"HE'S A HUMAN, YOU'RE A MERMAID": NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE IN

DISNEY'S *THE LITTLE MERMAID*

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Disney animation represents a powerful source of economic and cultural production. However, following the death of Walt Disney, the animation division found itself struggling to survive. It was not until the 1989 release of the hugely successful animated film *The Little Mermaid* that Disney would reclaim its domination among children's cultural producers. Additionally, *The Little Mermaid* inaugurated a shift in Disney's portrayals of gender as the company replaced the docile passive princess characteristic of its previous animated films with a physically active and strong willed ambitious heroine. Grounded in an understanding of Disney's cultural significance as dominant storyteller, the present study explores gender in *The Little Mermaid* by means of narrative performativity. Specifically, I analyze the film's songs "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as metonymic narrative performances of gender that are (1) embodied, (2) materially situated, (3) discursively embedded and (4) capable of legitimating and critiquing existing power relations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Albeit difficult to imagine from within a mediated culture in which Disney animation and

its characters have taken on iconic status, Disney animation has not always enjoyed such

unquestioned success. Following the death of Walt Disney in 1966 the company entered a

transitional period that would prove critical to the future of the company. Run by family

members who committed themselves to upholding Walt Disney's vision and ideology, the

company failed to keep pace with a rapidly changing industry. After the release of several box

office flops, including *The Black Cauldron* (1985)*,* Disney animation found itself struggling to

survive (O'Brien, 1996). This period of decline continued and in the early 1980s executives at

the Disney studios discussed shutting down the animation division of the company altogether

(BVHE, 2006). In 1984 a group of high profile corporate investors recognized the potential of

Disney's assets. New owners appointed former Paramount executive Michael Eisner and former

Warner executive Frank Wells to revamp Disney's antiquated business practices. Recalling the

management shift, Walt's nephew Roy Disney said, "The thing that brought about the

management change in 1984 is that we just tried to bring in people who knew how to run a film

company" (BVHE, 2006).

The children's market shifted away from Disney's hitherto wholesome animated classics

to live action films such as *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars* and the animation division faced

significant pressure from the new management team (O'Brien, 1996). As Roy Disney's wife

Patty Disney noted, Disney animation was "in a dark spell" (BVHE, 2006). Disney would not

reclaim their canonical status among popular culture until the 1989 release of *The Little*

Mermaid. In fact, Comer (2008) noted, "[*The Little*] *Mermaid* was Disney's first fairy tale in thirty years, and its unprecedented success saved the animation division from irrelevance or closure" (para. 5).

Recalling this precarious time in Disney animation history, Glen Kean, co-supervising animator for *The Little Mermaid* commented, "The writing was on the wall and we had to prove ourselves" (BVHE, 2006). Under the pressure of ambitious corporate production deadlines the animation team faced the challenging task of appropriating the classical narrative style that had earned Disney their earliest successes to a form and content that would appeal to new audiences. Members of *The Little Mermaid'*s production team explicitly addressed the demand for a negotiation of a Disney future with a Disney past. Speaking of *The Little Mermaid*, John Musker, the co-writer, director, and producer of the film recalled:

> The idea of doing a fairy tale certainly appealed to me because it was certainly a part of the Disney tradition but there hadn't been one in thirty years so it was doing something in a tradition and yet trying to find a new approach to it that had never been done before. (BVHE, 2006)

Writer-director-producer of the film, Ron Clements expressed, "Our big fear was that people would compare [*The Little Mermaid*] to say the earlier fairy tales like *Snow White* and *Cinderella* and say, 'you know, what happened?'" (BVHE, 2006).

Several significant tensions between animators and the new financially ambitious management team characterized the film's production process from the beginning. Occupying valuable real estate needed to attract new corporate investors, the animators were forced from the main lot at Burbank and into a warehouse of trailers just as production of *The Little Mermaid* began. In an analysis of Disney's business history, Gomery (1994) described Katzenberg as representative of "the new breed of moviemaker, a compulsive, driven studio boss fond of saying, if you don't bother to show up on Saturday, then don't bother to show up on Sunday and

anytime thereafter" (p. 80). Having worked exclusively on live-action films, Katzenburg himself pointed to the differing cultures of animation and live action film production as a source of the friction that marked the production process of *The Little Mermaid* (BVHE, 2006). Peter Snider, vice president of feature animation during the production of the film, recalled the hesitation of animators and production team members to break from Walt's way of doing business. Although widely unpopular at times, Katzenburg functioned to disrupt the deeply entrenched habits of animators in order to increase production and keep pace with the rest of the industry (BVHE, 2006).

Following a turbulent production process, Disney released *The Little Mermaid* in the fall of 1989. In this 83-minute animated adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen's original tale, Disney told the coming of age story of a headstrong, tempestuous teen-age mermaid named Ariel. Obsessed with the human world, Ariel dreams of nothing more than to one day walk among humans on land. Her desire to become human and live on land peaks when she encounters and instantly falls in love with Eric, a human sailor and prince. When Ariel's father, King Triton, forbids her contact with the prince and all things human, Ariel turns to the witch Ursula for help. In a vengeful plot against King Triton, Ursula transforms Ariel into a human for three days in exchange for her voice. Moreover, Ursula stipulates that if the voiceless Ariel can entice Eric to kiss her by the end of the third day she will remain permanently human. However, should Ariel fail to win the prince's affection in the form of a kiss, she will be transformed back into a mermaid and become Ursula's property. The majority of the film animates Ariel's race against time with the help of her animal friends. In the climax of the film Ursula is able to foil Ariel's attempt to win the prince's kiss in time, allowing her to seize control of Ariel, Triton, and his ocean kingdom. However, Ursula suffers a violent death as Eric impales her with the jagged

mast of his ship, restoring Triton to power. Ultimately, Triton realizes the error of his ways and restores Ariel's human legs so that she may marry her true love. The film concludes as Ariel kisses her father good-bye and whispers, "I love you daddy" (Clements et al., 1989).

In October of 2006, Disney re-released *The Little Mermaid* in a new digitally restored DVD format. A variety of bonus material including *Treasures Untold: The Making of The Little Mermaid* accompanied the DVD. Running approximately 45 minutes, *Treasure Untold* chronicles the production of *The Little Mermaid,* and provides commentary from various (primarily male) contributors to the film. The documentary begins as co-writer director-producers, Ron Clements and John Musker, contextualize the making of *The Little Mermaid* within the state of Disney animation at the time of the film's production. They recalled the 1985 transition of the Disney animators from the state-of-the art animation studio in Burbank to a warehouse on Flower Street. The documentary continues through five subsequent chapters or "acts:" Act I: Renaissance Men, Act II: A Symphony of Talent, Act III: Broadway Comes to Burbank (adjacent), Act IV: Setting Sail, and Act V: A Mermaid Sings. Various people offer commentary chronicling varied aspects of *The Little Mermaid*'s production. The final chapter of the documentary details the critical and popular success of the film and concludes with film historian Leonard Maltin heralding *The Little Mermaid* as the film that transformed the precarious state of Disney animation studios to one of award-winning success (BVHE, 2006). Earning $84.4 million at the box office and two Academy Awards for Best Song and Best Score*, The Little Mermaid* became the most successful Disney film to that time (O'Brien, 1996). Indeed, *The Little Mermaid* was the critical and popular success Disney needed to rejuvenate Disney animation and reinstitute Disney's dominion among children's culture. Katzenburg

described the impact of the film for Disney animation by stating "*The Little Mermaid* is the foundation upon which an entire renaissance was built" (BVHE, 2006).

<div align="center">Purpose</div>

In a revealing statement, film critic and historian, Leonard Maltin observed:

> Sometimes if you take out one element in a time frame everything else collapses too. The *Black Cauldron* served its purpose. There was good work done in *Oliver and Company* and *The Great Mouse Detective* but when *The Little Mermaid* came along it was the right film at the right time and it really did turn everything around. (BVHE, 2006)

In a comparative analysis between Hans Christian Andersen's original tale and Disney's 1989 adaptation, Comer (2008) noted a number of striking parallels between the effect of the tale upon Andersen's career and the marked shift the film created in Disney's popular fate. She noted that both Disney and Andersen successfully attempted to reach audiences of children and adults. Additionally, both Andersen's tale and Disney's adaptation enjoyed an immediate popular success that dramatically impacted the financial success of their creators. Finally, according to Comer, both tales "marked a definitive shift in the creators' genre of choice and also in the genre their audiences overwhelmingly associate with the name" (para. 4).

In a critical documentary entitled *Mickey Mouse Monopoly* that chronicled Disney's pervasive influence, critical cultural scholar Justin Lewis described Disney's unique cultural impact by characterizing the company as "a dominant storyteller for children globally" (Sun, 1991). Coupling Comer's (2008) observations of *The Little Mermaid's* success with the comments of members of the film's production team revealed repeated reference to the film as bringing about a new condition. In particular, as members of the film's production team recounted the significance of the fairytale for Disney's success they pointed to the way in which

the story of *The Little Mermaid* was told. As Comer noted, "There seems to be a certain power in the mermaid's tale" (para. 4). Comer went on to underscore the significance of gender portrayals in Disney's version of the film. Approaching *The Little Mermaid's* cultural import from a storytelling perspective, my purpose in this study is to investigate the role of narrative performance in *The Little Mermaid* to bring about a shift in Disney's portrayals of gender. I posit narrative performativity as productive theoretical lens through which to interrogate the film as a performative communication practice in terms of gender. Specifically, I turn my analysis to three specific songs performed in the film: "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls."

Members of *The Little Mermaid's* production team attributed much of the film's success to the musical innovations brought about by lyricist Howard Ashman and composer Alan Menken. Clements noted that while music comprised a large part of Disney's early films, the company had gotten away from reliance on musical numbers in the films leading up to *The Little Mermaid*. In a chapter of *Treasures Untold* entitled "Broadway Comes to Burbank," story artist Rodger Allers speaks of Ashman's invaluable contribution to the film, "Howard brought in a wonderful understanding of story and character and how songs can define story and character" (BVHE, 2006). Ashman commented, " I think we wanted to make songs that would tell the story, songs that would really move the story forward, really push the plot along and keep things driving ahead" (BVHE, 2006). Indeed, the musical numbers in *The Little Mermaid* are significant in terms of narrative as well as popular success. In addition to their commercial success, Disney took home two Oscars for *The Little Mermaid*, one for Best Song and the other for Best Score. Understanding the songs within *The Little Mermaid* to represent key narrative performances of gender performativity, in this study I examine three songs specifically: "Part of

Your World" performed by Ariel, "Under the Sea" by Sebastian, and "Poor Unfortunate Souls"

by Ursula. I argue that employing each song as an illustrative exemplar of the intersections of

narrative and performance reveals a unique relationship between the body, the voice, and the

performance of gender. By analyzing these three songs as "(1) embodied, (2) situated and

material, (3) discursive, and (4) open to legitimation and critique" (Langellier and Peterson,

2004, p. 8), I aim to explore the narrative dimensions through which characters not only speak

about the body and voice but performatively constitute gender relationships.

Significance

Any attempt to gain further insight into *The Little Mermaid* as a cultural text cannot

ignore the critical import of the film's position as a Disney production. Indeed several scholars

have addressed Disney's significance in terms of cultural production (Dorfman & Mattelart,

1975; Maltin, 1980; Mosley, 1985; Schickel, 1968; Smoodin, 1993;Wasko, 2000). Giroux (2004)

emphasized

> culture's role as an educational site where identities are being continually transformed,
> power is enacted and learning assumes a political dynamic as it becomes not only the
> condition for the acquisition of agency but also the sphere of imagining oppositional
> social change. (p. 60)

Giroux (1996) advocated attention to Disney animation as a complex site of cultural production

with implications for individual and collective identity negotiation. Moreover, combining the

increasing cultural import of media literacy with Disney's uniquely inescapable cultural ubiquity

and primary audience of children, Giroux (2004) referred to Disney as an "expansive teaching

machine" (p. 68) with implications for public memory and developing notions of citizenship.

Giroux (1999, 2004) clearly established the undeniable cultural significance of Disney

artifacts for both individuals and a larger society. According to the author, Disney's corporate

success directly results from their negotiation of two exceedingly contradictory identities. He

argued that Disney's public image, based upon fantasy, innocence, imagination, and wholesome

values has allowed Disney to conceal their insidious corporate practices effectively, while

simultaneously insulating themselves from critical attention. Smooden (1994) argued that

"Disney constructs childhood so as to make it entirely compatible with consumerism" (p. 18).

The conflicting ideologies Disney subscribes to find symbolic manifestations within Disney

films as well as corporate marketing techniques and domination. Giroux (1999) contended:

> One can't help wondering what is so wholesome about Disney's overt racism toward
> Arabs displayed in *Aladdin*, the retrograde gender roles at work in *The Little Mermaid*
> and *Beauty and the Beast*, and the undisguised celebration of anti-democratic
> governments and racism . . . evident in *The Lion King*. (p. 86)

Lacroix (2004) underscored the unique contemporary significance of Disney's animated films

and their characters, noting specifically,

> Because of the significance of the six animated feature films produced in the "new era"
> of Disney animation (*The Little Mermaid*, 1989; *Beauty and the Beast*; 1991; *Aladdin*,
> 1993; *The Lion King*, 1994; *Pocahontas*, 1995; *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1996)
> and their mass merchandising, Disney characters became ubiquitous for children of the
> 1990's. (p. 213)

Drawing upon Miller and Rode (1995), Lacroix underscored the substantial influence of

Disney's animated images and their mass-merchandised reproduction upon children's discourses

of self and other. She noted that while Disney hides behind seemingly innocuous constructions

of childhood culture, feminist and cultural critics have taken Disney's alarming pervasiveness as

cause for increased attention to Disney products and films. Indeed, scholars have explored the six

"new era" Disney films from a variety of theoretical and methodological vantages with critique

of each film largely centering upon certain themes. For example, much of the research

addressing Disney's portrayal of a young Native American female in *Pocahontas* centers upon

representations of colonialism (Aidman, 1999; Buescher & Ono, 1996; Ono & Buescher, 2001)

and depictions of an ethnic other (Bird, 1999; Edgerton & Jackson, 1996; Lacroix, 2004; Sardar, 2002). Set in the Middle East, Disney's 1993 film *Aladdin* elicited critiques of race (Giroux, 1999; Sun, 2001) and the legitimation of imperialism (Phillips and Wojcik-Andrews, 1996). In *The Lion King*, Disney tells the story of young lion prince in Africa. Critics pointed to problematic representations of race (Giroux, 1996; Sun, 2001). For example Artz (2002) noted Disney's use of minority voices to animate socially undesirable characters. Ward (2002) provided an extensive analysis of myth, ritual, and archetype within *The Lion King* in order to demonstrate the way in which Disney serves as a moral educator.

Disney attempts to construct a public identity founded upon wholesome family values. However, Disney's public image conflicts with the overt racism, imperialism, and sexism portrayed in its animated films. Unlike the portrayals of ethnic others and/or foreign lands Disney propagates in *Pocahontas, Aladdin*, and *The Lion King*, *The Little Mermaid* animated a coming-of-age tale of a white teenage female. As one might expect, gender studies have comprised the majority of research devoted to *The Little Mermaid*. Specifically scholars (Henke, Umble, & Smith, 1996) pointed to *The Little Mermaid* as evidencing the beginning of Disney's attempt to renegotiate gender identities.

In *Mickey Mouse Monopoly* (Sun, 2001), a critical documentary highlighting the danger of Disney's virtually unchecked corporate power and socially undesirable messages, Danielle Gaines commented specifically upon Disney's need to renegotiate gender portrayals. She began by underscoring Disney's 1937 heroine *Snow White*, who, isolated in a cottage home, enjoys cooking and cleaning with her animal friends. Gaines argued that in the context of contemporary feminist discourse and its impact on popular culture, such a female heroine makes little to no

sense. Highlighting the deceptive appearance of Ariel in 1989 as an icon of feminine

empowerment Gaines noted:

> What Disney has to do in order to keep up with the themes of a society, is they have to
> keep changing. In *Little Mermaid*, you know she does defy her father. There is a sense of
> a more powerful female here. Of course ultimately she's willing to give up her voice to
> get the male. (Sunn, 2001)

Henke et al. (1996) investigated the ways in which the worlds constructed in Disney

films function in the development of the female sense of self. Specifically, the authors offered

analysis of five Disney female-centered animated features: *Cinderella* (1950), *Sleeping Beauty*

(1959*)*, *The Little Mermaid* (1989*)*, *Beauty and the Beast* (1991*)* and *Pocahontas* (1995*)*.

Illustrating the shift in heroine portrayals Gaines observed, the authors pointed to Disney's early

heroines represented in *Cinderella* and Aurora of *Sleeping Beauty* as passive victims whose fate

is controlled by others. Noting a marked shift in Disney's representations of females, the authors

argued, "Beginning with *The Little Mermaid*, however, the female protagonist shows signs of

selfhood" (Henke et al., 1996, p. 236). However, like Gaines, the authors recognized the

contradiction operating within *The Little Mermaid's* seemingly liberated heroine. Pointing to

several themes, events and relationships that undermine Ariel's empowerment the authors noted:

> Having a voice, a sense of selfhood is risky because it is inconsistent with images of the
> "perfect girl" or the true woman. Ultimately, Ariels's voice is silenced and she sacrifices
> her curiosity to gain the love of a man. (Henke et al., 1996, p. 237)

By recognizing *The Little Mermaid* as the first animated film to evidence the shift in

feminine portrayals of the Disney heroine, critics (Sunn, 2001; Henke et al., 1996) have

highlighted the significance of *The Little Mermaid* in terms of the negotiation of gender identity

within the plot of the film itself as well as Disney's identity as storyteller. While Disney would

have consumers believe Ariel provided audiences with an icon of feminine empowerment, critics

from across the social sciences (Comer, 2008; Dundes & Dundes, 2000; Giroux, 1999; Herbozo,

Tentleff-Dunn, Larose, & Thompson 2004; Sells, 1995) have been skeptical of Disney's attempt to abandon the patriarchal values characteristic of Disney films in favor of a strong independent heroine. Such skepticism has provided the basis for critiques from a variety of theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches to *The Little Mermaid* as a text of cultural significance, especially in terms of gender.

Herbozo et al. (2004) called critical attention to the significance of the body and body related messages in children's media. They conducted a content analysis of representations of beauty in Amazon.com's top 25 children's movies (19 of which were Disney animated films). The researchers found *The Little Mermaid* and *Cinderella* to exhibit the most body related messages. While the average film exhibited 8.7 body related messages, *The Little Mermaid* and *Cinderella* portrayed 14. Through a comparison of films centered upon a female protagonist and those in which males perform the lead role, the authors posited gender as a major contributing factor affecting messages regarding thinness and beauty for children. Their findings and subsequent discussion of the relationship between corporeal messages and gender highlighted the critical significance of the body to gender studies. In terms of an understanding of *The Little Mermaid*, the researchers illustrated the continued popularity of *The Little Mermaid* 15 years after its original release as well as underscored its unique relevance in terms of gender and body related messages. The fact that researchers did not set out to critique *The Little Mermaid* only served to further demonstrate the film's unavoidable importance and justify critical engagement of the messages propagated both in and around the film.

Comer (2008) provided a comparative analysis juxtaposing Han's Christian Andersen's original version of the *The Little Mermaid* with Disney's adaptation of the tale. Particularly, the author took issue with Disney's sanitization of female struggle and the marginal role supporting

females played in Ariel's journey as compared to Anderson's tale. For example, rather than portray Ariel's sisters as developed characters who provide feminine support as Anderson does, Disney relegated Ariel's female support system to marginality casting them as silly male helpers characteristic of Disney films instead.

In a psychoanalytic feminist critique, Dundes and Dundes (2000) argued that Disney's adaptation of Anderson's original tale demonstrated a female's resolution of the Electra complex with patriarchal values superimposed upon it. They pointed to the tensions inherent in masculine narrations of female centered tales. The authors traced the symbolic use of the mermaid as a figural trope. They argued, "Ariel's mermaid image itself contains a basic paradox. As a young girl she is quite literally divided" (Dundes & Dundes, 2000, p. 121). Indeed the physical and symbolic division Ariel embodies makes *The Little Mermaid* an ideal text for the exploration of the performance of competing gender ideologies.

Similarly, in her feminist analysis, Sells (1995) suggested the significance of the mermaid figure as a symbol of competing gender ideologies and a symbol of the tensions underlying contemporary feminist discourse. She underscored the dialectic operating between reformist demands for equality and access that serve to reify existing binaries between masculine and feminine identities and a radical refiguring of gender identity that relies on changes in symbolic understandings. Thus she contended, "In this context, then, the mermaid figure becomes both an icon of bourgeois feminism and a sign of the stakes in reinventing the category of women as speaking subjects" (Sells, 1995, p. 177). The author's contextualization of the film within the tensions of contemporary feminist discourse corresponded to Gaines (Sun, 2001) and Henke et al. (1996) understanding of *The Little Mermaid* to evidence Disney's attempt to renegotiate gender portrayals. Sells noted that while Anderson's tale reflected the issues of class struggle the

author faced, Disney's adaptation shifts to represent contemporary conflict about gender.

Moreover, Sells' (1995) explicit positioning of the film within contemporary discourses of femininity shed significant light upon Maltin's characterization of *The Little Mermaid* as "the right film at the right time" (BVHE, 2006). Members of *The Little Mermaid's* production team retrospectively understood *The Little Mermaid* as a catalyst resulting in Disney's commercial success. Scholars (Comer, 2008; Henke et al., 1996; Sells, 1995) characterized the film as marking a significant shift in terms of Disney's portrayals of gender. In both analyses, the film is understood as bringing about a new condition. In the present study I expand upon existing research regarding the shift in gender portrayals inaugurated in *The Little Mermaid* by interrogating the way in which gender is performed in and through narrative.

As an animated film *The Little Mermaid* is uniquely positioned to elucidate the way in which gender is performed. In contrast to live performance or live action films in which directors work with the attributes of preexisting individual bodies, animators bring gendered bodies into existence. Every aspect of the narrating bodies the audience views is the result of careful, deliberate and collaborative choices. Thus, by analyzing the narrative performance of gender in *The Little Mermaid* I explore the Disney's capacity to constitute gender through narrative performance. Specifically, I argue that analyses of "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as narrative performances of gender provide new insights into the relationship between the voice, the body, and the gender performance.

Method

Linguistic theorist Austin (1962) distinguished between two types of utterances: constative and performative. According to Austin, constative utterances represent those

statements that can be proven true of false. Conversely, he identified performative utterances as those linguistic cases "in which to say something is to do something; or in which by saying or in saying something we are doing something" (Austin, 1962, p. 147). Austin provided the utterance "I do" spoken at a marriage ceremony as an example of an utterance that *does* something, specifically marrying two people. However, taking the nature of performative utterances as the focus of his essay, Austin argued that simply saying so-called performatives does not guarantee their success. For example, the words "I do" uttered under the wrong circumstances will not succeed in marrying a couple. Rather, "Besides the uttering of the words of the so-called performative, a good many other things have as a general rule to be right and go right if we are to be said to have happily brought off our action" (Austin, 1962, p. 148). Austin outlined the necessary circumstances that, if violated, would result in unsuccessful or "unhappy" performative utterances. First he argued that a recognized conventional procedure must be in place. Moreover, the procedure must include people and circumstances appropriate for that particular convention. For example, "I now pronounce you husband and wife," uttered by someone un-ordained does not result in a legal marriage. Austin also stipulated the correct and full execution of the procedure by all participants as a necessary condition for happy performatives. Moreover, the participants involved must have the thoughts, feelings, and intentions of conduct consistent with the procedure they invoke. Finally, according to Austin, the participants "must actually so conduct themselves consequentially" (p. 148).

