

Yesterday, Tomorrow, and Fantasy: History
and Innocence in the Magic Kingdom

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Abstract

Herein, the construction of historical knowledge in Disney theme parks is examined, with particular emphasis on the ways in which the Walt Disney Company exploits historical narratives in its Magic Kingdom parks around the world to reinforce its paternalistic role in its consumers' lives. The built space and attractions are analyzed for their extensive, though not always explicit, support of historical narratives of progress and corporate innovation. The Magic Kingdom parks, as descendents of earlier forms of amusement parks, pleasure gardens and World's Fairs, also bear similarities to modern museums. As visitors to museums, casinos, and other leisure institutions are more and more frequently immersed in themed environments, the role of theming in creating memories and historical knowledge – and the way visitors understand learning in themed environments – becomes increasingly important. By unbounding visitors from time and space in the Magic Kingdom, Disney is able to successfully market its brand of history, as long as the experience is also seen as entertainment and not edification.

Introduction

Walt Disney told his daughters he would take them to amusement parks when they were young and would “sit on park benches eating peanuts while the girls rode the merry-go-rounds,” (Weinstein, 1992, p. 148) imagining a recreational place where parents and children could have fun together. Thus, the idea for Disneyland was born. Unable to find financial backers for the project, he financed a company – WED Enterprises – to begin design work on the park. His own interest in American history and miniature trains formed the foundation for early designs; he envisioned a 1/3-scale steam train encircling the park, and history dioramas for visitors to view. Many of Walt’s earliest ideas were eventually realized in Disneyland or other parks bearing his name. The parks include a whirlwind tour of several key hearth areas of American culture and heritage, as seen by Walt Disney and his team (Weinstein, 1992, p. 150).

On July 17, 1955, Disneyland opened outside of Los Angeles, California, to great fanfare and huge crowds. On opening day, the weather was hot, women’s high heels sunk into the soft, newly laid asphalt, and cars were lined up for miles waiting to get in (Gabler, 2007, p. 531). In the first seven weeks of operation, the park welcomed one million visitors, 50% more than projected, and by the end of the park’s first fiscal year, another three million would visit. The park, with its different themed lands, helped to further popularize Walt Disney’s animated characters and films, and its commercial success inspired a plethora of new and expanded parks around the country (Weinstein, 1992, p. 153). The Walt Disney Company itself went on to develop theme park complexes in Florida, Japan, France and Hong Kong, with another set to open in mainland China (Shanghai) in 2014 (Lee, 2010). In 2009, 10 of the top 25 most attended theme parks worldwide were Disney parks. Even Disneyland Paris, which, at opening, was widely criticized, is now the most widely visited theme park in Europe (TEA/AECOM, 2010).

Following a decade of immense success at Disneyland, Walt Disney, accompanied by his brother Roy and Florida Governor Haydon Burns, called a press conference on November 15, 1965, to announce plans to build a new theme park in Florida. The company had been purchasing swampland in central Florida using assumed names and dummy corporations – about 47 square miles in total, or roughly twice the size of Manhattan. After the success of the attractions Disney had created for the 1964-65 New York World's Fair, the company felt confident that East Coast populations would be willing consumers of a new theme park complex. The first park to be built was the Magic Kingdom, which was modeled on Disneyland and featured many of the same themed areas and attractions, though adapted for the audience and location (Pepper, 2010).

And, again, history played a central role in not only attractions, but in the constructed environment itself. Of the six original themed “lands” of the Magic Kingdom, five deal with past time periods and one with the future. For the roughly 17 million visitors to the Magic Kingdom annually, the chance to visit a nostalgic, whitewashed (in more ways than one) vision of the past must be a motivating factor. Additionally, since the earliest pre-opening advertisements for Disneyland, visiting the parks has been marketed as a rite of passage, as part of American heritage, and as a pilgrimage of sorts. Americans were already familiar with the characters and ethos of the Walt Disney Company, and the theme parks gave them a chance to experience them in a more tangible way. Thus, the drive to visit is not related solely to successful marketing, but to a desire to experience the familiar. The application of similar design strategies and park layouts make even visits to geographically disparate parks familiar and safe. And, as Chris Newcomb (2003) says, “Park visits are badges of societal involvement – a unifying, shared experience that, to a degree, cuts across social division” (p. 7).

The Disney theme parks “form the landscape against which Disney’s visions meet the historical and political realities of America” (Wilson, 1994, p. 118). The parks evolved from nineteenth and twentieth century seaside amusement parks, European pleasure gardens, and the midways and pavilions of World’s Fairs. In this period, living history museums also began to take shape, and the idea of recreating an historical period to help modern audiences understand gained popularity and practice. The Disney Company brought its skills in reading its consumers to the theme park business, and adapted these earlier forms to meet the expectations of mid-twentieth century American audiences. Today, as the Magic Kingdom in Florida nears its fortieth birthday, tourists from around the country and around the world continue to stream through its gates. In each of the park complexes the company runs around the world, a version of Disneyland, complete with fairytale castle, awaits visitors. The Magic Kingdom parks provide the framework for understanding the company’s approach to history, to theming, to consumerism, and to visitor control. The Magic Kingdoms’ details and organization differ to accommodate cultural differences, but the main idea is the same: The past was a simpler, more idyllic time that we should regard with nostalgia, but Americans (because the parks, wherever they are located, continue to tell a narrative about Americans) have been progressing towards a future in which life will be easier, thanks to the innovations of a few brilliant people and the flexibility of the masses.

The Walt Disney Company obliterates the present while its visitors are in the company’s realm, thereby making their relationship to Disney’s versions of the past and future meaningless. They are suspended in time and space. Disney’s version of history is a reflection of what visitors already knew and felt was reassuring at the time Disneyland was designed. History is rendered impotent. Similarly, the company has reacted to shifting perceptions of the past and future since

then through changes in programmatic elements, design strategies, and pedagogic methods. Walt Disney intended for the parks to be educational as well as entertaining, but rather than learning about specific dates and events, the park conveys information about ideas and principles that contribute to American's identity and heritage: cleanliness, order, innovation, progress, and, for good measure, imperialism. That the public continues to pay to visit the parks calls into question the role of memory and nostalgia in public consumption of history. Even as traditional history museums and living history sites face falling visitorship and financial troubles, Disney continues to attract visitors to its gates. The nostalgic version of history Disney is selling appeals to people, and Disney has succeeded in marketing the parks as a lighthearted entertainment complex rather than a serious educational facility. The public seems to assume that Disney's displays are merely for fun, rather than thinking critically about the ways in which the parks' historical presentations reinforce their own previously held assumptions, memories and nostalgia.

Theming and immersive environments seem to have become central to nearly every leisure time activity in the United States— from restaurants, to hotels, to casinos, to museum exhibits. And yet, as evidenced by the public outcry following Disney's attempts to open an American history-themed park in Virginia, people consume different types of themed environments with different expectations and needs. However, in an age when every tourist environment promises to be immersive and educational, people should be critical of the historical information that is actively curated and created for them, whether it is in a living history museum or a theme park. To understand the ways in which people experience themed historical spaces, it is important to examine a space that was not only one of the first extensively themed environments built on such a scale to enjoy long-term use, but one that also remains one of the

best examples thereof. The Florida park, which will be the focus herein, has what Walt Disney referred to as “the blessing of size” (Disney, 1967). The sheer size of the property was designed to allow a Disney-controlled buffer zone around the parks to avoid the outside encroachment of neon signs and advertisements that had sprung up around Disneyland in the years following the opening of the park. The level of control that Disney maintains in Florida, therefore, exceeds that held in California, and thus visitor experience is more tightly constructed.

