A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks

Middle Class Kingdoms

SABRINA MITTERMEIER

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To all who come to read about this happy place, welcome.

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Foreword and Acknowledgments

This book originated as my doctoral dissertation in American Cultural History at the Ludwig Maximilians University (LMU) in Munich, Germany. I had never actually planned to end up working in academia, and yet here I am, almost incapable of imagining doing anything else – I owe this book, and the people that helped me write it, this much. Growing up, I wanted to be a teacher, then a writer, then an actress; academia allows me to put on all of these hats. The job is brutal – or less so the job, as I love teaching, I love writing and I love traveling for research, giving talks and digging into archives. But the job situation is, and the hours we have to put in for the compensation we receive. So, to every grad student that may find themselves reading this, I want to pass on one crucial piece of advice: find your people. Find those that will support you, whether it is mentors, or friends, or partners (in crime, or otherwise). Nobody can go it alone. While only my name may appear on the cover of this book, in reality, it is a great many people that have contributed to not only improving this work, but assuring its existence in the first place.

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When it was time to turn this thesis into a book – and technically, even before that, as I approached him before I had even written one word of it – it was another James Campbell, this one at Intellect, who helped me get it to print. Thank you for championing me all along the way. My gratitude also goes to Alex Szumlas for designing an amazing cover, and the lovely Helen Gannon for her help in getting this manuscript published, especially under the time constraints and other peculiarities of the German academic system.

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You also understand most why I would also like to give my love to our cat Johnny, who sadly passed away shortly before I turned in my thesis, and who I still miss now, as I finalize in this manuscript. His companionship is something no human could have provided.

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Introduction

The Cultural Relevance of Disneyland

"I'm going to Disneyland!" Millions of Americans hear this every year, immediately following the win of the country's most important sporting event, the Super Bowl, excitedly exclaimed by one of the winning team's vital players. Depending on where in the United States you live, the exclamation might be slightly altered and say "I'm going to Disney World!" After all, this is not spontaneous, but a well-thought-out ad campaign that has been around since 1987 and put in place by the Walt Disney Corporation's probably most infamous CEO, Michael Eisner (Kaplan 2015: n.pag.). And yet, the phrase has entered the American lexicon, contributing to the idea that Disneyland is the "ultimate reward for a work well done," as historian Miles Orvell (2012: 37) has put it. When Ellen DeGeneres came out on television in her sitcom *Ellen* in 1997, and her therapist asked her, in character, what she would do next, she answered without a beat: "I'm going to Disneyland!" (Kaplan 2015: n.pag.). The phrase is but one example of how ingrained Disneyland truly is in US culture. The park and its rides are regularly alluded to in television shows or movies, and other works of popular culture, but not just there – in 1983, when the astronaut Sally Ride became the first woman in space, she described her flight as an "E-Ticket" ride (Begley 1983: n.pag.), alluding to Disneyland's best and most thrilling rides. The theme park has become shorthand for excitement, fairy-tale endings, (American) dream(s) come true. However, it has also been used as a metaphor for the United States as a whole, often in a critical fashion – Disneyland as the epitome of the fake, the phony, the unreal. As early as 1958, in an article for *The Nation*, Julian Halevy (1958: 510–13) decried it as such; and only recently, in 2017, journalist Kurt Andersen published *Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire*, a social diagnosis of US-American life in which he uses the allegory of Fantasyland to describe how Americans have a history of deluding themselves, consequently leading to the election of their 45th President, Donald J. Trump. In its 65-year-old history, Disneyland has come a long way – but before we dive into finding out how it got there, we have to take a step back and trace its origins back to its creator, Walt Disney.

Walter Elias Disney, born December 5, 1901, in Chicago, Illinois, commonly known as Walt, came to worldwide fame in the 1930s. Initially, through his cartoons featuring his most famous creation, Mickey Mouse, who got introduced to the world by 1928's *Steamboat Willie* and was drawn by Ub Iwerks (Watts 1997: 51). He soon also helmed the first full-length animated feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which was released in 1937 and became an instant, and enormous, success (Watts 1997: 67). As Walt Disney Productions (as it was known since 1929) continued work on now-classic animated films, by the time the war ended, Walt himself had largely moved on to different, and bigger, things. Told by his doctors to find a hobby after the stress of the previous years that had also seen an embittered strike of some of his studio employees, he had started to become interested in miniatures and model railroads in particular (Watts 1997: 266). A chance meeting with Harper Goff (who would later also work on the design of Disneyland) in a London railroad store and getting together with the other railroad enthusiasts at his animation studio, among them Ward Kimball and Roger Broggie, added to Walt's excitement (Gennaway 2014: 8). Out of this hobby, soon grown into an expensive 3/4-scale railroad in the backyard of his new house on Holmby Hills, gestated the plan of building a set of miniatures using American historic scenes that would travel by railroad to major cities in the United States – a project dubbed "Walt Disney's America" (Watts 1997: 284). Yet, Walt, ever the visionary, did not stop there, and soon an idea he had had in the back of his mind for quite some time resurfaced: building an amusement park.

While he was ultimately inspired to build such a park because of many factors, the official origin story is an anecdote about Walt and his daughters at Griffith Park in LA. Sitting on a bench and watching them while they rode the carousel, he had always wondered if there could not be a better place where they truly could spend their leisure time together as a family (Watts 1997: 384). The fans of Disney's movies also had long requested a place where they could meet Mickey and the other characters, and there was (and is) no tour of the Walt Disney Studios available to the public (Gennaway 2014: 6). All of these circumstances finally led to Walt pursuing the idea of a Disney amusement park in earnest. In 1948, he visited the Chicago Railroad Fair with Ward Kimball, and was thoroughly impressed with it, especially the detailed miniature landscapes (Watts 1997: 266). During the same visit, the men also spent time at the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, which served as further inspiration (Watts 1997: 266). First concrete plans were made in the early 1950s, but Walt soon ran into trouble when trying to finance his dream of an amusement park. His brother Roy saw it as a too risky investment to make with the movie studio's money, and so Walt founded WED Enterprises (standing for Walter Elias Disney) as a production company for the park, using his own personal finances, including even his life insurance as collateral (Watts

1997: 385). As he began working on the project in earnest, he recruited some of his most talented animation artists to design it – the men and women that would later be called "Imagineers." "Mickey Mouse Park," as it was called in the early stages (Gennaway 2014: 12), had begun production.

To fully finance the project, Disney also needed a substantial bank loan, and to convince the Bank of America and other investors, he decided that they needed a portfolio to visualize his plans for the park (Gennaway 2014: 34). For this, he contacted animator John Hench. Over what has, in Disney lore, been referred to as the "Lost Weekend," because Disney and Hench spent all of September 26 and 27, 1953, working on it, the basic premise of the park was laid out (Gennaway 2014: 34–35). In another important move toward guaranteeing the ultimate success of the park, Disney struck a deal with the then fledgling third television network ABC – he would produce a weekly one-hour show advertising the park, and they would receive significant shares (Watts 1997: 385). This was an unusual move, but contrary to other movie studio executives of the time, Walt saw the burgeoning medium of television as a chance rather than a threat. The television show, as well as the park it was going to promote, was going to be called Disneyland. Financing finally in place, Disney hired the Stanford Research Institute to scout several promising locations, and ultimately, an unassuming orange grove in the small city of Anaheim, just outside of Los Angeles, was chosen (Watts 1997: 385). Near the soon to be finished Santa Ana Freeway, Walt Disney was going to build his magic kingdom.

The concept of Disneyland was unique, in that it took great pains to distinguish itself from its antecedents, the amusement parks found in New York's Coney Island and many other big cities that had seen their heyday at the turn of the century. While Walt Disney had admired the parks as a child – his daughter Diane would remember him reminiscing about an amusement park in Kansas City that he and his sister would only ever get to see from outside the gates (Gennaway 2014: 5) – he was less pleased with them as an adult. He took research trips to Coney Island and smaller, local amusement parks in and around Los Angeles (Gennaway 2014: 11), but was left most impressed with Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, Denmark, that he visited in 1951 (Gennaway 2014: 16). Tivoli, in contrast to most other amusement parks, was clean, well-kept, and favored a relaxing atmosphere over raucous entertainment – it did not even sell alcohol. Disney vowed his own park would be kept just as clean, and he also admired the landscaping and ride designs.

Disney was equally informed by the World's Fairs – not only had his father been a construction worker for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (Gennaway 2014: 5), early research for Disneyland also took place at the 1939 World's Fair at San Francisco's Treasure Island (Gennaway 2014: 7). The connection between the two forms also became apparent again when Walt Disney Imagineering designed several attractions for the 1964/65 New York World's fair that

would later be transplanted to the parks – something that will also be addressed further throughout this book.

An important change Disney made for his park was the pricing and admission system. Upon opening in 1955, visitors paid an entrance fee of $1, and 10 to 35 cents for each attraction once in the park, a model pioneered by amusement parks in the 1930s. Before that, amusement park goers would only pay for rides and other entertainment individually, and the premises were thus open to all – an important distinction, as charging a flat entrance fee was a measure of deliberate, classist, and racist exclusion (Morris 2019: 215). This measure was then consciously adopted by Disney. Yet, less than three months after opening, Disneyland further distinguished itself from its antecedents, as this cash-based system was replaced with a coupon system: guests would now purchase ticket books that classified rides in categories "A," "B," or "C," with "C" being the best, or most elaborate rides and hence also the most expensive. In 1956, a category "D" was introduced, and in 1959, the "E" ticket was born. This coupon system remained in place until 1982, when it was replaced by the all-inclusive pricing structure that is still used today (Weiss 2009: n.pag.). Now, visitors purchase tickets for one or several days (or annual passports) that buy entrance to the park and unlimited rides on all attractions and access to all other entertainment. Such an all-inclusive pricing strategy not only hides cost (as there is still a significant amount of secondary spending on food or merchandise), it also allows control over who enters (Morris 2019: 220). And while the cost in the early years was not "prohibitively expensive," as, adjusted for inflation, it would have cost about $29 today to enter Disneyland and buy a ticket book in 1955 (Morris 2019: 220), it still branded the space as one targeted at the newly rising middle class, that then, was also overwhelmingly white. As this book will show, this is a strategy that has been applied to all of Disney's resorts over the past 60 years of their existence.

On top of its pricing structure, Disneyland park also had an innovative layout: instead of the usual multiple entrances, visitors are only able to enter the park through one central entryway that funnels them through the entrance area, Main Street, U.S.A. and onto a central plaza. The other parts of the park are then radially laid out from there, in a so-called "hub-and-spoke" system, easing guest flow and orientation, and shortening the distances people have to walk to get from attraction to attraction (Gennaway 2014: 26). All of this clearly signaled that what was born here was a new form, a new kind of entertainment that only marginally shared common ground with its antecedents. Disneyland, ultimately, would not just be based on Tivoli's concept (Gennaway 2014: 16), but improve on it. It would not be a simple amusement park, but a theme park.

And yet, what exactly the theme park is has been notoriously hard to define. Indeed, most academic works engaging with the subject have avoided this, and

existing definitions (much as the whole study of theme parks itself) stem from a variety of disciplines. Geography and tourism studies have produced the most comprehensive attempts at defining the form, yet as Clavé notes, even here definitions have so far been neglected "due to the existence of multiple similar formats that hinder such a task" (2007: 28) – i.e., the problem of differentiation from amusement parks, national parks, carnivals, and fairs, and the like.

Existing attempts at definition, such as the online Merriam Webster Dictionary entry that simply describes the theme park as "an amusement park in which the structures and settings are based on a central theme," make clear that the defining characteristic of the theme park is, indeed, its theme. While early amusement parks such as Coney Island's Luna Park or the above-mentioned Copenhagen's Tivoli Gardens, and occasionally also the fair rides that you would find at, say, Munich's Oktoberfest, did and do employ strategies of theming in their rides, as did some of the historic World's Fair pavilions, they lack overall coherent themes. Only theme parks employ the design methods of "Imagineering" or as it has also been called, "narrative placemaking" (Rohde 2007: n.pag.).

So, what exactly is Imagineering? Disney uses the term – a portmanteau of "imagination" and "engineering" – for the practice of designing and developing its theme parks around the world. It was coined by Walt Disney, who defined it as the "blending of creative imagination with technical know-how" (quoted in Sklar 2010: 10–11). The term has increasingly found use for describing other themed attractions and immersive environments (such as hotels, restaurants, or shopping malls). Besides theming, a term that most overtly focuses on the architecture and design of a space, Imagineering also encompasses the use of several technologies to tell a story. In addition to the classic arts of filmmaking or music, these can include the use of audio-animatronics to simulate humans or animals;[1] touch screens, virtual reality, and other kinds of interactive information technology; different kinds of vehicles for actual or simulated transport; and many more such tools, often state-of-the-art. The purpose of all of these is the immersion of the visitor into the venue and the story or information it tries to convey. Noel B. Salazar sums it up as follows:

> A perfectly imagineered attraction makes you feel like you are on a journey that transports you to a different place or time and completely engulfs you in a new world. It makes a story convincing by engaging all senses and moving peoples' emotions within a fantasy environment in which, paradoxically, the fantasy feels completely real. (2011: 49)

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[1] Audio-animatronics, an invention by Walt Disney Imagineering, are essentially automata (an early form of robotics) running on compressed air and magnetic tape.

To understand how Imagineers let theme parks tell these stories, one needs to understand two key terms in their design: "theming" and "immersion." Theming, according to Scott A. Lukas, is simply, "the use of an overarching theme [...] to create a holistic and integrated spatial organization of a consumer venue" (2007: 1). Imagineer Joe Rohde defines theme as such:

> A theme is a driving universal idea that each moment in the story revolves around. It is the philosophical premise that drives the storyteller to tell the story, the spine and bones of every tale. Developing a theme and committing to it allows the subsequent story building to proceed in a unified direction and achieve some coherent meaning. (2007: n.pag.)

Themes are usually based on historical periods or mythical representations of culture or nature; movies, TV, or other popular culture media; visions of the future and other fantastical worlds; as well as more abstract concepts. Theming is achieved not only by detailed recreations of such environments, but also by the evocation of general ideas of the portrayed theme. To theme a space, designers not only use architecture, but also music, sounds, often also smells, and costumes for its patrons, as well as food and merchandising articles that guests can buy. Theming thus includes "material attributes of the environment (scale, color, layout, costumes), all sensory environmental stimuli (visual, aural, tactile, olfactory), commodities sold (arts and crafts, foods, souvenirs), and the practices of all constituents (both on frontstage and backstage)" (Mitrasinovic 2006: 121).

The goal of theming, ultimately, is an emotional, affective, response to a space, to achieve a so-called "authenticity of experience" (Grusin and Bolter 2000: 172). For this to be possible, the guest (or visitor) needs to be immersed into the space's story. Immersion literally means being submerged into something completely, for example, a person being immersed in water during baptism. In the metaphorical sense then, immersion implies "a transition, a 'passage' from one realm to another, from the immediate physical reality of tangible objects and direct sensory data to *somewhere else*" (Huhtamo 1995: 159, original emphasis). To be immersed in the environment of a theme park, it is usually necessary for us to apply a willing "suspension of disbelief" (as Coleridge has famously described) – the willingness to ignore the elements of a themed space that could possibly destroy the illusion of the other reality (Hofer and Wirth 2008: 168). Thus, the theme park designers themselves do everything to avoid such interferences and guide and constrain the points of view of the guests as well (Lonsway 2009: 125). To sum it up with Lukas: "Immersion is all about the ways that the guest feels able to be part of that space" (2013: 136).

While theme park attractions and shows usually tell their own coherent narratives, in the more open spaces of the park, be it outside on the walkways or in restaurants, different methods have to be used to convey a story. This space has been called "narrative space" by Rohde (2007: n.pag.). Consequently, he calls the practice of designing these spaces "narrative placemaking"; or "the building of ideas into physical objects" (Rohde 2007: n.pag.).[2] He also describes the particular challenges of this narrative placemaking:

> Literature, cinema and live theater can create stories that are linear because they have complete control over the journey of your imaginary presence. But in the public environment of narrative space, the guests' real physical bodies are all moving inside the imaginary narrative space. Guests make choices as to how to travel through the space or where to look. […] [L]inear storytelling doesn't read. […] [W]e create concentric layers of space with a sequence of idea and impacts. This is at the heart of narrative placemaking. The place itself, in every detail, must reiterate the core ideas that drive the story. (Rohde 2007: n.pag.)

So, it is especially important that every detail serves the overarching theme, and there are as few as possible visual or other intrusions into the narrative – helping the guest with their willing suspension of disbelief and immerse themselves into the narrative space. Rohde even stresses that guests "are given roles within the narrative" (2007: n.pag.) – when the guest takes on their role, they will become immersed. Thus, they will be able to employ suspension of disbelief, which another Imagineer, Tony Baxter, has said is "directly related to how well the illusion is created in the background. […] If the environment isn't a complete space of illusion or theater, then people are more inclined not to participate in the performance" (1992: 80). This is also why designers have begun to expand attractions' narratives to the inside of their queue areas (Lonsway 2009: 123). All of this makes clear how every aspect of the theme park space is important for its theming, the consequent immersion, and its narrative placemaking, and not just its rides – another crucial factor that distinguishes them from traditional amusement parks, something King (2002: 3) has also noted.

The narrative placemaking also includes the park's employees: they receive costumes corresponding to the location they are working in and are called "Cast Members." In keeping with this concept, official Disney terminology also refers to everything that theme park visitors see as "on stage," and all the Cast Member-only

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[2] Scott Lukas calls the same practice "spatial storytelling" (2012: 157), while Deborah Philips uses the term "narrativized space" for theme parks (1999: 91–108).

areas as "off stage." Cast Members were and are rigorously trained to work at a Disney theme park, engaging in what has been termed "emotional" or "performative labor," meaning that they are encouraged to smile at visitors, and always be courteous, while essentially playing a role within their themed environment (Bryman 2004: 183). Cast Members also have to meet grooming standards and adhere to a strict dress code, and are trained in the so-called "Disneyland University," which was established shortly before the original park's opening (Gennaway 2014: 185).[3]

Given all of these narrative and theatrical capabilities of the theme park, it makes sense that Margaret J. King, one of the earliest and most prolific writers on the subject, has defined it as "a social artwork designed as a four-dimensional symbolic landscape to evoke impressions of places and times, real or imaginary" (2002: 3). Yet, as media scholars Richard Grusin and Jay David Bolter have argued, theme parks are a prime example for the process of remediation – transforming one medium to another – and thus, theme parks should be seen as media forms rather than the harder to define works of art (Grusin and Bolter 2000). American studies scholar Florian Freitag has also classified them as "hybrid" media (2017: 706). As media, theme parks are also embedded in a larger "participatory culture" following Henry Jenkins seminal studies (1992, 2006), what King hints at when she describes them as "social" – their visitors are after all integral to their purpose. To fully understand the theme park, then, one has to see it as (a) a form of (mass) media, and (b) as all comprehensive studies of mass media, should consider its audience reception.

When taking into account reception of the theme park, it naturally emerges as a medium that transgresses national boundaries. John Dorst, a scholar of American studies, argues that "[t]he theme park […] call[s] into question the old ways of thinking about how national cultures influence one another. As an industry, theme parks are thoroughly transnational in terms of ownership, design, production, operation, and clientele" (1993: 267), and that "[it]s true conditions of possibility have much more to do with the global order of advanced corporate and consumer capitalism than with any national cultural identities" (1993: 264).

In summary, then, the most important characteristics of the theme park are: its theme (or, more specifically, strategies of theming or narrative placemaking), its status as a medium in a larger participatory culture, its transnational nature, as well as its central role within consumer culture as a private space that is only accessible to more affluent demographics. We can thus call the theme park a participatory medium that relies on strategies of theming to entertain an audience within a transnational consumer culture.

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[3] Such training facilities exist for all Disney theme park resorts.

Disney's theme parks, and Disneyland as a form in particular, have long expanded beyond its somewhat humble origins in 1950s US-America and are now a firm constant of this transnational consumer culture. With over 20 million visitors, the Magic Kingdom in Florida was the most-visited theme park in the world in 2016, followed by Disneyland in Anaheim with over 17 million (Au et al. 2017). When Disneyland came to other continents, it gained in cultural as well as financial capital. The combined number of visitors to all Disney theme parks in the world, in the United States, Europe, and Asia, exceeded 136 million in 2016 (Au et al. 2017). Disney theme parks are cultural phenomena first, and theme parks second. Disneyland will always keep its status as the world's first theme park, the originator of the form, and with the technological advances Walt Disney Imagineering has made over the past six decades, the company's parks remain the benchmark for other designers. And it is so far also the only theme park that has been successfully transferred into several other cultures while also maintaining relevance in its host country.[4]

Despite such massive cultural impact, the academic study of theme parks had long been sidelined in the larger project that is popular culture studies. While early forays into the subject matter coincide with the beginnings of this field in the United States and the United Kingdom (Hall 1976; Browne 1981), a more substantive body of work did not surface until the 1990s, and only recently steps have been taken toward there being a more distinctive subfield of theme park studies. This also has to do with the fact that besides cultural studies, which still engage with them (Jackson and West 2011), the academic study of theme parks is a truly inter-disciplinary endeavor. Theme parks have been analyzed by, among others, designers (Younger 2016b), anthropologists (Lukas 2008; Hendry 2000), geographers (Pinggong 2007; Steinkrüger 2013), economists (Gilmore and Pine 1999), sociologists (Fjellman 1992), art historians (Marling 1997), archaeologists (Holtorf 2005), architecture/urbanism (Findlay 1992; Foglesong 2001; Mitrasinovic 2006; Lonsway 2009), literature (Philips 2012), and media scholars (Grusin and Bolter 2000), and those interested in tourism and travel (Steinecke 2009; Clavé 2007). In addition to these, there have been a number of works that deal with their antecedents (Adams 1991; Jones and Wills 2005; Riley 2006; Cross 2005; Szabo 2009; Rabinovitz 2012), as well as other themed or immersive environments, such as theme restaurants, hotels, or shopping malls (Gottdiener 2001; Legnaro and Birenheide 2005).

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[4] While other examples, such as Comcast's *Universal Studios* theme parks, have equally started to expand into other countries and cultures (such as *Universal Studios Japan* in Osaka), they are not yet present in as many different locations as Disney's theme parks, and also do not look back on such a long history of doing so.

Overall, the most studied theme parks are those by the Walt Disney Company, which is not surprising, given also the more wide-reaching general interest in it (Schickel 1968; Smoodin 1994; Bryman 1995; Byrne and McQuillan 1999; Wasko 2001; Budd and Kirsch 2005). Disney's parks have also become the subject of a postmodern critique of capitalist-consumerist spaces, based on Jean Baudrillard's framing of the parks as "simulacra" (1994), and Italian semiotician Umberto Eco's (1986) labeling of them as "hyperreal" spaces, both ideas that also informed Fjellman's (1992) comprehensive treatment of Walt Disney World and that are still pervasive even in current scholarship. They have also been frequently discussed in the context of questions of utopia (Marin 1977; Gottdiener 1982; Hobbs 2015) or Michel Foucault's (1986) concept of "heterotopia" (Philips 1999) and other studies of space and place (Sorkin 1992; Zukin 1993), as well as time (Carlà-Uhink et al. 2017).

The majority of these critical readings are consequently rather reductive, as they most often seem to leave people out of the equation. Only few studies have dealt with Disney parks' workers (Project on Disney 1995; Raz 1999; Choi 2007) or their audiences (Wasko et al. 2001; Krause Knight 2014). Particularly those treatments from a postmodern point of view usually cast theme park visitors as mere passive receptacles without any agency, but as fan studies have grown as an important subfield of cultural studies, they have also begun to inform theme park studies. This has allowed for a nuanced treatment of these spaces and has become a central part of the theme park studies project (Koren-Kuik 2014; Baker 2016; Kiriakou 2017; Waysdorf and Rejinders 2018; Williams 2018, 2020; Lantz 2019). A recent volume from a theatre studies background also treats the theme park visitor as central, framing her in the role of actor (Kokai and Robson 2019), cementing this trend. While this book will not directly engage with Disney parks' fans in the same fashion that these studies have done, it takes audience studies seriously. As it will analyze cultural contexts, as well as class-based consumer targeting by the Walt Disney Company, the question of who visits (and who does not, or cannot) these parks is integral.

Another glaring omission in the scholarship of Disney's theme parks are any proper historical treatments – if (cultural) historians have engaged with them, they have so far done so largely in the context of the question of authenticity of their historical theming (Wallace 1996), especially surrounding the scandal of the never-built Disney's America (Mittermeier 2016). Only Andrew Lainsbury has written a cultural history of Euro Disney (2000), while Sébastien Roffat has dealt with the first twenty years of the same resort (2007), and Steve Mannheim has taken on Epcot (2002). Yet any other attempts at providing comprehensive histories of the Disney theme parks come from outside of academia, and are largely written by fans or hobby historians (Strodder 2012; Gennaway 2014), or are published by the Walt Disney Company to acknowledge park anniversaries.

What is thus lacking is a broader cultural study and diachronic history of one park that could give indication of the continuing relevance of the form not just in the United States, but also abroad. Additionally, Disney's Asian theme parks have received much less attention than their western counterparts, and nobody has yet attempted a much-needed single transnational study of all of them. This book wants to fill this void.

What emerges here is a diachronic history of the form "Disneyland," i.e., the history of the so-called "castle parks" – it will thus only touch upon parks such as Epcot or Tokyo DisneySea that follow much different core ideas and designs where deemed necessary. The book approaches each of the existing six Disneylands as both a product of their culture of production and of their historic context in chronological order: the original Disneyland in Anaheim, California, that opened in 1955, followed by the Magic Kingdom as part of Walt Disney World (Orlando, FL, 1971), then Tokyo Disneyland (1983), Euro Disney (now Disneyland Paris) (1992), Hong Kong Disneyland (2005), and finally, Shanghai Disneyland (2016). As theme parks are in a perennial state of change for both economic and cultural reasons, they will be analyzed at the time of their opening, tracing how their direct historical and cultural circumstance has shaped their designers and consequently, their design. Doing so gives more space to analyze the design template of the "original" Disneyland, highlighting key attractions in its opening years in every one of its distinctly themed "lands" (Main Street, U.S.A., Adventureland, Frontierland, Fantasyland, and Tomorrowland), and in consequent chapters, highlights deviations (as well as significant similarities) in the design of the other parks. For these chapters, focus is placed on tracing the events leading up to the opening of each of these parks, making clear that historical events, cultural memory, and trends in popular culture have directly affected these spaces. Overall, this book argues that reading Disney's theme parks as the direct outcome of a certain culture of production is the only way to truly understand why and how they work, why they are successful in some cases, or struggle to resonate or turn a profit in others. Through the study of these conceptionally interesting, and multilayered products of popular culture, it is thus possible to gain a better understanding of not only how American culture has evolved over the past 60 years, but also how its transnational relationships have.

Additionally, while theme parks' commodified nature is what they have come under scrutiny for the most, and many have discussed their role as private, rather than public spaces, class as a central factor has so far not been thoroughly addressed in academic scholarship. Cultural historians Judith Schlehe and Michiko Uike-Bormann have pointed out that "[o]bviously there is a remarkable class division [in themed environments]. Presently, only the rich can afford to live permanently in themed environments and most cultural parks are not accessible for

everybody due to the high entrance fees" (2010: 87), but they do not delve further into the subject. As discussed above, class has however always been a key factor in the design of parks in general, and theme parks in particular. Consequently, how social class differences and thus differences in income affect these theme parks is clearly a pressing question. Disneyland, from its beginning, has targeted the middle to upper classes, and this targeting was not only achieved by its pricing structure, it has also directly affected its design. In fact, as this book shows, it is also this class factor that determines every Disneyland's success or failure, both in the short, but more importantly, in the long run. Class targeting is at the core of what defines the Disneyland theme parks – back in 1955, as well as today. Rather than "magic kingdoms," then, it seems almost more fitting that we call them "middle-class kingdoms."

PART I

THE AMERICAN DISNEY THEME PARKS

1

An Orange Grove in Anaheim: The Original Disneyland (1955)

To understand 1950s America, the decade into which Disneyland was born, one first has to look back a few years: after the end of World War II in 1945, only a minority of Americans were homeowners or driving their own car, and most received their news and entertainment via the radio or regular visits to a local cinema. Shopping was done in modest neighborhood groceries, and leisure and travel happened equally close to home. Yet change came, rapidly and radically:

> Ribbons of highways connected inner cities to suburban developments that sprouted everywhere. Sixty percent of all Americans now owned their own homes. TV antennae perched on nearly every roof, families sat down to eat frozen dinners purchased at the supermarket in a nearby suburban shopping mall, and they then argued over the correct cost of the latest consumer gadget on TV's quiz show, "The Price is Right." Jet planes had reduced coast to coast travel to five hours, the two-car family was as much the rule as the exception, and families of the middle class debated whether to take an out-of-state vacation or build a new addition on the house. Between 1947 and 1960 the average real income for American workers increased by as much as it had in the previous half century. (Chafe 1999: 111)

Disneyland opened on July 17, 1955, in the midst of this new world, after only one year of construction. It immediately was an enormous success. Looking at the economic boom of the 1950s, this hardly seems a surprise – the new majority middle class (about 60% in the mid-1950) (Chafe 1999: 112)[1] could afford a day in the park,[2] and the newly built Santa Ana freeway brought droves of visitors in

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[1] Middle class was defined as incomes of $3,000 to $10,000 in constant dollars.
[2] On opening day in 1955, entry into Disneyland cost $1 per adult, yet the rides still cost extra at this point, with a tiered ticket system that priced rides at 10 to 50 cents each. While this does not seem much, when adjusted for inflation and median household incomes at the time, it was still steep and certainly not affordable by everyone – the target audience of a white middle-to-upper class was not picked without a reason, as also discussed in the introduction here and by Morris (2019).

their cars to its doors, eager to spend their time and money on leisure activities (Chafe 1999: 119). Walt Disney's smart move to promote the park in the form of a TV show, also called *Disneyland*, on the then-fledgling ABC network, paid off handsomely. His intuition for what appealed to the masses had struck once again, yet the people's love for the place can ultimately be explained by several historical and cultural circumstances of the time that came together perfectly. More than that, as a close reading of the place will show, it directly appealed to the 1950s white middle class on every level. While the 1950s are often seen as a "golden age" in popular imagination, a simplistic decade "against which latter periods can be defined as either a liberation or a fall" (Jancovich 2000: 12), historians have long started to discuss it beyond its obvious themes of prosperity, conformity, and family values, which alone could already easily explain an original success of Disneyland. On a closer look, the 1950s emerge as a decade of paradoxes, "a period of *both* complacency *and* paranoia, a period remembered for its mindless conformity *and* for its numerous figures of heroic non-conformity and dissent" (Jancovich 2000: 12, original emphasis). Yet Disneyland, on a closer look, also mirrors these paradoxes and especially the unique culture of the beginning Cold War. A walk through the park as it was on opening day (with glimpses to a few years beyond) will make this clearer.

Main Street, USA: Civil Religion, Miniaturized Pasts, and the American Imagination

Entering Disneyland, you first pass[3] the entrance turnstiles and then walk underneath the Main Street Railroad Station, where the Disneyland and Santa Fe railroads leave for their journey around the park.[4] The first land you enter is Main Street, U.S.A., described in the first official Disneyland guidebook as an "accurate reproduction of Main Street in a typical American town," set at the turn of the century, as the "nostalgic charm of 1890 comes to life again" (Anon. 1955: n.pag.). The street begins at Town Square, where, left of the railroad station, you can find the City Hall (the location for the guest services center of the park), the Disneyland Fire Department, and above it, Walt Disney's personal apartment (not open to the public). On the other side of the street is the Opera House, and a bank (once operated by the Bank of America the venue has since been turned into the Disney Gallery). The Opera House has housed the Great Moments with

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[3] I am using the present tense here and in the other introductory sections of the lands to make clear that this basic layout and quite a few of the attractions have not changed since the park's opening in 1955.

[4] The railroad was named after the actual Santa Fe railroad that had a sponsorship deal in place with Disney until 1974.

Mr. Lincoln attraction since it was shipped there in 1965, right after the 1964/65 World's Fair that Walt Disney Imagineering (WDI, formerly WED Enterprises) had originally built it for. The buildings leading down the street house several locales, including the Disneyland Penny Arcade and Shooting Gallery and the Main Street Cinema, as well as several restaurants (including an old-fashioned ice-cream parlor) and retail venues, the biggest of them the department store-like Emporium. Main Street, U.S.A., then culminates into Central Plaza, home of the park's famous icon, the Sleeping Beauty castle, and the so-called "hub" with pathways leading to all of the other lands of the park.