Butler (1988) applied Austin's theory of performative utterances to gender in order to posit gender as performative identity. Rather than a preexisting locus of identity or agency, Butler asserted that gender "is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler, 1988, p. 154 emphasis in original). Rather than

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evidencing a natural, preexisting identity, this stylized repetition of acts constitutes the very concept of gender. Just as Austin's performative utterances did not constitute claims of truth or falsehood, gender cannot be understood as a fact to be proven. Instead, for Butler, gender can be thought to exist only insofar as it is performed. She illustrated the social and pedagogical significance of the temporal and shared dimensions of gender performativity. According to the author, gender performance can be understood as neither the passive reception of social law by inactive bodies nor the solitary act of individuals. She explained,

> Just as a script may be enacted in various ways, and just as the play requires both text and interpretation, so the gendered body acts its part in a culturally restricted corporeal space and enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives. (Butler, 1988, p. 161)

While actors must always operate within preexisting cultural codes, Butler pointed to the performative nature of gender as a means by which to challenge naturalized conceptions of gender. Gender's constitution by a stylized repetition of acts leaves the possibility for the repetition of alternative acts and repetitions with the potential to subvert reified notions of essentialized gender.

Peterson and Langellier (2006) drew on Austin's and Butler's theory of performativity in order to posit an understanding of narrative. They argued that narrative represents not only the performance of a communicative practice, but is itself performative; that is, narrative functions as both making and doing. Interrogating the possibilities and implications of a performative conception of narrative, the authors explicated what they referred to as "the performance turn in narrative studies" (Peterson & Langellier, 2006, p. 173). They noted the growing excitement surrounding performance in a variety of disciplines and observed that performance becomes relevant to narrative studies at the intersection of two conceptions of narrative: narrative as making and narrative as doing. To understand narrative as making is to situate narrative as an

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object or text fashioned from the storyteller's lived experience. Understood as performance, the making of narrative refers not only to the creation of a work but to the demarcation of a particular communication as distinctive from the communication that surrounds it. Narrative performance "marks it self off and thereby turns back to comment on its context, and it puts this 'making something out of nothing' on display for the participants" (Peterson & Langellier, 2006 p. 174). Moreover, positioning narrative as a bounded space displayed for its participants implies attention to narrative as an embodied performative act, a doing. Following Butler's argument that gender comes to exist through performance, Peterson and Langellier contended that, "Narrative is not merely the performance of an underlying communication competence; rather narrative is performative in that it produces that to which it refers" (p. 174). Narrative utterances, according to the authors, call subject positions and discursive subjects into being while utilizing and negotiating existing communication codes. The authors asserted that understanding narrative as both making and doing has critical implications for narrative studies and underscored four consequences specifically. They argued that "performing narrative is (1) embodied, (2) situated and material, (3) discursive and (4) open to legitimation and critique" (Langellier and Peterson, 2004 p. 8).

I contend that the narrative songs "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" provide critical exemplars which illustrate narrative as both a making and doing within *The Little Mermaid*. Ariel, Ursula, and Sebastian each explicitly and implicitly draw upon past embodied experiences, constraints, regulations, and possibilities relating to gender in order to create or make their respective narratives. By singing rather than speaking the narratives they create, the characters clearly frame each story as distinct from the surrounding spoken communication. Ariel, Sebastian, and Ursula are indeed "making a to-do" (Peterson &

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Langellier, 2006, p. 174) about gender. As the authors argued, "This turn to performance as a kind of "making a to-do" suggests the second way of understanding narrative as doing and not only a making" (Peterson and Langellier, 2006, p. 174). Attention to both the making and doing aspects of narrative in "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" necessitates attention to the way in which each narrative is embodied, situated within a particular material context and discourse. Accordingly, in what follows I analyze each narrative by means of the four consequences of narrative performance outlined by Peterson and Langellier in order to articulate gender performativity as it relates to the voice and the body *The Little Mermaid*.

First, Langellier and Peterson (2004) pointed to the impossibility of separating narrative performance from the body. They "begin with a most mundane and obvious description: some *body* performs narrative" (Langellier & Peterson, 2004 p. 8). Indeed, in order to produce a narrative utterance, some *body* must engage activities that constitute narration. The authors went on to complicate their observation by pointing to the ambiguity of narrative's embodied context. They argued, "In storytelling, this embodiment constitutes a system of relations among storyteller, narrator, character, audience. That is, these embodied relations are extensions of an incarnate subject capable of moving reciprocally between perception and expression" (Langellier and Peterson, 2004, p. 9). Further, the embodied context of narrative performance becomes relevant not only to the immediately present bodies but moves beyond spatial and temporal boundaries to include actual, potential, and virtual audiences. Finally, the authors further complicated the notion of narrative embodiment by highlighting additional ambiguity of the observation that some body performs narrative. The narrating body, they contended, may refer to the personal body of interpersonal communication, a group of bodies such as a body of women,

many people as in the body politic or public communication, or many groups of people such as cultural or intercultural bodies.

Scholars (Dundes & Dundes, 2000; Herbozo, et al., 2004; Sells, 1995; Sun, 2001) have highlighted the significance of the body in *The Little Mermaid*. Indeed, in terms of the body *The Little Mermaid* provides a unique narrative text. Both "Part of Your World" and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" explicitly address the physical body as the primary means of separating the citizens of two distinct worlds. Eventually both the film's heroine and villainess undergo dramatic corporeal transformations necessary to achieve their goals. Thus, the body represents an explicit force in the film's driving conflict and ultimate resolution. *The Little Mermaid* addresses the limits, possibilities, and implications of narrative as an embodied performance of gender.

Frank (1991) advocated a sociological re-theorization of the body from an action perspective that proves useful in an attempt to understand the body within the process of making and doing narrative. Rather than functional approaches that position the body as a functional problem for society, Frank proposed, "instead to begin with how the body is a problem for *itself*, which is an action problem rather than a system problem, proceeding from a phenomenological orientation rather than a functional one" (p. 47). Particularly relevant to the present study, the author explored the dimensions of embodied consciousness and explained "that the body becomes most conscious of itself when it encounters resistance which is to say, when it is in use, acting" (Frank, 1991 p. 51). According to the author, the body must orient itself in relation to questions of control, desire, other-relatedness, and self-relatedness as it acts in relation to some object. From these questions, the author posited corresponding continua within which various body types of bodily usages can be conceptualized. Analysis of the body within the multiple complexities Langellier and Peterson (2004) articulated lies outside the scope of this study.

Frank's elaboration of the body, however, supplies a systematic means by which to begin to investigate the embodied act of narration. Frank (1991) argued, "The theoretical problem is to show how social systems are built up from the tasks of bodies, which then allows us to understand how bodies experience their tasks as imposed by a system" (p 48). Accordingly, I aim to explore how bodies experience gender by beginning analysis of each narrative with an investigation of the way in which Ariel, Sebastian and Ursula orient their bodies in relation to Frank's four dimensions as they engage in the performative act of narration.

Second, "Narrative is constrained by situational and material conditions" (Peterson & Langellier, 2006, p.176). The authors contended that understanding narrative as performance implies attention to the way in which lived situations both create and constrain the possibilities for narrative performance. The authors specified, "We use the term *constraint* here in the semiotic and phenomenological sense of a boundary that defines and constrains what is possible" (Langellier and Peterson, 2004 p. 14). While narrative embodiment yields the possibility of storytelling performances, only some possibilities can be actualized. Material, social, and political conditions allow some narrative voices to be heard, sanctioned, and widely circulated, while other stories are ignored or silenced. In an effort to elucidate the narrative performance of the voice and body in relation to gender, I argue "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" provide unique narrative texts by which to explicate the complex interactions between material limitations and possibilities. For example, constrained at least in part by her mermaid body, Ariel explicitly details the limits and possibilities of her material reality in "Part of Your World."

In addition to its embodied context and material situation, narrative is performed within particular discursive fields (Langellier & Peterson, 2004). Langellier and Peterson (2004) drew

upon Foucault's (1969/1972) understanding of discursive regularities in order to explicate the way in which narrative is situated within particular discursive fields. Foucault identified four regulatory principles governing discourse: event, series, regularity, and the possible conditions of existence. Langellier and Peterson drew upon Foucault's explication of discourse in order to posit the consequences of discursive regulation for narrative performance. Foucault distinguished between internal and external rules. First, he explained the way discourse is delimited as an event through external rules that function as interrelated laws of prohibition, division, and rejection and the opposition of truth and falsehood. External rules distinguish what is meaningful and relevant to discourse from what is meaningless. For example, in "Under the Sea" Sebastian makes use of discursive prohibitions of feminine speech in order to perform his narrative as a meaningful, rational public narrative event.

Foucault (1969/1972) identified series as a second regulatory principle. While external rules primarily concern the power and knowledge that govern discourse from the outside, internal rules refer to the way in which discourse regulates itself. Such rules function to locate regularities in a series. The author pointed to the discursive hierarchy created as some discourses fade from existence as soon as they are spoken while other discourse becomes sanctified and ritualized through repetition. The identification of gradations of repetition or regularities within a series allows for the classification of various types of discourse. For example, Disney's animated films repeatedly include a musical performance by the film's heroine in which she expresses her desires, goals, and dissatisfaction with her current state. This repetition allowed Sells (1995) to refer to Ariel's song "Part of Your World" as the "I want" characteristic of Disney's animated films.

Foucault's third regulatory principle, regularities, refers to the rules regarding speaking

subjects. Such regularities within discourse work to determine "the conditions under which it may be employed, of imposing a certain number of rules upon those individuals who employ it, thus denying access to everyone else" (Foucault, 1969/1972 p. 224). Finally, the author offered possible conditions of existence as a fourth regulatory principle. Rather than a quest to uncover universal meaning hidden within discourse, Foucault advocated aims to elucidate the conditions that both limit and give rise to a particular discourse. Langellier and Peterson (2004) applied Foucault's discussion of possible conditions of existence to storytelling, arguing that, "analysis elucidates regularities by exploring variations in relations of knowledge and power as the possible conditions of storytelling: this story could be told differently" (p. 20). Following Langellier and Peterson I analyze "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as discursively embedded narrative performances by exploring each song in relation to Foucault's four regulatory principles. Rather than attempt to uncover some hidden truth regarding gender I aim to expand upon scholarly and popular recognition of *The Little Mermaid* as doing something in terms of gender by exploring the discursive relationship between the body, the voice, and gender as it is performed through narrative song in the film.

Finally, Peterson and Langellier (2006) pointed to the capacity of narrative performance to critique as well as reify existing social relations. According to the authors, the performance turn in narrative studies calls attention to the function of narrative in reifying or subverting power relations. Butler (1988) asserted that understanding gender as a performative construct implied the possibility for the disruption of gender norms through alternate performances. Likewise, Peterson and Langellier (2006) argued that performing narrative re-inscribes existing power dynamics while also creating a space within which to trouble or subvert such relations. Langellier and Peterson (2004) pointed to Foucault's critical question of discourse: "What is so

perilous, then, in the fact that people speak, and that their speech proliferates? Where is the

danger in that?"(Foucault, 1972, 216.) Applying the question to narrative the authors argued,

"The danger in performing narrative is that by doing something in and with discourse that is

neither uniform nor stable, we risk changing the bodily practices and material conditions in

which they are embedded: what is done can be undone" (Peterson & Langellier, 2004, p. 25).

Thus, in examining the embodied, material, and discursive dimensions of narrative performance,

in this study I aim to uncover the ways in which "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and

"Poor Unfortunate Souls" function to legitimate existing relations of gender, power, and

knowledge as well as to create a space in which such relations can be challenged.

Chapter Outline

In this chapter I introduced the study by establishing the significance of the Disney

corporation as a dominant cultural narrator. I also discussed *The Little Mermaid* as a unique text

among Disney products for exploring narrative performances of gender negotiation.

Furthermore, in this chapter I explained the narrative significance of "Part of Your World,"

"Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as the specific narrative performances to be

analyzed. I briefly reviewed the scholarly literature regarding Disney and *The Little Memaid* in

order to posit Langellier and Peterson's (2004) conception of narrative performativity as a

productive method for expanding upon the existing research. Finally, I detailed the four

dimensions of narrative performance the authors offered and discussed the way in which they

relate to the present analysis.

In chapters 2, 3 and 4 I take "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor

Unfortunate Souls" as narrative case studies. I begin with "Part of Your World" in order to

establish the heroine as struggling with the constraints of patriarchal domination. I then continue to analyze the performative operation of the domination Ariel laments by considering Sebastian's narrative "Under the Sea." Finally, I turn to Ursula's performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as complex narrative performance with the potential to subvert the patriarchal order performed in both "Part of Your World" and "Under the Sea." I begin each chapter by situating the narrative performance to be evaluated within the overall plot of the film before providing the narrative text itself. In an attempt to explore the performance of the body and voice as they relate to gender in each chapter, I analyze the narrative performance as it is embodied, constrained by material conditions, and situated in fields of discourse. Finally, I examine the way in which the narrative functions to legitimate and/or critique existing relations of power in each narrative.

In chapter 5 I conclude the study by summarizing the findings of each chapter and relating the discussion of each song to the overall purpose of the study. Additionally, in chapter 5, I address the limitation of the present study and posit areas for future research that might mitigate some of the constraints of my approach to *The Little Mermaid*.

CHAPTER 2

"NOT ANOTHER WORD!": THE NARRATIVE PERFORMANCE OF
SILENCE IN "PART OF YOUR WORLD"

Approximately 15 minutes into *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel, the film's heroine, performs a

3-minute musical narrative entitled "Part of Your World." An expression of Ariel's frustrations,

hopes, and desires, "Part of Your World" represents the "I want" song characteristic of Disney's

animated films (Sells, 1995). Ariel sings of her desire to trade her mermaid tail for human legs

and become part of the terrestrial world. Henke, Umbel and Smith (2006) noted, "The

conventional Disney tale introduces the heroine near the film's beginning through a song in

which the heroine expresses these dreams" (Henke et al., 2006, p. 235). The authors drew in part

upon several Disney heroines' musical expressions of desire to illustrate a shift in feminine

portrayals of agency in Disney's animated films. Quoting Ariel's song directly, the researchers

argued that Ariel inaugurates the shift in feminine representations of selfhood in Disney films.

While previous heroines sang passively of their dreams and desires Ariel "expresses frustration

and resistance" (Henke et al., p. 236). Sells referenced various aspects of Ariel's performance of

"Part of Your World" in her analysis of gender performance in *The Little Mermaid*. Authors like

Henke et al., (2006) and Sells demonstrated the significance of "Part of Your World" both in

terms of the film's plot and performances of gender. As the heroine's only solo narrative

performance, "Part of Your World" works as a narrative synecdoche for the film's overall

treatment of an acceptable performance of femininity. Thus, while previous researchers (Henke

et al., 2006; Sells, 1995) have discussed "Part of Your World" tangentially, in this chapter I build

upon such analysis by taking the heroine's song and the surrounding events as the primary text

for analysis. I employ Langellier and Peterson's (2004) four dimensions of narrative

performance as a framework for exploring the way in which gender is performed in and through "Part of Your World."

First, drawing upon the work of Frank (1991), I explore the song's embodied context in order to posit Ariel as a mirroring body. I explicate the material constraints upon Ariel's narrative performance by looking specifically at the narrative implications of space. I turn to Taylor's (2003) discussion of the repertoire of residence as a discursive resource for identity negotiation. I continue by following Langellier and Peterson's (2004) use of Foucault's (1969/1972) description of discursive regularities to interrogate the discourse in which Ariel's narrative is embedded. Finally, I conclude the chapter by identifying the way in which Ariel's narrative functions to both critique and legitimize existing relations of power.

The Little Mermaid begins with a series of events that serve to establish the film's heroine, Ariel, as a tempestuous, rebellious, and free-spirited 16- year-old princess. After Ariel misses her kingdom debut as King Triton's youngest and most talented daughter, Triton scolds Ariel for her negligence. When he learned that she traveled to the forbidden ocean surface, Triton reprimands Ariel despite her attempts to reason with him. He commands, "Not another word, and I am never, never to hear of you going to the surface again. Is that clear?" (Clements et al., 1989). With tearful frustration Ariel retreats to a secret cavern in which she collected a multitude of artifacts from the human world. In an attempt to express her frustration to her fish friend, Flounder, Ariel performs a 3-minute musical narrative entitled "Part of Your World." Describing the fluidity with which Ariel transitions from spoken to sung dialogue, Ariel's voice-over actress Jodi Benson commented,

> When she's saying to Flounder, you know "I've got all these treasures around, I've got this and I've got this" and I say, "look at this stuff," I mean it just comes right out of the dialogue that she has and then she just begins this monologue that happens to be put to music. (BVHE, 2006)

The narrative begins as Flounder inquires, "Ariel, are you ok?" (Clements et al., 1989). Lying

upon a rock at the bottom of the cavern, Ariel replies, "If only I could make him understand. I

just don't see things the way he does. I don't see how a world that makes such wonderful things,

could be bad" (Clements et al., 1989). She then sings the following narrative:

> Look at this stuff. Isn't it neat? Wouldn't you think my collection's complete? Wouldn't you think I'm the girl, the girl who has everything?
>
> Look at this trove, treasures untold. How many wonders can one cavern hold? Looking around here you'd think, sure, she's got everything.
>
> I've got gadgets and gismo's a'plenty. I've got whoseits and whatsits galore. You want thingamabobs? I've got twenty. But who cares. No big deal. I want more.
>
> I want to be, where the people are. I want to see, want to see 'em dancing. Walking around on those…what do you call 'em? Oh feet.
>
> Flipping your fins you don't get to far, legs are required for jumping, dancing, strolling along down a…what's that word again? Street.
>
> Up where they walk, up where they run, up where they stay all day in the sun wondering free. Wish I could be part of that world.
>
> What would I give, if I could live out of these waters? What would I pay to spend a day warm on the sand? Betch'a on land, they understand. Bet they don't reprimand their daughters. Bright young women, sick of swimming, ready to stand.
>
> And ready to know what the people know, ask 'em my questions at get some answers. What's a fire and why does it, what's the word? Burn. When's it my turn? Wouldn't I love, love to explore that shore up above.
>
> Out of the sea, wish I could be part of that world. (Clements et al., 1989)

The song ends as Ariel sinks from the top of the cavern back to the bottom where she began.

In addition to Flounder, King Triton's dutiful servant Sebastian is present for Ariel's

performance of "Part of Your World." Although Sebastian is a crab and significantly smaller

than Ariel he is an adult, chaperoning Ariel in Triton's stead. Ariel performs her narrative

unaware of Sebastian's presence until he disrupts the silence following her song by crashing

loudly into a pile of trinkets. Shocked to discover Ariel's collection of human artifacts, Sebastian

asks angrily, "Ariel, what are…? How could you..? What is all this?" (Clements et al., 1989).

The mermaid shrugs, tugging on her long red hair, sheepishly smiles and replies, "Its uh, its just

my collection" (Clements et al., 1989). Sebastian panics as he imagines the king's reaction should he discover Ariel's trove of possessions. Flounder cuts Sebastian off with great concern, " You're not going to tell him are you?" (Clements et al., 1989). Ariel pleads, "Oh please Sebastian he would never understand" (Clements et al., 1989). Dismissing both Ariel and Flounder's anxiety Sebastian smiles, takes Ariel's hand and offers, "Ariel, you are under a lot of pressure down here. Come with me. I'll take you home and get you something warm to drink" (Clements et al., 1989). Before the crab can lead Ariel out of the cavern she is distracted by the shadow of a boat as it passes overhead. Ignoring Sebastian's desperate appeal for her return, Ariel exits the cavern and heads eagerly toward the surface leaving both Sebastian and Flounder behind.

Embodied Context

Langellier and Peterson (2004) contended, "Before performing narrative is perceived or represented, it is lived through the body as meaningful. Our task is to explicate the context of relations in which the body is both part and participant" (p.9). Thus, in the following description of the embodied context of "Part of Your World" I aim not merely to describe individual bodies at work but rather to explore the way in which the song is lived through bodies as meaningful. Moreover, taking seriously the complexity of narrative embodiment I consider the complicated set of corporeal relations that allow "this story, told in this way, by this person, for this audience" (Langellier and Peterson, 2004, p. 11). The authors explained that narrative embodiment implies a system of relations among storyteller, narrator, character, and audience that extends from the embodied subject's ability to move simultaneously between perception and expression. For example, rather than understand storyteller and audience as distinct subject positions they

contended that in performing narrative the storyteller becomes an audience member for herself. Thus, in what follows I discuss "Part of Your World's" embodied context by attending to the intersection of relationships that constitute Ariel's storytelling body.

Frank (1991) advocated an understanding of action as embodiment particularly useful for analysis of "Part of Your World." Positing the body as existing at the intersection of institutions, discourses, and corporeality, Frank pointed to the purposeful use of bodies that are conscious of themselves. Specifically, he argued "that the body becomes most conscious of itself when it encounters resistance, which is to say, when it is in use, acting" (Frank, 1991, p. 51). Ariel's narrative performance of "Part of Your World" represents a constitutive act in and through which Ariel's body encounters resistance. Ariel is unquestionably conscious of her body. For example she complains, "Flipping your fins you don't get too far. Legs are required for jumping, dancing" (Clements et al., 1989). In fact, much of her song overtly expresses the resistance Ariel's body faces. Merleau-Ponty (1964) noted,

> the enigma is that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize in what it sees the other side of its power of looking. It sees itself seeing; touches itself touching; it is visible and sensitive for itself. (p. 162)

"Part of Your World" begins as Ariel invited her listeners to look while simultaneously looking at herself. The first words of Ariel's song are "Look at this stuff" (Clements et al., 1989). Later she continues, "Looking around here you'd think, 'Sure, she's got everything'" (Clements et al., 1989). As Ariel double voices the perception of another looking at her, she demonstrates the self-consciousness Mereleau-Ponty articulated. She sees herself being seen. Ariel simultaneously narrates and audiences her experience.

According to Frank (1991), "The theoretical task is to describe the dimensions of this consciousness" (p. 51). To that end, the author posited four questions the acting body must

consider: control, desire, self-relatedness, and other-relatedness. As the body responds to all four dimensions of consciousness four types of bodily usage emerge. In what follows I analyze Ariel's body in the embodied, conscious act of narrative performance as it relates to control, desire, self-relatedness, and other-relatedness in order to posit Ariel as a mirroring body whose paradigmatic activity is consumption.

Control

First, the dimension of control requires that the body position itself on a continuum of predictability. As Frank (1991) observed, "Bodies always align themselves somewhere on the continuum between god-like assurance and the embarrassment of the Freudian slip"(p. 51). Both Frank's "disciplined" and "mirroring" bodies represent types of bodily usage in which the body strives to understand itself as predictable. However, while the disciplined body minimizes contingency through regimentation, the mirroring body attempts to make itself predictable through consumption. Frank argued, "based upon consumption, the body becomes as predictable as the objects made available for it" (p. 61). At the time in which Ariel performed "Part of Your World," she has no direct experience with the human body. Despite her lack of experience Ariel desires to become human. The young mermaid attempts to make both her own body and the human body predictable through the endless collection of material artifacts, thereby marking herself as a mirroring body. While Triton warns his daughter of the dangers of the human world, Ariel insists upon the virtue of humanity. In the dialogue leading up into Ariel's song she laments "I just don't see things the way he does. I don't see how a world that makes such wonderful *things*, could be bad" (Clements et al., 1989). Murphy (1995) argued that Disney's full-length animated films demonstrate an escapist sanitization of nature's contingency. "The

Disney ethos," Murphy explained, "promotes escapism from the indeterminacy of 'wild systems' through denial of process and difference" (p. 126). Based on the objects she collects and consumes, Ariel believes the human world and the individual bodies within it to be artistic, beautiful, cultured, and free from restraint. She leaves no room for the contingent possibilities of the human body as part of a wild system. Rather, Ariel understands human bodies and the cultural capital they produce as separate from and superior to the natural underwater world.