Origins and Influences of Disney Theme Parks

Pleasure Gardens

The great gardens designed and built in Europe were attempts to create a specialized recreational space, “a hubristic attempt to build paradise on earth, a Garden of Eden,” as Jeffers (2004) describes (p. 223). Featuring exuberant fountains, perfectly manicured gardens, and landscapes that were torn up and replanted based on trends and whims, the gardens were attempts to demonstrate human control over nature and provide a retreat from both the chaos of city life and the disarray of nature.

Tivoli Gardens, in Copenhagen, was one of the world’s early amusement parks. While it featured rides and restaurants, the main attraction is the extensive landscaping throughout the park. Disney visited the gardens in 1958, and incorporated some of what he saw there into his future plans for Disneyland (Heldman, 1993).

Carnivals and Boardwalks

A disappointing visit to Coney Island was supposedly one of Walt Disney’s inspirations for his eventual family vacation kingdom. At the time he visited, likely in the late 1930s or early 1940s, Coney Island was still reeling from the effects of the Great Depression. Subway expansion in 1920 brought large numbers of people with little spending money to the amusement

area, driving prices lower and changing the atmosphere at Coney Island. Around the turn of the century, developers had supplanted the brothels, saloons, and gambling dens that had been the economic mainstay of the Coney Island area with attractions inspired by the 1893 Columbian Exposition. Luna Park, Dreamland, and Steeplechase were all amusement parks that premiered in this period, and which featured themed villages, grand ballrooms and elaborate architecture in addition to carnival rides (Cross, 2006).

The parks, particularly Luna Park, attempted to maintain a level of decency and decorum within their gates, and Luna Park owner Frederick A. Thompson required that employees be courteous to visitors at all times – a policy Walt Disney would later implement in his own parks. From the area's revitalization at the end of the nineteenth century, the amusement area appealed to New York's middle classes as well as its less well-off populations. By the 1930s and 1940s, though, changed economic conditions, several devastating fires, and changes in public perception and use had brought the return of the brothels, saloons and freak shows that had been held at bay through the first decades of the twentieth century (Weinstein, 1992). Still, the success and format of the parks at Coney Island led to the creation of amusement parks featuring midway attractions – in contrast to the trolley parks and pleasure gardens that had previously been in vogue – across the country.

Living History Museums

The first house museums in the United States were created to preserve the past for the edification of the public, especially those immigrant groups who had yet to be Americanized. In 1926, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and his partners began buying land and restoring structures in Williamsburg, Virginia, with the intention of preserving the roots of American democracy (Wallace, 1996). The result, Colonial Williamsburg, is a living history museum that

encompasses an entire historic district, features costumed interpreters living life as though it were the late eighteenth century, and interacting with a paying public to this day. Interestingly, Colonial Williamsburg's mission is to educate visitors about the creation of the "idea of America" (<http://history.org>), and not the reality of America. They traffic in ideology and heritage, rather than historical facts.

Colonial Williamsburg is only one of many living history museums to appear on the scene in the 1900s. In this period, members of the upper class began to appropriate history and use it in attempts to Americanize new immigrants and others who did not fit their prescribed qualifications. According to Wallace (1996), these early history museums' other goal was:

... rescuing isolated bits of the old order from the juggernaut of progress. The museums became preserves where the past, an endangered species, might be kept alive for visitors to see. . . . The museums did nothing to help visitors understand that a critical awareness of history, although not a sufficient guide to effective action in the present, was an indispensable precondition for it, and a potentially powerful tool for liberation" [of the proletariat] (p. 25).

While many history museums today have adopted a more critical stance towards history and historical knowledge production, the museum as an institution has generally maintained its authority over history. In contrast, however, historical presentations at Disney theme parks do not invite visitors to engage in any critical historical thinking, and they also fail to acknowledge history's relationship to the present. The parks present themselves first and foremost as an amusement, and therefore absolve themselves of any responsibility to the professional discipline of history.

World's Fairs

The International Expositions and World's Fairs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were vehicles for disseminating information, popularizing technological, mechanical, and scientific advancements, and providing entertainment for the throngs of people who visited them. Progress was a major theme of public display throughout the twentieth century. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century World's Fairs focused on advancements in science and technology and ideas of a tech-centric future, to spur individualism and consumer culture while also supporting nationalist ideals (Rydell, 2000). The International Exposition in 1933-34 in Chicago, for example, marked the city's centennial, and was known as the Century of Progress Exposition. American fairs also celebrated nationalism, and many celebrated historical landmarks such as the anniversary of Columbus' landing in North America (Chicago, 1893) or the Louisiana Purchase (St. Louis, 1904). These ideas are also at work in Disney theme parks.

In addition to their contributions to popular paradigms of the time, the fairs often also featured midway areas with games, amusements, adult entertainment and carnival-style rides. Often staying open until late at night, these entertainment zones were sources for financial gain, but often attracted crime and other unsavory endeavors. Their popularity, though, ensured their continued use at most fairs throughout the century. Many of the amusements popularized on the midways of World's Fairs would eventually be used at permanent parks around the world.

Twentieth century New York World's Fairs.

Two World's Fairs, both in New York, were bookends to the opening of Disneyland. The 1939-40 and 1964-65 fairs heavily featured the concept of progress. The rhetoric of the fairs asserted that, as time passed, humans were developing greater and greater technologies that would continue to simplify life (Harris, 1997). Humans would mine resources more effectively,

cure diseases, travel with great efficiency, colonize outer space, and understand the world around them intimately. Futurama, General Motors' attraction at the 1939-40 World's Fair, took riders through complex, incredibly detailed models of the future, in which automated highways snaked through rural areas and into carefully planned urban centers. At a time when most fairgoers did not own cars and had not heard of superhighways, this attraction revolutionized the way people imagined the future. Many of the predictions made and gadgets demonstrated within Futurama, such as cars controlled by radio signals to keep a proper distance between vehicles, have yet to be realized. However, at the 1964-65 World's Fair, General Motors again sponsored a pavilion, and the ride within it was called Futurama II. It also featured a look ahead, this time to the mid-21st century, and visitors to the Fair again flocked to see it. People were still consuming optimism for the future (The Original Futurama, 2007). The 1964-65 World's Fair also featured several attractions developed by WED Enterprises, now known as Walt Disney Imagineering, Disney's theme park design firm. The main idea of these and other attractions was, as the theme song for the Disney-developed Carousel of Progress attraction for the General Electric Pavilion at the 64-65 World's Fair asserted, "there's a great big beautiful tomorrow shining at the end of every day." These narratives of progress were also a part of Disney's attractions in its theme parks.

Disney Parks

Walt Disney's experiences with his own daughters, his desire to popularize the history he was passionate about and the opportunity he saw to capitalize on the new technology of television to market his characters and films, led to the creation of Disneyland in 1955 (Weinstein, 1992). After the success of Disney's "it's a small world," The Magic Skyway, and The Carousel of Progress at the 1964-65 World's Fair, the company felt confident that East

Coast audiences would patronize a Disney theme park in the vicinity. Locations were scouted in St. Louis, upstate New York, and other areas, but central Florida was ultimately chosen due to its year-round warm climate and the ability to purchase large tracts of undeveloped land. In total, the Disney Company purchased 27,258 acres of land in secret, at a total cost of just over five million dollars, or about 185 dollars per acre (Wright, 2005, p. 17). The swampland required heavy development in order to be suitable for construction.