In the middle of Main Street, U.S.A.'s Town Square is a flagpole, flying the American flag (accurate to contemporary times, sporting 50 stars, not the 43 it would have been in 1890, the setting of the land). The California state flag is attached to the pole as well – referring to the state Disneyland was built in, and also not keeping with the essentially Midwestern theme of Main Street. This break with theming is owed to the flag retreat ceremony that is performed every evening at 5 PM, with the help of military veterans among the park visitors picked at random (originally you could volunteer at City Hall).[5] Some of the buildings are also decked in bunting, further showing the patriotic spirit of Main Street. While all of these seem like minor details at first, they do very much set the tone for this entrance area, and therefore also for what is to come once you pass the Plaza and make your way toward Adventure-, Frontier-, Fantasy- or Tomorrowland. The lens that Main Street provides the visitor with is that of American civil religion (Salamone and Salamone 1999: 87), an upbeat, but also reverent patriotic spirit. "America thus becomes the dominant narrative of the park, with the majority of its lands devoted to telling the stories of American history," so literary historian Deborah Philips (2002: 34).

The time frame portrayed in Main Street, U.S.A. makes this abundantly clear – set sometime between 1890 and 1910, it glorifies

> the halcyon days of the small town; what has been called the "McKinley era," or simply the turn of the century. It is this period, a rather lengthy but misty time frame suspended between the Civil War and World War I, that Disney recreated. (Francaviglia 1981: 143)

Often hailed as an "innocent" time in American history, it is one of the most revered times in the American imagination, and while historians firmly disagree on how

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[5] This principle however also works in favor of practicality in other places: walking down Main Street, U.S.A., the buildings on either side also sport several smaller flags, yet these are purposely kept "unofficial": they all have one fewer star and one fewer stripe and therefore, do not have to be taken down each night or lowered in times of mourning, as the flag on Town Square does. (The same goes for all other flags that can be found across the park.)

idyllic this period truly was, historian and journalist Lucius Beebe has character-
ized the period as "the most typical extension of the American personality" and
one of "the happiest decades the American people were ever to know" (quoted
in Francaviglia 1981: 143). It is a point of contention between his biographers,
historians, and other researchers just how much of Walt Disney's own memories of
his childhood hometown Marceline, Missouri, played a role in the design of Main
Street. Disney's family lived in the small town when he was between the ages of
four and nine (from 1906 to 1911), and this is also where he developed an inter-
est in drawing and became enamored with trains, making these defining years for
his later career. In these years, his family was also financially well-off, while they
lived in near-poverty in later years in Kansas City and Chicago, where Walt and
his brothers often had to work despite their young age (Watts 1997: 9). As histo-
rian Richard Francaviglia has asserted, it seems understandable that "Walt Disney
looked back on Marceline in particular, and the small town in general, with a great
deal of nostalgia" (1996: 145). While this is hardly disputable, as Disney himself
often talked of the town, Francaviglia has also found out that original Marceline
main street was much more austere and dirtier because it was unpaved, like many
small-town streets at the turn of the century (1996: 144), and thus it could not have
served as much of a direct inspiration for Disneyland's Main Street. Art historian
Robert Neuman further notes that the relation to Marceline comes from an article
in *Look* magazine written on the opening of Disneyland, and was not featured in
earlier guidebooks of the park (2008: 85–86). This is backed up by my own study
of early guidebooks and other promotional materials; the story has since however
entered Disney lore and is perpetuated by many of Disney's official sources.

Aside from the possible connection to Disney's own biography, the Imagineers
who eventually worked on the designs for Main Street, among them John Hench,
Marvin Davis, and Harper Goff, all drew their inspirations from several sources;
most prominently Goff's own childhood hometown of Fort Collins, Colorado, yet
he also "synthesized elements from numerous high-style Victorian buildings rather
than copying, detail for detail, any particular building" (Francaviglia 1996: 151–52).
Walt Disney's personal input was however significant and came with his usual eye
for detail[6] – after all, he built railroad models and other miniatures in his free time.
Main Street itself, although life-sized, was thus miniaturized, too: all the buildings
are built at a 5/8-scale, making them feel less imposing – a perfect example of the
"architecture of reassurance," as the Disneyland design-style has been called (Marling

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[6] Francaviglia notes, quoting Mildred H. Comfort, one of Disney's biographers, that "the
storefronts of that period were so important to Walt Disney that he worked out two hun-
dred specific color shades with his artists" (Francaviglia 1996: 146). As much else of Disn-
eyland, some of these colors have changed over the years, following Disney's own notion of
the park as a work in progress (Kurti and Gordon 2006: 10).

1997). These buildings, much like the rest of Disneyland, also follow in the footsteps of movie sets as they are only accessible and fully constructed on the ground floor, yet the upper floors are merely facades. It is thus a correct assertion that Disney is "miniaturiz[ing] history" (Olson and Roberts 2001: 236) in more than one way. As art historian Karal Ann Marling has noted: "Memory shrinks the past and sweetens it, too, until history becomes something small and precious and private" (1997: 90). The portrayal of the past as it is found on Main Street, U.S.A. was always solely a work of such nostalgia and myth, never meant to be historically authentic; or in postmodern theory terms, "a simulacrum" (Philips 2002: 31). Based on a history that never really was, "Disney created small-town America as it *should* have been" (Francaviglia 1996: 156, original emphasis), and such a view of the past was crucial to 1950s America. Thus, the nostalgia spoke not just to Walt Disney himself, but to all the members of his generation that romanticized their own childhoods, and more generally, a time before two World Wars.

Francaviglia has noted that "[v]iewed retrospectively, Main Street, U.S.A., is as much a statement of the Cold War as it is Disney's early-twentieth century childhood" (1996: 176). So, while Disney's own biography's direct influence on the design can be disputed, the Cold War climate in the mid-1950s cannot. The Disneyland dedication speeches made during the opening ceremony on July 17, 1955, most clearly exemplify the patriotic spirit felt at the time. While the influence of American civil religion is not limited to the Cold War era, the clear politicization of the event speaks volumes. The setting of this ceremony could not have been more fitting, as it took place on Main Street's Town Square. The first dedication of the park was unsurprisingly made by Walt Disney himself, who in a short speech set the agenda for his endeavor:

> To all who 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 which have created America, with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world. (quoted in Phelps et al. 1955)

The notion of the park as a purely American idea is put front and center – as well as the goal that it would serve as an example of what the United States stood for to other countries, further suggesting "a relationship between the park and the state" (Lambert 2000: 29). While the motivation for his words might not have been solely political, they are nevertheless striking in this particular historical context. What further speaks for a contextual relevance of this ceremony is that while Walt Disney's speech is fairly well-known and shown often, the two other dedications that followed are virtually never seen anymore, although they also aired on live television in 1955.

Following Disney, his nephew, Reverend Glenn D. Puder, took to the microphone, and after praising his uncle's "spiritual motivation," dedicated Disneyland to

> Understanding and goodwill toward men, laughter for children, memories for the mature, and aspiration for young people everywhere. And beyond the creeds that would divide us, let us unite in a silent prayer that this and every worthy endeavor may prosper at God's hand. (Phelps et al. 1955)

This was then followed by the announced silent prayer, in company of not only the Presbyterian Puder, but two other military chaplains representing the Catholic and Jewish faiths. It seems curious that such a religious display was featured in the dedication ceremony, as Disneyland was (and is) otherwise devoid of any signs of religious worship – Main Street, U.S.A., despite its agenda to represent the perfect version of an American small town, does not feature a church – a fact that many attribute to the fact that Walt Disney was "something of a secular humanist" (Francaviglia 1996: 176). Yet the presence of the then three most dominant faiths in the United States (Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, and Judaism) speaks toward a call for unity exceeding religious differences, "beyond the creeds that would divide us." The opening ceremony thus emerges further within a context of a huge religious revival in the years after World War II, when churches gained more and more significance as community centers in the new suburbs, as the design of these living communities generally lacked such spaces (Donaldson 2012: 70). Historian Gary Donaldson argues that this surge in religiousness had its roots in the Cold War, as "the Soviet Union, the enemy, was a godless entity, and religious leaders in the United States constantly evoked religion as a weapon against communism" (Donaldson 2012: 70). President Dwight D. Eisenhower often cited the necessity of faith for the American community, and in 1954, "One nation under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the addition of the phrase "in God we trust" printed on currency (Donaldson 2012: 71).

   The third speech at the park's dedication ceremony, which was the most evocative of Cold War politics, backs up this connection between religion and politics. Held by then-California Governor Goodwin J. Knight (Republican), it stresses not only the uniquely American character of Disneyland, but also situates it in a long tradition of American exceptionalism:

> Good morning Mr. and Mrs. Disney, reverend, clergy, and my fellow Americans. Today is a wonderful day and all America is proud as we open Disneyland. This is a wondrous community, with all the charm of the old world, and all of the progress and ingenuity of the new world. Yes, this is a wonderful place, for children and grown-ups alike, there are replicas of every town and

city in America, stores, libraries, schools, just like your hometown, all built by American labor and American capital under the belief that this is a God-fearing and a God-loving country. And as we dedicate this flag now, we do it with the knowledge that we are the fortunate ones to be Americans, and that we extend to everyone everywhere the great ideals of Americanism: brotherhood and peace on earth, goodwill towards men. (quoted in Phelps et al. 1955)

This dedication of the flag on Town Square was followed by raising it, accompanied by a drum roll and a marching band playing "The Star-Spangled Banner," as fighter jets from the California Air National Guard flew overhead in salute (Kruse 2015: 128). Such a display of patriotism is rather common for big events in the United States, yet the choice of words by Knight point toward the US-Soviet conflict, such as the wish "to extend to everyone everywhere the ideals of Americanism," again connecting nation building with the theme park (Lambert 2000: 37). Historian Kevin M. Kruse however has cited this as evidence for an underlying religious motivation behind Disneyland (2015: 127–28). He writes that it speaks toward "how deeply piety and patriotism were intertwined in its creator's worldview" and that Walt Disney "relied on Christianity as a constant guide" (Kruse 2015: 128). Kruse gives no source for this, and I neither have found evidence for such an interpretation – none of Disney's biographers suggest he was a particularly religious man, and as mentioned above, he is mostly painted as a secular humanist. What he firmly believed in, however, was his country, and while Disneyland is thus steeped in a quasi-religious enthusiasm for all things American (as most apparent in Frontierland and on Main Street, U.S.A.). I would interpret this as a classic example of Robert N. Bellah's civil religion (1967). This idea of American civil religion was then further amplified through the political climate of the Cold War, when "[t]he 'cultural' became the 'political,' not through any grand affirmation of support for a particular policy or rally behind this or that candidate but through the everyday formation of values and practices" (Lucas 2000: 189).[7]

Main Street, U.S.A.

> struck a deep chord with Americans after World War II, an affirmation of shared cultural values that symbolized the anchor for a ship of state that had recently survived a cataclysmic war and was now in the midst of an equally challenging Cold War. (Orvell 2012: 37)

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[7] Stephen J. Whitfield similarly argues that during the Cold War, culture was politicized (2001: 259).

It is clean, safe, "a place that implies a harmonious community and a democratic society, it is what Americans (and the rest of the world) want to think America stands for," so historian Miles Orvell (2009: 106). And as such, it represents not only the "heartline of America" (Anon. 1959: 4), as a 1959 guidebook describes it, but also the heartline of Disneyland. As political scientist Scott Lucas has argued, a trip to Disneyland "brought 'freedom' and 'nation' to far more people than any town hall meeting ever could" (2000: 189), and this established the theme park as central site for nation building in a time of war.

Main Street, U.S.A., is also one of the most-often discussed parts of Disneyland in academic texts. The reason for this likely lies in the importance of the idea of "Main Street" for American culture, and the questions of historical authenticity this part of the park raises.[8] When Disneyland opened its doors in 1955, the idealized depiction of Main Street and the American small town was nothing new. As Orvell has argued, Main Street became an American myth during the 1930s and 1940s, when many small towns faced severe struggles, and during World War II, imagery of small-town life became synonymous with an "American way of life" (2012: 35). Neuman (2008) adds that the same imagery could be found in several successful Hollywood films of these years, such as *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), and in Disney's own *So Dear to My Heart* (1948). The latter would go on to inspire Walt Disney to personally build a miniature of Granny Kincaid's cabin featured in the film, when he had still toyed with the idea of a traveling show of miniatures called "Disneylandia," one of the earliest inspirations for Disneyland. Additionally, a copy of the railroad station featured in the film would end up as the train depot of Frontierland (Sampson 2010: n.pag.). This imagery of the mythic Main Street would then find its ultimate portrayal in Disneyland in the 1950s, and served not only as a matter of reassurance during the Cold War, as discussed above, but also counteracted the suburban sprawl and deterioration of city centers during the decade (Neuman 2008: 85). As such it also mirrored the movement of an overwhelming number of people to suburban areas, such as the famous Levittowns that strived on cleanliness and conformity and catered almost exclusively to the white middle and upper class – just as Disneyland did. In the coming years, the mythic portrayal of Main Street had then become so prevalent in the American imagination that it would even go on to inspire the remodeling of real small towns' inner cities, such as in Medina, Ohio (Francaviglia 1996: 169–70).

Disney's Main Street further served as a model for another (sub)urban development of the 1950s: the shopping mall (Francaviglia 1996: 165). After all, the only

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[8] Since these discussions surrounding historical authenticity are so manifold in the literature on Disneyland and theme parks in general, I have chosen not to delve deeper into them here, but I address them in another publication in the context of Disney's America (see Mittermeier 2016).

real attractions (besides the later addition of Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln) on Main Street were shopping and dining, and those could be experienced in a safe and clean, and most importantly, privately owned environment. It thus only seems fitting that Walt Disney apparently had books by Victor Gruen, who is hailed as the inventor of the shopping mall, in his office (Marling 1997: 147). In turn, James Rouse, the pioneering developer of many of these suburban malls, has stated that his work has been directly inspired by Disneyland (Hine 1986: 152). In the past twenty years or so, this development has progressed even further, as the classic enclosed malls have given way to so-called "lifestyle shopping centers" that mimic public streets, but are still privately owned and monitored, and often even rely on theming in their design, much as Disneyland's Main Street (Kern 2008).[9] Orvell, therefore, could not be more right when he writes: "Walt Disney was both reflecting American popular culture and creating it when he constructed his theme parks with an entrance through Main Street" (2012: 241). Thus, Main Street, U.S.A., also exemplifies the far-ranging influence Disneyland has had since it opened over 60 years ago.

Adventureland: Showcasing the Exotic

Coming from Main Street and walking immediately to the left, you find Adventure-land. Passing under a big sign announcing its name, and then over a bridge made out of bamboo wood decorated with tribal masks, as well as skeletons and skulls, the visitor is introduced to an area inspired by an amalgamation of places deemed exotic in the 1950s' American imagination: Asia, Africa, the South Seas, Central and South America, in other words, "a trip to the far ends of the world" (Anon. 1955: n.pag.) – and its troublingly racialized take on it. The main attraction, the Explorer's Boat Ride (soon re-named Jungle River Boat Safari, today: Jungle Cruise) takes the visitor through an expedition of these countries, where "crocodiles, hippos, lions, and head hunters add thrills and chills" (Anon. 1955: n.pag.). Across from the Boat Ride's entrance, the Adventureland Bazaar sells "exotic imports from the four corners of the world" (Anon. 1959: n.pag.). Over the course of the 1960s, the land would see the addition of several attractions that specifically referenced Polynesia, such as the Tahitian Terrace restaurant (1962) and the famous audio-animatronic bird show, The Enchanted Tiki Room (1963). With the Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse, a walk-through attraction opened in 1962 (inspired by Disney's 1960

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[9] Examples of such centers include the outlet shopping "villages" owned by Value Retail that have locations, among other places, in Ingolstadt near Munich, Germany, Val d'Europe outside of Paris (and near Disneyland Paris) or Shanghai (also near Shanghai Disneyland). Another good example is "Santana Row" in San José, CA, an outdoor shopping street and mixed-use center that while mimicking as a public street, is completely privately owned.

film *Swiss Family Robinson)* the line-up was rounded out. In the guidebook from 1955, Adventureland is put together into one section with Main Street, U.S.A., in maps (Anon. 1955: n.pag.), suggesting a temporal and thematic connection in their settings, therefore dating the land to the turn of the century. This changed at least partly with the addition of the Indiana Jones Adventure in 1995 that resulted in a de facto rethemeing to the 1930s, the decade the movies are set in (Marling 1997: 113).[10]

The land was originally supposed to be called "True-Life Adventureland," based on the popular nature documentary series *True-Life Adventures* that Disney produced between 1948 and 1960. Yet it soon proved to be difficult to represent actual nature (and most importantly, to house actual animals) in the theme park,[11] resulting in "a shift to the 'cinematic exotica'" (Kurtti and Gordon 2006: 18) that are dominating Adventureland to this day. Literary historian Deborah Philips frames these exotic representations as part of a larger tradition of Adventure literature or "explorer narratives," as well as in the tradition of colonial displays at the World's Fairs. She argues that theme parks generally position the visitors "as an adventurer and inviting them into a site that is explicitly coded as a landscape waiting to be explored" and that the parks' advertising usually constructs a site "as exotic and mysterious territory" (Philips 2012: 143). Adventureland does this rather explicitly: "The geographical narratives of the theme park consistently construct Adventureland as a 'frontier' in which 'primitive' dangers lurk" (Philips 2012: 144). Art historian Thomas Hine further argues that

> Adventureland sums up Africa, South America and Southeast Asia as places of lush plants, large verandas, fierce animals and headhunters. It is a marvelous pastiche, but unfortunately, it probably is an accurate reflection of the nation's view of what was to become known as the Third World. (1986: 152)

Just as for the rest of Disneyland, Adventureland's frame of reference is the US-American white middle class of the 1950s – something that becomes even more apparent when looking at its major attraction that embodies these ideas explicitly: The Jungle Cruise.

For a long time, the ride was, and remains to this day in many ways, the defining attraction of Adventureland, and it clearly shows the land's filmic roots. Disneyland's official website still refers to the Jungle Cruise as a "True-Life Adventure" and highlights the land's original idea. While the ride is set along several "exotic" rivers of the

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10 I have written elsewhere on the *Indiana Jones*-themed attractions in Disney's parks, see Mittermeier (2020b).

11 This idea was eventually realized with the opening of Disney's Animal Kingdom theme park as part of Walt Disney World in 1998.

world (the Mekong, the Nile, the waters of the Congo, and the Amazon), the boats designed by Imagineer Harper Goff were inspired by the movie *The African Queen* (1951) (Marling 1997: 105). Adapted from the novel by C.S. Forester and starring Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn, the film was set in German East Africa during World War I and chronicles the adventurous journey of the small steamboat "African Queen" and its captain in 1914, when the war between Germany and Britain breaks out. The movie, a frequent inspiration to Goff, was a great success at the box office and even won Bogart an Oscar in 1952.[12] The Jungle Cruise is exemplary to what set Disneyland apart from the classic amusement parks, not just in terms of overall quality of the design, but also its cinematic influences. As art historian Karal Ann Marling argues: "In many ways, the Jungle Cruise defined what Disneyland was all about. It was a cinematic experience, an art director's pipe dream […]. It was ad hoc landscape architecture, conjured up almost overnight […]. And it was a vast, complicated experiment" (1997: 106). The ride takes passengers along artificial rivers in several small boats, through a vast jungle engineered by Disneyland's landscape designer Bill Evans that even included walnut trees replanted upside down (Marling 1997: 107). After the idea of using life animals was abandoned early in the planning stages, they were replaced by artificial (later full-blown audio-animatronic) elephants, crocodiles, and other inhabitants of the world's jungles, and the staged scenes that tell a story of the dangers of the adventure are set up cinematically, "composed of curves and well-placed switchbacks that hid one part of the set from another and so preserved the illusion. […] The continent changed every time the boat rounded a curve" (Marling 1997: 107–09).

It is a true example of narrative placemaking, and at the same time, epitomical for everything criticized about Disney: the, in the words of Jean Baudrillard, "hyper-real" (1994: 12–14) representation of nature (and culture) has often been deemed "phony," or even "sad" by Julian Halevy in a 1958 issue of *The Nation* (510–13). Other criticism has been directed at the representation of indigenous people on the ride (and in the rest of Adventureland), for example by anthropologist Stephen Fjellman, who argues that one of its "subthemes is 'cute' colonial racism" (1992: 225–26), as almost all of the human characters on the ride are Black, Indigenous or People of Color (BIPOC) and are othered. Fjellman assesses that the Jungle Cruise is the "middle class version [of a safari] for those who don't mind being crowded together on shared seat cushions," as it is a safer version, "without mosquitoes, monsoons or misadventures" (1992: 226). The experience being "the middle-class version" of the "real" thing is the point: the ride's audience, as well as its makers, stems from 1950s America, or more precisely, a 1950s, white, middle- to upper-class America.

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[12] The connection to the film is not official or marked anywhere on the ride; after all, the film was produced by United Artists, not Disney.

And yet the ride, as so much of Disneyland, has changed with the times. The original narration was straightforward and indeed still echoed the documentary-style of the *True-Life Adventures*, but by the 1960s, the ride had already become decidedly more tongue-in-cheek. Besides the "gags" included in some of the scenes, such as a group of explorers being chased up a pole by a rhinoceros (added in 1962 and designed by Marc Davis), what still keeps visitors charmed by the ride (aside from nostalgia) are mostly its skippers. Every boat is steered by a Jungle Cruise skipper who narrates the journey, taking passengers on the "week-long" adventure, following a script of corny jokes, but often ad-libbing their own. While this ultimately does not excuse the colonial imagery, it at least softens the blow – the often snarky remarks of the skippers put focus on the staged nature of the adventure, and heighten its cinematic elements:

> As the camera's scrutiny of the Third World, flora and fauna, and historical sites has made an aura of authenticity harder and harder to achieve, the Disney parks have been forced to stay a jump ahead, in order to preserve the basic premise: that this is a movie, enjoyable on the same terms. That it's not a real crocodile, folks (Marling 1997: 111)

and that the view on "far-ends of the world" that is presented in Adventureland has been largely informed by a 1950s idea of these places. An idea made up not only of cinematic influences, but also by other visual material broadly available to the public. According to Philips, a "Western popular fascination with intrepid heroes and unexplored territories has a long history; [as] the illustrated book of travel and foreign adventures dates back to the Crusades and beyond," (2012: 145) yet such ideas were also prominently featured in the popular magazines of the 1950s: *Life*, *Look,* and most importantly here, *National Geographic*. This was not only true for Disneyland's visitors, but back then also for its designers. Today's Imagineers often travel themselves to the countries they want to depict in their designs, and do research to better gain a sense of their cultures (Rohde 2007: n.pag.),[13] but much of the influence they had in their beginnings came from such materials as the *National Geographic* magazine, that Walt Disney himself referred to as a "truly invaluable research tool" and that his movie studio library stocked in great numbers (de Roos 1963: 159).[14] Other source

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[13] Even as late as the 1970s, Imagineer Tony Baxter was still inspired by an article on Bryce Canyon in Utah in a 1958 issue of *National Geographic* in his design of Big Thunder Mountain for Disneyland park. Yet after discovering the article, he and his team took a field trip to the actual Bryce Canyon – a second step that had become common practice for the Imagineers then, yet was not yet in place when Disneyland was designed in the 1950s (Thornton 2011: n.pag.).

[14] For more on the prevalence of the *National Geographic* magazine as a purveyor of the foreign in the American imagination, I recommend Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1993).

material for the ride also came from the photographers that had worked on Disney's True-Life Adventure film *The African Lion* (1955) (Sklar 1964: n.pag.). While this was footage at least directly commissioned by Disney, yet for another purpose, Disneyland's designers still relied only on secondhand material in their process.

As Eric Avila notes, "Walt Disney cannot take credit for inventing these racial stereotypes. Rather, park designers drew on a tradition of racial stereotyping in the national culture. Generations of Americans could view images of racial otherness at world's fairs and expositions of various sorts" (2004: 135). The majority of the visual source material about other cultures that the white middle class was familiar with, in addition to these fairs in the 1950s were movies, books, magazines, and increasingly, television, only rarely was it ever firsthand experience – something that does not only explain the often troublingly racist content of Adventureland, but ultimately also its mass-appeal at the time, as it contributed to a feedback loop of racist stereotyping.

Other secondhand accounts people received in the postwar years about foreign places were the stories of the returning GIs (Kurtti and Gordon 2006: 18). The soldiers stationed in the Pacific Theater of World War II had much to tell upon their return home. While they often spent their time in places that were not quite as idyllic as imagined, and in fact suffered through the same hardships of the war as those stationed elsewhere (about 100,000 men died in South Seas battles), they very much relied on the South Seas myth of the "Polynesian paradise" to make it through (Kirsten 2014: 126–28). Those soldiers that never saw action fostered the myth of the exotic islands themselves, such as James A. Michener, who wrote the bestseller *Tales of the South Pacific* (1947) that would also be adapted into the equally successful Broadway musical *South Pacific* (composed by Rodgers and Hammerstein) only two years later, in 1949, and continued to perpetuate the idea with the film version of the musical in 1958. The musical's songs would go on to be played on the radio for years and became popular standards of the American songbook – among them "Bali Ha'i," and "Some Enchanted Evening."

The traumatized veterans returning home gladly bought into the "South Seas clichés […] where friendly islanders and beautiful wahines frolicked, life was a beach and fun could be had" (Kirsten 2014: 130). As self-described urban archaeologist Sven A. Kirsten argues:

> Eager to re-enter normal life, the G.I.s themselves willingly forgot about the horrors of battle. By selectively embellishing the humorous aspects of their "exotic adventure," the soldiers' experiences were swiftly woven into the mainland's pop culture mythology. […] The South Seas fantasy, having existed long before the war, proved to be stronger than any grim memories. (2014: 133–34)

Before the war, these myths were promulgated by both a penchant for Hawaiian ukulele music (Kirsten 2014: 50) (perpetuated by World's Fairs and expositions that as mentioned, also generally exoticized BIPOC), and the success of such movies as *The Hurricane* (1937) that sparked a string of Polynesian supper clubs and bars modeled on the film's sets. These early themed restaurants used filmic set design – and as urban myth would have it, one of the most popular of these, "Clifton's" in Los Angeles, served as one of the inspirations for Walt Disney when Disneyland was developed (Kirsten 2014: 76). The popularity of South Seas stylings was further exacerbated when Thor Heyerdahl set out on his Kon-Tiki voyage in 1947 and "made 'Tiki' a household name" (Kirsten 2014: 153), especially when his own written accounts, as well as the documentary film based on his voyage, were released in 1950. Notably, Heyerdahl's "unsettling motive" for his travels, an attempt to prove that "a lost white race could originally have settled Polynesia," is often erased from public memory (Rauchway 2019: n.pag.)

All of this would culminate in a venerable "Tiki craze" by 1959 when Hawaii became the 50th state of the United States and continued to be a fad during the 1960s. Soon people would decorate their homes with Tiki artifacts, drink Mai Tais from Tiki mugs at *Trader Vic's*, sing along to Elvis Presley's *Blue Hawaii* (1961), and follow the adventures on *Gilligan's Island* (1964–67) on TV. It is no wonder that Disneyland would see its Polynesian inspired additions in this time frame: the Tahitian Terrace Restaurant and The Enchanted Tiki Room opened at the entrance of Disneyland's Adventureland in 1962 and 1963, respectively.

"Welcome to the wondrous realm of Polynesia […] the Tahitian Terrace! Here Walt Disney has opened wide the portals to an enchanting island world across the blue Pacific […] a world of romance, beauty, and exciting entertainment!," invited the menu of the Tahitian Terrace its guests, and promised a line-up of, among other things, a "thrilling fire-knife dance" and the "traditional grass-skirted 'twist' of Samoa, Tahiti, and Hawaii" (DeCaro, *Tahitian*). While the Terrace (like the rest of Disneyland) did not serve alcohol, it provided an Americanized menu full of Pan-Asian dishes with Hawaiian names. With this, it was in line with the Polynesian restaurants springing up all over the United States, and mostly the West Coast, that benefited from the unfamiliarity of, but great interest in, the Polynesian cuisine at the time (Marling 1997: 118). The entertainment offered was also reminiscent of the tourist-targeted performances on the Islands of Hawaii, especially those at the Polynesian Cultural Center that opened at the same time, in 1963, on Oahu.[15]

The Enchanted Tiki Room, however, is conceptually more intriguing than the Tahitian Terrace. Originally intended to be a dinner show itself, it showcases the

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[15] Run by the Mormon church, the center remains open and popular until today and can be found under http://www.polynesia.com/. For an academic study on it, see Balme (1998).

then newly developed technology of Audio-Animatronics, essentially automata (an early form of robotics) running on compressed air and magnetic tape. Inside the Tiki room, after passing an audio-animatronic Tiki God preshow, the audience is seated on benches in a round room, and when the lights are dimmed, a Cast Member "wakes" the host of the show, the macaw José, who in turns wakes the other three masters of ceremonies (all of them macaws) Michael, Fritz, and Pierre, and a room full of other singing birds and flowers. The show runs seventeen minutes and features three songs by the Sherman brothers, among them the titular "The Tiki Tiki Tiki Room." [16] It is rather curious that the hosts are themselves not Polynesians (and possibly evoking western occupation of the territory), as they are in fact stereotypes of other nations: José speaks with a Mexican, Michael with a British (although meant to be Irish), Fritz with a German, and Pierre with a French accent. Their feathers' colors also correspond to their home nations' flags. The reasons for the choice of these heritages remains unknown, yet cultural historian Craig Svonkin has speculated that it is an ironic nod to a shift in cultural taste for themed restaurants that

> parallels the return of American GIs, for when American GIs came back from Germany and France, Americans wanted German and French restaurants, and when GIs came back from Hawaii or other parts of Oceana, Americans craved faux-Polynesian restaurants. (2011: 114)

While the popularity of Polynesian culture was ultimately more manifold than just the GIs' influence, a stereotypical, though amicable depiction of the nations allied to the United States after World War II seems likely – and given the Cold War, as well as the American occupation of Germany, featuring a German bird in lieu of a Russian one would not be surprising. The addition of Mexico might also be explained by Walt Disney's World War II goodwill tour to Central and Latin America as part of the United States' "Good Neighbor Policy" that resulted in the animated films *Saludos Amigos* (1942) and *The Three Caballeros* (1944) that feature a Brazilian Parrot called José Carioca. The birds also parody famous singers of the time: one chorus of "Let's All Sing Like the Birdies Sing" "has José crooning like Bing Crosby, Fritz scat-singing in a gravelly voice like that of Louis Armstrong and Pierre singing like Maurice Chevalier" (The Disney Wiki n.pag.).

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[16] Richard and Robert Sherman composed several famous songs for Disney's theme parks and movies, among them "It's A Small World" for the ride of the same name, "There's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow" for the Carousel of Progress, as well as the songs for Disney's *The Jungle Book* (1967) and *Mary Poppins* (1964). While Robert Sherman died in 2012, Richard continues to compose music for Disney, including the song for Disneyland's 60th anniversary in 2015, "A Kiss Goodnight."

Such a parody might be the ultimate reason for the inclusion of these characters – American postwar audiences were rather familiar with the accents used, the vocal stylings and stereotypes portrayed here. Yet it is a curious intrusion into the South Seas myth that provided a war-riddled nation (first the hot, then the cold) a sense of escapism – the true underlying reason for the popularity of Tiki.

Besides the zeitgeisty setting, the biggest draw of the attraction certainly was its technology. Before its opening in June of 1963, Robert De Roos, writing for the *National Geographic*, was taken into the workshop at WED by Walt Disney himself and left impressed by the Audio-Animatronics that Disney described to him as "an extension of animated drawings" (1963: 202). And this is what it essentially is, in the typical Disney style: the birds and flowers, even the carved wooden Tiki masks, are anthropomorphic, they can talk and sing, and have stylized facial features (designed by Imagineer Marc Davis) (Kurtti and Gordon 2006: 18). For the times, the technology was, and still remains, impressive (the attraction had cost over a million dollars then) (De Roos 1963: 204). The show was touted as "the combination of entertainment and space-age technology […] 'using a tape machine of the same type used in the Polaris submarine'" (Kurtti and Gordon 2006: 22), drawing droves of astonished guests who had never seen something like it before, and were intrigued by the seemingly futuristic technology – so much so that a bird "barker" once stationed outside the attraction caused traffic jams on the walkways and had to be removed (The Disney Wiki: n.pag.). While audio-animatronics have developed immensely since the advent of computers, the original Tiki Room remained as it was until 2005, when it received a major renovation and technological overhaul, yet the actual show has stayed the same to this day, and long was one of the only remains of the Tiki craze that swept the postwar nation. In the early years, the show was sponsored by United Airlines (that ran promotions for flights to Hawaii at the time) (Franks-Allen n.dat: n.pag.), but was taken over by Dole in 1976, the purveyor of fruit and vegetables (most famous for its hold on the Hawaiian export of pineapples), that also sells concessions, such as the popular Dole Whip pineapple soft serve, at the entrance of the show. The entrance area also includes a pre-show of simpler audio-animatronics of the "Tiki" gods and a video advertising Dole and showcasing the history of the pineapple – at once exoticizing Hawaiian culture through its myths, while also stressing the importance of its agricultural production for the rest of the United States at a time when Hawaii just had become a new state.

