

DISNEY AT 100 YEARS: EVERLASTING ENTERTAINMENT AND A SPELLBINDING FUTURE



26 JUNE 2023 – 30 JUNE 2023

on Zoom

PRESENTED BY DISNEY, CULTURE AND SOCIETY
RESEARCH NETWORK





Welcome to Disney at 100 Years: Everlasting Entertainment and a Spellbinding Future!

The warmest welcome to all our presenters, attendees and publishers to the very first Disney, Culture and Society Research Network Conference!

The Walt Disney Company has been making magic for the last 100 years, and Disney Studies Scholars have been studying how that magic relates to audiences, identities, business, industry, popular culture and society – to name a few!

From Disney's humble beginnings to its current international, multi-billion dollar transmedia success, the academic exploration of the Walt Disney Company's business, films, products, theme parks, shows, streaming platform, and other consumer experiences has come to the fore in recent years through the creation of Disney Studies. To celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the Walt Disney Company and the first year of our own Disney, Culture & Society Research Network, we want to reflect on the past, present, and future of conversations around Disney Studies in our first annual conference.

This conference is focusing on the past, present and future of Disney as a field of study and a company. Join us to reflect and celebrate not only the last few decades of Disney Studies, but the first anniversary of the Disney, Culture and Society Research Network. We are excited to celebrate and showcase cutting edge research from Disney Scholars

Best Wishes,
The DisNet Conference Organising Committee



Table of Contents

<u>Welcome Letter</u>	2
<u>What is DisNet?</u>	4
<u>DisNet Organizing Committee</u>	5
<u>Mousekeeping</u>	6
<u>How to Use This Program</u>	7
<u>Zoom Instructions</u>	7
<u>How to Use Discord</u>	8
<u>Keynote Speakers</u>	9
<u>Schedule Overview</u>	12
<u>Monday</u>	14
<u>Tuesday</u>	16
<u>Wednesday</u>	19
<u>Thursday</u>	21
<u>Friday</u>	24
<u>Presenter Bios & Abstracts</u>	27
<u>Join DisNet</u>	87
<u>Lexington Books</u>	88
<u>Intellect Books</u>	89
<u>University Press of Mississippi</u>	91
<u>Rutgers University Press</u>	92
<u>Recent Disney Publications</u>	93
<u>DisNet 2024</u>	95



What is DisNet?

The Disney, Culture and Society research network was founded in 2022 to create an international space where scholars could come together to discuss and collaborate on Disney research. Disney Studies has come to the fore in recent years, and is interdisciplinary in its nature. However, scholars working on Disney are so spread out across disciplines and continents, so we need a 'home', where we can find one another, explore each other's work and collaborate on future research.

DisNet has provided that home, and has been steadily growing in its first year of existence, something we are immensely proud of.

Our goal is to create an inclusive and interdisciplinary space where scholars and learners can come together to discuss and collaborate on Disney Studies research, whether that be books, articles, grants, or events. Our aim is to highlight and celebrate the cutting edge research being done on Disney, as well as share conference, publishing and funding opportunities. This will help us to continue to grow Disney Studies as a field.

As a research network, we provide a range of events for our members to celebrate and support their research and careers. From our network launch in June 2022, we have delivered a range of events such as tackling imposter syndrome, publishing panels, career opportunities and conferences. We provide early career researcher support through our events, as well as the mentoring scheme we are currently trialling. Our website showcases the fantastic research being conducted by our members, and our blog provides members with the opportunity to respond to the ever changing world of Disney. And of course, our very first Disney Studies conference for the network that demonstrates the breadth and depth of the research being conducted on this global media conglomerate.

Thank you for being part of what has been an incredibly special first year. To many more.

Robyn Muir

Director of the Disney, Culture and Society Research Network



The DisNet Conference Organising Committee



Robyn Muir



Rebecca Rowe



Brittany Eldridge



Heather Holian



Kristi Gatto



Priscilla Hobbs-Penn



Charlotte Durham



Hannah Helm



Emily Aguiló-Pérez



Mousekeeping

Code of Conduct

DisNet welcomes you and appreciates your participation at the 2023 conferences. DisNet is dedicated to inclusivity, diversity, and multi/interdisciplinarity within our community. At any of our events, you will find a supportive and considerate environment where you are safe to express diverse views and encounter new ways of thinking. While we hope you have a good, fun, and scholarly time at our conference, we would also appreciate it if you could follow our Conference Code of Conduct (known as Mousekeeping).

DisNet's ethics and values are based on a firm belief in the value of civil discourse and the exploration of ideas and concepts (competing or otherwise). We also hold fundamental respect for the rights, dignities, and values of all people. As such, DisNet is committed to creating, providing, and establishing an inclusive and harassment-free environment - regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, physical appearance, ethnicity, religion, geographic location, age, or other group identity. **All DisNet members and participants at any DisNet function or event are expected to treat all persons with consideration and dignity.**

By attending this DisNet conference event, participants are actively agreeing to abide by the DisNet Code of Conduct. For DisNet's full Mousekeeping Policy, please see the following link:

[Code of Conduct](#)



How To Use This Program

This program provides you with all of the information you need regarding attending sessions and the research being presented during each session. There are embedded links within this program to make it easy to find where you need to be and at what time. The following diagram explains where you can click and what it will take you to.

Disney and Nostalgia

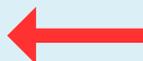


Zoom link

16:30 - 18:00

Moderator: Rebecca Rowe

Charlotte Durham



Presenter Bio & Abstract

University of Leeds

That Comfort-Nostalgia Thing': On Homecoming, Ontological (In)securities, and Disney+

All section headings in the table of contents can be clicked and will lead to the proper pages.

Technology Instructions

In order to join each session, you will need to have Zoom downloaded on your device. You can sign-up for a free Zoom account and download the software at the links below:



Desktop Client



iPad/iPhone



Android

We recommend that you download Zoom ahead of time so that you do not encounter any issues on the day of the conference. Once Zoom is downloaded, the session link will take you right to the conference.



How To Use Discord

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION ON DISCORD!

Discord is a social media platform that allows members to chat around a variety of topics. To get started, **click here**. You will be prompted to log in or create a Discord account. Then you'll be prompted to answer some questions to set up your profile within the server:

Customization Questions

Answer questions to get access to more channels and roles.

Answer the questions as prompted to create your profile tags.

Once those are done, you'll have access to the channels. These will be used throughout the conference to provide announcements and resources, and networking and other discussion opportunities! Think of this as the conference lounge where you have a chance to meet and get to know other magical people.



- ▼ GENERAL INFORMATION
 - # welcome
 - # what-is-disnet
 - # introduce-yourself
- ▼ CONFERENCE INFORMATION
 - mousekeeping
 - announcements
 - # tech-resources
 - # conference-schedule-ov...
- ▼ KEYNOTE ROUNDTABLE
 - # discussion
- ▼ NETWORKING & OPPORTUNITIES
 - # share-work
 - # research
 - # teaching
 - # alt-ac
 - # aca-advice
 - # phd-chat

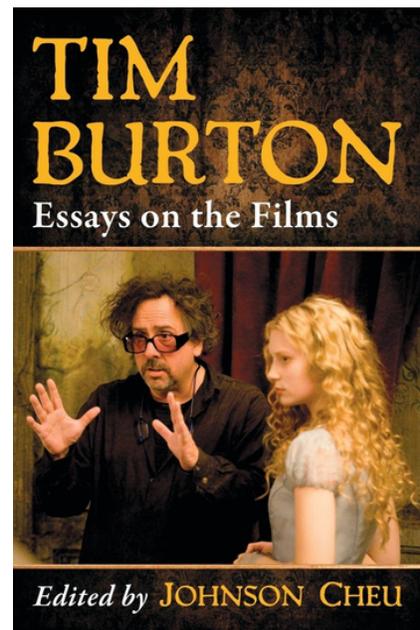
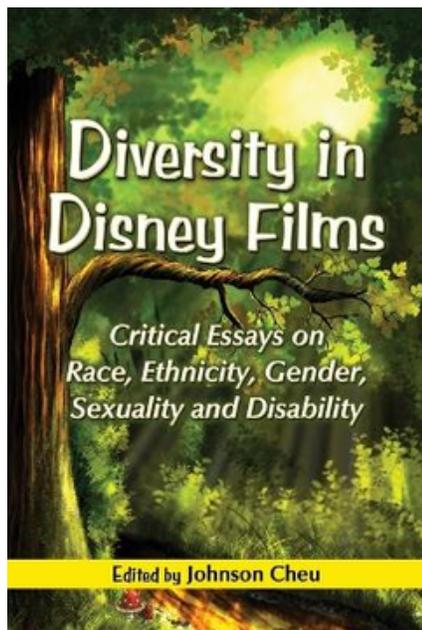
Keynote Speakers

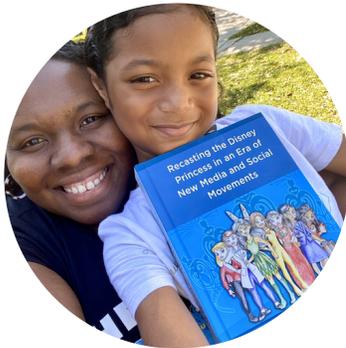


Johnson Cheu
Michigan State University

Johnson Cheu, PhD. is an Assistant Professor at Michigan State University, with expertise in media, cultural studies and disability studies. He has edited two books in relation to *Disney*, *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability* (2013), and *Tim Burton, Essays on the Films* (2015), both from McFarland.

Disney Publications



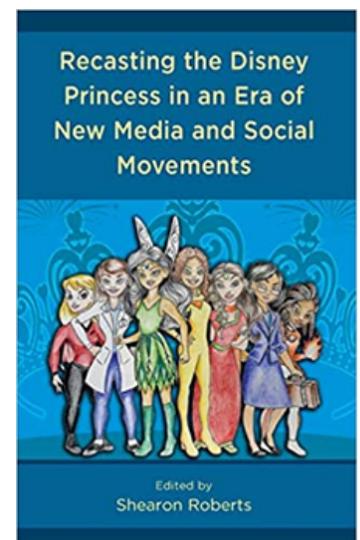


Shearon Roberts Xavier University of Louisiana

Shearon Roberts, Ph.D. is an associate professor of Mass Communication and an affiliate faculty member in African American and African Diaspora Studies at Xavier University of Louisiana, an historically Black university in New Orleans. She holds a PhD in Latin American and Caribbean studies from Tulane University's Roger Thayer Stone Center and a Masters in Mass Communication from Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication. She studies representations of race and gender in the media in the news, entertainment and depictions of the Global South, specifically the African Diaspora. She is the founder and director of the digital platform *My Nola, My Story*, which features one of the final interviews from culinary icon Leah Chase, who served as the real-life inspiration for Disney's *The Princess and the Frog*. Her current work continues to examine the most recent diverse stories for children and families from Disney post-2020. She is a former reporter.

Disney Publications

She is the editor of the 2020 volume *Recasting the Disney Princess in an Era of New Media and Social Movements*, the co-editor of HBO *Treme* and *Post-Katrina Catharsis: The Mediated Rebirth of New Orleans* and the co-author of *Oil and Water: Media Lessons from Hurricane Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon Disaster*. She is the author of two forthcoming books "Media Discourse in Haiti" and the role of Black women in advancing racial social justice movements through diplomacy.

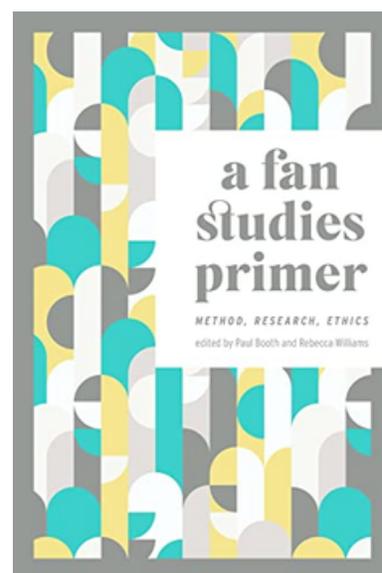
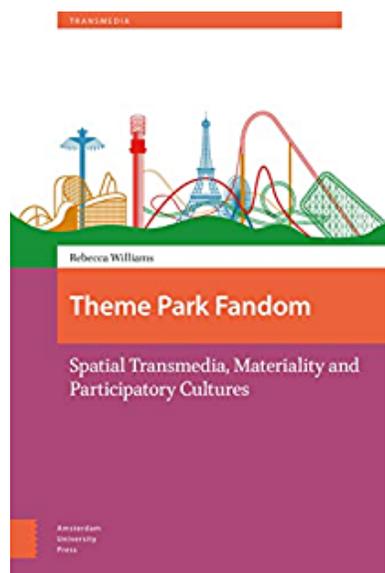




Rebecca Williams
University of South Wales

Williams is Associate Professor in Media Audiences and Participatory Cultures at the University of South Wales. Her books include *Theme Park Fandom* (2020, University of Amsterdam Press) and *Post-object Fandom: Television, Identity and Self-Narrative* (2015, Bloomsbury) *Everybody Hurts: Transitions, Endings, and Resurrections in Fandom* (2018) and *Fan Studies: Method, Research, Ethics* (2021, with Paul Booth) with University of Iowa Press. She has published widely on fan studies, media tourism and place, space and transmedia, and theme parks.

Disney Publications

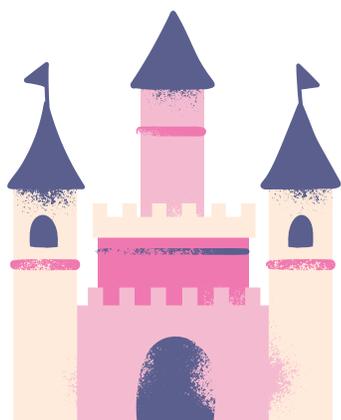


Schedule Overview

Monday June 26th, 2023

times listed in BST

- 12:30 - 14:00 [Disney Fans](#)
- 14:30 - 16:00 [Comics, Games, and Music](#)
- 16:30 - 18:00 [Disney and Nostalgia](#)
- 18:30 - 20:00 [Disney Film History](#)
- 20:30 - 22:00 [Parks 1](#)



Tuesday June 27th, 2023

times listed in BST

- 12:30 - 14:00 [Disney & Disability](#)
- 14:30 - 16:00 [Encanto and Turning Red](#)
- 16:30 - 18:00 [Rethinking Heroism](#)
- 18:30 - 19:30 [DisNet Social - Disney Bingo!](#)
- 19:30 - 20:00 [DisNet Updates: Happy 1st Birthday!](#)
- 20:30 - 22:00 ['Knowing Where You Are, By Knowing Where You've Been' - Reflecting on 100 Years of Disney Keynote Roundtable](#)

Wednesday June 28th, 2023

times listed in BST

- 12:30 - 14:00 [Parks 2](#)
- 14:30 - 16:00 [Queerness and Masculinity](#)
- 16:30 - 18:00 [Learning in the Shadow of the Mouse](#)
- 18:30 - 20:00 [Television and Disney+](#)
- 20:30 - 22:00 [Fashion and Form](#)



Schedule Overview

Thursday June 29th, 2023

times listed in BST

- 12:30 - 14:00 Disney Animation
- 14:30 - 16:00 Art and Culture
- 16:30 - 18:00 Disney Goes Serious
- 18:30 - 20:00 Writing Disney Histories
- 20:30 - 22:00 Disney Villains

Friday June 30th, 2023

times listed in BST

- 12:30 - 14:00 Animation, a History
- 14:30 - 16:00 Disney and Animals
- 16:30 - 18:00 Princesses
- 18:30 - 20:00 Business and Merchandising





DAY 1

Monday, 26 June 12:30 – 22:00

Disney Fans

12:30 – 14:00

Moderator: Charlotte Durham

Filipus Gilang Wicaksono

Independent Researcher

"All I Wanted is to Be Understood": Reaction Videos and Affirmation of Fan Identities in The Owl House

Lara López Millán

Universitat de Valencia

Approaching Marvel Fandom on Tumblr: From Fanfic to Incorrect Quotes

Rebecca Williams

University of South Wales

"Not great, Bob!" Disney Parks, Anti-Fandom & the Contested Authorship of the Celebrity CEO

Cariad Martin

University of Kent

Born Disney: Disney Fandom, Inheritance and Identity

Comics, Games, and Music

14:30 – 16:00

Moderator: Robyn Muir

Muyang Zhuang

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Mickey Mouse's Trip to Republican China: Pictorial Culture and Transnational Media-Mix

Peter Cullen Bryan

Clemson University

The Once And Future Duck: Fanzines as Archival Sites

Bobby Schweizer and Megan Condis

Texas Tech University

Deconstructing the Disney Happiest Day Board Game



Disney and Nostalgia

16:30 – 18:00

Moderator: Rebecca Rowe

Charlotte Durham

University of Leeds

'That Comfort-Nostalgia Thing': On Homecoming, Ontological (In)securities, and Disney+

Andrew Bumstead

University of Utah

Peter Pan and the Dangers of Immersion

Tracey Mollet

University of Leeds

"I guess I just don't feel like a natural Belle [...] and sometimes that feels complicated...": High School Musical The Musical The Series, Disney Fairy Tales, Nostalgia and Authenticity

Audrey Louckx

Université de Mons

Peter Pan Syndrome? Nostalgia and (Self-)Reflexive Metafiction in Disney+ Chip'n Dale: Rescue Rangers Remake

Disney Film History

18:30 – 20:00

Moderator: Heather Holian

Robert Neuman

Florida State University

From Robin Hood to Rob Roy: Walt Disney, Richard Todd, and the Live-Action British Films of the Early 1950s

Michael J. Meindl

Radford University/Virginia Tech

Too Close to the Sun: The Fall of Disney's Multiplane Camera

Filipa Antunes

University of East Anglia

Rethinking Ron Miller's Disney: The Watcher in the Woods (1980) and the Film Ratings System as a Pivotal Challenge in Disney History



Parks 1

20:30 – 22:00

Moderator: Emily Aguiló-Pérez

Linda Levitt

Stephen F. Austin State University

EPCOT's Colonialist Nostalgia: It's Still a Small World, After All

T.L. Taylor

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Staring at My Phone: Play and Presence in Batuu

Angela Pinholster

Arizona State University

Magical Moments: Gift Culture in US Disney Theme Parks

Francine N. Sutton

University of Central Florida

Returning to the Magic: A Brief Personal Narrative of Walt Disney World's Closure & Reopening During the Pandemic

DAY 2

Tuesday, 27 June 12:30 – 22:00

Disney and Disability

12:30 – 14:00

Moderator: Hannah Helm

Lizzie Wright

University of Leeds

Disability in Disney's MCU: Origins, Identities, Duties

Erin Pritchard

Liverpool Hope University

Representations of Dwarfism: How to Laugh with us, not at us

Selma Aitsaid

University of Leicester

Algerian Disabled Tweens' Identification with Disney



Disney and Disability, cont'd

12:30 – 14:00

Jess Gibson

Independent Researcher

'I'm Not a Glitch, Taffyta. I've Just Got Pixlexia': Exploring the Representation of Disability in Wreck-It Ralph and Frozen

Encanto and Turning Red

14:30 – 16:00

Moderator: Emily Aguiló-Pérez

Jennessa Hester

Texas Tech University

'No-body Like U: Race, Ethnicity, and the Reparative Pop Stars of Turning Red

Ayu Ratna Ningtyas

Independent Researcher

Home and Alienation in Disney's Encanto

Leticia Cortina Aracil

Independent Researcher

'Disenchantment and Discapacity': The Miracle of Vulnerability in Encanto

Emily Y. Hernández Giovannetti and Itza M. Hernández Giovannetti

University of Puerto Rico

An Exploration of Generational Trauma in Encanto and Turning Red

Rethinking Heroism

16:30 – 18:00

Moderator: Brittany Eldridge

Hannah Sophie Schiffner

Zeppelin University

Post-Heroism in Children's Films: Analyzing the Hero's Journey in Pixar Films

Ibtisam Ahmed

LGBT Foundation

"With Great (Individual) Power, There Must Also Come Great (Communal) Responsibility" – The Impact of Care in Spider-Man: No Way Home



Rethinking Heroism, cont'd

16:30 – 18:00

Zsofia Anna Toth

University of Szeged

"Choose Your Weapon: The Fighter Heroines of Disney/Pixar

Anna Shapland

Illinois State University

"I Come Back to the Water": Care Ethics and the Hero's Quest in Disney's Moana

DisNet Social – Disney Bingo!

18:30 – 19:30

Please RSVP by the end of Day 1!

RSVP

DisNet Updates: Happy 1st Birthday!

19:30 – 20:00

'Knowing Where You Are, By Knowing Where You've Been' – Reflecting on 100 Years of Disney (Keynote Roundtable)

20:30 – 22:00



DAY 3

Wednesday, 28 June 12:30 – 22:00

Parks 2

12:30 – 14:00

Moderator: Kristi Gatto

Alice D. Keane

Queens College, City University of New York

From Tomorrowland to Batuu: Tracing Cultural and Economic Narratives in the Disney Theme Parks

Ana Carolina Almeida Souza

Centro Universitario UNA

Geotransmedia: Space, Memory and Transmedia Branding in Magic Kingdom

Andrew Grunzke and Rebecca Grunzke

University of Guam

It's a Small World's Fair: Tokyo Disneyland and Japan's Foreign Country Theme Parks

Queerness and Masculinity

14:30 – 16:00

Moderator: Brittany Eldridge

Steven Dashiell

American University

Disney Boys to Men: Erotic Gaze and Masculine Gender Capital of Former Disney Boy Actors

Georgios Chatziavgerinos

University of Cambridge

"Model Home Open for Destruction": How Disney's Pinocchio Subverts Toxic Masculinity

Ferdinando Cocco

University of Cambridge

(Re)Animations of AIDS: Disney and the Economics of Queer Death

Jonas Lindkvist

Lund University

Parody and the Queer Potential



Learning in the Shadow of the Mouse

16:30 – 18:00

Moderator: Rebecca Rowe

Roundtable

featuring: Julye Bidmead (Chapman University), Alannah Rosenberg (Saddleback College), and Stephanie Takaragawa (Chapman University)

This presentation focuses on college-level pedagogy about and within Disneyland. The park provides a learning experience meaningful to students from every discipline: art, physics, urban planning, psychology, music, gender studies, business, communications, literature, geography, history, architecture, religion, sociology, economics, and more. Our schools' proximity and easy access to Disneyland, its neighborhood, and many other local primary sources provide rich opportunities for study. We showcase three different college courses about Disney and Disneyland topics, demonstrating the potential of Disney Studies to inspire and educate at the same time, as Walt Disney himself always sought to do. The courses are Disney: Gender, Race and Religion; The Anthropology of Space and Place: Disneyland; and the Disneyland version of Honors Culture, Science, and Society: The Postmodern World.