As of 2010, the resort now consists of four theme parks, two water parks, 23 themed hotels, and one shopping and entertainment complex. Disney-run buses, trams, monorails and boats shuttle guests through the vast network of roads, tracks and waterways that connect sites. In partnership with the Florida government, Disney has also created the Reedy Creek Improvement District, which provides emergency services, water control, public utilities, land use, building codes and financial responsibility for the issuance of general obligation and revenue bonds for the whole of Disney's property (<http://www.rcid.org/>).

During several phases of development, Disney also allowed several outside hoteliers to construct hotels within the property. Other than these hotels and the non-Disney restaurants and entertainment venues at their outdoor shopping complex called Downtown Disney, there is little to no intrusion into the experience Disney creates for its guests. In fact, since 2003, the Walt Disney World resort has been classified a no-fly zone by the United States Congress (Mussenden & Pierson Curtis, 2003). Though this no-fly zone was justified by security concerns following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, many of Disney's critics accused the company of capitalizing on national fear to close their borders to the small airplanes that would fly over the parks trailing banners advertizing the company's competitors.

In addition to the Magic Kingdom park, which is similar to California's Disneyland in theming and attractions, Walt Disney World also features three other parks. Epcot, which opened in 1982 as EPCOT Center, was designed to operate as a permanent World's Fair. Its two large themed areas feature pavilions devoted to science and technology in Future World, and to various countries' cultures and lifestyles in World Showcase. Disney's Hollywood Studios, a park devoted to attractions and themed areas related to movie and television production, opened in 1989. In 1998, Animal Kingdom, a park accredited by the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums, opened its gates to guests with live animal habitats and amusement rides. In each of these parks, historical time periods are represented in built space, but the foundation for the Walt Disney Company's historical ethos can be observed in the Magic Kingdom.

Spatial Organization of the Magic Kingdom

The Magic Kingdom in Florida occupies about 120 acres, compared to Disneyland's 80 acres (Wright, 2005, 18). The parks designers – a team of architects, artists, set designers, animators, engineers and other creative professionals called “Imagineers” – employed cinematic methods to create a believable simulated environment for visitors, or “guests” in Disney-speak. The Magic Kingdom is made up of seven themed areas, or lands: Main Street USA; Adventureland; Frontierland; Liberty Square; Fantasyland; Mickey's Toontown Fair; and Tomorrowland. Each of these lands, with the exception of Mickey's Toontown Fair, is original to the park; the late addition of Mickey's Toontown fair, its tenuous backstory, and its recent demolition to make way for an expansion of Fantasyland, are cause for the land's exclusion from analysis herein. Each of the six lands discussed herein is grounded in a historical time period, from Frontierland's nineteenth century to Tomorrowland's imaginary future. Even Fantasyland, while originally serving as just the home for attractions featuring the company's film characters

and therefore not requiring a historic setting or major back story, is set during a medieval fair, placed within the walls of Cinderella Castle.

The space within the parks is highly controlled, planned and mapped, such that Disneyland is often viewed as a model for elements of urban design (Weinstein, 1992; Ross, 1999). The park's different themed areas flow together without distracting visitors. Elements that are seen from multiple lands work with each land in turn. Theming also continues beyond the boundaries of the park, and Imagineers are careful to avoid environmental dissonance for guests wherever possible. For example, the Contemporary Resort (so named because the sleek A-frame main hotel building through which the monorail passes was considered forward-looking in the 1970's) is visible from Tomorrowland, enhancing the futuristic theme. However, the resort is blocked from view by the Town Hall when visitors are in the turn-of-the-century atmosphere of Main Street, USA. Town Hall is the only building in the area to be built at full scale (Wright, 2005).

The flow of traffic within the parks is also highly planned. Many walkways include bridges that dictate how quickly crowds can access different areas. Popular attractions are spread throughout the park to divide up large crowds at opening, when visitors are given access to the park in stages. Visitors are constantly counted. At turnstiles, their ticket cards and fingers are scanned to ensure that the same person uses every day of admission on a ticket. Surveys are administered within the parks and as visitors exit, measuring demographics and visitor experience. Room key cards double as tickets and moonlight as credit cards for visitors who choose to stay at Disney owned resorts. While in the parks, official Disney photographers take visitors' photographs that people can purchase at kiosks in the park or upon returning home. These measures of mapping and counting, along with the constant display of material that

supports their ideological vision of America, contribute to the formation of place and control of people in the same way that the census, map, and museum do for nation-states (Anderson, 2006).

Arriving at the Park

Approaching the park, visitors have already surrendered control to the Disney Company. There is no parking outside the gates of the Magic Kingdom, in contrast to the vast lots that sit just outside of the other 3 parks in Walt Disney World. Instead, visitors to the Magic Kingdom must park at what Disney calls the Ticket and Transportation Center. After they have abandoned their cars – in parking lots that Baudrillard (1983) calls “veritable concentration camps” (p. 24) – visitors may choose to approach the park itself on a ferry or a monorail. Each route – as well as the buses that drop off most of the patrons of Disney’s hotel rooms on property – unloads its riders at the front gates of the Magic Kingdom. The ferry boat brings to mind the past, the monorail is firmly placed within our mythic imaginings of the future, and the buses are rooted in the smoggy rumblings of the present (van Wert, 1995, p. 191).

The multiple methods of mass transit in simultaneous use also begins Disney’s dialogue about mechanized life and progress. At opening, the Magic Kingdom featured, among other transportation-based rides, a steam train, horse-pulled trolleys, a monorail, a skyway (gondola ride), a miniature car track, a PeopleMover (or continuously loading unmanned tram on a track), and a riverboat (Patton, 2005). Several of these mass transportation designs were originally installed in Disney parks as serious prototypes for urban use. For instance, Disney designed a PeopleMover for Houston’s George Bush Intercontinental Airport based on the theme park technology. Mass transit’s key role in the Disney empire is unsurprising, given Walt Disney’s own fascination with trains, planes, and automobiles. However, even while telling a story of

technological advancement and acceptance, Disney designers were developing products that they thought could actually be used in future urban environments (Telotte, 2008).

While approaching the park, whether by water, elevated track, or roadway, visitors catch glimpses of what Imagineers call a “weenie,” or centerpiece, Cinderella Castle (Wright, 2005). It is the icon of the Magic Kingdom and of Walt Disney World, featured in hundreds of commercials, publicity photos, and Facebook profile pictures. From a distance, while visitors approach on ferries, monorails and buses, it rises above the scenery to a height of 180 feet – tall, in an area of reclaimed swampland. When visitors finally arrive at the entrance to the park, however, the castle is obscured. Passing through the turnstiles, guests climb a gentle slope towards the elevated train trestle along which a miniature steam train regularly chugs. The combination of the incline and the train station blocks anything inside of the park from view. Continuing on, visitors enter one of two tunnels that pass beneath the train station. The plaque above each of the tunnels reads, “Here you leave today and enter the world of yesterday, tomorrow and fantasy,” and the same words greet guests to Disneyland and other Magic Kingdom parks around the world. The dim tunnels slope downward and then back up, so that while visitors travel through them it is difficult to see what lies on the other end. Emerging into Town Square, visitors are immediately immersed in an environment of colors, scents, sounds, Florida sunshine, and, of course, Cinderella Castle beckoning them further down Main Street USA and into the park and its pedagogy (Wright, 2005).

