride all the major rides, there is a simple (if expensive) solution. Stay at one of the Disney resorts and buy a three day pass to the park. Come to the park early and get on the rides before the crowds arrive. Retreat from the mid-day heat and crowds, and lounge around the hotel swimming pool or watch TV (is Channel 13 available at Euro-Disney?). Then, return to the park in the evening when the crowds have thinned out, and ride some more rides. This strategy, of course, ties the theme park and the resorts together into one grand "Disney experience." Which brings me to my conclusions.

**Disney and the Culture Industries**

Recent discussions of culture industries such as the mass media have focused a great deal of attention on multi-national corporate development. Horizontally integrated companies control all media at once -- TV, film, music, toys, fashion, etc. Michael Eisner’s Disney empire is a good case in point, and Euro-Disney is an excellent illustration. The theme park derives from Disney movies, as do TV specials, videos, popular music ("Under the Sea" may be replacing "The Mickey Mouse Club Theme" as the themesong of the new generation) and toys. The theme park, in turn, generates resort development -- hotels, restaurants, amusements, leisure services. Each of these cultural forms becomes, in essence, an advertisement for each of the others. At the theme park, this integrated media corporation is connected to other major corporations through corporate sponsorship. Among the major corporations sponsoring exhibits, rides, or other attractions at Euro-Disney are Coca-Cola, IBM, Mattel, Renault and French Telecom.

If the tone of this piece seems cynical, it is. I've attached a lot of cultural studies baggage to Euro-Disney, and I think all of it is deserved. But remember, cynicism can be fun. My day at Euro-Disney passed quickly. I bought souvenirs, got some thrills from some rides, and enjoyed watching the crowds. The cynical viewpoint allowed me to temporarily store my neo-Marxist baggage (locker available near the front entrance, 10FF per day) and have a good time.