Other-Relatedness

In addition to positioning itself in relation to dimensions of predictability or contingency the body must orient itself in relation to others (Frank, 1991). According to Frank, the question of other-relatedness becomes "Does the body relate to itself as monadic and closed in upon itself, or as dyadic, existing in relation of mutual constitution with others?" (p. 52). Like the disciplined body, the mirroring body represents a form of bodily use that understands itself as monadic. Unlike the disciplined body that closes itself off to others for the proficiency of its regiment, the mirroring body remains open to the exterior world's influence upon its constitution. While such openness might appear dyadic at first, the mirroring body remains open to the exterior world only insofar as its appropriation informs its own reflection. To be sure, the possessive pronoun *your* in the title of the narrative itself, *"Part of Your World,"* precludes a dyadic relationship of mutual recognition between bodies that implies an appropriation of one body into a world or reality possessed by another. Ariel's body is constituted in the monadic appropriation of her image to those reflected in human artifacts. Frank explained, "Even as the body itself mirrors these objects, the objects are always already seen as mirroring the body" (p. 61). Hence, Ariel surrounds herself with material artifacts that she understands to reflect the human body and in

turn attempts to align her own bodily conduct with such reflections. She arches her back, closes

her eyes and extends her arms as if sunbathing on a beach when she asked, "What would I pay,

to spend a day warm on the sand?" (Clements et al., 1989). Although Ariel has never

experienced a fire's heat she retracts her finger from the painted image of a flame as if it actually

burns. When Ariel references "Bright young women," (Clements et al., 1989) she throws her

shoulders back and elongates her spine. Her facial expression shifts from a look of helpless

longing to one of confidence, even condescension. She pauses as if posing for a picture. Frank

noted that "Consumption thus cannot mean 'use' in the classic Marxist sense, but rather the

endless assimilation of the world's objects to one's own body, and of one's own body to the

world's objects" (p. 61). When considered in relation to Ariel's narrative performance, Frank's

contention underscores the functionality Ariel's collection lacks. Ariel has no practical *use* for

the majority of her material collection. The nonsensical names she applies to her possessions

demonstrate their futility, "I've got gadgets and gismos a plenty. I've got whose-its and whatsits

galore" (Clements et al., 1989). Yet even as Ariel is unable to name or use the objects in her

abundant collection, they serve as the only means by which she predicts and reflects the human

body she desires to become.

Furthermore, Frank (1991) argued that the mirroring "body is monadic in that nothing in

the world challenges its consciousness of itself" (p. 62). Images of embodiment do nothing to

trouble or strengthen the understanding of one's own embodiment. Ariel's monadic relation to

others has significant implications for understanding the relationship between Ariel and the

immediate audience of "Part of Your World." Flounder, Ariel's young fish sidekick, and

Sebastian, Triton's crab confidant, constitute the immediate audience of Ariel's narrative within

the context of the film. The mermaid begins "Part of Your World" by directly addressing

Flounder. As she performs various human activities, Ariel demonstrates an understanding of human beings as relational creatures. She looks longingly at a ceramic figure of a male and female dancing as she sings, "I want to see, want to see 'em dancing" (Clements et al., 1989). Flounder does not speak during the narrative but instead serves as a living, embodied prop by which Ariel appropriates her own body to its fullest humanity. For example, as she sings, "Strolling along down a…what's that word again? Street" (Clements et al., 1989) Ariel holds Flounder by one fin as she switches her hips back and forth to perform a couple walking down a street. When she asks, "Walking around on those…what do you call 'em" (Clements et al., 1989), Flounder flips to reveal his caudal fin. The fish's demonstration reminds Ariel of the human body part she forgot and they laugh together as she replies, "Oh feet" (Clements et al., 1989). For Ariel, the fish fin represents the antithesis of human feet. Nevertheless, because she has so thoroughly appropriated Flounder to her own reflection, Flounder's fins do not pose a challenge to her performance of the human body but rather affirms what she never doubted: the a priori image of the human body.

While Ariel speaks consciously and directly to Flounder, Sebastian listens to Ariel's narrative without her knowledge. Charged by the king with constant supervision of his petulant daughter as a means by which to keep her out of trouble, Sebastian must follow Ariel and Flounder. In contrast to Ariel and Flounder, who attempt to perform human embodiment, Sebastian's body struggles against the material objects Ariel's body mirrors. Even as he enters the cavern his legs are stuck beneath the large stone that covered the cave's entrance. As Sebastian frees his legs and enters the cave he is propelled head first into an hour- glass that appears enormous in comparison to his tiny body. The crab wanders about the cave stumbling upon a spherical reflective surface that magnifies his reflection to more than double his size.

Startled by his own exaggerated image, Sebastian propels himself away from the reflective surface only to find himself trapped in a drinking mug. As Ariel sings the final notes of her song and sits at the bottom of the cavern gazing longingly above, the mug rolls from the top of the cavern to the bottom, crashes into a jack-in-the-box loudly, and catapults Sebastian's body into a pile of trinkets. Surprised by Sebastian's presence, Ariel and Flounder turn to find the crab angrily entangled in a beaded necklace with a diamond ring around his neck, a thimble on his feet, a tobacco pipe in his mouth, and a fishing hook and wire wrapped around his claw.

As a result of Sebastian's physical difficulty moving among Ariel's material collection, the crab does not hear much of Ariel's narrative. Sebastian physically struggles against Ariel's collection of material artifacts highlighting its excess and futility. Confused and upset he kicks himself free of the objects that entangle him as he inarticulately asks, "Ariel, what are…how could you…what is all this?" (Clements et al., 1989). When Ariel finally becomes aware of his presence, Sebastian responds not to Ariel's espoused desires but to the material objects she has collected. Consuming material reflections of the human body provide Ariel a means by which to predict the human body, appropriate that image in her own reflection, and endlessly produce desire so as to keep her own lack unconscious. Sells (1995) asserted,

> In these contrasting and muted worlds of dominant and muted cultures, Ariel's song "Part of Your World" becomes more than an adolescent yearning for adulthood. As Ariel sings of access, autonomy and mobility, she yearns for subjecthood and for the ability to participate in public (human) life. (p. 179)

However, rather than fear, anger, or acknowledgment of Ariel's desire for access, Sebastian reduces Ariel's conflict to one of possessing illicit material. In fact, in "Part of Your World" Sebastian's body itself performs in opposition not to the desire for access Sells underscored but the very paradigmatic activity of Ariel's mirroring body, consumption.

Desire

Desire constitutes the third dimension of consciousness the acting body must address. The body must constitute itself as either lacking or producing (Frank, 1991). While the disciplined body strives to make itself predictable for fear of its contingency, the mirroring body produces a never-ending sequence of desire in order to suppress its lack. Of the four dimensions of embodied consciousness outlined by Frank, desire is embodied most overtly in Ariel's performance of "Part of Your World." In fact, Sells (1995) described the song itself as "the I-want" number characteristic of Disney's animated films. Frank argued, "The mirroring body finds its paradigmatic activity in consuming, but consumption is less about actual material acquisition than it is about producing desires" (p. 62). Thus viewers see Ariel recognizing the useless abundance of her collection of human artifacts singing, "Looking around here you'd think, sure, she's got everything. I've got gadgets and gismo's a'plenty. I've got whoseits and whatsits galore. You want thingamabobs? I got twenty. But who cares, no big deal" (Clements et al., 1989). However, rather than being satisfied, Ariel's desire is only exacerbated. "I want more" (Clements et al., 1989). Instead of merely owning objects, Ariel herself desires to become part of the human world. "I want to be where the people are" (Clements et al., 1989). Sells pointed to *The Little Mermaid's* construction of a hierarchy between two parallel worlds, one literally above the other. She argued that as Ariel sings of the access and autonomy associated with the human world she longs for subjecthood within the public human sphere. Interestingly, Ariel has had little if any contact with actual human beings prior to her performance in "Part of Your World." Frank noted,

> As the body sees the object it immediately aligns itself to fit with that object; its desire is to make the object part of the image of itself. Thus the object becomes a mirror in which the body sees itself reflected, but only on its own terms. (p. 62)

Thus, Ariel's desire for access described by Sells resulted as part of her mirroring body's endless production of desire.

Self-Relatedness

Frank (1991) posited the body's relation to self as the fourth and final dimension of embodied consciousness. Frank asked, "Does the body consciousness associate itself with its own being, particularly its surface, or disassociate itself from that corporeality?" (p. 52). The mirroring body, according to Frank, *associates* itself with the surface of its body. In fact, the body comes to understand itself primarily by means of its corporeal surface. As Frank noted, "Having learned itself through advertising the mirroring body sees the grimace as a sign of an occasion for drug taking. Pain signifies the grimace; the grimace signifies consumption, not embodied pain" (p. 63). The body is conceptualized as a surface to be decorated and reduces pain to an image of pain's expression with no referent in an actual feeling. Here again Ariel's interaction with a painted image of a candle is illustrative. She extends her finger as if touching the flame and asks, "What's a fire and why does it…? What's the word?" (Clements et al., 1989). She retracts her finger as if in pain as she recalls the word "Burn." (Clements et al., 1989). Thus, Ariel's retraction to the painted image of a flame demonstrates the expression of pain, literally in the absence of an actual feeling. Ariel asks, "What would I give if I could live out of these waters? What would I pay to spend a day warm on the sand?" (Clements et al., 1989). The heroine leaves her own questions unanswered implying the endless possibility of sacrifices she is willing to make in an attempt to appropriate her body's surface to human activity. Moreover, as the questions she asks imply an exchange of capital for the appropriation of her body, Ariel demonstrates the commodification of her body's surface. In fact, Ariel's ability to narrate on land

is entirely contingent upon her body's surface rather than any internal aspect of her corporeality. Ariel's unanswered questions foreshadow the severity of what she will ultimately exchange for the chance to be part of *your* world.

<center>Situational and Material Constraints in Performing Narrative</center>

According to Langellier and Peterson (2004), narrative's embodied context gives rise to the possibility of narrative performance. However, not all narrative performances are materialized in a given narrative context, rather situational and material circumstances constrain the possibilities for embodied performance. Rather than oppositional to or independent from its environment, Langellier and Peterson argued that the performing body is dependant upon its embodied context but is not determined or caused by its corporeal situation. The authors noted that the word constrain implies both restriction and facilitation. The corporeal situation of narrative performance allows for certain possibilities to be materialized while precluding others. For example, Ariel's fish-like tale restricts her ability to narrate upon land while at the same time allowing her to move efficiently and narrate underwater. Hence, as the young mermaid expresses her desire for human legs so that she might walk on land, in "Part of Your World" she makes the connection between bodies and material settings explicit. The authors offered, "We use the term constraint here in the semiotic and phenomenological sense of a boundary that defines the conditions of what is possible"(Langellier & Peterson, 2004). The author's employment of a spatial metaphor to illustrate the relationship between narrative embodiment and the material conditions in which narrative performance occurs prove relevant to an analysis of Ariel's performance of "Part of Your World." De Certeau (1988) argued, "Every story is a travel story—a spatial practice" (p. 115). Baynham (2003) employed de Certeau's assertion to posit the unique

significance of narratives of migration and resettlement in an attempt to challenge essentialist understandings of the relationship between space, time, and narrative. In migration narratives, he contended, "Orientation/disorientation/reorientation in space and time, far from being a simple contextual backdrop *is* the story" (Baynham, 2003, p. 351). Likewise, narrative space *is* the story in "Part of Your World" as Ariel orients herself in relation to the literal boundary between the underwater and terrestrial worlds. "Part of Your World" demonstrates the way in which space functions uniquely as a material constraint, both facilitating and restricting embodied narrative performance.

Taylor (2003) posited the relationship between narratives about place and identity, offering them as an integral component of identity construction. Moreover, Taylor described identity work in a manner consistent with Langellier and Peterson's (2004) contention that narrative is constrained by material conditions. Taylor explained, "Identity work is therefore ongoing and open-ended. Yet it is also constrained. There is not an infinite play of positions but flexibility within requirements of plausibility and consistency" (p. 196). Understanding "Part of Your World" as a migration narrative in which Ariel does discursive work in the construction of her identity through two oppositional spaces, I focus specifically upon space as one material constraint upon Ariel's embodied narrative performance.

Wetherell (1998) defined an interpretive repertoire as "a culturally familiar and habitual link of argument comprised of recognizable themes, commonplaces and tropes" (p 400). Taylor (2003) applied Wetherell's definition of interpretive repertoires to analysis of several narratives of place by positing what she termed "the interpretive repertoire of residence" (p. 194). The author argued that repertoires of residence serve as discursive resources by which speakers build functional relationships to place. According to Taylor, the repertoire of residence can operate in

the discursive construction of identity by providing the speaker continuity and the ability to project her life narrative into the future. For example, the author pointed to a particular example of a repertoire of residence that included a conception of home that functioned to link people to places through family relationships. However, for other speakers the same repertoire of residence may cause a disconnect rather than continuity between place and identity. Taylor (2003) found "The repertoire of residence involves a certain construction of family and for some speakers it was problematic to position themselves within such a family because this conflicts with other identity work" (p. 210). Similarly, "Part of Your World" illustrates a conflicting relationship between place, family, and Ariel's identity work.

Just prior to Ariel's performance of "Part of Your World" her father, King Triton, scolds her and ultimately silences her as she attempts to refute his injunctions. "Not another word" (Clements et al., 1989), he commanded. Overwhelmed with frustration, Ariel begins to cry and then immediately swims away, retreating to a secret cavern. As Ariel removes the large stone that covered the entrance to her cavern she looks around to be sure no one is watching. The mermaid's precautionary entrance evidences that she is not free to narrate just anywhere. Ostensibly alone with Flounder, Ariel calmly voices that to which her father refuses to listen. She begins, "If only I could make him understand. I just don't see things the way he does. I don't see how a world that makes such wonderful things could be bad" (Clements et al., 1989). By beginning this way, Ariel frames her narrative within a disconnect between space, family relations, and identity. Her identity as Triton's youngest and most beloved daughter is incongruous with the identity Ariel constructed for herself in relation to place. Thus, Ariel establishes that she does not relate to place through a notion of home or her relationship to her

father. "Part of Your World" then becomes the means by which Ariel renegotiates her identity in relation to her material circumstance.

As Taylor (2003) contended, the way in which a speaker characterizes a particular place does significant identity work by designating the kind of person that belongs there and the kind that does not. After establishing conflict with her father as the impetus for her utterance, Ariel begins to characterize the space in which she narrates and consequently the type of being that belongs there. She sings, "Look at this stuff," (Clements et al., 1989) and begins to move upward from the bottom of the cavern where she began. She immediately offers a tour of the place in which she narrates.

> Look at this stuff. Isn't it neat? Wouldn't you think my collection's complete? Wouldn't you think I'm the girl, the girl who has everything?
> Look at this trove, treasures untold. How many wonders can one cavern hold?
> Looking around here you'd think, sure, she's got everything. (Clements et al., 1989)

Ariel puts the cavern on display in order to characterize the type of beings that belong within it. The type of beings that belong under the sea would accept Ariel's collection as "complete" or even excessive. She continues, "But who cares. No big deal. I want more" (Clements et al., 1989). Thus, Ariel distinguishes herself from those who would be content with her cavern. Because of her unwillingness to accept the limits of the cavern, Ariel establishes that she does not belong there. She continues to employ the repertoire of residence not to establish continuity for her own life, but rather to juxtapose her own ambitious spirit with the continuity of other sea creatures' residences. In fact, Ariel positions herself among a specific category of women who do not belong under water. She sings, "Bright young women, sick of swimming. Ready to stand" (Clements et al., 1989). In describing herself and other women in this way, Ariel not only identifies herself as bright and ambitious but also contrasts herself to the simple-minded women content to continue swimming in the underwater world. By disconnecting herself from a

narrative of continuity, Ariel discursively constructs a positive identity for herself as someone who wants more from life. The lack of continuity in Ariel's narrative presents a dilemma of non-belonging not resolved by the repertoire of residence. Taylor (2003) argued, "continuity within the life narrative could also be established by constructing a relationship to place using a different repertoire" (p. 206). For instance, based upon interview data she collected, the author posited "the repertoire of nature and landscape" (p. 207) to describe one alternative repertoire employed by her interview subjects. Rather than constructing an identity in relation to place based upon residence, women who engaged the repertoire of nature and landscape identified with place via an emotional response to the landscape. I posit what might be termed a repertoire of access to describe the discursive means by which Ariel renegotiates her identity in relation to place.

According to Taylor (2003), "A speaker can also position herself differently in relation to place because the relationship itself can be described with reference to different activities or practices (for example, living, working or visiting)" (p. 201). Like the interview subjects the author described, Ariel understands her relationship to place not through a repertoire of family and residence but through an alternative repertoire. The mermaid constructs her identity in relationship to place through reference to certain activities or practices associated with both the terrestrial and underwater worlds. For example, she sings, "Flipping your fins you don't get too far. Legs are required for jumping dancing…" (Clements et al., 1989). In Ariel's opinion the underwater world restricts inhabitants to the futility of flipping their fins, while subjects of the terrestrial world possess the required bodies for jumping and dancing. Later in the narrative Ariel longs to be "up where they walk, up where they run, up where they stay all day in the sun. Wandering free, wish I could be, part that world" (Clements et al., 1989). Sells (2005)

characterized "Part of Your World" by asserting,

> In these contrasting worlds of dominant and muted cultures, Ariel's song Part of Your World becomes more than an adolescent yearning for adulthood. As Ariel sings of access, autonomy and mobility, she yearns for subjecthood and for the ability to participate in public (human) life . . . . Her desire for access is characterized by her hunger and fascination with a different world in which she believes she can have autonomy and independence. (p. 179)

In contrast to the generalized activities of living, working, or visiting Taylor (2003) described, Ariel characterizes place through specific mobilizing activities such as running, walking, jumping, exploring, and dancing. Additionally the mermaid perceives the terrestrial world as a place for knowledge acquisition. For example, caressing a book she cannot read and gazing at a painting Ariel describes herself as "ready to know what the people know, ask them my questions and get some answers. What's a fire and why does it…what's the word? Burn" (Clements et al., 1989). Thus, as Ariel characterizes the human world through mobility and opportunity she employs a repertoire of access as a discursive tool for constructing her identity in relation to place.

Langellier and Peterson (2004) as well as Taylor (2003) have noted that narrative is constrained by material circumstances. In the case of "Part of Your World" the cavern space itself illustrates the material constraints upon Ariel's narrative. Filled with the material objects Ariel collected, the cavern provided a space for the paradigmatic activity of consumption that characterizes her mirroring body. In no other underwater space can Ariel store and interact freely with her collection of human artifacts. In fact, as the film opens Ariel and Flounder risk being eaten by a shark as they enter a sunken ship in search of human objects. Additionally, within the cavern space, Ariel employs the repertoire of access as a discursive tool by which she negotiates her identity in relationship to place. However, outside the cavern walls Ariel is afforded no such resource for resolving the disconnect she experiences between place and her identity. In fact, her

voice is silenced altogether as she attempts to speak about place. "But if you would just listen" (Clements et al., 1989), she implores Triton. "Not another word!" (Clements et al., 1989) Triton responds. However, while the cavern space provides a safe space for Ariel to collect and consume human artifacts as well as discursively negotiate her identity it simultaneously restricts her voice and body from being heard outside the enclosed walls of the cavern.

<p style="text-align:center">Narrative as Embedded in Fields of Discourse</p>

According to Langellier and Peterson (2004) an embodied narrative, constrained by material circumstances, is performed in and through the discursive fields in which it is embedded. "To our earlier observation that somebody performs narrative we add an equally mundane corollary: to perform narrative is to do something in and with discourse" (p. 18). Foucault (1972) posited four regulatory principles functioning to govern discourse: event, series, regularities, and the possible conditions of existence. Applying each of the four principles to narrative performance, Langellier and Peterson explored the implications of narrative performance as a discursively embedded communication practice. Analysis of Ariel's narrative within Foucault's regulatory principles reveals the way in which patriarchal discourse both restricts and gives rise to "Part of Your World."

Event

First, Foucault (1969/1972) explored the formation of discourse as event. According to the author, a network of interrelated rules of exclusion work to distinguish what is salient and relevant from what is not. Through laws of prohibition, division, rejection, and the opposition of truth and falsehood, external rules operating outside discourse define just what discourse is. "Part

of Your World" implies the functioning of several exclusionary rules. Positing prohibitions as the most obvious exclusionary laws Foucault pointed out, "We know perfectly well we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone, finally, may speak of just anything" (p. 216). Ariel's first utterance highlights a prohibition regarding the exclusive right of certain subjects to speak. She complains, "If only I could make him understand" (Clements et al., 1989). Ariel refers to her father, King Triton, who not only forbids her travel to the ocean's surface but prohibits her from speaking about her fascination with the human world. Triton, as the authority figure for the merpeople, holds the exclusive right to define the terrestrial world as dangerous and barbaric. Ariel is unable to make him understand not because she is an inept speaker but because her position as Triton's daughter prohibits her to speak on the subject. In fact, in the scene leading up to "Part of Your World" Triton literally silences Ariel as he commands, "Not another word! And I am never, never to hear of you going to the surface again. Is that clear?" (Clements et al.,1989).

In addition to laws of prohibition Foucault outlined division and rejection as a second set of exclusionary rules. Specifically he pointed to the opposition between "reason and folly" (Foucault, 1969/1972, p. 217). The distinction of reason from folly proves particularly relevant for analysis of "Part of Your World" as it parallels the oppositional spaces of the underwater and terrestrial world. As Murphy (1995) and Sells (1995) have observed, the bifurcated world presented in *The Little Mermaid* positions the terrestrial space as a rational space of cultural validity while relegating the underwater world to an irrational space of nonsensical fiction. In a particularly illustrative example Sells pointed to the inability of land animals to talk while the fictitious animals underwater speak, sing, and dance. Analysis of "Part of Your World" provides insight into the way in which the two differentiated spheres functioned discursively to regulate

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narrative performance. Here, the narrative distribution of knowledge becomes especially

relevant. "Part of Your World" characterizes Ariel as ignorant yet desiring of knowledge. At

several points throughout the song Ariel forgets the word for some aspect of human life she

attempts to describe. For example, she sings, "Walking along down a…what's that word again?

Street" (Clements et al., 1989). As the song continues she describes herself as "Ready to know

what the people know. Ask them my questions and get some answers. What's a fire and why

does it…what's the word…burn?" (Clements et al., 1989). Murphy (1995) noted that in the

colonized space presented as the underwater world, inhabitants danced and sang to calypso

music without producing anything. This absence of production included the production of

sanctioned knowledge. Thus, Ariel's thirst for knowledge could not be satisfied within the silly,

inconsequential space of the marginalized other. Rather, she must to traverse the boundary into

the white-male sphere of valid scientific knowledge and learn from subjects qualified to dispense

such knowledge.

Series

While external rules operate to control and delimit discourse from the outside, internal

rules work to locate regularities in a series within discourse. By locating various degrees of

repetition a series allows for the classification of different types of discourse (Foucault,

1969/1972). Ariel's narrative demonstrates the function of repetition to create a regulatory series

that allows us to classify the type of story Ariel tells. For instance, the mermaid repeatedly uses

the verbs want and wish throughout the narrative. The repetitious expression of wants and

desires throughout "Part of Your World" has lead Sells (1995) to characterize Ariel's narrative as

an "I want song" (p. 178). Additionally, the repetition of action verbs associated with autonomy,

access, and mobility (walking, running, jumping, wandering free, dancing, standing) allows for the further classification of the heroine's narrative performance. As previously mentioned, Sells drew upon Ariel's desire for mobility and access in order to qualify "Part of Your World" more specifically among narratives of desire. She contended, "As Ariel sings of access, autonomy and mobility, she yearns for the ability to participate in public (human) life" (Sells, 1995, p. 179). Thus, Ariel's narrative can be understood as a tale of feminine struggle. Finally the repetition of spatial references such as "up there" or "that shore up above" serve to establish a physical as well as socio-cultural hierarchy between the underwater and terrestrial worlds. As Sells explained,

> The repeated depictions of land and sea as complementary also create a hierarchical relationship in which Eric's human world on land is privileged as the real world. This is most frequently reinforced through the language and imagery of "up there"   and "down here." (p. 178)

Through repetition of verbs synonymous with mobility and access, coupled with the repeated use of spatial references, Ariel tells a story about more than simply teenage petulance or father-daughter relationships. "Part of Your World" becomes a tale of feminine struggle for mobility, access, and subjecthood in the culturally validated white male sphere.