Hub-and-Spoke Layout

Each of the Magic Kingdoms, and most Disney parks with other themes as well, are laid out in similar fashion. A long, narrow bottleneck leads from the controlled vistas of the entrance to the park’s centerpiece, in this case a fairytale castle, designed to pull visitors into the park

(Surrell, 2007). The thoroughfare extending from the gates to the hub is known as Main Street USA, a stylized, imaginary street in a turn-of-the-twentieth-century small, Midwestern American town (in fact, Disney lore states that it mimics Walt Disney's boyhood home of Marceline, Missouri [Wright, 2005]). The area in front of the castle is called the hub, and from this central area, paths lead to each of the other themed lands. Radiating out from the hub, clockwise, are Adventureland, Frontierland, Liberty Square, Fantasy Land, and Tomorrowland. Splayed out in this fashion, the past is to the left, the future to the right, and this juxtaposition causes confusion for visitors: "Temporality ceases to be: no relationality, no causality, no vicissitudes, no ethnicity, no cultural difference, and no death" (van Wert, 1995, p. 191).

Adventureland and Frontierland each offer their own version of history, a cheerful corporate Disney version of the past that Stephen Fjellman (1992) calls "Distory." Liberty Square attempts to recreate a fictionalized Colonial America complete with fife and drum corps. Fantasyland offers attractions based largely on Disney films, including Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Peter Pan, and Alice in Wonderland, set in a fictionalized medieval fair within the walls of Cinderella Castle. Tomorrowland, at the end of the rightmost path out of the hub, was designed to give visitors a view of the future that was waiting imagined just over the horizon (Sterngold, 1998). Each of these lands contributes to the historical positioning of visitors in the park, and further removes historical meaning from their experiences.

Major Differences Between Magic Kingdom Parks

The Walt Disney Company, while selling a globally identifiable culture of consumption, attempts ultimately to reflect the ideas already present in an area. Their goal is to sell as much as possible, and they are more successful taking advantage of trends within a society than trying to rewrite them, reflecting not inventing cultural trends (Weiner, 1997, p. 115). Thus, there are

differences in the layout, design and style of Magic Kingdom parks around the world so that local audiences will find them appealing.

For instance, in each Magic Kingdom park, the Haunted Mansion is in a different land. In California, the antebellum structure resides in New Orleans Square, an area that was not replicated in Florida because of that park's proximity to the real New Orleans. In Florida, a Gothic mansion houses the Haunted Mansion in Liberty Square, an area unique to Florida's Magic Kingdom. Tokyo Disneyland places the Haunted Mansion, again with a Gothic façade as in Florida, in Fantasyland. And in Paris, the house closely resembles the Bates' house from *Psycho*. The European counterpart is called Phantom Manor, and features a different storyline than the others, though it borrows many elements and effects from the Haunted Mansions worldwide. Another key difference between Disneyland Paris and its predecessors is that Disneyland Paris lacks a Tomorrowland. Instead, many of the attractions found in Tomorrowland in other parks (such as the dark roller coaster Space Mountain) are instead housed within Discoveryland. This land is themed to recall the works of Jules Verne, whose nineteenth century science fiction writings predicted space travel and other advances. The whites and chromes of other parks' Tomorrowlands were instead the bronzes and jewel tones of a steampunk imagining of Victorian Europeans' ideas of the future (Sterngold, 1998). France has a long history of imperialism, including the discovery of lands and people. This history may have influenced Disney's decision to recall the ideas and triumphs of the Victorian past rather than prophesy an uncertain future.

Major Themes Represented in Disney Parks

In Florida, the major themes and aims of the Magic Kingdom can be read in the aforementioned plaques above the train station tunnels: "...leave the world of today to enter the

world of tomorrow, yesterday and fantasy.” The parks set out to remove the present with all of its trials and tribulations from guests’ minds, replacing it instead with nostalgia for the past and hope for the future. A similar or identical plaque greets visitors to each of the Magic Kingdom parks worldwide.

Throughout the park, visitors are led to believe that they are the main characters in their own unfolding dramas. Outside of Fantasyland and other specified areas where visitors may queue up to meet people wearing costumes to look like their favorite characters, the environs of the lands of the Magic Kingdom are devoid of individuated characters. There are exceptions to this rule, most notably on Main Street USA. There, a cast of individuals, from the Mayor to a barbershop quartet, populates the imaginary turn-of-the-century town. To the extent that this area was designed to feel like a functioning town (you can get your hair cut at the barbershop, watch “Steamboat Willie” – itself a relic of Walt Disney Company history – at the cinema, and, somewhat anachronously, make dining reservations or report a missing child at Town Hall), these characters support that goal. In addition, they are not recognizable characters (as the other costumed characters in the park are) and their sole purpose is to make visitors feel like part of Main Street USA. Families do not line up to pose for photos or get autographs from these characters, because they function as part of the scene that has been set. Similarly, the dancers and actors dressed as cowboys and girls in Frontierland are part of the setting; they do not enjoy the celebrity status of the stars of animated films and shorts.

Progress

As visitors journey up Main Street from the front gates, architectural styles change slightly, with buildings at the end of Main Street more modern than those at the beginning. Inside the shops that line the street, gaslights give way to electric lamps as you move towards the

castle, signifying the townsfolk's glad acceptance of new technologies over time. This is progress as defined in the twentieth century, when technological advancements were seen to simplify life, free up time, and improve the standard of living for rich and poor alike. This ideology is evident at World's Fairs, in textbooks, on television, and, of course, in Disney theme parks. The message is rarely explicit. Instead, it is built into the themed environment and carefully messaged at attractions.

Main Street USA, as previously mentioned, has an elaborate backstory of which progress is a main element. For instance, the Emporium, the main shop façade on Main Street USA, is designed to show the success of the shop's owner over time in the following manner:

The original Victorian space has always shown signs of opulence in the finishes and the fixtures, such as the combination gas and electric chandeliers . . . – a tremendous extravagance during this era. The expansion [onto Center Street, a side shoot from Main Street in the park, in 2002] revealed the ways the proprietor has been spending his money. The architecture is intended to reflect influences brought back a few years later [than the original Emporium shop area, set in the 1890s], circa 1903, from Europe, revealed in its Edwardian style. (Wright, 2005, p. 30)

The official Disney narrative, though never didactically shared in the parks (in fact, the character of the shop owner described here has never actually been designed or seen), builds an elaborate back story to portray not only the social trends and styles of an era, but the success and progress of one entrepreneur in one shop on one street in an imaginary turn-of-the-century town.

Similarly to Main Street USA, the buildings in Frontierland, an area that glorifies Americans' movements West and Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth century, follow a similar modernization pattern as you move deeper into the themed land. The spatialization of time is not glaringly

obvious, and most visitors likely do not notice it (Fjellman, 1992). However, it is an important foundation for the messaging within the park.