The Tiki craze eventually died down after 1965 as a result of a growing awareness of the appropriative depiction of Polynesian culture and labeled as a fad of "'the establishment': middle-aged, well-off, conservative whites, out of touch with America's changing ideals" (Kirsten 2014: 345). A contemporary view on the Tiki phenomenon and its corresponding attractions at Disneyland inescapably brings up the problems of racism, cultural appropriation, and (post)colonial "orientalist"

ideas. Svonkin admits that he was fascinated by all things Tiki and especially the Enchanted Tiki Room as a child growing up in Southern California and only later, as an adult and academic, would reflect on these issues: "I was too focused on experiencing an aesthetics of wonder to notice my pursuit of faux-Hawaiian culture might have been damaging or hurtful to indigenous people" (Svonkin 2011: 108–09). Without a doubt, so were and are many of Disneyland's visitors. As the postwar penchant for all things Tiki, and its reflections in Disneyland had undeniable roots in a larger cultural context, it remains troublesome that the attraction, and especially its preshow, has stuck around – especially as it is tied to the remaining sponsorship of Dole that stipulates it should remain untouched (DeCaro, *Tiki Room*). Nostalgia contributes to keeping it alive, given also Walt Disney's personal involvement in its creation, and so it remains preserved as a "classic" attraction of the early Disneyland.

The Tahitian Terrace also remained in place for several decades, open seasonally in the summer months, then closed in 1993 to make room for a short-lived dinner show based on Disney's *Aladdin* (1992), and eventually, an Aladdin character meet. A revived interest in all things Tiki, or even "Tiki boom" (Rauchway 2019: n.pag.) has recently (in 2019) led to the reopening of the space as The Tropical Hidea-way, and had also resulted in the addition of Trader Sam's Enchanted Tiki Bar and Tangaroa Terrace Restaurant at the Disneyland Hotel in 2012. Historian Erich Rauchway (2019: n.pag.) has argued that "Tiki […] cannot perhaps be consumed by anyone conscious of its history without some sense of inordinate cost." It is indeed hard to fully untangle these establishments from their troubling roots, no matter how fun they may be, and their continued presence in Adventureland normalizes exoticized portrayals that should perhaps have gone out of style with the 1960s.

Frontierland: The Crockett Craze and Other Western Myths

Continuing clockwise from Adventureland, not accidentally, to the West of the park (Disney 1958: 11), one finds Frontierland, where you "enter through the massive log gates of an old eighteenth-century fort into the world of yesterday" (Anon. 1955: n.pag.). Reflecting on the frontier spirit and America's fondness of the Western genre, it features several headliner attractions. Here you can take a scenic tour on the Mark Twain Riverboat down the Rivers of America, or a ride in a stagecoach through the Painted Desert, as "one of America's most colorful scenic wonderlands is reproduced in all its natural beauty" (Anon. 1955: n.pag.). The Disneyland and Santa Fe Railroad stops here as well, and a corral of live miniature horses were here for the first two years of the park, as well as mules that you could take for a ride through the scenery of the Painted Desert. In another section, the Indian Village, Native Americans performed ceremonial dances, and

"[g]uests could meet a full-blooded Indian Chief, buy authentic Native American crafts at the Indian Trading Post, or paddle an Indian War Canoe (which opened on July 4, 1956)" (DeCaro, *Indian Village*). These attractions were troublingly reminiscent of World's Fair displays, exoticizing Native Americans' culture and bodies, and "reinforced stereotypes popularized by films and cartoons, some created by Disney" (Lantz 2019b: 48). By the 1970s, these had disappeared, much like some other racialized depictions of BIPOC – however, as Victoria Pettersen Lantz has noted, it has also "create[d] indexical absence of Nativeness" in Disneyland and "relegated representations to the back areas of Frontierland" (Lantz 2019b: 48).

A headliner attraction for the land, the Rainbow Caverns Mine Train (better known as Mine Train Through Nature's Wonderland as it was called from 1960 to its closing in 1979) opened in 1956, filling the gap of the amusement park staple of the mine train ride. It was replaced in 1979 by Big Thunder Mountain, an extremely popular runaway mine train roller coaster. Other popular attractions include (to this day) Tom Sawyer Island, in the middle of the Rivers of America, and the Frontierland Shooting Gallery.

Frontierland owes even more of its design to movies than Adventureland does, as its original plans are based on a cinematic imagination of the West, as the Western genre had reached that had reached a high point of popularity in the 1950s. As Marling outlines, Frontierland had originally represented a time ca. 1840, which was thematically structured around "a slightly older rendition of Main Street," featuring "the full cast of buildings needed to reenact the Hollywood myth of the West: the marshal's office, assay office, stage depot, general store, and the saloon" (1997: 103). While, as described above, this concept changed until its opening, today's set up owes a lot to its cinematic predecessors, as this anecdote exemplifies: When developing Disneyland, Walt Disney urged Imagineer Harper Goff to design the Golden Horseshoe Saloon (a dining show venue) based on the saloon in *Calamity Jane* (1953). Ironically and unbeknownst to Disney, Goff found himself reusing his own work, as he had been the set designer for the film (Marling 1997: 105). Sam McKim, another Imagineer who designed much of Frontierland, based his work on his own "memories of pulp westerns, cowboy movies, and [his] experience as a bit actor hanging around Hollywood western movie lots in the late 1930s" (Steiner 1998: 11).

Ultimately, a Western setting was especially attractive to Disneyland's audience as the genre had received a big burst in popularity throughout the early Cold War years. After all, American values and traditions are at the core of the Western, as "no other genre is more American than the Western, more engaged with such fundamental American concepts as individualism, progress, democracy," according to cultural historian Steven McVeigh (2007: 76). Several studies of the cultural history of the Western, such as McVeigh's, or Stanley Corkin's *Cowboys as Cold Warriors*, have outlined the relevance of the genre for the American imagination

during the Cold War. Between 1947 and 1962, more Westerns were produced in Hollywood (as much as 54 films in 1958 alone) compared to the years before and since (Corkin 2004: 2), and as Corkin argues, these films "helped audiences assimilate major events and both predict and react to ideological intentions" (2004: 2). There is, for example, a clear parallel between the racist depictions of "Indian" attacks in these movies and the fear of a Communist invasion that swept the nation in the 1950s (McVeigh 2007: 78). McVeigh has also argued that even the fear of the Atomic bomb was ultimately entangled in these narratives, as the Atomic age's "Doomsday clock" can be likened to the fatal approach of "High noon" (McVeigh 2007: 78). So as time in the Western "brings violence, confrontation and death" (McVeigh 2007: 81), it is all the more fitting that Frontierland, as the rest of Disneyland, is essentially timeless. There are no visible clocks anywhere to be found[17] – not even on the station of the Santa Fe Railroad that operates without a timetable. This is somewhat ironic given the fact that the building of the railroad is what introduced the concept of time zones to the United States in the first place, and thus influenced the perception of time nationwide. But Disneyland, only focuses on the positive, escapist elements of the Western: the rugged hero protecting his people, the wilderness beckoning to be explored. It offers just what the Cold War audience also ultimately wanted from the films: the triumph of the American spirit over outside forces, restoring order and peace; simple solutions in an increasingly difficult world.

Adding to the popularity of the land was also a specific intellectual property of the Western genre, produced by Walt Disney himself: the television mini-series *Davy Crockett*. The show aired as part of the *Disneyland* program in five installments between December 15, 1954 and December 14, 1955, and starred Fess Parker as the titular hero. The immediate and immense popularity of the show took everyone by surprise, especially because the choice of Crockett as the epitome of an American folk hero was a rather unusual one. As historians Randy Roberts and James S. Olson outline, in early 1954 the historical figure of Davy Crockett was still "relatively obscure […]. There were few serious historical articles about Crockett, no major biography, and outside of Texas hardly any interest in him" (Olson and Roberts 2001: 239). However, other characters that would have been more obvious for a filmic treatment were discarded by Disney for varied reasons – Daniel Boone, for example, was deemed unfit as Revolutionary War movies had never fared well at the box office and the era was hardly ever portrayed on screen (a fact that remains true today) (Hochgeschwender 2016: 432–35). He also died peacefully at old age, and therefore lacked a certain dramatic potential (Olson and Roberts 2001: 240). Yet the legends surrounding Crockett and his (presumed) death

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[17] For more on time in the theme park, see Carlà-Uhink et al. (2017).

at the Alamo, as well as his political career proved a more than perfect fit for a television show: "By the end of the three shows, Fess Parker would be very well known, the power of television would be fully recognized, and Davy Crockett would be the most famous frontiersman in American history" (Olson and Roberts 2001: 240).

Originally only those three episodes had been produced and the character had been killed off at the end of the third (dying at the Alamo), but another two episodes were quickly added. The first three episodes also received a cinematic release as *Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier* in May 1955. "The Ballad of Davy Crockett," a song that originally premiered on the first episode of the *Disneyland* television series in October 1954, then performed by The Wellingtons, was re-recorded for the film by Bill Hayes, and in quick succession, by Fess Parker himself, as well as by Tennessee Ernie Ford. All three new recordings made the Billboard charts in 1955 and became equally popular in Europe as the film was also released overseas; a French version of the song by Annie Cordy stayed at the top of the charts in France for five weeks in August of 1956. Disney capitalized on this "Crockett craze" by licensing the show's rights to several companies, producing all kinds of merchandise – whether directly related to the movie's hero (plastic rifles, bearskin rugs), or not (soap, bedsheets) (Olson and Roberts 2001: 244). Most popular was a replica of Davy's coonskin cap, and by the end of 1955, Americans had spent over $300 million on Crockett paraphernalia (Olson and Roberts 2001: 245). This spoke immensely to the buying power of 1950s Americans in general, but also especially to an (indirect) buying power of school-age children, who had only just started to become a target for marketing: the baby-boom generation.[18]

The "Crockett craze" would shape American culture for years to come: besides the economic factors, it cemented the medium of television as a powerful marketing tool and conveyor of American values. Davy Crockett opened up the often-brutal genre of the Western to children and their families, and so fostered the communal experience that television would quickly become. That Davy resonated so deeply with these families had essentially the same reason that Westerns did in general: he was clearly portrayed as a Cold War hero in these films (Olson and Roberts 2001: 241). "Davy was a visible expression of the Truman Doctrine, and his mission in Texas was to fight the encroachment of an evil empire, in this case Santa Anna's forces. Disney consciously turned the Alamo into freedom's last stand" (Olson and Roberts 2001: 242) – and so would make the battle and Davy symbolic figures for an American national culture of the 1950s, ensuring that indeed no-one would soon forget the Alamo.

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[18] For further discussion on the baby boomers and the Crockett Craze, see O'Boyle (1996).

As the "Crockett craze" thus not only promoted, but also directly financed Disneyland, it comes as no surprise that Davy was featured prominently at the park's opening ceremony, with actors Fess Parker and Buddy Ebsen (who played Crockett's friend and sidekick George Russell) dressed as their characters riding on horseback through the gates of Frontierland. In the first months after the opening, visitors could also stop by the Davy Crockett museum there, featuring an Alamo exhibit and a historical firearm display provided by none other than the National Rifle Association (D23: n.pag.). Although it would resonate for much longer than that in American culture, the craze was ultimately short-lived, and while the wax figures of Parker and Ebsen that were originally made for the museum were moved to Fort Wilderness on Tom Sawyer Island (D23: n.pag.), there are only details that remind visitors of Davy Crockett in today's Frontierland: the merchandise store Pioneer Mercantile's entrance sign still attributes the locale to Davy, and a small and often overlooked attraction, the "Davy Crockett Explorer Canoes" that you can take for a ride on Frontierland's Rivers of America, is named after the character.[19]

Yet while Davy Crockett's presence practically vanished from Frontierland, the political implications of his myth are still clearly seen and felt. Walt Disney's own patriotism and fondness for and protectiveness of American history loom large over the land – after all, he named it *Frontier*land, not Westernland; a fact that came to matter when Disneyland parks opened abroad. American historian Fredrick Jackson Turner's famous "frontier thesis," published in 1893, outlines the significance of the frontier myth for the foundation of an American national ideology, and describes it as essential to an American character. This idea directly corresponds to the popularity of the Western genre, further marking it as something specifically American. By the 1950s, there had already been a frontier nostalgia, and this is apparent in Walt Disney's dedication of Frontierland:

> All of us, whether 10th generation or naturalized Americans, have cause to be proud of our country's history, shaped by the pioneering spirit of our forefathers. It is to those hardy pioneers, men and women of vision, faith and courage, that we have dedicated Frontierland. Here you can return to Frontier America, from the Revolutionary War to the final taming of the Great Southwest. […] [The] adventures in Frontierland are designed to give you the feeling of having "lived," even for a short while, during our country's days of pioneer development. (Anon. 1959: 14)

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[19] This attraction was originally called Indian War Canoes. The name was changed in 1971 (Lantz 2019b: 48).

A later guidebook, from 1964, claims that "[m]uch of America's history is the story of frontiers awaiting conquest," and explains that

> Disneyland's frontier stretches from the 1790's to the 1870's, and within the log stockade that serves as its entrance, touches on some of the most colorful aspects of American pioneer history: the boisterous frontier of Davy Crockett, the southwest with its rollicking dance halls, the charm and elegance of early New Orleans, the captivating lure of the ghost towns, and the romance of Tom Sawyer's Mississippi. (Sklar 1964: n.pag.)

Such nostalgia for the Old West and the Frontier myth was directly exacerbated by the Cold War that pitted the United States' ideological ideas of freedom and rugged individualism against the collectivist ideas of the Soviet Union's communism. In this context, the frontier stopped being an existing, physical barrier and was transformed into a purely ideological idea – informing a politically conservative agenda that Walt Disney himself had increasingly held after the 1940s. According to geographer Richard Francaviglia, Frontierland can be read directly through this lens (1999: 167–68). Popular culture was a powerful conveyor of this ideology: "Children who had never heard of Fredrick Jackson Turner […] nevertheless instinctively recognized and reveled in the escape from authority figures, the joy of exploration, and the individual freedom offered by the American frontier myth" (O'Boyle 1996: 74). And Frontierland became the first three-dimensional space that would embody it, de facto turning the frontier myth into a walkable environment for baby-boomer children and their parents.

Walt Disney's personal frontier nostalgia also played an important role in Frontierland. As he outlined in a short article for *True West* magazine in 1958, he held a special "fondness" for the land as it reminded him of his own childhood, his "boyhood memories" (Disney 1958: 10). Disney was born in Chicago, but his family moved to small-town Marceline, Missouri when he was just shy of five years old. In his own words, "[t]hat was in 1906, when elements of the frontier were still visible in rural Missouri" (Disney 1958: 11). So, he felt he had still lived the frontier myth, and as a child was fascinated by the "big river boats" and railroads that traversed the area. His fascination did not stop as an adult, as his aforementioned love for railroads attests, and so it is unsurprising that a big stern-wheeler called "Mark Twain" has been transporting guests along Frontierland's Rivers of America since Disneyland's opening in 1955. The name is far from accidental – as Disney proudly notes, "Marceline was only sixty miles from Hannibal, Mark Twain's home town" (Disney 1958: 11). As a boy, Disney would read the books available "in the family library. Many of them concerned the Civil War and tales of the frontier, both true and fictional. That was when I became acquainted with

heroes like Daniel Boone, Thomas Hart Benton, Davy Crockett and Mark Fink"
(Disney 1958: 11). The influence of these books, including Mark Twain's Tom
Sawyer novels that Disney was very fond of (West 2011: 103), are clearly present in
Frontierland: in the middle of the Rivers of America, Tom Sawyer Island provides
children (of all ages) with an adventure playground to explore "to your heart's
content" (Disney 1958: 13), reminiscent of the "nearby caves like the one in which
Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher got lost" (Disney 1958: 11) and of Disney's own
childhood memories. When the Island opened in June 1956, Disney even arranged
for a boy and a girl from Hannibal to come to the opening and christened it with
bottles of water from the Mississippi river (West 2011: 104). Disney had a very
nostalgic look back on his childhood years and he admitted that he had "put in all
the things [on Tom Sawyer Island] I wanted to do as a kid – and couldn't" (quoted
in West 2011: 103). His personal influence is a big piece of what makes up the
unique mixture of Frontierland, and ultimately Disneyland in total.

It should be noted that while Disney's personal interest did play a big role
(after all, in his position as the founder of the company and especially the head of
WED Enterprises that designed the park, what he said was usually not refuted),
his ideas also were easy to market to the visitors of Disneyland. Disney's nostal-
gia (and personal ideology) spoke to his generational peers, whether in the case
of Frontierland or Main Street, U.S.A.. And often not just his own generation: by
the 1950s, after all, works like Mark Twain's books had long entered American
cultural memory and had become a staple of many a home library. Consequently,
Frontierland remains an important part of the park that continues to draw crowds
long after the 1950s and even after the end of the Cold War, and thus "indicate[s]
that the frontier is [still] America's most potent myth and Disney its most effec-
tive merchandiser" (Steiner 1998: 4). Yet Frontierland has also managed to stay
relevant thanks to some updates to the attractions, such as the addition of a roller
coaster with the opening of Big Thunder Mountain in 1979, and even changes to
Tom Sawyer Island, that received a pirate spin called "Pirates Lair on Tom Sawyer
Island" coinciding with the opening of the third installment of the *Pirates of the
Caribbean* movie series in May 2007. How this retheming ultimately tied in the
land and its backstory with some of the other bigger, and much earlier changes to
the area becomes clear when looking at New Orleans Square.

New Orleans Square: Stretching the Frontier

When Disneyland opened in 1955, Frontierland included New Orleans Street,
featuring Aunt Jemima's Pancake House (later Aunt Jemima's Kitchen), including
an African-American actress playing the titular character. While the character of
"Aunt Jemima" originally came from Minstrel shows, her inclusion in Disneyland

is directly tied to the "Aunt Jemima" pancake mix – a brand owned by the Quaker Oats Company that sponsored the restaurant. As such racist stereotyping rightfully sparked controversies in the 1960s, both the restaurant and the actress had been removed by the late 1960s, followed by the end of sponsorship by Quaker Oats in 1970 (Avila 2004: 134–35). And yet it is another example of racialized bodies that were part of the themed space in the early years of Disneyland – and given the continued existence of the Jungle Cruise, even remain part of it to this day.

New Orleans Street turned into a full-fledged land of the park, New Orleans Square, on July 24, 1966. This was the last big park opening Walt Disney would be able to attend himself, as he died only a few months later, on December 15. The small land houses were two of the most important and iconic attractions of the park that Walt himself still oversaw, but would never see completed: Pirates of the Caribbean (opened March 18, 1967) and the Haunted Mansion (opened August 9, 1969), as well as the Blue Bayou Restaurant and the exclusive Club 33.[20] All of the attractions, as well as several smaller restaurants, are situated along a street themed to New Orleans' iconic French Quarter. The choice of New Orleans allegedly came from Walt Disney's personal love for the city and ties it to the rest of Frontierland through the historic storyline of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. The idea for this addition had been gestating for a while, as Disney's 1958 article on Frontierland attests; speaking about the area next to the Santa Fe railroad station, he states: "In that area I'm planning a Louisiana Purchase Section, where we'll reproduce the New Orleans French Quarter, together with a fantastic Haunted House filled with all manner of delightful ghosts" (Disney 1958: 12). The Square conjures up New Orleans' atmosphere in little details, such as a voodoo charm necklace, or a small banner in the Mardi Gras colors on one of the balconies, left behind by its "residents." The music playing in the land is, naturally, jazz – not just in form of a background "loop" but also by regular live performances of Dixieland and jazz combos. The food served includes beignets and (non-alcoholic) mint juleps. New Orleans square is, as Chris Strodder so correctly sums it up, "a compressed idealization of what everyone still imagines a perfect block of New Orleans should look like" (2012: 304–05), and therefore a model example of theming.

Victor H. Schiro, then the mayor of New Orleans, attended the opening ceremony of New Orleans Square, and Walt Disney declared him the mayor of New Orleans Square as well (DeCaro, *New Orleans Square*). Schiro in turn made Disney an honorary citizen of his city (Sampson 2008: n.pag.). Disney apparently joked that it was built for the same amount paid for the entire Louisiana Purchase in

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[20] Club 33 is a club that charges a steep membership fee and houses a restaurant – the only one serving alcohol in Disneyland. Walt Disney had originally intended to entertain VIP guests there, and many of today's members still use it for hosting important business clients.

1803 (Mahne 2012: n.pag.) – not adjusted for inflation – and Schiro complimented that it looked just like its namesake, but was apparently "somewhat miffed when Walt pointed out that the Disneyland version was cleaner" (Wright 2008: 59). The idealized nature of New Orleans Square, besides being integral to the Disneyland experience, is also relevant when considering the reasons for its inclusion in the park. Legend has it that Walt loved to spend time in the city, and had gotten much inspiration there for his endeavor – while antiquing with his wife Lillian, he had found several things that would wind up in Disneyland, such as a small electronical bird that would go on to inspire the Enchanted Tiki Room (Mahne 2012: n.pag.) and the whole system of Audio-Animatronic technology (integral also to both the Pirates of the Caribbean and the Haunted Mansion rides). The Disneyland parades also apparently took inspiration from Mardi Gras parades (Mahne 2012: n.pag.).[21] So the New Orleans Walt knew was a place of escapism and inspiration for him, and this is reflected in its sanitized portrayal. Disney's interest in the city was of course not something he had alone – by the 1950s, New Orleans had emerged as a major tourist destination within the United States. As sociologist Kevin Fox Gotham has argued, an "authentic" New Orleans was marketed to tourists at the time via three strategies: "romanticization of the past, idealization of the present, and aestheticization of space" (Gotham 2007: 97) – essentially the same tools that Disney used in their portrayal of New Orleans Square. The New Orleans here is not only evoked through the French Quarter standing in for the whole city, it is also a New Orleans lifted out of time, again an idea of a "miniaturized" past. It is "a New Orleans of a century ago when she was the 'Gay Paree' of the American frontier," according to Walt Disney's opening speech (quoted in Sukovaty 2010: n.pag.). This would set it around 1860 – yet signs of slavery, secession, or the Civil War are nowhere in sight; the focus is nostalgia, not historical authenticity. Thematically, the speech again evokes the frontier, making clear the connection to the adjacent Frontierland and Disney's version of the frontier myth. Another colonial "frontier," the Caribbean, would later famously be represented with the opening of the Pirates of the Caribbean ride on the Square. Besides its whitewashed portrayal, the South, albeit in sanitized form, was finally included in the American imagination of Disneyland.

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[21] Disneyland parks usually feature a daily parade, sometimes two (one in the afternoon and one in the evening).

Bear/Critter Country: The Southern Wild

The South would again be represented in Disneyland when Splash Mountain opened in 1989, a flume ride telling the story of B'rer Rabbit and his adventures, based on the controversial movie *Song of the South* from 1946.[22] Named after the starring critters, a small area adjacent to Frontierland has since been known as Critter Country, partly themed to the rural Georgia of Song of the South, yet ultimately representing a fantastical version of what could be called a "Southern wild." This theming had been cautiously introduced in the years between 1972 and 1989, when this part of the park had been called Bear Country and only housed the Country Bear Jamboree show (that would be replaced in 2003 with The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh dark ride). Bear Country itself had replaced the Indian Village in 1972, as mentioned above, when such a racialized representation of Native Americans had become severely controversial and outdated, and "the subservient roles and mere presence of people of color in Frontierland [had] sparked troubling questions" (Steiner 1998: 13) in the 1960s. As historian Michael Steiner argues, rather than confront these questions, it was "much easier […] and consistent with Disney's utopianism simply to erase them from the script" (1998: 13). The white, yet classist, "hillbilly" stereotypes portrayed in the Country Bear Jamboree apparently seemed safer in comparison. The erasure of Uncle Remus from the narrative of Splash Mountain meanwhile avoids racial complication, but at a price:

> As part of its late capitalist project, Disney, in other words, disconnects *Song of the South* from Splash Mountain, erasing past connections to racism and the institution of slavery rather than engaging directly or indirectly with it as means of not offending any potential consumer and selling more theme park tickets, Splash Mountain t-shirts, and B'rer Rabbit stuffed animals. (Bringardner 2019: 116)

What remains are (literally) Southern accents here and there, and a fantastical version of the Southern wild, only inhabited by animals, and the adjacent sanitized urban environment of New Orleans Square.[23]

Fantasyland: Remediation and Synergy

Fantasyland, in the north of the park, is the land people most often associate with Disneyland, as it has the clearest connection to Disney's animated movies – or at least it did in 1955. While, as argued before, ultimately other Intellectual Prop-

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[22] For more on this movie, see Sperb (2013).

[23] In June 2020, Disney announced that they would retheme Splash Mountain to the New Orleans-set *Princess and the Frog* (2009).

erties (IPs) owned by Disney (such as the *Davy Crockett* films) could be found in other lands as well, their animated films had stuck to Fantasyland in the early years – a fact that would change in the decades to come, when further animated creations started to populate almost all areas of the park. However, Fantasyland is and was where the animated classics were turned into so-called "dark rides"[24] and occasionally other classic amusement attractions: Peter Pan's Flight and the Pirate Ship, Mr. Toad's Wild Ride (from *Wind in the Willows*), Snow White Ride-Thru (later called Snow White's Scary Adventures), Dumbo Flying Elephants, Casey Jr. Circus Train (from *Dumbo*), the Mad Tea Party (from *Alice in Wonderland*; an Alice in Wonderland dark ride was also built in 1958), and the Mickey Mouse Club Theater (showing films for children). The Storybook Land Canal Boats take you through miniature scenes of fairy tales[25] and the classic King Arthur Carousel tie in with the medieval fairy-tale setting of Sleeping Beauty Castle that anchors the land.

While often perceived as mostly aimed at children, Fantasyland would in 1966 add the universally appealing (but by many, famously loathed) It's a Small World (taken directly from the 1964/65 World's Fair UNICEF Pavilion) and even sooner, in 1959, the Matterhorn Bobsleds, Disneyland's first roller coaster. While the original designs for the land had foreseen Tudor style facades for the buildings, evoking fairy-tale illustrations, budget constraints had led to a much simpler tournament tent-look. This was finally rectified by the major overhaul of the land in 1983 that also added Pinocchio's Daring Journey but saw the removal of the Pirate Ship. In 1993, another small land called Mickey's Toontown was added to Disneyland, this time right next to Fantasyland, themed to the Toontown in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988) and featuring such attractions as Mickey's House.

While ultimately all lands in Disneyland had their roots in filmic or literary creations, Fantasyland directly transfers Disney's animated movies to the theme park and banked on the marketability of these creations. Fans of Disney movies had long asked for a tour of the Walt Disney Studios or some other way to get closer to the world of these films, and so Fantasyland was the first venue to provide this opportunity. Yet while much of the other lands' architecture could draw on direct adaptation of live action set design, Fantasyland presented the Imagineers with the challenge of bringing a completely drawn world to life and so it "rapidly became

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[24] Dark rides take riders in small vehicles on a guided track through several scenes in a show building. These scenes are artificially lit for effect and are thus not actually "dark" but take place in an otherwise dark environment that hides the set structures, much like on a theater stage.

[25] For the first year after opening, the attraction was known as Canal Boats of the World and was supposed to feature miniature scenes from different lands of the world, yet as budget ran out, there were only muddy hills left for the guests to view. The fairy-tale scenes were then added and the ride reopened in 1956.

the preserve of the animators" (Marling 1997: 123). They were inspired by their own work on the early Disney animated features, but also by illustrations in children's books, such as those by Gustaf Tenggren (Marling 1997: 123) (who had also worked on several movies for Walt Disney Animation as a chief illustrator). Budget shortages led to the aforementioned simplistic design for the facades of the buildings, but the insides of the so-called "dark rides" were much more sophisticated: applying the technique of film sets or theater stages, and specially constructed vehicles, they were essentially ride-throughs of the stories. While walking through Disneyland itself is, as argued before, a cinematic experience, the inside of these rides was in many ways animation come to life in a three-dimensional environment. They were supposed to transplant the guest not only directly into the world of the fairy tale, but also make it possible to become part of the narrative, a character within the adventure, as a guidebook from 1959 attests:

> In Fantasyland, those classic stories of childhood have become actual realities for you to participate in. Here in "the happiest kingdom of them all," you can journey with Snow White through the dark forests to the home of the Seven Dwarfs; fly with Peter Pan from the clutches of Mr. Smee and Captain Hook; and race with Mr. Toad on his wild auto ride through Old London Town (Anon 1959: n.pag.)

This practice is still at the core of Disney Imagineering until today, as Imagineer Joe Rohde stresses that guests at Disney's theme parks "are given roles within the narrative" in order to immerse them (2007: n.pag.). Early versions of some of these attractions thus even tried to convey the story from a first-person perspective of the main character, supplanting them entirely with the guest, something that failed massively in the case of the Snow White's Adventures dark ride: "you were taking Snow White's place […] you were the girl that was being threatened. And nobody got it. Nobody actually figured out that they were Snow White. They just wondered where the hell Snow White was," points out Imagineer Ken Anderson (quoted in Rahn 2011: 94). As literary scholar Suzanne Rahn has chronicled, the perspective of the story had led to the ride being rather scary, following Snow White's frightening journey while being chased by the evil old hag, and omitting most of the cheerier scenes with the Dwarfs and a likeness of Snow White herself. The ride therefore went through several iterations in an attempt at making it more child-friendly, and essentially trying to follow the film's story more closely, but never availed to much success (Rahn 2011: 87–100). Yet as this example shows, Disneyland's guests were expecting to see the Disney characters, songs, and scenes they knew from the films, not any of the other interpretations of these popular fairy tales or otherwise altered versions of them. Visual iconography was and is very important to the audience of

these rides, something that is usually almost impossible with the classic oral or written retellings of fairy tales. As folklore historian Alfred Messerli has noted, in fairy tales "[o]nly those spatial indicators are provided that are absolutely necessary to understand the story" (2005: 281), as their narratives are generally placeless as to be perceived as universal, and also as timeless. While Disney claims the same for their stories, the media of the film and the theme park complicate this understanding of space, as here the visual nature of the story makes it necessary to create a specific world for the tale. This also includes the presence of the Disney characters in the park – an element only rarely addressed by scholars so far.[26] Meeting these characters and taking pictures with them has always been a vital element of the Disneyland experience, and mostly relies on visual iconography to make the guests believe that who they are meeting is indeed the "real" Snow White.

While going into more detail of the prevalence and especially the criticism of this prevalence of the so-called "Disney version"[27] of these fairy tales would lead us too far away from the topic at hand, it is clear that this specific iconography was and is necessary for the success of Disneyland. To explain why iconography is so important, we have to take a step back and take another look at the relationship of film and theme park. Media scholars Grusin and Bolter have described the process of the way movies have been incorporated into Disneyland as "remediation" (2000: 169–83), while American studies scholar Florian Freitag has used the term "intermedial transposition" for "the cases in which a particular movie is translated into the medium of the theme park" (2017: 710). Theme parks are media themselves, but they also contain other media within them – such as movies, music, and art, and have therefore been called "hybrid" media (Freitag 2017: 706). As mentioned before, Disneyland was designed with movie strategies in mind: many sources (e.g. Mitrasinovic 2006: 121) report that Imagineers worked with storyboards for the concept of the park, as is conventional in animation. Yet, as a three-dimensional space functions very differently than the two-dimensional animated "space," they had to invent ways to transfer the process onto the theme park. As architecture scholar Brian Lonsway describes,

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[26] For one of the few articles on this subject, see Schwarz (2016); Lantz (2019b) also briefly discusses the meet and greet with Pocahontas. In her recent publication, Williams (2020) provides a more comprehensive look at these encounters through a lens of fan studies.