Additionally, Foucault (1969/1972) posited the individual "I" as another series around which discourse is organized. Langellier and Peterson (2004) applied Foucault's conception to storytelling, arguing that, "In storytelling, we identify utterances as belonging to speakers; we identify point of view, narrators, and characters as types of coherence of action in discourse" (p. 19). The ordering of "Part of Your World" around Ariel as an individual speaker functions to regulate the discursive action within *The Little Mermaid* as the story of Ariel's struggle rather than say that of Sebastian or Triton. The way in which Ariel situates herself as a storyteller, character, and audience member within her narrative has performative implications for gender.

Within "Part of Your World" Ariel positions herself as a character in relation to other women. For example as she sings "Bright young women, sick of swimming ready to stand" (Clements et al., 1989), Ariel changes her posture and facial expression from disappointed and helpless to bold confidence and determination. By speaking in third person about multiple unspecified women Ariel positions herself and her audience in relation to other women who, like herself, desire more than the underwater world can offer. Her embodied performance serves to constitute the feminine struggle of not only her own body but a body of women. Ariel continues her utterance, "and ready to know what the people know, ask them my questions and get some answers" (Clements et al., 1989). By switching from third person to first person within the same sentence Ariel makes herself synonymous with the group of bright young women she calls into existence. Thus, she characterizes herself as a bright young woman while also performitivly constituting other women as desiring the knowledge of the white male sphere. To be a bright young woman is to desire a place within prohibited masculine domain.

Regularities

Foucault's third regulatory principle, regularities, concerns the conditions under which discourse may be employed. Specifically, regularities function to impose constraints upon those who utilize discourse, differentiate between speaking subjects, and qualify the degree of interachangability of various discourses. As Langellier and Peterson (2004) summarized,

> These *regularities* in discourse, in the conjunction of knowledge and power, reveal rules for who is qualified to speak on a specific subject, rules for how speaking and listening roles are appropriated and the extent of their interchangeability, rules for the diffusion of discourse through the doctrinal adherence of subjects, and rules for differences in the ability to appropriate discourse. (p. 20, emphasis in original)

"Part of Your World" functions to reveal several discursive regularities governing speaking subjects. First, the exchange leading into the heroine's song illustrates the patriarchal authority that qualifies Triton to speak while denying Ariel the right to narrate. Ariel attempts to position herself outside of Triton's authority. She argues, "I'm sixteen years old. I'm not a child" (Clements et al., 1989). Ariel accepts that children are subject to patriarchal authority and works to position herself in opposition to young obedient children. For Ariel age and physical maturity warrant certain freedoms from patriarchal authority. Triton however employs his power as both Ariel's father and the sea king to redefine the terms of his authority in terms of place. Unlike human children who eventually gain autonomy as speaking subjects by moving out of the parental home, as a mermaid, Ariel is unlikely to move out of her father's ocean. Thus Ariel stands to be indefinitely silenced by virtue of her position as a female rather than her age or level of maturity.

In addition to demonstrating Triton's unending patriarchal authority over Ariel, "Part of Your World" reveals the exclusive possession and appropriation of knowledge by members of the white male sphere. For example, Ariel sings, "And ready to know what the people know. Ask them my questions and get some answers. What's a fire and why does it, what's the word? Burn" (Clements et al., 1989). The young mermaid points to the authority of "the people" to possess and speak about certain types of knowledge, particularly science. Members of the white male terrestrial sphere are endowed with cultural authority to employ and appropriate scientific discourse. Regularities, according to Foucault (1969/1972), work "to preserve or reproduce discourse, but in order that it should circulate within a closed community, according to strict regulations, without those in possession being dispossessed by this very distribution" (p. 225). Rules governing the interchangeability of speaking subjects preclude Ariel from possessing and

distributing knowledge. Thus, while Ariel imagines she might gain some sanctioned scientific knowledge from human beings, she does not envision herself sharing knowledge of the ocean's underwater workings with members of the terrestrial world. An entire field of scientific study known as marine biology exists so that humans might better understand aquatic life. Yet, as part of the mythical culturally insignificant sphere to which women are relegated, Ariel is not qualified to employ and appropriate scientific discourse.

Possible Conditions of Existence

Foucault (1969/1972) underscored a cultural fear of discourse's potential dangers and uncontrolled proliferations. Rather than efface a fear of discourse's irregularity through attempts to uncover universal axioms or fixed meaning, the author advocated a turn to the possible conditions of existence that facilitate and delimit discourse. In exploring the possible conditions of narrative performance, Langellier and Peterson (2004) drew upon Foucault to ask, "What becomes discussable as a consequence of this particular storytelling?" (Langellier and Peterson, 2004, p. 23). Thus, rather than an effort to posit fixed meaning, critical discursive inquiry becomes a means by which to elucidate struggles over meaning rather than discover a cause or the motive of those involved in narrative performance. Langellier and Peterson (2004) observed, "The conditions of existence make some stories, some ways of telling stories, and events of storytelling more easily performed. If the story was performed in this way, it can be performed in another, different way" (p. 24). The comments of Triton and Sebastian frame "Part of Your World" by marking out the possible conditions for Ariel's narrative underwater while simultaneously creating a space for alternate performances. First, before Ariel begins singing in her secluded cavern, Trion commands, "And I am never to hear of you going to the surface

again. Is that clear?" (Clements et al., 1989). Ariel does not reply verbally but rather begins to

cry before swimming away in frustration. Triton does not demand that Ariel never visit the

surface but rather that he is not to hear of her adventures. Thus, even in his attempt to restrict and

silence Ariel, Triton creates a space for Ariel to respond in opposition to his injunction. The

king allows for the possibility of Ariel's journey to the surface while prohibiting Ariel or anyone

else to speak on the subject in his presence. Additionally, as Ariel sings she imagines the

possibility of alternative narratives. For example she sings, "Betch'ya on land they understand

bet they don't reprimand their daughters" (Clements et al., 1989). Ariel's imagination of an

alternate narrative performed on land coupled with the possibility Triton makes available for

Ariel to contact the human world, creates a space that limits Ariel's speech under water while

simultaneously allowing for the possibility of a different narrative performance elsewhere.

As Langellier and Peterson (2004) contended, narrative performance "is known through

the discursive practices in which it participates" (p. 18). Foucault's (1969/1972) four regulatory

principles provide a means by which to analyze the discursive practices in which "Part of Your

World" exists. Rather than reveal fixed absolute truth regarding gender, attention to the

discursive regularities enacted in Ariel's song reveal a struggle over the meaning of voice,

silence, and access in relation to gender.

Legitimation and Critique in Performing Narrative

Langellier and Peterson (2004) continued to employ the work of Foucault (1969/1972) to

discuss the implications of embodied, materially situated, and discursively regulated narrative

performance. Narrative performance, according to the authors, represents a contingent unfixed

discursive practice. While narrative functions to produce and reinforce existing relationships of

power, narrative performance "also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it at least temporarily" (Foucault, 1980, p. 101). For example, Ariel's opening utterance "If only I could make him understand" (Clements et al., 1989), demonstrates Ariel's desire to function within the existing system of power. In this statement, Ariel does not contest or attempt to thwart Triton's power or the patriarchal system from which it derives, rather she seeks a more reasonable exercise of such power. Conversely Ariel sings, "Bright young women, sick of swimming, ready to stand" (Clements et al., 1989). Ariel's use of the verb stand in this statement refers not only to the physical privilege of humans denied to mermaids but to the ability to stand up for oneself or challenge authority. As "Part of Your World" demonstrates, narrative performances can function both to legitimate and critique existing relations of power. However, rather than divide narrative into absolute dominant and subversive discursive categories, Langellier and Peterson (2004) explicated, "the tactical productivity or efficacy of storytelling" (p.25). They posited storytelling as strategic process arguing that, "Strategy concerns the goals around which a system is organized; while tactics concern how a system goes about accomplishing goals. Tactics concern the precise and sometimes tenuous ways strategy is put into practice" (p. 25).

Moreover, Langellier and Peterson (2004) went on to note that while in ordinary situations tactics are constrained by the strategies that envelop them, the relationship between strategies and tactics should not be understood as a static hierarchy. Rather, they observed that strategies and tactics mutually inform each other. In short, changes in tactics can result in changes in strategy. "Part of Your World" illustrates the contingent relationship between strategies and tactics. As the narrative begins, the patriarchal familial structure emerges as a dominant strategy with obedience functioning as a tactic for maintaining the family structure.

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Triton insists on Ariel's obedience to ensure the safety of his daughter. For example, in the exchange leading into "Part of Your World" he asks, "Do you think I want to see my youngest daughter snabbed by some fish-eater's hook?" (Clements et al., 1989). Although Ariel resists the patronizing implications of Triton's question by contesting her position as a child, the heroine relies upon her familial relationship with her father to survive in the underwater kingdom. In fact, Ariel does not deny the strategic emphasis on family structure but rather posits alternative tactics to obedience for retaining that structure. For example, Ariel begins her narrative by lamenting, "If only I could make him understand. I just don't see things the way he does" (Clements et al., 1989). Additionally she sings, "Betch'ya on land, they understand. Bet they don't reprimand their daughters. Bright young women, sick of swimming, ready to stand and ready to know what the people know. Ask them my questions and get some answers" (Clements et al., 1989). Both an attempt to reason with Triton and the imaging of the human world serve as alternative tactics for maintaining the father-daughter strategy. However, both tactics would require a redistribution of power within the overall patriarchal structure. Langellier and Peterson (2004) observed, "The danger that storytelling poses is this potential to critique or reinscribe ongoing strategic arrangements" (p. 26). Reasoned negotiation with Triton regarding Ariel's fascination with the human world would necessitate a reordering of rules for speaking subjects. Constrained by her embodied material condition underwater in which she is silenced, Ariel imagines alternative father-daughter relationships above water. Human knowledge becomes an alternative tactic to obedience that both reinscribes the father-daughter relationship while simultaneously suggesting a strategic reorganizing of gendered relations of power.

Langellier and Peterson (2004) explained, "tactical innovations may rupture or restructure the constraints of strategy. Once strategy is restructured, however, the hierarchy of

strategy enveloping tactics returns" (p. 25). Wright (1992) argued that claims of knowledge serve to support the status quo by establishing that which is correct or legitimate. Returning to Sells (1995) likening of the terrestrial world to the white male sphere reveals the way in which masculinist appropriations of knowledge serve to legitimate patriarchal structures of power. Thus, albeit reorganized by the development of alternative tactics, the strategic patriarchal emphasis operating within "Part of Your World" returns through the function of sanctioned cultural knowledge to legitimize patriarchal relations of dominance.

Analysis of "Part of Your World" as an embodied, materially constrained, discursively embedded narrative performance capable of reifying and subverting existing relations of power, establishes voice and silence as a critical narrative tension even before it is made explicit in the film. Because of her mermaid body Ariel is denied the right to speak in the white male terrestrial sphere. As a mirroring body with consumption as her paradigmatic activity, Ariel's desire for human subjectivity becomes reduced to and conflated with the consumption of material artifacts. Constrained to the confines of her secret cavern, Ariel is doubly silenced as she is forbidden to speak on land or below water. Through narrative Ariel negotiates her identity in relation to place only to have that relationship and her identity silenced. Attention to the discursive fields within which Ariel narrates elucidates the rules and regularities that function to silence Ariel on the basis of gender. Interrogating the legitimating and subversive potential of "Part of Your World" underscores silencing as tactic for maintaining the strategic patriarchal structure. Ariel's desire to become human then serves as an alternate tactic with the possibility of restructuring current relations of gender and power. Moreover, because the film's heroine performs "Part of Your World" the song can be understood to offer a culturally acceptable performance of feminine struggle with patriarchal discourse. Specifically, consideration of "Part of Your World" within

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Langellier and Peterson's four dimensions of narrative performance elucidate the narrative function of silence in relations to the performance of gender. In the next chapter I turn to Sebastian's performance of "Under the Sea" in order consider the performative operation of masculine domination through narrative performance.

CHAPTER 3

PERFORMING DOMINATION IN "UNDER THE SEA"

In the previous chapter I explored the discursive regularities and embodied material

context of Ariel's narrative in "Part of Your World." Analysis of the heroine's song through the

lens of narrative performativity revealed patriarchal power to directly constrain every aspect of

Ariel's narrative. Thus, in the present chapter I move from a discussion of the accepted gender

performance of the film's heroine in "Part of Your World" to more closely consider the way in

which masculine domination is performatively constituted through narrative performance in

"Under the Sea." While patriarchal domination informs each narrative song in *The Little*

Mermaid, I turn to "Under the Sea" for two primary reasons. First, "Under the Sea" is the next

major musical narrative in *The Little Mermaid* following "Part of Your World." Developing my

analysis in a manner consistent with the chronological progression of the film underscores the

narrative significance of each song in terms of gender as well as the advancement of the film's

overall plot. "Part of Your World" establishes Ariel's desire to be human as the heroine's driving

motivation. As *The Little Mermaid* continues, "Under the Sea" addresses the obstacles and perils

Ariel must work against to achieve her goals. Second, as Sebastian explicitly attempts to

constrain Ariel's speech, body, and contact with the human world on Triton's behalf, "Under the

Sea" puts the complex operation of patriarchal domination on display in a way unlike any other

song in the film. By beginning with an expression of the heroine's desires before moving to

Sebastian's expression of the limitations Ariel faces, the story of *The Little Mermaid* frames

Ariel as an individual tempestuous teenager who is unhappy with her father's rules rather than a

female who struggles with systemic patriarchal oppression. I employ Langellier and Peterson's

(2004) four dimensions of narrative performance as a framework for elucidating the performative

operation of patriarchal power in and through "Under the Sea." To begin, I situate the song within the context of the overall plot of the film.

Sebastian, a small sea crab that serves as King Triton's servent, serves as the primary narrator for "Under the Sea." After Ariel's initial disobedience, Triton charges Sebastian with watching over his petulant daughter. Immediately following "Part of Your World" Ariel encounters, instantly falls in love with, and ultimately saves the human prince Eric from drowning. Sebastian and Flounder stand by in horror as Ariel's fascination with the human world reaches its pinnacle and she vows to become human in order to be with her new love. While Ariel disregards her father's command to stay away from humans, Sebastian fears Ariel's behavior will bring about Triton's wrath. Accordingly, Sebastian and Flounder agree to keep Ariel's adventures a secret. The song's lyricist, Howard Ashmen, discussed the impetus for the song in terms of the overall plot of *The Little Mermaid*. He asserted, "You get to a certain point where the crab has to convince the mermaid not to go up above the water and change her life so he *has* to sing 'Under the Sea'" (BVHE, 2006).

The scene begins as Ariel lies on a rock coquettishly picking a flower apart, alternately imagining, "He loves me. He loves me not" (Clements et al., 1989). Sebastian paces below her growing increasingly worried Triton will discover Ariel's forbidden love. He mumbles to himself, "So far, so good. I don't think the king knows. But it will not be easy keeping something like this a secret for long" (Clements et al., 1989). Like Ariel's performance of "Part of Your World," Sebastian transitions seamlessly from spoken dialogue with Ariel to the sung narrative of "Under the Sea." Responding to Ariel's day dream Sebastian begins,

Sebastian: Ariel, stop talking crazy.

Ariel, seemingly oblivious to Sebastian's attempt to silence her only grows more excited at the

thought of Eric.

Ariel:	I've got to see him again. Tonight. Scuttle knows where he lives.
Sebastian:	Ariel, please will you get your head out of the clouds and back in the water where it belongs?
Ariel:	I'll swim up to his castle, then Flounder will splash around to get his attention and then we'll go…

Sebastian cuts Ariel off exclaiming,

| Sebastian: | Down here is your home! Ariel, listen to me. The human world, it's a mess. Life under the sea is better than anything they've got up there. |

Calypso music begins to play and Sebastian starts to perform the following musical narrative that

progressively grows to include an entire underwater community of dancing aquatic life:

Sebastian:	The seaweed is always greener in somebody else's lake.
	You dream about going up there but that is a big mistake.
	Just look at the world around you right on the ocean floor.
	Such wonderful things around you. What more is you looking for?
	Under the sea. Under the sea. Darling it's better down where its wetter.
	Take it from me.
	Up on the shore they work all day. Out in the sun they slave away
	While we devoting full time to floating. Under the sea.
	Down here all the fish is happy as off through the waves they roll.
	The fish on the land aint happy, they sad 'cause they in the bowl.
	But fish in the bowl is lucky. They in for a worser fate. One day when the boss get hungry,
Fish:	Guess who's going to be on the plate.
Sebastian:	One more, Under the Sea.
	Under the Sea.
	Nobody beat us, fry us and eat us in fricassee.
	We what the land folks love to cook,
	under the sea we off the hook.
	We got no troubles life is the bubbles! Under the Sea.

Since life is sweet here, we've got the beat here naturally.

Even the sturgeon and the ray, they get the urge and start to play.

We've got the spirit you've got to hear it, under the sea.

The newt play the flute, the carp plays the harp, plaice play the bass and they sound'n sharp.

The bass play the brass, the chub play the tub. The fluke is the duke of soul.

Fluke: Yeah

Sebastian: The ray he can play the lings on the strings, the trout rocking out, the blackfish she sings, the smelt and the sprat they know where its at, and oh that blowfish blow!

Yeah! Under the sea, Under the sea.

When the sardines begin the beguine its music to me.

What do they got? A lot of sand. We've got a hot crustacean band.

Each little clam here know how to jam here under the sea. Each little slug here cutting a rug here under the sea.

Each little snail here know how to wail here that's why it's hotter under the water. Yeah we in luck here down in the muck here under the sea. (Clements et al., 1989)

The sea creatures climactically end the narrative by encircling the rock on which Ariel sat as the narrative began only to find the mermaid has disappeared at some point during the performance. The sea creatures swim away as if disappointed at their failed effort to persuade Ariel.

Sebastian: Oh, somebody has got to nail that girl's fins to the floor (Clements et al., 1989).

Embodied Context

Langellier and Peterson (2004) contended that narrative performance becomes meaningful as it is experienced through the body. According to the authors, analysis functions to elucidate the context of embodied relations constituted in and through a particular narrative event. Like my analysis of "Part of Your World," I utilize Frank's (1991) action theory of embodiment as a productive entry point for exploring the complex web of embodied

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relationships at work in Sebastian's narrative performance. Specifically, I understand "Under the Sea" to offer a narrative of and about masculine domination of the female other. I analyze "Under the Sea" in an effort to build on the previous chapter by adding to an understanding of the embodied gender relations performed in "Part of Your World" and *The Little Mermaid* overall. Frank noted, " dominating bodies are, at least in the literature, exclusively male bodies. Hence it is impossible to consider the dominating body without also considering the construction of the masculine body" (p. 69). When applied to "Under the Sea," the dominating body offers an ideal corporeal orientation and type of bodily usage for understanding the embodied narrative performance of patriarchal power relations in the film. While in the previous chapter I focused specifically on Ariel's performance as a mirroring body, the domination at work in "Under the Sea" cannot be understood through Sebastian's individual body. As Lagnelleir and Peterson explained,

> The mundane observation with which we began, some *body* performs narrative contains an important ambiguity: that is, this body may be a person (my body, or interpersonal communication) a few persons (a body of women, or interpersonal and small group communication) many people (the body politic, or public communication) and many groups of peoples (cultural bodies, or intercultural communication). (p. 13)

The authors' observation becomes particularly useful in an attempt to understand the role of the body in the constitution of gendered relations of power in "Under the Sea." While Sebastian represents a dominating body in relation to Ariel, he simultaneously serves as a dominated body relative to Triton. Triton dominates Ariel, Sebastian, and the bodies within his kingdom, but the human bodies of the white male public sphere in turn dominate them. Indeed, "Under the Sea" makes the ambiguity of narrative embodiment explicit. According to Langellier and Peterson, exploring the various dimensions of narrative performance is to ask what embodied, material, and discursive contexts occasion a particular storytelling as opposed to other narrative

possibilities. An investigation of the multiple dominating bodies at work in "Under the Sea" reveals the role of Sebastian's particular embodiment in making him the only character capable of delivering this narrative in this way. In what follows I attempt to shed light upon the embodied context of patriarchal domination in "Under the Sea" by beginning with a discussion of the dominating body generally as described by Frank (1991) before applying the author's distinctions to the song specifically. In addition to the bodies present during the performance of "Under the Sea," I discuss the implication of absent bodies made present in Sebastian's song.

Frank (1991) argued that acting bodies are conscious of themselves and they must orient themselves in relation to four dimensions of embodied action. As the body answers questions of control, desire, self-relatedness, and other-relatedness, four types of bodily usages emerge. Configured by its lacking desire, the dominating body understands itself as contingent, its relationship to the other as dyadic, and as disassociated from its own corporeality. According to Frank, the body must position itself as either lacking or producing in terms of desire. While the mirroring body endlessly produces desire in order to keep its lack unconscious, the dominating body's fundamental sense of lack represents its defining characteristic. The author argued that this lack derives from a traumatic experience during the process of individuation from the mother. The two-person relationship between the body and the mother constitutes a dyadic other-relatedness. Eventually, the body turns the body to domination of that other as it attempts to compensate for its lack. For the dominating body the other becomes sub-human yet remains necessary as the body engages force as its paradigmatic mode of activity. Frank employed the soldier male as a representative example describing the need for the dominating body to physically destroy the body of the other. Force works as both the medium and outcome of domination.

Existing in a dyadic constant state of warfare with the other, the dominating body understands itself to be contingent. Gregor (1986) described the masculine dominated sexual relations of a specific Amazonian culture in a manner illustrative of the contingency Frank (1991) articulated. Gregor (1986) observed, "Even though male identity and men's house culture are not immediately in danger of collapse, the cost of maintaining the façade runs high. The price men pay is anxiety: fear of their own sexual impulse and fear of women" (p. 115). Drawing upon Gregor's analysis, Frank noted that as a result of its own contingency, the dominating body is as threatening to itself as the body of the other. Accordingly, the body must dominate the other in an effort to control the expression of its own threatening internal contingency. Finally, the body must relate to itself by either associating with its own corporeality or disassociating itself from its embodied reality. In the case of the dominating body, it must be disassociated from itself in order to carry out force as its paradigmatic mode of activity. This disassociation is facilitated through a prohibition of the lacking subject from knowing her own body. As Frank explained,

> The authority of rulers is implanted into subjects' bodies in the form of a lack in overflowing (a prohibition against using what belongs to you). These subjects have always experienced their lack of social power as a lack of power over specific areas of their own bodies. The body must not become too familiar, 'known.' It must be an object and source of fear. (p. 72)

Sebastian's embodied performance clearly reveals his relationship to Ariel to be one of domination. Understanding the dominating body generally as lacking, contingent, dyadically constituted, and disassociated from itself provides a foundation from which to elucidate the performative operation of domination in "Under the Sea." In the opening of the narrative Sebastian commands, "Ariel, listen to me. The human world, it's a mess. Life under the sea is better than anything they've got up there" (Clements et al., 1989). As Langellier and Peterson (2004) pointed out, "The speech act 'let me tell you something that happened to me' situates the

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storyteller as a narrator in a relationship with a listener in a particular setting" (p. 9). While the specific utterance "let me tell you something" connotes a sense of choice on the part of the listener, Sebastian's utterance "Ariel, listen to me" (Clements et al., 1989), in "Under the Sea" functions performatively to dominate Ariel through silence. Sebastian positions her as a silent listener and himself as speaker. By silencing Ariel, the crab privileges his characterization of the terrestrial world over her competing narrative of the human body. Moreover, Sebastian's physical performance utilizes the embodied conventions of narrative performance to frame "Under the Sea" in patriarchal domination. Langellier and Peterson posited storytelling to represent a joint endeavor of speaking and listening subjects. While Sebastian positions himself as the narrator of "Under the Sea," he can do so only when a listener creates a space to experience the story. Just as the utterance "Ariel, listen to me," (Clements et al., 1989) implies a certain lack of agency on the part of the listener, Sebastian's embodied performance works to physically position Ariel's body within appropriate corporeal conventions for listening. As he pleads with Ariel to remain underwater where she "belongs" he grabs onto her fin while she swims about as if to physically restrain her body. When he finally demands, "Ariel, listen to me," (Clements et al., 1989) the crab swims up to Ariel's face and moves forward forcing her to sink backwards and be seated on a rock. Once Ariel has engaged the embodied conventions of listener, Sebastian can begin his narrative but not before. The music begins and he sings his song only after Ariel is seated on a rock ready to listen. As "Under the Sea" ends Sebastian and the fish ensemble that entered to accompany his narrative find Ariel's body to be unrestrained. As if the entire performance had been for nothing, the fish swim away leaving Sebastian to close the narrative with a final testament to the embodied context of narrative performance, "Somebody's got to nail that girls fins to the floor" (Clements et al., 1989).