Progress works its way into the narrative of attractions in several ways. First, there are several attractions that employ “Great Man” style history, in which the story of one individual is used to illustrate the story of an entire culture or people. In other attractions, tales of corporate success are used to parallel and explain the successes of people in industrialized cultures in general. These two methods of storytelling in attractions would later be perfected at Disney’s second park in Florida, Epcot, which opened in 1982. There, in an environment that was designed to be reminiscent of a World’s Fair, the built world lacks a cohesive narrative. The half of the park closest to the entrance gates is called Future World, and features pavilions centered on concepts such as innovation, energy, transportation, space, imagination, the seas, and the land. The rear half of the park, called World Showcase, features pavilions for 11 countries, each designed to provide to visitors a recognizable snapshot of the architecture, food, and culture of the countries portrayed. Generally, the built spaces of the pavilions are designed to portray a given period in a country’s history, or to amalgamate elements that tourists wouldn’t recognize as being out of harmony. Young adults from the countries depicted staff pavilions. In some cases rides help to relay a country’s history, such as an attraction called Maelstrom in the Norway pavilion. Guests climb aboard a boat to travel back through time and learn about distant and more recent history, industry, and folklore of Norway. With the elimination of a narrative conveyed through the built environment (due to the changed function and focus of the park), Disney’s Imagineers turned to more explicit storytelling methods in attractions. To understand this later shift, it is important to examine the early adoption of these methods in two Magic

Kingdom attractions. Within the Magic Kingdom, “Great Man” history and narratives of corporate innovation are two ways that progress is explicitly worked into visitors’ experiences.

“Great Man” History

The Magic Kingdom features few rides and attractions that feature humans outside of cartoon characters. In most attractions featuring human audio-animatronics, the visitor is once again experiencing the attraction as the main character. In the Haunted Mansion, for example, the visitor is experiencing the narrative of the life and deaths of some of the characters who are now haunting the building. In contrast, another attraction, the Hall of Presidents, features all 43 men who have been presidents of the United States, in robot form. The approach here is not participatory, but didactic and one-sided. The attraction sprung from one Disney created for the Illinois pavilion at the 1964-65 New York World’s Fair. There, an audio-animatronic Abraham Lincoln stood and spoke excerpts from some of his most famous speeches. The attraction, called Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln, was wildly successful, and was eventually moved to Disneyland, where it has continued to play after several revisions and periods of inactivity.

The Hall of Presidents is an expansion on the technology and story put to work at Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln. Making use of paintings, documents, and speeches, the presentation has variously focused on the constitution, war, and other challenges faced by presidents. The original speech was given by Abraham Lincoln, and was a nearly exact replica of Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln. Now, in addition to President Lincoln, President Washington also speaks, and the current president – at the moment, Barack Obama – gives a short speech. As Pam Fisher, senior show writer for Walt Disney Imagineering, said, “It is quite an experience to arrive in the White House and actually be present when the president records his speech for the Hall of Presidents” (Powers, 2008).

A roll call of all of the presidents occurs during the show, and each one nods or otherwise acknowledges his introduction. During the main speech, the other presidents fidget slightly, blinking, looking around, and talking to each other. The ultimate message is one of triumph through the difficult, divisive times in American history, thanks to the leadership of select individuals and their talents at select times. This storyline ignores the contributions of the masses to history, and instead congratulates these few dozen men for guiding the United States through its difficult periods. This is similar to the simplified historical narratives presented in children's textbooks, despite the fact that it was created to appeal to visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

Corporate Innovation

Another major theme of the attractions and environment at Walt Disney World is that of corporate innovation. When planning Disneyland and, later, Walt Disney World, Walt Disney approached corporations to sponsor various attractions and features. In exchange for monetary investment, the corporate sponsors had some influence on storylines and the chance to put their names and logos all over the park. This approach is similar to the ways that some World's Fairs were put together, with various countries and corporations funding pavilions. The companies involved often viewed favorably storylines that championed corporate innovation as a driver of progress, which would ultimately drive consumer support of their products and companies. Aside from the pragmatic goals of serving funders, the Disney Company was itself already a large corporation the interests of which would be best served if their audiences believed that corporations were ultimately herding society into the brightest of futures.

The Carousel of Progress, another of the few attractions to address its audience directly and to feature human robots that aren't characters in films or animations. Originally constructed

for General Electric's "Progressland" pavilion at the 1964-65 New York World's Fair, the Carousel of Progress is a stage show that features an audio-animatronic family at the turn of the twentieth century, in the 1920s, the 1940s, and sometime in the future. The attraction has been updated several times due to lapses in corporate sponsorship and because the present always seems to catch up with the final scene, ostensibly set in the future. The overarching theme, however, has remained the same. The family continually accepts new technologies in their everyday lives, and the new gadgets and gizmos improve their quality of life. Even when kitchen appliances malfunction or the television stops working, the family just keeps singing and smiling onstage, convinced that tomorrow is "just a dream away" (Fjellman, 1992).

When GE underwrote the show during and following the World's Fair, the family dropped General Electric slogans into their conversations and talked openly about how the company was dreaming up new things to simplify their lives further (Wasko, 2001). The Carousel of Progress spins on in Tomorrowland in Florida, though usually to near empty theaters, in contrast to the hours-long waits visitors at the 1964-65 World's Fair endured to see the show. In fact, the attraction is only open seasonally, and for a period it disappeared from the park maps altogether, effectively removing it from the itineraries of many park visitors who didn't already know it was there.

The Future

The right-most land, spatially, in the Magic Kingdom, is Tomorrowland. It is here that the Carousel of Progress now finds its home, though it is, in some ways, an odd place for this mainly historically themed attraction. If you read the park as a text, from right to left, Tomorrowland follows Adventureland, Frontierland, Liberty Square and Fantasyland in the narrative. Though slightly anachronistic overall, this placement of Tomorrowland, at least,

seems intentional. Adventureland, Frontierland, and Liberty Square, with their themes of progress and forward motion through linear time, seem to build up to an experience of the future. Fantasyland, located between Liberty Square and Tomorrowland, is not grounded in linear, historical time, but in the imagined time and space of fairy tales. In Tomorrowland, futuristic products and science-fiction attractions invited guests to imagine what might lie in store for them. These products and simulated experiences were futuristic when they were created, but within the public's imagination. Tomorrowland featured white and chrome in its décor, and wide streets with elevated mass transportation systems such as the PeopleMover. Attractions such as Mission to Mars fueled the public's hunger for outer space. However, as at the Carousel of Progress, in Tomorrowland, the future became the present, and the predictions of yesterday were too quickly proven incorrect. These issues of false prophecies had impacted the progress era's World's Fairs attractions as well, but due to the ephemeral nature of the fairs, designers hadn't been faced with the task of convincing visitors to continue consuming an outdated attraction. But Disney was.

So, they updated and removed attractions, continued to work with corporations to develop new attractions, and remodeled the Tomorrowlands at Disneyland and Walt Disney World several times after they opened. At the same time, though, Americans faced the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and rising concerns about nuclear war. The advancements of science and technology were no longer such sunny propositions. The American public was mistrustful of the future, and wary of the corporations that tried to sell it to them in Tomorrowland. Thus, in 1994, Tomorrowland retreated into a Buck Rogers-esque "future that never was," and the only forward-looking land at the Magic Kingdom also fell into a nondescript history and nostalgia.

The narratives of corporate innovation and of “Great Man” history took on new importance when Epcot opened in 1982. There, the attractions serve to further reinforce the idea that the future is in hand as long as people continue to embrace the advances brought on by brilliant individuals and tireless corporations. The adjustment for 1980s audiences, though, was for corporations to admit that there had been tough times. In the Universe of Energy, sponsored by Exxon, the attraction acknowledges the challenges of providing energy to a growing population and its industries, but assures viewers that they will all make it through if they just trust the problem-solving folks at Exxon. Solar panels on the roof provide part of the energy needed to run the attraction, and the narrative nods politely in their direction, citing alternative energies as necessary for the future. Spaceship Earth, a ride housed in the large geodesic sphere that is the icon of the park, moves visitors through the history of communication, beginning with cave paintings and traveling to the near future with playful imaginings of what lies ahead. The past is told through the accomplishments of individuals such as Michelangelo, and the future is framed by the ride’s corporate sponsor, Siemens (Fjellman, 1992). Corporate innovation, at home in a corporate environment, is framed as a vital driving force for American innovation.