[27] There have been several academic studies on this topic, most of them critical of the concept; Richard Schickel's book *The Disney Version* is among the earliest and most often-cited, within fairy-tale studies, Jack Zipes' works are similarly important and argue against the prevalence of a Disney "culture industry." See Schickel (1968) or Zipes (1983). Both books have received several new editions.

designers had to determine how to architecturally create the spatial equivalent to the panels of the storyboard, how to "tween" in space given the perceptual variance implicit in complex and highly populated space, and how, perhaps most difficult, to enforce a kind of linear experience of space so that narratives would be understood in their proper sequences (2009: 116)

This is especially the case within attractions, as ride vehicles and their rails clearly mark out the directions for the rides and make it possible to guide the guests exactly where the designers want them to go. The dark ride, usually retelling the story of a movie in very compressed form through evocative scenes, is the most obvious example of this practice. As several scholars (e.g. Lonsway 2009: 121) have pointed out, the vehicles also evoke a cinematic point of view through programmed turns.

The storyline of a movie is usually greatly compressed in theme park rides, and without ever having seen the film it is based on, it is most likely very confusing to ride one of Fantasyland's dark rides – especially if the aforementioned visual iconography and possibility of identification with central characters are missing. This need for previous knowledge is something that could be argued is intrinsic to immersion in general – as studies of immersion in different media have proven, interest in the story is vital for anyone to be immersed in a narrative (Hofer and Wirth 2008: 167). While this feeling of immersion can be evoked by more general theming (say "Western" or "the Future"), as long as it relies on the general principles and attention to detail, in attractions and spaces that are themed to certain works of popular culture, it seems crucial to know them beforehand to really enjoy their theme park counterparts. Dark rides "are effective only because the Disney narratives on which they are based are omnipresent; without the intertextual interpretive context provided by the films, these rides would be meaningless – a series of disconnected images" (Aronstein 2012: 67).

At first glance, this seems to be a rather risky practice, as it might drive away a lot of potential customers. Yet Disney has relied on this principle since the opening of Disneyland in 1955, and still does so today in even greater proportions. The built-in knowledge a visitor needs is precisely what drives their theme parks. They rely on the fact that even if someone does indeed not know a certain movie, an attraction or show in the park might actually spark an interest in watching said movie. And vice versa – if someone loves or at least knows one or more Disney movies, it may inspire them to visit their parks. So, when Disney "worked to turn those very familiar films world into immediately recognizable physical worlds" (Beatty quoted in Hamburg 2012: 4–7), they already had a huge built in audience, and Fantasyland is the most obvious example of this practice. From the beginning, Disneyland has been a highly synergistic effort.

On the one hand, this built-in audience was a huge boost for the theme park, but on the other, Disney equally used the park to actively promote new movie releases: Sleeping Beauty Castle, Disneyland's world-famous park icon, was only ascribed to the character of Sleeping Beauty to promote the upcoming film of the same name – even though it does not even really look like the castle in the movie! Serving as the entrance to Fantasyland, its primary function was ultimately that of a so-called "weenie" (sometimes spelled "wienie"), a term coined by Walt Disney, that describes a device for crowd control used "to attract and then disperse pedestrian mobs in a variety of directions" (Doss 1997: 182) – or in a filmic, storytelling sense, "a motivating object that draws viewers into the narrative" (Bayless 2012: 47). Yet for Disneyland's opening day guests, the castle did not offer anything in and of itself (besides the obvious photo opportunities). As the first floor was accessible, it seemed a waste of space, and so in April 1957, a walk-through diorama of the concept art for the movie (mostly done by animator Eyvind Earle) was opened to the public and dedicated by actress Shirley Temple. As *Sleeping Beauty* did not open in US cinemas until January 1959, this exhibit was in fact nothing more than a rather prominent marketing campaign for the film right in the heart of the magic kingdom. Originally, the film struggled financially (largely due to its high production costs), but it was critically lauded and became a "Disney classic" in its own right (supported by several cinematic re-releases, a common practice in the days before the advent of VCRs), and so the exhibit remained in Disneyland. It was closed in October 2001 without a public statement given as to the reason (but likely because it proposed a security threat after 9/11). In 2008, however, it was refurbished and reopened and remains there to this day.

These synergistic efforts ultimately explain why the Bavarian-inspired castle had become home to a princess from an originally French fairy tale. It has become common knowledge that in the designs for Sleeping Beauty Castle, the Imagineers were inspired by King Ludwig's famous Neuschwanstein Castle towering over Hohenschwangau, near Füssen, Bavaria. Yet as cultural historian Erika Doss and literary scholar Martha Bayless both note, it is ultimately closer in style to a projected castle at Falkenstein, also near Füssen, that the "Fairy Tale King" Ludwig had planned with architect Max Schultze – a *maquette* of it can be found at the König-Ludwig-II Museum in Herrenchiemsee (Doss 1997: 183–84; Bayless 2012: 45). As Christina Gutierrez-Dennehy has argued, Disney's medievalism is "tied to images of middle-class whiteness" (2019: 66), and that the Middle Ages depicted in Fantasyland are "specifically reflective of conservative values, particularly in regard to the performance of gender and notions of American tourism" (2019: 68).

Indeed, tourism played a major role here, as by the 1950s, Americans had started visiting Neuschwanstein and surrounding sites and cities in Bavaria in droves (Doss 1997: 179–89). As US forces were still occupying parts of West Germany, the country

became increasingly interesting for American tourists, and "Ludwig's castles were landmark 'must-sees' among the standard tourist packages assembled for tens of thousands of GIs stationed at bases from Bad Tölz to Baumholder, and for Americans from all over the States" (Doss 1997: 184). The affluence of the 1950s made such overseas travel financially feasible for more and more people, and commercial transatlantic air travel became more regular after World War II, including such milestones as the first transatlantic jet flight in 1958, massively cutting down travel time between Europe and the United States. Walt Disney himself had traveled through Europe as early as 1935,[28] a trip that served as a huge source of inspiration for much of his films and also Disneyland. Many of the impressions he gained during his travels would ultimately end up in the park, such as the addition of the Matterhorn Bobsleds roller coaster in 1959. Again a good example of synergy, the coaster was based on the film *Third Man on the Mountain* (1959), which was set in the Swiss Alps and had itself been a direct product of Disney's earlier visit to Switzerland.[29] Such sites, especially those including medieval architecture and design, were and are appealing to Americans as the United States for obvious reasons lacks in those – in many ways then, the portrayal of castles or rural medieval villages in Fantasyland (even if viewed through the lens of fairy tale) were as exotic to the American eye as the far-off jungles and rivers of Adventureland. And just as Adventureland (and ultimately, all of Disneyland) at the same time, they fulfilled a deep-seated need for reassurance and escapism. Fantasyland in general, and Sleeping Beauty Castle in particular, evoke a sense of a timeless medievalism[30] and fairy-tale world, often connected to Europe, immersing guests into the world of Disney's animated fairy tales. Such pure escapism represented "an entire national mindset […] of security and reassurance" (Doss 1997: 180) of 1950s Cold War America. Thus, it seems fitting that the fairy-tale castle would come to symbolize Disney, as it embodies much of what made the company successful for decades to come: synergy, an eye for design, and an uncanny intuition for zeitgeist.

Tomorrowland: Domestic Futures and Visions of Mobility

"Whatever your dreams of the future may be, you will find them all realized in Tomorrowland" (Anon. 1955: n.pag.), proclaims an official brochure made for Disneyland's opening. The fifth original land of the park, it is situated on its Eastern end, making a right from Main Street, U.S.A. In 1955, the future it depicted

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[28] For more on these travels, see Ghez (2013).
[29] For more on Walt Disney's European influences, see Allan (1999).
[30] For more on Disney's portrayal of the middle-ages see Aronstein and Pugh's essay collection (2012).

was that of the far-off year of … 1986.[31] The Clock of the World in the middle of Tomorrowland showcased worldwide time zones (when such a thing was still uncommon and thus exciting), Autopia provided children with the opportunity to ride "sports cars of the future on a 100% safe freeway" (Anon. 1955: n.pag.), and the *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* exhibit promoted Disney's live action film based on Jules Verne's famous novel with "a walk-through tour of an atomic-powered submarine" (Anon. 1955: n.pag.). The TWA moonliner and its Rocket to the Moon attraction offered guests a "round trip to the moon" (Anon. 1955: n.pag.). Yet the ways of living in the future on earth equally played a role, as budget constrains meant that much more attractions had to be prominently sponsored by corporations showcasing their products, such as *Crane*'s Bathroom of Tomorrow (1956–60) or *Monsanto*'s House of the Future (1957–67). In 1959, three major (the first "E-Ticket," the most highly priced and most popular) attractions opened: the Matterhorn (officially part of Fantasyland, but directly adjacent to Tomorrowland), the Submarine Voyage, and the now-famous Alweg Monorail, taking guests to the Disneyland Hotel outside the park. Another big expansion followed at the end of the 1960s, when some of the attractions that Disney had built for the New York 1964/65 World's Fair were added to Tomorrowland: the Carousel of Progress and the People Mover (originally part of Ford's Magic Skyway).

As the future depicted in Tomorrowland constantly became outdated, frequent changes became necessary, and so besides the World's Fair attractions, it was completely redesigned in 1967 and several other big attractions were added (touted "New Tomorrowland"): Flight to the Moon, Adventure Thru Inner Space, and the Rocket Jets. After the moon landing in 1969, many of the attractions slowly lost their appeal yet again, and further changes were made over the 1970s, including the addition of the Space Mountain roller coaster (1977). Star Tours, a simulator attraction based on the *Star Wars* franchise, was added in 1987, marking a further shift toward a more fantastical, and less utopian vision of the future. This was cemented in 1998, when a major overhaul proclaimed a "New" Tomorrowland yet again and changed the design into a retro-futurist vision of tomorrow.

A central agenda of Tomorrowland was envisioning urban improvements to America's cities in general, and Los Angeles in particular. One of the most popular attractions on Disneyland's opening day was Autopia, meant to simulate a freeway of the future, but in this case, one accessible for children, who could drive the small gasoline-powered cars along the course. Then sponsored by the Richfield Oil Company, the fascination of children being able to drive by themselves accounted

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[31] This year is often wrongly quoted as being 1984 – possibly because of the association with George Orwell's famous work. 1986 was chosen because it was the year Haley's Comet was supposed to return to Earth.

for most of the popularity of the attraction, yet adults also enjoyed the scenic ride that "both served and mirrored the American family's interest in the automobile" (Janzen and Janzen 1997: 12). The attraction directly promoted a then-new mode of transportation: the American freeway. Disney's version provided a safe driving experience, and one without traffic jams – guaranteed first by the addition of attendants watching for rowdy drivers (Janzen and Janzen 1997: 18). In 1963, control rails were additionally installed in the middle of the road that prevented slamming other cars left and right (Janzen and Janzen 1997: 25). Los Angeles had already started to suffer from traffic congestion within the city, but the new massive freeways that were just being built seemed a hopeful alternative for a better driving experience. As Marling has noted in her aptly titled essay "Disneyland, 1955: Just Take the Santa Ana Freeway to the American Dream," the freeways were also meant to provide their drivers, then often traveling as a family unit, with a new-found sense of freedom:

> According to the ads, the car promised freedom – "freedom to come and go as we please in this big country of ours," Ford rhapsodized. It also liberated the family from the conformity of the suburb, from rows of identical houses, rigid social rituals, unspoken codes of conduct, and written rules governing the proper trimming of lawns. The car allowed the family to escape the pressure of modern times: out there, on the freeway, it was still possible to play the part of the pioneer, headed bravely off into that unknown America of the presuburban past, in search of adventure and self-exploration. (Marling 1991: 176)

Disneyland thus fulfilled such promises of the newly emerging freeway culture in two ways: firstly, in miniature form with Autopia, that opened it up to children, and secondly, as a destination on the newly built Santa Ana Freeway that provided the possibility of such adventure for all of the family to participate in.[32]

There is a certain irony within all of this, as one of Walt Disney's goals was to make Disneyland a pedestrian experience that left the visitor's cars outside of the park, and out of view, yet based almost all of its pleasures on mobility. However, these forms of transport were largely different from the outside experience, as architectural critic Reyner Banham noted as early as 1971:

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[32] Episode 26 of the Disneyland TV show, titled "Magic Highways, U.S.A." that aired on May 14, 1958, also dealt with the history of roads and motorways in the United States, up until the invention of the highway. As a Tomorrowland segment, it included an outlook to the future, with utopian views on how to improve highways and car travel in the years to come, but also touched upon problems like traffic jams and how to solve them.

> Disneyland offers illicit pleasures of mobility. Ensconced in a sea of giant parking-lots in a city devoted to the automobile, it provides transportation that does not exist outside – steam trains, monorails, people-movers […] not to mention pure transport fantasies such as simulated space-trips and submarine rides (quoted in Marling 1991: 176).

Banham is not the only critic of the theme park that has noticed this, Michael Sorkin equally stated that "[w]hatever its other meanings, the theme park rhapsodizes on the relationship between transportation and geography" (1992: 210), and Erkki Huhtamo has called Disneyland a "metaphor of traveling" (1995: 62). There are several reasons for this intrinsic connection between Disneyland and mobility. The first, and most obvious, is the history of the amusement park, the theme park's predecessor. As historian David E. Nye outlines, the earliest amusement parks were built at the turn of the century as so-called "trolley parks" that used the surplus energy at the end of streetcar lines at night and on weekends (1992: 122–24). The first rides then also made use of the street car technology, as this was already understood by the operators of the trolley parks, and it could easily be adapted to scenic railways or roller coasters (Nye 1992: 128). Simulator rides (like Rocket to the Moon or later Star Tours) were also based on early amusement technology, the so-called "phantom rides" and "Hale's Tours" (Huhtamo 1995: 171) that simulated rides in "mock train carriage[s]" (Bukatman 1991: 61).

The other and ultimately more influential reason when it comes to Disneyland was Walt Disney's aforementioned love for trains and other public transportation, and his goal to provide "workable blueprints for change" (Marling 1997: 146). The first attempt at building such a train of the future was the short-lived Viewliner that ran only from 1957 to 1958, based in part on General Motors' "Train of Tomorrow" (Novak 2014: n.pag.) that "in true 1950s American tradition, would be powered by gasoline, courtesy of a Chevy Corvette V-8 Engine" (Gordon and Mumford 2000: 164). Yet as fate would have it, Walt Disney soon came across a much better alternative for public transport: during a summer vacation in Germany in 1958, while driving in the woods outside Cologne with his wife Lillian, he saw a monorail being tested (Gurr 2001: 12–13). The monorail had been German technology to begin with, as the city of Wuppertal had long operated one (Gurr 2001: 11), yet the Alweg company had started working on a new model solely because the company's owner, Dr. Axel Wenner Gren, had to spend money that the German government did not let him repatriate back to Sweden after the end of World War II (Gurr 2001: 11). Walt Disney, after jumping out of his car to meet with the people working at the test site, made a deal with the company to build a version of the Alweg monorail

(that rode on top of the rails instead of hanging from it) at Disneyland. One of his imagineers, Bob Gurr, took charge of the project.

The inaugural run of the Mark I Disneyland-Alweg monorail happened on June 14, 1959, eventually completely redesigned by Gurr, now looking sleek and futuristic. The ride took visitors from the Disneyland hotel outside of the park directly to Tomorrowland. Disney's intent for the system always was to provide an example for LA that solely lacked in such public infrastructure, as a Disneyland guidebook in 1959 proclaimed: "The trains of the Disneyland-Alweg Monorail System will give you a preview of the future in city mass transportation, aboard America's first monorail" (Anon. 1959: 18). Fitting to such a political agenda, the first guests on board were none other than the then vice president Richard Nixon and his family. Robert De Roos, writing for *National Geographic* in 1963 also noted: "Most visitors, myself included, leave the monorail convinced it is the answer for rapid transit of the future" (200–01). Disney had even tried to donate the Viewliner trains as parking lot trams for a proposed Dodger Stadium near downtown LA, and when that plan fell through, proposed connecting the Stadium with Griffith Park (Gordon and Mumford 2000: 196). "Walt and the City of Los Angeles had already been studying the feasibility of running a monorail along the downtown freeways, and this offer to donate the Viewliners was no doubt another attempt to introduce future transportation into the real world," so Disney historians Gordon and Mumford (2000: 196).

Yet Disney's vision was never fulfilled – LA, to this day, lacks in public transport infrastructure, having only started to operate a Metro system in 1990, while Disneyland continues to operate monorails, now in its third generation, and the promise of the glorious freeways turned into the plight of everyone who has ever driven a car in the greater LA area. Somewhat ironically, the city of Los Angeles is, as of June 2017, officially considering building a monorail over the 405 freeway to deal with traffic gridlock (Smith 2017: n.pag.).

Such visions of public transportation however did not stop there, but also came in much more fantastical form – including proposed scheduled space flights out of a Spaceport that "could be routine by 1980" (Sklar 1964: n.pag.) as a Disneyland guidebook still claimed in 1964. Space travel, in addition to earthbound urban travel, also played a significant part in 1950s Tomorrowland. Public interest in space travel was met with another popular opening day attraction in Tomorrowland, the TWA Moonliner model that was a weenie for the Rocket to the Moon ride. TWA (Trans World Airlines) was owned by mogul Howard Hughes at the time but struggled financially (Anon. TWA: n.pag.) – probably one of the reasons for his interest in such prominent sponsoring in Disneyland, as the Moonliner was the tallest structure in the park at the time, even taller than Sleeping Beauty Castle (DeCaro, *The Moonliner*). Rocket to the Moon was a classic simulator attraction, where guests

Would sit in a pseudo rocket and live through a simulated trip to observe the far side of the moon. Projections above and below enabled guests to see where they were going and where they had been. It was always impressive to see Disneyland and then the earth getting smaller and smaller as the rocket left for the moon (Smith quoted in DeCaro, *The Moonliner*)

The attraction and the design of the Moonliner were directly based on the Tomorrowland segments of the *Disneyland* TV show, "Man in Space," "Man and the Moon," and to some degree also on the third part, "Mars and Beyond."[33] These episodes had proven to be a challenge, as Disney so far had not produced any kind of futuristic or science-fiction content that they could use for the TV show (besides the 1954 cinematic release, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*) – and consequently also not for Disneyland. As the park was already well underway at the time, and Walt Disney was very busy, he ended up giving one of his animators and Imagineers, Ward Kimball, almost free reign in producing content to fill this void, including setting his own budget that eventually amounted to over a million dollars for all three episodes (Smith 1978: 63; Liebermann 1992: 145). Kimball, with great interest, had been following a series of popular articles in *Collier's* magazine (one of the most-read publications in 1950s America) (Liebermann 1992: 135) that promoted man's travel to space, written by some of the leading experts on the topic at the time; among them Wernher von Braun, Willy Ley and Heinz Haber (Smith 1978: 55). All of them Germans, Ley, a physicist and zoologist turned science-fiction and science writer, had emigrated to the United States before the beginning of World War II, while Haber, a physicist, and the infamous von Braun[34] had been originally targeted as part of Operation Paperclip and came

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[33] It should be noted that J. P. Telotte (2004) has written an excellent book on the Disneyland television show, including a whole chapter on these segments.

[34] Wernher von Braun is a rather controversial figure. He was and is still severely criticized for his leading work on designing and building war missiles for Nazi Germany, such as the V2 model, one of the so-called "vengeance weapons" (*Vergeltungswaffen*) and especially his failure to intervene in the slave labor of concentration camp inmates from Mittelbau-Dora in the Mittelwerk facility (near Peenemünde) where the rockets were built. He is however equally lauded for his key role in the American space program and his contributions to the eventual moon landing, yet the fact that the American government whitewashed his (and many other German scientists') Nazi pasts has left a bitter taste in many people's mouths. Opposition to his person both in Germany and in the United States seems to have grown louder beginning with the 1960s, including voices in popular culture, such as Tom Lehrer's satirical song "Wernher von Braun" (1965) written for the American version of the comedy TV show *That Was the Week That Was,* or a recent episode of the US-American TV sci-fi series *Timeless* (created by Eric Kripke), "Party at Castle Valar" (aired on October 24,

to the United States after the end of the war. Von Braun surrendered to the United States in 1945, while Haber emigrated in 1946 and became an expert in space medicine. Kimball, greatly impressed by the *Collier's* articles, decided to approach these men to turn their written ideas for space travel into visual programming with the help of Disney's animators and modelers – creating a part animation, part live action program. The tone of these shows, much like Tomorrowland, was supposed to be "science-factual," something Walt Disney came up with, as he found that both "comedy and factual interest" were "vital to keep the show from becoming too dry and too corny" (quoted in Smith 1978: 55). This paralleled his efforts with the "True Life-Adventures" films, as his goals for them were presenting "facts, and opening up this world to people" (quoted in Smith 1978: 56). He saw these segments as a chance for "[m]en dealing with fantasy and men dealing with fact coming together, meeting and combining their resources to present this material" (quoted in Smith 1978: 57). This collaboration proved to be extremely fruitful, and von Braun, who had long been interested in marketing his plans for space travel to a broader public, and thus eventually motivating the US government, was especially passionate about his work on the project – often spending long hours in the Disney studio (Smith 1978: 57). The resulting first episode, "Man in Space", premiered on March 9, 1955. It used models based on designs made for the *Collier's* series, as well as German rocket film footage for a segment on rocket history. This was easy to secure by the studio, as there was plenty of accessible German material, yet American footage was "almost nonexistent" (Smith 1978: 57) at the time. "Man in Space" was narrated by Kimball and featured von Braun, Ley and Haber "to add authenticity" (Smith 1978: 57),[35] but was introduced by Walt Disney, who proclaimed:

> One of man's oldest dreams had been the desire for space travel – to travel to other worlds. Until recently, this seemed to be an impossibility, but great new discoveries have brought us to the threshold of a new frontier – the frontier of interplanetary space. (quoted in Smith 1978: 54)

The notion of space as a "new frontier" would play a big role again when the Cold War space race heated up under President John F. Kennedy.[36]

2016, written by Jim Barnes, directed by Billy Gierhardt) that raised the question of von Braun's responsibility in the deaths caused by Nazi Germany.

[35] Smith reports that it was discussed if featuring the three men speaking with German accents was going to be a drawback, but the risk was taken in favor of adding said "authenticity."

[36] The original *Star Trek* series (1966–69) also proclaims space as the "final frontier" in its opening credits. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ

The film was a great success, not just with the public audience of the show (reportedly 42 million viewers) (Wright n.d.: n.pag.)[37] and the press, but also with scientists, and possibly even the US government. At the time, the government had not yet begun a space program (NASA was founded in 1958), and even the scientist's predictions for space travel made in the Disney films were very conservative – von Braun vaguely stated that it would be "many years" before a trip to the moon (Smith 1978: 60). Ward Kimball reports that after the success of "Man in Space", President Dwight D. Eisenhower personally called Walt Disney and asked to borrow a copy of it (quoted in Smith 1978: 59).[38] Yet when Disney's publicists wanted to build a direct relation between "Man in Space" and Eisenhower's announcement to launch an unmanned satellite into space on July 29, 1955, von Braun shot the idea down, as he feared it would seem that he wanted to receive credit ahead of the many scientists that put hard work into the launch for many years. In the end, such a statement would have "hurt the cause far more than it would help" (quoted in Smith 1978: 59). So, while there might not have been a direct connection between the American space program's beginnings and Disney's productions, they certainly boosted public interest in actual space travel (building on the science fiction books and films that had already been popular) (Wright n.d.: n.pag.), and von Braun apparently even called Ward Kimball on the day that Apollo 8 circled the moon to acknowledge his contribution (Smith 1978: 63). In a curious twist, a Soviet space official, L. Sedov did take interest in the segments as well, as historian Mike Wright has uncovered – again a foreshadowing of the Cold War space race in the coming years that culminated in the moon landing on July 16, 1969.

Yet as with everything on the *Disneyland* TV show, the ultimate goal was to promote Disneyland park: early on in the meetings for the episodes Walt Disney had made clear that he wanted to build a moon-ride attraction in Tomorrowland. "We really want the people to get the feeling of a trip to the moon" (quoted in Smith 1978: 56), he said, and the designs made for "Man in Space" ended up serving as a

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[37] Liebermann concurrently reports 100 million viewers, although this could be a combined number of all three episodes or including soon following reruns (Liebermann 1992: 145).

[38] Smith quotes Kimball on this matter, but Mike Wright notes that "in the Office of the Historian at the Pentagon as well as the archivists at the Eisenhower Library were unable to locate documentation supporting Eisenhower's interest in the Disney films." Yet the correspondence between Kimball and von Braun seems to suggest that this actually happened, and Liebermann also supports this, even adding that the film was rented for two weeks and shown to the Pentagon, although his only source on the matter seems to be Smith, so it is unclear where he got the additional information from (1992: 145). Telotte, quoting Bill Cotter's hard to find book *The Wonderful World of Disney Television* also mentions this incident (2004: 49).

model for the TWA Moonliner (that essentially looked like the von Braun-designed V2-rocket) and the Rocket to the Moon ride, and thus further tried to convince Disneyland's visitors that space travel would soon be possible. While indeed "no one guessed in 1955 that man would be walking on the moon a mere 14 years from the date of the first Disney space show" (Smith 1978: 63), and this event would eventually have great influence on Tomorrowland as well, for the time being, a trip to the moon was as enticing to Disneyland's visitors unlike anything else.

The interest in space travel also informed popular culture in other ways. While the 1950s film and television landscape might have been dominated by a craze for all things Western as exemplified by Davy Crockett and the other inhabitants of Frontierland, science fiction also played an increasingly important role. While the genre mostly stayed in the territory of so-called "pulp fiction," often operating on low budgets and relying on formulaic plots, it reflected on many Cold War fears and ideas, similar to the Western.[39] Milestones in SF cinema would mostly emerge with the 1960s, yet the 1950s already saw the production of a few classics, such as *The War of the Worlds* (1953) or *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954), that both won Academy Awards. *20,000 Leagues* was based on the famous Jules Verne novel and produced by Walt Disney Pictures, and it comes as no surprise that the original sets of the Nautilus, designed by set designer-turned Imagineer Harper Goff, would find their way to Disneyland. From 1955 to 1966, an exhibit made Captain Nemo's submarine accessible to visitors. While the movie was set in a fantastical version of the Victorian era, the submarine curiously contained a lot of 1950s design choices. One important change to the Nautilus made in the movie was that it was powered by atomic energy rather than electricity – directly speaking to the "Atomic Age" and nuclear optimism of the 1950s (Stöver 2007: 200). This is also touted in an early Disneyland guidebook:

> Tomorrow can be a wonderful age. Our scientists today are opening the doors of the Atomic Age to achievements which will benefit our children and genera- tions to come. In Tomorrowland, we've arranged a preview of these wonderful developments the future holds in store. (Anon. 1959: 18)

Such efforts of promoting nuclear energy were directly sponsored by the US government – the Eisenhower administration had approached Disney in 1955 to produce a cartoon for their "Atoms for Peace" program (Langer 1998: n.pag.). This project would turn into a 1957 episode of the *Disneyland* television show called "Our Friend the Atom" that described the benefits of nuclear energy and,

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[39] For more on 1950s science-fiction and its role in the Cold War, see Booker (2001).

as the other Tomorrowland segments, featured scientist Heinz Haber in a mixture of live action and animation. For the expansion of Tomorrowland in 1959, the US government, *General Dynamics* and Disney would then top off their cooperation by building a 2,500,000$ eight-vessel fleet of submarines (Langer 1998: n.pag.) that would take visitors through the lagoon in Tomorrowland, giving the illusion of a Jules Verne-esque trip to a fantastical world under the Sea. Originally named after the vessels in the actual 1950s Nuclear submarine program (including the "Nautilus"), they made Walt Disney the de-facto owner of the largest peacetime fleet of "atomic" submarines in the world (DeCaro, *Submarine Voyage*). Disney had even planned on taking a somewhat tongue-in-cheek photo with Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in front of his fleet on September 19, 1959 (Maltin 2001), before Khrushchev's visit was canceled because of security reasons.[40]

The original Nautilus set exhibit spoke to the zeitgeist of the 1950s in other ways as well, evoking, as movie scholar Françoise Schiltz has argued, contemporary ideas of living design and domesticity: "Like many 1950s suburban houses, the ship's salon is open-plan and comprises a dining room and a multi-purpose living room [...]. A private retreat and public library, the salon provides both knowledge and entertainment in a quiet and stylish environment" (Schiltz 2011: 109). As such, it echoed another important attraction of 1950s Tomorrowland: The *Monsanto* House of the Future. One of the most popular exhibits in Disneyland park, the model house opened in June 1957 and promised "progressive accomplishments for future living" (Anon. 1959: 18). Made almost completely out of plastic, it was designed by MIT architecture professors Marvin Goody and Richard Hamilton in cooperation with the plastics division of *Monsanto* under their engineer Robert Whittier (MIT Museum n.dat: n.pag.), "who hoped to demonstrate the feasibility of plastic construction to a housing industry obsessed with wood" (Gordon and Mumford 2000: 158). The house was designed with the picture-perfect 1950s nuclear family in mind: two bedrooms for kids, one for a boy and one for a girl, a living room with a huge TV, a bathroom with electric toothbrushes, and a high-tech kitchen designed by *Kelvinator* called "Atoms for Living" with futuristic appliances like an ultrasonic dishwasher (Gordon and Mumford 2000: 158–59). It represents the 1950s' paradoxical relationship with Atomic energy well that *Monsanto* praised Atomic kitchen appliances, while other companies simultaneously advertised "blast resistant Houses for the Atomic Age" (Stöver 2007: 215). Whittier remembers: "Everybody marveled at it, everybody loved it,

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[40] Lambert's research suggests that Krushchev turned down a visit himself, even when security was offered to him, and she interprets this as him "balk[ing] at the idea of visiting such a paradigm of capitalist dominance and American success" (2000: 38–39). Yet all other sources I've personally reviewed back up the official story of security concerns preventing the visit.

and everybody wanted one" (Scanlon 2005: n.pag.), yet the House of the Future itself never created a real market, and was demolished in 1967. Still, it speaks volumes about the zeitgeist of the 1950s and the target audience of Disneyland that it proved to be so popular. Expensive, state-of-the-art appliances, and new technology and design wowed visitors, and dreams of improved domestic living was a major concern for middle-class families, as was car travel as reflected by Autopia, and another Tomorrowland attraction, Circarama, presented by *American Motors*. A 360-degree movie theater (an invention by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks) (DeCaro, *Circarama*) showed a film about the western United States, yet the inside of the theater was largely a display of cars by *American Motors*, and *Kelvinator* kitchen appliances, so "[t]o some, [it] looked like a used-car lot that collided with an appliance center" (Gordon and Mumford 2000: 155). Yet this combination was not as odd as it sounds – it directly played into the consumer interests of the 1950s audience that was mostly focused on domestic living:

> In the four years following the end of the war, Americans purchased 21.4 million cars, 20 million refrigerators, 5.5 million stoves, and 11.6 million televisions and moved in over 1 million new housing units each year. (May quoted in Schiltz 2011: 112)

Cars also played a big part of this vision of domestic bliss, as they became more relevant than ever by the boom of suburbia and the consequent need to commute.

So, as Tomorrowland originally faced budget restraints, it was a logical conclusion to fill the void with brand-sponsored exhibits promising improvements in future living. Much like the World's Fairs of the time (that would soon also play a role for Disneyland park), several pavilions showcased the technological inventions of big companies. Among the opening day exhibits were *Kaiser Aluminum*'s Hall of Fame (closed 1960), extolling the virtues of aluminum and a *Richfield Oil* sponsored film and diorama called "The World Beneath Us" about geology, and naturally, oil (also closed 1960). Another peculiar showcase was *Crane*'s Bathroom of Tomorrow (opened on April 5, 1956, closed 1960) that promoted "Tomorrow's Bathroom […] Available Today," complete with a gold-plated bathtub and bidet (Simon 2010: n.pag.). Brand awareness played a major role in the popularity of these exhibits, and the future as presented at Tomorrowland was firmly in the hands of major corporations like *Monsanto*, that also sponsored two other attractions besides the House of the Future: the *Monsanto* Hall of Chemistry (1955–66), and later, Adventures Thru Inner Space (1967–85). This theme continued with the 1967 addition of the Carousel of Progress, an attraction built by WED for the 1964/65 World's Fair for the General Electric pavilion that "demonstrated how electricity had improved the American family's standard of living" and had come out of old,

never-realized plans for a side arm of Main Street, U.S.A., Edison Square (Marling 1997: 140). The domestic values the Carousel portrays leave no question that it promotes an image of a conservative white middle-class family, as Tom Robson has argued: "By presenting a world centered around a man as the center of the family unit, and without acknowledging significant contributions by women, BIPOC, queer people, or any conception of family without a cis-gendered, heterosexual white man at its core, the Carousal of Progress simply reifies traditional values" (2019: 37). The attraction's theme song by the Sherman brothers, "There's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow" meanwhile embodied the spirit of the early Tomorrowland, with its progressive, utopian visions of the future, and "Walt's steadfast belief that with a little luck, a big corporate investment in research and development, and the consumer's continuing avidity for new household products, tomorrow was bound to be just terrific" (Marling 1997: 140). Tomorrowland's attractions and exhibits thus connected domesticity to corporations and consumer goods, as advertising did all over the country, and fostered the privatization of public life in postwar society (Avila 2004: 131), cementing traditional white, middle-class values.