Ariel's absence and Sebastian's subsequent response as a desire to force her physically to listen to his narrative illustrates the contingency that threatens the dominating body and gives rise to its fear of the feminine other. Sebastian clearly demonstrates the anxiety and fear Frank posited as characteristic of the dominating body. In fact, he arguably represents the most fearful anxiety ridden character of the entire film. In the dialogue leading into "Under the Sea" Sebastian paces below Ariel as she voices a daydream about Eric and her plans to travel to the ocean's surface. He mumbles to himself, "Ok, so far. So good" (Clements et al., 1989). Noticing Ariel's speech he frets, "But it will not be easy keeping something like this a secret for long" (Clements et al., 1989). He pleads "Ariel, please! Would you get your head out of the clouds and back in the water where it belongs…Ariel, stop talking crazy!" (Clements et al., 1989). Ariel continues to ignore Sebastian's efforts to silence her until he finally cuts her off mid sentence exclaiming, "Down here is your home" (Clements et al., 1989). The dialogue leading into "Under the Sea" frames the song within masculine fear of women where they do not belong: the white male sphere.

However, domination cannot be reduced to a discrete motive or Sebastian's individual body. Indeed, Sebastian's anxiety blurs the boundaries between individual dominating bodies to reveal a more complicated corporeal web of domination. In fact, Sebastian's desire to dominate Ariel through the forceful control of her body and the silencing of her narrative has little if anything to do with Sebastian's own relationship to Ariel. Rather, Sebastian is concerned with Ariel only insofar as she relates to the body that dominates him: King Triton. He postulates, "Ok, so far so good. I don't think the king knows. But it will not be easy keeping something like this a secret for long" (Clements et al., 1989). Specifically appointed to keep watch over Ariel, Sebastian takes on the primary burden of dominating Ariel on Triton's behalf. As Frank (1991)

observed, "The need to dominate the other is a need to control the internal contingency which threatens them" (p. 72). Accordingly, Triton controls his internal contingency by projecting his subsequent anxiety onto Sebastian's body. Moreover, Triton extends his dominance to include all the underwater creatures. As discussed in the previous chapter, the king silenced Ariel by commanding, "I am never, never to hear of you going to the surface again. Is that clear?" (Clements et al., 1989). Rather than directly demand that Ariel never return to the ocean's surface, Triton forbids the narrative recounting of her transgressions. Hence the king prohibits Ariel from telling her story while simultaneously charging others with the task of silencing his daughter on his behalf. In this way, Triton dominates the entirety of the aquatic community positioning the various fish and sea creatures as both dominated in relation to his body and dominating in relation to Ariel. The incorporation of the public body of the aquatic community into Sebastian's narrative serves as an elaborate performative enactment of Triton's kingdom wide domination.

Analysis reveals "Under the Sea" to be structured by masculine domination. Sebastian directly refers to his fear of Triton's wrath before performing "Under the Sea." Indeed Triton's body is highly present in Sebastian's narrative. This narrative presence underscores an important characteristic of the patriarchal domination that governs Ariel's narrative in "Part of Your World" and *The Little Mermaid* more generally, absence. While Triton's relationship to Ariel serves as the initial narrative conflict in the film, he remains conspicuously absent throughout most of the film. In fact, Triton does not directly participate in any of the six songs performed throughout the film. According to Frank (1991), the dominating body remains disassociated from itself through a prohibition against knowledge of itself. He explained,

> The sense of the body as a dark territory, fearful and forbidden, is prerequisite to being a warrior, since to fight is to turn this dark power outward. The soldier male's darkness is

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his strength, though his power remains contingent since it is not really his. (p. 73)

While the dominating body disassociates from itself in darkness, narrative performance functions to spotlight the body. As Langellier and Peterson (2004) observed, "Performing narrative requires bodily participation: hearing and voicing, gesturing, seeing and being seen, feeling and being touched by the storytelling" (p. 8). Narrative performance represents a communicative practice in which the body experiences itself and the bodies of others while simultaneously being experienced by others. In many ways the body becomes known in and through narrative performance. Frank's equation of the dominating body's strength with darkness reveals the role of invisibility or absence in the practice of domination through narrative. Throughout the film Triton's physical presence repeatedly calls attention to the contingency of his power. For example, in his final altercation with Ariel, Triton becomes overwhelmingly frustrated with his inability to control his daughter and uses his magical scepter to destroy her private cavern of human artifacts. Moreover, Triton stands considerably larger than Ariel's petite feminine body. His loud booming voice easily overpowers Ariel, allowing Triton to silence his young daughter. Frank argued that the adoption of force as its paradigmatic mode of activity precludes the dominating body from other forms of interaction with the other. Hence, Triton and Ariel's repeated attempts to interact inevitably end in Triton silencing Ariel through a display of physical force. As a dominating body, Triton is unable to silence Ariel through a coherent narrative that would effectively re-characterize the terrestrial world as a dangerous space rather than one of access and mobility. The absence of the dominating body that structures "Under the Sea" allows patriarchal domination to operate as a predictable certainty. Ariel, at least initially, desires to be part of the human world as a means of escaping domination. While Triton's overpowering body precludes a narrative engagement with Ariel, Sebastian's small crustacean

embodiment allows him to characterize both the underwater and human world.

To complicate matters further, understanding Triton as a dominating body points to yet another dominating body. While Triton dominates Ariel, Sebastian, and a body of aquatic life, he is himself dominated by the human body. Triton forbids Ariel to travel to the ocean's surface because of his fear of the human body. He attempts to explain his prohibition of the human world, "Do you think I want to see my youngest daughter snabbed by some fish-eater's hook?" (Clements et al., 1989). Accordingly, as Sebastian invokes Triton's dominating body in "Under the Sea," he simultaneously implicates the human body that dominates Ariel, Triton, and the ocean kingdom. Triton's body precludes his direct participation in "Under the Sea." Similarly, the absence of the human body in Sebastian's narrative performance about human domination underscores the ever-presence of the dominating force of the human body. Frank (1991) employed the soldier male as an illustrative example of the necessity of the other for the dominating body. He noted,

> The other becomes a sub-human who is a human of the nether regions, a person who is human even sexually below. But the other is no less necessary even if subhuman. For the dominating body, someone or other had to die so that they could live. (p. 71)

Frank's explanation of the dominating body's relationship to the other becomes uniquely relevant when applied to an understanding of the embodied context at work in "Under the Sea." While the soldier dominates through violent acts of war, the human body dominates through the necessary human process of consumption. The aquatic life who collectively perform "Under the Sea" are literally necessary for the dominating human body. Consumption as an act of domination becomes the subject of much of Sebastian's narrative. In fact, he describes the connection between humans and sea creatures through the use of a master-slave metaphor. He sings, "Down here all the fish is happy as off through the waves they roll. The fish on the land

ain't happy. They sad cause they in the bowl. But fish in the bowl is lucky, they in for a worser

fate. One day when the boss get hungry…" (Clements et al., 1989). An accompanying fish

finishes Sebastian's sentence, "Guess who's gon be on the plate" (Clements et al., 1989). Later

in the narrative Sebastian continues, "Under the sea nobody beat us, fry us and eat us in

fricassees. We what the land folks love to cook. Under the sea we off the hook" (Clements et al.,

1989). Although heavily anthropomorphized Sebastian, Flounder and the other sea creatures

alone cannot function as the dominated other for the human body. Literally only partially human,

the mermaid body provides the dominating body with a body just human enough to compensate

for his lack as he physically destroys the mermaid body in the process of consumption. Just as

Triton's dominating body renders him unable to directly participate in "Under the Sea" as a

narrative of domination, the human body that understands aquatic life in terms of food cannot

directly engage Ariel in narrative performance. Moreover, while Triton's absence might appear

to be a matter of choice or coincidence, the human body is physiologically incapable of narrating

under water. The biological impossibility of the human body's speech underwater necessitates its

absence from a particular narrative space and points to the significance of the relationship

between bodies, space, and domination. Hence I turn to space as a particular material constraint

uniquely relevant to Sebastian's narrative performance of "Under the Sea."

Situational and Material Constraint

According to Langellier and Peterson (2004) narrative's embodied context gives rise to

the possibility of narrative performance. However, the authors argued that not all possibilities

can be actualized in a given situation. Rather, material and situational circumstances constrain

the body that performs narrative. Such constraints both facilitate and restrict narrative

performance. Sebastian's small crustacean body precludes his domination of Ariel through the outright physical force Triton employs. However Sebastian's small size in relation to Ariel allows him to restrict her through his narrative performance of domination in "Under the Sea." Sebastian's embodiment allows him to dominate in a way that Triton's body cannot. The authors further explained, "We use the term constraint here in the semiotic and phenomenological sense of a boundary that defines the conditions of what is possible" (Langellier & Peterson, 2004, p. 14). The driving conflict in *The Little Mermaid* as a whole centers upon the opposition of two bordering spaces. "Under the Sea" offers a bounded narrative performance of the way in which the dominating body utilizes space as a material resource for domination. De Certeau (1984) observed the relationship of space within strategies of domination. He defined a strategy as

> the calculation or manipulation of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets and threats (costumers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed. (pp. 35-36)

In "Under the Sea" both the underwater and the terrestrial sphere function as strategic locations by which the logic of patriarchal domination isolates and delimits itself from the feminine other that threatens its power. According to de Certeau, the strategic appropriation of space has important effects that he described as power struggles that are always resolved in favor of the status quo. Hence, I explore the implications of the masculine ability to claim both the ocean and terrestrial worlds as sites of domination.

First, according to de Certeau (1984), the declaration of an autonomous space shields those in power from the variability of contingent circumstances. Such space offers its inhabitants stability over time in order to plan and calculate actions. The author argued, "the 'proper' is a triumph of place over time" (p. 36). "Under the Sea" positions land as the autonomous space of

masculine human activity. Just as de Certeau argued, this spatial appropriation naturalizes the logic of patriarchy by mastering stability overtime. As Sells (1995) pointed out, *The Little Mermaid* juxtaposes a rational human world against the fictive magical underwater world. For example, the humans of the film believe mer-people to be the stuff of myth and legend. Grimsby, Eric's royal advisor warns him against the fictive tales of sailors. "Pay no attention to this nautical nonsense" (Clements et al., 1989), he urges. That which is rational, valid, and proper is defined by the masculine logic of the terrestrial sphere and imposed upon the underwater world. Sebastian references that which is "proper" in terms of gender throughout "Under the Sea." As the narrative begins he begs "Will you get your head out of the clouds and back in the water where it belongs?" (Clements et al., 1989). Later he urges her, "Down here is your home!" (Clements et al., 1989). Sebastian positions Ariel's presence in the white male sphere as illogical and improper. The crab goes on to detail the risk of her own consumption should Ariel travel into human space. The appropriation of space affords the dominating human body a monopoly on proper rationality by providing a stability over time while simultaneously relegating the feminine and ethnic other to the contingent possibility of being eaten.

In addition to appropriating land as a strategic locus of domination, patriarchy simultaneously imposes its logic upon the ocean allowing it to function as a place from which to dominate the feminine other. In fact, at one point Triton makes this masculine claim to ownership and the subsequent domination explicit. He tells Ariel, "As long as you live under my ocean, you'll obey my rules" (Clements et al., 1989). Hence, when Sebastian reprimands Ariel, "Down here is your home!" (Clements et al., 1989), he not only characterizes her presence in the white male space as improper he subjects Ariel to the stability of domination over time. As previously discussed, human children might eventually escape their father's rules as they become

adults and move out of the home. By contrast, an aquatic subject such as a mermaid is unlikely to move out of the ocean. Hence, the passage of time affords a young mermaid no such escape from the unwavering authority achieved through the masculine appropriation of the ocean as a site of domination.

Second, according to de Certeau (1984) the appropriation of a space also affords a visual advantage. He noted, "the division of space makes possible a panoptic practice proceeding from a place whence the eye can transform foreign forces into objects that can be observed and measured, and thus control and include them within its scope of vision" (p. 36). De Certeau's contention points to the significance of the masculine human world's positioning literally above the aquatic world to provide humans with a visual vantage from which to dominate the other. The social hierarchy established between the ocean and terrestrial worlds "is most frequently reinforced through the language and imagery of "up there" and "down here" (Sells, 1995, p. 178). Nowhere in the film is the language to which Sells referred more frequent than in "Under the Sea." In fact, the song's title denotes a vertical spatial relationship. In order to illustrate the significance of space for domination in the human/fish relationship one need only imagine a sailor fishing from beneath his target. Moreover, just as both the aquatic and terrestrial spaces provide the dominating masculine body with stability over time, the ocean as well as terrestrial space provides patriarchy with a visual vantage. The juxtaposition of "Part of Your World" and "Under the Sea" offers a clear illustration of a public/private distinction. Ariel sings in a tiny, secluded and secret underwater cavern. As analysis in the previous chapter revealed the cavern functions to restrict Ariel's narrative by leaving her voice unheard beyond the cavern walls while simultaneously providing Ariel with a space in which to freely voice her desires. By contrast, Sebastian performs within the wide-open expanse of the ocean. Unrestricted by walls Sebastian,

Flounder, and various other members of the ocean community directly participate in the narrative as both audience and co-creators. While the secret location and guarded entrance of her cavern make Ariel's performance exceedingly private, "Under the Sea" represents the epitome of a public performance at least within the underwater world. Ortner (1974) described the way in which the public sphere encompasses the private. She explained, "although not every culture articulates a radical opposition between the domestic and the public as such, it is hardly contestable that the domestic is always subsumed by the public" (p. 76). As its title implies, Sebastian's narrative functions literally to encapsulate the logic of Ariel's narrative within the scope of Triton's vision. In fact, Sebastian sings "Under the Sea" as part of his duty to watch over and constantly supervise Ariel in order to "keep her under tight control" (Clements et al., 1989). By forcing Ariel to narrate in confined under water locations, Sebastian is better able to surveil his target. He repeatedly panics when Ariel manages to escape the confines of his view. Hence when the crab and other sea creatures conclude "Under the Sea" only to find Ariel gone, he expresses a desire to confine her. He says, "Somebody's got to nail that girl's fins to the floor" (Clements et al., 1989).

De Certeau (1984) highlighted the relationship between space, knowledge, and power as the third and final effect of an appropriation of an autonomous space. He observed,

> It would be legitimate to define the power of knowledge by this ability to transform the uncertainties of history into readable spaces. But it would be more correct to recognize a specific type of knowledge, one sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place. (p. 36)

Following the author's contention, it becomes productive to interrogate not only the way in which knowledge functions in a project of domination but to explore the specific types of knowledge made possible by the power to claim a particular space of authority. In "Under the Sea" Sebastian constructs a binary oppositional relationship between underwater and terrestrial

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space. In "Part of Your World" Ariel establishes the human world as the exclusive locus of scientific and rational knowledge of production. By contrast, Sebastian characterizes the knowledge of the ocean world to pertain to art and leisure. He sings, "Each little snail here know how to wail here that's why it's hotter under the water" (Clements et al., 1989). Essentially the crab argues that unlike the humans who are obsessed with labor and production, ocean inhabitants know how to sing, dance, and live happy, carefree lives. Speaking of the division of the ocean and terrestrial spaces in *The Little Mermaid* and the knowledge and logic appropriate to each, Murphy (1995) pointed to "Under the Sea" specifically arguing,

> This racist and colonialist perspective reinforces the human/nonhuman and culture/nature dichotomies by associating mer-people, and by implication Caribbean and other equatorial peoples, with a closer to nature, live off the land indigenous lifestyle inferior to the industrial lifestyle—because advanced humans make things. (p. 132)

The patriarchal authority to appropriate and bisect space allows for the division and hierarchic ordering of knowledge in a way that sustains existing relations of white masculine domination.

Narrative as Embedded in Fields of Discourse

According to Langellier and Petserson (2004) in addition to being embodied and materially constrained, narrative performance is embedded in fields of discourse. Following Foucault (1969/1972) the authors expounded upon their observation by exploring the way in which discourse is ordered as an event, series, regularity, and possible conditions of existence. I have argued "Under the Sea" is an overt narrative performance of and about domination that is both embodied and constrained by material space. In the present chapter I continue to elucidate the gendered power relations at work in "Under the Sea" by turning to narrative's discursive ordering by means of Foucault's four regulatory principles.

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Event

First, Foucault (1969/1972) posited external rules acting to bound and delimit discourse as an event through systems of exclusion. Specifically, prohibitions, divisions and rejections, and the opposition of truth and falsehood work to deal with discourse's "powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous awesome materiality" (p. 216). As Langellier and Peterson (2004) discussed at length, speakers are not free to narrate just anywhere, about anything, to anyone. Rather, as Foucault (1969/1972) argued, prohibitions exist to regulate the conditions under which narratives can be performed. He posed "covering objects, ritual with its surrounding circumstances, and the privileged or exclusive right to speak of a particular subject" (p. 216) as three specific types of prohibitions. The dialogue leading into "Under the Sea" points to all three types of prohibitions. Sebastian paces about saying, "I don't think the king knows, but it will not be easy keeping something like this a secret for long" (Clements et al., 1989). In response to Ariel's daydream about Eric he commands, "Ariel stop talking crazy" (Clements et al., 1989). The crab enacts the prohibition of humans and Ariel's love for Eric as objects of speech and Triton specifically as an audience of that speech. Ariel begins to plan an encounter with Eric saying, "Scuttle knows where he lives. I'll swim up to his castle. Then Flounder will splash around to get his attention and then…"(Clements et al., 1989) before Sebastian finally interrupts, "Down here is your home" (Clements et al., 1989). Ariel invokes a mating ritual that Sebastian reframes as contingent upon residential space. According to the crab, because Ariel lives under the sea she is prohibited from courting Eric. Furthermore, Sebastian's status as a male and Triton's royal servant afford him the authority to silence Ariel. He reveals his privileged right to narrate by commanding, "Ariel, listen to me" (Clements et al., 1989). While Ariel is prohibited to speak about the human world, Sebastian begins a detailed narrative that

takes the terrestrial space and its inhabitants as its subject. As the music begins Sebastian has already founded "Under the Sea" upon a web of prohibitions.

In addition to prohibitions, divisions and rejections govern narrative by dividing what is meaningful and salient from that which is insignificant or meaningless. Sebastian frames Ariel's desire to traverse the divisive border as foolish, silly, childish, and irrelevant in relation to dominant masculine logic. Foucault (1969/1972) described the distinction between reason and folly as a particular division and rejection that worked to silence the madman. Despite the rise of institutions designed to give voice to the madman by creating a context in which doctors and psychoanalysts listen, Foucault observed the division to remain as strong as ever while simply functioning along different lines. As Ariel picks a flower apart alternately saying, "He loves me, he loves me not" (Clements et al., 1989), Sebastian not only prohibits her speech he divides it from that which is meaningful. He responds, "Stop talking crazy" (Clements et al., 1989). Later the crab asserts, "You dream about going up there. But that is a big mistake" (Clements et al., 1989). Similar to the discursive shift Foucault observed among lines dividing reason from folly, Sebastian does not dismiss Ariel's ambitions and desires. Rather he acknowledges and responds to them overtly as the impetus for his narrative. However, Foucault noted, "If we truly require silence to kill monsters it must be an attentive silence, and it is in this that division lingers" (p. 217). Indeed, Sebastian acknowledges Ariel's desires within an active silence that constructs the feminine as silly and the masculine as rational and knowledgeable. The song continues by establishing the division between land and the ocean, work and leisure, material production and artistic expression, and oppression and freedom. Sebastian constructs the binary oppositions that dominate *The Little Mermaid*. Although he seems to denounce the former term of each binary in favor of the latter, no rejection is actually made. In fact, both the human and aquatic discourses

remain exceedingly salient for all the sea creatures. While Sebastian constructs various divisions, it is humans who dismiss aquatic life and subsequently leisure, artistic expression, and freedom from oppression. The human rejection of the discourse of the underwater world can be best summarized in Grimsby's response to sailor tales of merpeople. He advises Eric to dismiss such tales saying, "Eric, pay no attentions to this nautical nonsense" (Clements et al., 1989). As Langellier and Peterson (2004) noted the division and rejection of meaningful discourse from that which is meaningless gives rise to the distinction of truth from falsehood as a third system of exclusion. They posit the specific consequence of such exclusion for narrative performance, arguing:

> Indeed, this opposition makes possible the common dismissal of storytelling as entertainment or fiction, and its reverse valorization as an aesthetic or artistic performance. In both cases, storytelling is excluded from an exercise of power; it says and does nothing in the social world. (p. 19)

In this way the aquatic world parallels the performative practice of storytelling itself. Associated with the artistic and the aesthetic, the ocean's creatures are perceived as fictive and thus excluded from the exercise of power.

Series

In addition to external rules that work to bound and delimit discourse from the outside, Foucault (1969/1972) pointed to internal rules that describe the way discourse regulates itself from within. Rather than principles of exclusion, internal rules observe degrees of repetition in order to classify, order, and distribute varying types of discourse. Following Foucault's definition of internal rules and Langellier and Peterson's (2004) application of this regularity to storytelling it becomes possible to order and classify the type of story Sebastian tells by locating repetitions within "Under the Sea." For example the repetitive positioning of the pronouns we

and us in opposition to they and them indicate a story about the solidarity of one group against another. What is more, Sebastian characterizes the consumer-food relationship through imagery consistent with master-slave relations. For example he sings, "Under the sea nobody beat us, fry us and eat us in fricassees" (Clements et al., 1989). Later the crab refers to consuming humans as the boss to whose whims the fish is subject. He sings, "But fish in the bowl is lucky. They in for a whorser fate. One day when the boss get hungry, guess who's going to be on the plate" (Clements et al., 1989). He places value upon the ocean only insofar as it serves as refuge from the fear, anxiety, and brutality of oppression. Locating regularities in a series allows us to characterize the type of story Sebastian tells. The repetition of us versus an enslaving other combines with the repeated reference to aesthetics, happiness, and recreation to make "Under the Sea" a story about escaping from and coping with oppression rather than a narrative about the wonders of ocean life.