Elimination of the Other

The Walt Disney Company also eliminates the experiences of those who do not fit the generic progress narrative they have built for the park. By removing the experience of the Other from the attractions throughout the park, visitors are able to further write themselves into that narrative. Without a population to compare itself to, visitors may instead create a community of Walt Disney World visitors that helps to cross social boundaries in place outside of the bounded space of the parks (Newcomb, 2003). Many of the attractions in the Magic Kingdom do not feature a well-developed cast of characters, instead placing the visitor in the starring role.

Therefore, a particular set of racial, class, gender, or other characteristics is not explicitly required for participation. Removing the Other, however, is also problematic. It creates an uncomplicated, unilateral historical storyline, and removes challenges to visitor perceptions.

The Magic Kingdom was originally supposed to feature an area of Frontierland that would feature a Native American village, with a troupe of performers acting out dances and other rituals for visitors. That this seems downright offensive today is clear. However, Disneyland had such performers in the park until the early 1970s. Disneyland also had African American women dress up as Aunt Jemima as part of a pancake house in New Orleans Square. Eventually, these features were eliminated from the parks, much the way the burning settler's cabin on Tom Sawyer Island in Disneyland – complete with dead settler out front, arrow in his back from those aggressive Indians – is now a quiet, well-tended settler's cabin. These types of performances did not originate in the parks. By eliminating these storylines and not initiating a productive conversation of some of the issues that gave rise to them, though, Disney attempts to eliminate controversy and history that may jar guests out of the nostalgia they are engendering.

Now, the clearest place for guests to interact with the Other is in Adventureland. Themed to resemble the far off locales showcased in Disney's True Life Adventures documentaries, Adventureland is a combination of imaginary colonial spaces surrounded by tropical foliage. This unidentified tropical locale is full of tiki statues and mixed colonial styles of architecture. One of the largest attractions in the land is the Jungle Cruise. Pretending to take visitors on a cruise past robotic animals on the great rivers of the (nineteenth-century colonial) world, the Jungle Cruise also includes audio-animatronic brown-skinned "natives" who dance in circles, cannibalize explorers in pith helmets, and shrink tourists' heads. The attraction is known for the corny jokes that the "Skippers" tell during the cruise, including head hunter jokes. When passing

a figure of a man in mixed indigenous and colonial garb, carrying an umbrella in one hand and several shrunken heads in the other, they jest, “Here's old Trader Sam, head salesman of the area. Business has been shrinking lately, so this week only, Sam's offering a two-for-one special: two of his, for one of yours!” (<http://www.themedattraction.com/jungle.htm>)

The Jungle Cruise, and Adventureland more broadly, exaggerate the Other into something safe, something to be laughed at, and something robotic, when it is not completely obliterated. Theme park visitors understand these caricatures as distant from them in time, space and culture, and the attractions and theming create a sense of nostalgia for a past in which the United States was an imperial power, even though the attractions themselves do not take place in or involve American personalities. This nostalgia, like that sold throughout the park, would not be possible without the removal of nearly all controversy and negative history.

Visitor Motivations

That the history in Disney theme parks is overly rosy is no secret. It has been discussed in detail by academics and the general public alike, and has been parodied in pop culture media such as *The Simpsons*. And yet, visitors continue to arrive, not only for one trip, but also for repeat visits. The Disney Vacation Club, a timeshare program with high buy-in costs for hotels on property, expands annually. Disney builds new hotels regularly; its theme park revenue stays strong through hard economic times (TEA/AECOM, 2010). A trip to a Disney theme park has become a vital part of American experience and, as the Walt Disney Company expands its amusement empire worldwide, American heritage.

Leisure Time and Disney Theme Parks

Since the industrial revolution and the labor reforms of the first half of the twentieth century, Americans have had more time to spend on leisure. And, in the prosperous decades

following World War II, they have had more money as well. Families have thus patronized museums, fairs, festivals and theme parks to fill their time and have fun. Walt Disney is credited as having said, “I would rather entertain and hope that people learned something than educate people and hope they were entertained” (Hanna, 2008). That philosophy is reflected in the company’s representations of historical time periods and events, and the successful fulfillment of that desire may be what draws people back to the parks.

Membership to Community

Long before a person chooses to visit the parks, they are familiar with them, and with the Walt Disney Company’s reputation for family entertainment. The parks are featured in commercials, talk shows, travel specials, and holiday specials year round. Acquaintances who visit the parks share their stories. When professional athletes win championship games, they shout that they are going to Disney World! And, before each film released by Walt Disney Pictures, an animation of a castle like those in the Disney parks appears, complete with a steam train chugging along nearby, lighted structures surrounding it, and fireworks exploding above it. As William van Wert (1995) says, invoking Jean Baudrillard:

The map precedes the territory, not just in the architecture and simulations of Disney World itself, but because all of these institutions of the real [such as media, travel, and corporate agencies] conspire to become satellites of the ‘hyperreal,’ Baudrillard’s term for the age of simulacra (p.189).

The constant messaging from Disney and other outlets (though it should be noted that Disney controls much of major media in the United States) reinforces the notions of comfort, wonder, nostalgia and familiarity marketed as part of a visit to the parks. Thus, visitors feel as though they know the parks before they ever set foot inside of the gates. Walt Disney himself was a

major force in creating that sense of safety and anticipation. One of the greatest reasons for the success of Disneyland was the marketing campaign that Walt Disney undertook to popularize the park while it was still being planned and constructed. His weekly television show, begun in October 1954 and called “Disneyland,” had different segments each week that reflected the layout of his upcoming park: Adventureland, Frontierland, and so on. Aside from the fictionalized segments, they also featured periodic construction updates in advance of the July, 1955, opening date. Thus, the public was already informed of and invested in the park itself when the celebrity-studded opening ceremonies were broadcast live on television (Weinsten, 1992). Even in the decades since the death of “Uncle Walt” in 1966 (and given that he is not cryogenically frozen – fitting an end though it would be – as so often rumored; rather, he was cremated and his ashes spread in Glendale, California’s Forest Lawn Cemetery [Gabler, 2007, p. xii]), the company has managed to maintain its friendly, paternal grip on American families.

Once someone has decided to take a trip to a Disney theme park, he or she may book online, over the phone, or with a travel agent that specializes in Disney vacations. From that point on, they are regarded as a guest of the Walt Disney Company. They receive custom emails, mailings, and online memberships regarding their Disney vacation, and will continue to receive special offers after they have returned from their vacation. Arriving in Orlando (a city and airport that have grown to their current size largely because of the existence of Walt Disney World), visitors staying in a Disney resort can skip the baggage claim and board themed coach buses called Disney’s Magical Express; the company will ensure that your specially marked baggage is retrieved from the carousel and deposited inside of your hotel room within a few hours. While on Disney property, guests are shuttled between parks, hotels, and shopping areas on Disney buses, boats and monorails, eliminating a need for a rental car that would allow you to

visit competing parks and attractions. And, on the day of departure, the Magical Express bus picks guests up at their hotels and whisks them off to the airport, playing a video reminding them of the fun they've had and inviting them back. To maintain control over its guests as long as possible, the company attempts to influence not only visitors' experiences within the park, but also their memories of the trip.