Television and Disney+

18:30 – 20:00

Moderator: Charlotte Durham

Samantha Tecson

Independent Researcher

From Cable to Streaming How Disney Treats Shonen Anime

Nicolò Villani

e-Campus University

Disney+: From the Archive to the Theme Park

Allison McClain Merrill

Independent Researcher/Journalist

Observing the Overwhelming Disney Channel Effect in Millennial Viewers



Fashion and Form

20:30 – 22:00

Moderator: Priscilla Hobbs

Marley Healy

Independent Researcher

“You Must be Bold and Daring!”: Exploring How Fashion is Interpreted and Presented Through the Lens of Animation in Disney Films

Rebecca Rowe and Robyn Muir

Texas A&M University-Commerce and University of Surrey

“Super Skinny” and “Insanely Small Waists”: Adapting Princesses from Animation to Live-Action

Abigail Fine

Queen Mary University of London

One Hundred (and One) Years of Disney’s Fairy Godmother: The Legacy of Disney’s Iterations of an Iconic Character

DAY 4

Thursday, 29 June 12:30 – 22:00

Disney Animation

12:30 – 14:00

Moderator: Priscilla Hobbs

Pat Brereton

Dublin City University

Greening Animation in Disney

Kyle Meikle

University of Baltimore

The Disney Cinematic Universe

Silvia Rusiñol-Romero and Antonio Moreno-Cárdenas

Universidad de Sevilla

The Art of Creating Plots: How to Use Episodic Plots to Shape Complex Horizontal Narrative in Gravity Falls



Disney Animation, cont'd

12:30 – 14:00

Giulia Cavazza

University Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

Investigating Magic in Disney Animated Canon

Art and Culture

14:30 – 16:00

Moderator: Heather Holian

Evan Nooe

University of South Carolina, Lancaster

Shopping in Florida's Past: The Real and Imagineered History of Disney Springs

John Wills

University of Kent

Disneyland, Cartoon Atoms and Doom Town in the 1950s

Heather Holian

University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Crafting a New Art History: Guthrie Courvoisier's Marketing of 'Walt Disney Originals' and the Quest for an American Art, 1938-48

Disney Goes Serious

16:30 – 18:00

Moderator: Emily Aguiló-Pérez

Kate Koppy

New Economic School

The Disneyfication of Death: How Recent Animated Films Create a New Model of Death and the Afterlife

Aneesh Barai

University of Sheffield

"Justice is Extreme, Anne!": Challenging Policing in Disney's The Owl House and Amphibia



Disney Goes Serious, cont'd

16:30 – 18:00

Alexander Pointon

University of Wolverhampton

Star vs The Forces of Gaslighting

Writing Disney Histories

18:30 – 20:00

Moderator: Heather Holian

Roundtable

featuring: Peter C. Kunze (Tulane University), Sabrina Mittermeier (University of Kassel), Heather Holian (University of North Carolina, Greensboro), Cindy Mediavilla (University of California, Los Angeles), Jake S. Friedman (New York University), and Susan Ohmer (University of Notre Dame)

Studying Hollywood can be hard, especially when it entails primary research. The Walt Disney Company, in particular, can pose particular challenges, not only because of the company's protection of its intellectual property and archival resources, but also because of its financial stakes in producing corporate histories (see Wasko 2020; Thompson 2022). This roundtable presentation brings together historians working on various dimensions of Disney—cultural, industrial, social—to consider how we do Disney history today. In addition to working within and around the company archives in Burbank, we will consider a range of methods, including oral histories and interviews, (auto)ethnography, discourse analysis, and textual analysis. We will also discuss writing for general and academic audiences as well as placing your work in a range of venues. The hope is to both inspire future Disney histories and collaborations, but to reflect on the very process of writing history.

Disney Villains

20:30 – 22:00

Moderator: Hannah Helm

Amanda Rutherford

Auckland University of Technology

The 'Scairy Tales' of Once Upon a Time



Disney Villains, cont'd

20:30 – 22:00

Elizabeth Zak

University of Iowa

Evaluating the Disinformation of the Animated Disney Universe

Silvia E. Storti

Kingston University London

The Shape of Villainy: Othering in Disney as Index of Cultural Change

Brittany Eldridge

University College London

Disney's Villains as Victims: Vilifying the 'Other' Mother in Princess Film

DAY 5

Friday, 30 June 12:30 – 20:00

Animation, a History

12:30 – 14:00

Moderator: Kristi Gatto

Sanskriti

Indian Institute of Technology

What's Cooking and Whos' Cooking?: Locating the Politics of Ethnic Food in Select Disney and Pixar Cinema

Amy Davis

University of Hull

Donald Gets Drafted: Donald Duck and US National Identity During WWII

Emma Bálint

University of Szeged

The Monster Within: Tim Burton at the Walt Disney Studios



Disney and Animals

14:30 – 16:00

Moderator: Rebecca Rowe

Antares Leask

Arlington Public Schools / Northern Virginia Community College

"There Is No Finer Cat than I Am": Disney's Asian Cat Problem

Karli Brittz

University of Pretoria

'A Ruff Ride': Critically Exploring Dogs as Companion Species in Disney Theme Parks

Hannah Palsa

Kansas State University

Pluto Joins Up: Pluto, Disney, and the War Dog Cartoons of Walt Disney Studios

Princesses

16:30 – 18:00

Moderator: Robyn Muir

Hannah Helm

University of Salford

Teaching Disney through Creative Outreach Workshops: A Critical Reflection

Dori Koehler

Southern New Hampshire University

Returning The Heart To Te Fiti: Moana's Mythic Message

Nichol Brown

Illinois State University

Tiny Feet and a Tinier Waist: The Dangers of Identification in Disney's Live-Action Cinderella

Polina Rybina

Lomonosov Moscow State University

Madness as Metaphor in Linda Woolverton's Adaptations for Walt Disney Pictures



Business and Merchandising

18:30 – 20:00

Moderator: Priscilla Hobbs

Priscilla Hobbs

Southern New Hampshire University

Mickey on Main Street: Consuming the Disney Brand

Leigh H. Edwards

Florida State University

Star Texts in The Mandalorian: Disney+ and Branded Authenticity

Jamie Clarke

Solent University

The War for the Disney Succession: Management Strategy and Ratatouille (2007)

Jason Scott

Leeds Trinity University

Disney+ as a Platform for Franchise Expansion



Presenter Bios & Abstracts

DAY 1

Monday, 26 June

Disney Fans

12:30 – 14:00

Filipus Gilang Wicaksono (Independent Researcher)

“All I Wanted is to Be Understood”: Reaction Videos and Affirmation of Fan Identities in The Owl House

This research paper delves into the examination of reaction videos of the Disney Channel series The Owl House to understand how it affirms the identities of its adult fans. The show represents a significant departure from traditional Disney media by featuring the company's first bisexual main character and same-sex couple in lead roles, making it a groundbreaking representation of the LGBTQIA+ community. Reaction videos provide a unique insight into the audience by capturing viewers' initial reactions to the show in a comfortable and natural setting, allowing scholars to see reception in its most “honest” and “raw” form. Through the use of content analysis, the paper investigates how fans respond to the show's diverse cast of characters and narratives. Four creators who identify as both queer and fans of Disney content – Not Your Average Fangirl, IAMZamber, Morgan Terry, and TheThirdBill – were selected for analysis. I analyzed reactions to key episodes in which the show introduced and explored queer characters and their narratives. The videos reveal the creators' initial surprise, disbelief, and excitement as they watch the show normalize and explicitly showcase queer characters, which they did not expect from Disney. Notably, the creators note that they are pleased to be able to connect with the characters through their shared identities. Despite the positive representation being seen as a step in the right direction, the show's cancellation left the creators with the impression that the company still has further to go in terms of inclusivity and representation.

I am an aspiring scholar from Indonesia and a recent master's graduate of Children's Literature, Media, and Culture from the University of Glasgow and Aarhus University. My research interest is in audience and fan study, particularly on how fans navigate their identity. Disney was a major part of my childhood. I grew up as a massive fan of Donald Duck and Uncle Scrooge (and I still am) and Star Wars was my first foray into participatory culture. I am currently looking to pursue a PhD in audience and fan study.



Lara López Millán (Universitat de València)

Approaching Marvel Fandom on Tumblr: From Fanfic to Incorrect Quotes

Among the numerous fandoms that exist today, the Marvel Cinematic Universe is known to have encouraged the consolidation of a fan culture with frequent activity in digital communities. The last few decades have shown a nascent increase in the participation of fandom communities through the Tumblr platform. Known for its "always-on" participatory role and organisational folksonomy, this website facilitates the entry into diverse groups with common interests thanks to a tagging system. In addition, its interface allows users to explore multiple possibilities for creating content. It is worth noting that fan groups of the Marvel franchise, one of the biggest audiovisual phenomena in the entertainment industry, are among the most notable on this microblogging website. In this study we will conduct a review through the prevalent practices performed by members of the Marvel fandom on Tumblr, among which fanfics and incorrect phrases stand out. We will also observe the usual tropes frequently used to develop fictional texts, highlighting the high narrative sexual content that is projected, as well as the use of GIFs as a resource to support the texts. Thanks to this analysis, we will be able to check which is the most used form of interaction between users and their main motivations. To conclude, we will highlight the participants' ability to construct stories in order to produce new meanings, both through the characters and the canon.

Lara López Millán is a PhD student at the Universitat de València. She studied a degree in Mass Media and a master's degree specialising in Art History and Visual Culture. Throughout her career she has participated in several international conferences, at universities such as Cambridge, and has published in journals on fandom. Her current research focuses on fandom theory, social networks and visual culture. In addition, she is also a member of the committee of Cuadernos de Aleph, a journal for young researchers in Hispanic culture that promotes the exchange of knowledge.

Rebecca Williams (University of South Wales)

"Not great, Bob!" Disney Parks, Anti-Fandom & the Contested Authorship of the Celebrity CEO

Many fans of the Disney theme parks engage in discussion about the history, current state, and future of these sites (Williams 2020). Such fans are keenly aware of those who are responsible for them, primarily demonstrating interest in the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Disney Company and the Chairman of Parks, Experiences and Products. In 2020 when long-term CEO Bob Iger stood down as Company CEO, he was replaced by Bob Chapek who had previously been unpopular with fans as Chairman of Parks. Despite the appointment of his own replacement, Josh D'Amaro, ongoing issues within the Parks (e.g., price increases, poor maintenance, a lack of new attractions, and the removal of free perks such as hotel parking) were blamed solely on Chapek. In turn, the



sarcastic hashtag #notgreatBob (a line from a scene in the TV series *Mad Men* which was turned into a meme) was often utilised on social media to blame Chapek for everything negative about the Parks. When Chapek was removed in November 2023, and replaced by the returning Bob Iger, fans were elated, welcoming back the 'good' CEO, and celebrating the loss of Chapek.

This paper explores the centrality of the Disney CEO, and the Head of Parks, to Disney fans and considers their function as an 'author' of the Parks, even though these are designed, built, and managed by a range of Disney employees. Considering Iger and Chapek as celebrity CEOs (Littler 2007), the paper considers how Parks fans have focused their anti-fandom (Gray 2003) on Chapek as the 'bad object' (Lewis 1992) of their fandom. Highlighting his overt focus on profit and corporate synergy, his lack of understanding and respect for the Parks' history, and his derision towards those who visit these places, Parks fans demonstrate their own values and priorities via a range of anti-fan discourses.

Dr. Rebecca Williams is Associate Professor in Media Audiences and Participatory Cultures at the University of South Wales and currently a co-editor of *Popular Communication*. Her books include *Theme Park Fandom* (2020, University of Amsterdam Press), *Post-object Fandom: Television, Identity and Self-Narrative* (2015, Bloomsbury), *Torchwood Declassified* (2013, I.B. Tauris), and *Everybody Hurts: Transitions, Endings, and Resurrections in Fandom* (2018) and *A Fan Studies Primer: Methods, Research, Ethics* (2022) with University of Iowa Press.

Cariad Martin (University of Kent)

Born Disney: Disney Fandom, Inheritance and Identity

Since the brand's inception in 1923, the Disney fan community has grown into one of the most passionate and far-reaching fandoms with a profound attachment to the brand's projected ideals of American nostalgia, family values and childlike joy.

While a significant body of work exists on the neo-tribal qualities of contemporary brand communities, the ways in which brand fan culture is passed from generation to generation has yet to be explored. This paper will look specifically at the notion of whether people can be 'born' fans. Most fan studies and consumer culture scholars argue that fandom is acquired, a conscious choice made by an individual. But what happens when you are born into a community where Disney is central to familial rituals, traditions, and identity? To what extent is participation 'voluntary' when your nursery has been decorated with Mickey Mouse before you've even left the womb, or when your first visit to Disneyland is a more celebrated milestone than your first steps or first words?

This paper will argue that, due to the influence of a variety of factors from national identity to familial rituals, fandom can form an essential part of our identity from birth, and our perception of our place



within our family and wider community, and therefore is not, in the words of Harrington and Bielby, easily 'abandoned at any point' (Harrington and Bielby 2010).

Cariad Martin is a PhD researcher at the University of Kent. She is currently working on her thesis: *Fan or Mouse: How Disney fandom became generational cultural legacy, 1923 – present*. This multidisciplinary project looks at one hundred years of Disney fan culture in the USA and beyond to examine how subcultural capital and fan attachment is passed like an heirloom through families and more widely through American history and national identity.

Cariad completed her Masters in Brands, Communication and Culture at Goldsmiths University. Prior to postgraduate research, she worked in television and as a freelance brand strategist.

Comics, Games, and Music

14:30 – 16:00

Muyang Zhuang (The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology)

Mickey Mouse's Trip to Republican China: Pictorial Culture and Transnational Media-Mix

During the Republican era (1912–1949), Mickey Mouse and many other Disney cartoon characters became probably the most well-received film stars in the country. Even the influential and respected Chinese intellectual Lu Xun (1881–1936) was attracted by Disney animation. At that time, the prosperous metropolis of Shanghai was embracing the kaleidoscopic pictorial culture. With numerous pictorial magazines occupying the cultural production, Mickey Mouse, like other renowned film stars, appeared frequently in news reports, cartoons, and comic books. While most of the current scholarship tends to analyze Disney's impact on Chinese screen culture, this paper will look at the localized appropriations of Disney characters in printed materials. In addition to translating original Disney comic books from English, Chinese publishers tried their utmost to incorporate Disney cartoon figures in their advertisements. Cartoonish drawings of various Disney characters were printed in popular pictorial magazines. Published as manhua (Chinese cartoons), these images not only extended Disney's influence from screen to page, but also renewed the cartoon culture in Republican China that cartoons could be more than political caricatures. Some Chinese comic authors even created a serial cartoon titled "Mickey Mouse's Trip to Shanghai" (Milaoshu you Shanghai), which became a hit in Republican Shanghai. Inspired by Marc Steinberg's analysis of the media convergence in Japanese pop culture, I argue that Mickey Mouse and Disney's popularity in Republican China represented a form of "transnational media-mix." Adopting methodologies of cultural history and media-mix studies, I will showcase how Disney cartoon characters occupied pictorials in Republican China. I will also analyze the localized Mickey Mouse stories to demonstrate how the transnational media-mix functioned in the international circuits of pop culture in the early twentieth century. In doing so, this research will refresh our understanding of Disney's global impact in its early days.



Muyang Zhuang is a PhD candidate in the Division of Humanities at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. His research interests include cultural and art history in modern China, film studies, and visual culture in East Asia, with special focuses on animation and cartoon. He is writing his dissertation on the historical interplays between cartoons/manhua and animation in China. His publications on animation history and theories can be found in *Animation studies 2.0*, *Association for Chinese Animation Studies*, *Journal of Beijing Film Academy*, and *Film Arts (Dianying yishu)*.

Peter Cullen Bryan (Clemson University)

The Once And Future Duck: Fanzines as Archival Sites

Fanzines serve as archival sites, illustrating both the moods and particularities of the given groups, while also functioning as an organizing force among the fan community. For fans of Donald Duck comics, these became spaces to buy and sell specific issues, to share photocopied reprints, and to catalogue and account for the specific stories (in the case of Donald Duck, and many other comics focused toward younger audiences, reprints were often inserted into the normal numbering scheme). In many cases, fanzines were the only spaces where reprints were available, albeit often as clips and fragments of questionable legality and quality.

This paper serves as a case study of two long-running Disney-focused fanzines: *The Duckburg Times* and *The Barks Collector*, each emphasizing slightly different audiences, and their function in maintaining an audience for the comics in the period when the comics were out of print. I examine the ways in which fans communicated with one another, ranging from trading back issues to the effort at cataloguing the complete works of Carl Barks to grey market sales of photocopied classics. These fanzines represent a crucial linkage in the preinternet development of this small and scattered fan community, and a useful tool to better understand the development and growth of the early fandom.

Dr. Peter Cullen Bryan is a Lecturer of English at Clemson University, where he teaches comics as literature and science fiction as futurism. His first book, exploring the transcultural adaptations of Carl Barks's Duck Comics, was recently published, though the work continues with explorations the intersections of creative activism and fan identities in adaptational and transnational spaces. His current projects include an in-depth exploration on the world of mid-century fanzines, and a special issue on the 100th anniversary of Disney for the *Journal of American Culture*. He hopes to one day trace the journeys of Scrooge McDuck himself, and see how reality stacks up to the legend.



Bobby Schweizer (Texas Tech University) and Megan Condis (Texas Tech University)

Deconstructing the Disney Happiest Day Board Game

Disney fans have likely noticed the recent influx of board games being created for the parks and attractions. This is the most recent wave of cross-promotion campaign that dates back all the way to the opening of Disneyland (1955). In particular, this presentation will focus on the Disney Happiest Day Game from 2022. The experience playing a board game emerges through what Paul Booth identifies as the “interactive potentiality” of how “board games emphasize possibilities rather than procedures at play” (Booth 2021). These possibilities are expressed not only through the rules and themes that define what goes into the game box, but they “harness the affective power of fandom to help generate player interaction” (Booth 2015) that rewards expertise.

Theme park board games are both paratextual and metatextual. As paratexts, they “ask players to perform a version of a media text” (Booth 2015) in the form of adaptations of theme and indexical reference (Condis 2014; Brown and Waterhouse-Watson 2016) and methods of transmedia storytelling familiar to the Walt Disney Company (Freeman 2017). As metatexts that are “medial representations of theme parks or parts there of that are produced by the parks themselves” (Freitag 2019) intended to communicate to the parkgoing audience, these games are promotional adver-games (Condis 2021) and interpretations of the theme park put agency at the core of the experience (Schweizer 2016). In order to read the values (Flanagan and Nissenbaum 2014) inscribed into the Happiest Day Game, my colleague and I will use our backgrounds as game design educators to examine its rhetoric of parkgoing while also critiquing it using alternative rule sets that we have created that more accurately represent a day at the Disney theme parks. Bobby Schweizer, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in Creative Media Industries in the College of Media & Communication at Texas Tech University. As a games scholar and designer interested in themed space and expressive environments, he researches interaction design, story, and play in theme parks. At Texas Tech, Dr. Schweizer teaches never-before-game-makers how to express themselves with computational tools.

Megan Condis is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Texas Tech University. Her book, *Gaming Masculinity: Trolls, Fake Geeks, and the Gendered Battle for Online Culture*, was published by the University of Iowa Press in 2018.



Disney and Nostalgia

16:30 – 18:00

Charlotte Durham (University of Leeds)

That Comfort-Nostalgia Thing¹: On Homecoming, Ontological (In)securities, and Disney+

Disney has always been there for me. It's a familiar story: a life set against a series of returns and repetitions of favourite Disney films and television series, emerging not just as a way of managing crisis and transition, but as one which speaks to the mundanity of watching practices embedded in quotidian rhythms of everyday life (Holdsworth, 2021). These routine and repetitive experiences offer a way to make sense of the world (Felski, 2000), alluding to a kind of ontological security (Giddens, 1991) through which they provide us with the ability to comfort, and protect against the contingencies of life itself.

This paper is an exploration of comfort within the context of lives lived alongside 100 years of Disney's film and television. These ideas draw from a series of 10 watching sessions with friends, which is to be interpreted alongside my own autobiographical and autoethnographic reflections. My focus on Disney+ here, then, is to elucidate how the launch of the platform and turn away from Disney's prior strategy of limited releases of content otherwise kept inside the 'Disney Vault' encourages a kind of 'comfort-nostalgia' watching that can be understood as a return to the safety of an imagined home. Therefore, by thinking of Disney+ as a virtual space (Grosz, 2001) encountered at the interface of human and technology (Suchman, 2009), I am calling into question the unconscious and unquestioned nature of our relationship to Disney+. For me, valuing Disney+ and granting status to these affective textures of watching in this way is both politically and culturally significant: it renders an ephemeral, deeply personal, and everyday lived experience visible.

Charlotte Durham is a PhD student based in the School of Media and Communication at the University of Leeds, UK. Her current research is particularly interested in the entanglements of affect, data, and space within Disney's hyper-mediated environment. Her wider research interests involve feminism, research methods, datafication and the datalogical, embodiment and everyday life, and biopolitics.

Andrew Bumstead (University of Utah)

Peter Pan and the Dangers of Immersion

Despite the predominant view of J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan as an escapist work of children's fiction, nearly all of Barrie's works—The Little White Bird (1902), The Boy Castaways of Black Lake Island (1901), the 1904 play, the novel Peter and Wendy (1911), and the published play in 1928—resist the seductive pull of Romantic escapism through metafictional narrative techniques, intrusive narrators, and the artificiality of each medium. For Barrie, the dangerous potentiality that Neverland poses is that of complete immersion, not only for Peter but for the reader. Unlike other fictional children who eventually return



to the primary world, Peter is so completely immersed in the dream-world of Neverland that he has lost himself in it, and like Don Quixote, he cannot distinguish between reality and fantasy. Peter's deep immersion into childhood play is meant to be pitied, not admired or idealized. Two Disney adaptations in the 1950s, on the other hand, the animated Peter Pan (1953) and the Disneyland dark ride Peter Pan Flight (1955), virtually erase the storyteller, embrace the immersive qualities of film and theme park attractions, and reimagine Neverland as an escape from the real world. Drawing from Marie-Laure Ryan's and Mark J.P. Wolf's theories of imaginary worlds and immersion, I argue that while Barrie's self-absorbed and ultimately tragic Peter Pan figure warns of the dangers of complete immersion into an imaginary childhood space, Disney's Peter Pan adaptations saturate their audiences in a proliferation of immersive media and in order to pull them into a more absorbing version of Barrie's Neverland.