Regularity

Along with identifying gradations of repetition, discourse exercises further control over itself through regularities that define the circumstances in which individuals can make use of discourse (Foucault, 1969/1972). As Langellier and Peterson (2004) underscored, these regularities operate in relation with knowledge and power to establish rules regarding who is qualified to speak on certain subjects, the relationship between listening and speaking subjects, the degree to which speaking and listening roles are interchangeable, and the authority to appropriate various discourses. They applied this regulatory principle to storytelling in particular, arguing that "In storytelling we ask what qualifies someone to tell a story, for example, to speak for herself or himself from the 'authority of experience' or to speak for others as an expert" (p.

20). In "Under the Sea," Sebastian overtly invokes an authority of experience to validate his narrative. He sings, "Darling it's better down where its wetter take it from me" (Clements et al., 1989). The crab implies a past experience with both the underwater and terrestrial world that allows him to accurately compare the two spaces. Based upon his past experience he defines the human space as one of oppression. Unlike Sebastian's invocation of an authority based upon direct experience, Triton makes no such reference to contact with the human world. Hence, Triton's attempt to characterize humans as dangerous barbarians is framed not as an accurate definition of the terrestrial space but as the irrational narrative of a loving yet over protective father struggling to deal with the loss of his youngest daughter. Sebastian garners authority by referencing an experience with the human world that occurs outside the narrative context of *The Little Mermaid*. Ariel on the other hand encounters, rescues, seduces, and falls in love with an actual human prince within the events of the film itself. Sebastian sings, "The seaweed is always greener in somebody else's lake. You dream about going up there but that is a big mistake" (Clements et al., 1989). The crab completely discounts Ariel's experience. In fact, while Sebastian's direct experience counts as public knowledge as evidenced by the range of aquatic life that participate in his narrative, Ariel's experience cannot even validate her own personal choices. Rather than understand her desire to be human to derive from her experience with human artifacts or direct contact with an actual human, Sebastian infantilizes Ariel by framing her desires as the result of an uninformed, inexperienced child-like want of what she cannot have. By privileging his own experience as knowledge and discounting Ariel's, Sebastian endows himself with the authority to narrate in "Under the Sea" while simultaneously silencing Ariel's speech by virtue of her lack of experience.

Possible Conditions of Existence

Foucault's (1969/1972) fourth and final regulatory principle concerns that which becomes possible as relations of power and knowledge constrain discourse. According to Langellier and Peterson (2004) discursive analysis aims not to fix meaning on the basis of an individual storyteller, text, or audience, but to explore sites of struggle over meaning. "That is, analysis elucidates regularities by exploring variations in relations of knowledge and power as the possible conditions of storytelling: this story could have been told differently" (p. 20). Hence, the authors interrogate the space for alternative performances created as particular material and discursive forces interact. Sebastian's closing remark of defeat marks out just such a space of possibility. "Under the Sea" concludes climactically with Sebastian and the other fish encircling the empty rock upon which Ariel sat at the narrative's start. "Oh, somebody's got to nail that girls fins to the floor" (Clements et al., 1989), he laments as his aquatic accompanists swim away. He directs "Under the Sea" at Ariel in an attempt to convince her to remain under water. The meaning of Sebastian's narrative is highly contingent upon Ariel as a listening audience. Discovering her absence at the end of the song Sebastian cannot be sure what portion of his narrative Ariel heard. While the crab speaks in an effort to didactically redefine spatial and social relations, "Under the Sea's" end highlights a contingent struggle over meaning. Sebastian's song does not reveal a hidden "truth" about gender, Langellier and Peterson explained,

> Rather the meaning of response is a question of the possible conditions of existence of discourse performed by the ordering of events, series, and regularities of speaking subjects…If this story was performed in this way, it can be performed in another, different way." (p. 24)

The absence of a responsive body underscores the presence of the infinite possibilities for response made possible by the discursive regularities operating in and through "Under the Sea."

With his final utterance Sebastian acknowledges that this narrative could have been performed differently and laments the multiplicity of options left available even as he attempts to limit possibilities. Hence, rather than suggesting an alternative, more effective way of telling, Sebastian turns from discourse to the material restriction of Ariel's body by proposing to "nail that girls fins to the the floor" (Clements et al., 1989).

Legitimation and Critique in Performing Narrative

Foucault (1969/1972) argued that discursive practices work to reinforce existing relations of power. "Under the Sea" provides a clear example of the way in which narrative performance, as a discursively embedded practice, works to reinforce prevailing patriarchal and colonialist relations of domination. However, according to Foucault, narrative also exposes existing power dynamics making them vulnerable to critique and subversion. Langerllier and Peterson (2004) theorized the implication of the combination of narrative's embodied material context and discursive regulation. They asserted,

> The danger in performing narrative is that by doing something in and with discourse that is neither uniform nor stable we risk changing the bodily practices and material conditions in which they are embedded: what is done can be undone. (p. 25)

Understanding narrative performance as a practice of both legitimation and critique, the authors pointed to the futility of binary distinctions between discourses of power and those of subversion. Instead, they posited an interrogation of "the tactical productivity or efficacy of storytelling" (Langellier & Peterson, 2004, p. 25). The complex web of power relations operating in and through "Under the Sea" illustrate precisely the inefficacy to which Langellier and Peterson referred. Following the authors' supposition, I explore "Under the Sea" in relation to both legitimation and critique. I aim not to separate discourses of domination from those of

subversion or describe power relations as deriving from individual motives. Rather I return to de

Certeau's (1984) notion of strategies and tactics in order to examine the "tactical productivity" of

"Under the Sea" as it both reiterates and calls into question patriarchal relationships of power.

While de Certeau posited strategies to rely upon a discrete autonomous space, he understood

tactics to be defined by the inability to demarcate an exteriority. Accordingly, "The space of a

tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and

organized by the law of a foreign power" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 37). Without a space from which

to establish a sense of proper rationality over time, survey an exterior enemy, or claim and

appropriate particular types of knowledge, a tactic takes advantage of possibilities as they arise.

The lack of stability that characterizes a strategic base affords tactical operations a mobility,

albeit reliant upon particular opportune moments. "Under the Sea" operates tactically by working

within the imposed logic of the white male sphere. Indeed, Sebastian posits the ocean as a space

in which to subvert the oppressive rationality of labor and production. In so doing, he

simultaneously naturalizes the dualistic logic at the foundation of colonialist and patriarchal

discourses of domination. Sebastian sings "Under the Sea" as both a subject of and subject to

power. He narrates in the underwater space of the other. Moreover, as he both legitimates and

attempts to subvert human domination through a narrative performance of space, Sebastian

denies Ariel both land and ocean as strategic space. While the logic of patriarchy relegates

Ariel's narrative to an enclosed private cavern, Sebastian sings in an exceedingly public space.

However, it is the open public space denied her in "Part of Your World" that allows Ariel the

mobility to escape Sebastian's domination. De Certeau (1984) described the power of a tactic

contending that,

It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the

surveillance of proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. (p. 37)

In this way, De Certeau's understanding of tactics underscores the significance of Ariel's disappearance as Sebastian sings. To be sure, Ariel relies upon a particular opening in Sebastian's narrative to make a discrete unexpected exit.

Analysis of Ariel's narrative in "Part of Your World" continually implicated a patriarchal system to constrain Ariel's voice and body in terms of her performance of acceptable femininity. "Under the Sea" offers a narrative text through which to investigate the embodied, material and discursive operation of domination in relation to the narrative performance of masculinity. Specifically, Langellier and Peterson's (2004) four dimensions of narrative performance offer a productive frame to consider patriarchal domination not as a set of fixed meanings or individual motives but rather as sites of struggle over meaning. The conclusion of "Under the Sea" proves particularly significant as Ariel's absence and Sebastian's subsequent reaction point to the cracks in discursive relations of power and underscore the subversive potential of narrative performance's embodied, material and discursive context. In the next chapter I more closely interrogate narrative performance as a performative act with the potential to subvert existing relations of gender and power. In an attempt to take Foucault's (1969/1972) question seriously I turn to the performance of the film's villainess, Ursula's in order to ask, "What is so perilous, then, in the fact that people speak, and that their speech proliferates?" (p. 25).

CHAPTER 4

POOR UNFORTUNATE BODIES: NARRATING THE
GROTESQUE BODY IN "POOR UNFORTUNATE SOULS"

In chapter 2 I examined Ariel's narrative performance of "Part of Your World" and

continued by analyzing Sebastian's song "Under the Sea" in chapter 3. In her song, Ariel

expresses a desire to overcome the material and discursive constraints of the patriarchal system

in which she exists. "Under the Sea" represents Sebastian's attempt to reinforce the restrictions

Ariel challenges. While Ariel and Sebastian communicate oppositional desires, the goals and

obstacles of both "Part of Your World" and "Under the Sea" depict protagonist narratives within

the context of *The Little Mermaid* overall. Both narratives then can be understood to (re)perform

socially sanctioned narrative constructions of gender that naturalize existing patriarchal relations

of power. As Butler (1988) argued, gender represents a stylized repetition of particular acts. Thus

the potential to disrupt a naturalized perception of gender identity exists in the performance of

alternative repetitions. In the present chapter I aim to move beyond the validated repetitions of

gender performed by the film's protagonists in "Part of Your World" and "Under the Sea" to

consider the possibility of subversive gender performance in Ursula's antagonistic performance

of "Poor Unfortunate Souls." Moreover, "Poor Unfortunate Souls" is the next major musical

number to follow "Under the Sea." By continuing to construct my analysis in a manner

consistent with the chronological progression of *The Little Mermaid* as a whole I strive to

elucidate the way in which the film deals with the voice, the body, and gender through narrative

song.

Scholars (Bell, 1995; Dundes & Dundes, 2000; Mallan & McGillis, 2005; Rozario, 2004;

Sells, 1995) have cited Ursula's significance both in terms of Disney villains and *The Little*

Mermaid specifically. Sells drew an explicit connection between Butler's (1988) notion of

gender performativity and Ursula's performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls." Likening the witch's number to a drag show, the author argued that Ursula teaches Ariel that gender is performative. Rather than maintain gender as an essential identity, Ursula underscores the use of makeup, silence, and body language as parts of the performance of femininity. Hence, "Ursula doesn't simply symbolize woman she performs woman…Ariel learns gender not as a natural category, but as a performed construct" (Sells, 1995 p. 183). Similarly, Mallan and McGillis (2005) noted that "while she demonstrates for Ariel the ways to use her feminine charms to lure men, [Urusla's] camp drag performance highlights the fraudulence of her purportedly natural feminine talents" (pp. 14-15). In both studies, the authors pointed to Ursula's performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as the primary text for an analysis of gender subversion. In each case the authors understood the villainess's potential to destabilize constructions of gender as the result of a disruption of the ostensibly natural gender/sex connection.

Langellier and Peterson (2004) argued that narrative represents a performative communication practice that both legitimates and critiques existing relations of power and knowledge. Accordingly, in what follows I discuss Ursula's performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" within Langellier and Peterson's four consequences of narrative performance in order to interrogate the possibility of alternative enactments of gender in and through the performative practice of narration. By turning to Ursula's narrative performance as an embodied, materially situated, and discursively embedded communication artifact, I aim to shed light upon the way in which "Poor Unfortunate Souls" works through narrative to both subvert and reinforce existing gender relations. Specifically, I want to explore the performative implications of Ursula as a grotesque communicative narrating body. I begin by contextualizing my analysis of the song within the plot of *The Little Mermaid*.

Following Sebastian's performance of "Under the Sea" the crab accidently informs Triton of Ariel's disobedient journey to the ocean's surface and consequential love for a human prince. Accompanied by Sebastian, Triton confronts Ariel in her secret cavern of treasures. Ariel and her father argue briefly before Triton, overcome with frustration and anger, uses his magical scepter to completely destroy Ariel's entire collection of human artifacts. The devastated young mermaid allows Fletsum and Jetsum, Ursula's evil eels minions, to convince her to seek the help of the sea witch. Ariel travels to Ursula's underwater lair. The witch welcomes the hesitant young mermaid:

Ursula:	Come in. Come in my child. We must'nt lurk in doorways. It's rude. One might question your upbringing. [laughs] No then, you're here because you have a thing for this human. This prince fellow? Not that I blame you. He is quite a catch isn't he? Well angelfish, the solution to your problem is simple. The only way to get what you want is to become a human yourself.
Ariel:	Can you do that?
Ursula:	My dear sweet child. That's what I do. Its what I live for. To help unfortunate merfolk like yourself. Poor souls with no one else to turn to. (Clements et al., 1989)

Ursula's continues her response in a seamless shift from spoken to sung dialogue. She sings:

I admit that in the past I've been a nasty. They weren't kidding when they called me well, a witch. But you'll find that now a days I've mended all my ways, repented seen the light and made a switch. True? Yes.

And I fortunately know a little magic. It's a talent that I always have possessed. And dear lady please don't laugh I use it on behalf of the miserable lonely and depressed, pathetic,

Poor unfortunate souls. In pain. In need. This one longing to be thinner that one wants to get the girl and do I help them? Yes indeed. Those poor unfortunate souls, so sad, so true. They come flocking to my cauldron crying spells Ursula please and do I help them. Yes I do.

Now its happened once or twice, someone couldn't pay the price and I'm afraid I had rake 'em across the coals. Yes I've had the odd complaint but on the whole I've been a saint to those poor unfortunate souls. (Clements et al., 1989)

The music stops briefly and Ursula returns to spoken narrative as she explains the terms of the

contractual arrangement she offers Ariel:

Ursula:	Now, here's the deal. I will make you a potion that will turn you into a human for three days. Got that? Three days. Now listen this is important. Before the sun sets on the third day you've got to get dear old princey to fall in love with you. That is, he's got to kiss you. Not just any kiss. The kiss of true love. If he does kiss you before the sun sets on the third day you'll remain human permanently but if he doesn't you turn back into a mermaid and you belong to me.
Sebastian:	No Ariel!
Ursula:	Have we got a deal?
Ariel:	If I become human, I'll never be with my father or sisters again.
Ursula:	That's right. But, you'll have your man. Life's full of tough choices itenit? [laughs] Oh and there is one more thing. We haven't discussed the subject of payment. You can't get something for nothing you know.
Ariel:	But I don't have…
Ursula:	I'm not asking much just a token really a triffle you'll never miss it. What I want from you is your voice
Ariel:	My voice?
Ursula:	You've got it sweet cakes. No more talking, singing. Zip.
Ariel:	But without my voice, how can I…? (Clements et al., 1989)

The music returns and Ursula resumes her song.

Ursula:	You'll have your looks, your pretty face. And don't underestimate the importance of body language ha! The men up there don't like a lot of blabber. They think a girl who gossips is a bore. Yes on land its much performed for ladies not to say a word and after all dear what is idle prattle for. Come on they're not all that impressed with conversation. True gentlemen avoid it when they can. But they dote and swoon and fawn on a lady who's withdrawn. Its she who holds her tongue that gets a man. Come on you poor unfortunate soul. Go ahead. Make your choice. I'm a very busy woman and I haven't got all day it won't cost much. Just your voice. You poor unfortunate soul. It's sad but true. If you want to cross a bridge my sweet you've got to pay the toll. Take a gulp and take a breath and go ahead and sign the scroll. Fletsum, Jetsum now I've got her boys. The boss is on a roll. This poor unfortunate soul.
	Beluga sevruga come winds of the Caspian Sea. Larengix glaucitis et max laryngitis la voce to me! Now sing!
Ariel:	[Sings]

Ursula:　　　　Keep singing! (Clements et al., 1989)

The song ends as Ursula uses her magic to encapsulate Ariel in a bubble and transform her

mermaid tail into human legs. Unable to swim, Ariel frantically rushes to the surface with the

help of Flounder and Sebastian.

Embodied Context

During her performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" Ursula explicitly instructs Ariel not

to "underestimate the importance of body language,"(Clements et al., 1989). The present section

takes Ursula's advice seriously by exploring the narrative's context of the body in the villainess's

performance. The significance of the body in "Poor Unfortunate Souls" cannot be overstated.

Ursula sings and dances about while conjuring ghost-like bodies that act in accordance with her

narrative dialogue. As the narrative progresses Ursula exceeds the limits of her own body, using

ghost-like human hands to extract Ariel's voice. "Poor Unfortunate Souls" reaches its climactic

conclusion as Ariel undergoes the magical physical transformation of her mermaid fins to human

legs. The wealth of corporeal imagery, explicit verbal references to the body, and constitution of

embodied relations performed in "Poor Unfortunate Souls" underscore the import of the body in

terms of the film's overall plot and the performative enactment of gender.

In chapters 2 and 3, I used Frank's (1991) action theory of embodiment as a productive

point of entry for discussing the complex embodied context of narrative performance outlined by

Langellier and Peterson (2004). Likewise, I apply Frank's typology to Ursula's performance of

"Poor Unfortunate Souls" in order to posit the sea-witch as a body that approaches Frank's

fourth and final body, the communicative body. Frank described the mirroring and dominating

body along four basic continua using exemplarily body types to illustrate the working of each.

For example, the male solider demonstrates the quintessential dominating body as it employs force in response to its own lack. The communicative body offers no ideal types. It must be understood not as an observable empirical reality, but for its communicative potential. Hence, instead of a comprehensive heuristic of the communicative body, the author articulated an effort to bring together "fragments of its emergence" (Frank, 1991, p. 79). Likewise, in the following illustration of narrative's embodied context, I aim to bring together fragments of the communicative body's emergence in Ursula's narrative performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls."

First, as Frank (1991) argued, the body must position itself along a continuum of control. Whereas Ariel's mirroring body strives to understand itself as predictable through consumptive practices, the communicative body's potential exists in its contingency. The author offered the menstruating female body to illustrate the communicative potential of embodied contingency. He explained, "The woman can neither prevent nor be the mistress of her periodicity. Thus women's embodiment can teach them to live with contingency, to make it their potential (as opposed to a male ideology which calls it a curse)" (Frank, 1991, p. 79). Moreover, in the body's contingency exists the possibility of an embodied connection to other bodies such as mothers, lovers, and children. Hence, Frank characterized the contingent communicative body by its dyadic other-relatedness. As a communicative body Ursula performs a dyadic contingency through narrative song in "Poor Unfortunate Souls." For example, in order to become human Ariel strikes a deal with the sea witch. Ursula agrees to make Ariel human and gives her three days to win the prince's affection in the form of a kiss. Ursula explains, "If he does kiss you before the sun sets on the third day you remain human permanently but he if doesn't you turn back into a mermaid and you belong to me" (Clements et al., 1989). Ariel's body and fate are contingent upon a

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contractual agreement with Ursula as well as a dyadic romantic performance of heterosexual love with Eric. Similarly, Ursula depends upon Ariel in order to overthrow Triton. Should Ariel succeed in her quest to win Eric's love, Ursula would remain subjugated under Triton's rule. However, Ariel's failure would result in Ursula's possession of Triton's most beloved daughter providing the witch with a bargaining chip for Triton's power. "Poor Unfortunate Souls" brings about a communicative embodied context as the possibilities of both Ariel's and Ursula's body rely upon a contingent relationship with another body.

In addition to the dimensions of control and other-relatedness, the communicative body must orient itself in terms of desire. In contrast to the dominating body that is configured by a desire that is lacking, the communicative body's desire is producing (Frank, 1991). The mirroring body's productive desire is distinct from that of the communicative body as well. While the mirroring body endlessly produces a desire for monadic consumption the communicative body desires dyadic expression. Frank (1991) posited narrative as a means of accomplishing the embodied sharing the communicative body desires. He explained,

> What communicative bodies are about is the capacity for recognition which is enhanced through the sharing of narratives which are fully embodied. What is shared is one body's sense of another's experience, primarily its vulnerability and suffering, but also its joy and creativity. It is when narratives are spoken from the experience of the body that they can be shared most readily. (p. 89)

As the only two significant females within *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel and Ursula struggle similarly with patriarchal domination. For example, Triton's masculine domination restricts both females from accomplishing their goals. As a father, Triton prohibits Ariel from even learning about the human sphere, while his position as king allows him to exile Ursula to the outskirts of the kingdom. Hence, "Poor Unfortunate Souls" provides another narrative context in which bodies share in the vulnerability, suffering, joy, and creativity of a common embodied gendered

experience. As Ursula and Ariel share their bodies in "Poor Unfortunate Souls" they perform a narrative recognition not of an ill body but of the common oppression and performative possibilities they share as female bodies within a patriarchal system of domination. While the male characters within the film recast, dismiss, or silence Ariel's expression of dissatisfaction with the limitation of her embodied gender experience, the sea-witch recognizes the young mermaid's struggle and the cost of access to the white male system. She explains to the young mermaid, "If you want to cross a bridge my sweet you've got to pay the toll" (Clements et al., 1989). Ursula performs a communicative recognition founded on the common embodied experience of the marginalized gendered body. Finally, according to Frank, the communicative body engages in an associated self-relatedness. Unlike the mirroring body that relates to itself through a reflected image, the communicative body relates to itself through a continual process of corporeal realization. Frank began his discussion of the communicative body by noting the relative difficulty in locating social bodily types that approach the embodied ideal he outlined. He posited the grotesque body (Bakhtin, 1965/1984), performance art, medicinal caretaker practices, and dance as sites of potential communicative embodiment. While the author went on to detail only the latter three, in what follows I want to explore "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as a grotesque bodily performance that approaches Frank's communicative ideal.

Bakhtin (1965/1984) described the image of the body within grotesque literary imagery as distinct from those performed in traditional literary genres. The author explained,

> We find at the basis of grotesque imagery a special concept of the body as a whole and of the limits of this whole. The confines of the body and the world and between separate bodies are drawn in the grotesque imagery quite differently than in the classic and naturalist images. (p. 315)

The villainess's performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" works to trouble the naturalized rigid binary distinctions regarding gendered bodies and space performed in *The Little Mermaid*. The

grotesque's emphasis upon alternative embodied relationships provides an applicable framework for understanding Ursula's performance. In what follows I explore several critical aspects of Bakhtin's grotesque body in order to posit "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as a grotesque performance that approaches Frank's (1991) communicative body.

Bakhtin (1965/1984) argued that in contrast to a dominant aesthetic that portrays the body as impenetrable, whole and complete the grotesque body is characterized by its ambiguity and unfinalizability. According to the author, "The grotesque image reflects a phenomena of transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming" (p. 24). As a body that relates to itself by means of a continual process of re-creation, the grotesque body embraces the contingency Frank (1991) underscored as an essential aspect of the communicative body. Furthermore, Bakhtin (1965/1984) characterized the grotesque body's relationship with other bodies. According to the author "The grotesque body never presents an individual body; the image consists of orifices and convexities that present another, newly conceived body. It is a point of transition in a life eternally renewed, the inexhaustible vessel of death and conception" (p. 318). The grotesque body relies upon a dyadic other-relatedness in order to trouble normalized distinctions between individual bodies and the external world. Moreover, Bakhtin pointed to the universality of grotesque bodily imagery by noting its attention to "elements common to the entire cosmos" (p. 318). He went on to describe the grotesque body as, "The body that figures in all the expression of the unofficial speech of the people is the body that fecundates, that gives birth and is born, devours and is devoured, drinks defecates, is sick and is dying" (p. 319). Hence the grotesque body performs the diffuse expression the communicative body desires.

The Little Mermaid juxtaposes a world of complete individuated bodies and binary

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divisions with Ursula's corporeal excess and ambiguity. The witch's performance approaches the communicative ideal Frank (1991) posited by embodying the never-ending process of corporeal creation and recreation central to the communicative and grotesque body. In fact, the very outset of the narrative demarcates "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as a narrative of and about *becoming*. As Ariel enters Ursula's lair, the omniscient sea-witch summarizes the heroine's dilemma and resolves, "The only way to get what you want is to *become* a human yourself" (Clements et al., 1989). A surprised Ariel replies hesitantly, "Can you do that?"(Clements et al., 1989). Ursula responds in turn, "My dear sweet child. That's what I do. It's what I live for. To help unfortunate mer-folk like yourself" (Clements et al., 1989). Ursula defines her entire existence and frames the ensuing performance within a process of transformative becoming.