These strategies are part of a larger system of meaning that helps to create a sense of community among parkgoers. The cost of visiting (in 2010, a one-day ticket cost 82 dollars) limits the experience to those who can afford it, who are simultaneously the audience the company most wants to attract – those with money to spend. The historical memory presented in the parks reflects middle class, white American experiences, self-perceptions, and ideas of history. Bierman (1976), muses on the self-reflection in presentation at Disney parks thus:

Disney's enormous success in providing popular inoffensive entertainment is, in part, a function of his knowledge of his audience, and in part, a function of his canny ability to provide them with the amusement they desire. His conspicuously middle class American public is treated with respect and admiration in his entertainment enterprise. He never talks down to his public, but celebrates an enormously generous vision of its realities (p.67).

To understand what Bierman means by “enormously generous,” one needs only to look at the historical representations in the park. Any moments in history that are less than flattering for the protagonists in the park's presumed shared history are either edited out completely or quickly glossed over.

Theme Parks as Sacred Space

A berm, or a high earthen barrier that prevents guests from seeing beyond it, bounds the Disney theme parks. Beyond this wall lie show buildings (where the bulk of the ride tracks exist), backstage areas for employees, and the infrastructure that allows the parks to run smoothly. Below the Magic Kingdom, in particular, is a network of corridors called “Utilidors” which allow costumed employees to travel between areas of the park without breaking illusions, and enable products and waste to travel into and out of the park undetected. Everything within the parks is an attempt to make the present – and all of its unpleasant necessary functions – disappear.

The suspension of visitors in time within the carefully controlled space of the parks also helps turn the authority and maturity of adults on its head as Disney attempts to sell innocence to its visitors. According to Francaviglia (1995), Disney “. . . created Main Street USA as the entry to the theme park because it would provide a ‘mood setting’ exposure to the familiar” (p. 70). That familiarity, the imagined (for most Americans) memory of a childhood in a small, midwestern town, is set against the backdrop of an undersized built Main Street. The buildings there, built at 7/8 scale on the ground floor and decreasing in size on upper floors, add to the sense that something is slightly off-kilter about the place (Wright, 2005). The scale also helps adults feel as though they have mastery over their surroundings. In a world in which people have so little control over their disordered lives, the illusion of mastery and order is powerful (Orvell, 1993, p. 249). By drawing visitors first through Main Street USA as a sort of dreamer’s time machine, the company can convince adults that they are acting out their childhood memories of an imagined past, and thereby convince them to abandon their adult habits and act like children. Children will respond to the change in behavior of their parents, and Disney will have placed the

child – whether actual child or adult regressed to childlike behavior – at the center of the experience. In that vein, Disney will convince people to spend money (because they will be making their biological children or inner child happy), to follow rules (because they have removed some of the adult's autonomy) and to participate in behaviors that otherwise might make adults feel foolish (Cross, 2006). Adults will also thus be exonerated from examining Disney as a multi-national corporation with incredible power and societal influence. Giroux (1998) explains thus:

Disney has given new meaning to the politics of innocence as a narrative for shaping public memory and for producing . . . a sanitized version of American history.

Innocence also serves as a rhetorical device that cleanses the Disney image of the messy influence of commerce, ideology, and power. In other words, Disney's strategic association with childhood, a world cleansed of contradictions and free of politics, represents not just the basic appeal of its theme parks and movies, but also provides a model for defining corporate culture separate from the influence of corporate power (p. 258).

The Disney theme parks, from the moment visitors step through their gates, serve to support the company's control of information, entertainment and economic capital precisely by removing them from consideration. In addition to removing the present from historical consideration by placing visitors within a nostalgia-driven narrative, Disney, by packaging a return to innocence as a desirable effect of a theme park visit, essentially convinces its patrons to turn a blind eye to the company's practices. And, as adults give in to the Disney brand of innocence (Cross, 2006), the company steps in as a paternal guardian, protecting the safe space for this enactment of innocence (Giroux, 1998).

I would argue that this phenomenon has its roots in the early American amusement parks, including Coney Island, but that Disney has perfected the art. Whereas visitors to Coney Island were able to throw off the shackles of Victorian era propriety during a trip to Dreamland or Luna Park (Cross, 2006), Disney's visitors are encouraged to completely surrender to the Disney machine for the duration of their stay, whether they are in a hotel, in a restaurant, in a theme park, or in transit between these locations. All of the Walt Disney Resort is a playground for acting out this fantasy.

Americanism and Heritage

The Disney theme parks also present an overarching patriotism woven into all the historical presentations within them. The very silencing of darker moments in history in favor of triumphant progress is evidence of this phenomenon. Even when issues such as the Civil War are discussed, as in the Hall of Presidents, it is in the context of what America did to rise above the conflict, rather than any real historical investigation of the circumstances that led to it or its effects.

The Walt Disney Company continues to export its parks, films, and merchandise to international locales. There are now Magic Kingdoms outside of the United States in Tokyo, Paris and Hong Kong, with plans underway for a park in Shanghai to open in 2014. The parks all follow the same basic plan as California and Florida, with culturally sensitive changes, as previously discussed. The company is not only exporting its rides, characters and environments, but also an intense consumerism that goes hand in hand with America's mall culture. All of Main Street USA is essentially a mall, full of specialized shops. While there is great overlap in the type and variety of merchandise offered in these shops, there is also specialized merchandise available at every turn, encouraging visitors to buy now lest they miss their opportunity. Many

attractions empty into themed gift shops selling ride-related merchandise (Orvell, 1993). The very cost of admission, on top of the costs of food and souvenirs, is a modern invention related to the value of time and the ability to sell one's time and one's labor. When Disneyland opened in 1955, admission was free, but to ride any of the attractions guests had to purchase ticket books. As time went on, that model was given up in favor for a one-price-fits-all general admission cost.

Memory, Innocence and “Distory”

Disney's version of history, which Stephen Fjellman calls “Distory” (1992), seems perfectly suited to the current culture of memory. Favoring memory over history and nostalgia over fact, Disney's attempts to obliterate the present inside of its parks have been thoroughly enjoyed by its visitors. The 1980s ushered in an era of remembrance triggered in part by the fiftieth anniversaries of significant Holocaust events. People around the world rushed to record the lived histories of Holocaust survivors, and museums devoted to the era sprang up in large numbers globally (Huysen, 2003). Additionally, the twentieth century was full to brimming with global wars, genocides, and new and horrifying chemical and nuclear weapons. In the United States, social movements upset the established order in the latter half of the century, and large-scale protests unsettled the idea of the American Dream. The progress lauded at the turn of the century had not brought peace and happiness. Fears of the future caused people to retreat into the past and, importantly, to begin to privilege memory over history. And the changes in the larger public also affected the Walt Disney Company. As Fjellman (1992) says:

Walt Disney died and Corporate Disney came into being, transforming Walt's plans... along the way. During those years, as the U.S. empire continued to crumble; as crises of political leadership and legitimacy grew; as the world economy shifted and U.S. wealth was redistributed upward; as race, sex, crime, drugs, religious

fundamentalism, acid rain, chemical dumping, nuclear leaks, and the like began to affect most of us most of the time, the need for grew for something of enduring interest and value to take us away for a while, to entertain us – perhaps something from the simpler past (p. 60).