Disneyland as a Cultural Product of the 1950s

Disneyland is the definite cultural product of 1950s America. It is the epitome of the mass culture that emerged, and its origin was directly dependent on television, mass culture's most important medium. The park made popular culture a walkable environment at a time when, pushed by a growing youth demographic, it had reached new heights in relevance. The postwar baby boom put children in the focus of the affluent, overwhelmingly white, heteronormative middle-class families that was Disneyland's self-proclaimed demographic. It catered to them in every way imaginable, and built on the consumerism and the brand-awareness that came with the age of advertising. It provided a clean and safe environment, mimicking the suburbia that became home to millions of Americans. Yet it would be somewhat reductive to read Disneyland just as predictable, conformist, and consumerist, just as it is reductive to see the decade in those terms. Much of the more recent scholarship has painted the 1950s as a decade of paradox (Halliwell 2007: 4; Chafe 1999: 144), "a site of dualities, tensions, and contradictions" (Halliwell 2007: 3). It pitted the often tight-knit communities of suburbia against the increasing mobility of the people who lived in them, made possible by new highways and two-car households; conformity against new rebel icons like James Dean or the heroes of the Western, anxiety against optimism. Disneyland reflects

on these paradoxes by featuring visions of the past *and* visions of the future;[41] by contrasting the escapism of Fantasyland with the ever-fighting heroes of Frontierland, the familiarity of Main Street, U.S.A. with the exoticism of Adventureland, and by pairing the technology of Tomorrowland with the traditional values of domesticity. It brought escapism from the anxieties of the Cold War with its Communist witch hunts and nuclear threats, yet was always steeped in patriotism that reminded its visitors of the importance of closing ranks. Disneyland became the epitome of 1950s America, and yet, its allure never faded, even over 60 years later. Even more, since then, five other Disneylands have emerged, in cultures as different as Japan and France, and all of them have found their audiences. It is interesting to see how much has changed, and indeed, maybe even more intriguing, how much has remained the same – but first, it is necessary to turn to the only other Disneyland on the US continent, that opened only sixteen years after its predecessor: the Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Florida.

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[41] Fittingly, "Hannah Arendt characterized the postwar period as one caught 'between past and future'" (quoted in Halliwell 2007: 3).

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Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom (1971) and the Age of Fracture*

The Florida Project

Given the enormous success of Disneyland, it seems hardly surprising that Walt Disney soon had plans for an East Coast Disneyland. As some sources suggests, as early as 1959 (a mere four years after its opening) (Mannheim 2002: 67). As consumer research proved, another theme park on the East Coast would be especially lucrative as very few visitors from east of the Mississippi actually came to Disneyland (Ford 2013: n.pag.) – after all, most domestic tourists still traveled by car, not by plane. Several locations were evaluated; among them New York (Robert Moses had urged Disney to eventually take over the World's Fair site) (Mannheim 2002: 68), Maryland (in the vicinity of Washington, D.C.), and St. Louis, but, after several reconnaissance missions by Disney and his advisors, the choice was finally made for Central Florida in 1963 (Arnold n.dat: n.pag.). Land there was cheap, the weather was sunny and largely stable, and the target area outside of Orlando was well connected by highways. Florida, after all, was already a popular tourist destination. The most important factor for Disney, however, was size, as the "sprawl" of hotels, motels, bars, and fast food restaurants that had quickly started to mushroom around Disneyland in Anaheim had always irked him. Disneyland was originally only about 160 acres in size, and for his "Florida Project," as it would become known, he eventually purchased a whopping 27,443 acres (Mannheim 2002: 5). Disney knew that if he would inquire about the land, prices would soar, so the purchases were made by nine dummy corporations; still, such big investments drew attention, and the local press naturally began to speculate about the identity of the mystery buyer (Mannheim 2002: 5). Emily Bavar, a reporter for the *Orlando Sentinel*, had done months of research on the subject, and when she was invited to a press event in Burbank that celebrated Disneyland's centennial, she finally took the chance to confront Walt Disney himself. During an interview with him, she

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*This title is a reference to Daniel T. Rodgers' book of the same name (2012).

outright asked him whether it was his company buying the land. As Bavar would note years later, he "looked like [she] had thrown a bucket of water in his face" (Schmidt 2017: n.pag.). Further, while he denied that it was him, he knew way too many details about the property for someone claiming to not have any interest in it. On October 21, 1965, the *Orlando Sentinel* ran the headline "We Say: Mystery Industry is Disney." By then, Disney had already bought 27,258 acres of land, and while the prices for the last few acres still to be purchased soared as predicted, the total property eventually only cost approximately $5.1 million ($184 per acre) (Mannheim 2002: 72).

The vast land (twice the size of Manhattan!) was not purchased to just build another theme park. Disney's plans, as he officially revealed during a press conference on November 15, were much greater: besides a vacation destination containing a Disneyland-style theme park, resort hotels, and camp sites, the site was planned to contain an "airport of the future," an industrial park showcasing "American industry at work," the Lake Buena Vista living community, and most importantly, EPCOT, the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (Anon. 1971: 14).

Everything in this "Disney World" was supposed to be connected by a state-of-the-art transportation system (Anon. 1971: 14). EPCOT was the heart and soul of the project, and Disney's main reason to want to build on the newly acquired land. The Disneyland-style theme park was just an easy way to bring in the visitors and cash flow to finance EPCOT. Walt Disney laid out his plans for the prototype community in a short film produced in October 1966 to be shown to industry and government leaders, written by Marty Sklar:

> EPCOT will take its cue from the new ideas and new technologies that are now emerging from the creative centers of American industry, it will be a community of tomorrow that will never be completed, but will always be introducing, and testing, and demonstrating new materials and new systems. And EPCOT will always be a showcase to the world of the ingenuity and imagination of American free enterprise. I don't believe there is a challenge anywhere in the world that's more important to people everywhere than finding solutions to the problems of our cities. [...] We think the [public] need is for starting from scratch on virgin land and building a special kind of new community. So that's what EPCOT is: an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow that will always be in the state of becoming. It will never cease to be a living blueprint of the future where people actually live a life they can't find anyplace else in the world. (Walt Disney Productions 1967)[1]

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[1] The original EPCOT film as well as a transcript of the script can be found here: https://sites. google.com/site/theoriginalepcot/film-transcript

Such city planning ideas did not just come out of nowhere. Disneyland had taught Disney much about building an environment, and the problems and pitfalls that came with it. After all, pioneering urban planner James Rouse had called Disneyland "the outstanding piece of urban design in the United States" in a speech given to the graduating class of the Harvard School of Design in 1963 (Arnold n.d.: n.pag.), something the EPCOT film also quoted. Also, while Disney's aforementioned ideas for improving on public transport in Los Angeles had always fallen on deaf ears, he never gave up on them. Besides Disneyland, Disney had also begun to work on two other projects in the early 1960s: the campus for CalArts in Valencia, California that was formally established in 1961,[2] and a ski resort proposed for the Mineral King valley in the Sequoia National Park. While the campus opened in 1971, the ski resort would never come to fruition, as environmental concerns eventually stopped its construction. Yet, it was still underway when EPCOT was announced in 1965.[3] Disney had, however, not stopped there: in 1958 he had already sent some of his staff to the Brussels World's Fair for inspiration, and in 1962 to the one in Seattle, where they had made an unsuccessful bid to build the fair's monorail (Mannheim 2002: 15). For the 1964/65 World's Fair, however, WED finally designed and built a total of four attractions: the "Pepsi-Cola Presents Walt Disney's 'It's a Small World' – a Salute to UNICEF and the World's Children" for the UNICEF pavilion, "Progressland" for the General Electric pavilion that featured the "Carousel of Progress," "Ford Magic's Skyway" for Ford Motor Company, and "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln" for the State of Illinois, featuring an audio-animatronic of Abraham Lincoln. All of the attractions were eventually relocated to Disneyland after the fair: Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln came to Main Street, U.S.A., in 1965, "It's A Small World" to Fantasyland in 1966, the Carousel of Progress to Tomorrowland in 1967, and the dioramas created for "Ford's Magic Skyway" were added to the track of the Disneyland Railroad in 1966. The transportation system used in the attraction was transformed into the WEDway Peoplemover and opened, like the Carousel, as part of the redesign of Tomorrowland as "New Tomorrowland," under the aptly titled headline "World on the Move" in 1967.

The People Mover was also planned to be part of EPCOT. The original plans for the city were reminiscent of Le Corbusier's Radiant City, as well as Ebenezer Howard's

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[2] Disney had contributed to the formation of CalArts that merged the Chouinard Art Institute and the Los Angeles Conservatory of Music as many of his artists had graduated from Chouinard, and hired the architectural firm of Ladd & Kelsey to design the campus that eventually opened in 1971 (Mannheim 2002: 14–15).

[3] For more on the Mineral King project see Marx (1971: 12–17) (originally published in *The Nation*, July 28, 1969).

Garden City, and showed a design with several concentric circles (Mannheim 2002: 3). In many ways, the plans for EPCOT were part of a larger historical tradition of utopian urban planning in the United States and Europe; progressive ideas had spurred on reform programs such as the City Beautiful and the Garden City movement at the turn of the century were still felt in the plans for the "prototype community," as were newer concepts.[4] The focal point of EPCOT was the "town center," essentially a shopping mall themed to different countries around the world, with a landmark hotel in the middle, serving as a visual magnet – much like the "weenie" that is Sleeping Beauty castle in Disneyland. The town center would be completely enclosed by a glass dome, to shield from outside weather and to climate-control the area (Mannheim 2002: 8). Underneath it was a multi-level "transportation lobby": WEDway People Movers served as the main mass transit system, as well as a monorail that left from the top level. The mid-level was used by automobile traffic and hotel parking, and trucks drove on the lower level (Mannheim 2002: 33). A greenbelt reminiscent of Howard's ideas divided apartments from single-family housing, and featured, among other things, recreational facilities, schools, and churches (Mannheim 2002: 11). A 1,000 acre industrial park located south of EPCOT along the monorail route was also featured on the plans, and from the station located here, People Movers would take passengers to the industrial complexes (Mannheim 2002: 12).

Disney had long been inspired by the work of his contemporary Victor Gruen (Mannheim 2002: xvii). Gruen, the inventor of the shopping mall, saw his designs as counteracting the suburban sprawl and decentralization of cities by providing these communities with a true town center (Mennel 2004: 131). His Southdale Center that opened in Edina, Minnesota in 1956 was climate-controlled and used then-groundbreaking designs such as rooftop parking and escalators (Mennel 2004: 130). Gruen, like Disney, believed that technology could be used to develop "better forms of social life" and that architecture and design could "mitigate threats to community and individual happiness" (Mennel 2004: 129). His 1964 book *The Heart of Our Cities – The Urban Crisis: Diagnosis and Cure* directly served as an inspiration to the plans for EPCOT. For the 1964/65 World's Fair, Disney also worked closely with city planner Robert Moses who was in charge of the fair (and won this position in a bid over Gruen) (Mennel 2004: 142). Moses, however, held

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[4] City Beautiful is best known for Chicago's White City as presented at the World's Columbian Exposition, the World's Fair held in 1893 in Chicago. The Garden City movement emerged at the same time in the UK. Both efforts were put in place to beautify existing cities and were driven by an ideology to improve civic virtue through design. Corbusier's ideas for the Radiant City (*Ville Radieuse*) were published in 1933 and promoted a more totalitarian idea of city planning that however equally aimed at fostering better living conditions. The idea of zoning, structuring cities according to use, also plays a role here – as can also be seen in the EPCOT plans.

much different beliefs from Disney and Gruen – for example, he favored building highways over public transport, and his influence in planning and building cities, especially in New York, had directly contributed to the often-cited "plight of the cities" in 1960s America. Unsurprisingly, Disney clashed with Moses frequently, and it is "more than coincidental that the tide turned dramatically on Moses' grandiose schemes around the same time as Disney showcased his plans for a utopian city of tomorrow" (Schmidt 2010: n.pag.). The idea for EPCOT was developed at a time when urban planning had become a popular buzzword (again), further exemplified by Jane Jacobs' 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs, however, argued against such modernist planning (especially Moses' methods) and in favor of a more organic urban development. EPCOT was therefore not only developed from Walt Disney's personal experiences with Disneyland in the 1950s, but also bigger concerns during these times; the "sprawl" of Anaheim and the wider Los Angeles area was but one example of the decentralization of American cities that came about by the white flight to suburbia, leaving many downtowns struggling. However, it should be noted that Disney's target audience would likely not have been those mostly working class, and thus BIPOC and queer people that were still living in these downtowns, but again, a middle- or upper-class demographic that was also largely white and heteronormative.

Disney's plans however called for "starting from scratch" (Walt Disney Productions 1967) and thus had a decidedly more utopian notion at its core than the ideas of other contemporary urban planners. He wanted to come up with a "blueprint" for the future, providing a showcase for technological inventions of American industry leaders – essentially building on the existing successful partnerships with corporations he had established in Disneyland and at the World's Fair. Much like Disneyland, his goal was to create something that would be able to continuously evolve, but less inhibited by size; a community in a constant "state of becoming" (Walt Disney Productions 1967). So, while EPCOT makes use of older, as well as contemporary, ideas of utopian urban planning, it equally emerges as part of a larger context of future research that had begun in the post–World War II/early Cold War years and would continue to define the 1960s and 1970s.[5] As historian Elke Seefried has outlined,

> future thinking in the 1960s was dominated by ideas of feasibility (*Machbarkeitsdenken*) and some sort of technological optimism, as most exponents of the futures field were confident that they would be able to plan and steer the future by using "modern" and rational methods. (2013: n.pag.)

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[5] I want to thank Torsten Kathke who was kind enough to share his personal resources and research on the subject with me.

This makes it part of a line of tradition of what Seefried has termed a "critical-emancipatory" (*kritisch-emanzipatorisch*) approach to future thinking perpetuated mostly by Austrian Robert Jungk and German Ossip K. Flechtheim (Seefried 2015: 125). While their ideas were grounded in a socialist, neo-Marxist ideology, as well as connected to the social philosophy and critical theory of Adorno and Horkheimer and critical peace research (Seefried 2015: 125–28), they were aiming at creating active, plannable steps toward the future instead of just theoretical speculation (Seefried 2015: 141). Disney's ideas, however, do not call for active citizen participation as they are, but are supplanting any participatory ideas with corporate control. Still, his agenda for EPCOT can be seen as part of a "'Western' futures research […] aiming at combining forecasting *and* planning a better future" (Seefried 2013: n.pag., original emphasis).

And yet, Disney's vision would indeed never become more than that: on December 15, 1966, only two months after the EPCOT film was shot, Walt Disney died after a failed operation of his lung cancer. On his deathbed in St. Joseph's hospital in Burbank, he would stare at the ceiling, picturing the squares of tile as a grid map for Disney World (Mannheim 2002: 31).

After Walt's death his brother Roy, who had often been portrayed as the more levelheaded businessman of the two Disney brothers, took charge of trying to make Walt's vision a reality. The staff at WED, also shaken by the sudden death of their boss and mentor, equally focused on finishing the work they had already started.[6] A six-month report from WED Enterprises covering the period from October 1966 to April 1967 shows how much was still left up in the air at the time of Disney's death: Pirates of the Caribbean would finally open on April 19, 1967, the private Club 33 was also completed at New Orleans Square in Disneyland, and the Mineral King project was awaiting decision by the Secretary of the Interior to build a road across Park Services land (WED Enterprises 1967: 4–5). Disneyland's $22 million remodel of Tomorrowland had already begun and would benefit from the aforementioned World's Fair attractions and a new *Monsanto*-sponsored ride (Adventure Thru Inner Space) as well as *America the Beautiful*, a new Circle Vision 360 film (WED Enterprises 1967: 4–5). As of May 2, 1967, Disney World was "awaiting action later this spring by the Florida legislature" (WED Enterprises 1967: 5). The report states that "the WED staff is crystallizing Walt's philosophies for this project" and that they would "move immediately into the detailed

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[6] The here cited report states on Disney's death: "His close personal association with the management and staff of WED through the years caused his passing to be a particularly heavy blow to all of our people. As Walt would have it, WED recoiled from this shock and quickly rededicated itself to carrying on in the best Walt Disney tradition" (WED Enterprises 1967: 1).

planning and design stages for the theme park and other areas of *Disney World*" (WED Enterprises 1967: 6). The awaited action came only 10 days later, when Florida Governor Claude R. Kirk Jr. (Republican) signed the statutes for the creation of the Reedy Creek Improvement District, and the establishment of the City of Bay Lake and the City of Reedy Creek (soon renamed to City of Lake Buena Vista). The Reedy Creek Improvement District was unique and multipurpose and granted the Disney corporation extraordinary rights for the building of Disney World, including:

> Sovereignty over its own roads, the right to condemn private property, the right to impose penalties for non-compliance, exemption from eminent domain by other bodies, operation of airport facilities, provision of fire protection, the right to levy taxes, the right to issue bonds, the right to drain the property, the right to oversee planning and building and safety functions, and the right to provide public transportation. […] In summary, the district is exempt from county regulation relating to zoning, building, subdivision, safety, sanitation, and from state law relating to land use and building codes. (Mannheim 2002: 107–09)

Such a carte blanche was possible because Florida officials saw the enormous financial benefits of Disney World for their state, but also because of recent developments in US legislation. The hot button topic of the demise of the American city had spurred on President Lyndon B. Johnson to react: in 1965, as part of his "Great Society," he founded the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to develop and execute policies on housing and cities. In 1966, he also established the "Model Cities Program," as an anti-poverty effort and to develop alternative forms of municipal government. It was quickly deemed a failure and officially abolished in 1974, yet for EPCOT, Disney executives sought support from HUD, and also temporarily considered applying for help from the Model Cities program (Mannheim 2002: 95–96). While the legislation would have likely proven to be too restrictive for Disney's plans, it is in this political climate that Reedy Creek, and essentially, EPCOT, were approved.

With legal issues solved, the Disney corporation started to work in earnest on Phase I of Disney World: the "vacation kingdom," encompassing the East Coast version of Disneyland, resort hotels, camp ground, and recreational facilities. On May 30, 1967, ground was broken on what would turn out to be America's largest private construction project at the time (Anon. 1971: 20). As such massive amounts of land would be affected, some voiced environmental concerns, and local residents also feared the sprawl that had developed around Disneyland and that would eventually also come to the areas outside of Reedy Creek (McCleary 1971: 6). Most of these concerns were thwarted when Disney consulted "five

leading conservationists, among them National Wildlife Federation Executive Director Thomas L. Kimball" (McCleary 1971: 7) and William E. Potter, an ex-general in the Army Corps of Engineers who ensured that the land would not be overdrained and to make the "property usable without interfering with the natural growth of trees, plants and wildlife" (McCleary 1971: 7).

The freedom of Reedy Creek also allowed for the application of several state-of-the-art technologies, such as "a water purification facility; a solid waste disposal system; a Central Energy plant; and a total-integrated communications system linking computers, telephones, automatic monitoring and control devices, mobile communications and television" (Anon. 1971: 24). Amended building codes further allowed for such measures as the burying of all electric and communications lines and installation of fire sprinkler systems – all also done with EPCOT in mind (McCleary 1971: 9). Kimball praised Disney's efforts and concluded: "The added cost of environmental protection on this $300-million project was only about $15 million, or five percent. If a profit-oriented company like Disney can make it work there is no reason why the same thing can't be done all over America" (quoted in McCleary 1971: 11). The heightened environmental concerns that had started to emerge in the 1960s and would become even more urgent in the 1970s not only affected Disney World for the better, but also made it an exemplary case of environmentally conscious building and planning – which in hindsight seems somewhat ironic, given that it was similar concerns that shut down the Mineral King project at the same time.[7]

The Magic Kingdom

On October 1, 1971, the resort, now officially christened Walt Disney World (WDW) in honor of its founder, opened to the public. At the core was the Magic Kingdom, the theme park built in Disneyland's image. Nestled on Bay Lake, it was surrounded by three resort hotels (The Contemporary, the Polynesian, and the Fort Wilderness Resort and Campground), as well as the Palm and Magnolia Golf Courses. The Contemporary and the Polynesian resort were (and are) connected to the Magic Kingdom by monorail and boats, Fort Wilderness could only be reached by boat. The monorail also connects to the Transportation and Ticket Center, where the parking lot for Magic Kingdom is located for those not staying at the three resorts. While it would continue to grow significantly over the coming years, Walt Disney World was established as a destination from the beginning – in stark contrast to Disneyland, which at least over the first decades of its existence,

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[7] The project was shut down in 1972 after a lawsuit by the Sierra Club (Gennaway 2011: 187).

was more of an attraction. Guests traveling to Disney World would stay there for a week or more, whereas Disneyland was often visited as just one of many stops along a typical vacation in Southern California. Walt Disney World would hence also equally target a middle- to upper-class clientele, possibly even more so than Disneyland, as such longer stays would also cost more money – but timing could not have been more perfect, as the baby-boomer children were now growing up and would soon take their own families on vacation. This was just one aspect of how everything about this endeavor was an opportunity to perfect what Disneyland had started. Consequently, the Magic Kingdom theme park was not a direct clone of Disneyland, but what was considered an improved version of it by WED.

Besides its much different surroundings, the Magic Kingdom also benefited from the urban planning of the rest of Walt Disney World. The whole theme park was built on the second floor, as beneath it is an intricate system of so-called "utilidors" making it possible for the working Cast Members to get from A to B without disturbing the guests. They allow for theme continuity as Cast Members dressed in the costumes corresponding to their location do not have to cross areas where they do not fit – to avoid cowboys in Tomorrowland, so to speak (Jason and Becky 2014). The park also uses AVAC (Automatic Vacuum Collection), a Swedish garbage disposal system that pulls trash underground in pneumatic tubes and moves it at 60 miles per hour directly from the trash cans to a central compacting plant (Mannheim 2002: 76). Both efforts thus improve on guest service and employee convenience, both central priorities of Disneyland. The effort of learning from Disneyland did not stop there – while the layout largely remained the same, the attraction line up on opening day included mostly those attractions that had proven continuously successful over the first 15 years of Disneyland's existence. A short overview of the Magic Kingdom will mostly highlight the differences to Disneyland, but also those attractions that continued to speak to an audience in the early 1970s.

The most obvious change made to the Magic Kingdom was the park's icon: no longer does the somewhat modest rose-toned Sleeping Beauty Castle sit at the end of Main Street, U.S.A. and at the entrance to Fantasyland, but the impressive white-and-blue Cinderella Castle. It also fits the overall grander scale of Main Street: "To walk down this Magic Kingdom, is to re-live the Victorian times and moods of eastern-seaboard America at the turn of the century," according to the first official guidebook of Walt Disney World (Anon. 1971: 43). Consequently, the choice was made to relocate the Midwestern setting of the original Main Street to the East Coast – the term "eastern-seaboard" usually refers to "the coastal settlements from Boston to Philadelphia, an area of heavy urbanization, in which are islands of great poverty and conspicuous wealth, business and financial centers, major educational institutions, and a high level of social and cultural sophistication"

(Encyclopedia Britannica). The theming thus fits the East Coast location of the Magic Kingdom (as the "Eastern seaboard" geographically encompasses Florida), yet it is first and foremost a nod to the cities of the early American settlement and sets the tone for one of the other major changes to the park: the inclusion of Liberty Square, which will be discussed later in this chapter. The more prosperous setting is apparent in the design and color scheme of all the buildings on Main Street, yet is most striking on its Town Square. The Main Street Station, again doubling as an entryway and the railroad station overhead, is much more ornate then Disneyland's and features a large overhang that evokes Victorian arcades. The City Hall is equally grand and "was based on an amalgam of Victorian civic buildings, such as the 1887 Larimer County Courthouse in Fort Collins, Colorado, and the 1892 City Hall in Bellingham, Washington" (Kurtti and Gordon 2009: 5). Unsurprisingly, there is again no exact location or time frame given, as "[m]ost civic buildings of the period would have not enjoyed the architectural filigree and fretwork seen here" (Kurtti and Gordon 2009: 5). Main Street remains an amalgam and simulacrum of what a turn-of-the-century city on the eastern seaboard could – or should? – have looked like. Early designs for the park also included an actual Victorian-style luxury hotel on Main Street, yet the idea was abandoned as hosting guests inside the park proved too difficult (something that would later be revisited in Disneyland Paris) (Kurtti and Gordon 2009: 3). However, in 1988, the Grand Floridian Resort hotel opened outside the Magic Kingdom on the monorail line, echoing the design of Main Street.

At the end of Main Street is another building unique to the Florida park: the Crystal Palace that "transitions Main Street, U.S.A. into Adventureland. Its architecture was based on a combination of sources – the San Francisco Conservatory of Flowers, Kew Gardens in England, and the Crystal Palace in New York" (Wright 2009: 39). Hosting a restaurant, it was designed as such in "order to serve as the gateway to the colonial-inspired visions of Africa and Asia that form the basis of the architecture of Adventureland nearest the hub" (Wright 2009: 39). Designwise, then, the Magic Kingdom's Adventureland keeps with the basic idea of an amalgam of all places deemed exotic in the American imagination. Yet, the focus on what these places are had shifted slightly since the early 1950s, and this, in addition to what was deemed more appropriate to the new East Coast location, is reflected in the land's design.

According to Disney historian Foxx Nolte, the Magic Kingdom's Adventureland can be divided into four themed sections all showcasing its troublingly racialized elements: the Jungle, the Colonial, the Native, and Caribbean Plaza (Nolte 2016: n.pag.). The Jungle contains the "thematic heart" of Adventureland, the Jungle Cruise, made its way to the Magic Kingdom, as did the Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse. Nolte argues that the three areas follow a historical progression, with the

Jungle representing "the concept of 'Survival Against All Odds'" and the Cambodian Ruins scene that was added to the ride in Florida "represents the notion that all cultures will fail to conquer the wilds of the Jungle and establishes the dominance of this threat" (Nolte 2016: n.pag.). The colonial area is the entrance area coming from the hub, including the Adventureland Veranda that hosts a restaurant. The architecture here is heavily influenced by French colonial buildings in French Indochina and the Caribbean, as well as the British colonies in the West Indies. Imagineer Dorothea Redmond used the books *The West Indies* by the Life World library (1967) and *Shadows From India* by Roderick Cameron (1958) as direct inspirations for her designs (Nolte 2016: n.pag.), again a case of the secondhand knowledge that had already been the base for Disneyland's Adventureland. The Jungle Cruise entrance across the Veranda is also set as a British outpost during the depression era, and operated by the fictional *The Jungle Navigation Co.*

The "native" section then encompasses the Enchanted Tiki Room attraction and the surrounding restaurants and shops (Nolte 2016: n.pag.). This distinguishes the Tiki Room from its setting in Disneyland. As aforementioned, the attraction had originally been conceived as a dinner show restaurant and developed as a reaction to the Tiki craze in postwar Southern California. Yet as the craze had vanished by the time the Magic Kingdom opened, the setting is now less kitsch and more "authentically" Oceanian – its show building is now a Balinese temple, and the preshow cites magical powers as the reason the birds talk, something not further explored in Disneyland (Nolte 2016: n.pag.). This is mirrored in the Polynesian Resort Hotel outside of the Magic Kingdom that, like all the resort hotels surrounding the park, correspond to one of the lands.

The fourth section of Adventureland is Caribbean Plaza, home to the Pirates of the Caribbean attraction. Although all the other opening day attractions in Adventureland were successfully "imported" from Anaheim, Pirates of the Caribbean was not one of them. Having just opened in Disneyland in 1967, it quickly became a success and one of the defining attractions of the park, yet it was deemed uninteresting to a Florida audience because of the proximity to the Caribbean – and it would have taken up a big part of the Magic Kingdom's budget (Surrell 2005: 53). In fact, it would have been so expensive as to "add that one attraction we would have had to eliminate five others," so Dick Nunis, Disneyland's and later, WDW's operations chief (quoted in Surrell 2005: 53). However, the guests were severely disappointed that the attraction would not be part of the Magic Kingdom, as "cross-country word-of-mouth and the undiminished power of Disney's Sunday night television show" (Surrell 2005: 54) had boosted its popularity. And thus, the attraction was quickly set for an opening date in 1973, and the Cast Members who had to field guests' complaints at City Hall "began wearing buttons proclaiming, 'The Pirates Are Coming! Christmas 1973!'" (Surrell 2005: 55).

The location change of the ride from New Orleans Square to Adventureland also meant changes in design – the surrounding Caribbean Plaza was, as mentioned before,

> an island seaport reminiscent of the British and Spanish colonies of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century West Indies. The attraction itself is housed in Castillo del Morro, an "ancient" Spanish citadel based on the Castillo de San Felipe del Morro in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and stands in the shadow of Torre del Sol (Tower of the Sun), a Caribbean-style watchtower. (Surrell 2005: 70)

The area also contains appropriately themed shops and a restaurant, and its Spanish Colonial architecture thus bookends Adventureland with another colonial settlement (Nolte 2016: n.pag.), and fittingly leads the way over to the American Southwest section of Frontierland that borders it in a "seamless visual transition" (Surrell 2005: 71).

Frontierland in the Magic Kingdom meanwhile follows a historical progression in its theming, beginning with the pre-Revolutionary 1700s as reflected in the area surrounding the Haunted Mansion in Liberty Square to the year 1867 as indicated on the Town Hall of Frontierland (Wright 2009: 52). The Diamond Horseshoe Saloon located "at the boundary to Liberty Square marks the end of the East and the beginning of the West" (Wright 2009: 52). One of the only attractions unique to the Magic Kingdom on opening day is located in Frontierland: the Country Bear Jamboree, an audio animatronic musical revue. The show stars several bears that represent white rural, classist "hillbilly" stereotypes, singing classic country songs (such as Tex Ritter's "Blood in the Saddle"; Ritter also voices the bear Big Al) and the original song "Bear Band Serenade" written by Imagineer X Atencio[8] and Disney's musical director George Bruns. Originally created for the Mineral King Ski Resort, it was decided to make it part of the Magic Kingdom as it became clear that the project would not move forward. It introduced the rural South to Frontierland for the first time. The same geographical area was later also portrayed by the Splash Mountain log flume ride (based on the controversial, Georgia-set film *Song of the South*) that opened in 1989 in Disneyland, and in 1992 in the Magic Kingdom. The show's characters were designed by Marc Davis, who had been instrumental in a number of classic Disney attractions (among them the Jungle Cruise, The Enchanted Tiki Room, and the Pirates of the Caribbean) and was known for his humorous style and attention to detail. The show became a huge hit and was soon exported to Disneyland, where it remained from 1972 until 2001,

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[8] Atencio, who was indeed usually just referred to as "X", short for Xavier, also co-wrote the Pirates of the Caribbean's "Yo Ho (A Pirates Life For Me)" and the Haunted Mansion's "Grim Grinning Ghosts."

yet it still resides in the Magic Kingdom until today, as, pointed out by Imagineer Tony Baxter, "Country music is much bigger in the South than it is in California" (quoted in Surrell 2007: 80).

Marc Davis also worked on another project that was planned to be unique to Magic Kingdom's Frontierland and would have likely become the area's defining attraction: The Western River Expedition. This boat ride would have taken the guests through several show scenes tracing the United States' western expansion, inspired by the Lewis & Clark expedition, and would have been at the heart of a vast themed area called Thunder Mesa (Surrell 2007: 60). The project was originally greenlit in 1969, yet had to be shelved as its scope exceeded the Magic Kingdom's opening day budget, and was supposed to be built in the coming years (Surrell 2007: 60). Yet when the park opened, the demand for another Pirates of the Caribbean soon took precedent, money got tighter during the economic crisis in the early 1970s, and the attraction was cancelled for good. Another reason for its cancellation was not just the economic circumstances of the 1970s, but also its change in culture: Davis' "cartoonish and not at all politically correct" (Surrell 2007: 61) depiction of Native Americans on the ride concerned executives who had taken over the company after Roy O. Disney retired shortly after the Magic Kingdom opened:

> Between that increasing political sensitivity and waning popularity of Westerns in general since their heyday in the 1950s and 1960s […] executives suggested that the Imagineers just abandon the politically touchy cowboys-and-Indians adventure altogether and build a much-needed thrill ride instead. (Surrell 2007: 61)

This idea would eventually result in the mine train roller coaster Big Thunder Mountain that opened in 1980 (Surrell 2007: 72). Magic Kingdom's Frontierland thus retained the Frontier myth and historical portrayals of the western expansion that after all had remained relevant in 1960s America with Kennedy's "Final Frontier" of the space race. Yet at the same time, it moved away from more classic Western movie stereotypes, and filled the void with Southern rural stereotyping. Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground outside of the Magic Kingdom also reflects this.[9] Another major change was that New Orleans Square, which had become an integral part of Disneyland, was not replicated here – yet the area gained a unique themed complex that also further elaborated on the theme of American exceptionalism: Liberty Square.

