



Coining for Capital: Movies, Marketing, and the Transformation of Childhood

Jyotsna Kapur

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"This book is a welcome addition to the literature on children and the media, and a most stimulating application of social theory to questions of the child in contemporary film and consumer culture."—Ellen Seiter, author of *The Internet Playground: Children's Access, Entertainment and Mis-Education*

Since the 1980s, a peculiar paradox has evolved in American film. Hollywood's children have grown up, and the adults are looking and behaving more and more like children. In popular films such as *Harry Potter*, *Toy Story*, *Pocahontas*, *Home Alone*, and *Jumanji*, it is the children who are clever, savvy, and self-sufficient while the adults are often portrayed as bumbling and ineffective.

Is this transformation of children into "little adults" an invention of Hollywood or a product of changing cultural definitions more broadly? In *Coining for Capital*, Jyostna Kapur explores the evolution of the concept of childhood from its portrayal in the eighteenth century as a pure, innocent, and idyllic state—the opposite of adulthood—to its expression today as a mere variation of adulthood, complete with characteristics of sophistication, temptation, and corruption. Kapur argues that this change in definition is not a media effect, but rather a structural feature of a deeply consumer-driven society.

Providing a new and timely perspective on the current widespread alarm over the loss of childhood, *Coining for Capital* concludes that our present moment is in fact one of hope and despair. As children are fortunately shedding false definitions of proscribed innocence both in film and in life, they must now also learn to navigate a deeply inequitable, antagonistic, and consumer-driven society of which they are both a part and a target.

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