Andrew Bumstead is a PhD candidate in Literary and Cultural Studies at the University of Utah. His research focuses on the intersections of nineteenth-century children's literature, adaptation, and media studies. His work has been published in *Texas Studies of Literature and Language* and *Peer Review*. He is currently working on his dissertation, titled "Adapting Childhood: Disney's Mid-Century Adaptations of Golden Age Children's Literature," which will be completed in Summer 2023. Andrew was recently awarded a grant to travel to Disneyland for his dissertation research. Andrew is a massive Disney fan and is excited to be able to merge his favorite fandom with his academic research.

Tracey Mollet (University of Leeds)

"I guess I just don't feel like a natural Belle [...] and sometimes that feels complicated...": High School Musical The Musical The Series, Disney Fairy Tales, Nostalgia and Authenticity

At first glance, the Disney Plus coming of age musical docu-drama, *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series* (2019-present) appears to be a simple nostalgic reboot of the enormously successful Disney Channel film franchise *High School Musical* (2005-2008) (Potter 2011). "Authentic" East High students, Ricky and Nini are cast in the school production as leads Troy and Gabriella and magically fall in love again as the show's rehearsals get underway. Disney's trend towards reboots has been well documented in recent years (Lizardi 2017) with many scholars commenting on the ways in which Disney commodifies the nostalgia of its original millennial audience, but also takes the opportunity to revise the most problematic aspects of its most well-loved narratives, specifically their racial homogeneity, their heteronormativity, and their use of gender stereotypes (Craven 2017; Benson 2020; Roberts 2020; Mollet 2020). This certainly rings true for the show, which has been praised for its diversity and inclusion of queer teen narratives (Russo 2021).

However, the show's scope expands for its second and third series, facilitating an explicit commentary on the limitations of Disney fairy tale narratives as the students put on musical performances of *Beauty and the Beast* and *Frozen*. These later series surface a discomfort with the "typical" Disney princess



character as the girls cast as Belle and Elsa struggle to engage with the expectations attached to the leading roles. The show also exposes a deeper complexity within its depiction of fairy tale characters – a general trend of the live action Disney fairy tale begun in *Enchanted* (2007) and crystallised in the ABC series *Once Upon a Time* (Cecire 2012; Taber 2013). New girl Gina is cast as a “villain” who wishes to steal the limelight from “authentic” princess Nini in the first season, but later becomes a sensitive, strong, and kind character when cast as Anna in the show’s third season. The second series sees “actual real life Disney princess”, Lily, turn spy for East High’s competitors, North High and become the villain of the narrative. Moreover, HSMTMTS’ third season allows for a critique of the ‘happily ever after’ narrative within the Walt Disney Company’s promotional discourse. In the show, Disney Plus commissions a documentary on the making of *Frozen*, but one of its producers turns “villain” when editing footage for the production, attempting to stir trouble amongst the teens to prevent their respective happily ever afters. Thus, on a number of carefully constructed levels, this deceptively simple series allows for a multi-faceted critique over the presentation of the Disney fairy tale, both from within and from without.

Dr Tracey Mollet is an Associate Professor in Media and Communication at the University of Leeds, UK. She is the author of *Cartoons in Hard Times: The Animated Shorts of Disney and Warner Brothers in Depression and War* (2017) and *A Cultural History of the Disney Fairy Tale: Once Upon an American Dream* (2020). She has published widely on American popular culture, nostalgia and Disney fairy tale narratives.

Audrey Louckx (Université de Mons)

Peter Pan Syndrome? Nostalgia and (Self-)Reflexive Metafiction in Disney+ *Chip’n Dale: Rescue Rangers* Remake

“Peter Pan syndrome” (Kiley, 1983) in pop-psychology denotes men who refuse adult responsibilities, and therefore try to recapture their youth. This concept finds echoes in contemporary cultural trends. Scholars (Bonhomme 2018, Gilbert 2019, Loock 2020, Rosewarne 2020, Rowe 2022) have flagged nostalgia, this longing sentiment for an idealized and unattainable past, as a major emotional and commercial motivation for contemporary remakes. By building on technological innovation, the intention is to revive a title as a form of homage and home-coming experience. Disney Studios have helped establish this trend with recent live-action adaptations of their animated classics. Yet, Disney+ *Chip’n Dale Rescue Rangers* (2022) movie remake of the 1980s Disney Afternoon TV series goes further than its predecessors as it openly seeks to question remaking practices by engaging in selfreflexive metafictional discourse. Sandeau (2018) established that this can assume three perspectives: a critical, a cynical and/or a nostalgic one. This presentation will show that *Rescue Rangers* adopts all three. The plot openly criticizes remaking practices as it likens the production of



boot-legged remakes to criminal activity, placing Peter Pan (a.k.a. Sweet Pete) at the head of its mafia. The main character, CGI-surgery enhanced Dale, embodies cynicism as the TV has-been's only hope is to star in a reboot. Other characters undergo changes that contribute to creating this sarcastic yet assumed Roger-Rabbit-like world in which Pan has become middle-aged riffraff and once-silent Zipper has turned into a deepvoiced suburban parent. This humorous satire is nonetheless sweetened by a nostalgic aesthetic that does homage to the history of animation techniques ranging from 1980s 2D to state-of-the-art 3D in live-action backgrounds. As stated by director Akiva Schaffer, the movie is "a love letter to animation" that aimed to "dump [those chipmunks] back into the culture [for] a good reason" (Mallory, 2022, p.29).

Audrey Louckx is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Translation and Interpreting at the University of Mons in Belgium. She obtained her Ph.D. in contemporary American Literature in 2013. Her research initially focused on testimonial literature in contemporary American culture and has now evolved to focus on adaptation and intermediality in contemporary pop culture. She published a book chapter on the movie adaptation of *The Freedom Writer's Diary* and presented papers on Hayao Miyazaki's adaptation strategies of European literary sources.

Disney Film History

18:30 – 20:00

Robert Neuman (Florida State University)

From Robin Hood to Rob Roy: Walt Disney, Richard Todd, and the Live-Action British Films of the Early 1950s

In 1949 Walt Disney joined with RKO Radio Pictures to form a production company in London for the purpose of using profits frozen in Britain after the war. This resulted in four films representing Disney's first foray into live-action features lacking animated sequences. All were based on British history and legend: *Treasure Island* (1950), *The Story of Robin Hood* (1952), *The Sword and the Rose* (1953), and *Rob Roy, the Highland Rogue* (1953). Whereas I have discussed *Treasure Island* in a separate essay, this paper focuses on the subsequent three films, all of which featured British actor Richard Todd in the lead role. Few scholars have discussed these films, notably Noel Brown in his article on their underlying American content. My analysis draws from the abundant documentation in the contemporary British press of these movies' production, promotion, and critical reception. In an era when Fleet Street was the national center for journalism, eighteen daily and weekly London newspapers, supplemented by an array of trade and fan magazines, covered the entertainment industry. These previously unexamined sources provide insight into several aspects of the Disney Studio's creative process: the challenge of adapting literary sources; the assembling of the all-British casts; and the use of local resources in shooting the movies at Denham Film Studios and on location. Walt Disney was beloved by British audiences, and his efforts to oversee production, both from afar in Burbank and on site, is notable.



Critics approached the films with caution, but the reviews, garnished with typical British urbanity and wit, make for engaging reading.

Robert Neuman is professor of art history at Florida State University. He is the author of the new monograph *From Hollywood to Disneyland: Walt Disney's Dream Park and the Influence of American Movies* (McFarland, 2022). He has published several essays on Disney topics in academic journals and anthologies, and edited a collection of Disney essays in the journal *Visual Resources*.

Michael J. Meindl (Radford University/Virginia Tech)

Too Close to the Sun: The Fall of Disney's Multiplane Camera

In 1938, Disney released two works that featured its new multiplane camera setup: *The Old Mill*, a short, and the feature-length *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. This technology allowed the company to create dazzling three-dimensional effects, showcased in such sequences as *Snow White's* terrifying run through a dark forest. The device, which won the company a special technical Academy Award, was heavily utilized in the late 1930s and the 1940s, and it would continue to be used off and on until the late 1980s when digital technologies replaced the need for the multiplane camera. However, its treatment in a "making-of" sequence for an early Disney film mirrors the lack of scholarly, historical analysis of the device. The filmmakers and scholars fail to reveal how the multiplane camera goes beyond being a black box that helps create three-dimensional effects (i.e., acting as an "aesthetic machine"). The device, instead, represents a core element in a larger network.

This presentation focuses on the end of the multiplane camera's heyday (looking primarily at the early 1940s into WWII). Using a variety of primary and secondary documents to help show the various connections, translations, and negotiations involved in the use of the multiplane camera, I argue that the multiplane camera became an unwieldy element in the Walt Disney Studios' technological and aesthetic philosophies. The new labor structures that were created and the labor and spatial demands of various iterations of the multiplane camera itself revealed the limits of this once championed device. This research bridges traditional media studies with science and technology studies (STS) and the history of technology to create a deeper understanding of animation technologies that goes beyond seeing devices, such as the multiplane camera, as a black box or an "aesthetic machine."

Michael J. Meindl is an Associate Professor of Media Production and Director of Cinema and Screen Studies at Radford University. He has an MFA in Dramatic Media from the University of Georgia, and he is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Dept. of Science, Technology, and Society at Virginia Tech. He has presented at numerous regional, national, and international conferences. He has an essay entitled "You're Gonna Need a Bigger Boom: *Jaws*, *MythBusters*, Science, and the Legacy of the Blockbuster" that will appear in an edited collection focused on *Jaws*. He also co-authored a piece called "Mojo Rising: Critiquing Mass Media through Animation and Comics" that will appear in an edited collection centered on *X-Men: The Animated Series*.



Filipa Antunes (University of East Anglia)

Rethinking Ron Miller's Disney: *The Watcher in the Woods* (1980) and the Film Ratings System as a Pivotal Challenge in Disney History

The period of Ron Miller's leadership tends to be remembered as a lull in Disney history, a mostly uninteresting period between Walt Disney and Michael Eisner. There is little written on Miller or the films of this period, with a general consensus that this was a time of decline, poor leadership, and creative struggle. This paper argues that Miller's Disney should be revisited, specifically contending that the period must be understood in light of contextual factors so far ignored, namely the introduction of the film ratings system in 1968. The paper makes its case through an analysis of the production of Disney's first PG-rated film, *The Watcher in the Woods* (1980), understood by its producers as "our Exorcist" but ultimately received poorly by audiences and critics. As the paper demonstrates, the move to horror with *Watcher* was an attempt to reposition Disney as a mainstream family brand in a market newly segmented by film classification. By drawing on the horror genre, Miller hoped to escape the niche of the G rating, which had become very narrowly associated with young children and therefore unprofitable, and reengage a broad family audience under the PG classification, where the vast majority of blockbusters were placed. Rather than an odd misfire or another example of the stagnation of the studio, *Watcher in the Woods* is an example of the complexities of managing Disney's legacy during the 1970s and early 1980s, since that legacy was built under the Production Code for a market that no longer existed under the film ratings system.

Dr Filipa Antunes is lecturer in humanities at the University of East Anglia (UK), where she teaches and researches media and popular culture. Her focus is horror and childhood, with a special interest in media regulation. Her monograph, *Children Beware! Childhood, Horror, and the PG-13 Rating* (McFarland, 2020), identifies a children's horror trend in pop culture (1980-1997) and explores its links to changes in American attitudes towards horror and childhood, as well as dramatic industrial transformation during the period. Filipa's work has also been published in *Horror Studies*, the *Journal of Children and Media*, and the *Journal of Film and Video*.

Parks 1

20:30 – 22:00

Linda Levitt (Stephen F. Austin State University)

EPCOT's Colonialist Nostalgia: It's Still a Small World, After All

Visitors to EPCOT's opening day in 1982 were officially greeted by then-Disney chairman Card Walker. An excerpt from his speech was enshrined on a plaque at the park entrance: "Epcot is inspired by Walt Disney's creative vision. Here, human achievements are celebrated through imagination, wonders of enterprise and concepts of a future that promises new and exciting benefits for all." Walker's speech implicitly upholds Disney's "creative vision" through the capitalist commodity culture at the heart of the corporate empire, especially with regard to "wonders of enterprise and concepts of a future."



This project argues that the Disneyfication of global cultures is fundamental to the EPCOT vision, misrepresenting the reality of everyday life in eleven nations included in the original World Showcase. In the decades since EPCOT's grand opening, the park has been through many changes but the idealized depiction of world cultures remains static.

EPCOT continues to embrace a nostalgic view of its featured nations, idealizing them through the lens of American exceptionalism that shrinks global culture to a neatly packaged and readily commodified Disney offering. Visitors—and especially children—who expect an opportunity to learn about people in other parts of the world may not realize that EPCOT is not a realistic showcase of the rest of the world but rather a real-life incarnation of *It's a Small World*, which the Disney Parks official blog describes as a “whimsical boat ride past a jubilant chorus of children from around the globe.”

Linda Levitt teaches communication and media studies at Stephen F. Austin State University. Her primary research sits at the intersection of memory studies and media, considering media's role in shaping understandings of the past. She has published essays in *Participations*, *Radical History Review*, and *Velvet Light Trap*, along with book chapters in edited academic collections. Levitt's book, *Culture, Celebrity, and the Cemetery: Hollywood Forever*, was published by Routledge in 2018.

T.L. Taylor (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Staring at My Phone: Play and Presence in Batuu

Theme parks have long been spaces of play, from affect and attitude to embodied practices and social interaction. There has been some fascinating initial work exploring the role of play, and particularly games, within theme parks versus, for example, looking at how Disney IP has been utilized in the production of digital games (see, for example, Moulton 2022, Pearce 2007, Raffe et. al. 2015, Raz 2002, Schell & Schochet 2001). Much more can be done to bring game studies into conversation with theme park studies and this talk will pick up that thread and seek extend it. In particular, I will explore the ways gaming has come to be situated as a socio-technical assemblage in the theme park. Using the case study of *Star Wars Galaxies Edge* at Disney World (for more on this space see Geraghty 2022 and Williams 2019), this piece explores not only how play and games are being constructed by Disney within the park, but offers empirical qualitative data from my ongoing research project on the subject. The talk will explore not only the ways the company has produced both a physical and digital gaming space (mediated through the Play Disney app) but how players are taking up, and navigating often in complex and sometimes fraught ways, that invitation.

T.L. Taylor is Professor of Comparative Media Studies at MIT and Director of the MIT GameLab. She is a qualitative sociologist who focuses on the interrelations between culture and technology in online and leisure environments. She is the author of a number of books focused on gaming, most recently *Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming* (Princeton, 2018).



Angela Pinholster (PhD Candidate, Arizona State University)

Magical Moments: Gift Culture in US Disney Theme Parks

Through a phenomenological approach, this roundtable discussion aims to investigate how acts of gifting within the Disney theme parks use material culture as forms of both care and gratitude. While scholars such as Henry Giroux and Alan Bryman have focused on criticizing the capitalist consumption aspects of the Disney brand, I explore how material culture can subvert capitalism by incorporating performances of service that add value to the immersive theme park experience. From guests who bring cast members tokens of appreciation to cast members providing a “magical moment” for guests, the exchange of gifts adds to the ephemeral magic found within the theme parks. Another layer of these acts is that they are typically unexpected. While guests often bring cast members gifts such as stickers or notecards to express their gratitude for their role in providing a magical vacation, it is not expected of them. Similarly, while cast members are encouraged to make “magical moments” for guests, they can choose the circumstances around how such an act is performed. Not every guest will receive these experiences, making these surprise gestures unique and special. The acts of surprise gestures of gratitude or care perform within material culture as an antidote to consumerism.

Angela Pinholster is a Ph.D. candidate in the Theatre for Youth and Community program in the School of Music, Dance and Theatre at Arizona State University. She is an educator, scholar, and Disney scholar-fan who is interested in creating and researching immersive performance experiences. She is currently exploring online and related fandom communities, especially in connection with the Disney brand and associated theme parks.

Francine N. Sutton (University of Central Florida)

Returning to the Magic: A Brief Personal Narrative of Walt Disney World’s Closure & Reopening During the Pandemic

The “most happiest place on earth” is known to fans to deliver magic and thrills, while its closure during natural disasters seemed like an indicator to measure severity. According to a local news article, nine instances of the theme park’s closure have occurred, including the Covid-19 pandemic, most of which were hurricane-related. Walt Disney World Resort announced that it would temporarily close beginning March 16th due to the global pandemic Covid-19 and remain closed until summer 2020. This time of uncertainty caused anxiety to theme park employees, tourists, and locals who unknowingly knew how this closure would impact them financially or emotionally. Harvard et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative study to examine how Disney fans coped during the theme park closure through interviews that sought to learn more about fan behavior. As an annual passholder, I had the opportunity to visit Epcot, Hollywood Studios, and Animal Kingdom before the closure, unbeknownst that this was the last view of



what was known as “normal” and the final use of reserving a fast pass for attractions. What happens next is known as the phased reopening, which introduces the park reservation system, social distancing markers, facial covering requirements, and other safety guidelines based on CDC recommendations. The purpose of this paper is to present preliminary research conducted by analyzing articles, social media posts, and photos to provide a personal account of WDW’s closure and reopening during the pandemic.

Francine N. Sutton is a Ph.D. candidate in the Texts & Technology program at UCF with a concentration in Digital Media. She obtained a BA in Art and MA in Urban & Regional Planning from Jackson State University. Her dissertation research aims to examine older adults’ user experience with mHealth applications through a three-phase mixed methods methodology. Her research interests include user experience design, popular culture, fandom studies, and video game studies. She had the opportunity to present her academic papers at several international, national, and regional popular culture conferences.

DAY 2

Tuesday, 27 June

Disney and Disability

12:30 - 14:00

Lizzie Wright (University of Leeds)

Disability in Disney’s MCU: Origins, Identities, Duties

Superhero films in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) are known for their fantastical stretches of the possibilities of human bodies. Their status as a highly popular cultural form makes them rich sources of Anglo-American values, especially surrounding disability, but they have received little critical attention. The nature of comic-book films allows them to imagine possibilities beyond our current achievements: as Sami Schalk writes, understandings of disability differ in a context of ‘high-tech assistive devices, altered abilities, and fictional worlds’ (2016, p.82), making the conventions of the genre essential to consider when figuring disability and disfigurement.

Some superheroes are literally disabled, but, as this presentation will discuss, disability in the superhero film is most often metaphorical. The bodily transformation that comes with the character’s move from ‘normal’ to ‘super’, much like disability, often ends up serving as a narrative catalyst – popularly termed as the ‘origin story’. This presentation will move through discussion of the origin story as a crucial link between the superhero and disabled bodies in film, towards an analysis of the political, nationalist, and militaristic undertones in contemporary Marvel films. Using Tony Stark/Iron Man and Steve Rogers/Captain America as key examples, I will showcase how Marvel and Disney utilise the soft power



of the superhero film to present ideologies and propaganda masked in the extraordinary bodies of the superhero. When analysed with a view of their politicalised status (under which the presentation of disability is an important feature), the superhero film provides a compelling space in which to explore how disability, the fantastic, and popular culture intersect to form narratives where extraordinary bodies are intrinsic to the basic functioning of the superhero genre.

Lizzie Wright is a first year English Literature PhD student at the University of Leeds currently researching narratives of female violence and revenge in response to the rise of incelism. Her presentation adapts part of her MA by Research thesis, 'Disability and Disfigurement in Twenty-first Century Comic-Book Films'. Her research interests primarily lie in medical humanities, superhero studies, and women on screen.

Erin Pritchard (Liverpool Hope University)

Representations of Dwarfism: How to Laugh with us, not at us

For centuries, people with dwarfism have been sought after for humorous entertainment purposes. Whilst most people have seen dwarfs in some form of entertainment, most have never met someone with the condition. Therefore, how dwarfism is represented within the entertainment industry is important to consider. A prominent representation of dwarfism is Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Whilst the characters from the iconic 1937 animated version of the fairytale are deemed beloved, for people with dwarfism they are seen as problematic as they encourage audiences to laugh at people with the condition. This paper explores various representations of dwarfism, in particular how dwarfism is represented in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Drawing on theories of humour, the paper argues that the 1937 representation of the Seven Dwarfs engages with disabling humour, which mocks their stature and has implications for people with dwarfism in society, including being laughed at or being seen as childlike. This is evidenced by empirical research conducted with people with dwarfism. This paper examines why it is important that the new live action remake of the film promotes a more positive representation of dwarfism.

Erin Pritchard, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in Disability Studies at Liverpool Hope University and core member of the Centre for Culture and Disability Studies. Her recent book, *Dwarfism, Spatiality and Disabling Experiences*, published by Routledge explores the socio-spatial experiences of people with dwarfism in public spaces. She has published work on dwarfism in key disability journals, including *Disability and Society*, the *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, and *Disability Studies Quarterly*. In 2020, she guest edited a special issue on representations of dwarfism for the *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*. She is currently a consultant for Disney, specializing in disability representations.



Selma Aitsaid (University of Leicester)

Algerian Disabled Tweens' Identification with Disney

Disney canon texts (mainly animations) are believed to have an authority over children's identities. However, much of the research on Disney tends to focus either on textual analysis, and/ or Western audiences. In fact, there is a lack in the literature on Disney child audiences from non-Western countries though Disney is a global media corporation that appeals to audiences from all over the world and is believed by some critics to be inclusive of minorities (Brode 2005; Resene 2015; Perea 2018; Grodal 2007). To address this, I have conducted qualitative research involving interviewing 25 Algerian disabled tweens between the ages 11 to 14 on their familiarity and identification with Disney animations in order to decolonise disability in Algeria and Algerian audiences, which are framed via Global North generalizations and hegemony. This paper will share some of my key findings. My findings suggest that the postcolonial context has an impact on how my participants identify with Disney animated texts. For instance, Disney becomes a social and cultural capital for Algerian tweens when dubbed in French, the colonizer's language. Another finding demonstrated that the Western concept of Tweenhood is imported to the MENA region through Disney animations, recontextualized/ censored in order to fit the conservative context. Tween themes such as same sex friendship and the sparkling pink for girls are emphasized whereas opposite-sex romance is replaced with marriage through Arabic dubbing. Despite these modifications my participants still showed an active engagement with Disney animations by interpreting the texts socially and politically while taking into consideration their conservative context.

I am an international PhD candidate at The University of Leicester in the School of Media, Communication and Sociology. My main research interest is audience research, mainly disabled tweens in Algeria where I seek to examine how they identify with Western media, mainly Disney. The latter is the channel through which the Western concept of tweenhood is imported to the MENA region recontextualized in order to fit the conservative context. That is why, I am open to study for future research how tween audiences in other countries in the Middle East interpret Disney in their own context.