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[9] The resort originally featured a "nineteenth century steam locomotive" several "trading posts," hiking trails and horseback riding, and campfire sing-alongs, as well as the "Hop Dee Doo Musical Revue" dinner show in "Pioneer Hall" (Walt Disney Production 1977: 17).

The Western River Railroad was originally scheduled for an opening in 1976, the year of the Bicentennial (Surrell 2007: 60). Yet this date was not only considered for additions to the Magic Kingdom, it had also informed its designs from the very beginning, as even in 1971, "five years ahead of the American Bicentennial celebration, the awareness of that upcoming event had reached a very high level, and made it a popular choice to differentiate Magic Kingdom Park from Disneyland" (Wright 2009: 66). The original idea for Liberty Square traces back to the early plans for Disneyland, when several side arms for Main Street, U.S.A. were planned: Edison Square (which eventually survived in spirit as the Carousel of Progress) (Marling 1997: 140), and Liberty Street, for which Imagineer Herb Ryman had originally made several sketches that were now finally used (Kurtti and Gordon 2009: 80).

Liberty Square is relatively small compared to other lands of the park, like New Orleans Square in Disneyland, yet also serves as a thematic addition to Frontierland. In the Magic Kingdom, one cannot enter Frontierland directly from the park's hub, but must go through Liberty Square (or Adventureland) to reach it, which makes the historic progression in theming more than clear. Liberty Square houses two attractions, the Haunted Mansion and the Hall of Presidents, in addition to several shops and restaurants. The Haunted Mansion, located at New Orleans Square in Disneyland, thus takes on a completely new exterior, while essentially remaining the same attraction at both parks – in fact, as the Mansion had only just opened in Disneyland in 1967, duplicate interiors were built and one put in storage for the Magic Kingdom (Surrell 2015: 36). While Disneyland's version resembles a Southern plantation house, the exterior of the Magic Kingdom's Mansion was modeled in the style of the Dutch Gothic manors, as could be found in Pre-Revolutionary New York's Hudson River Valley, the home of Washington Irving's *Sleepy Hollow* (Surrell 2015: 37).

> Liberty Square celebrates the original 13 colonies at the time of the American Revolution, and brings in many elements of Colonial America […], from Dutch New Amsterdam at the entry from the hub to a Williamsburg Georgian style across the way at Ye Olde Christmas Shoppe. There is the flavor of New England along the waterfront near Fantasyland […] [and] toward Frontierland […] rougher-hewn replicas of structures from the old Northwest Territory. (Wright 2009: 66–67)

At the center of Liberty Square is the Liberty Tree, a relocated live oak decorated with thirteen lanterns, one for each original colony, and "follows in the tradition of colonial America by which each town would designate one tree as their symbol of the fight for independence and to serve as the meeting place for

the Sons of Liberty" (Wright 2009: 74). In a window of the Hall of Presidents, one can spot two lanterns referencing Paul Revere's "one if by land, two if by sea" (Wright 2009: 74), and since 1987, the Bicentennial of the US Constitution, a replica of the Liberty Bell can be found next to the Liberty Tree. As so many of Disney's creations, Liberty Square's theming was done with incredible attention to detail, yet is ultimately an amalgam of several locations and encompasses a time frame tracing several years: from the early 1700s of the Haunted Mansion through the Revolutionary War and after, with 1787, the year of the signing of the US Constitution marked on the Hall of Presidents attraction. The fact that an official guidebook from 1973 touts Liberty Square as "America on the eve of Independence – 1776" (Anon. 1973: n.pag.) likely has to do with the fact that the connection to the impending Bicentennial celebrations was put in focus. The Hall of Presidents, the area's main attraction, is a show celebrating the American presidents, and features a movie on American history, followed by an audio-animatronic presentation. The original 1971 show only focused – in true civil-religious fashion – on the Revolution and the Civil War, and only the audio-animatronic Lincoln had a speaking part, duplicating the presentation in Disneyland's Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln.

Once again, the historical context surrounding the opening of the Magic Kingdom influenced its theming. The tumultuous 1960s that witnessed the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War and its protests, and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Martin Luther King Jr., left the nation visibly shaken. While this was already apparent when Walt Disney World opened in 1971, the coming years would deepen this national malaise when the oil crisis of 1973 and the resulting stagflation shook the nation's economy, and the Watergate scandal during the same year all but stripped people of their already tarnished trust in the government. The Bicentennial in 1976 thus created "both an opportunity and a problem" (Ryan n.dat: n.pag.). The Ford Administration hoped it would bring a renewal in people's faith in the nation and pushed celebratory events, but it also proved difficult to rally people behind a common idea, and the result was a dispersion into smaller, more local events (Ryan n.d.: n.pag.). The new ways the past was celebrated focused on materiality and experience; through reenactments, symbolic affirmations, and by buying memorabilia (Lowenthal 1977: 258). The nation's history was seen through a thick lens of nostalgia, especially the Revolutionary era, resulting in

> A mythical and monumental reading of the US Declaration of Independence in 1776 and its revolution […]. [This] produced a discourse and evident yearning for home and for a past that no longer existed and never did, except in the constructivist formations of national stories and identities. (Ryan n.d.: n.pag.)

The Magic Kingdom's Liberty Square provides just such a treatment of the past – and not just on Liberty Square, but also in Frontierland and Main Street, U.S.A. Disney also added a special parade for the Bicentennial called "Disney's America on Parade" that ran from June 1975 to September 1976 and depicted "milestones and important institutions in American history, from Columbus' discovery of the New World through the establishment of the government in Washington DC, to space exploration" (Jacobs 1975: 7). Thus, it seems hardly surprising that the Disney theme parks remained relevant, and possibly even gained in relevance for their visitors during the disillusioned 1970s. As early as 1977, historian David Lowenthal (who would later publish his magnum opus *The Past is a Foreign Country* on the subject), noted that tourism during the Bicentennial seemed to focus not just on memorials, but also "imitations or […] evocations of the past" and that the younger American's "most vivid heritage is enshrined not at Williamsburg or Old Sturbridge Village but in the Florida swamp recently civilized by Walt Disney's pioneering genius" (Lowenthal 1977: 256–57). Thus, the Disney theme parks aligned themselves with memorials, historic sites, and other institutions of public history such as Colonial Williamsburg as the favored destinations of the so-called "heritage tourism" that began during these years of the Bicentennial; and the addition of Liberty Square to the Magic Kingdom once again proved Disney's – the man and the company's – uncanny ability for zeitgeist.

The newfound ways to deal with the past even found their ways to Fantasyland. The lineup of attractions here also consisted of a "best of" of Disneyland's attractions in the land, minus the massive Matterhorn. While the rides were the same, their facades were however fully themed to European villages, as the featured fairy tales (such as Snow White or Peter Pan) dictated. Such a theming had originally also been planned for Disneyland, but budget constraints had not allowed for it; something that would be rectified in 1983 with a big remodeling of the whole land. Magic Kingdom's Fantasyland was also home to two unique attractions: The Mickey Mouse Revue and 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. The Revue was an audio-animatronic show featuring Disney characters playing Disney songs, and added a needed entertainment option to the land. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* however was intriguing in many ways. It combined two Disneyland attractions: the *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* movie exhibit that had been in the park's Tomorrowland from 1955 to 1966, and the Submarine Voyage, that had opened as part of the first Tomorrowland expansion in 1959. Essentially the ride still followed the narrative of the Submarine Voyage, yet here the "submarines" were actually boats and not redesigned war submarines as in California. Those make-believe submarines' interiors were themed to the Nautilus set that Imagineer and set designer Harper Goff had created for Disney's 1954 adaptation of *20,000 Leagues*, and that had been featured in the Disneyland exhibit of the same name. Thus, the

attraction provides a curious throwback to a 1950s aesthetic, as aforementioned, the set designs for the submarine reflect postwar domesticity more than Victorian times (Schiltz 2011: 109–11). Such a nostalgia for the 1950s was not uncommon in the 1970s: even though the time frame of twenty years (or less) seemed unbelievably short, many saw the 1950s as the decade where everything had still been "the way it should be." A glorified, conservative point of view pictured these years as economically prosperous, with an intact nuclear family and healthy patriotism – everything that seemed lost in the 1970s. Lowenthal noted this nostalgia for the recent past in 1977, and argued that even the Revolutionary period as depicted during the Bicentennial actually reflected a longing for the 1950s:

> We tend to focus on "a past so recent that only an 11-year old could possibly view it as past […]." […] For many the Revolution clearly evokes the Weltanschauung of the late 1940s' and 1950s'. It is […] post-World War II that is idolized for its energy and flamboyance. (Lowenthal 1977: 257)

This phenomenon would later be called "retro" – a way "to come to terms with the modern past" (Guffey 2006: 9). The fact that *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*'s home was no longer Tomorrowland, but Fantasyland, also speaks volumes: what had once been part of the utopian domestic futures of postwar America was now part of the realm of fantasy. As the 1970s continued, a progressive idea of the future slowly vanished, something that could also be seen in the Magic Kingdom's Tomorrowland.[10]

Just as it had been with Disneyland, the Magic Kingdom's Tomorrowland was opened unfinished in October 1971. For opening day, the line-up consisted of the Grand Prix Raceway (a variant of Autopia) and the Skyway gondola lift to Fantasyland. America the Beautiful (the Circlevision 360 film) and Flight to the Moon opened shortly after, both also cloned from Disneyland. Yet the land would fill up continuously over the coming years (as did the rest of Magic Kingdom, but here the changes were most apparent – and most necessary). Star Jets, a simple spinner attraction was added in 1974, and in 1975, the Carousel of Progress, the WEDWay PeopleMover, and the first real headliner and (initially) a unique attraction: Space Mountain. It was apparent that the disillusioned climate of the 1970s did not lend itself to depicting any kind of positive future, especially not the progressive, utopian one as envisioned by Walt Disney for his Tomorrowland

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[10] As I have discussed elsewhere, Imagineering also planned a bigger expansion for Disneyland in the mid-1970s that drew on similar ideas; a whole new land called "Discovery Bay" that would have featured a Steampunk aesthetic and also *a 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*–based attraction (Mittermeier 2017: 171–87).

in the 1950s. Yet some of the ideas he still had put in motion before his death in 1966 were still implemented in the Magic Kingdom.

As mentioned before, when Disney died, a big transformation for Tomorrowland in Disneyland was still underway that resulted in an overall redesign of its buildings. The theme for it was "World on the Move," and included, among other things, the addition of the Carousel of Progress and the PeopleMover. Yet Disney had originally planned to also include bigger area themed to a "Space Port," as the Space Race was then still at its high point. He envisioned an indoor roller coaster ride in the dark, simulating a rocket flight into space, something that up to this point, had never been done before (Surrell 2007: 37). Imagineer John Hench made the first designs for this attraction in 1965, and it was called Space Mountain in 1966 (Surrell 2007: 37–40). Designing the track system was not yet technologically possible at the time, and so the project was shelved (Surrell 2007: 40), yet by the early 1970s, technology had caught up, and the Imagineers secured sponsorship (and thus, generous funding) from RCA (*Radio Corporation of America*). They included RCA satellites in Space Mountain's "orbit" and showcased their home entertainment products in a post-show space (Surrell 2007: 43). Construction began on December 15, 1972, "six years to the day after Walt Disney's death and eight years after Walt first approached John Hench with the idea to build a 'Matterhorn in outer space'" (Surrell 2007: 47). The opening ceremony on January 15, 1975, was a big spectacle, and the first ride was taken by Colonel James Irwin, pilot of the Lunar Module on the Apollo XV mission to the moon (Surrell 2007: 49). The long gestation time of the project sadly meant that the biggest enthusiasm for actual space travel had diminished after the moon landing in 1969, and the interest in the science-fiction genre had somewhat tapered off as well. This was also reflected in another change to Tomorrowland in 1975, when the Flight to the Moon attraction was changed to Mission to Mars. Yet when *Star Wars* premiered in 1977, this problem was quickly solved – while the original science-factual approach to Tomorrowland lost its appeal, science-fiction (re-)gained relevance. Besides its theming, Space Mountain was successful on other levels, as it added a needed thrill ride to the Magic Kingdom. Originally it was expected that a Florida audience would be mostly made up of local retirees, with families and young children traveling domestically and internationally, yet it turned out that visitors also included a lot of older children, teenagers and young adults, and so changes had to be made (Surrell 2007: 41).

Disneyland's "World on the Move" concept was also implemented in other ways, when the WEDWay People Mover and the Carousel of Progress came to the Magic Kingdom in 1975. The People Mover was one of the central concepts thought up for EPCOT, yet its technology was improved upon from the earlier 1967 version from using a propulsion system of rotating (*Goodyear* sponsored)

tires to linear synchronous motors, and now featured open air cars. The linear motors were emission free and thus reflected the changing awareness of producing environmentally sound technology of the 1970s. While this still also tied in with EPCOT's utopian visions of transportation, the Grand Prix Raceway was a long way from Disneyland's Autopia. While Autopia showcased then new ways of building and driving on highways, environmental concerns had also started to dampen the enthusiasm for car travel, and so the Grand Prix Raceway was rethemed to represent a race course in the style of Formula 1 – a sport that was just on the verge of becoming the multibillion-dollar business it is today when the Magic Kingdom opened in 1971.

The Carousel of Progress however marked the first time that an attraction was fully moved from Disneyland to the Magic Kingdom, and not just cloned – yet it received extensive changes as well. The most notable was a new theme song that replaced "A Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow." Again written by the Sherman brothers, "The Best Time of Your Life" reflected everything that changed over the last decade, as sponsors General Electric evidently thought it was not timely anymore for their customers to have to wait for a tomorrow to arrive, but wanted them to purchase and enjoy their products right *now* (Paddon n.d.: n.pag.). The lyrics that begin with "now is the time / now is the best time / now is the best time of your life" (Duggan 1975) reflected a changed sensibility in the 1970s, that put focus on the present and began to see the future in an increasingly negative light. The Contemporary Resort outside the Magic Kingdom also cemented this idea – while it was planned as an "hotel of the future" (Anon. 1971: 41) and used the visionary technique of "modular construction" (Anon. 1971: 34) that was possibly because of Reedy Creek's unique building codes, in the end, it was literally contemporary in name. Walt Disney's "Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow" was slowly fading, as the same disillusioned population that turned toward a nostalgic view of their own heritage during the Bicentennial also turned away from their own future.

EPCOT and the Disillusionment of the 1970s

So what became of EPCOT? A WED Enterprises brochure titled "EPCOT – An Introduction: What it is – How it works – Values of Participation" from 1976 traces the changes the project went through in the decade after its official announcement. While it is hard to pinpoint when exactly the idea for building a true "Prototype Community of Tomorrow" was abandoned, the pessimistic mood of the early 1970s also gripped WED. While the brochure states that Walt Disney's "creative insight" that led him to EPCOT "is as valid today as it ever was" and notes Senator Edward Kennedys June 1975 call for a (never-realized) "Experimental Futures Agency," it also describes these plans as "lofty and noble

dreams" (Walt Disney Productions 1976: 1). Further, it directly acknowledges the changes American society went through:

> In the decade since Walt Disney made his concept known to the world it has become painfully apparent that: 1. Government and industry have both lost the public's trust. A recent national opinion poll has indicated clearly that the majority of people no longer believe that the actions of these institutions are motivated by genuine concern for improving the quality of life. As a result, democracy and free enterprise are coming under increasing attack, both at home and around the world. 2. At the same time, the public is becoming increasingly aware of the complex nature of the problems facing all people. They have a need to know what is being done to solve these problems. (Walt Disney Productions 1976: 2)

This clearly reflects the aforementioned disillusionment in the wake of the tumultuous 1960s, and especially the erosion of trust in the government when the Vietnam war dragged on and President Richard Nixon was almost impeached and stepped down from office following the Watergate scandal. Walt Disney World was even directly involved in these proceedings as Nixon famously stated "I am not a crook!" on November 17, 1973, during the Associates Press Managing Editors annual conference, taking place at the Contemporary Resort's convention center (Pope 2016: n.pag.). The oil crisis of 1973 and the related growing environmental concerns both made clear to (at least parts of) the American public that big government and big industry could not be the (sole) answer anymore. Technology, once the savior of the Cold War, also became increasingly faceless, lacking recognizable figures such as the (controversial) Wernher von Braun during the height of the space program. The death of Walt Disney, who had become the nation's trustworthy "Uncle Walt" also did not just shake his own company. The loss of his vision however made EPCOT as originally planned simply no longer feasible and it is hard to judge how the project would have progressed had he still been alive. One of his Imagineers, Bob Gurr, imagined him as "still struggling" with it in retrospect (Mannheim 2002: 140). Roy O. Disney, whose leadership had seen Walt Disney World through its Phase 1, died soon after its completion, on December 20, 1971, following a seizure. It was then that the Walt Disney Company definitely transitioned from a family company to the conglomerate it is today.

The 1976 proposal by WED Enterprises however still tried to keep some of the original spirit of EPCOT alive by trying to appeal to corporations to dedicate their time and efforts toward invention and improvement of the problems of the world, and making EPCOT an industry showcase and scientific institute.

It promised the ability to "communicate directly with the public" through Walt Disney World's millions of visitors and the company's many other media channels (Walt Disney Productions 1976: 17). Yet the proposal is somewhat nebulous in its intentions and clearly marks the shift to the idea of Epcot Center, the final stage of the original EPCOT that opened on October 1, 1982, and still exists to this day. Epcot Center (now simply called Epcot) is a theme park consisting of two parts, Future World and World Showcase, and has often been described as a "permanent World's Fair." Future World features several pavilions showcasing science and industry by means of several sponsored theme park attractions. World Showcase, that developed out of the original EPCOT town center idea, condenses eleven countries into themed entities, mostly featuring shopping and dining venues. Epcot Center thus contains some of the original plans for EPCOT in spirit still, yet the grand visions are completely gone. That the utopian notion of late 1960s EPCOT would falter and by the 1980s have turned into essentially, "just" another theme park is epitomic for the larger changes in US society. Epcot Center contributed to further cementing Walt Disney World as one of the top worldwide tourist destinations – ultimately then, instead of providing feasible solutions for the woes of the 1970s, Epcot merely ended up offering escapism from them.

The 1973 oil crisis, the resulting stagflation and economic crisis (that was also a consequence of the end of the Bretton Woods currency accord in 1971), however also left their mark on Walt Disney World. A big blow was dealt especially when car travel decreased severely in 1973 and 1974, but tourism quickly recuperated after that. Travel had become so ingrained in post–World War II consumer culture that even in economically unstable times, going on vacation was something not many people were willing to give up (Döring-Manteuffel and Raphael 2012: 125). Walt Disney World's original idea for Phase I, the "vacation kingdom" hit a nerve during these times, especially with the middle to upper classes. It can be seen as the epitome of an "experience economy" (as proposed by Gilmore and Pine 1999), as well as a larger development of Post-Fordist consumption and its resulting idea of post-(mass) tourism, putting experience and choice of options front and center (Urry and Larsen 2011: 49–54). Instead of simply building a clone of Disneyland as one of many attractions on the East Coast, Walt Disney's idea for establishing a veritable vacation destination had paid off and paved the way for many such resorts. Walt Disney World would add on a shopping village in 1975 (today's Disney Springs), and two other theme parks (Disney-MGM Studios, now Disney's Hollywood Studios in 1989; Disney's Animal Kingdom in 1998), as well as three water parks (Disney's River Country from 1976 to 2001; Disney's Typhoon Lagoon 1989; and Disney Blizzard Beach 1995), four golf courses and other entertainment complexes, and today contains over 30 resort hotels, most of

them run by Disney. Its success is unbroken. Walt Disney World, and Magic Kingdom as its first part, can also be regarded as a "trial run" for the later international expansion of Disney's theme parks discussed in the following. The East Coast of the United States drew different demographics than Disneyland on the West Coast, including more international visitors. The radical changes that occurred in American culture between the mid-1950s and the early 1970s also meant the Magic Kingdom had to deal with a different audience. This was reflected in its line-up of attractions, however cautiously. How well the Magic Kingdom adapted to these circumstances becomes apparent when looking at the international Disneyland theme parks.

PART II

THE INTERNATIONAL DISNEY THEME PARKS

3

"Is There Really a Disneyland in America?"[1] – The Unique Case of Tokyo Disneyland (1983)

After the successful opening of their second theme park destination with Walt Disney World in Florida, it seemed like a natural step for the Walt Disney Company to expand internationally – but the death of Walt and Roy Disney and the resulting change in management, as well as the economic woes of the 1970s made them cautious to pursue such a project in earnest. Yet, when a Japanese company approached them to build a Disneyland near Tokyo, these plans quickly became a reality. The Japanese company was the Oriental Land Co. (OLC), a joint venture of Keisei Electric Railway Co., Ltd. and Mitsui Real Estate Development Co., Ltd. that was formed in 1960. OLC was entrusted by the Chiba Prefectural Government (the prefecture that borders on that of Tokyo in the east) to create 874 hectares (2,160 acres) of new land in the city of Urayasu. The site was supposed to be used for commercial or recreational use and/or quasi-industrial districts and leisure facilities (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.), and a Disney theme park seemed a perfect fit.

As Disney was cautious to fully expand internationally at the time, OLC's proposal was ideal: while Imagineering would design the park, and Disney would be able to retain creative and quality control, it was essentially a licensing deal. OLC would build and finance the park, and Disney would receive royalties of 10% on ticket sales and 5% on sales of food and merchandise, whether OLC made a profit or not; the agreement was initially made for 45 years (Raz 1999: 27). While there are persisting rumors that in 1962 Chiharu Kawasaki, the president of OLC was in California to talk to Roy Disney about Disneyland finances and predicted a Disney theme park in Tokyo (Marling 1992: 104), and that Disney was in negotiations with Mitsubishi to build a park near Mt. Fuji in 1974 when OLC approached them first (Marling 1992: 104), the fact remains that an official agreement to build Tokyo Disneyland was not made until April 30, 1979. From

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[1] A Japanese girl asking an American visitor in 1992 (quoted in Gitlin 1992: n.pag.).

then on, the project moved quickly. On December 3, 1980, a Shinto purification ceremony was held on the site for the official groundbreaking (Oriental Land Company Ltd. 1983: n.pag.), and soon a month-long overseas training program for future Cast Members began (Oriental Land Company Ltd. 1983: n.pag.). On April 15, 1983, Tokyo Disneyland opened its doors, marking the first time that a Disney theme park did so outside of the United States.

The Design of Tokyo Disneyland

The design concept for Tokyo Disneyland (TDL) was in so far striking, in that it was essentially the same as the one for the American theme parks. While Imagineers had initially suggested incorporating attractions based on Japanese culture, such as a Samurai land or a ride based on the Japanese fairy tale "Little Peach Boy" (Brannen 1992: 216), OLC insisted that TDL be a copy of the American Disneylands so that the Japanese could experience America in their own country. Toshibaru Akiba, a public relations spokesman for TDL was quoted as saying: "We really tried to avoid creating a Japanese version of Disneyland. We wanted Japanese visitors to feel they were taking a foreign vacation by coming here, and to us Disneyland represents the best that America has to offer" (quoted in Brannen 1992: 216). However, Tokyo Disneyland neither was a carbon copy of Disneyland in California nor the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World, it was specifically designed to represent the best of both parks, as an introductory brochure to the project states:

> From the beginning, the design philosophy was to incorporate the best of both existing Disney theme parks in the building of Tokyo Disneyland, and, as such, it can be said that Tokyo Disneyland reflects the current state of the art. However, Japanese guests anticipate a "foreign experience" when they visit Tokyo Disneyland so all food facilities feature Western-style menus, merchandise are displayed from all over the world, and the primary graphics, as well as some of the show songs, are in English. (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.)

Additionally, many attractions were corporate sponsored just as in the US parks – yet mostly Japanese companies were chosen to do so, such as Fuji, Japan Air Lines, Kodansha Publishers, Ltd., or the Japanese division of Coca-Cola (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.). The basic layout of the park remained the same, but some changes were made here and there – largely to account for the different weather and crowd conditions, yet ultimately also for cultural differences.

Most notably, Main Street, U.S.A. was turned into World Bazaar. While the buildings of the streetscape remain themed to an idealized small town America at

the turn of the century, the colder, wetter weather conditions called for a roof that "resemble[s] a giant train shed or an iron-and-glass exhibition hall at a World's Fair of the 1890s" (Marling 1997: 97) and essentially turns the space into a shopping mall, or as Marling has called it, "little Ginza" (1997: 97), referencing the famous shopping district of Tokyo. Merchandise sales have always been central to TDL, as the Japanese have a great tradition of gift giving, entailing that travelers bring gifts "not only to family members but also neighbors, friends, and office colleagues. These gifts, called *omiyage*, are defined as 'a representation of otherness that one brings home after a journey to another, often distant and/or mythical place'" (Laemmerhirt 2013: 81). They must fulfill two essential requirements: "(1) the gifts purchased must be a specialty of the locale visited – a *meibutsu* – and (2) the gifts must have a legitimating mark – a *kinen* tag or wrapper proving that they were purchased on site" (Brannen 2004: 609). TDL thus offers – in addition to countless other merchandise articles – packaged sweets, most of them cookies in specially labeled tins or wrappers that fulfill this purpose. While these can be bought all over the theme park, World Bazaar has one huge retail space dedicated to these *omiyage*.

Early artwork for World Bazaar showed a concept similar to that of the World Showcase in Epcot, which would have apparently featured a number of internationally themed shops (WED Imagineering 1975: n.pag.). However, this idea was scrapped, likely because the idea of an American experience prevailed, and the relevance of gifts hailing from TDL became apparent. Yet the name World Bazaar remained. Even though it essentially is just another Main Street, U.S.A., with a roof, this name did just not resonate culturally, as cultural historian Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt explains: "the concept of a main street which runs through a rural town does not exist in Japan and therefore, Japanese visitors have no nostalgic notions about a rural main street" (2013: 80).

Frontierland in TDL has become Westernland. When it comes to design, this is only a name change, as the theming and its attraction line up remains the same as in the US parks. The elimination of the idea of the "frontier" is essential to an understanding of the space to the Japanese, as according to Akiba, "we could identify with the old West, but not with the idea of a frontier" (quoted in Bly 1983: G1–3). Japan as an island nation has a different understanding of expansion, yet, the American Western is highly recognizable because of US popular culture's influence. Many American Western television shows were also very popular in postwar Japan, and thus many Japanese grew up watching *Rawhide* (1959–65) or *Bonanza* (1959–73) (Brannen 2004: 608) – at least the generation that were children in the 1950s and 1960s. An opening day brochure of TDL outlines this popularity of the Western in Japan: "But we [the Americans] are not the only ones fascinated with this memorable era. In Japan, western jeans and cowboy boots

are common attire, and musical groups featuring country and western themes find enthusiastic followers" (Oriental Land Company Ltd. 1983: n.pag.). Westernland featured a shop selling such attire, and Country and Dixieland bands were part of its entertainment lineup in the early years. The same brochure also states: "Although our favorite folk hero, Davy Crockett, is not as widely known in Japan as he is in America, his famous coonskin cap is!" (Oriental Land Company Ltd. 1983: n.pag.). This points toward a commodified idea of the Western; Disney's version of Davy Crockett was also released in Japan in 1956, and so the fictional version of the character was a staple of the Japanese popular culture landscape as much as he was in the United States at the time. Commodification also did play an equally important role in Davy Crockett's popularity in the United States; ultimately, the propagation of the frontier myth in postwar America in general was done largely through popular culture such as Western films and television (as has been discussed in the first chapter of this book). Historian Michael Steiner's account of Disney's Frontierlands also notes the presence of the famous coonskin cap on the rainy opening day of TDL. Quoting an Australian journalist, he describes "'iron-willed Japanese Crocketts in dripping coonskins' canoeing furiously to Tom Sawyer's Island, 'huddling under umbrellas, paddling with their free hands, and each paying […] for the fun'" (Steiner 1998: 4). While the Western genre was popular in Japan, the Japanese cultural understanding of cowboys is much different there than it is in the United States. Americans generally see the cowboy as a lonesome rider and the epitome of rugged individualism, yet many Japanese apparently view cowboys as team players, as a Japanese man related when interviewed on the subject by Brannen:

> When you boil it all down, what's the most important thing in a cowboy's life? Pride in his work. […] We all grew up watching those TV shows like "Rawhide" and "Laramy." What we saw was everyone getting together around the campfire. You guys have it all wrong. It's not about being an individual, it's about working together. Whenever those guys had a problem, they'd get together and figure out how to solve it. That's why the shows were so popular in Japan. They used teamwork. (Brannen 2004: 608)

Westernland makes perfect sense in TDL, and was bound to be as popular as it was in the United States, but the way it translates is ultimately rather different. Commodification has played a role in the promulgation of Western myths in both countries, but in the United States, these myths were important for Cold War culture and patriotic spirit, while in Japan, the same characters promoted ideas of community and a shared love for the United States' popular culture.

Meanwhile, the exoticism of Adventureland also remained exotic for the Japanese, where represented regions include the Polynesia (which is especially popular in Japan)[2] of the Enchanted Tiki Room,[3] the "rivers of the world" of the Jungle Cruise, and the Caribbean with its pirates. Yet the latter had actually held rather different meanings for the Japanese as well. While familiar with the idea of pirates, Japanese were unfamiliar with the history of the Caribbean and its relevance to the United States. As was explained by a Japanese woman: "The word 'the Caribbean' has no meaning to me except for the image of an expensive yacht cruise for some rich folks. I didn't know that pirates once lived there until I saw this attraction at Tokyo Disneyland" (quoted in van Maanen 1992: 21). Such statements are contrary to an official Disney book that claims that "[t]he Japanese […] were particularly enamored of Disneyland's Pirates of the Caribbean" (Surrell 2005: 58). Yet while the attraction was indeed not as popular in the beginning, it has found its audience in more recent years. Not just because it has by now become a well-known staple of the park, but also because the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies based on the attraction were as popular in Japan as they were largely everywhere else in the world.[4] The ride is housed in a section of Adventureland that is partly a clone of Disneyland's New Orleans Square, although it is not especially labeled as such – simply, "for the Tokyo audience, nineteenth-century New Orleans […] was an exotic port of call" (Surrell 2005: 58) and as such it was integrated with the other exotica of the land.

The Jungle Cruise received a translation and operates on a script that still has largely the same storyline, as well as bad puns, but is completely tailored to the Japanese language. Sociologist Aviad E. Raz has extensively written on this spiel (2000: 79–82; 1999: 33–38) that includes word-plays and puns only possible in Japanese, which he describes as a "creative rewriting and 'redecorating' of the English version" (Raz 1999: 38).

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[2] For more on the popularity of Polynesian (and especially Hawaiian) culture in Japan, see Yaguchi and Yoshihara (2004).

[3] While the show remained a clone of the American version in the early years of TDL, it was changed to The Enchanted Tiki Room: Now Playing "Get the Fever! in 1999, a Las Vegas-style nightclub show, and most notably, in 2008, became The Enchanted Tiki Room: Stitch Presents Aloha e Komo Mai, featuring Stitch, the alien main character from Disney's animated film *Lilo & Stitch* (2002). The movie is incredibly popular in Japan as part of the *kawaii* culture sensibility (to which I will come back later), as well as because of its ties to Hawaiian culture. While the attraction in the Magic Kingdom also received changes in 1998 with The Enchanted Tiki Room (Under New Management) that incorporated characters from *The Lion King* and *Aladdin*, those were poorly received and the original attraction was reinstated in 2011.

[4] The most recent installment, *Pirates of the Caribbean – Dead Men Tell No Tales* opened at No. 1 in Japan; the best start for a foreign film in 2017 (Schilling 2017: n.pag.).