Additionally, "Poor Unfortunate Souls" performs the grotesque extension of the body beyond an impenetrable surface in several ways. First, there is Ursula's body. In contrast to Ariel's fair skinned, adolescent mermaid body, Ursula performs as a large, black, middle-aged squid. With six long black tentacles, the sea-witch embodies the grotesque privileging of bodily extensions. For example, she explains the terms of her proposal while draping her tentacles around the mermaid's comparably tiny body. The heroine stiffens her entire body to react to Ursula's grotesque excess in fear and disgust. Ariel's encounter with the sea witch in "Poor Unfortunate Souls" underscores the aesthetic distinction between the grotesque and the complete by juxtaposing Ariel's dainty, refined intelligible performance of femininity with Ursula's gendered ambiguous drag performance of feminine excess. The witch continues her song to further display a grotesque communicative body that extends beyond its own surface to connect with another body. In order to extract Ariel's voice Ursula produces two large phantosmatic human hands that penetrate the young mermaid's mouth, reach down her throat and retrieve the

glowing, golden material manifestation of Ariel's voice. The hands retract pulling the voice into a conch shell where the witch stores it for later use. Through Ursula's corporeal extension that which was part of Ariel's body is extended to merge with another body. As Ursula exceeds her own bodily surface Ariel's body too is extended beyond itself in communion with the external world. Sell's (1995) cited the significance of the witch's possession of Ariel's voice by describing it as, "a voice no longer innocent because it resided for a time in the dark continent that is the house of Medusa" (p. 185).

Moreover, Bakhtin's (1965/1984) grotesque imagery performs the expressive dyadic dispersion Frank (1991) articulated. In "Poor Unfortunate Souls," Ursula's grotesque body extends beyond itself to share not only in Ariel's embodied oppression, but spreads out to commune with the ocean's poor unfortunate souls. In a particularly illustrative example Ursula conjures the ghost-like image of a thin, physically weak male and a round, middle-aged female who according to Ursula are "miserable, lonely and depressed, pathetic" (Clements et al., 1989) as a result of their bodies. She explains, "This one longing to be thinner that one wants to get the girl and do I help them? Yes I do. Those poor unfortunate souls" (Clements et al., 1989). With a snap of her fingers the witch transforms the male body from thin and scrawny to large and muscular. The female body becomes thin, long-haired and youthful and the couple engage in an ecstatic embrace. While this example comprises a brief and ostensibly trivial portion of the overall narrative, the transformation warrants further consideration as it elucidates the significance of the body and gender performance to Ursula's narrative. The bodies Ursula conjures are "poor unfortunate souls, in pain, in need"(Clements et al., 1989) because they do not adhere to the ideal image of masculinity and femininity. In fact, it is as if the two bodies are incapable of a heterosexual relationship without the desirable bodies Ursula magically provides.

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Similarly, Ariel comes to Ursula because her body precludes her romantic heterosexual relationship with Eric. The song's title and chorus then can be understood to refer to those bodies that struggle with the rigidity heteronormative prescriptions of gender performance. Langellier and Peterson (2004) described narrative's embodied context noting that the storyteller takes her embodied experience and makes it the experience of her audience(ing) body. The authors explained that inherent in narrative's embodied context exists

> An important ambiguity: that is, this body may be a person (my body, or interpersonal communication), a few persons (a body of women, or interpersonal or small group communication), many people (many people or public communication), and many groups of people (cultural bodies, or intercultural communication). (p. 13)

Through her grotesque communicative body, Ursula exceeds her own corporeality in diffuse realization to share in an embodied narrative recognition with Ariel and a cultural body of oppressed poor unfortunate souls. The final aspect of the grotesque body I want to highlight is its function to shift abstract concepts to the material realm of the body. Bakhtin (1965/1984) explained, "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, a lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (pp. 19-20). Accordingly, exploring the performative function of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" requires attention to the material constraints Ursula performs within her grotesque body.

Material and Situational Constraint

Langellier and Peterson (2004) argued that as an embodied communication practice narrative performance implies its situation within a particular material context. The authors explained, "The body is constrained: it depends upon but is not caused or determined by its environment" (p. 14). In *The Little Mermaid* both aquatic and terrestrial bodies depend upon

their environment to narrate. At the same time, the binary division of space precludes the

narrative performance of certain bodies in particular spaces. In the previous chapters I focused

upon the performance of space as a material constraint with particular relevance to the plot of

The Little Mermaid. In the present section I continue to explore the narrative performance of

space as an embodied material constraint. Having posited Ursula as a grotesque communicative

body, I investigate the function of space to both restrict and give rise to the performance of a

dyadic narrative recognition.

Both "Part of Your World" and "Under the Sea" illustrate the significance of the vertical

hierarchy performed by a spatial division in which one world exists literally above another. For

example, Sells (1995) argued that *The Little Mermaid*'s emphasis upon the ocean and terrestrial

spaces as mutually exclusive worlds establishes the human sphere as real and culturally valid

while relegating Ariel and other aquatic animals to a space of cultural insignificance. She

observed, "This is most frequently reinforced by the language of 'up there' and 'down here'"

(Sells, 1995, p.178). Similarly, Bakhtin (1965/1984) described the degradation performed by the

grotesque body along a high/low ordering of space. He explained,

> The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is a lowering of all that is
> high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth
> and body in all their indissoluble unity. (p. 19)

The Little Mermaid positions socially ideal performances of knowledge, culture, and

gender within the spatially superior human world. Cast out of Triton's kingdom, the sea witch

performs in an isolated lair in the ocean's deepest outskirts. Hence, in her performance of "Poor

Unfortunate Souls" Ursula degrades high, validated conceptions of femininity as a stable identity

by relocating gender in the material realm of the body. In fact, the transfer of the elevated sacred

ideal to the material sphere can be seen from the very outset of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as

Ariel enters Ursula's lair. Moreover, the witch's narrative performs the indissoluble unity of the grotesque body and material space as Ursula's cave itself performs as a grotesque body. Trites (1990-1991) explained, "Ursula's palace is entered through the mouth opening of a skeletal animal, and the swimming entrant must traverse the long neck of the animal before penetrating the womb like inner chamber where Ursula resides" (p. 149). As the communicative body remains open in dyadic relation to the outside material world, grotesque imagery ignores notions of a complete impenetrable corporeal surface to privilege the body's orifices and protrusions, and its points of cyclical, unending interaction with the world. Bakhtin (1965/1984) posited the mouth as the most important feature of the grotesque body. It is through the mouth that the body swallows the world while at the same time being swallowed by the world.

As Ariel approaches the witch she is literally swallowed up by a giant grotesque mouth before descending into the depths of the animal's womb. The heroine's dissention reflects "The mighty thrust downward into the bowels of the earth, into the depths of the human body" (Bakhtin, 1965/1984 p. 370) that characterizes grotesque realism. Once the young mermaid has entered the cave Ursula performs "Poor Unfortunate Souls" amidst a wealth of vaginal imagery (Dundes & Dundes, 2000; Sells, 1995; Trites, 1990-1991). Bakhtin (1965/1984) described the lower region of the body that he termed the material bodily lower stratum. Comprised of the womb, the genitals, and the anus, "the material bodily lower stratum is productive. It gives birth, thus assuring mankind's immortality. All obsolete and vain illusions die in it and the real future comes to life" (p. 378).

The bowels of the cavernous body in which Ursula dwells house several transformations that illustrate grotesque realism's emphasis upon the drama performed in the bodily acts of birth, death, consumption, transformation, and re-birth. Likewise, the corporeal transformations central

to the plot of *The Little Mermaid* occur in Ursula's den. For example, after entering through the mouth Ariel moves downward through a canal lined with worm-like bodies that seem to grow from the cave itself. As Ursula performs her narrative we learn that the worms are mer-people the sea witch transformed as punishment for failing to fulfill bargains made with the witch. Growing from walls within Ursula's lair, the transformed bodies blur the distinction between the body and material space. At one point the sea witch refers to the group of captive bodies as "my little garden"(Clements et al., 1989). The body of the once mer-person is degraded as it descends to literally become part of the earth. As one body dies another body is born anew. A similar degradation can be seen through the use of objects in relation to the body. Later in the narrative the sea-witch pulls a seaweed vine over her head as she sings, "Yes I've had the odd complaint but on the whole I've been a saint" (Clements et al., 1989). The vine is transformed to become a nun's head covering. Ursula completes the line singing, "to those poor unfortunate souls"(Clements et al., 1989) as she drapes the same vine around her hips and buttocks and shimmies to shake her voluptuous breasts. As the vine descends vertically from the superior region of the head to the lower bodily region Ursula degrades that which symbolized sacred feminine piety to part of a camp drag performance of gender ambiguity thus complicating the traditional witch/saint dichotomy typical of feminine archetypes in Disney films.

According to Bakhtin (1965/1984), the grotesque body ignores its impenetrable surfaces to highlight, "only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths" (p. 318). In addition to the body's exterior, "Poor Unfortunate Souls" emphasizes the voice as a means by which the body extends beyond itself to make contact with the world. In the song's most significant embodied spatial transformations the witch extracts Ariel's voice and exchanges the mermaid's fins for human legs. Whereas Bakhtin described the debasement of religious

ideals and iconography in literary images of the grotesque, *The Little Mermaid* affords sacred

status to the mermaid's voice. Eric falls in love with Ariel as she looms above him singing on the

ocean's shore. When Ariel disappears suddenly, it is Ariel's voice for which the prince searches.

He complains, "It's that voice. I can't get it out of my head"(Clements et al., 1989). When the

human Ariel finally encounters her prince on land the absence of her voice leaves the prince

unable to recognize her as the one he loves. Feminist critics (O'Brien, 1996; Sells, 1995; Sun,

2001;Trites, 1990-1991) attribute similar import to Ariel's voice in relation to gender. For

example, Henke et al. (1996) equated the voice to the construction of the female's sense of self.

They argued, "Articulating one's own dreams and wishes—possessing an autonomous voice—is

a strong indicator of the development of selfhood" (p. 237). For Sells (1995) the treatment of

Ariel's voice in *The Little Mermaid* represents not only a denial of feminine agency within an

oppressive patriarchal system, but a libratory possibility. She observed,

> After all, Ariel enters the white male system with her voice—a stolen, flying voice that
> erupted amidst patriarchal language, a voice no longer innocent because it resided for a
> time in the dark continent that is the Medusa's home. (p. 185)

In contrast to the elevated abstract status of the voice the film positions the material bodily lower

stratum at the bottom of a vertical spatial ordering. As part of a critical documentary regarding

Disney (Sun, 2001), Gaines spoke skeptically of Ariel's potential to serve as an icon of feminine

empowerment among Disney films. She explained,

> In *Little Mermaid* she does defy her father. There is the sense of a more powerful female.
> Of course ultimately she is willing to give up her voice to get the male. And without the
> voice all she has left is the body. (Sun, 2001)

Bakhtin (1965/1984) illustrated grotesque degradation by providing literary examples in

which the spatial hierarchy of abstract religious values was inverted. That which symbolized

high spiritual piety is degraded as "the downward is opposed to the upward movement. The

entire spiritual topography is turned upside down" (p. 378). As part of a grotesque drag

performance of embodied feminine excess, Ursula indeed flips the vertical hierarchy through her

narrative performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls." When confronted with the prospect of

silence Ariel frets, "My voice? But without my voice how can I…" (Clements et al., 1989). The

witch cuts her off and assures the young mermaid, "You'll have your looks, your pretty face.

And don't underestimate the importance of body language" (Clements et al., 1989). Ursula

debases the sanctity of the feminine voice assuring Ariel that the essence of her femininity exists

not in the voice but in the performative potential of her body. Moreover, Bakhtin pointed to the

function of laughter to materialize and degrade. As the witch extracts Ariel's voice from her

body and transforms her into a human, she laughs heartily shaking her shoulders and breasts.

Rather than degrading sacred religious symbols, Ursula inverts cultural ideals of gender by

degrading gender from abstract essentialist notions of femininity to the material sphere of a

contingent body. In order to become human and ascend in upward motion to the human sphere,

Ariel gives up her voice in exchange for a new material bodily lower stratum. Endowed with the

corporeal productivity of a newfound vagina, womb, and anus the mermaid travels upward while

the once sacred voice moves downward to reside with Ursula in the ocean's lowest region.

Bakhtin (1965/1984) explained the significance of the cyclical vertical degradation, death, and

rebirth that defines grotesque imagery.

> It is a gay and free play with objects and concepts, but it is a play that pursues a distant, prophetic goal: to dispel the atmosphere of a gloomy and false seriousness enveloping the world and all its phenomena, to lend it a different look, to render it more material, closer to man and his body, more understandable and lighter in the bodily sense. (p. 380)

In "Poor Unfortunate Souls" Ursula plays with objects, bodies, and abstractions in order to teach

Ariel about gender. Bringing gender to the bodily realm she renders the performance of

femininity "more understandable and lighter in the bodily sense" (Bakhtin, 1965/1984, p. 380).

However, the witch performs within a patriarchal structure. Indeed, Ursula's lair exists under the expansive patriarchal sea described in the previous chapter. "Poor Unfortunate Souls" is constrained by its material context. Langellier and Peterson (2004) underscored narrative's material situational constraint as a "boundary that defines what is possible" (p. 14). Bakhtin explained grotesque degradation in terms of the body arguing that all acts of degradation are performed along the limits of the body. In "Poor Unfortunate Souls" the grotesque cavern space in which Ursula performs serves as the embodied material boundary posited by both Langellier and Peterson and Bakhtin. Ursula is not free to perform a narrative of subversive gender play just anywhere. Rather, Ursula's cavern makes "Poor Unfortunate Souls" and all its transformations and spatial reversals possible as the witch's lair swallows, transforms, and produces Ariel's body anew while simultaneously limiting the diffuse possibility of the witch's narrative to the ocean floor.

<div align="center">Narrative as Embedded in Fields of Discourse</div>

In addition to narrative's embodied context and material constraint, narrative performances cannot be understood outside of the discursive fields they exist within (Langellier & Peterson, 2004). As Langellier and Peterson pointed out, "to perform narrative is to do something in and with discourse" (p. 18). Foucault (1969/1972) posited event, series, regularity, and possible conditions of existence as four regulatory principles that work to order discourse. Drawing upon Foucault's regulatory principles, Langellier and Peterson (2004) explicated narrative performance as a discursively embedded communication practice. Similarly, in the present section I investigate the ordering of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" through the discursive regularities Foucault articulated.

Event

First, according to Foucault (1969/1972), discourse is ordered as an event. Rules of exclusion work to prohibit certain storytelling, divide what is meaningful from what is meaningless, and oppose truth from falsehood. As Langellier and Peterson (2004) observed, a storyteller cannot narrate under just any conditions. Rather, discursive prohibitions regulate the circumstances in which particular stories can be performed. According to the authors, "A storyteller utilizes and enacts prohibitions, in other words, when he or she performs narrative" (p. 19). As discussed previously, Ursula performs a narrative recognition of the patriarchal restrictions upon the performance of gender. The witch explicitly makes use of discursive prohibitions in order to perform "Poor Unfortunate Souls."

Like Ariel, Ursula sings in an enclosed, private cavern space. As the film's only two significant female figures, both the heroine and the witch are forbidden to narrate in public space even in the marginalized aquatic realm. Much of the plot of *The Little Mermaid* and the subsequent feminist critique (Herbozo et al., 2004; Sells, 2005; Sun, 2001) has centered upon the loss of Ariel's voice. In the previous chapters I have explored the ways in which the narrative performance of "Part of Your World" and "Under the Sea" work to silence the mermaid's voice. However, Ariel does participate in public aquatic life even if only as an audience member in "Under the Sea." Despite his repeated silencing of Ariel, King Triton does address the young mermaid. As the film opens, the entire kingdom gathers to hear Ariel's beautiful singing voice. While the heroine is prohibited to speak about certain topics or in certain spaces, the film ends as Ariel, reunited with her voice, sails away to begin her life in the public, white-male sphere. As the film's heroine, Ariel learns to manage patriarchal oppression by assimilating to the white male order. By contrast, Ursula's voice itself represents a prohibited object. The prohibition of

Ursula's voice is best illustrated by the witch's use of Ariel's voice to mask the low pitch, gender ambiguous quality of her own voice on land. In fact, as Ariel's voice returns to her during the wedding scene Ursula covers her mouth in shock and disgust as her own voice suddenly reappears. The prohibition of Ursula's voice outside her cavern marks her narrative performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as *the event* in which the witch speaks.

According to Foucault (1969/1972) divisions and rejections also work to regulate discourse as an event by dividing that which is meaningful from that which is trivial or insignificant. Specifically, Foucault described the division between "reason and folly" (p. 217). The author characterized the treatment of the madman noting that while his speech was considered to be devoid of truth or significance it was often attributed with mysterious powers. The author described the madman's words by asserting, "They either fell into a void—rejected the moment they were proffered—or else men deciphered in them a naïve or cunning reason, rationality more rational than that of a rational man" (p. 217). The division between reason and folly Foucault observed further delimits Ursula's song as an event. Ursula begins her song by acknowledging her position as a specific class of madwoman. She sings, "I admit that in the past I've been a nasty. They weren't kidding when they called me well, a witch" (Clements et al., 1989). Ursula recognizes that her status as a witch renders her speech insignificant and explicitly asks Ariel to take her narrative seriously. She continues, "And I fortunately know a little magic. It's a talent that I always have possessed. And dear lady please don't laugh. I use it on behalf of the miserable lonely and depressed. Pathetic "(Clements et al., 1989). As Ursula narrates "Poor Unfortunate Souls" she advances an alternate, vilified rationality. The witch teaches Ariel how to perform femininity in the white male sphere (Sells, 1995). She sings,

You'll have your looks, your pretty face and don't underestimate the importance of

body language Ha! The men up there don't like a lot of blabber. They think a girl who gossips is a bore. Yes on land it's much preferred for ladies not to say a word and after all dear, what is idle prattle for. Come on their not all that impressed with conversation. True gentlemen avoid it when they can. But they dote and swoon and fawn on a lady whose withdrawn. It's she who holds her tongue who gets a man. (Clements et al., 1989)

As Sells argued, Ursula teaches the young ingénue that gender exists insofar as it is performed.

Foucault (1969/1972) explained,

> At all events whether excluded or secretly invested with reason, the madman's speech did not strictly exist. It was through his words that one recognized the madness of the madman; but they were certainly the medium within which this division became active; they were neither heard nor remembered. (p. 217)

Ariel eventually comes to understand her pact with the villainess as a naive mistake. She cries, "Daddy, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to. I didn't know" (Clements et al., 1989). Ursula's speech is ultimately forgotten as Prince Eric slays the villainess before marrying Ariel and sailing away to live happily ever after. Although Ariel gives credence to Ursula's narrative out of desperation, "Poor Unfortunate Souls" exists as an event only insofar as Ursula's speech designates her a witch. The song serves as the medium through which the villainess's speech and the lessons she offers about gender are divided from salient, meaningful discourse.

Series

In addition to external rules that work to govern discourse through rules of exclusion, Foucault (1969/1972) discussed the regulation of discourse by means of internal rules. According to the author, internal rules work as discourse regulates itself through classification. Foucault posited that series allow for the location of degrees of repetition among discourse and elucidate a society's "major narratives, told, retold and varied; formulae, texts, ritualized texts to be spoken in well defined circumstances; things said once and conserved because people suspect some hidden secret or wealth lies buried within" (p. 220). As the song's title suggests, the

repetition of "poor unfortunate souls" throughout her narrative works to classify Ursula's song as a story of oppression, struggle, and dissatisfaction. Additionally, Ursula's repetition of "poor unfortunate souls" functions to constitute a variety of bodies as oppressed while positioning the witch in relation to the bodies she describes as their potential emancipator. Ursula sings the chorus for the first time in reference to the dissatisfied mermaid couple she conjures. She sings, "Poor unfortunate souls, in pain, in need. This one longing to be thinner that one wants to get the girl and do I help them? Yes Indeed" (Clements et al., 1989). The witch continues to sing as the animation pans over her garden of worm-like bodies. She recounts, "They come flocking to my cauldron crying spells Ursula please and I help them. Yes I do" (Clements et al., 1989). Here, the poor unfortunate souls the witch references shifts from the specific bodies of the couple to a larger social body. Later the witch repeats the chorus to Ariel in the second person. She sings, " Come on you poor unfortunate soul. Go ahead. Make your choice" (Clements et al., 1989). Finally, Ariel shifts from audience to character within Ursula's narrative as the witch turns to Fletsom and Jetsom, points to Ariel and sings, "This poor unfortunate soul"(Clements et al., 1989). In each case Ursula constitutes an oppressed body while simultaneously establishing her relationship to the various "poor unfortunate souls" (Clements et al., 1989) she describes. Hence, "Poor Unfortunate Souls" represents a narrative not only about oppressed bodies but about a madwoman's role in relation to recognition of and liberation from that oppression. Ursula establishes her identity in terms of her unique libratory function. She explains to Ariel, "My dear sweet child. That's what I do. It's what I live for. To help unfortunate merfolk like yourself, poor souls with no one else to turn to" (Clements et al., 1989). Understanding the sea witch as a grotesque body elucidates her potential to free Ariel and other "poor unfortunate souls" from patriarchal oppression. According to Bakhtin (1965/1984), degradation cannot but understood as

entirely negative. Rather, as the grotesque body lowers sacred ideals to the material bodily lower

stratum, it performs a regenerative function. The author described the grotesque body's ability to

> liberate from the prevailing view of the world, from conventions and established truths,
> from cliché's, from all that is humdrum and universally accepted. This carnival spirit
> offers a chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realize the relative nature of all
> that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things. (p. 34)

Thus, Ursula's performance creates a space in which to reconsider femininity as a performative

contingency rather than an essential identity. For example, the witch degrades Ariel's voice by

extracting a golden material sphere from the mermaid's body while engaging in a loud grotesque

cackle. She does not discard or destroy the heroine's voice but instead holds it in a conch shell

that will eventually shatter to reunite Ariel's voice with her body. Ursula does not sever the

relationship between the voice, the body, and gender, rather she creates a space in which to

reconsider gender as a performative possibility.

Regularity

Foucault (1969/1972) posited regularity as a third principle governing discourse.

Regularities control discourse by revealing rules for speaking subjects. Langellier and Peterson

(2004) applied Foucault's description of regularities to storytelling by arguing,

> In storytelling, we ask what qualifies someone to tell as story, for example, to speak for
> herself or himself from the "authority of experience," or to speak for others as an expert .
> . . . Storytelling has rituals to determine which subjects are eligible to speak and listen
> and which subjects are enforced speakers or audiences. (p. 20)

In the present section I explore Langellier and Peterson's supposition in relation to Ursula's

narrative performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls."

From the outset of her performance Ursula explicitly sets up her authority to speak. As

researchers (Dundes & Dundes, 2000; Rozario 2004) have argued, Ursula serves as a surrogate

mother for Ariel. This relationship is clear from the outset of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as the

first words Ursula speaks to the young mermaid she refers to her as "my child" (Clements et al.,

1989) and instructs her in the proper etiquette for entering a room. Hence, Ursula's authority to

speak and Ariel's obligation to listen derive in part from rituals of parent/child interaction. The

witch further grounds her authority to speak in her omniscient knowledge. Before Ariel can

explain her visit Ursula says,

> Now, you're here because you have a thing for this human, this prince fellow. Not that I
> blame you. He is quite a catch isn't he? Well angelfish, the solution to your problem is
> simple. The only way to get what you want is to become a human yourself. (Clements et
> al., 1989)

When Ariel questions the witch's capacity to transform her into a human, Ursula continues to

infantilize the mermaid while simultaneously validating her speech through her authority as an

expert. She responds, "My dear sweet child. That's what I do. It's what I live for. To help

unfortunate merfolk like yourself. Poor souls with no one else to turn to" (Clements et al., 1989).