Jess Gibson (Independent Researcher)

'I'm Not a Glitch, Taffyta. I've Just Got Pixlexia': Exploring the Representation of Disability in Wreck-It Ralph and Frozen

This paper will explore how Vanellope in Wreck-It Ralph (2012) and Elsa in Frozen (2013) can be considered representations of disability. I will argue that when analysing through a critical disability studies lens that both Vanellope's and Elsa's journey depict their magical powers as a physical difference that others treat negatively. From this, they can be read as a disability through the social model of disability which views disability as a social construct imposed on top of someone with an impairment or difference. Vanellope is bullied by other racers because of her glitch and Elsa is isolated



because of her ice powers. Hall (2020) describes analysing disability narratives as 'exploring examples where the text does not explicitly name a particular impairment or condition, but where disability structures the logic of the narrative or ways of seeing and knowing in the text' (p. 2). I use this as the theoretical perspective in this paper. By exploring the narratives of these characters further, I discuss how the societal issues surrounding the character's differences can be read as metaphors for real-life experiences of disability. In doing so, I analyse disability which is not explicitly or overtly present but where the narrative functions similar to disability (Chivers & Markotić, 2010). I argue that *Wreck-It Ralph* and *Frozen* portray disability as a multifaceted experience that ultimately becomes enabling and affirmative to the characters as their narrative progresses. By the end of the films, both characters are accepted without overcoming their powers which portrays a positive representation of disability and an example of the affirmation model of disability.

Jess Gibson is an independent scholar who is submitting her PhD which has looked at the representation of disability in Disney animated films (1937 - 2016). Her research interests are Disney, theme parks, representation, disability studies, equality. She recently had a chapter published in an edited collection about *Dumbo*, physical difference and disability.

Encanto and Turning Red

14:30 - 16:00

Jennessa Hester (Texas Tech University)

No-body Like U: Race, Ethnicity, and the Reparative Pop Stars of *Turning Red*

Upon release, Disney-Pixar's *Turning Red* received ample praise for protagonist Meilin Lee, an Asian Canadian girl whose identity resonated with viewers seeking more nuanced representation from the company. However, amidst the well-deserved adulation for young Mei, another progressive aspect of the film's approach to race and ethnicity went underdiscussed: the diverse boy band at the center of its plot, 4*TOWN.

In this paper contribution, I will outline the hegemonically white history of the modern boy band, describing the carefully cultivated perception of monoethnicity utilized by the group 4*TOWN draws inspiration from Maria Sherman (2020). In doing so, I will detail Disney's conflicted relationship with this system, touching on both their corporate investment in the allwhite boy band structure (see: the Jonas Brothers) as well as their occasional but minor attempts to destabilize said structure in the past (Tyler Bickford, 2020).



After providing this background, I will argue that *Turning Red* demonstrates a significant shift in Disney's treatment of boy bands. In terms of representation, the film makes a clear effort to decenter whiteness in how it depicts 4*TOWN—most notably by making the group's figurehead, Robaire, Black and dark-skinned, a choice which attempts to negotiate colorist perceptions of Black boys in popular culture (Racquel J. Gates, 2018) and the "sonic color line" of western music (Jennifer Lynn Stoeber, 2016).

Perhaps even more profoundly, in emphasizing the multiethnic fan reception of 4*TOWN, the film engages with growing calls among Disney fandoms for the company to take responsibility for its long-standing reinforcement of white supremacist ideology (Sabrina Mittermeier, 2022). Specifically, *Turning Red* sees Disney applying a reparative (Eve Sedgwick, 2002) lens to western history, rewriting the hegemonically-inflected perception of pop culture the company helped create in order to make space for non-white audiences and perspectives.

Jennessa Hester is a transgender scholar and poet working out of Lubbock, Texas. She serves as an assistant editor for the *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, managing editor for the *Iron Horse Literary Review*, and poetry editor for *Wrong Publishing*.

Ayu Ratna Ningtyas (Independent Researcher)

Home and Alienation in Disney's *Encanto*

The meaning of home for each family is formed in different ways. Disney's *Encanto* (2021) tries to represent the meaning of an ideal home. Instead of only presenting how a Colombian family construct the meaning of an ideal home through a series of conflicts within the characters happened in a sentient house, the "Casita", *Encanto* seems to show the existence of alienation between the characters and within the characters themselves, as also seen in Mirabel, the main protagonist. This study aims to show how the meaning of home is constructed in *Encanto* and the representation of alienation that is intertwined within it. This research uses Derrida's theory of deconstruction and the concept of difference. The results of this study indicate that home is not about ideological construction but considered only as a physical building where the characters in the film interact. In the process of constructing the meaning of home is also accompanied by alienation that is interrelated between the characters. Alienation will also affect how the meaning of home in *Encanto* tends to be only as a physical building where the individuals in it live.

Ayu Ratna Ningtyas, pronouns are she/her. She received her Master's degree from the University of Indonesia. Her research interests encompass studies of children's and young adult literature, and gender studies. Her current research focuses on Disney and children's literature.



Leticia Cortina Aracil (Independent Researcher)

Disenchantment and Discapacity: The Miracle of Vulnerability in Encanto

Encanto's story focuses on the Madrigal family, the family presiding over a town that has been enchanted away from the dangers of the world. Their prevalence is based on how each of its members is the repository of a prodigious gift that ought to be used to serve and protect their community and thanks to which the people can lead a perfect life. In this apparently ideal state, however, a member of the family does not receive a prodigious gift: the little Mirabel, in whose name the word "miracle" resonates powerfully. Thus, Mirabel becomes a disabled person in the bosom of her very able and high performing family, her very existence turned into a permanent and unbearable stain on the perfection and power of the family; even more, into a reminder of the secret fragility of their paradisiacal lives. Yet, the importance of sustaining this enchanted place is not due to cliché hedonistic reasons or lust for power, but due to the very real risk of a lurking danger of death on the outside.

This paper will explore the extension of this disability presented by Mirabel, defending that the film poses how the particular form of vulnerability that it entails as the constitutive state for a true family bond, beyond issues related to success, validation or performance. Thus, the family is revealed as the place where one can be loved by the mere fact of existing and that, precisely albeit counterintuitively, is the gratuity of this love is what brings the miracle forth and not the other way around. This will be achieved through a critical commentary of the story supported in an interpretation of the narrative resources supporting it, concluding with an assessment of the interest of story in the horizon of the acceptance of disability in contemporary society.

Dr. Leticia Cortina Aracil is an independent researcher currently working as a guide, cultural mediator and Humanities lecturer in the city of Madrid. Her research interest includes the existential interpretation of material culture, with an emphasis on corporeality and its impact in the building of worldviews. She has published work on philosophical anthropology, mythology and folklore.

Emily Y. Hernández Giovannetti (University of Puerto Rico) and Itza M. Hernández Giovannetti (University of Puerto Rico)

An Exploration of Generational Trauma in Encanto and Turning Red

In this presentation I will be exploring generational trauma and healing of families in Disney and Pixar's recent animated films. I will present two different films as examples of this; these films are Encanto (2021) and Turning Red (2022). Firstly, Encanto showcases how Abuela Alma, matriarch of the Madrigal family, is a strict perfectionism due to the fear that if everyone does not serve and protect their community in a certain way, horrible things will happen to the family. Throughout the movie, the viewers see how this affects multiple characters in the story.



For example, Isabella, also known as “señorita perfecta” (miss perfect) grew up with enormous amount of pressure from Alma and her family to please everyone. Because she is afraid of letting her family down, she hides her insecurities from everyone around her. It escalates so much that she agrees to marry Mariano even though she does not love him. Isabella feels trapped in her situation. Ultimately thanks to her sister Mirabel, Isabela is able to understand how generational trauma has affected her and frees herself from expectations to constantly be perfect. Similarly, in *Turning Red* Meilin Lee has a special ability that has been passed down from generations to generations to turn into a giant red panda. Mei and her mom’s views on the red panda are quite different and cause a lot of difficulties between them. The curse itself can be analyzed as a representation of generational trauma shared by all the females in Meilin’s family. Meilin embraces her red panda instead of hiding it, by doing this, she not only heals herself, but transforms the curse into a blessing not just for herself, but for her family as well. As analyzed, both films explore the way generational trauma can be present in families and the negative consciences of it.

Emily Y. Hernández Giovannetti is from Bayamón, Puerto Rico. She holds a B.A. in English Literature from the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), Río Piedras Campus and an M.A in English Education with a certification in TESOL from UPR, Mayagüez Campus. She is currently an English professor at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. She will soon continue her studies in the Ph.D. English with specialization in Languages, Literature, and Culture of the English-speaking Caribbean at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus.

Itza Hernández is from Bayamón, Puerto Rico. She earned a B.A. in Teaching English to Spanish Speakers from the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), Río Piedras Campus and an M.A in English Education with a certification in TESOL from UPR, Mayagüez Campus. Hernández is currently a Ph.D. student in the Linguistics of the English-speaking Caribbean program at UPR, Río Piedras Campus. She is currently an English professor at the University of Puerto Rico, Bayamón Campus.

Rethinking Heroism

16:30 – 18:00

Hannah Sophie Schiffner (Zeppelin University)

Post-Heroism in Children’s Films: Analyzing the Hero’s Journey in Pixar Films

Children’s films reflect the morals and expectations of a society with their inspirational heroes teaching us what is, and isn’t, acceptable. These films follow a hero’s journey, a concept outlined by Joseph Campbell in 1949 and later adapted for Disney by Christopher Vogler. However, it has been theorized that western societies have come to embrace a post-heroic era. Nevertheless, children in post-heroic societies are still confronted with heroic characters and narratives in children’s films. In response to this contradiction this paper will analyze how the hero’s journey is reflected in Pixar films. Children’s films are often overlooked in theories on post-heroism.



Yet children's films are unique, as they reflect the values societies desire to pass on to the next generations. Examining the heroic narratives of Pixar films therefore provides insight into how heroism has evolved and which role heroic narratives play in post-heroic societies. I will analyze Pixar films released after Disney's acquisition of Pixar in 2006, focusing on *Ratatouille*, *Inside Out*, *Cars* and *Turning Red*. I will discuss how these films follow a recognizable hero's journey while concurrently questioning traditional heroic values. Accordingly, I will analyze how clear post-heroic trends can be observed, such as the focus on an internal battle and the questioning of traditional concepts of 'good' and 'evil'. I will also address how it is simultaneously recognizable that these heroes are still inspirational figures that follow a hero's journey and carry valuable life lessons. Pixar thus shows that post-heroism does not mean that heroes are no longer popular characters in children's films but rather that the traditional hero's journey is being used to negotiate a new understanding of heroism.

Hannah Sophie Schiffner is a doctoral candidate in Cultural Theory and Analysis at Zeppelin University. Her thesis investigates the concept of heroism in post-heroic societies, focusing on heroic narratives in children's and teen films. Her research interests include material fan practices, the cultural impact of fictional worlds, heroic narratives, post-heroism and traumatized heroes.

Ibtisam Ahmed (LGBT Foundation)

"With Great (Individual) Power, There Must Also Come Great (Communal) Responsibility" - The Impact of Care in *Spider-Man: No Way Home*

By its very nature, the superhero genre tends to centre on the actions of extraordinary individuals as the method of enacting social change (or, in many cases, social continuity). With the narrative relying on the abilities of their powered protagonists, the films in the Marvel Cinematic Universe largely adhere to this formula. A literal reading of these texts could, therefore, support the idea of a superior *ubermensch*, beyond the expectations of society and accountability. However, I offer a nuanced reading of the superhero text that looks at the motivation and ethics behind their powers (not the powers in and of themselves) as the focal point of the narrative, using the example of *Spider-Man: No Way Home* to illustrate my point.

I consider superheroes to be a utopian allegory for critical mass, their powers standing in as a metaphor for greater social capacity to influence systemic change. Ultimately, it is the way these powers are used that determine the impact on society. I believe the ethos that is shown in *Spider-Man: No Way Home* is informed from a position of community-based care, embodied in Peter Parker's focus on being a "friendly neighbourhood Spider-Man" and magnified by the influence of such characters as Aunt May and her commitment to grassroots projects.

Heroism stems not from grand spectacle but from compassion and healing. By looking at Peter's evolution through the film and his acceptance of communal responsibility as the driving force for how he



uses his individual power, I argue that *Spider-Man: No Way Home* showcases a way in which an ethics of care can be the most transformative and impactful way forward.

Ibtisam Ahmed (he/him) completed an MPhil in Politics at the University of Nottingham, with a focus on decolonial utopianism. He co-edited *The Politics of Culture* (2020, Cambridge Scholars Publishing), where he also contributed a chapter on queer immigrant superheroes as utopia. His other publications include articles, posts and podcasts in *Imagining the Impossible*, *Modernism/modernity*, *e-International Relations*, *Fantastika*, and *Shuddashar*. As a queer disabled immigrant of colour, his focus is on uplifting marginalised and oft-silenced communities. He works as the Head of Policy and Research at LGBT Foundation. He tweets in a personal capacity at @lbzor.

Zsófia Anna Tóth (University of Szeged)

Choose Your Weapon: The Fighter Heroines of Disney/Pixar

In my paper, my aim is to discuss the fighter heroines of Disney/Pixar. I intend to highlight the importance of the strong female characters – who fight back or defend themselves and others – as positive role models for young girls/women because at the beginning of Disney history the strong women were always villainesses and witches who were ostracized, punished and mostly killed off to send the message that only docile females are acceptable. As Bell also pointed out about the gender politics of Disney cartoons: “[t]he wicked women harbor depths of power that are ultimately unknowable but bespeak a cultural trepidation for unchecked femininity. That Disney artists resorted to coded cinematic representations of the femme fatale for feminine agency speaks to the lack of conventions for encompassing such incomprehensible power” (1995: 121, emphases added). As Do Rozario claims, it was Ursula in *The Little Mermaid* (1989) who taught the “femme fatale’s trade” to Ariel thus clearly marking a transitional period in the representation of socially acceptable femininity (2004: 44–45). That is why my focus will be exactly on the Disney/Pixar heroines who contributed greatly to the changes in the perception that the only good woman is the submissive and silent one. I will take under scrutiny such characters as Ariel, Mulan, Rapunzel, Merida, Anna and Elsa, Moana and Raya. I also would like to show the process how this representational change took place, and how we reached the point where violent, strong and powerful women are accepted as equal members of a society and as competent leaders of a community in e.g. *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021) because e.g. in *Zootopia* (2016) it still was not the case.

Zsófia Anna Tóth received her PhD in British and American Literature and Culture from the University of Szeged and is currently a senior assistant professor at the Department of American Studies, Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary. Her main research interest is concerned with the representation of female aggression and violence in American literature, culture, especially in



film. Her research also includes Jane Austen's works, their adaptations as well as her legacy, her 'afterlife'; the New Woman (her representation and historical, cultural and academic reception), American women writers especially Sandra Cisneros as well as Disney and Pixar animations. She is currently working on theories of humor and gender, women's humor, and especially the work(s) (and the phenomenon) of Mae West.

Anna Shapland (Illinois State University)

"I Come Back to the Water": Care Ethics and the Hero's Quest in Disney's Moana

To a Western audience, Disney's *Moana* (2016) is broadly recognizable as a hero's quest. Many Eurocentric markers of this narrative structure are present in Moana's journey across the ocean to restore the heart of Te Fiti: Moana, the hero, is motivated by a posed threat to her people; she ventures through a realm of monsters to reach her destination; she is accompanied by Maui, a trickster character; she is met with a seemingly invincible monster; and she returns home after her journey's conclusion. This familiar narrative can even be seen in the structure of the sea-journey, which echoes Homer's *The Odyssey*, one of several canonical texts which help to shape a contemporary Western understanding of the heroic tradition. Many audience responses to *Moana*, both popular and critical, have centered the supposed "plot twist," which reveals that Te Kā, the supposed malicious monster who is responsible for the slow destruction of the islands and sea, is actually Te Fiti, the island goddess, who turned into Te Kā only after her heart was stolen by Maui. Since Disney films are largely informed by and marketed to a Western audience, many viewers of *Moana* are influenced by their cultural understanding of the recognizable heroic tradition, and are thus led to believe that the hero's journey can only culminate in the violent defeat of the story's monster. However, this paper argues that while *Moana*'s journey is marked by many tropes of the Western heroic tradition, the ethical framework of the film is much more informed by the Polynesian mythology from which it takes its inspiration. Through an application of care ethics, primarily as it has been conceptualized by Nel Noddings, this paper reveals the underlying concern for balance, care for living others, and restoration of peace that is at the heart of *Moana*'s journey.

Anna Shapland is a second-year PhD student in English Studies at Illinois State University focusing in Children's and Young Adult Literature. She obtained her MA in Children's Literature from Central Michigan University, where she primarily studied the heroic tradition in contemporary young adult fantasy. She currently teaches Foundations in Literature for Children at ISU while she develops her current research interests in care ethics, generational storytelling, and young adult activism.



DAY 3

Wednesday, 28 June

Parks 2

12:30 – 14:00

Alice D. Keane (Queens College, City University of New York)

From Tomorrowland to Batuu: Tracing Cultural and Economic Narratives in the Disney Theme Parks

As Walt Disney World guests travel between Magic Kingdom's midcentury Peoplemover – gliding past views of Carousel of Progress, where every scene in the round theater's rotation promises "a great, big, beautiful tomorrow"; a model of Walt Disney's Progress City (the original inspiration for Epcot); and a shiny space-age beauty parlor where the modulated voice of a PA announcer pages "Mr. Morrow, Mr. Tom Morrow" for his flight to the Moon – and Black Spire Outpost in Hollywood Studios, where guests can be recruited for a Smuggler's Run to support the ragtag Resistance or propelled into a battle between precarious, outnumbered Resistance and shiny, fascistic First Order troops, contemporary theme park visitors also experience a shift from propagandistic consumer narratives of Cold War capitalistic "utopia" to immersive participation in gritty, 21st century inegalitarian dystopia.

Carousel of Progress's midcentury theme song continues to promise that the future, replete with affordable new appliances for the middle-class home, will be "a dream come true for you and me." One cannot (yet) pay for priority access to the Peoplemover. Although anyone with a park reservation can shop, eat and wait in long standby lines in Black Spire Outpost, only those who are willing to pay upcharges can enjoy "Lightning Lane" entry to Batuu's rides, and only a fraction of economically privileged tourists can purchase VIP tours or enact their own immersive narratives of valiant Resistance or First Order oppression for two nights on the Galactic Starcruiser. Only the First Order's equipment is shiny on Batuu; the evershrinking middle class – Walt Disney's original target market for midcentury Disneyland and the Magic Kingdom – is notably absent in its Star Wars IP. By exploring and comparing the narratives of midcentury Tomorrowland and 21st century Batuu, we can better understand key changes in neoliberal economic and cultural realities that are reflected in the evolution of the Disney theme parks.

Alice D. Keane earned her Ph.D. in English Language & Literature from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 2014. Since 2015, she has been an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Queens College, CUNY. She is currently working on a narrative and cultural studies analysis of the Disney theme parks.



Ana Carolina Almeida Souza (Centro Universitário UNA)

Geotransmedia: Space, Memory and Transmedia Branding in Magic Kingdom

Launched in 1971, Magic Kingdom in Orlando is considered “the crown jewel of Walt Disney’s legacy” (Lipp, 2014), according to the Disney brand itself. It is observable that the physical space of the Magic Kingdom changed in very specific measurements during its 51 years, but the changes were always connected to a larger story that the brand is trying to (re)tell: “The Disney Master Narrative” (Madej & Lee, 2012), in which Mickey Mouse and Walt Disney are the main focus and the values they carry are what supports the brand culture as a whole.

To this analysis, we understand the theme park as a media and also as a *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1989) in which the experience that is created and also lived is built on both the brand memory and the personal memory highlighted by an embedded engagement (Hill & Dahlgren, 2020) that is particular and capable of change the experience people have in the theme park.

Arguing around this plasticity of physical space, we propose that the Magic Kingdom is the spatial manifestation of the brand’s storytelling overflow, maintained by the people’s memories through affection. We call this triangulation between space, memory and transmedia branding: geotransmedia.

This presentation will show a part of a PhD dissertation, in which we discuss the uses of spaces in transmedia dynamics, especially in the creation and maintenance of transmedial worlds. Also considering the user-producer relation, as a way to map how it reflects on (in)material interventions through memory. We intend to go beyond the obvious modifications, such as the construction of new attractions, this presentation aims to understand how Disney’s theme parks can remain current after 50 years of existence.

Ana Carolina has a double degree PhD in Media and Communication, of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil and Jönköping University, Sweden. She holds a master’s degree in Social Communication from the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais and a bachelor’s degree in Social Communication from the University of Amazonia. She is a lecturer at PUC Minas and UNA. <http://acasprof.com>

Andrew Grunzke (University of Guam) and Rebecca Grunzke (University of Guam)

It’s a Small World’s Fair: Tokyo Disneyland and Japan’s Foreign Country Theme Parks

The concepts around which Walt Disney designed the plans for Disneyland borrowed heavily from the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the 1939 World’s Fair in Flushing Meadows, New York. Both events featured recreated scenes of daily life and architecture of peoples from around the world. Disney repackaged those scenes, sometimes in the service of promoting understanding of



world cultures (e.g., EPCOT's World Showcase), sometimes providing an entertaining and highly stereotyped glimpse of another culture or historical era (e.g., the Jungle Cruise or Pirates of the Caribbean), and sometimes depicting idealized images of American life or history (e.g., Main Street USA, New Orleans Square, Bear Country). These attractions were built on the educational structure established by the Columbian Exposition, recreating geographic spaces, populating them with heavily stylized depictions of the "real" people who occupy those spaces, and presenting the images as authentic representations.

However, when Disneyland was transplanted to Tokyo, Westernland and Main Street USA provided an opportunity for Japanese audiences to experience a "typical" American town from a bygone era with more of a detached curiosity than would be experienced by an American audience. The massive success of Tokyo Disneyland popularized the notion of the "foreign country" spectacle in Japan. If Japanese tourists can visit the American West without leaving the outskirts of Tokyo, why not give them other transnational experiences in the Japanese countryside? In the years following the opening of Tokyo Disneyland in 1983, a host of other "foreign country theme parks" (gaikoku mura) began appearing across Japan, including simulated villages of Germany, Spain, Canada, Russia, and others. This paper argues that the inspiration of Tokyo Disneyland led to the proliferation of Japanese foreign country parks that functioned as exhibits in a sort of Columbian exposition, dispersed across the Japanese countryside.

Rebecca Grunzke is a cultural anthropologist and assistant professor at the University of Guam. Her research interests include anthropology of education, childhood, parenting, and family policy. Andrew Grunzke is a historian of education and associate professor at the University of Guam whose research interests include non-formal and informal education, the educational function of children's media, and the depiction of educators and teaching in popular media.