The comfort Disney's visitors take in the mythologized past available for consumption in Disney theme parks arises out of the uncertainty of the present and future, and because the public aligns itself more closely with the past than the future (Huysen, 2003). However, the public does not see the Disney parks as a legitimate source for historical information. Rather, they visit Disney parks to forge new memories, to have fun, and to insulate themselves from the present and future for a period of time. Disney's completely ahistorical presentation of the past, with no grounding in specific time, supports these goals.

Given the Walt Disney Company's use of memory and history within their established parks, the controversy over their proposed theme park in Haymarket, Virginia, in the early 1990s seems trivial. The planned park, titled Disney's America (which was also a proposed name for what became Disneyland [Weinstein, 1992]) sparked a hearty debate over the ownership of history, the production of historical information, and the public's consumption of it. Due to backlash, the company abandoned the plans in 1994, though elements of the park have survived in attractions in, for example, Disney's California Adventure Park in Anaheim.

However, there is no unbiased construction of history, by the dirtiest of corporations or by historians with the purest of intentions (Trouillot, 1995). Therefore, what is so off-putting about the idea of the Walt Disney Company, a company that in the early 1990s had been in the themed environment business for nearly 40 years, constructing a park themed to different areas of American history? The subject raises questions not only about the rightful ownership of

history, but also the efficacy of museums and historical sites and the varying motivations of theme park and museum visitors. What differentiates the history presented at Disney theme parks from that presented at sites such as Colonial Williamsburg, in the eyes of the public and of academics?

Understanding the outcry against Disney's America helps to clarify the issues with historical representation within the Magic Kingdom, as well. Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995), discusses the negative reactions in regards to Disney's initial plans to portray slavery in the United States in its park. People argued that a group of mostly white, corporate types were not qualified to interpret such a dark moment in America's past. Disney countered that it had hired historians as consultants, and would display slavery as a painful, agonizing experience. Again, this eliminates the spectrum of experiences of slavery among slaves and freemen, and among white slave owners and abolitionists. Disney again oversimplifies and does historic events a disservice.

But Trouillot makes a greater argument about authenticity and historical knowledge production:

Cascardi suggests that 'authenticity is not a type or degree of knowledge, but a relationship to what is known.' To say that 'what is known' must include the present will seem self-evident, but it may be less obvious that historical authenticity resides not in the fidelity to an alleged past but in an honesty vis-à-vis the present as it re-presents that past. When we imagine Disney's project and visualize a line of white tourists munching on chewing gum and fatty food, purchasing tickets for the 'painful, disturbing and agonizing' experience promised by television ads, we are not into The Past. And we should not ask these tourists

to be true to that past: they were not responsible for slavery. What is obscene in that image is not a relation to The Past, but the dishonesty of that relation as it would happen in our present (148).

The Disney parks' portrayal of historical events is necessarily devoid of darkness because its audiences would not respond well to being submerged within a recreation of the past with all of its unpleasantness intact. It would not sell. By removing the present from the parks, Disney makes its portrayal of the past and future really a remark on the present. Disney's re-presentations, as Trouillot would say, of the past gel with a modern audience's perceptions of itself and its relation to history.

History is not a foregone conclusion. It is constantly produced – whether brought forth from the depths of time or created with specific intentions – by historians, governments, the media, museums, educational institutions, and a variety of other groups. In the twentieth century, corporations also came to define history for themselves, their employees, and members of the public. Corporations sponsored museums, pavilions at World's Fairs, and also codified their own institutional histories. This period of historical examination followed decades of disdain for the past, as capitalists favored instead the ruthless march away from the provincial past and towards an industrialized future. Henry Ford, who infamously declared that history was “more or less bunk,” also amassed a huge collection of Americana that became the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, a mash-up of American industrial history as Ford saw it (Wallace, 1996, p. 9). The Walt Disney Company, one of the world's largest media and entertainment conglomerates, has become a great presenter of history for the public, largely through the theme parks it operates around the world. Through the architecture, attractions, and

shows in these parks, Disney presents its version of (mostly American) history, no matter how watered down, to the millions of visitors that stream through the gates each year.

The creation of historical knowledge is an exercise in reflecting the present. Any knowledge created at a given time is a product of the paradigms, politics, and preconceptions of the present. The millions who visit the Magic Kingdom yearly take the historical framework the Walt Disney Company has built into the environment and attractions and layer their own meanings and knowledge on top of it. This is not to say that the Magic Kingdom does not help to create historical knowledge among guests, but rather that guest' experiences of history in Disney parks serve to reinforce what they already know. As Carson (1995) says, "Laypeople learn about the past passionately, indiscriminately, and with a healthy disregard for rules made by professional historians" (p. 65).

The problem, then, by Carson's reckoning and as evidenced by the voracious consumption by the public of such pseudo-educational history exhibits as those at Walt Disney World, is not getting the public to be interested in history, despite Colonial Williamsburg's continually declining visitation. Instead, the issue is helping the public to understand the ways in which historical knowledge is created, how the process changes over time, and the ways in which the history produced is a reflection of the present in a given culture. All historical information – whether presented in a theme park or museum – is created by humans, and is always subject to bias, to trends, and to change. The difference between Colonial Williamsburg and the Magic Kingdom, in some ways, is marketing. Because visitors assume they are receiving an entertainment experience at Disney theme parks, they disengage from critical thinking about the historical information presented to them, and do not recognize the ways in which that information upholds their own memories and nostalgia about American history.

When Disney began building theme parks, the man and the company were interested in creating safe spaces for family entertainment. Walt Disney was also interested, however, in avoiding the waste he saw inherent in the ephemeral World's Fairs of the age. Disneyland, though Walt Disney said it would never be finished, has been in existence for more than 50 years. The other parks in the company's retinue are aging as well, and the constant expansion of the parks – in individual size and number of international locations – gives no indication that they will disappear any time soon. The audiences consuming Disney's version of history today are different than those original mid-twentieth-century visitors, with different life experiences and ways of seeing the world. The Disney parks continue to draw visitors because they allow visitors to insert themselves and their knowledge into the company-built narrative. Throughout the parks, visitors move not only through space, but also through a spatialized conception of time. This constant juxtaposition of time allows visitors to disregard not only specific time in the past, but also any acknowledgement of the present. These factors combine to help market innocence and ignorance, which ultimately supports Disney's agenda of assuming a paternalistic role in consumers' lives, and creating lifelong Disney supporters.

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Yesterday, Tomorrow, and Fantasy Kirsten Griff in 2013. Produced in Philadelphia, PA. To all that come to this happy place : welcome. Disneyland is your land. Here age relives fond memories of the past, and here youth may savor the challenge and promise of the future. Disneyland is dedicated to the ideals, the dreams, and the hard facts that have created America . . . with hope that is will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world . Walt Disney. Walt Disney World has been the choice vacation for my family for the past 15 years . Every other summer since 1998, my entire mom It wasn't unheard of, even in the days of the Bitchun Society, and eventhough there were cures, they weren't pleasant. I was once married to a crazy person. We were both about 70, and I was living for nothing but joy. I had been working on my third symphony on and off, and whenever I thought I had a nice bit nailed, I'd spend some time in the sphere playing it. Sometimes, the strangers who jammed in gave me new and interesting lines of inquiry, and that was good. Even when they didn't, playing an instrument was a fast track to intriguing an interesting, naked stranger. Which is how we met. She snagged a piano and pounded out barrelhouse runs in quirky time as I carried the main thread of the movement on cello.