The only truly new addition to Adventureland is thus the Western River Railroad, yet this is a version of the Disneyland railroad to be found in the other Disneyland-style theme parks around the world (with the notable exception of Shanghai that will be discussed later in this book). Instead of surrounding the park, the railroad here departs (and returns to) a station above the Jungle Cruise, traversing only Adventure- and Frontierland. While Mary Yoko Brannen has interpreted this design choice as a reason to avoid the possibility of visitors seeing the surrounding Chiba prefecture and thus disrupting the "foreign" experience (Brannen 1992: 232), Raz quotes an unnamed Imagineer with a much more practical reason for this change: "In Japan, if you have a train that's going only to one station it's not considered a train. […] It's a ride, not a train. Otherwise, we would have to deal with the Transportation Department, apply for various licenses, and be subject to various requirements and supervision" (quoted in Raz 1999: 35). This conflict with Japanese law that would essentially mean having to charge for the railroad if it made several stops around the park has also been related to me in conversation with American Cast Members working on California's Disneyland railroad. It can also be backed up by the fact that the resort monorail that connects TDL with the Tokyo DisneySea theme park that opened in 2001 and some of the surrounding hotels does indeed require a separate train ticket purchase, unlike it does in Disneyland, Walt Disney World, or Hong Kong Disneyland where similar systems are in place.

Fantasyland in TDL also follows the "best of both parks" mentality in its design and attraction line up. It debuted the Pinocchio's Daring Journey dark ride that was soon after implemented in Disneyland in California for its aforementioned remodel in 1985. The most curious addition to this land is certainly the Haunted Mansion – again changing its location because of the lack of an actual New Orleans Square or Liberty Square area in this park. While very early designs placed it in Westernland (Walt Disney Productions 1981: n.pag.), it was decided to move it to Fantasyland for cultural reasons. The Japanese have a very different understanding of ghosts (*yūrei*) than our western world, which includes that "ghost stories are often categorized as fairy tales or fables" (Surrell 2015: 38), and so Fantasyland seemed the most fitting locale for the Mansion. The architecture of the building was however cloned from the Magic Kingdom with its Dutch Gothic style, or as Disney has termed it in a brochure for TDL, "'early Edgar Allan Poe' architecture" (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.) and it was placed at the edge of the land where it serves as a "thematic bridge between Fantasyland and Westernland" (Surrell 2015: 39).

Tokyo Disneyland's icon is Cinderella Castle, a clone from the Magic Kingdom rather than Sleeping Beauty Castle from Anaheim, as it was deemed important to have a bigger and more imposing castle for the park, where the walkways were built wider than those of the American counterparts, in order to ease crowd

control.[5] Additionally, as the Japanese have their own castles, Disney's castle had to live up to a literally higher standard – an introductory brochure of the park even compares its height with that of Osaka castle (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.). The brochure also extols its virtues as being "the most unique castle in the Orient and one without age-crusted floors and drafty hallways" (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.). What however made it unique among the other Disney castles (until the opening of Shanghai Disneyland in 2016 and Hong Kong's revamp of their own in 2020) is the fact that Tokyo's Cinderella castle actually housed an attraction between 1986 and 2006.

The Cinderella Castle Mystery Tour was a guided walking tour through the dungeons of the castle where a group of guests actively fought the Disney villains from several animated films in an interactive adventure. Raz has argued that this attraction worked well for Japan because it resembled a Japanese ghost house (*obeyashiki*) (2000: 87), yet cultural historian Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt contests this idea as she rightly says that Disney villains again function very differently from Japanese ghosts; she claims that the attraction "has to be evaluated as a familiar form of entertainment because it features Japanese concepts of entertainment and role play set in a romantic Western environment" (2013: 86). Sociologist John van Maanen has argued that this style of group touring and role play could only work in Japan, as in the American parks the lack of necessary group discipline and "'me, me, me' attitude" of the guests, particularly the children, would hinder the process (1992: 19–20). While I would agree with Laemmerhirt that the role-playing aspects certainly made Japan a good fit for the first instance of such an attraction in a Disney park, since then, attractions with similar game play have been developed both by Disney and Universal for American theme park audiences, showing that these types of attractions also work very successfully in western cultural contexts (Baker 2016: n.pag.).[6] The Mystery Tour closed in 2006 although it remained very popular with park guests, as new building codes demanded better earthquake

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[5] Laemmerhirt erroneously suggests the castle was modeled after Neuschwanstein, which is a popular tourist destination not only for the Americans but also the Japanese – but as I have outlined in previous chapters, this only partly applies to the Sleeping Beauty castle in California's Disneyland (and Hong Kong's), not Cinderella castle as it can be found in Florida and Tokyo (2013: 88).

[6] These include, but are not limited to, Sorcerers of the Magic Kingdom (Magic Kingdom, since 2012) (that Baker 2016 has written on) or the Ollivander's magic wand choosing experience in Universal Studios' Wizarding World of Harry Potter (to be found in Florida, Japan, and California since 2010, 2014, and 2016, respectively). The Cinderella Castle Mystery Tour was a very early instance of such an interactive theme park attraction and to this day remains singular.

refitting and wheelchair access, and it would have had to be completely rebuilt to remain operational (JoeInJp 2009: n.pag.).

Tokyo Disneyland's Tomorrowland was built at a time when modern visions of the future were slowly crumbling and the part of the park was on the way to becoming a somewhat incoherent "catch-all" for attractions not fitting elsewhere; as the Magic Kingdom and changes throughout the original Disneyland attest. Yet TDL's version still essentially tried to recreate the 1967 concept of a "world on the move" (Oriental Land Company Ltd. 1983: n.pag.), according to the park's opening day brochure. However, one of the most kinetic elements of Disneyland, the submarines that were already moved to Fantasyland in Orlando, did not make it to Tokyo at all. According to Awata Fusaho and Takanarita Toru, this was "because it was thought that the Japanese might hold anti-nuclear feelings regarding the models of nuclear submarines, and that the military theme would not fit the 'peace loving attitude' of postwar Japanese citizens" (quoted in Toyoda 2014: 218). While the nuclear issue seems plausible, there definitely would have been a way to make the attraction fit in the Japanese cultural context, as the Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* version of the ride as it was built for the Magic Kingdom would have likely found an audience. When the second theme park in Tokyo, Tokyo DisneySea, opened in 2001, it featured a whole land based on Jules Verne's stories, including a *20,000 Leagues* attraction with submarine vehicles (albeit different looking ones than those used in the United States). Operational issues seem most likely to be the reason for their omission, as the submarines had always been slow-loading, and expensive to maintain, which also led to their closure in the Magic Kingdom in 1994.

Tomorrowland however did house the only truly unique attractions that TDL had to offer on its opening day. One of them was *The Eternal Sea*, a film that dealt with the Japanese's relationship with the sea as an island nation, or as the opening day brochure put it: "This show is particularly meaningful to the Japanese because of their intense involvement with the sea – its mysteries and benefits – throughout their history" (Oriental Land Company Ltd. 1983: n.pag.).[7] It let "guests explore man's newest frontier through Disney's unique 200 degree theater" (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.) – the idea of in some way incorporating a Japanese "frontier" in the park seemed important to the American Imagineers. Yet the show was so unpopular that it was closed on Sep 16, 1984; roughly 1.5 years after the park's opening. The theater then housed *Magic Journeys*, a film imported from Epcot, and from 1987 on, *Captain EO*, which starred Michael Jackson, was produced by George Lucas and directed by Francis Ford Coppola. It proved

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[7] Sadly, there are not many more details known about his particular attraction or what the film actually contained.

popular in all Disney parks that it was implemented in. While the Japanese did not seem to be interested in attractions without a direct link to Disney characters in the early years of the park, such as *The Eternal Sea*, (something that would change later, especially with the opening of Tokyo DisneySea), the popularity of Michael Jackson made *Captain EO* a better fit and lasted until 1996.[8]

Another movie theater attraction was also part of Tomorrowland's early years: *Magic Carpet Round the World* was a Circle Vision 360 film that was originally shown at the Magic Kingdom from 1974 to 1975 but received new footage for Tokyo. Described by van Maanen as a "movie trip across five continents which culminates, dramatically, in the adventurer's return to 'our beloved Japan where our hearts always remain'" (van Maanen 1992: 19), it equally suffered from its lack of Disney characters and was also closed in 1986.

The most compelling and truly unique addition to the park's opening lineup however was Meet the World. In a revolving theater similar to the one used for the Carousel of Progress,[9] audio-animatronic characters presented a short version of Japanese history with a focus on transnational relations, told through several key scenes; "a 16-minute capsule history of Japan and its relationship to the world" (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.). The story was told by a magical crane that tells a pair of children, a brother and a sister, about these key moments of Japan's meeting with other nations, such as its history with China, the closing off from the outside during the Edo period, and Admiral Perry's "black ships," the crucial moment in Japanese-American relations. As Raz has posited, it attempted "to merge two historiographic narratives. One is the popular narrative of Japan as an 'island nation,' isolated and unique. The other is the pragmatic account, equally popular, of Japan's skills of borrowing and adaptation" (2000: 91). It also was a classic example of disneyfied history, in that it omitted darker and especially more recent history such as World War II completely, and ended on the usually upbeat note with an original Sherman Brothers theme song "We Meet the World with Love." The ultimate unpopularity of the attraction can be traced back to several reasons: The first reason was that it was sponsored by Matsushita Electric Industrial Company, and Konosuke Matsushita, the company's founder, had a strong interest in Japanese history and in Walt Disney's visions and pressed Disney to create a Japanese analogue of the American Hall of Presidents attraction. While American history was deemed uninteresting to the Japanese audience unless filtered through pop culture as in Westernland, his reasoning likely was that Japanese

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[8] After the death of Michael Jackson in 2009, the attraction was also revived for a few years in several Disney parks around the world.

[9] In the Carousel of Progress, the audience sat outside while the stage was inside; Meet the World featured a reversed layout.

history would find an audience. However, and that is the second reason, the attraction was originally planned to be a part of the Japan pavilion in Epcot's World Showcase (Beard 1982: 194–99). Imagineering even went so far as to construct the show building in Epcot, which was ultimately never used. A book published for the opening of Epcot in 1982 outlines the attractions storyline and some of its artwork and claims that the "Florida version will be substantially the same as the Tokyo show, although there will be a few changes, if only in phraseology" (Beard 1982: 197). The final attraction was planned and scripted by Americans for largely an American audience, and while built on Japanese request in Tokyo, the request also came from an outside sponsor and not the OLC that had wanted a purely foreign experience within the park. It thus seems unsurprising that the result was uneven and ultimately ill-fitting for TDL, also considering the fact that such an edutainment approach was in line with Epcot's, but definitely not with TDL's offerings.

In another weird twist that would have been much more fitting to an actual Carousel of Progress attraction, an early Tokyo Disney brochure claims that the exit area of Meet the World would showcase "Matsushita's version of the future and view kitchens, living rooms, and study rooms of the 21st century" (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.). I could however not find any sources on whether this exhibit was ever realized, but it seems likely that it was not. Meet the World played to a usually empty theater until 2002, even though an unnamed Imagineer quoted by Raz in the early 1990s called it "an embarrassment for everyone" and claimed that "practically everybody would like to see it abolished" (quoted in Raz 2000: 92). That the attraction lasted so long was likely because outside sponsorship sustained it, yet its replacement, Monsters Inc. Go Ride and Seek, an interactive dark ride based on Pixar's Monsters Inc. movies, proved ultimately much more popular. This was yet another case arguing for the idea that "[f]or the Japanese audience it is obviously crucial to keep Disneyland purely Disney and American and not to disturb the magic of Disneyland by including too obviously non-Disney, i.e. Japanese characters in the park" (Laemmerhirt 2013: 80).

Tokyo Disneyland: A Transcultural Space?

> To all of you who come to this happy place, welcome. Here you will discover enchanted lands of Fantasy and Adventure, Yesterday and Tomorrow. May Tokyo Disneyland be an eternal source of joy, laughter, inspiration, and imagination to the peoples of the world. And may this magical kingdom be an enduring symbol of the spirit of cooperation and friendship between the great nations of Japan and the United States of America (Walker 1983).

With these words, Card Walker, then chairman of the Walt Disney Company, opened TDL on April 15, 1983. The dedication, obviously referencing Walt Disney's speech in 1955, essentially repeated its general ideas, yet with one significant change – where once America's Cold War-tinged ideals were stressed, this dedication put importance on transnational relations between East and West. Much had changed in almost 30 years, yet the appeal of Disneyland had stood the test of time. Tokyo Disneyland was an immediate and overwhelming success. Oriental Land's impulse to recreate the American experience for a Japanese audience had been the right one. Tokyo Disneyland was welcomed with open arms by the Japanese, in spite of a few small hiccups: embarrassing construction errors did originally not account for the usually smaller stature of the Japanese (almost 100 telephones were placed too high, as well as many service counters at the park's restaurants) (Hamby 1983: 21), and there were not enough traditionally Japanese food offerings; Restaurant Hokusai was opened later to appeal to the many elderly visitors who were less used to westernized food (Raz 1999: 63). Even though there was "bad weather and even a typhoon" ahead of, and during the opening in April, visitors came in droves to experience it, and "by November, attendance had already topped the seven million mark, slightly ahead of the first-year projection of 10 million" (Walt Disney Productions 1983b: n.pag.). Tokyo Disneyland was (and is) so popular that it even influenced the customs of some Japanese: many now travel there in the summer instead of visiting their hometown, as was customary (Toyoda 2014: 209–10), and although the new year is traditionally a solemn holiday for the Japanese, the celebrations at Tokyo Disney draw massive crowds (Anthony 1992: 7). Masako Notoji, a cultural historian from the University of Tokyo, even went so far as to call the opening of TDL "the greatest cultural event in Japan during the '80s" (quoted in Dawson 2001: n.pag.).

Such overwhelming success did not just attract interest of the press, but also academia. Yet while the number of publications on TDL ultimately remain far and few in between, the existing body of work mostly tries to explain not just why the park was and remains so successful, but also why the particular form of the theme park appeals so greatly to the Japanese and what role culture plays in these sites. The idea of TDL as an America within Japan might in fact have been crucial in its early years, yet seems to have diminished in importance for its popularity since then. TDL is often seen as an interplay between the exotic and the familiar, something that however ultimately all theme parks are based on. German architectural theorist Jörg H. Gleiter (1999) has labeled Japanese theme parks as an "exotization of the trivial" ("*Exotisierung des Trivialen*"), as many of the theme parks that opened after TDL were so-called "foreign country" theme parks or "European villages" (Hendry 2009: 129), meaning that they are themed after countries in miniature, such as Huis Ten Bosch in Sasebo, Nagasaki that recreated the

Netherlands.[10] Anthropologist Joy Hendry has worked extensively on these types of theme parks, and has argued that the "principle of the microcosm" (a term by historian Donald Richie 1992: 44) is quintessentially Japanese, and that these theme parks can thus be seen as a natural extension of the traditional Japanese garden (Hendry 2010: 43).[11] Cultural historian Richard Pells similarly argues that "the structure of Disney's theme park coincided with certain qualities the Japanese admired. Its order and coherence, its immaculate grounds and peaceful atmosphere, even its obvious artificiality evidently reminded the natives of a Japanese garden, a precise and flawless but miniature rendition of nature that was more enchanting and less threatening than anything they encountered in the real world" (1997: 308). Hendry thus concludes that "[i]n practice, TDL is, from a Japanese point of view, just another foreign country theme park" (2000: 94). Cultural anthropologist Yukio Toyoda however has pointed out that "most foreign country theme parks were constructed after TDL and were inspired by TDL's success" (2014: 211), and hence, Hendry's argumentation appears to be anachronistic. Indeed, TDL was the first theme park to be built in Japan, and generated a venerable theme park boom in the 1980s and 1990s (Raz 1999: 147–55). Yet even that would make TDL the de facto first of these "foreign country" theme parks, this does still not explain how it has remained so overwhelmingly popular while many of the other Japanese parks have come and gone (bankrupt) (Toyoda 2014: 211).

Hendry's studies can be seen in a larger context of other work on the cultural recontextualization of TDL. In one of the seminal essays on the park, "'Bwana Mickey': Constructing Cultural Consumption at Tokyo Disneyland," Mary Yoko Brannen has argued that the "recontextualization of Disneyland is a specifically Japanese construction of cultural consumption and takes two forms: making the exotic familiar and keeping the exotic exotic," (1992: 219) and, in a more recent article, has concluded that uncharacteristically for exported products, foreignness is an asset for Disney and not an (economic) liability (2004: 593–616). Foreignness is however, as I would argue, central to the theme park experience in general, and that it works as an asset, is not necessarily a specifically Japanese phenomenon. Theme parks always try to transport people out of their ordinary surroundings and immerse them in exotic, unfamiliar locations – yet so that the audience can decode them, rely on familiar cues to trivialize the exoticism and thus reassure

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[10] For more on these foreign country theme parks or foreign villages, particularly Huis Ten Bosch, see Schlehe and Uike Bormann (2010: 57–91).

[11] I want to note that the idea of the Japanese garden as being something "traditional" has also been recently contested by Christian Tagsold (2017), who argues that the Japanese garden as a form has been developed in a constant cultural exchange with the West and thus marks it as an "inverted" tradition in his monograph on the subject. I would like to thank Katharina Hülsmann for making me aware of this.

them. This balance is critical also for transcultural processes in general, as Laemmerhirt argues, as "it is of crucial importance to maintain a sense of "Otherness" in order to keep [...] [cultural items] interesting" (2013: 29). When Pells argues that "neither Main Street nor the Old West seemed fake because these did not exist in Japan – except as fantasies which, after all, was what Disney excelled at. The Japanese were able to domesticate Disneyland because they already felt at home in its embrace" (1997: 308), he jumps to the wrong conclusions. The specifically American connoted areas of TDL were precisely what sold the park to the Japanese – because American culture was as exotic to them as, say, the Asian countries as portrayed in Adventureland were to the Americans. In the context of TDL, America, or at least Disney's version of America, becomes the exotic cultural item that is consumed by the Japanese.

Nevertheless, scholarly opinion diverges on the subject of what this consumption, or "domestication" as Pells calls it, does to the cultural item itself. A majority of earlier works on the park argue that TDL has indeed stopped to be American, and through Japanese consumption, has been turned into an entirely Japanese cultural item. Raz argues that "the Japanese [...] imported Disneyland for their leisure, translating and editing it to project a Japanese national identity and consuming it in unique ways" (1999: 7). Masako Notoji's (and she is arguably the Japanese scholar that has dealt most extensively with TDL) main argument is also that TDL has been completely reappropriated. She writes: "It was like we were buying Disneyland. [...] We took the foreignness out of it and digested it. It came out as something with an American character, but for the Japanese it is Japanese" (Notoji quoted in Sterngold 1994: n.pag.). She concludes that in TDL, the Japanese are in fact no longer "enjoying [...] the American dream, but their own Japanese Dream" (Notoji quoted in Sterngold 1994: n.pag.).[12]

While such statements certainly speak toward the relevance of TDL for Japanese culture, it is questionable how accurate they are; as John van Maanen has pointed out, "Japan's widescale adoption of things American is now something of a universal cliché" (van Maanen 1992: 16). And indeed, as the other international Disney parks will show, the transcultural processes here at work might indeed not be uniquely Japanese. American popular culture has spread so far and wide across the globe that Japan is, as we all know, not the only country where it has found fertile ground. Yet what is often understood by scholars as the unique Japanese way of consumption is the purely commodified use of American cultural goods and practices, such as the adoption of American Christmas traditions, and integrating them into their own. As Marling has argued, using, among other things, the Christmas

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[12] Notoji also has published one article in English herself where she outlines these theories in more detail, see Notoji (2000: 219–26).

festivities at TDL as an example, the Japanese have reduced American Christmas to pure iconography and consumer goods (Marling 1992: 102). Richie has described Japanese consumption of TDL in similar terms: "with understandable enthusiasm Japan embraced the biggest piece of kitsch in the West. Did so, then broke off a chunk and brought it home to add to its collection" (1992: 45). Raz even argues that the "cultural production/consumption of TDL has initiated and became part of this trend of Japanese imperialist consumption of the world" (1999: 153). They are making a case for what can essentially be understood as Japanese cultural imperialism – counter arguing the standard claim of American cultural imperialism. Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto states that TDL never was a case of American cultural imperialism, because it is not an exact copy of the American parks (Yoshimoto 1994: 193) but, similar to Notoji's thesis, in fact "one of the most powerful manifestations of contemporary Japanese nationalism" (Yoshimoto 1994: 197). Brannen further sees these practices of cultural appropriation as part of a "Japanese hegemony" that is reinforcing their own "cultural uniqueness and superiority" (1992: 219). In postcolonial terms, this process has been labeled, following Edward Said (1978), as a possible "reverse orientalism" by both Raz and Hendry (Hendry 2000: 94; Raz 2003: 224), or in other words, as "[o]ccidentalizing the idea of America" by Laemmerhirt (2013: 76). Yet as sociologist Shunya Yoshimi has pointed out, and I would agree with him, "[t]he concept of reverse Orientalism might be misleading as it suggests an historical and structural symmetry between Orient and Occident, or Japan and 'the West'; it is the question of appropriation of the foreign, however, which is essential in interpreting foreign country theme parks in Japan" (quoted in Schlehe and Uike Bormann 2010: 69).

As I would however argue, the processes of cultural transformation at work in Tokyo Disneyland, and for that matter, in the other foreign Disneylands, should be viewed through a less culturally essentialist lens. Culture is in a constant flux, and the way popular culture is received and reinterpreted is also never as stoic as the idea of cultural imperialism suggests – two fronts, a singular, fixed American culture and an equally unmovable Japanese culture colliding, and one of them eventually overtaking the other. The often-cited idea of "culture clash" might indeed be misleading. I am not alone with this sentiment, as there has been plenty of scholarship dealing with cultural transformation, appropriation, or translation; in other words, a "flow" of cultures. The most prominent theories of these is the idea of glocalization, "a portmanteau of the words 'globalization' and 'localiza-tion' […] [it] emphasizes particularism of a global theme, product, or service" (Matusitz 2010: 224). As Freitag has discussed, cultural imperialism has indeed lost relevance in academic discourse as it was deemed too simplistic a model, but as the example of Euro Disney/Disneyland Paris will show, it has still held meaning in a public forum (2014: 168). Ideas of hybridization, creolization, and glocalization

have taken its place in understanding transcultural processes (Freitag 2014: 168; Bryman 1999: 261). Glocalization means that a host culture never undermines the guest culture, but if something from one culture enters another, there is a process of transformation that results in a cultural item that contains elements of both host and guest cultures.

Freitag however argues that TDL is not a case of glocalization, as its design is a carbon copy of the Magic Kingdom in Florida (2014: 178–79). While this is not correct, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, he also only considers the design of the park, not the way the visitors (and the people working there) interact with it – in other words, in his assessment, he does not consider its reception, which I consider equally important. Levels of interaction and reception with a theme park are ultimately manifold – including, among other things, interaction with and spectatorship of the rides, shows, and parades in the park, as well as character meets; consumption of food and merchandise, and a fandom culture that continues even when people leave the park.[13] While this book cannot provide a reception study, these aspects still need to be considered when talking about the transcultural processes at work. Almost all scholars who have worked on TDL agree that it has passed through a cultural transformation sparked by its avid Japanese consumers. Glocalization does seem to describe the process, as it accounts for the relevance of the foreign American experience that the park provided its visitors in the early years, and was the reason for much of its initial popularity – after all, "[g]localization is successful when adaptation to foreignness is successful" (Matusitz 2010: 224). But most importantly, it also encompasses the changes TDL went through in the following 30+ years (such as the addition of unique attractions, food, and merchandise, as well as the eventual transformation into a resort with the opening of the Tokyo DisneySea theme park in 2001).[14] A more recent study from 2014 by Yukio Toyoda has found that the Japanese have come to think of the experience they have at TDL not as one that is particularly Americanized, but view the park as a fantastic environment that allows them to escape the ordinariness of everyday life (2014: 218): "TDR's success lies more in its meaning as 'a non-ordinary world' for Japanese, and that this non-ordinariness does not come from it being 'American' *per se*, but more importantly by being

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[13] As discussed in the introduction, there is a growing scholarly interest in Disney parks fandom (see, for instance, Williams 2020).

[14] This is important as Tokyo DisneySea shifts the focus farther away from the idealized representation of American culture, and accounts for the popularity of, among other things, European cultures in Japan. As Laemmerhirt has argued, "a significant interest in European styles and especially French and Italian design rose in the 1970s in Japan […]. Millions of Japanese tourists visiting European cities such as Paris, Heidelberg, and Venice every year" (2013: 86) is something that DisneySea is reacting to.

seen as 'non-Japanese'" (Toyoda 2014: 222). A student of Shunya Yoshimi had related similar feelings in 2001 (quoted in Yoshimi 2001: 161). Thus, in the case of TDL, "American culture is deconstructed and recontextualized into the everyday experience of the people," (Notoji 2000: 225) and it makes sense to term TDL a "transnational space" (Laemmerhirt 2013: 73). As Laemmerhirt has put it, in "Tokyo Disney Resort, Disneyland becomes a transnational dream, a fantasyscape that is still in a constant flux" (Laemmerhirt 2013: 99).

Tokyo, 1983: The Relevance of Historic Context

As both culture and theme parks remain in constant flux, it seems all the more important to come back to the opening year of Tokyo Disneyland, 1983, to reflect on why the park was ultimately so successful. While glocalization theory can help us understand the process of the park went through, the specific cultural historic context it was brought into is still the most important factor in explaining why the park resonated so profoundly with the Japanese.

First, we have to look at the relevance American popular culture, and especially the Disney brand had for postwar Japan. While many assume that American pop culture just came to Japan through the years of occupation after the end of World War II (1945–52), it had in fact gained relevance as early as the 1920s (Yoshimi 2000: 202), with particularly American films (both live action and animated) gripping the Japanese imagination – including Disney's early Mickey Mouse cartoons and other animated shorts.[15] The war years largely saw a ban of American cultural products, but with the 1950s, they reached a so far unseen popularity – Disney's own *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, released in 1938 in the United States, was first shown in Japan in 1950, and going to see Disney films even became part of the primary school curriculum at the time (Kinsella 1995: 241). Yet,

> [t]he military and economic might of the American Occupation Force was not the only, or even the main reason for such a desire. [...] [Even before the occupation, the] Japanese public had already begun to associate images of Disney's film and land with "America" as the symbol of "richness" and "newness." (Yoshimi 2000: 207)

The Japanese indeed began to connect the idea of modernity with the United States and their consumer goods, as the postwar years in Japan were rather bleak, and

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[15] For more on the transcultural exchange of early animation shorts from the United States (and other countries) to Japan (see Annett 2014: 25–48). I would like to thank Katharina Hülsmann for making me aware of this article.

the economic prosperity of the booming 1950s in America became a goal to strive for (Marling 1992: 107; Notoji 2000: 224). As Japanese architect Arata Isozaki, who was born in 1931, relates: "We look back today on the 1950s as the good old days of American culture" (1993: 177). It is important to point out that, as in the case of TDL, in these years, Japanese (pop) culture was never fully supplanted by American, but there was always a coexistence (Isozaki 1993: 178), and again, a remaking and appropriation process of the American product by the Japanese (Yoshimi 2000: 205). The American films also were a great influence to Japanese artists, as the Disney animation style would go on to inspire Japanese animation and comics, leading to the "introduction of the modern cute aesthetic into Japan" (Kinsella 1995: 241) (a concept that I will come to later). Yet the presence of Disney did not just include their movies, but also their television shows: both the *Mickey Mouse Club* (Brannen 1992: 223) and the *Disneyland* TV show were household staples in the Japan of the 1950s and 60s (dubbed into the Japanese language) (Yoshimi 2000: 207). *Disneyland* aired on Nippon TV beginning in 1958 (Yoshimi 2000: 207) and lasted until 1967,

> and this period between 1958 and 1967 more or less coincided with the age of the so-called high economic growth characterized by the annual average of more than eleven percent increase in GNP. In the 1960s, this television show made Disneyland one of the most powerful symbols of the affluent society for which the Japanese were earnestly striving. (Yoshimoto 1994: 189)

Disneyland thus became intrinsically connected with modernity and affluence.

Japan went through rapid economic growth from 1955 to 1973 that even the oil crisis in 1973 with its worldwide impact did not have too much of a negative effect on. By the end of the 1970s and into the early 1980s, the nation experienced an economic boom, mostly driven by a veritable speculative mania (which by end of the decade, would turn into the (in)famous "bubble economy") (Yoshimi 2000: 210). By the early 1980s, "nearly 90 percent of Japanese felt that they had achieved middle-class status" (Notoji 2000: 224), and hence, when TDL opened in 1983, it could not have come at a better time. The economic boom finalized Japan's postwar strive for prosperity, for what modern life was supposed to look like in their imagination. As Notoji has pointed out: "'The 1980s was a decade of great economic affluence and an era when Japanese society started to feel a part of world culture' [...] 'Tokyo Disneyland really became a symbol for many people of Japan's entry into world culture'" (quoted in Sterngold 1994: n.pag.)

The economic prosperity of the late 1970s and early 1980s however also had other consequences that effectively paved the way for TDL. This "economic miracle" led to the so-called "*reja bûmu* (leisure boom)" (Hendry 2009: 42; Raz

1999: 16–17). More time for leisure was made possible when the five-day work and school week was introduced over the course of the decade (before, Saturday had been a workday) (Toyoda 2014: 212), but the surplus income mostly drove people to find new ways to spend their money on more intangible goods. The Japanese government began to set aside land for leisure purposes, and it is in this context that the OLC acquired the property on which TDL was supposed to be built (Walt Disney Productions 1983: n.pag.). The WED feasibility analysis for the park also acknowledges this fortunate timing (WED Imagineering 1975: n.pag.). "Indeed, the year in which it opened, 1983, has in Japan been dubbed *reja gannen*, or 'the first year of leisure,'" according to Hendry (2000: 73). Tokyo Disneyland thus opened on the cusp of this leisure boom, and first introduced the form of the theme park to a Japanese audience, also sparking a wave of them all over the country, such as the aforementioned foreign country theme parks (Raz 1999: 145–55). As Fusaho concludes: "Tokyo Disneyland's success thus symbolizes changes both in the Japanese economy and in the leisure consciousness of the Japanese people" (1988: 61). Yet these were not all the factors that made the park as successful as it was.

Tokyo itself also was an especially good location, as the Kanto District was home to about 30% of the total of Japan's population, which equaled about 33 million people in 1975. As Disney's feasibility study points out, this was "equivalent to over three times the population available in Disneyland's (California) USA major market" (WED Imagineering 1975: n.pag.). Thus, it made sense that although early WED documents such as the cited 1975 feasibility study still speak of "Oriental Disneyland," the name was soon changed to Tokyo Disneyland. The original name likely referred to the Oriental Land Company, and might have proven cringeworthy in years to come,[16] but it also would have implied a much larger target audience than the one TDL suggests. This narrow targeting seemingly paid off, as Tokyo Disney has a high number of repeat visitors (by 1989, they made up 75% of all visitors) (Walt Disney Productions 1981: 15), and they often tend to be locals holding annual passes (Toyoda 2014: 212) (a demographic that is also especially important to California's Disneyland).

Tokyo also was successful in providing the park with eager and skilled workers, as typical for Japan's leisure industry, most often young women, on

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[16] The term has been problematized by such studies as Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism* and has largely stopped being used for its racist undertones, but some older sources dealing with Tokyo Disneyland still use it. The Walt Disney Annual Shareholders Report from 1981, for example, refers to the park as "the new jewel of the Orient" (Walt Disney Productions 1981: 20), and some newspaper articles from the 1980s also make use of the term, such as Bruce Hamby writing for the LA Times who begins with: "And now a news flash from the mysterious Orient: Mickey Mouse is Japanese" (Hamby 1983: 3).

whom Raz has extensively written (1999: 73–143; 2003: 210–27). It should just be said here that the high work ethic and detail-oriented Japanese service culture lent itself exceedingly well to Disney's high standards, and it was not hard for them to find and train potential Cast Members when the park opened – a stark contrast to the problems Disney would encounter a decade later in France. The generally courteous manners of the Japanese also helped not only in staffing the park, but also in keeping it orderly on the visitors' end – as an American living in Tokyo pointed out: "Tokyo is very crowded, and Japanese here are used to crowds and waiting lines. They are very patient. And above all Japanese are always very polite to strangers" (Anthony 1992: 7). Something that anyone who has ever visited Japan, or for that matter, TDL, can surely attest to.[17]

The mostly young and female demographic was not just the target group for the staff of TDL, but also its visitors. Beginning with the mid-1970s, a new youth culture started to gain relevance in Japan and would reach its peak in the early 1980s (Kinsella 1995: 220; Allison 2004: 39): *kawaii*, the "culture of cute." According to Sharon Kinsella, who wrote one of the seminal articles on the topic, "[k]awaii or 'cute' essentially means childlike; it celebrates sweet, adorable, innocent, pure, simple, genuine, gentle, vulnerable, weak, and inexperienced social behaviour and physical appearances" (1995: 220).[18] Exemplified by consumer goods with "cute" animated characters as mascots, such as the world-famous *Hello Kitty*, and young women dressed up in an overtly feminine "Lolita" look, it became an important subculture of Japanese youth that holds relevance until today. While it could easily be mistaken for a decidedly un-feminist movement, it was in fact often just the opposite: *kawaii* began as a subculture of youth rebellion (Kinsella 1995: 230), "a kind of rebellion or refusal to cooperate with established social values and realities" (Kinsella 1995: 243) that opposed a Japanese society striving for conformity and obedience. The key demographic was (and is) young, single women (mostly in their twenties) with disposable income – the so-called "'office ladies,' frustrated by a lack of challenging work within the corporate structure and forced by convention to live with their parents" (Marling 1992: 109), who are also a driving force in overseas tourism from Japan. *Kawaii* culture's love for cute mascots fit perfectly with the animated Disney characters, that have become ubiquitously featured on the consumers goods that drive it – especially as *kawaii*

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[17] My own experience as a tourist in Tokyo and at Tokyo Disneyland (on three instances between 2014 and 2016), as well as the experiences of Katharina Hülsmann, a colleague in Modern Japanese Studies from the University of Düsseldorf, who has spent a considerable amount of time in Japan, back up the descriptions of the courteous nature of the Japanese given here.