Queerness and Masculinity

14:30 – 16:00

Steven Dashiell (American University)

Disney Boys to Men: Erotic Gaze and Masculine Gender Capital of Former Disney Boy Actors

This research examines the nature of gender presentation of individuals who were at one time known for their performances as children and teens on Disney serial television shows. Research has already examined how young women who were Disney stars become quickly sexualized and perceived as women under the male gaze (Lamb, Grailing and Wheeler, 2013; Oppliger, 2018; Trekels and Eggermont, 2021). However, there is little corresponding research on boys who are subject to the scrutiny of the public. I engage in a phenomenological content analysis of three well-known young adult male actors who starred on the Disney Channel show *Wizards of Waverly Place*. I discuss how these men move from their roles perceived as youthful boys to a stage of attempting to advance to a more adult identity.



The nature of masculine gender capital encourages these men to move towards a hegemonic masculine ideal where they focus on valued characteristics in manhood. I note how, similar to former girl Disney stars, these men are subjected to an erotic gaze, as they all have gay and bisexual male fans. This space of complicity is a form of what Michael Kimmel (2009) notes as *guyland*, where the men are shed of future gender-related goals in this liminal period following their youth fame. These men push to be severed from their youth identities, forming a strategic boundary that nods to the homoeroticism surrounding their identity (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014).

Steven Dashiell is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Sociology of American University in Washington, DC. His research examines the study of linguistic and cultural capital in male-dominated subcultures, and how they affect those populations who must interact in these spaces.

Georgios Chatziavgerinos (University of Cambridge)

"Model Home Open for Destruction": How Disney's Pinocchio Subverts Toxic Masculinity

Traditionally, Disney's portrayal of gender and sexuality has been deemed quite regressive; following the footsteps of the Hays code, Disney films have been described as "teaching machines" that perpetuate gender stereotypes (Giroux and Pollock, 2010, p. 91). More recently, however, a more nuanced image of Disney filmography seems to emerge as its portrayal of masculinity becomes more progressive (Jeffords, 1995; Davis, 2015). What has not been discussed so much yet is how older films can find a new role to play in today's attempt to challenge repressive master narratives about gender. In this context, and drawing on Roland Barthes' "Death of the Author" (1977) and Elizabeth Ebony Thomas' concept of *restorying* (2019), I am arguing that regardless of Disney's regressive or progressive intentions, we should try to trace cracks in the films that allow us to invest them with more radical interpretations that are relevant for the needs of today's diverse society. To illustrate this approach, I am going to use *Pinocchio* (1940) as an example. According to existing scholarship, *Pinocchio* exemplifies conformity to the scripts of 1940s American masculinity (Zipes, 1996). However, I am arguing that through the prism of masculinity studies and a close study of audio-visual cues in the *Island of Pleasure* sequence, *Pinocchio* can be seen as an *avant-garde* criticism of toxic masculinity and rape culture - one that would resonate with the discussion about masculinity in the post-MeToo world. In this light, his transformation to a sensitive and caring boy is not a sign of subordination to authority, but a nod to healing toxic masculinity. By showcasing the methodological tools for this new interpretation, my presentation aims to invite the examination of other Disney classics in a new light that would allow them to acquire a new, more progressive usefulness in our discussions about gender today.

Georgios Chatziavgerinos is a PhD student and a Cambridge Trust Scholar at the University of Cambridge. His PhD focuses on how children's media can subvert toxic masculinity. He holds an MPhil in Education and Children's Literature from the University of Cambridge (1st) and a BA in



English Language and Literature from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (1st). He likes to explore the intersection of children's literature and media, diversity, gender and queer studies. He has been given a Latsis Foundation Scholarship for master's studies and a George and Mary Vergottis Scholarship for doctoral studies.

Ferdinando Cocco (University of Cambridge)

(Re)Animations of AIDS: Disney and the Economics of Queer Death

When it comes to queerness, Disney animation is propelled by an unflickering ambivalence born of economic opportunism. On the surface, Disney's animated texts often commit to the commercial mollifications of seemingly irreproachable, conservative values. But beneath this illusory display of conservatism, they concurrently harbour structures of subtextual, contextual and paratextual knowledge that call upon queerness to exact the economic returns of oppositional identifications. In this paper, I propose that the AIDS epidemic marked a crisis in the otherwise enduring history of this opportunistic pattern of simultaneous inscriptions and erasures by threatening the text with what, following theoretical approaches to AIDS, I regard as an "epidemic of meaning." AIDS, I argue, facilitated a dispersion of subtextual, contextual and paratextual knowledge through which queerness broke into the foreground of the animated texts that toil to obfuscate it. If we attend to those Disney animations produced during the escalation of AIDS-related mortality in collaboration with queer playwright and lyricist Howard Ashman, in fact, we are forced to realize that not only is the so-called "Reinassance" of Disney animation inextricable from a historical contemporaneity with the epidemic but that, according to its established mythologies, the "rebirth" of the Disney animated musical is also to be attributed to the "queer creativity" of the very homosexual subject these films stubbornly repudiate. For this reason, this paper mobilizes a reading of Disney's animated feature *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), tracking its relationship to its liveaction remake, *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), as well as to Howard (2018), a Disney-distributed documentary on Ashman. In so doing, I aim to tease out how Disney has repeatedly capitalized on AIDS-related death: at stake is the premise for a possible history of animation in the age of the AIDS epidemic, but also the received orthodoxy of present frameworks of animation historiography.

Ferdinando Cocco is a PhD candidate in the Centre for Film and Screen Studies at the University of Cambridge. In his current research, he is concerned with staging a mutually productive encounter between the fields of Queer and Animation Studies. And by attending to questions of life and vitality in the canon of Western animated media, he aims to lay the grounds for a reparative history of queer animation as well as for a theory of the queer aesthetics of the animated medium.



Jonas Lindkvist (Lund University)

Parody and the Queer Potential

In his text *Pronoun Trouble - The Queerness of Animation* from 2004 Sean Griffin writes that “animation’s use of metamorphosis and inanimate objects brought to life creates a constant potential for queerness to be read by audience members.” Animation therefore, one could argue, has a built-in queer potential, but is it being fulfilled? One of the chapters in my dissertation is dedicated to representations of queerness in modern animated parody.

The first known use of parody is from Aristotle’s *Poetics* and since then it has been used for both transgressive and normative purposes. Parody deals with the concept of borders, in what it can mock and ridicule, in who is allowed to lie as well as tell the truth, and in what is transported and reiterated from its original source to create new art, new worlds, new possibilities. By using and expanding on theories on parody and pastiche from among other Linda Hutcheon, Richard Dyer and Dan Harries it is my ambition to show that several modern animated tv shows use parody or pastiche not only as a means for humor and derision, but also for political and aesthetic purposes and that animated tv parody is at the forefront of not only parody and intertextuality, but of dramatic, comedic, political and personal storytelling of today.

The presence and the crossing of borders is a key concept to both parody and representations of queerness in art. Can the use of parody combined with queer themes and characters offer subversion and resistance to societal heteronormativity even in mainstream media such as animated tv shows aimed at a large audience? In other words, can parody realize the queer potential of animation? By looking at examples from Disney owned animated tv shows such as *American Dad*, *Family Guy*, *The Simpsons* and *Futurama*, I hope to provide answers to, or in the very least discussions on that question.

Jonas Lindkvist is a PhD student in Film Studies at Lund University, Sweden, with degrees in gender studies, history, creative writing, film studies and film & media history. Fields of research include humor, parody, satire, animation, high concept films, television, and fan culture, but also sports and media. His dissertation *Resistance and Subversion in Animated Parody* focuses on the use of parody, pastiche, and satire in modern animated tv shows such as *Archer*, *BoJack Horseman*, *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, and *South Park* through the lenses of the borders of parody, representations of queerness, nation and nationalism, and the notion of carnival and sitcom temporality.



Learning in the Shadow of the Mouse

16:30 – 18:00

This presentation focuses on college-level pedagogy about and within Disneyland. The park provides a learning experience meaningful to students from every discipline: art, physics, urban planning, psychology, music, gender studies, business, communications, literature, geography, history, architecture, religion, sociology, economics, and more. Our schools' proximity and easy access to Disneyland, its neighborhood, and many other local primary sources provide rich opportunities for study. We showcase three different college courses about Disney and Disneyland topics, demonstrating the potential of Disney Studies to inspire and educate at the same time, as Walt Disney himself always sought to do. The courses are *Disney: Gender, Race and Religion*; *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Disneyland*; and the Disneyland version of *Honors Culture, Science, and Society: The Postmodern World*.

Disney: Gender, Race and Religion allows students to explore challenging topics through the lens of Disney and Disneyland, which students find more accessible and easier to confront issues of race, gender and religion. *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Disneyland* is a fieldwork-based class that takes place both in a traditional classroom and in Disneyland itself. Its goals are to get students to understand the application of social theory and field-research methods to undertake original social science research. *Honors Culture, Science, and Society: The Postmodern World* is a cross-disciplinary general education capstone course. As a required course for students of many different majors, it exposes students to postmodernist theory, the history and economics of amusement and theme parks, the emergence of suburbia in the 20th century, and the fine, architectural, and performing arts of Disneyland. Together, our courses can highlight some ways in which Disney Studies can enrich college curricula.

Dr. Julye Bidmead is Director of the Center for Undergraduate Excellence and professor of Religious Studies at Chapman University.

Dr. Alannah Rosenberg is the (retiring) chair of the honors program at Saddleback College, a two-year institution in Orange County, California. She grew up in California watching "Uncle Walt" every Sunday on television and going to Disneyland whenever possible. She team-taught the "Honors Disney" course with professors of literature in some years and music in others, always amazed at the diversity of research her students brought out of the rich material Disneyland provides.

Dr. Stephanie Takaragawa is Associate Dean of Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and professor of Anthropology at Chapman University.



Television and Disney+

18:30 – 20:00

Samantha Tecson (Independent Researcher)

From Cable to Streaming How Disney Treats Shonen Anime

One of the most profitable types of anime is the shonen genre which often centers on stories about a young male hero who usually becomes involved in action-packed adventures (Eisenbeis, 2014). Shonen anime is so popular that at least four shonen series are among the international highest-grossing anime franchises of all time (Gintoli, 2022). It was then only a matter of time before Disney would attempt to break into the anime space using a famous shonen anime. In 2009, Disney held the rights to *Naruto: Shippuden* (2007-2017) but by 2011 forwent continuing to play the show on their cable channel DisneyXD due to its violent content. It was not until 2022 before Disney would once again deal with the shonen genre when they announced their acquisition of the *Bleach* (2004-2012, 2022) anime franchise and the second season of the *Tokyo Revengers* (2023) series. Unlike *Naruto*, *Bleach* would be available internationally on the streaming services Disney+ and on Hulu in the United States. Using observations of audience demographics between DisneyXD and Disney's streaming services Disney+ and Hulu, I argue that due to the shift in age ranges and distribution, Disney can better exploit anime licenses. Utilizing Christopher Chávez's assessments of DisneyXD's targeting of a 6 to 14-year-old boy audience and Evan Elkin's research regarding Hulu's geo-blocked content, I assert that as Disney progressed from cable to streaming it was able to mitigate parental backlash regarding younger viewer's exposure to violent content. Thus, this allows Hulu to cater to a wider and niche audience in ways Disney could not do on linear television.

Samantha Tecson was born and raised in San Diego County where she enjoyed regular trips to San Diego Comic-Con. She has a Master's degree from UCLA's Theater, Film & Television program in Cinema and Media Studies along with a Bachelor's degree in Television, Film & New Media (Critical Studies) from SDSU. Her current research involves examining the relationship between streaming platforms and niche fandoms, questioning how studio marketers and fans negotiate a streaming service's treatment of fan-favorite content and their audiences. She also interrogates these negotiations' effects on racial and gender politics within fandom.

Nicolò Villani (e-Campus University)

Disney+: From the Archive to the Theme Park

Arrived on the market at the end of 2019, with an opening to the global market in early 2020, Disney+ has been able to establish itself in a very short time as one of the most important platforms on the audiovisual streaming market, coming to equal and even surpass Netflix's numbers in the arc of just over two years. What has decreed the success of the Disneybranded portal is the wide range of



offerings in a catalog that is given as constantly expanding and with an unbreakable base, composed of products extracted from the different proprieties of which the Walt Disney Company's portfolio is made up. This paper proposes to observe how the platform organizes and arranges its contents, going on to configure the experience of its viewer and returning a peculiar image of what Disney+ says about itself through its interface. Using the methodology of ethnosemiotics analysis, we will go on to show how what initially appeared to be a configuration with an archival vocation - to remember the collection of all the content tagged "Disney over the decades" - has rapidly transformed itself by returning to the user a media environment that faithfully traces the entertainment experiences that can be lived in Disney theme parks, through thematic areas, product collections and guided tours.

Nicolò Villani - Graduated at the DAMS of Bologna with a thesis in Media Semiotics and a master's degree from CITEM in the History of Seriality. Among his interests are structural semiotics, the contemporary media landscape, the evolution of digital media and the possibility of bringing the structural investigation - especially through the recent evolutions of Ethnosemiotics - close to contemporary audiovisual textuality. Fresh from his experience as a juror for Venice 75 Classics section, he is editor-in-chief for Birdmen Magazine, and is a Ph.D student at the e-Campus and a member of CUBE - Bologna University Center of Ethnosemiotics.

Allison McClain Merrill (Independent Researcher/Journalist)

Observing the Overwhelming Disney Channel Effect in Millennial Viewers

The Disney Channel launched as a premium cable channel in 1983. In the late '90s and early 2000s, the network rebranded twice and gradually became a hub for tween viewers. Lizzie McGuire, That's So Raven, and Hannah Montana are only a few examples of the sitcoms that became extremely popular for young audiences. Disney Channel Original Movies likewise became televisual destinations - there were films to fit sports enthusiasts, budding musicians, nature lovers, and even sci-fi fans. The programming was the most important aspect of the Disney Channel empire, but series and movies were eventually accompanied by music and merchandise for consumers to complement their viewing experience. Decades past the Disney Channel's rise, millennial viewers maintain a fervent sense of nostalgia for everything from Kim Possible to The Cheetah Girls and High School Musical. Since the 2010s, Disney Channel nostalgia has been mined by countless content creators. Bloggers, journalists, and podcasters have taken their turns examining Disney Channel programming through an adult lens. Some focus on whether the programs have "aged well" while others stick to the nostalgic high that might accompany these childhood staples. For so many fans of both the channel and of Disney as a whole, Disney content is inherently tied to personal memories and coming-of-age moments. "Observing the Overwhelming Disney Channel Effect in Millennial Viewers" is an exploration of a millennial urge to mentally relive and rebroadcast the highlights of Disney Channel programming. On a broader scale, the topic relates to the abundance of nostalgic reboots in the television industry, fan conventions



celebrating nostalgic content, and the creation of new content (podcasts, blogs, articles) based on existing intellectual property.

Allison McClain Merrill is an entertainment journalist with a passion for pop culture and television history. She works as a freelance writer and editor and loves interviewing actors, artists, and creators for her projects as a Disney Channel historian. Allison is represented by Susan Velazquez Colmant of Jabberwocky Literary Agency. Allison grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, and earned her bachelor's degrees in music education & English at Jacksonville University. She graduated with a Master of Arts in Religion from Yale Divinity School and Yale Institute of Sacred Music in 2019 and now lives in the Detroit area.

Fashion and Form

20:30 – 22:00

Marley Healy (Independent Researcher)

"You Must be Bold and Daring!": Exploring How Fashion is Interpreted and Presented Through the Lens of Animation in Disney Films

In film, costume is inextricably linked to a character's appearance, an actor's performance, and is an essential pillar in the foundation upon which the film's world is built. This is especially true in the case of animated films where a character's clothing needs to be visually impactful, communicate a myriad of messages regarding a character's personality and story arc, and also situate them in the context of the world in which they exist. While costume designers for film incorporate their experience of garment construction and knowledge of historical and contemporary fashion in their designs, their services have not been engaged in the world of animation. Despite the absence of this specific expertise, over the past 100 years artists at Walt Disney Animation Studios have been responsible for delivering some of the most memorable and iconic fashion moments in film history. From glass slippers to fur coats, animators outfitted characters through their own interpretations of fashion, blending historical fantasy with contemporary style. From the early years of Disney's famed "Nine Old Men" to the current animators at Disney and Pixar, these artists have used all materials and opportunities at their disposal including fieldtrips and drawing from personal experience to develop visually effective apparel and accessories that became integral to those characters' overall look. This presentation will examine how Disney animators have approached costuming by exploring factors such as personal filters of contemporary fashion, interpretations of historical fashion, and technological advancements in animation, while also considering the unique circumstances of animated character design. Concurrently, it will analyze examples of real-world fashions, both historical and contemporary, that are amalgamated into the ensembles of Disney's animated characters and evaluate their significance as effective film costumes.



Marley Healy (@bastion_of_fashion) is an independent scholar and curator. She has a Bachelors in History from Harvard University Extension School and a Masters in Fashion Curation from the London College of Fashion. Some of her curated work includes exhibitions at the Rambert ballet company on London's South Bank, the Japanese Friendship Garden in Balboa Park, and the Women's Museum of California. Marley is a regular contributor to fashion studies publications and academic journals, reviewing domestic and international fashion-based exhibitions. Her major line of research focuses on the costuming of animated and live-action characters in film and Disney-associated fashion cultures.

Rebecca Rowe (Texas A&M University-Commerce) and Robyn Muir (University of Surrey)

"Super Skinny" and "Insanely Small Waists": Adapting Princesses from Animation to Live-Action

Since 1923, the Walt Disney Company has contributed to the social shaping of gender through their wide range of media outputs, and especially through their Princesses. Scholars have argued whether Disney's princesses have progressed (Davis 2006; Itmeizeh & Ma'ayeh 2017; Mollet 2020) or regressed (Maio 1998; Rudloff 2016; Stover 2012) representations of gender in their animated films. This debate has been especially contentious around the physical depiction of the Princess's bodies, which many have claimed may cause body image issues for young girls because of their exaggerated proportions (Herbozo et al. 2004; Klein and Shiffman 2005). However, more recent scholars (Cordwell 2016; Coyne et al. 2016; Hayes and Tantleff-Dunn 2010) argue that many young girls do not directly compare themselves to the Disney Princesses exactly because of how unrealistic the animated bodies seem. In this paper, we want to continue work begun by Rebecca Rowe (2019) on how animated bodies may affect young girls by examining what happens when animated bodies become real in live-action remakes of the Disney Princess films.

Live action remakes are a way for Disney to inspire nostalgia in adults and reintroduce children to new classics, encouraging audiences to put the animated and live-action Princesses side-by-side. Combining our expertise in adaptation studies (Rebecca Rowe) and the Disney Princesses (Robyn Muir), we examine how (or even whether) this encouraged comparison helps audiences rethink unrealistic body standards, focusing on a few main questions: do the live-action actresses' body shapes correspond to their animated counterparts? Do adapters attempt to exaggerate body shape through wardrobe, makeup, and blocking to more closely resemble the original Princesses? And what does all of this suggest about how both adapters and audiences think through the connections between lines on a screen and real-life bodies and thus how real girls may interpret and accept messages around body image?

Rebecca Rowe is an Assistant Professor in the Literature and Languages department at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Her research focuses on how adaptations, both professional and fannish, change character identities due to cultural, media, and audience differences. She has articles in journals such as the *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, *animation*, and *Adaptation*, along with chapters in the edited



collections Fan Phenomena: Disney, Gender and Female Villains in 21st Century Fairy Tale Narratives and Lizzie McGuire to Andi Mack: The Disney Channel's Tween Programming 2000-2019.

Robyn Muir is a Lecturer in Media and Communication at the University of Surrey. Her research focuses on the images of femininity within the Disney Princess phenomenon, using facet methodology to explore the different areas of the wide ranging facets of the princesses. Her research interests include feminist methodology, representation of gender within popular culture and cultural phenomenon and the politics of merchandising. She is the founder and leader of the Disney, Culture and Society Research Network.

Abigail Fine (Queen Mary University of London)

One Hundred (and One) Years of Disney's Fairy Godmother: The Legacy of Disney's Iterations of an Iconic Character

Cinderella's fairy godmother is a pivotal figure in the 'Cinderella' narrative, and Disney's 1950 animated Fairy Godmother remains one of the most iconic versions of this character. The jolly, grandmotherly woman wearing a blue cape is not Disney's first fairy godmother, however, nor the last: in 1922, a young Walt Disney produced a short Laugh-O-Gram Cinderella that included a fairy godmother; in 2015 Helena Bonham Carter portrayed the Fairy Godmother in Disney's live action Cinderella; and iterations of the character continue to appear in new properties like the Disney+ film Sneakerella (2022). In this paper, I will examine the evolution of the Fairy Godmother in Disney's films and in Young Adult novel spin-offs of their classic properties.

Importantly, this paper contends that the Fairy Godmother now holds an unofficial role as a key figure in Disney's corporate optics and that, in essence, the Walt Disney Company has begun to position itself as America's - and the world's - fairy godmother. Due to the Walt Disney Company's increasingly close associative ties to the imagery and function of the fairy godmother, I posit that tracing the history of the various incarnations of fairy godmothers in Disney media lends insight into the history, self-perception and corporate brand strategy of the Walt Disney Company itself.

Finally, I explore the impact that Disney's versions of the fairy godmother have on societal understandings of the character. Though the elderly magical helper still appears, the past two decades have seen radically different types of fairy godparents in 'Cinderella' adaptations - several explicitly written against the Disney version - as cultural conversations on race, gender, and representation evolve. Yet, Disney, too, is evolving and how Disney embraces representation is critical: I argue that how Disney deploys the Fairy Godmother not only reflects current cultural conversations, but shapes them.

Abigail Fine is a PhD researcher in Comparative Literature at Queen Mary University of London. Her thesis, 'Fantastic Transformations: The Evolution of Fairy Godparents in British and American



Adaptations of Cinderella, 19222021,' focuses on the magical helper character in film and literary adaptations of Cinderella. She holds an MA in History from The College of William and Mary, and an MA in English Literature from Georgetown University.

DAY 4

Thursday, 29 June

Disney Animation

12:30 - 14:00

Pat Brereton (Dublin City University)

Greening Animation in Disney

This paper will trace the power and influence of Disney and Pixar in actively addressing environmental issues, especially the climate crisis. Recalling the 1942 classic *Bambi*, which for an older generation encouraged a love of nature and promoting human's love of animals. For environmentally focused film scholars, this tended to represent a 'Disney(land) view, as all the animals' troop down to see the 'miracle' of a new baby deer. Such a mise-en-scene evokes and serves to reinforce the idyllic co-existence of all animals. Only "man" can upset this utopia' (Brereton 2016: 26).

More recent environmentally leaning tales include *Pocahontas* (1995) and the appropriation of indigenous cultural attributes to help promote a biophilic love of nature alongside Pixar classics like *Up* (2009). Much of my ecological research remains focused on the mediation and staging of global risk and how such texts help to create fruitful eco-imaginaries. For instance, David Whitley (2008) has rightly suggested that Disney is above anything else preoccupied within the realms of feelings. Whitley, alongside numerous other scholars, convincingly argues that the Disney oeuvre, especially early works like *Bambi* and *The Jungle Book* (1967) have played an important role in educating the public about the environment and this role I argue continues up to the present day.

