

M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-S-E

by J.O. Tate

*"First grubs obscene, then wriggling worms,
Then painted butterflies."*

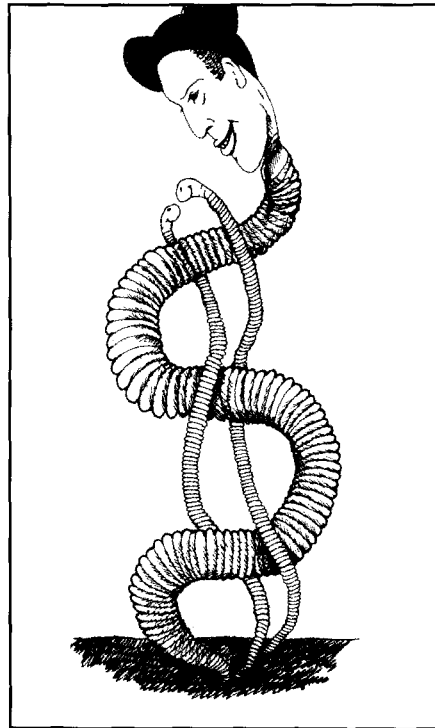
—Alexander Pope, *Phryne*

**Tinker Belles and Evil Queens:
The Walt Disney Company
from the Inside Out**
by Sean Griffin
New York: New York University Press;
292 pp., \$55.00

Maybe I'm bewitched, but I'm not bothered and certainly I'm not bewildered by Sean Griffin's *too* divinely unbelievable disquisition on one of everybody's favorite topics, and I'm not going to waste space by saying what *that* is, because you just read the title and subtitle and you'll know what I mean. So don't be a lazy little troll; just do your homework and I'll do mine, and we're going to get along just fine, you and me. I mean, you and I.

Now I *am* utterly—and I mean entirely, totally, and completely—convinced that *Tinker Belles and Evil Queens* is a vital work of our time, for so many reasons that I simply *can't* enumerate all of them in the stringent space limitation imposed on my freewheeling discourse by the rather bitchy editor of this section of this rather retrograde journal (and believe me, my little chickadees, they could all use some consciousness-raising around here). But clutch my pearls, my extempore effusions are just exhausting my precious space—I'm caught in the glow of my own brilliance, just trapped by the sound of my own dulcet tones! What's a girl to do?

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H. Ward Streett

I simply *must* pull myself together. But where to start? Begin at the beginning, you silly thing! So, in the first place then, this tome says a lot about the state of the academy *de nos jours*, being obviously a doctoral dissertation in critical studies at the University of Southern California and afterward—*cela va sans dire!*—published by N.Y.U., making Griffin bi-coastal if not bi-anything else. Of course, as is only too well known, he's teaching now at Florida Atlantic University. His significant other, Harry Benshoff, is the author of *Monsters in the Closet: Homosexuality and the Horror Film* (1997), and although Benshoff was cited in the index only twice, I found him in the notes and bibliography more often than that: I just thought that it was so nice 'n' cozy that

they could be together in print that way. Of course, Benshoff's article, "Heigh-Ho, Height-Ho, Is Disney High or Low? From Silly Cartoons to Postmodern Politics" (*Animation Journal*, Fall 1992), may have just *possibly* suggested a teensy-weensy something to Griffin about his topic, if you know what I mean, and I just know you do. But this book is state-of-the-art, and to confirm that I looked for the *de rigueur* citations of Michel Foucault—and there they were. So much for any pesky old academic credibility concerns. You know, it takes me back, really. I used to hang out with Michel, but he had problems. (Did he ever have problems. *Quelle horreur!*)

But this book also has so much to teach us about style and nuance and theory—it's a veritable bonanza, a cornucopia, if you'll permit a frivolous flight of fancy, of instructive examples. *Figure-toi*: How on earth do we represent the dazzling inflections of our heightened, urgent speech in the boring conventions of ordinary discourse? Griffin has shown the way, and it just reminds me of Dr. Evil in those cute Austin Powers movies. You remember how, with finger gestures, he'd put "quotation marks" about the words he emphasized? Sean Griffin does the very "same" thing, only without the "mimetic" image, by using "quotation marks" around anything that has a "special" meaning. I just got carried away reading those "special" words and phrases: They're so exciting, and there are so many of them, and I sort of felt like I was actually hearing his very own oral emphases on examples like "queer appreciation," "opera queen," "something," "gay

Briefly Summer

by Constance Rowell Mastores

I like the wild formality,
the strict order that survives.
Dune grass, beach rose;
a spindly yarrow. In rivulets

by the roadside, watercress
and vines of morning glory.
Closer to the sea, a struggling
pine; or tea tree bent by winter,

its muted foliage rustling
as the wind passes to the east—
peacock feathers of palest
green. No ardent color

until you breach the dunes
and tumble into summer:
volleyball players in orange
and neon green. A Coney

Island of umbrellas. Yet soon
the season closes, its color
spent. The beach resumes
itself: bleached, shucked,

strewn with shell; in browns
and olive greens, kelp tautens
on the shore and turns to salt.
Forward into autumn the egret

stretches. Left to themselves
on sandy shoals, the harbor
seals growl and mumble, earth
tones blending and breathing

as they shift about. Pelicans,
in silent flight, cross over.
Steady as a line of patriarchs,
they move from sunset into dusk.

agenda,” “special rights,” “gay Mafia,” “gay community,” “drag queen,” “non-straight,” “homosexual culture,” “heterosexual agenda,” “capitalist agenda,” “family,” “gay market,” “Disney discourse,” “gay gene,” “homosexuality,” “masculine,” “butch,” “femme,” “ideological state apparatuses,” “other,” “sexuality,” “the homosexual consumer,” “liberation,” “lesbian,” “gay,” “queer,” “smoking gun,” “gay sensibility,” and “out of the closet”—all these in the introduction alone! Imagine how I thrilled, realizing that such “expression” awaited me for another 290 pages of sheer bliss! This book is better than a Richard Simmons *Sweatin’ to the Oldies* videotape or anything you care to mention, and in case you don’t “get” the “picture,” I spell this review *Fab-U-Lus!!!*

Only lack of space and a Glenn Close-type editor could force me to move on so brutally to “nuance.” Griffin excels at “nuance.” And what is a “nuance”? A “nuance” is a “distinction” about “queer theory.” For example: “Gay culture” too often merely denotes “gay white male culture,” and not “lesbian culture,” or “black gay male culture,” or “transgender” or “bisexual culture.” The encompassing term is “queer culture,” *not* “gay culture,” and theories about that are subsumed under the term “queer theory.”

That last sentence reminds me that my b---- (rhymes with “witch”) editor has left me only a few more words to cover “theory.” As far as I’ve been able to understand, Sean Griffin has shown how capitalism has driven the Disney Company to be friendly to “the gay community.” Along the way, he’s told the story of gay activism at the company, while in his “nuanced” manner, he’s insisted that co-optation by the corporations is a trap that will never lead to “liberation.” Finally, Griffin has rejected, on theoretical grounds, any “post-gay” complacency: Various unpleasant episodes have suggested there’s no basis for feeling the “struggle” is over.

Sanctioned by the academy, Griffin has presented himself as threatened—a neat trick, if you can “pull it off.” But just in today’s newspaper, I noticed a picture of the chortling trio of Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and David Geffen, which suggests that maybe Sean should, like, lighten up. The battle is over, and “we” must have “won”—otherwise, why would a “university press” publish a “work” of such complete “self-absorption?”

Fan-tast-ic!

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