Through the use of magic, knowledge, and parent/child power relations the witch establishes her

right to speak and Ariel's obligation to listen. However, Ursula's authority to speak cannot

extend beyond her underwater lair or Ariel as a listener. As previously discussed, external rules

separate Ursula's speech from reasonable meaningful discourse. Thus the same magical

omniscience that grants Ursula the authority to speak to Ariel as an expert renders her speech

meaningless outside the context of "Poor Unfortunate Souls."

Possible Conditions of Existence

Foucault (1969/1972) posited possible conditions of existence as a fourth and final

discursive regularity. In terms of storytelling, Langellier and Peterson (2004) argued, "The final

regulatory principle is a critical effort to discuss the conditions of discourse that frame what can

be said, what can be understood and what can be done in storytelling" (p. 20). Analysis represents not an attempt to uncover a universal meaning in storytelling but to elucidate the possibilities performed by the ordering of discourse. In short, Langellier and Peterson (2004) observed that "If the storytelling was performed in this way, it can be performed in another, different way" (p. 24). Ursula's performance of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" illustrates the authors' contention in several important ways. First, as the witch describes the terms of the contractual agreement she offers Ariel, the two women explicitly discuss possible conditions of existence. Ursula explains, "If he does kiss you before the sun sets on the third day you'll remain human permanently but if he doesn't you turn back into a mermaid and you belong to me" (Clements et al., 1989). As Ariel contemplates Ursula's proposal she considers, "If I become human I'll never be with my father or sisters again." Ursula responds, "but you'll have your man. Life's full of tough choices itenit?" (Clements et al., 1989) The tough choices Ariel faces result from the discursive regularities that constrain the feminine voice. For example, the binary division of space precluding Ariel's habitation with both her family and her prince derive from the discursive division between reason and folly Foucault articulated.

As the song goes on Ursula continues to demonstrate the way in which discursive regularities function to mark out possibilities for narrative performance. The witch reveals that she wants the young mermaid's voice in exchange for her magical services. Ariel immediately responds by pointing to the importance of the voice on land. She asks, "But without my voice how can I…" (Clements et al., 1989). Ursula cuts Ariel off before she can express her specific concerns regarding the loss of her voice. The absence of Ariel's response underscores the infinite possible ways the question could be completed. Moreover, the multiplicity of questions Ariel performs frames the meaning of Ursula's response within equally varied possibilities. Ursula

responds to Ariel's concern with loss of voice by asserting the communicative function of the body in terms of gender. She sings, "You'll have your looks, your pretty face and don't underestimate the importance of body language ha!" (Clements et al., 1989). As Sells (1995) observed, Ursula teaches Ariel that gender is performative. The question of both the voice and body's function and significance

> is not a question of a hidden truth or universal meaning, or a system of signification located in storyteller, audience or story. Rather the meaning of response is a question of the possible conditions of discourse performed by the ordering of events, series and regularities of speaking subjects. (Langellier & Peterson, 2004 p. 24)

Through the discursive regulation of "Poor Unfortunate Souls," the narrative performatively carves out the possibility of alternative relationships between the body, the voice, and gender.

Narrative as Legitimation and Critique

As discursive regularities frame the embodied, materially situated performance of narrative, storytelling works to reify existing relations of power (Langellier & Peterson, 2004). However, Foucault (1969/1972) interrogated the consequence of discourse by asking, "What is so perilous then, in the fact that people speak, and that their speech proliferates?" (p. 216). Langellier and Peterson (2004) applied Foucault's inquiry to storytelling. They asserted,

> The danger of performing narrative is that by doing something in and with discourse that is neither uniform nor stable, we risk changing the bodily practices and material conditions in which they are embedded, what is done can be undone. (p. 25)

Storytelling works to both legitimate and critique the embodied, materially situated relationships it performs. "Poor Unfortunate Souls" illustrates narrative's capacity as both a legitimating and subversive communication practice particularly in terms of gender. As a grotesque communicative body the witch performs a narrative recognition of an oppressive patriarchal discourse that works to silence both herself and Ariel. Sells (1995) argued that Ursula opens a

potentially liberatory space as she instructs Ariel in gender's performative contingency. However, pitted against Ariel as the film's villainess, the witch simultaneously reinscribes oppressive gender relations of power. For example, the deal she offers Ariel subjects the young mermaid to whims of a man. Rather than kiss her prince Ariel's fate depends upon Eric's decision to kiss her. "Poor Unfortunate Souls" performs a complex distribution of power that cannot be ascribed to individual speakers. Langellier and Peterson (2004) explained "For this reason, we ask about the tactical productivity or efficacy of storytelling rather than divide it into discourses of power on the one hand, and counterdiscourses on the other" (p. 25).

Langellier and Peterson (2004) analyzed the efficacy of storytelling through a description of strategies and tactics that operate in and through narrative performance. They asserted, "Strategy concerns the goals around which a system is organized; while tactics concern how a system goes about accomplishing these goals. Tactics concern the precise and sometimes tenuous ways strategy is put into practice" (p. 25). Although *The Little Mermaid* presents the women in opposition to each other, Ariel and Ursula ultimately share the same goal or strategy. Both the heroine and the villainess utilize femininity as a strategy for a attaining a place in public life. For example, Ursula emphasizes femininity as a strategy when she stipulates that in order to remain part of public human life Ariel must win Eric's true love in the form of a kiss. The success of Ursula's plan to overthrow Triton is contingent upon Ariel's failure to successfully seduce Eric. For both Ariel and Ursula the voice and body become tactical tools for achieving an overall strategy.

Langellier and Peterson (2004) explained that under regular conditions strategies dictate and define the tactics they encompass. However, the authors went on to discuss the way in which strategies and tactics mutually inform each other. As tactics shift to accommodate an overall

strategy, the strategy itself may change. The authors observed, "tactical innovations may rupture or restructure the constraints of strategy. Once strategy is restructured, however, the hierarchy of strategy enveloping tactics returns" p. 25). Butler (1988) argued that gender exists only insofar as it is performed. While Ariel relies upon her embodied voice as a tactic for the performance of femininity, Ursula suggests the variability of tactical possibilities. The witch points out, "You'll have your looks, your pretty face and don't underestimate the importance of body language ha!" (Clements et al., 1989). Bakhtin (1965/1984) described grotesque bodily performance noting,

> It is a gay and free play with objects and concepts, but it is a play that pursues a distant, prophetic goal: to dispel the atmosphere of a gloomy and false seriousness enveloping the world and all its phenomena, to lend it a different look, to render it more material, closer to man and his body, more understandable and lighter in the bodily sense. (p. 380)

Ursula's tactical play with the performed relationship between the body and the voice suggests a strategic restructuring of existing gender discourse.

Langellier and Peterson (2004) summarized their contention that narrative works to both critique and legitimate existing power dynamics by offering a series of questions that help explicate the consequence of performing narrative. For example, they argued, "Rather than ask about individual motivation or social pressure we ask what strategic functions storytelling performs?" (p. 29). "Poor Unfortunate Souls" performs the strategic possibility of a subversive femininity through a grotesque narrative reconsideration of the tactical capabilities of the voice and body. Additionally Langellier and Peterson asked, "Why tell this particular story in this way to this audience?" (p. 29). The researchers' inquiry gives rise to important questions regarding the consequence of Ursula's narrative performance. For example, why is it significant that *The Little Mermaid*'s villainess performs "Poor Unfortunate Souls" for the film's heroine? What tactical operations of gender performance are naturalized or demonized as a result?

Ursula's grotesque free play with voice, body, and gender threaten to disrupt existing strategic understandings of gender as an essential, finalizable identity. By contrast the use of the ingénue's voice and body as tactical tools for the performance of femininity in masculine public space are less disruptive. Ariel's gender play functions as a tactical shift rather than a strategic reordering. Hence, the heroine's ultimate place on land can be easily reinscribed into existing strategic arrangements of patriarchal gender discourse. Indeed the film ends as Triton grants Ariel her legs and the ability to fulfill the patriarchal marriage plot central to Disney films. Ursula on the other hand meets her demise as Eric penetrates Ursula's flesh with his sunken ship.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

My purpose in this study has been to analyze the gender implications of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* by means of narrative performativity. Scholars (Comer, 2008; Henke et al., 1996; Sun 2001) and Disney producers alike have understood the film to bring about a new condition in terms of the success of Disney animation and the company's approach to gender portrayals. Members of *The Little Mermaid*'s production team retrospectively underscored the film as the catalyst for Disney's resurgence as the company struggled to survive following the death of Walt Disney (BVHE, 2006). Researchers (Comer, 2008; Henke et al., 1996; Sun 2001) have pointed to *The Little Mermaid* as evidencing a marked shift in gender representations among Disney's animated films. Framing the company's cultural significance within its role as dominant global storyteller, I have posited narrative performativity as a productive method by which to expand upon existing research and elucidate the performative operation of gender in *The Little Mermaid*. Specifically, I have understood Disney's animated films as particularly significant in terms of gender. While live performances deal with a preexisting human body, Disney animators have the agency to create narrating gendered bodies. As every aspect of the performing body the audience views results from careful deliberation Disney literally brings gendered bodies into being through narrative performance. I have analyzed three songs performed within the film that, taken together, operate as a synecdoche for the film's overall treatment of the relationship between the body, the voice, and gender performance.

I have approached Ariel's performance of "Part of Your World," Sebastian's song "Under the Sea," and Ursula's "Poor Unfortunate Souls" by means of Langelier and Peterson's (2004) discussion of narrative as performative communication practice. The authors argued that

to conceive of narrative as performance is to call attention to its embodied context, its situation within particular material circumstances and discursive fields, and its potential to both reinforce and critique existing power relations. I have argued that analysis of each song within the narrative dimensions outlined by Langellier and Peterson reveals the performative significance of the relationship between voice, body, and gender in *The Little Mermaid*.

In chapter 1 I framed the study within understandings of *The Little Mermaid* as performative as the film brings about a new condition both in terms of Disney's popular fate and the performance of gender. I justified a narrative analysis of the film by highlighting Disney's unprecedented pervasiveness as a cultural storyteller. Furthermore, in this chapter I established the methodological foundation for the study by tracing the concept of performativity as it relates to Langellier and Peterson's (2004) designation of narrative as a performative act. I also explained the four consequences the authors argued exist at the intersection of narrative and performance studies. Furthermore, I identified the narrative significance of "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" within the overall story of *The Little Mermaid* and argued that analysis of each song using Langellier and Peterson's four dimensions of narrative performance offered a productive means by which to posit the performative gender implications of the film.

In chapter 2 I considered Ariel's narrative performance of "Part of Your World." Analysis of the mermaid's song using Langellier and Peterson's (2004) four dimensions of narrative performance revealed the way in which Ariel's mirroring body, the binary division of masculine and feminine space, patriarchal discursive relations, and the strategic function of silence interact to constrain and facilitate "Part of Your World." Ariel performatively negotiates her position within a patriarchal relationship of voice, body, and gender through her narrative

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performance of song. Additionally, the film's heroine performs the song. Hence, "Part of Your World" offers a narrative of a culturally validated enactment of femininity even as Ariel bemoans the patriarchal constraints she narrates within. "Part of Your World" points to the patriarchal system of domination operating to constrain Ariel's narrating voice and body.

In chapter 3, I shifted my analysis to examine the way in which the masculine body narratively performs patriarchal domination by turning to Sebastian's song, "Under the Sea." Continuing to draw upon Langellier and Peterson's (2004) understanding of narrative performance, I posited the patriarchal function of the relationship between Sebastian's masculine body and space as resource for domination. Additionally, I explored the regulatory operation of silence in "Under the Sea" as well as the strategic and tactical operation of domination. Overall, in this chapter I illustrated the narrative role of voice, silence, and space in relation to the performance of a dominating masculinity. As protagonist narratives "Part of Your World" and "Under the Sea" offer two oppositional yet complementary performances of intelligible gender. Ariel's song provides an acceptable performance of feminine struggle under patriarchal constraint, while Sebastian's narrative naturalizes masculine domination through force.

In chapter 4 I moved from the culturally validated performance Ariel and Sebastian offered to investigate Ursula's potential to mediate the oppositional binaries performed in "Part of Your World" and "Under the Sea." I have established Ursula as a grotesque narrating body that approaches Frank's communicative ideal. Hence, I explored the narrative possibilities performed in the relationship between the grotesque body, material space, and the discursive fields in which it is embedded. Specifically, I argued that as a grotesque body the villainess performs the possibility for alternative enactments of gender by complicating the heteronormative relationship between the voice, the body, and gender performed in the film.

Taking "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" as a synecdoche for *The Little Mermaid*'s narrative performance of gender revealed that the film enacts and then complicates the oppositional relationships that constitute culturally validated gender performance. In chapter 4 I also argued that Ursula's grotesque performance enacts a subversive potential by underscoring gender as a performed identity. While the sea-witch creates the possibility of alternative voice/body/gender relationships, I cannot ignore the film's narrative end in my analysis. The witch seizes control of Triton's crown and the entire ocean but meets her end as Prince Eric plunges the jagged edge of his sunken ship into her flesh. Triton regains his crown, magical scepter, and control of the aquatic kingdom. Moreover, as the magical scepter falls from Ursula's grip to Triton's hand its power transforms Ursula's garden of captive bodies to free mer-people. In the film's final scene, Triton sees the error of his overprotective paternal ways, restores Ariel's human legs and gives his daughter away to the prince in a traditional wedding ceremony. As the king transforms Ariel into a human he reflects, "Then I guess there's just one problem left…how much I'm going to miss her" (Clements et al., 1989). The death of Ursula's grotesque communicative body and Triton's change of heart recast the narrative conflict performed in *The Little Mermaid* from a story of feminine struggle to one of the challenges of paternal masculinity. Once Ursula's subversive gender ambiguity has been negated the only conflict that remains in *The Little Mermaid* is the father's internal conflict as he passes the female from his own control to that of another male.

Limitations of the Study

Employment of performativity as a methodological foundation for understanding narrative texts assumes the cultural significance of the particularities performed in the mundane

everyday activity of storytelling. By virtue of its attention to specific embodied, material, and discursive relationships, narrative performativity has provided a more nuanced understanding of *The Little Mermaid* in terms of gender. For example, narrative analysis of "Poor Unfortunate Souls" revealed the narrative operation of the grotesque body as a specific embodied context with unique implications in terms of gender performance. Moreover, closely considering three particular narratives within the film allowed me to explore gender as it is constituted in and through storytelling as particular communication practice. While narrative performativity has enabled a detailed investigation of "Part of Your World," "Under the Sea," and "Poor Unfortunate Souls" the method creates certain limitations. The focus upon the particular inherent in Langellier and Peterson's (2004) approach to performativity as a method makes it difficult to discuss the study's findings in terms of broader social implications. Another useful method exists in Burke's (1974) representative anecdote. The author offers the representative anecdote as tool for literary criticism that proves useful in an effort to expand understandings of the narrative performance of gender in *The Little Mermaid* beyond the context of the film to consider the broader cultural significance of these particular narratives.

Burke (1974) pointed to the social function of literature. According to the author, literary forms and elements recur as means of appropriately responding to various types of recurring situations. Brummett (1984) expanded Burke's notion of literature to contemporary media artifacts, suggesting that the dramatistic nature of the media render Burke's dramatism an especially useful methodology for media criticism. From the broad overarching conception of dramatism, Brummett highlights the representative anecdote "as one key method stemming from dramatism" (p. 162). By representative anecdote Burke refers to a basic dramatic form underlying a particular discourse. According to Brummett (1984) the anecdote provides a lens

through which the critic examines a discourse. He suggests, "The critic *represents* the essence of discourse by viewing it as if it follows a dramatic plot" (p. 163, emphasis in original). Brummett continues by offering two reasons the representative anecdote is particularly suited for media criticism. First, it provides an ideal critical tool for media analysis because of the media's anecdotal nature. Second, because of the dramatic anecdotal nature of the media, audiences employ media texts as equipment for living. The representative anecdote calls attention to a relationship between a mediated dramatic text and the audience's lived experience. By identifying and exploring a representative anecdote among a particular media discourse, the critic gains insight into a culture's values, anxieties, and concerns.

Disney's success is due in large part to the invariable recurrent rhetorical form of its films. In fact, "the Disney ending" has become synonymous with a happy, simplistic solution to a conflict. For Burke (1974) an effect is produced in an audience "through the development of an idea in a way that creates and satisfies expectations" (p. 195). By relentlessly ascribing to the same dramatic narrative structure within its films, Disney inundates audiences across time with a particular dramatic form. In particular the company's recurrent use of the fairytale as specific narrative form creates and then satisfies audience expectations. John Musker illustrates the importance of the fairytale in terms of Disney's success (BVHE, 2006). He recalled,

> The idea of doing a fairy tale certainly appealed to me because it was certainly a part of the Disney tradition but there hadn't been one in thirty years so it was, doing something in a tradition and yet trying to find a new approach to it that had never been done before. (BVHE, 2006)

Writer-director-producer of the film, Ron Clements expressed, "Our big fear was that people would compare [*The Little Mermaid*] to say the earlier fairy tales like *Snow White* and *Cinderella* and say, 'you know, what happened?'" (BVHE, 2006).

Burke (1974) further underscored the rhetorical implications of form arguing that life itself is structured by expectations. Indeed, according to Burke, "life itself has form only in so far as you can get a sense of expectancy, and life becomes unreal, and puzzling and disarrayed when we do not have any way of expecting the next event" (p. 195). The antithesis of formless disarray, Disney fairytales are uniquely suited for easing the cultural anxieties or fears that result from an inability to predict or expect life's events.

The Little Mermaid presents society with equipment for dealing with the anxiety of gender's contingency. For example, Disney's adaptation of Hans Christian Anderson's original version is illustrative. As Anderson's tales are often considered largely autobiographical, Zipes (1983) has argued that his version of *The Little Mermaid* represents an anxiety about class struggle. Sells (1995) contextualized an analysis of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* within the tensions of feminist discourse at the time of the film's release. She observed,

> If a fairy tale is chameleon-like, as Joseph Campbell suggests, putting on "the colors of its background, living and shaping itself to the requirements of the moment "(1972, p. 850) then Disney's contemporary version has shifted colors from class to gender privilege. (Sells, 1995, p. 177)

In this study I have explored the way in which gender is performatively constituted in and through narrative performance in Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. Taken together, Burke's (1974) conception of the representative anecdote and Langellier and Peterson's (2004) narrative performance work to negotiate the general/particular dialectic of critical analysis. While Burke's representative anecdote offers a way in which to identify the social function of recurrent dramatic forms, narrative performativity elucidates the way in which such forms constitute particular embodied, material, and discursive relationships.

In addition to particularity of narrative performativity as a method, this study has been limited by the discussion of Ariel, Sebastian, and Ursula as narrating bodies. Langellier and

Peterson (2004) argued that narrative's embodied context implies a complex relationship between storytellers, narrators, audiences, and characters. They explained,

> The mundane observation with which we began, some *body* performs narrative contains an important ambiguity: that is, this body may be a person (my body, or interpersonal communication) a few persons (a body of women, or interpersonal and small group communication) many people (the body politic, or public communication) and many groups of peoples (cultural bodies, or intercultural communication). (p. 13)

While in the present study I addressed the ambiguity of the narrating body within the narrative world of *The Little Mermaid*, the authors' contention underscores another limitation of the present study. By positing Ariel, Sebastian, and Ursula as narrating bodies within their respective musical narratives, I have not as readily addressed the embodied context of Disney as a narrating body in this study.

The complexity of embodied relations inherent in Disney as a narrating body cannot be overstated. To begin, the name Disney itself refers to a multi-media corporation as well as the body of Walt Disney the man. The identity of Disney the company cannot be separated from the storytelling ethos of Disney the man. Additionally, a collective body of Disney employees constitutes the company and its ability to tell animated stories. In *The Little Mermaid* for example, the characters can narrate only insofar as they are narrated. Ariel's animated body exists at the intersection of a variety of animating bodies that sculpt, draw, color, and film the mermaid. Yet another body performs Ariel's voice. Moreover, both the animators and the voice-over actors create the heroine in accordance with the story of *The Little Mermaid*. Hence, the animators themselves narrate as the result of their experience as audience members for the screen-play writers John Musker and Ron Clements. Additionally, Musker and Clements' screen play represents an adaptation of Hans Christian Anderson's original version of the tale. As a

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mediated storytelling performance the viewing audience of Disney's *The Little Mermaid* represents a vast intercultural audience(ing) body that spans time and space.

Future Research

While no single study could exhaust the complex web of embodied relations performed in Disney films, future researchers might utilize Peterson and Langellier's (2004) dimensions of narrative performance in order to identify the relationship between the recurrent dramatic structure of the Disney fairy tale and narrative performance across Disney texts. For example, *Treasures Untold: The Making of The Little Mermaid* offers a narrative artifact that would serve as a fruitful entry point for exploring some aspect of Disney's embodied storytelling context. Exploring the narratives performed in *Treasures Untold* within Langellier and Peterson's four narrative dimensions would contribute to existing research regarding Disney and *The Little Mermaid* by elucidating the way in which Disney performatively negotiates its identity through narrative. By using Burke's representative anecdote to consider analysis of *Treasures Untold* along side the analysis offered in this study, future researchers could explicate the narrative relationship between Disney's identity as a storyteller and its negotiation of gender representations in *The Little Mermaid*.

Future researchers might also employ Burke's representative anecdote as method for continuing to investigate the social function of *The Little Mermaid* in terms of gender. For example, researchers could analyze the embodied, material, and discursive dimensions of narrative performance performed in other films released the same year as *The Little Mermaid*. Exploring reoccurring narrative relationships performed across several cinematic texts would elucidate the way in which society utilized particular narrative performances. Additionally,

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Jeffery Katzenburg claimed, "*The Little Mermaid* is the foundation upon which an entire renaissance was built" (BVHE, 2006). In a future study a scholar might attempt to understand the capacity of the film to bring about a new condition by analyzing the animated Disney films released just before and just after *The Little Mermaid*. Comparing the Disney films surrounding *The Little Mermaid* might allow researchers to identify a particular shift in narrative relationships that contributed to an overall change in Disney animation.

Other potential areas of research include an exploration of the role ambiguity plays in the Disney body. I have posited Ursula as a grotesque narrating body in order to theorize the witch's potential to subvert existing patriarchal constructions of gender. While Bakhtin (1965/1984) stressed the ambivalent nature of the grotesque body, Ursula's position as the film's villainess as well as her ultimate death in The *Little Mermaid* serve to reinstitute the rigid binary divisions of gender with which the film began. Future researchers might expand upon the present study by analyzing the performance of gender in the narratives of other Disney villainesses. Moreover, researchers might continue to explore the function of the grotesque body within the Disney fairytale.

In this study I have built upon existing research regarding Disney's *The Little Mermaid* by further investigating the implications of the film in terms of gender. I have grounded my analysis within an understanding of Disney's cultural significance as a dominant global storyteller (Sun, 2001). While researchers (Comer, 2008; Dundes & Dundes, 2000; Giroux, 1999; Herbozo, Tentleff-Dunn, Larose, & Thompson 2004; Sells, 1995) have discussed the way in which the film's characters represent patriarchal gender relations through their actions in the film, I have tried to explore the way in which *The Little Mermaid* constitutes intelligible gender through narrative performance. My aim has not been to contradict or reject the findings in

previous studies. Rather, I have argued that narrative performativity offers an understanding of

the embodied, material, and discursive relationships that give rise to the gender implications

other researches have identified. Langellier and Peterson (2004) argued that "analysis elucidates

regularities by exploring variations of knowledge and power as the possible conditions of

storytelling: this story could have been told differently" (p. 20). Hence, analysis of *The Little*

Mermaid not only provides a better understanding of a particular cultural text but creates a space

in which to imagine the possibility of alternate performances of gender.

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