While much theoretical environmental analysis concentrates on the semiosis of animation, more work is needed however to explore how actual audiences' emotions and pleasures are addressed. This paper attempts to capture some of the extra textual features framing audience engagement, by focusing on archival DVD bonus-features, as a bridge between the text and the creative makers of *Up* (see Brereton 2012). Animation and Disney continue to have a major role in promoting both environmental literacy and active engagement with the climate crisis.

Prof Pat Brereton has written numerous books and articles on the development of environmental communications and film - including the work of Disney and Pixar. See chapters in *Hollywood Utopia*:



Ecology in Contemporary American Cinema (2005), Smart Cinema, DVD add-ons and New Audience Pleasures (2012), Environmental Ethics and Film (2016), Environmental Literacy and New Digital Audiences (2019) and most recently Essential Concepts of Environmental Communication (2022). He constantly explores the power of cinema and all forms of media, including animation and television, to both speak to and critically reflected the climate emergency.

Kyle Meikle (University of Baltimore)

The Disney Cinematic Universe

In a little over a decade, the Disney universe has expanded to include galaxies far, far away and guardians thereof; Disney acquired Lucasfilm in 2012 and Marvel Entertainment in 2009, clearing the runway for Buzz Lightyear to share airspace with Skywalkers and Star-Lords. Not incidentally, that same decade-and-change found Disney remaking a dozen of its animated classics as live-action films, from 2010's Alice in Wonderland through 2022's Pinocchio—all very much resembling the special effects spectacles the company had acquired (with critics, for instance, comparing the star of 2021's Cruella to a superhero). This paper asks how and why Disney, Star Wars, and Marvel look like parallel, and sometimes perpendicular, worlds, as well as what their shared resemblance means for the future of animation and franchises more generally. It argues that, in the physics and metaphysics of the Disney cinematic universe, there exists no meaningful distinction between live action and animation—at the level of form or, more importantly, content.

Dr. Kyle Meikle is an Associate Professor of English and Communication at the University of Baltimore whose research centres on adaptations and media franchises. He is Associate Editor of the journal *Adaptation* and author of *Adaptations in the Franchise Era: 2001-16*. Dr. Meikle is currently writing a book about live-action/animated films.

Silvia Rusiñol-Romero (Universidad de Sevilla) and Antonio Moreno-Cárdenas (Universidad de Sevilla)

The Art of Creating Plots: How to Use Episodic Plots to Shape Complex Horizontal Narrative in Gravity Falls

Narrative for children has traditionally been built based on the use of repetition, imitation and association through episodic plots. However, in the last decade narrative has been experimenting with the transmutation of verticality, managing to create nexus points where it is possible to present horizontal plots to kids through the resource of planting (or set up) / pay off. If it is true that storytellers have widely used this technique so far and it has been always included in "adult" narratives, still in Disney's TV shows is something that has not been commonly used. This instrument consists of introducing certain elements for them to matter later, getting importance at the appropriate dramatic moment, just as Chekhov



pointed out, “if in Act I you have a gun hanging on the wall, it should be fired in the last Act”. It is remarkable, therefore, that showrunners behind the new Disney TV shows have been experimenting with it, getting to adopt it as a personal trait depending on how it is used, as the director of *Amphibia*’s Matt Braly named it: “Loading the Party Cannon”.

With this premise, the aim of the study is to analyze all those components used in the TV show *Gravity Falls* (Disney Television Animation, 2012-2016) appearing in episodic plots and (re)used to create horizontal lines whose new narratives continue along the show. To do this, the study will be divided into two phases: the first will consist of the identification through an analysis scheme of the existing plantings in the tv show and how they extend horizontally until it pays off. This allows us, in a second phase, to apply a content analysis where it is observed which frequency is necessary to use in each planting category for the payoff to work.

Silvia Rusiñol-Romero and Antonio Moreno-Cárdenas have a degree in Audiovisual Communication and a Master’s Degree in Screenplay, Narrative and Creative Writings, both from the Universidad de Sevilla. They are currently working on their doctoral thesis, within the interuniversity doctoral program in Communication: Silvia focused on the study of children’s narrative and Antonio on digital and transmedia experience. Furthermore, Silvia is also a member of the editorial team of *Comunicación. International Journal of Audiovisual Communication, Advertising and Cultural Studies*.

Giulia Cavazza (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)

Investigating Magic in Disney Animated Canon

“Magic” is one of the keywords that are usually associated with Disney animated movies.

The reason is not only the fact that many of them are fairy tales’ adaptations, but it concerns the foundation of the Disney empire, conceived as a “magic kingdom” “where dreams come true” (as many theme parks all around the world remind to the audience). Therefore, the presence of magical element in Disney movies goes beyond a specific genre to become a distinctive mark of his storytelling, that has deeply influenced the narrative structures. In the first Disney Classics magic is usually related to the inciting incident, as it happens in *Pinocchio* when the fairy gives life to the wooden puppet, or to the “threshold” that, using Christopher Vogler’s metaphor, the hero has to cross in order to go from the ordinary world to the special one.

Even though magic is one of the most recurring elements of Disney animated movies and has been able to overcome the changing of narrative models, especially at the turning of the century, it has not remained unaffected. In fact, many of the heroines of this last decade, such as *Rapunzel* or *Elsa*, still have to deal with a magical power (or, in the extreme case of *Mirabel*, with the inexplicable absence of it), but now it appears much closer to an inner problem than to an external “Call to Adventure”.



This paper will be focus on three or four Disney Classics from different decades, trying to investigate how the narrative role of magic has changed alongside the general approach to fairy tales to Disney's own narrative.

Giulia Cavazza, after a degree in Modern Philology, attended the Master program in International Screenwriting and Production at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milano). She worked for four years as story editor, both on live action tv series such as Doc and Blanca and on animated tv series for young audience. She is now a PhD student in Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures, with a research project about the evolution of adaptation strategies from book to screen in the history of Disney Animation Studios.

Art and Culture

14:30 – 16:00

Evan Nooe (University of South Carolina Lancaster)

Shopping in Florida's Past: The Real and Imagineered History of Disney Springs

In 2015, the Walt Disney Company re-branded Walt Disney World Resort's forty-year-old shopping, dining, and entertainment complex as "Disney Springs." For inspiration, The Disney Company looked to Florida's past to anchor the complex's constructed spaces and narrative. When announced in 2013, Disney Chief Operating Officer Tom Staggs wrote that Disney Springs represented "a timeless and vibrant place that celebrates turn-of-the century lakeside towns that dotted the Florida landscape." With this guiding directive, Disney designers, or "Imagineers", strove to create the façade of a repurposed town and corresponding narrative onto a publicly accessible retail space along Interstate I-4. For Disney Springs Imagineers, the storyline - at times visible to visitors and at times hidden away - presented the shopping center as a unique and enticing retail district that enhanced patron immersion, provided a memorable consumer experience, and ultimately fostered a definitive sense of place on par with fantasy lands of the nearby Magic Kingdom. The creation of Disney Springs provokes questions on the nature of a themed touristic space existing within the real place it is portraying. Is Disney Springs more honest than real Florida places considering the state's legacy of selling fantasy? How does a retail center present the state to local and international visitors? Should we simply dismiss it as a touristic delight, or does Disney Springs integrate into the state of Florida? Ultimately, to fully contemplate these queries, it is integral to connect the real Florida places with the sources of inspiration for Disney Springs. With these questions at the forefront, it is the intent of this paper to consider the intersection of real Florida places and history with the touristic representations at Disney Springs. This will be done through an examination of Florida history, real and fabricated historic architecture, and the deployment of narrative in themed spaces.

Evan Nooe is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of South Carolina Lancaster and historian for the Native American Studies Center. He has a Ph.D. in history and bachelor's degrees in



history and psychology. His work focuses on Southeastern Indigenous history, memory and violence, food in the South, and popular tourism (especially Walt Disney World). His publications have appeared in *Ethnohistory*, *The Southern Quarterly*, and *The Journal of Tourism History*. Nooe's first book *Aggression and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South* will be available from the University of Alabama Press fall 2023.

John Wills (University of Kent)

Disneyland, Cartoon Atoms and Doom Town in the 1950s

This paper explores connections between the Federal Civil Defense Administration's Operation Cue, a fake American townscape created at Nevada Test Site and tested on May 5, 1955, and the opening of Walt Disney's first amusement park, Disneyland, in Anaheim, California, receiving its first guests on July 17, 1955. On the surface, the FCDA's experiment in civil defense and Disney's experiment in mass amusement are unlikely bedfellows, one designed with serious intentions to shock and worry (with the project nicknamed Doom Town in the popular press), the other, a recreational landscape with a focus on fun, frolics and escape. Doom Town and Disneyland sit as improbable corollaries. However, given their close timing, geographical proximity, mid-fifties backdrop and shared target audience, the two landscapes make for interesting comparison. I explore Doom Town and Disneyland as unique mid-50s Cold War landscapes built around similar ideas of entertainment, audience, and mass engagement. I reveal some intriguing synergies and commonalities between the two spaces, finding how both share similar utopian ideology and forward persuasive prototypes of 'future living', both idealize the white middle class nuclear family and push gendered notions of domesticity (from the 'Atoms for Living' kitchen at Disney to 'Grandma's Pantry' at Doom Town). Both depend on corporate sponsorship and use live television to reach out to the American public. Both Disney and the FCDA also mould the 1950's atom into something entertaining and relatable, with Bert the Turtle and Our Friend the Atom only a few years apart. Ultimately, Doom Town and Disneyland represent a shared cultural imaginary to explore here.

John Wills is Professor of American History and Culture at the University of Kent, and author of seven books, including *Disney Culture* (Rutgers University Press, 2017). He co-edits the *European Journal of American Culture* and is currently a Leverhulme Research Fellow and British Academy Eccles Centre Visiting Fellow.



Heather Holian (University of North Carolina, Greensboro)

Crafting a New Art History: Guthrie Courvoisier's Marketing of 'Walt Disney Originals' and the Quest for an American Art, 1938-48

On July 19, 1938, after lengthy negotiations, art dealer Guthrie Courvoisier entered an agreement with Walt and Roy Disney to exclusively market, distribute and sell original production cels from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, as well as future Disney releases. This ambitious enterprise required a savvy marketing campaign that introduced the new art form to gallerists, museum directors, private art collectors and the public alike.

Courvoisier's campaign began in August 1938 and from the start it declared that Disney artwork would "find a permanent niche in the history of art." Ultimately Courvoisier distributed no less than five different exhibition announcements and press releases before apparently striking the magical formula in a remarkable 11-page document from September 1940 that, among other things, notably asserted that the production art of the Walt Disney Studios was "a new art," made by "artists" and "American to the core." This press release continued to be used by Courvoisier until the end of his contract with the Disney brothers and informed dozens of newspaper articles reporting on Disney-Courvoisier exhibitions. The timing for such a marketing strategy could not have been better. During the 1930s and early 40s art critics, as well as average Americans, re-engaged in a recurring debate as they sought to both locate and define a uniquely American art. Through his marketing scheme, Courvoisier boldly offered a candidate: Walt Disney Originals.

Using content analysis data, textual analysis, and newly discovered documents and rapidly evolving research, this paper will consider first, the words and strategies Courvoisier used to market Disney artwork in the United States, second, to what extent the press followed his lead, and lastly how the dealer sought to position Disney Originals, not only in the art world of the 1930s and 1940s, but also in American art history long term.

Dr. Heather Holian is a Professor of Art History at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. She is a specialist on the third decade of artistic production at Pixar, where she gathered more than 100 hours of interviews with the studio's artists, animators and directors. This research has appeared in edited volumes for Bloomsbury, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, McFarland, and the *Animation Studies* journal. Prof. Holian is currently working on new research focused on the early art exhibitions of the Walt Disney Studios during the 1930s and 1940s.



Disney Goes Serious

16:30 – 18:00

Kate Koppy (New Economic School)

The Disneyfication of Death: How Recent Animated Films Create a
New Model of Death and the Afterlife

As scholars have noted, in recent decades, Disney-Pixar films have featured a movement from emphasizing a happily-ever-after ending with a new marriage to showcasing the solidification of relationships within families--between parents and children or among siblings. Alongside this shift in emphasis, films of the past decade have also explored death and the afterlife. In previous presentations to this community at the PCA/ACA and ACLA conferences in 2022, I analyzed several films. This presentation will build on that analysis to theorize this shift in focus and connect to contemporary cultural movements in the US.

Kate Christine Moore Koppy is assistant professor (ntt) in the Department of Humanities at the New Economic School. Her monograph *Fairy Tales in Contemporary American Culture: How We Hate to Love Them* (Lexington Books, 2021) examines the proliferation of fairy tales across media as an American secular scripture.

Aneesh Barai (University of Sheffield)

"Justice is Extreme, Anne!": Challenging Policing in Disney's *The Owl House* and *Amphibia*

Amphibia (Braley, 2019-) and *The Owl House* (Terrace, 2020-) are two recent Disney series that meaningfully centre a racially diverse cast. Both shows have been praised for their diversity, with some critics praising *The Owl House* for its intersectionality and queer representation (such as Fawcett 2022). Both shows insightfully challenge the position of policing in society, a key issue in contemporary North American life and beyond, with particularly urgent ramifications for People of the Global Majority (PGM).

In *Amphibia*, Anne Boonchuy is transported into a world of anthropomorphic frogs and toads. In one episode, she encounters an aggressive paramilitary (toad) force, and presents the radical message to the show's young viewers that the law is not always aligned with morality, and that it can be necessary to stand against the police to fight to protect marginalised people. A later episode playfully highlights the absurdity of "copaganda," mocking media representations of policing.

The Owl House opens with Luz Amity transported to a magical island. She soon finds herself being chased by royal guards to be committed to a "conformitorium." She later regularly faces disciplinary trouble at school and for resisting the island's laws for witches. In both shows, policing enforces norms,



particularly norms that benefit those in power. Moreover, they examine connections between a police state and capitalist society, with the wealthy able to pardon themselves of crimes, while the impoverished have limited legal choices.

With the Washington Post describing the police killing of Black people in the USA as a “pandemic, too” (Obagosie, 2020), these depictions of PGM standing against the social norms of police violence are crucial, not only for racially diverse lives to be fully represented in American media, but to encourage a new generation to critically question an institution that works “to protect white supremacy” (Davis, 2020).

Dr Aneesh Barai is a Lecturer in Education and Children's Culture at the University of Sheffield. They are an interdisciplinary researcher in education, children's literature and media, researching youth cultures and literary/media representations of education. Their research interests are particularly on text and media representations of diverse childhoods and young people’s political agency, and they have written on queer, postcolonial and eco-activist childhoods in children’s literature, television and film. Their most recent publication is a chapter on queer ecologies in the children's animated series *Steven Universe*, *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, and *The Legend of Korra*.

Alexander Pointon (University of Wolverhampton)

Star vs The Forces of Gaslighting

Disney animated series and films since 2020, such as *The Owl House* (Dana Terrace, 2020) and *Encanto* (Byron Howard, Jared Bush, 2021), have been renowned for showing children different representations of family. Luz Noceda discovering a found family on the Boiling Isles in *The Owl House* or the familial pressures depicted in *Encanto*. However, another Disney animated series that uniquely presents the family is *Star vs The Forces of Evil* (SvtFoE) (Daron Nefcy, 2019) for how it portrays gaslighting of and within the Butterfly royal family.

Although the series received some bad reception from audiences owing to the hasty nature of its final season, it contained a deep narrative about the manipulation of the Butterfly family for generations to incite prejudice against the monsters of Mewni. SvtFoE not only provides a narrative surrounding this discrimination but also places the protagonist in a situation where they experience discrimination for their otherness. Star also discovers multi-generational gaslighting of her family and its traumatic effects that caused them to further enable and partake in it throughout the history of their kingdom.

Firstly, this presentation will provide context around the reasons that fans of the animated series felt that the fourth season of SvtFoE ruined the series, before presenting textual analysis of the characters of Star, Moon, Eclipsa and Meteora Butterfly to demonstrate how gaslighting influenced their actions



throughout the series. It will also use theories on generational gaslighting and, more specifically, draw from Caitlin Fisher's (2019) definition of and commentary on gaslighting. The purpose of this analysis is to highlight the fact that while the ending of SvTfOE may have been unpopular amongst fans, it was important that the messages concerning authority, gaslighting and otherness that the final season of the series conveyed were presented to children the way they were.

Alexander Pointon is a postgraduate research student at the University of Wolverhampton who is currently studying to become a Doctor of Philosophy in media and communications. His research centres on the intersection of fan studies with queer theory, particularly the relationships between LGBTQIA2S+ fandoms, corporations, and creators of American animated productions.

Writing Disney Histories

18:30 – 20:00

Studying Hollywood can be hard, especially when it entails primary research. The Walt Disney Company, in particular, can pose particular challenges, not only because of the company's protection of its intellectual property and archival resources, but also because of its financial stakes in producing corporate histories (see Wasko 2020; Thompson 2022). This roundtable presentation brings together historians working on various dimensions of Disney—cultural, industrial, social—to consider how we do Disney history today. In addition to working within and around the company archives in Burbank, we will consider a range of methods, including oral histories and interviews, (auto)ethnography, discourse analysis, and textual analysis. We will also discuss writing for general and academic audiences as well as placing your work in a range of venues. The hope is to both inspire future Disney histories and collaborations, but to reflect on the very process of writing history.

Peter C. Kunze is visiting assistant professor of communication at Tulane University. He is the author of the forthcoming book, *Staging a Comeback: Broadway, Hollywood, and the Disney Renaissance*.

Sabrina Mittermeier is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in British and North American history at the University of Kassel, Germany. She is the author of *A Cultural History of Disneyland Theme Parks – Middle-Class Kingdoms* (Intellect/University of Chicago Press, 2021), the (co)editor of, among other volumes, *Fighting for the Future – Essays on Star Trek: Discovery* (Liverpool University Press, 2020), *The Routledge Handbook of Star Trek* (2022) and *Fan Phenomena: Disney* (Intellect/ University Chicago Press, 2022).

Heather Holian is a Professor of Art History at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. For a decade Prof. Holian conducted research at Pixar and is a specialist on the art and artists of the studio's third decade; that work has appeared in a variety of publications. Currently Prof. Holian is studying the early art exhibitions of the Walt Disney Studios.



Dr. Cindy Mediavilla is a former librarian and UCLA lecturer, whose specialty is library history. Since retiring in 2016, she has focused her efforts on researching and writing the book *Early Women of Disneyland: Artists, Entertainers, and Guest Relations*, due to be published by Lexington Books in 2024.

Jake S. Friedman specializes in animation history as an author (*The Art of Blue Sky Studios*, *The Disney Revolt: The Great Labor War of Animation's Golden Age*, and *The Disney Afternoon: The Making of a Television Renaissance*), and professor (New York University, Rhode Island School of Design). A more complete scope of his work can be found on JakeSFriedman.com.

Susan Ohmer is professor emerita in the Department of Film, Television, and Theatre at the University of Notre Dame. She is writing a volume on the Walt Disney Company for the Routledge Hollywood Centenary Series.

Disney Villains

20:30 – 22:00

Amanda Rutherford (Auckland University of Technology)

The 'Scairy Tales' of Once Upon a Time

Disney film narratives have undergone fundamental changes over the decades. Early film saw the stories of old transformed into sanitised and magical retellings that taught our children morals and virtues. Times have changed, and Disney has moved their stories into a surprisingly darker, more terrifying, and often Gothic mode, where urban, social, and cultural anxieties of despair and 'otherness' are underpinning the narratives. The Gothic mode reveals hidden and troubling aspects of culture and the self, and it appears in many aspects of contemporary western popular culture. Early Gothic itself was "greatly influenced by the fairy tales" (Abbruscato, 2014, p. 8), however the original tales were greatly toned down by Disney to present a child friendly narrative "designed to be 'message' films in the broadest sense, and especially for children" (Pinsky, 2004, p. 2). Parents believed that "only conscious reality or pleasant and wish-fulfilling images should be presented to the child— that he should be exposed only to the sunny side of things" (Bettelheim, 1998, p. 7). For several decades this representation of the fairy tale in Disney film had become the norm, with both criticism and applause for the exclusion of the horrific and chilling early narration of these tales. Whilst Disney film has included monsters and dragons, witches and magic, the terrifying aspects had been removed. However, post 2000 films show that something has changed. I argue that these 'Tales as old as time' have a renewed interest and emphasis based on early 'scairy-tale' text, and with the help of the imagination, have incorporated and produced a Gothic narrative as "a tool for a new kind of self-expression and exploration" (Nixon, 2017), and we now see that the uncanny is not only found in postmodern film and writing.



Amanda Rutherford works in the School of Language and Culture at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. She is a member of the Gothic Association of New Zealand and Australia, the Popular Culture Association of Australia and New Zealand, International Gothic Association, the Pacific Modern and Ancient Language Association and the Northeast Modern Language Association. Her interests include Mediated Popular Culture, Fairy-tale, Fantasy, and horror and she has several publications including work into the connections between Horror and the Disney fairy tale narrative.

Elizabeth Zak (University of Iowa)

Evaluating the Disinformation of the Animated Disney Universe

Although Disney's animated cartoons often take place in the past, they reflect current concerns and worries. Villains are a major part of Disney animated stories. Often presented with a musical entrance, and distinct from their storybook counterparts, the Disney villains are a major element of their corresponding movies. However, one underexplored element of the villains is their tactics of deception. In many movies, they use disinformation and misinformation to achieve their goals. While the villains are always defeated, the harm and fallout from their disinformation is never addressed. I identify three villains who use disinformation against the heroes: the Wolf, from the Three Little Pigs cartoons, Gaston, from Beauty and the Beast, and Dr. Facilier, from The Princess and the Frog. Each of these villains use different methods of disinformation presentation. The Wolf from the Three Little Pigs uses smallscale disguises and other small-scale mechanical tools to trick the pigs and his other victims, while Gaston uses his initial heroic status to lead a mob against the Beast and various members of the castle. Dr. Facilier uses his charisma and magic to both enchant Prince Naveen, and manipulate Naveen's servant, Lawrence for financial gain. They each manipulate trust to obtain favor and use current power structures to their advantage. After evaluating each villain, his plan, and their plan's effectiveness, I explain how their portrayals reflect the anxieties of the time periods they originated in, and their appeal and longevity as popular villains. Finally, I conclude by presenting future plans for research regarding the Disney heroes, villains, and disinformation.

Elizabeth Zak is a PhD candidate at the University of Iowa. Her current research focuses on misinformation, information visualization and information literacy. She also explores misinformation within various popular culture, such as The Twilight Zone and animated Disney movies. She has presented at a number of conferences, such as the Midwest Pop Culture Association Conference, the Core Texts Conference, and the Far West Pop Culture Association Conference. Her publications include Information source and content: articulating two key concepts for information evaluation (2022) and A Visual Exploration of Bias in Covid-19 Coverage (2022).



Silvia E. Storti (Kingston University London)

The Shape of Villainy: Othering in Disney as Index of Cultural Change

As the Disney media output has grown and more assets have been annexed to the roster, so has their portrayal of villainy evolved and adapted. There is no doubt that the antagonist from *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) received a massive upgrade in *Maleficent* (2014). The TV series *Loki* (2021) expanded on the already existing material and complicated the title character further. Animated feature films such as *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021) and *Encanto* (2021) have seemingly done away with traditional villains altogether, while live-action *Cruella* (2021) and *Disenchanted* (2022) elevate them to main character status. All this is a far cry from the two-dimensional antagonists of folklore and fairy tales, Disney's initial guiding light in storytelling. Although an overall shift towards well-rounded characters that audiences can identify with has certainly influenced the change in perspective as regards to villainy in entertainment, what separates contemporary heroes from their villains are very slight shadings of right and wrong, instead of a clear-cut division of the roles. Yet villainy still resonates as the domain of the Other, defined as a minority group tagged as not fitting in within the norms of the more dominant social group; recognisable "us vs them" scenarios. The villain is the ultimate Other from the hero and from the audience, and to look at how villainy has been portrayed is to look at how Others have been represented. My aim is to ask, what is the new shape of villainy in Disney and what can it tell us about our culture and society? Without detracting from past and ongoing empowerment of heroes and heroines, I look at how the representation of the villain has been used as a metaphor for identities and sexualities seen as deviant, and what their inclusivity or exclusivity signals for the narratives we tell.

Silvia E. Storti is a doctoral researcher at Kingston University London. Her recently submitted thesis analyses villainy in fairy-tale retellings, reworkings, and adaptations from the Victorian Era to the contemporary media scene. Part of that research is published in "Interdisciplinary Essays on Cannibalism" (2021), edited by Dr Giulia Champion. She is currently reworking her thesis for publication and her wider research interests are popular culture studies, modern languages and philology. She is a member of The Angela Carter Society, The Folklore Society, and of the Disney, Culture and Society Research Network.

Brittany Eldridge (University College London)

Disney's Villains as Victims: Vilifying the 'Other' Mother in Princess Film

Disney Pictures is an influential film company that has had a long-lasting impact on American culture. With Disney creating live-action remakes of some of their most popular films, it is important to question the messages these films present to their audiences. One of the more interesting notions to be found in Disney films is their stance on motherhood. With a new 'Snow White' film to be released in 2024, the representation of the evil Grimhilde is important to study as she is not only a female villain - a queen -



but a stepmother. This same notion, this trope of the wicked stepmother, is found in Disney's Cinderella franchise as well. Disney's villains are known for their truly wicked characteristics and abuse of the heroine. With *Tangled* (2010), Disney's villain was also that of a mother figure, but the adoptive mother figure. This villainization of the 'other mother,' the non-biological mother, creates a stereotype and negative connotations regarding different types of motherhood. This presentation aims to discuss the representations of the American adoptive mother and stepmother in *Snow White* (1937), *Cinderella* (1950 and 2015), *Tangled* (2010) and *Into the Woods* (2014) as villains and the issues this then causes for adoptive mothers and stepmothers in the family dynamic. By looking into the representation of motherhood, this presentation will also discuss the glorification of the biological mother in their films, creating the duality of the good (biological) versus bad (the other).

Brittany Eldridge is a doctoral candidate at the University College London. Her most recent work published is "Forgive Me Mother for I have Sinned: Cinderella's Stepmother Meets Derrida's Forgiveness" in *Woke Cinderella* (2020). She is the co-editor on several upcoming edited collections, such as *The Frozen Phenomenon* (2023) and *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (2023). Her research focuses on representations of maternal archetypes in art, literature, and film. Her other interests include the adaptation of fairy tales, film, mythology, literary theory, young adult literature, queer studies, and gender studies.

DAY 5

Friday, 30 June

Animation, a History

12:30 - 14:00

Sanskriti (Indian Institute of Technology)

What's Cooking and Whos' Cooking?: Locating the Politics of Ethnic Food in Select Disney and Pixar Cinema

Food has been asserted to have a simulacrum value in the politics of identity sustaining nationalist, regionalist, gender, ethnic, and other local cognitive schemas. Food and cooking inform the political economy of an individual and community where the hegemonic structures of its society are mirrored in production, consumption, and ritualistic sharing (BanerjeeDube 2016; Coleman 2011; Poulain 2017).

Food practices have been scrutinized under the theoretical underpinnings and tools of anthropology, nutrition, neoliberalism, globalization, race, and caste to determine how food acts as an intermediary for social stratification. The culinary or gastronomic grammar maintained within a community also serves as a tool for cultural memory, thus a catalyst for evoking oral memories, folklore, and urban legends. Food has always been an object of cultural dialogue between humans, deities, and ancestral spirits in



the form of food gifts, religious offerings, and ritualistic sacrifices (Counihan and Kaplan 2005). While supermarkets, kitchens, restaurants, urban farms, and farmer's markets signify semiotic power structures on the place and space politics, food in the kitchen and on dinner tables brings about discourses of identity and family. Food has also been critical in lending a distinct visual grammar to cinema and televisual works where characters consistently "negotiate questions of identity, power, culture, class, spirituality, or relationship through food" (Lyons 2004). In Disney movies *The Princess and the Frog*, *Ponyo*, *Coco*, *Encanto*, and *Raya and the Last Dragon*, food does not operate as a prop. Instead, it is "used as a narrative and symbolic element that plays a central role" (Nicholson 2001). The select movies create interrogation sites where characters belonging to the ethnic minority communities of African American, Japanese, Mexican, Colombian, and Southeast Asian engage in an interplay of power and representation through food. The paper aims to document these interrogation sites and decode the analytic category of race within select Disney movies.

Sanskriti is a Doctoral Candidate at the School of Liberal Arts, Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur, India. Her research area is a broad intersection of Cultural Studies, Visual Cultures, Fandom, Media Studies, Food Studies, and Transnationalism. Her Ph.D. thesis concerns an Ethnographic Study of K-Drama fan communities in India's NorthEast of Manipur.

Amy Davis (University of Hull)

Donald Gets Drafted: Donald Duck and US National Identity During WWII

In Disney's World War II-era commercial output, the most frequently used character was Donald Duck. By the late 1930s, Donald had surpassed Mickey Mouse as the studio's most popular character, and it was believed that his persona was such that he was Disney's most suitable character to star in the majority of their war-related shorts. From the moment his country declared war on Japan in December 1941, Donald Duck went to work to defeat the Axis. Appearing in around a dozen war-themed shorts over the course of 1942 to 1944, Donald Duck showed his fellow Americans why paying taxes is a contribution to the war effort; the importance of participating in the Home Guard; and why he was doing his patriotic duty in the military (where we see him in roles from a private undergoing basic training through to his serving as a commando operating behind enemy lines). Over the course of these shorts, Donald emerged as a kind of "American Everyman" not in spite of, but rather because of the fact that his personality flaws - selfishness, irascibility, and laziness - are flaws most people can relate to. But by putting his own wants and needs aside in the interest of the greater good, Donald steps forth as a character who not only demonstrates his patriotism, but also his bravery in the face of great personal risk. This combination helped to make him a character with whom the American public could identify, and who could help inspire the American people to overcome their own personal shortcomings to contribute to the war effort. By examining Donald's wartime films, this paper will show both how - and why - Donald Duck came to stand in for the average American during WWII.



Dr. Amy M. Davis is a lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Hull, where she teaches (amongst other things) American Animation History and Disney Studies. Her publications include *Good Girls & Wicked Witches, Handsome Heroes & Vile Villains*, and *Discussing Disney*, as well as papers including “The Dark Prince and Dream Women: Walt Disney and Mid-Twentieth Century American Feminism”.

Emma Bálint (University of Szeged)

The Monster Within: Tim Burton at the Walt Disney Studios

However incongruent their styles might seem, it is difficult to talk about Tim Burton and his cinematic career without mentioning the Walt Disney Studios. Their alliance was made official and irrefutable once and for all when, in the late 2000s, Burton returned as director and producer to the studio he had initially set out from. Their list of cooperation began with the re-release of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), and, in the span of a decade, Burton contributed to the creation of several noteworthy films under the wings of the studio: *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *Frankenweenie* (2012), *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (2016), and *Dumbo* (2019). Although this partnership appears to have ended, Burton’s impact on the studio and on popular culture is long-lasting.

The wide-reaching influence of Tim Burton’s dark yet deeply meaningful art is made obvious in the edited scholarly collections published on his works in recent years—*The Works of Tim Burton* (2013, Palgrave Macmillan), *The Philosophy of Tim Burton* (2014, University of Kentucky), *A Critical Companion to Tim Burton* (2017, Lexington Books), *Tim Burton’s Bodies* (2021, Edinburgh University Press)—, however, I believe that the aforementioned segment of his career holds intriguing information not only on the auteur himself but on contemporary trends in visual culture as well. In this paper, I explore the “Burtonesqueness” of these films and examine the presence of Gothic elements in them with the ultimate aim to see how these films fit into the projected image of the Walt Disney Studios in 21st century.

Emma Bálint, PhD candidate, University of Szeged, is currently working on her dissertation, in which she explores transmedial narratology through contemporary adaptations of the tale “Little Red Riding Hood.” She has presented at several international conferences and has published research papers and reviews in English and in Hungarian in journals (*AMERICANA*, *HJEAS*, *Híd*, *Djetinjstvo*) as well as in two edited volumes: *Travelling around Cultures* (Cambridge Scholars, 2016) and *Turning the Page* (L’Harmattan, 2017). Bálint has been the review editor of *AMERICANA: E-journal for American Studies* since 2015.



Disney and Animals

14:30 – 16:00

Antares Leask (Arlington Public Schools/Northern Virginia Community College)

"There Is No Finer Cat than I Am": Disney's Asian Cat Problem

Everybody may want to be a cat, but Disney of the mid-twentieth century had problematic cats, particularly Si and Am in 1955's *Lady and the Tramp* and Shun Gon in 1970's *Aristocats*. These three cats perpetuate Asian stereotypes while also being animated yellowface – each was voiced by a white actor. While Shun Gon's bandmate, Scat Cat was voiced by a Black actor, Scatman Crothers, Disney animators of the time felt it was appropriate to allow a white actor to use a stereotypical "Asian" voice while saying "Asian" words as the cat plays piano with chopsticks. Although Disney has flagged each film for racist images that "were wrong then and are wrong now," and "We Are Siamese" was removed from the liveaction *Lady and the Tramp*, what was the historical situation that allowed these highlighted moments to appear in the original films? This paper will explore the environment that surrounded both films, as well as the lingering 19th century belief in the "Yellow Peril" that led to these feline characters being villainized for being a danger to an American baby, not to mention a good ol' American dog, as well as a temptation into the world of decadent jazz.

Antares Russell Leask teaches English for Northern Virginia Community College and Arlington Public Schools. She holds a Ph.D. in English, an M.Ed. in Gifted Education, an M.Ed. in Secondary Education, a B.A. in English, and is a National Board Certified Teacher. Her dissertation focused on the impact of white privilege on paranormal reality television. Other research interests include popular culture, horror, Disney, and cryptozoology.

Karli Brittz (University of Pretoria)

'A Ruff Ride': Critically Exploring Dogs as Companion Species in Disney Theme Parks

A recent video of a service dog meeting Donald Duck at Disney World has reached over 10.8 million views online, highlighting a new trend: service dogs at Disney Theme Parks. The global phenomenon has led to several people falsely presenting dogs as service animals to access Disney and capture the perfect picture to share online. These 'new guests' in Disney Theme Parks form part of the important ongoing conversation regarding Disney and animal representation. Existing as hybrid companion species beyond Disney's jurisdiction they could showcase a possible potential sense of animal agency, altering the guest's experience, but also the representation of animals at Disney.



From iconic characters, such as Mickey Mouse and his dog Pluto, to Disney's Animal Kingdom, a key aspect of The Walt Disney Company's transmedia success centers on human-animal relations. Scholars have extensively considered animal encounters at Disney, with a critical focus on anthropocentrism and concern for an ecological depiction of animals. Specifically, Walt Disney Theme Parks are scrutinised for the objectification and Disneyfication of animals. The growing number of service dogs in Disney Theme Parks, as well as their viral presence on social media, open a space for conversation regarding Disney species encounters.

In this paper I critically consider the significance of Disney service dogs, both in the Disney Parks and online. Informed by Haraway's (2007) theory of companion species and Berger's *Looking at Animals* (1977), I firstly contextualise Disney animal encounters in relation to existing literature. Secondly, through a hermeneutical reading of service dog encounters shared online, I question whether Disney service dogs are demystifying anthropocentrism, or if they are merely extensions of the current anthropocentric human-animal relation currently prominent throughout the Disney Franchise. Critically considering the role of these animals is vital to renegotiate species relations and representation in contemporary media.

Karli Brittz is a postdoctoral candidate in Digital Culture and Media at the University of Pretoria, where she teaches Visual Culture Studies and Digital Culture. Karli obtained a PhD in Visual Studies from the University of Pretoria in 2020. In her thesis, Karli offered a critical analysis of companion species on Instagram, for which she received the NIHSS award for best digital humanities visualisation project in 2021. Her main research and teaching interests consider human-nonhuman relations in the postdigital age, specifically in relation to popular culture phenomenon and social media.

Hannah Palsa (Kansas State University)

Pluto Joins Up: Pluto, Disney, and the War Dog Cartoons of Walt Disney Studios

Following the induction of dogs into the military on March 13, 1942, film studios scrambled to create cartoons based on the war dogs of World War II. Walt Disney Studios created the most cartoons centered on dogs in the military with four being produced beginning in 1942 with *The Army Mascot* and continuing until December 1945 with *Canine Patrol*. All the cartoons starred Mickey Mouse's loyal canine companion, Pluto. Though not specifically focused on *Dogs for Defense, Inc.*, the organization that recruited civilian dogs for the military, Pluto's adventures in the military can be read and understood as promoting *Dogs for Defense, Inc.*, and showcasing the service of real-life war dogs.

Hannah Palsa is a PhD Candidate at Kansas State University. Her research is focused on *Dogs for Defense Inc* and the American public during World War II. Outside of war dogs, she is interested in how pet keeping is portrayed in Walt Disney films, and the studio's response to World War II. She is a collector of Disney merchandise particularly *Oliver and Company*, *Lady and the Tramp*, and *the 101 Dalmatians*. She is owned by a very, very spoiled cat named Smokey.



Princesses

16:30 – 18:00

Hannah Helm (University of Salford)

Teaching Disney through Creative Outreach Workshops: A Critical Reflection

This reflective paper discusses a series of outreach workshops entitled 'Deconstructing Disney: Society, Culture, and Creativity', which took place at Media City in March 2023. The workshops were delivered to groups of learners aged 14-15, and they focused on the social, cultural, and political impact of Disney. The workshops were fun and light-hearted in nature, but they were also pedagogical and encouraged students to consider the dominant influence of Disney in our contemporary moment.

Through the workshops, students were able to hone key critical thinking skills and build confidence by sharing viewpoints in a supportive and thought-provoking space. The workshops provided a stimulating and interactive platform in which students could explore the impact of Disney in society and culture, particularly through the lens of Disney film. The students considered changing representations of gender in four film examples: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), and *Mulan* (2020). The activities – which included analysis and discussion of the film clips and playing a game based on opinions about Disney – were both enjoyable and educational for students. By the end, students understood that Disney films implicitly and explicitly shape our attitudes and experiences and that common stereotypes in Disney films ultimately influence how we view ourselves and others.

Reflectively discussing the workshops and feedback gained from participants, I will share 'how to' strategies that can be used to inform future lessons on Disney, whilst also sharing which strategies worked best (and which did not) in terms of engagement. It is my hope that this paper will emphasise the significance of teaching students about Disney, exemplifying Janet Wasko's (2020) recent claim that 'it is important to consider the Disney phenomenon seriously and to insist that it is a legitimate focal point for cultural and social analysis'.

Hannah Helm is a third-year PhD student and lecturer at the University of Salford. Her interdisciplinary doctoral project analyses anti-sanist and anti-ableist representations of mad and disabled women in nineteenth-century children's literature and Disney film. Hannah has published peer-reviewed articles in *Brontë Studies* and *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*, as well as a book chapter in *Gender and Female Villains in Twenty-First Century Fairy Tale Narratives*. Hannah has an article forthcoming in a Special Issue of *Journal of Gender, Ethnic, and Cross-Cultural Studies*, and she also leads the 'Widening Participation in Research' EDI Project (University of Salford 2022/2023).



Dori Koehler (Southern New Hampshire University)
Returning The Heart To Te Fiti: Moana's Mythic Message

"I will carry you here in my heart you remind me that come what may I know the way!
I AM MOANA!"

Disney princesses are a global phenomenon. They are deeply imprinted on our global psyche. Love them or hate them, we can't ignore them. They are often the targets of criticism, often with fair cause. But the truth is that they are far more complex and narratively significant than what the shallow critiques of them would have us believe. Disney princesses reflect what Jungian theorists call the anima consciousness, giving image to Walt Disney's admonition that his stories gotta have heart, and calling audiences to consider the healing potential of the myth present in each one of Disney's princess narratives. Princesses reflect the dynamic relationship between the attitudes of the artists at the studio and the people who engage them. In my opinion, there is no greater archetypal image of the Disney princess as healer than Moana. She journeys deep into the psyche returning the archetypal heart to Mother Earth and through that journey, she heals herself, her island, and her people. This presentation explores Moana as a character that enters directly into the traditional space of the wounded healer, the shaman, and a character who returns with deep wisdom for her community. I explore the film as a call to healing through an intersectional lens of archetypal theory and the decolonization of Disney's myth. Specifically, I will ask the following questions: what does it mean to return the heart of Te Fiti to Disney's mythic message? In what ways does this message speak to the absolute necessity of connecting to the archetypal heart from an indigenous perspective to begin that process of decolonization? And how does healing the collective heart prepare the collective psyche for action in this time of cataclysmic climate change?

Dori Koehler, Ph.D. is a cultural mythologist and scholar of American popular culture. She is a professor of Humanities at Southern New Hampshire University. Her research focuses on Disney, ritual, fandoms, and myth in the American cultural diaspora. Her book *The Mouse and the Myth: Sacred Art and Secular Ritual* is available through Amazon. She is a regular presenter at the national conference for the Popular Culture Association where she continues to ask questions about American mythic identity in this time of enduring change. She lives in Santa Barbara, California, USA with her husband, Bruce, and their cocker spaniel, Sorcha.



Nichol Brown (Illinois State University)

Tiny Feet and a Tinier Waist: The Dangers of Identification in Disney's Live-Action Cinderella

Although the Walt Disney Company first rose to fame for its technological innovation in animation, viewers are more recently seeing a reversal in this trend, as Disney has begun releasing live-action adaptations of its backlog. These live-action films are unique in that they are a Disney adaptation within a Disney adaptation, and there are clear changes between these sets of films, as the Walt Disney Company continues to build on its own legacy—a prime example of which is Disney's multiple iterations of Cinderella. Drawing on Maria Nikolajeva's work on subjectivity and narrative theory, I argue that the animated Cinderella (1950) develops empathic identification for its audience, while the live-action Cinderella (2015) develops immersive identification. The live-action film employs various strategies—including the focalization of the opening sequences, meta-narrative elements, narrator subjectivity, and the sidelining of the mice characters—that encourage the viewer to identify with Ella, while the animated film encourages the viewer to empathize with Cinderella. However, the Walt Disney Company goes a step further with this immersive identification through its synergistic merchandising power, which prompts a child to quite literally step into the shoes—and body—of a character. For the live-action Cinderella in particular, this is problematic because of Lily James' unrealistic, unhealthy, and unattainable waist in her iconic ball gown. The film and its creators seem to struggle with balancing reality and fantasy in the costume design, a struggle that is then passed on to the audience, who are not given the necessary tools to separate fantasy from reality due to the immersive identification developed by the film itself. Therefore, because these live-action films encourage the imitation of bodies—rather than merely the imitation of values—the stakes are increased for the child audience, demanding more extensive transparency regarding the reasonable attainability of these standards.

Nichol Brown is a PhD student in English Studies at Illinois State University. She received her B.A. and her M.A. from Arizona State University, where her research focused on contemporary young adult literature, fairy tale retellings, speculative fiction, and posthumanism. She currently teaches Foundations in Children's Literature at Illinois State University, while preparing to begin her comprehensive exams in the fall.

Polina Rybina (Lomonosov Moscow State University)

Madness as Metaphor in Linda Woolverton's Adaptations for Walt Disney Pictures

The paper focuses on several representations of "mad" characters in animated and feature films written by Linda Woolverton - *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), and *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (2016). Metaphoric meanings of what is labelled madness are diverse: they include fear of otherness (Belle's father taken to an asylum, little Alice unable to sleep because she's "come round the bend"), joyful comedy (the mad tea party), and "madness" as a tool for introducing positive change into the world ("I make the path", Alice says). Although Susan Sontag (*Illness as Metaphor*, 1978) concludes



that our inability to comprehend illness might give rise to damaging metaphors, this paper views a metaphor as an effective instrument to unpack Woolverton's narratives of success. The first part of the paper focuses on how madness is represented on screen. How is it mediated through the characters' bodies so that the audiences can relate to it? In her book *Embodying Adaptation* (2022), Christina Wilkins suggests close reading disorders as screen constructs: "psychological difference relies on a visualising of psychic otherness in order to be classified" [Wilkins 2022, 149]. We will look at the ways characters are positioned in the *mise-en-scène*, represented through dialogue, and function as plot-driving figures, achieving (or not) their central goals. In the second part of my talk, I will try to find an answer to the following: what metaphoric meanings of "madness" are particularly endorsed in the adaptations to make films suit the family audiences they are addressing?

Dr Polina Rybina is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Discourse and Communication Studies, Faculty of Philology at Lomonosov Moscow State University; member of Association of Adaptation Studies (AAS). Her primary interests include film adaptation and the theory of the film narrative, as well as adaptation and narrativity in contemporary theatre. She is the author of articles on film adaptation and appropriation published in Russia, Canada, Italy, and France such as: "Condensation Recondensed: Memory Regimes in Film Adaptation", *Transcr(é)ation*. Vol. 1, London (ON): King's University, 2022, p. 1–18; "Between Poetics and Production. A Russian Trace in Shakespeare: The Animated Tales (Soyuzmultfilm / Christmas Films / S4C / BBC Wales)", *Interfaces: Image, Texte, Language*, № 47, Dijon: Université de Bourgogne, 2022, p. 63 – 78, etc.

Business and Merchandising

18:30 – 20:00

Priscilla Hobbs (Southern New Hampshire University)

Mickey on Main Street: Consuming the Disney Brand

The Disney brand is outwardly built on the commitment to making Disney available to all dreamers, but is motivated by an American capitalist ideal that privileges consumption and financial success over the economic means of Disney consumers. This is most noticeable in the continued increase in the prices for the theme parks, and monetization of the smaller aspects of the park experience, as well as merchandizing strategies that proliferate marketplaces with Disney product. The desire to consume Disney resonates with a cultural desire for the American utopian ideal that Walt Disney promised in his television broadcasts during the construction of Disneyland. This presentation proposes to take a close look at the connection between consuming the Disney brand as a means to connect with an idyllic American Dream, with particular emphasis on the original Disneyland theme park, its advertisement on the Disneyland television show, and how Main Street, U.S.A., tapped into an archetypal hyperreality underlying the American experience. Given Disney's 100 year studio anniversary, this is an opportunity to



unpack a century of influence that continues to spread across the globe. The Disney brand offers reassurance through its vast spread across time and place, beliefs and values. This is also a potent opportunity to reflect on Disney's self-concept as its products approach copyright maturity and the impact on consumption of the brand.

Dr. Priscilla Hobbs is a cultural mythologist and regularly writes and presents research on popular culture with emphasis on Disney Studies. She is the editor of the *Disney and Culture* series for Lexington Books, as well as author of *Walt's Utopia: Disneyland and American Mythmaking* and editor of *Interpreting and Experiencing Disney: Mediating the Mouse*. She is a Senior Associate Dean at Southern New Hampshire University.

Leigh H. Edwards (Florida State University)

Star Texts in *The Mandalorian*: Disney+ and Branded Authenticity

This paper examines how *The Mandalorian* (2019-) uses key aspects of star texts in order to convey for Disney+ what Sarah Banet-Weiser (2012) would term "branded authenticity," where brands attempt to project an image of genuineness in order to spark audience affective investment in their brand. In order to build their emotion-filled brand identity, Disney+ deploys SVOD television series such as this one that obviously use transmedia storytelling to extend the Star Wars universe, but what is distinctive about this particular series is how extensively it also keys its intertextuality into specific star texts and genres. For example, it uses the star text of castmember Timothy Olyphant, an actor well known for previous television neo Westerns like *Deadwood* (2004-2006) and *Justified* (2010-2015), in order to key into the Western genre. It also references the star text of castmember Katee Sackoff, an actor well known for playing Starbuck in the *Battlestar Galactica* television series reboot (2004-2009), in order to play off of science fiction genre tropes that both draw from the Star Wars universe and also draw on other science fiction franchises. In so doing, the television series makes use of what Sean Redmond (2017) would call "liquid celebrity," meaning the fluidity of the star text or what Richard Dyer termed the "star image" (1979) as actors and celebrities can take on different connotations that they carry with them from different roles. As Amanda Lotz (2020) has established, streaming platforms often depend on nostalgia for their back library of titles in order to pull in SVOD audiences. In this case, Disney+'s *The Mandalorian* banks on not just the Star Wars nostalgia of recycling characters such as Luke Skywalker in new contexts, but it also taps into nostalgia for broader fanbases in key genres by drawing on the star texts of castmembers.

Leigh H. Edwards is Professor of English, Florida State University. She authored the books *Dolly Parton, Gender, and Country Music* (2018, Foreword Book of the Year Award), *Johnny Cash and the Paradox of American Identity* (2009), and *The Triumph of Reality TV: The Revolution in American Television* (2013).



She researches intersections of gender and race in popular music, television, and new media. Her article on Disney's Pocahontas and branded multiculturalism appeared in *Narrative*; other research in *Feminist Media Studies*, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, *Journal of Popular Television*, *FLOW*, *Journal of Popular Music Studies*. Institute for Bob Dylan Studies board.

Jamie Clarke (Solent University)

The War for the Disney Succession: Management Strategy and *Ratatouille* (2007)

In 1989 NeXT launched The Cube. NeXT was a computer company launched by Steve Jobs and he made a visit to the Walt Disney Company eager to evangelise about what The Cube could do for the venerable hand-drawn animation company. Pitching to Disney insiders Jeffrey Katzenberg and Frank Wells, Jobs 'launched into an excited spiel about putting the ability to create computer animation into the hands of every computer owner' (Young & Simon, 2005, p. 144). Katzenberg's response spoke to the prevailing culture of the company under the stewardship of CEO Michael Eisner since 1984. Katzenberg responded. 'I own animation ... and nobody's going to get it ... It's as if someone comes to date my daughter. I have a shotgun. If someone tries to take [animation] away, I'll blow his balls off' (Katzenberg reported in Young & Simon, 2005, p. 144-5)

Fast-forward to 2006 and Steve Jobs would be Disney's largest shareholder following the ousting of Eisner and Disney's subsequent purchase of Jobs' company PIXAR under new CEO Bob Iger. The flagship, first release of the new regime would be *Ratatouille* (2007). The film was at once a direct rebuttal of the culture under Eisner alongside a validation of the PIXAR approach to business as organised by the film's central premise that 'Anyone can cook'.

This paper will analyse this struggle for boardroom power at Disney. I will argue that in retrospect the rhetoric and strategies from each side reveal a sea-change in management strategy from the proprietorial residual approach of old Hollywood to the emerging Northern California business culture. The paper will conclude by discussing Bob Iger's attempts to reconcile the two approaches in the aftermath of the war for the Disney succession.

Originally from Manchester, I studied English Literature and then Film Studies in Sheffield. I now teach at Solent University in Southampton where I teach primarily on the BA (Hons) Media Production degree. My research interests in Disney stem from the final chapter of my PhD which focussed on how different academic methodologies have been used to look at animation. This led to an optional module that I taught at Southampton entitled 'Micky Mouse Studies'. Beyond this, my research interests are organised especially around the interconnection between Hollywood corporate culture and how this corporate culture is packaged and communicated.



Jason Scott (Leeds Trinity University)

Disney+ as a Platform for Franchise Expansion

In this paper I explore how Disney has pivoted its franchise strategy, from a focus on dominating theatrical box-office (with consequent home entertainment revenues) through its Branded Studios – Marvel, Lucasfilm/Star Wars, Pixar – to a transmedia branding and interlocking narrative approach to streaming with Disney+.

Differentiated from Netflix, and to a lesser extent other global streaming platforms, Disney+ has leveraged its four-quadrant franchises to rapidly grow its subscriber numbers and minimise churn, whilst also keeping customers within the Disney conglomerate ecosystem. In parallel, Marvel and Lucasfilm have adopted production and narrative strategies that build on their respective interlocking narratives (the MCU) and transmedia branding to expand their respective Universes. Star Wars and the MCU have provided Disney+ its most popular exclusive Original tentpole series, whilst the streaming service has provided both a site for interconnection and expansion, hosting long form Quality TV storytelling that can feed into and cross-promote other franchise products, but also bolster their studios' reputation for creative storytelling, grounded in the creative autonomy of these subsidiary studios and their individual production units. Furthermore, the first few years of Disney+ have emphasised the re-valuation and renewing of Disney's Intellectual Property (the library of films, and legacy characters) through updating, for new audiences, best illustrated by series like *The Mandalorian*, *Andor*, *Loki*, *Falcon and the Winter Soldier*, and *Ms. Marvel*.

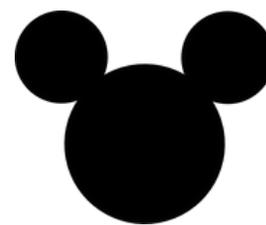
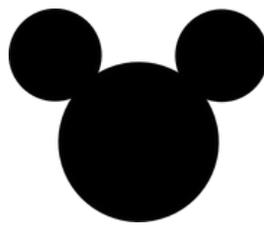
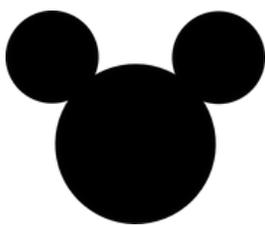
Dr Jason Scott is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at Leeds Trinity University. His current research focuses on Disney+ and the company's shifts into streaming, as well as contemporary animation, the Star Wars franchise, and the Iger era Disney company more generally. He has also begun research on contemporary franchise adaptations and transmedia storytelling, in film and television. The latter relates to his continuing research on the historical development of the character-oriented franchise in film and related media. His chapter 'Disney+ Legacy Media Strikes Back' is forthcoming in *Television by Stream* (McFarland) edited by Christina Adamou and Sotiris Petridis.



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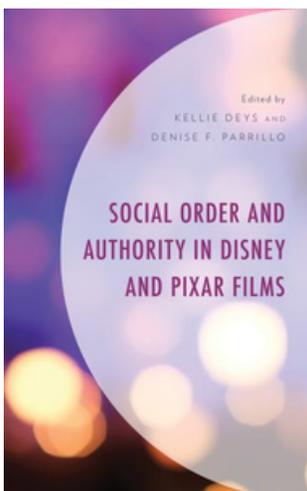
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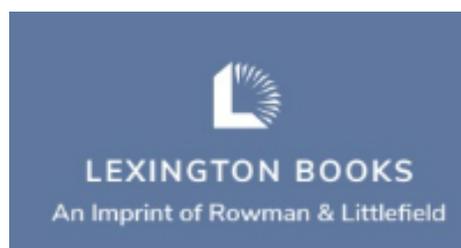
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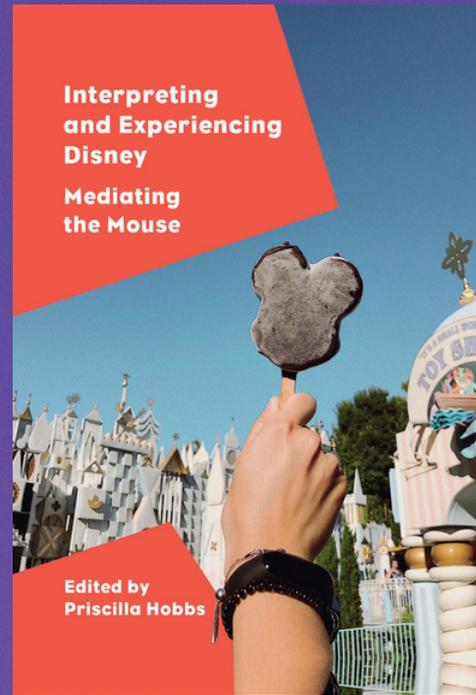
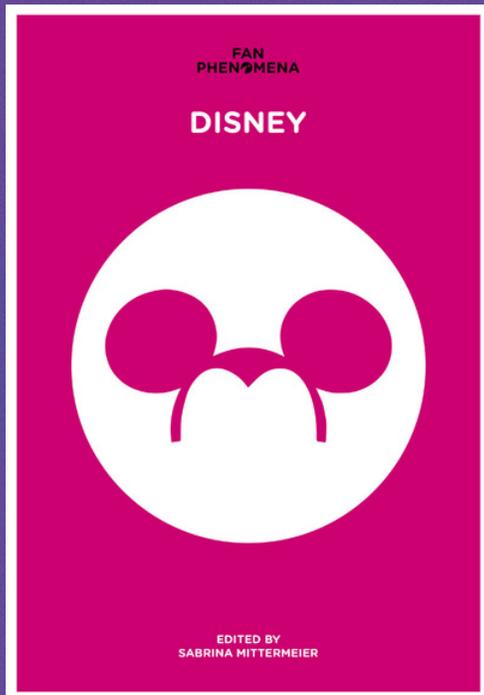
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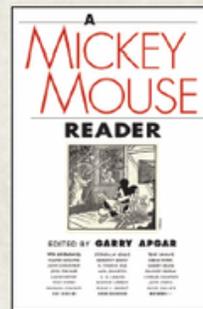
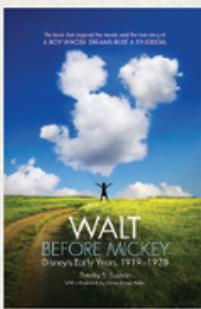
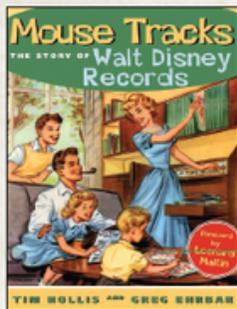
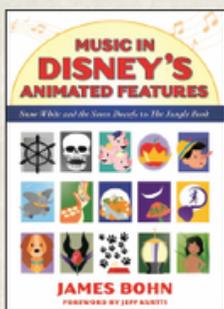
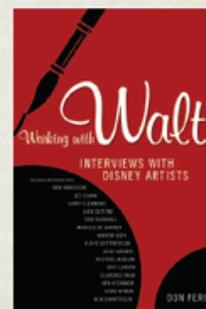
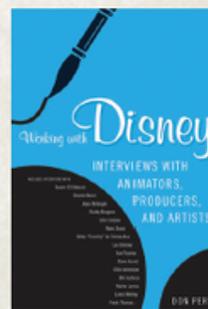
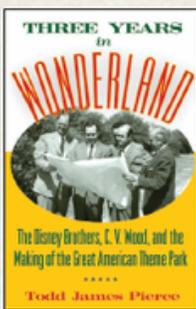
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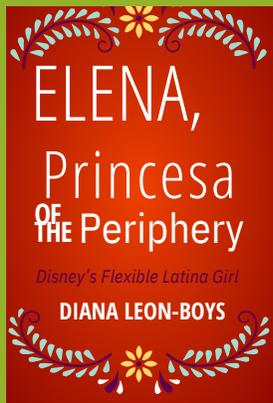


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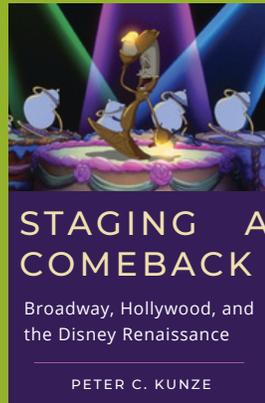
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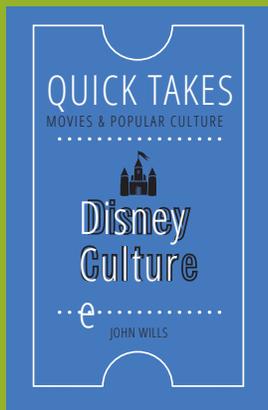
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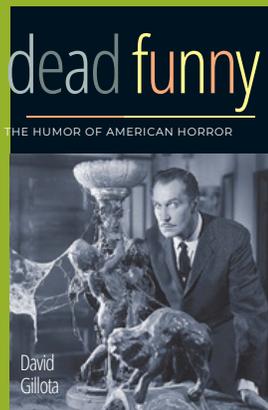
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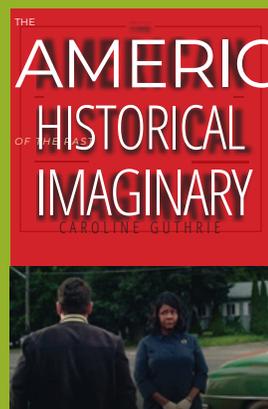
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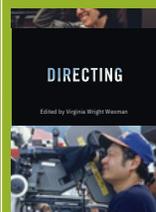


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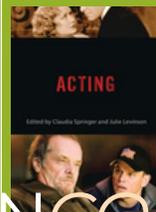
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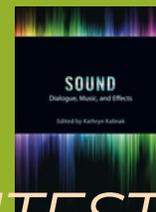
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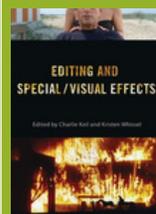
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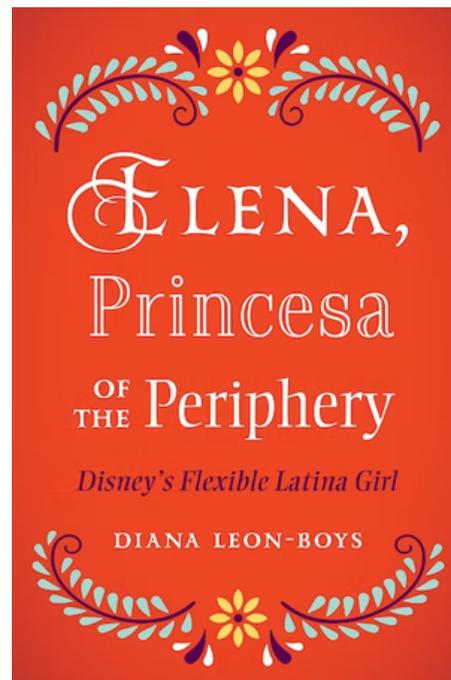
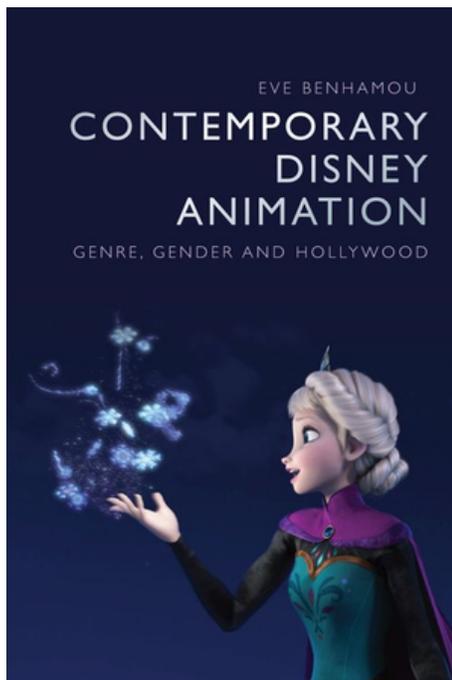
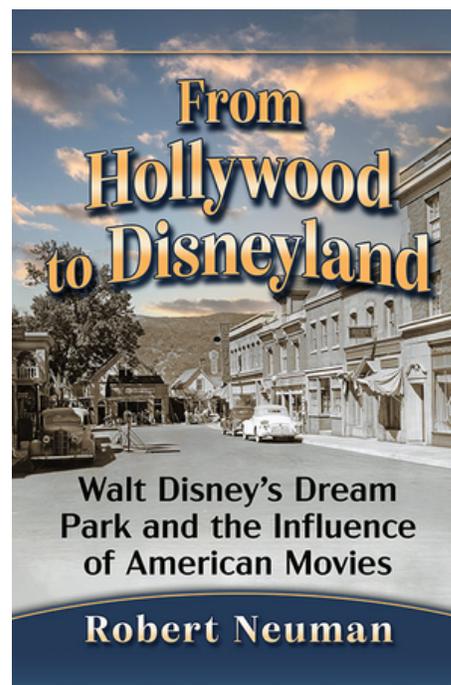
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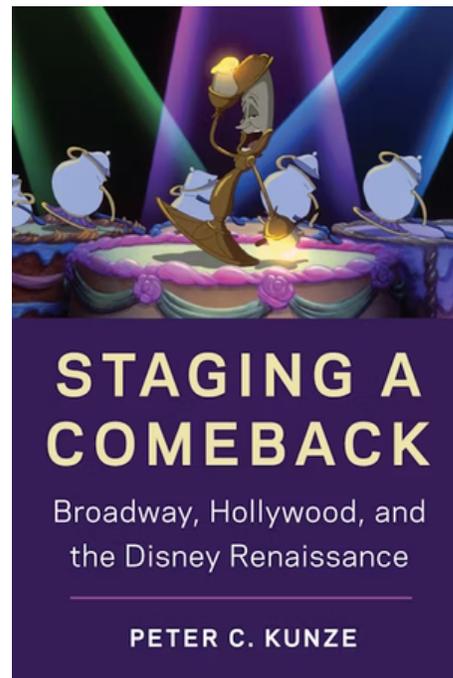
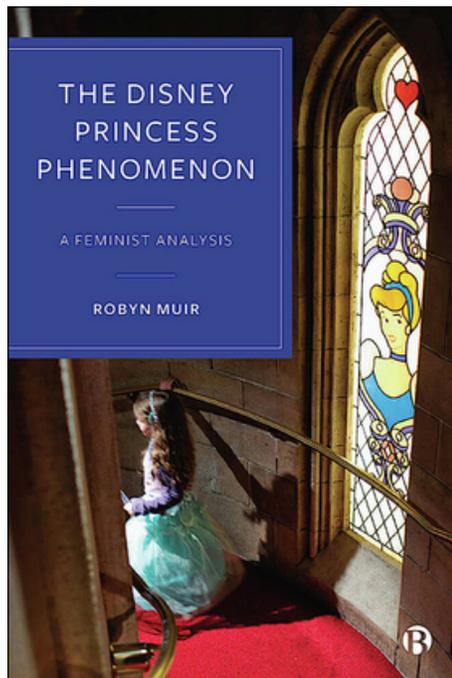
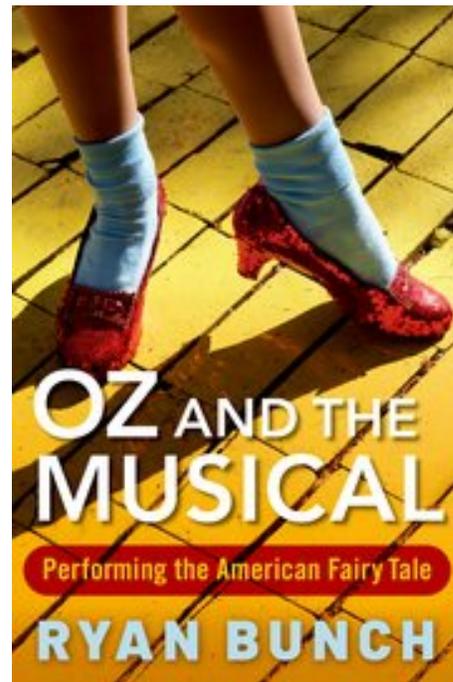
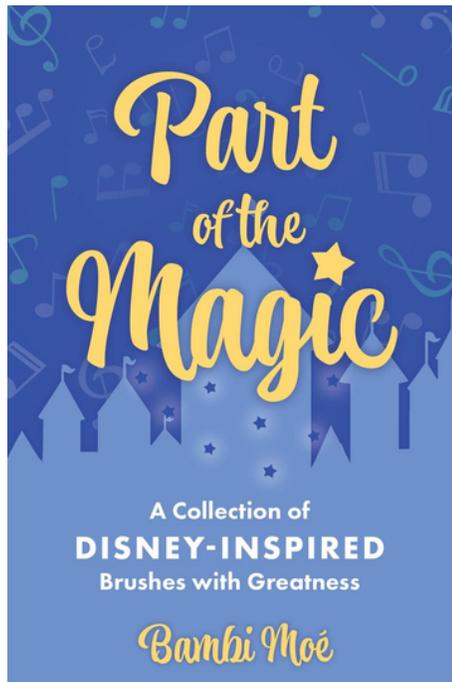
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