[18] I would like to thank Katharina Hülsmann for making me aware of Kinsella's and Allison's work on the *kawaii* culture in Japan.

also implies a nostalgia for childhood, "for a time when life was uncomplicated, safe, and reliable" (Brannen 2004: 608), providing "the feelings of comfort and reassurance" (Allison 2004: 45). Fittingly, one of the terms used for some of the adult women living the *kawaii* lifestyle is "Peter Pans," because of their perceived refusal to grow up (Marling 1992: 109). Since 1982, the Japanese publishing house Kodansha publishes the *Disney Fan* magazine that targets this demographic (Raz 1999: 169); it reports extensively on TDL as well as all kinds of Disney-related consumer goods and additionally releases special issues and other guide books for the parks on a regular basis; further fostering the fandom of the park and the brand. It is remarkable how much the key ideas of *kawaii* align with everything that (Tokyo) Disneyland represents:

> This popular culture is almost entirely devoted to an escape from reality, and its dominant themes have been cuteness, nostalgia, foreignness, romance, fantasy and science fiction. Cute culture has provided an escape exit into childhood memories; nostalgia has been a door to people's collective past; foreign travel and fixation with foreign culture have provided another escape hatch; whilst syrupy monogamous romance has beckoned people into their narrow, inner lives. (Kinsella 1995: 252)

This explains why the young "office ladies" became a key demographic for the park, and remain so to this day. As Toyoda reported in 2014,

> over 70% of visitors are women, more than half of TDR [Tokyo Disney Resort] visitors are between the ages of 18-39, […] [thus,] the typical frequent repeat visitors to TDR mostly consist of young women in their 20s and 30s who live in the Tokyo Metropolitan area. (212)[19]

Tokyo Disneyland opened at the time when *kawaii* culture had just reached its peak, and its members helped it to soar to unexpected heights in popularity.

Timing, Timing Timing: Tokyo Disneyland's Relevance, Then and Now

The 1980s in Japan were a time of economic boom, a time when a new prosperous middle class emerged and was testing out its buying power on every imaginable

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[19] Tokyo Disney still banks greatly on this demographic, steadily releasing seasonal character merchandise catering to them, as well as one of the greatest financial successes: Duffy, the Disney bear and several of his friends, a series of dressable plush toys exclusive to the Tokyo DisneySea theme park that exemplify everything that is *kawaii*.

consumer good and leisure activity. Driven by an appetite for the new, families, but also a new youth demographic sought to spend both their time and money in a safe, clean, and reassuring environment, with a fervor for American pop culture. Ever since the end of World War II, a generation had been growing up with one of the quintessential brands this pop culture had to offer: Disney. And Disney had just opened a new place, a place they heard about on television for years, that would make possible experiencing the pop culture they loved in a three-dimensional, safe and clean environment. The parallels to 1950s America and the opening of the original Disneyland to that of the opening of TDL in 1983 are hard to ignore. It is remarkable that this parallel has not been drawn before, except by Frank P. Stanek, one of the Disney executives at the time of TDL's opening: "The economic and social situation here is much as it was in the United States in the mid-50's when Disneyland opened" (quoted in Trucco 1983: n.pag.). An internal report made by Disney and Oriental Land in 1983 had also noted some of the key factors, such as the popularity of Disney's products, the demand for leisure, and the economic climate in Japan (Walt Disney Productions 1983a: n.pag.). Yet, just how similar it was to 1950s America, and thus how important that precise moment in history was for TDL's initial, but also its continuing success, cannot, and should not, be understated.

There is hence a case to be made that, had TDL opened only 10 years earlier,[20] or 10 years later, the result might have been different, perhaps even radically different. After all, the overall economic situation of a country and the existence of a stable middle class always had great impact on the parks' successes. When Disneyland opened in 1955, as I have argued in the first chapter of this book, it specifically catered to a middle-class clientele, and that included its price tag. Walt Disney World, a vacation resort, similarly invited mostly a wealthier customer base, and also banked on what was by then an established leisure consciousness in American society.

Had TDL opened in the early or even late 1970s, it would have been within the climate of the first oil shock of 1973 and the 1971 end of the Bretton Woods accords. While Japan recovered relatively fast and well from the resulting stagflation (Ohno 2006: 186–90), the economic climate would have not been favorable toward a leisure endeavor such as TDL. Additionally, the "leisure boom" (discussed above) had not set in yet. The Japanese's love for Disney was already culturally ingrained, yet the postwar generation that grew up with the *Mickey Mouse Club* and the *Disneyland* TV show were likely still too young to bring their

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[20] I took the idea for this time-frame comparison from Toyoda, who writes "Some suggest that OLC (…) would have failed if they had opened TDR 10 years earlier," yet does not provide a more detailed analysis of this statement (2014: 212).

own children to a Disney theme park – as were the young women who would spark the *kawaii* subculture not much later.

Conversely, had the park opened in the early 1990s or in the late 1980s, it would have been confronted with the Japanese bubble economy, and most importantly, with the bursting of this bubble in 1990. The recession hitting Japan in the 1990s was so severe that the years have been described as the "Lost Decade," and the economic situation would not improve until 2003 (Ohno 2006: 200). Additionally, the Japanese had been generally favorable toward the import and resulting ubiquity of American popular culture in the postwar years, yet the climate shifted significantly in the 1990s – as Marling wrote in 1992: "a feeling of open contempt for America [has become] so prevalent in recent years that the Japanese have coined a new word to describe the phenomenon: *kenbei*" (104). This contempt for all things America was fostered, among other things, by a resurgence of nationalism, as well as a sense of cultural superiority in Japanese intellectual circles (Marling 1992: 104) – a curious development when considering the climate surrounding the opening of Euro Disney in 1992, to which I will come in the following chapter. This also led to less interest in travel to the United States, but more and more to European countries – something that is reflected in the design choices for the Tokyo DisneySea theme park that opened in 2001 (Laemmerhirt 2013: 86). Overall, the opening of TDL, at least in the form of presenting an idea of foreign travel to America as the OLC intended in the late 1970s, would have not fared as well only a few years later, and the economic recession would have surely put a damper on visitor numbers and spending.

Naturally, all of this remains speculation, yet as it is, and as a study of the other foreign Disney theme parks will also show, the cultural and historic circumstances of the opening of TDL in 1983 can hardly be ignored when trying to pinpoint why it was so successful, and also when trying to determine why certain design choices were made. That the park remained popular and profitable even through the economic recession of the 1990s, and still is at the time of writing over 30 years later,[21] has to do with the fact that it adjusted well with changes of what is culturally significant for the Japanese. *Kawaii* culture, still a major factor in driving Tokyo Disney's attendance even gained relevance since the 1980s, so much so that it has become part of the country's foreign policy, as cute mascots still abound as the public faces of both the country and many a Japanese company (Yano 2009: 685). Tokyo Disneyland eventually grew into Tokyo Disney Resort, with steady

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[21] According to Global Attractions Attendance Report compiled every year by TEA (Themed Entertainment Association), as of 2016, Tokyo Disneyland is still number 3 in the most visited theme parks in the world (surpassed only by the Magic Kingdom and Disneyland in California) (Au et al. 2017: n.pag.).

addition of hotels (both owned and operated by OLC and not), and the opening of Tokyo DisneySea. The parks also continue to add on new attractions regularly, as well as seasonal festivities that drive up attendance.[22] Disney characters and movies are still almost universally beloved in Japan, even though its own animation scene is thriving (both nationally and internationally) – so much so that anthropologist Anne Allison has quipped that in Japan, "Disney is synonymous with the country itself" (2004: 37). Tokyo Disneyland arrived in Japan with superb timing in 1983, and is now so much part of Japanese culture that it seems hard to imagine Japan's cultural landscape without it. It was, and is, as one observer pointed out, "a match made in Walt Disney's heaven" (quoted in Anthony 1992: 7).

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[22] At the time of writing, Tokyo Disney Resort is undergoing an extensive expansion and refurbishment plan and will add on several new attractions in TDL's Western-, Fantasy- and Tomorrowland. The opening of the expansion in TDL's Fantasyland scheduled for April 2020 has currently been delayed by the park closures due to the Corona/Covid-19 pandemic. An expansion for Tokyo DisneySea is also planned and is scheduled to open in 2023. For a list of the yearly seasonal festivities (including the American holidays Halloween, Christmas and Easter, as well as the Japanese Tanabata Days), see http://www.tokyodisneyresort.jp/en/calendar/event.html

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A "Cultural Chernobyl?" Euro Disney (1992) and the Theme Park Public

Tokyo Disneyland had opened and passed the test of an international Disney theme park with flying colors. The plans for another one were shifted into gear almost immediately – yet first, major changes took place within the Disney company in 1984. The Walt Disney Animation Studios had gone through a decade of mostly flops, and the overall company leadership had seen a rotating roster of executives (after the death of Roy Disney, Donn Tatum and Card Walker, and eventually, Walt Disney's son-in-law Ron Miller), who barely dodged several hostile takeover attempts (Eisner 1998: 118–19). While TDL had been a success, it was possibly too successful for the company's taste considering the timid deal that had been made with OLC – it can be extrapolated that in the first decade alone, Disney sacrificed well over $2 billion of profit (Spencer 1995: 105). In 1984, Roy E. Disney (Roy Disney's son and Walt Disney's nephew), who had been on the company's board of directors and Sid Bass, a major shareholder, brought in Michael Eisner, former CEO at Paramount Studios, as the company's new CEO and Chairman of the Board, and Frank Wells (a former Warner Brothers chief) as President (Eisner 1998: 119). One of Eisner and Wells' first big projects was the negotiation and planning of a Disney theme park in Europe.

While Card Walker had suggested a European Disneyland as early as 1976, Tokyo Disneyland took precedent, and so there was no earnest research done into Europe until after that park's opening in 1983 (Eisner 1998: 262). In 1984, the first official site evaluations in Europe were made (Newell 2013: 195), based on factors such as "size, topography, and European vacation patterns […] climate, accessibility, land availability, governmental cooperation and stability, existing infrastructures, and the presence of a willing labor force and strong tourist base" (Lainsbury 2000: 19). In the fall of 1984, Dick Nunis (at the time president of what was then called the Outdoor Recreation Division) and Jim Cora (who had been instrumental in overseeing Tokyo Disney and was made vice president of Disneyland International in 1983), officially presented a roster of possible sites for the first time (Eisner 1998: 263). The choice was then narrowed down to three possible sites by March 1985, two in Spain and one in France (Eisner 1998: 264).

Spain was favored for its warmer temperatures by Nunis and Cora, and because they suspected the negotiations with the Spanish government would be easier than with the French (Eisner 1998: 264). Yet Spain had significantly worse infrastructure than France and attracted most tourism in the summer months (Newell 2013: 195), and Eisner, a true New Yorker, claimed that he was never too worried about the climate, but thought the direct access to public transport would be crucial – preliminary studies had shown that a site near Barcelona, because it was something of a cul-de-sac, would only attract about 6 million visitors in the first year (Eisner 1998: 265). He later admitted: "My heart was with France from the start" (Eisner 1998: 265). Cultural historian Christian Renaut claims that the decision to build in Paris was made early on, but the competition with Spain was held up for "blackmailing" (2011: 129) – whether this is true or not remains speculation, but both countries' governments did enter a heated bidding war that made it possible for Disney to secure a spectacular deal.

Eventually, the official announcement for the chosen location near Marne-la-Vallée, in the Ile-de-France district, about 30 minutes outside of Paris, was made on August 12, 1985 (Lainsbury 2000: 15). The site was especially attractive because Ile-de-France was controlled by French government, not the mayoral commune (Newell 2013: 196) and thus negotiations could directly be held with France's then-Socialist prime minister Laurent Fabius who signed an official letter of intent for Euro Disney Resort with Michael Eisner on December 15, 1985 (Lainsbury 2000: 23). Most importantly however, the location was selected for its central location in Europe and proximity to Paris that would also grant easy access via train (the Channel tunnel was just being built) and plane, but also car travel (Matusitz 2010: 225).[1] A projected 90% of all visitors were expected to be (western) European (with 55% of them French) and thus, a central location seemed crucial (Lainsbury 2000: 21).

Paris itself was (and is) of course also a major tourist magnet and, another important factor, boasted a "residential population of ten million that was known to be 'Disney-friendly'" (Lainsbury 2000: 22). In 1985, Eisner was quoted claiming that "France, more than any other country in the world, has been enthusiastic about Disney productions, Disney characters, Disney products, the whole Disney

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[1] It is bizarre how different the numbers given in different sources are, Matusitz writes that "17 million people lived within a two-hour drive, more than 500 million lived within a six-hour drive" (2010: 225), but Lainsbury claims that "Estimates showed that more than 50 million people lived within a two-hour drive of the French park site; more than 68 million people lived within a four-hour drive; more than 109 million lived within a six-hour drive; and some 310 million were within a two-hour flight." (2000: 22.) I have thus chosen not to include those estimates here, as the important fact remains that the location was centrally located to several European countries and had excellent infrastructure.

culture, for 60 years […]. It has been the leading market of the world for Disney after the United States" (quoted in Meisler 1985: 1). Overall, Disney's impulse to expand their theme park business to the European market seemed natural given that 2 million European tourists were visiting their American parks annually in the mid-1980s (a number that would jump to 2.7 million by 1990), and that these guests spent more than $1.6 million on merchandise during their stays (Lainsbury 2000: 17). Market research also showed that Disneyland was one of the top tourist destinations Europeans wanted to visit in the United States (Lainsbury 2000: 57). Furthermore, 25% of all of Disney's product licensing sales worldwide came from Europe in 1988 (Anthony 1992: 6).

However, two days before the final contract was supposed to be signed, on March 16, 1986, Fabius' Socialist government lost France's general elections and negotiations had to start almost from scratch (Lainsbury 2000: 27). Disney executives then met with Jacques Chirac (a Conservative) before he was even elected as the next French premier and, with the help of a single chief negotiator, Jean-René Bernard (a former French ambassador), acting as a proxy for the French government, a new agreement was reached. A year later almost to the day, on March 24, 1987, Eisner and Chirac signed the final contract for the Euro Disney Resort (Lainsbury 2000: 27–29).

The deal included "4,400 acres of Marne-la-Vallée land at a bargain price, a $700 million French government loan at below market interest rates" (Newell 2013: 198). While, as mentioned, Disney had always regretted the major losses the limited deal for Tokyo Disneyland had resulted in (Eisner 1998: 263), they still received the same royalties for Euro Disney (10% on admissions and 5% on food) (Anon. 1992: 100), but they now also held 49% in ownership (French law limited them to under half; the other 51% were held by shareholders), while retaining 100 percent control of operations and development (Lainsbury 2000: 29–30). They also received "a management fee of 3% of gross revenues […] [plus an] 'incentive management fee' that increases over the next few years from 30% to 50% of pre-tax cash flow" (Anon 1992: 100). Thus, even if Euro Disney lost money, the American parent company would still make a profit (Anon 1992: 100). Additionally, the normal value added tax of 18.6% was decreased to 7% for Euro Disney's ticket sales by the French government (Lainsbury 2000: 32).

Disney's own financial investment was also only $250 million total, compared to a whopping $960 million coming from a cheap loan from the French government, in addition to $1.6 billion in loans from a syndicate of 45 banks, a $1 billion loan from the state-owned Caisse de Dépôts, as well as $400 million "from special partnerships formed to buy properties and lease them back" (Lainsbury 2000: 31). The state further pumped money (over $400 million) (Newell 2013: 198) into the local infrastructure, such as transportation, by expanding the RER tracks, building a new TGV line and corresponding station for both train systems, and improving

the local highway; as well as the expansion of water, electricity, and other basic services such as telephone lines (Lainsbury 2000: 32). This meant that Disney paid only 26% of the total cost, according to Newell (2013: 198) – Taylor and Stevens even say that "the Walt Disney Company obtained a controlling 49% of Euro Disney for a mere 11% of capital outlay" (1995: 37), but they are possibly not considering the money that went into local infrastructure; either way, Disney greatly benefited. Yet, 85% of the French population at the time supported the deal, "despite the fact that their taxes paid for much of it" (Newell 2013: 198). The main reason why both the French public and its government stood behind the venture was that France struggled with unemployment: it was expected that Disney's resort would reduce the unemployment rate by 10 percent and increase tourist revenue by just as much (Lainsbury 2000: 33); it "promised to be one of France's biggest economic bonuses ever" (Lainsbury 2000: 32).

The Original Disneyland Glocalized – The Design Strategy of Euro Disneyland

The design for Euro Disney – the whole resort as well as Euro Disneyland park – proved to be a difficult endeavor. Tony Baxter, by then a veteran of Imagineering, having created such headliner attractions as the aforementioned Big Thunder Mountain and Splash Mountain, was chosen as the design lead for the project. He proclaimed that the European location provided a unique challenge: "We can't just transplant Tokyo Disneyland to Paris. […] We're building a resort next to one of the most sophisticated, cultured cities in the world, and we're going to be competing with the great art and architecture of Europe. We have to do something unique" (quoted in Eisner 1998: 270). Euro Disneyland was to be an original idea, and not as in Japan, an American experience, yet at least officially, it aimed to provide a European experience – whatever this would entail. It was supposed to respect its host culture, and not just because there was effort made to follow what market research suggested, but because the agreement made with the French government in 1987 actually "came with a contractual clause requiring a sensitivity to the culture of Western Europe, and particularly to the French culture" (Kurtti 1990: 35). It is thus no surprise that the park's design has so far been reviewed only through that particular lens of a "Europeanization" – and especially when the park struggled in the beginning (which I will come to later in this chapter), the central question whether it was indeed European enough, or still too American.[2] Curiously, Disney

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[2] Besides media discussions, this question is discussed in many academic works dealing with the park; for instance, Renaut makes it his central argument (2011: 125–37), while Newell also touches upon it (2013: 212).

executives and designers directly contradict each other on this issue. Dana Aiken, an Imagineer responsible, among other things, for the Disneyland Hotel at the entrance to the park, had this to say when interviewed in 1992: "My feeling is that we couldn't hope to compete with what already exists in France, so we tried to make Euro Disneyland purely American" (1992: 24). Yet, for example, Jeff Archambault, then Vice President for Communications claimed: "Since Europe presents a cultural diversity that is more significant than in any other country in the world where Disney parks are present, we had to adapt to that European specificity to find the right tone and the most efficient style for each market" (quoted in Noyer and Dugoujon 2012: 27). In retrospect, it seems clear that these two positions summed up what the central issue was: on a design level, the park clearly tried to remain true to a Disneyland concept that was in many ways quintessentially American (and in other ways spoke a universal language). Yet when it came to marketing, mounting public criticism made it necessary to sell the park as a Europeanized version of Disneyland, a true *Euro* Disney. This became blatantly obvious when promotional campaigns called upon the Disney family's alleged roots in France, and thus created "Walt D'Isigny" – the Disney family name was traced back to the French town of Isigny-sur-Mer, and ads and official guide books spoke of a European "homecoming" of its fairy tales (Freitag 2014: 173–78).

I would argue that the question of whether the park was European "enough" or still "too" American is indeed the entirely wrong one to ask (at least when it comes to the aspects of design), as it is again too culturally essentialist, but unsurprising given it was fueled by a heated debate on American cultural imperialism. Freitag has argued that (on a design level) the park indeed follows classic strategies of glocalization and can be seen as a successful effort of this process – Euro Disneyland is a glocalized version of the American product Disneyland, while still remaining true to its brand (2014: 192–93). I would add that the final version of the park specifically represents a glocalized version of the original Disneyland in Anaheim, as it pays tribute to it in many ways.

Euro Disneyland

Early plans for Euro Disneyland's Main Street were radically different from those found in Disneyland, the Magic Kingdom or Tokyo Disneyland. According to a book published for the park's 25th anniversary in 2017, the press kit produced for the 1987 agreement

> speaks about a Grande Rue set during the Roaring Twenties, complete with jazz clubs, a Palais du Cinema showing the popular films of the time, as well as a French bakery and a German bookshop! The historical transposition

was envisaged because the Imagineers were worried that the traditional, turn of the century Main Street, would not capture the imagination of European Guests. They therefore looked to cinema and music at the period when America started to influence European culture – films by the Keystone Cops, Chaplin and Keaton, jazz music, a funny, innocent and family-friendly approach. (Noyer and Dugoujon 2017: 137)[3]

Yet these plans were ultimately scrapped because Michael Eisner felt family-friendly and the Jazz Age with its speakeasies and gangsters would ultimately not mix. In his biography, he discusses this concept by Imagineer Eddie Sotto (who led the design team for Main Street) as "a street based on the New York and Chicago of the twenties, with speakeasies and jazz clubs, rough-hewn glamour and movie stars" (Eisner 1998: 271). He describes it as "provocative" and points out that goal:

> Was to transport the Disney brand to our new park, not to dramatically rein-vent it. The movie The Untouchables[4] opened during this period and it only confirmed my worst fears. Why export gangsterism and corruption as the essence of American culture? (Eisner 1998: 271)

Thus, the turn-of-the-century set Main Street, U.S.A. seemed the safer choice (and more "on brand" for the Disney parks), and cultural relevance to the European context was apparently deemed less important, despite the stipulations of the 1987 agreement (Freitag 2014: 172). An earlier announcement brochure from 1986 (The Walt Disney Company 1986: n.pag.) had described Main Street as set at the turn-of-the century, it seems the plans were thus also changed back after a trial of what a more "European-friendly" version could have looked like – further inspired by research trips to Europe that Tony Baxter and his team of Imagineers had conducted in the late 1980s.[5] The added touches in the 1987 press kit (the French bakery and the German bookshop) that Eisner does not mention do however seem out of place with the rest of the concept, and were perhaps a hastily added addition to pander to the French government's requests.

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[3] The concept is also discussed in Littaye and Ghez (2012: 27).

[4] *The Untouchables* premiered in 1987 and starred Kevin Costner, Sean Connery, Andy Garcia, and Robert De Niro, and depicts prohibition era Chicago in 1930 and is a classic "gangster movie" produced by Paramount Pictures.

[5] "Key Imagineers made numerous research trips to many existing European tourist destinations to experience the spectrum of entertainment available to the Euro Disneyland audience. 'We did a lot of research with Europeans, including the French, to learn what would work in the Park and what wouldn't,' says Tony Baxter," (quoted in Kurtti 1990: 35).

Euro Disneyland's Main Street eventually ended up a highly-detailed version of the classic Victorian era design that the Disneylands had become known for. Baxter pointed out that the space was "enriched" to be more "readable for a European audience" (1992: 65). Research showed that the Europeans, and particularly the French

> felt that the American approach was too shallow, and that we [Imagineering] needed to temper down the commercial aspect of the presentation. […] On Main Street, we wanted to create the atmosphere of an American town, but we cannot expect everyone to understand that imagery so we tried to tell more of a story, to create a little more romance. (Baxter 1992: 65)

The colder French climate also made it necessary to add arcades on both sides of the street that linked all the locales with each other (Baxter 1992: 65); this solution was devised instead of building a glass dome like in Tokyo Disneyland, an idea that had also been debated in 1986 (The Walt Disney Company 1986: n.pag.). The arcades also ease crowd control, especially during parades running along Main Street. Liberty Arcade, on the left-hand side, features a tribute to the Statue of Liberty and thus highlights the French-American relationship, while Discovery Arcade on the right features retro-futurist artwork of American cities, as well as an exhibit on new technology at the turn of the century, tying in with adjacent Discoveryland. Overall, the design of Main Street "embraces progress wholeheartedly" (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 42): while the American Main Streets still feature a mixture of electric and gas lamps, here it is just electric lamps, the vehicles running up and down the street also include cars, and homages to inventors such as the Wright Brothers can be found in several of the shops. The Cast Members' costumes and the music track for the land were inspired by such Broadway-turned-film musicals as *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944), *Oklahoma!* (1955) and *Hello, Dolly!* (1969) (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 42–44), stressing the heightened movie-like portrayal of turn-of-the-century America.[6]

Yet, besides these few (g)localized additions, Euro Disneyland's Main Street is essentially a more detailed version of the original Disneyland's entrance area – for the design, Baxter and Sotto even hired Herb Ryman who had drawn the original plan for Disneyland in 1953 to "draw the *spirit* of Main Street" (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 30, emphasis original), as well as revisiting the Henry Ford and Greenfield Village museum that had originally inspired the concept for Disneyland (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 35). Euro Disneyland's Main Street is also the only one that houses

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6 Similar music is currently part of Main Street, U.S.A.'s loop in the other parks that feature this land as well (Robson 2019: 30).

a full-fledged restaurant on the second floor on one of its buildings. Walt's – An American Restaurant pays tribute to Disneyland's original creator and has dedicated dining rooms to all of the park's lands. The land thus can be read as the effort to create both a homage to its original and to create a definitive version of it.

Meanwhile, original plans for Frontierland's European offshoot called it Westernland (The Walt Disney Company 1986: n.pag.; Cohen 1986: A11), like its counterpart in Tokyo Disneyland – yet Imagineering quickly "revived the name 'Frontierland' upon learning that it had meaning for continental audiences. Market research conducted throughout France and Europe proved to be a critical tool in making such decisions" (Lainsbury 2000: 57). Indeed, European audiences were as enthralled by the Western genre as the Americans and Japanese were – especially the baby boomer generation. Hollywood's Westerns, both films and televisions shows had made it across the pond in the postwar years and were often still shown in syndication; among them also Disney's own productions, such as *Davy Crockett* (1954–55) (as discussed in chapter one, a French version of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett" had topped the French charts in the late 1950s). Tony Baxter was considerably surprised to find how long some of the American productions stuck around in European households:

> When we came over here, I remember that Disney's most popular television product at that time was "Zorro." This was five years ago [in 1987], and it was still running here. It was a 1958 product. That was unbelievable to me. (Baxter 1992: 80)

Yet European audiences also produced their own Western content at the time: especially popular in postwar Germany, for example, was a series of movies surrounding the Native American character Winnetou that were produced in the 1960s, starring French actor Pierre Brice and based on German author Karl May's works from the late nineteenth century. The series featured a rare sympathetic (if inauthentic) portrayal of Native American culture that stood in stark contrast to many Hollywood Westerns that would usually cast the "Indians" in a negative light. Baxter's own research (done among other places in French bookstores) found that particularly "[c]owboys, Indians, outlaws, and the deserts of the Far West" held the European imagination as they "were made all the more fascinating by their contrast with life in Europe" (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 79). Frontierland gives nods to Native American culture with the Indian Canoes and the Pueblo Trading Post store, and to Mexican-American culture (as found in *Zorro)* with the inclusion of the Fuente del Oro Restaurante; cultural historian Andrew Lainsbury has argued that these are direct concessions to the European audiences, especially because Tex-Mex food as served in the restaurant was very popular in Paris in the late

1980s (Lainsbury 2000: 59). Yet, even though market research suggested that these additions would appeal to a local audience, they could also be found in the original Disneyland in California: the park had featured the Indian War Canoes from 1956 on (now called Davy Crockett's Explorer Canoes), as well as an Indian Village, and a Mexican-American restaurant called Casa de Fritos (today Rancho del Zocalo) since its opening in 1955.

Overall, Euro Disneyland's Frontierland is themed to "the American Southwest at the height of the Gold Rush era" (Harmon 1993: 16), between "1849, and […] about 1885" (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 79). The town area of the land, called Thunder Mesa, as well as the rivers, was inspired by the Western River Expedition (Surrell 2015: 42), the aforementioned never-built attraction designed by one of the most influential Imagineers of the original Disneyland, Marc Davis. Thus, the central attraction of the land is now Big Thunder Mountain, originally designed by Tony Baxter for the Florida and California parks and equally influenced by Davis's work (Surrell 2007: 60). The mine train roller coaster housed on and in a mountain structure resembling Monument Valley, and is situated in the middle of the Rivers of the Far West (as the Rivers of America are called here, meant to represent the Rio Grande, the Colorado, and the Sacramento)[7] (Harmon 1993: 16). The rivers could be traversed on the aforementioned Indian Canoes (at least until their removal in 1994), the River Rogue Keelboats (closed in 2007), smugglers boats inspired by *Davy Crockett and the River Pirates* (1955) (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 102), as well as the Mark Twain and Molly Brown steam liners (still in operation today). The many different kinetic elements found here were and are also integral to the original Disneyland. The landscaping however is different from that of the California park, as Baxter has explained; while the desert climate of California was offset in Disneyland with the lush Mississippi, but

> outside of Paris, people have a day-to-day connection with romantic and beautifully landscaped environments. […] we noticed the intrigue that the American southwest had for the French and for other Europeans. The Grand Canyon or Monument Valley, the images that have become familiar through John Wayne westerns are symbolic for Europeans of the entire American west, even if we feel that in reality these regions are as varied and diverse as Europe is diverse. That is why we created what we feel is going to be a stunning red environment, that is as much in contrast with the Marne Valley here as the greenery of our Disneyland river is with the dry Southern California climate. (Baxter 1992: 79)

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7 In the early 1986 brochure, they are still referred to as Rivers of America like their Californian counterpart, although the gold rush storyline was already in place (The Walt Disney Company 1986: n.pag.).

The Imagineers of Euro Disneyland tried to bring to life what can be described as "Marlboro Man country" and thus, brought "American exoticism to European visitors," according to Lainsbury (2000: 59). Market researchers Janeen Arnold and Gary Costa similarly conclude that "the themed environment [in Euro Disney] represents to Europeans an America that is temporally, geographically and culturally Other" (2001: n.pag.) and former Imagineer Jason Surell claims that Frontierland presents "a new and somewhat postmodern presentation of the American frontier, the mythology of the Old West as it's perceived not by Americans, but by Europeans, specifically the French" (2007: 74). I believe that this argumentation is somewhat of a two-edged sword. While glocalization processes did play a role here, they simply shifted the theming to a different region, but at its core, Frontierland still represents the same ideas as those in of its American counterparts. It is important to consider that the frontier and American West as it was and still is presented to a US audience in the American Disneylands (and in other theme parks, for that matter), is equally "othered," as it is based on fiction, filtered through movies and television, and temporally "othered" because it is not set in present times. As discussed before, exoticization practices are a key idea of the theme park – as are simultaneously practices of reassurance and elements of recognition for the visitor. Frontierland, as the other lands of Disneyland, works because it finds that crucial balance between the familiar and the exotic in its theming. To resonate with a European audience, and thus to make immersion possible, the myth might have been shifted to another setting of the American West, but it is still the same myth – just (g)localized. While the way the European audience then perceives and interrogates this myth might be radically different than the way the American or Japanese audiences do (such as the aforementioned Japanese perception of cowboys as team workers), this does not change the fact that it is a myth resonating with all of these cultures because of a shared popular culture.

These filmic roots also emerge in Frontierland's details, with its background music drawing from a selection of popular Hollywood Westerns as well as an incorporation of sound effects (such as shots being fired) (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 114). The transfer of the Haunted Mansion attraction into the land also follows the same logic. Again, no New Orleans or Liberty Square could house the attraction, and within a European context, Fantasyland did not make much sense, so this time the Imagineers went with the original impulse they had had for Tokyo Disneyland, and put it into Frontierland, calling it Phantom Manor. As Tony Baxter argued:

> A Frontierland setting in France turned out to be just as culturally appropriate as the Fantasyland location in Japan. "Gothic mansions and graveyards are part of the neighborhood in France – they see them every day. There's nothing exotic or magical about it." (quoted in Surrell 2015: 42)

However, the French's love for the American West provided an opportunity. According to Lainsbury, the ride's exterior was designed by drawing "upon a pastiche of powerful movie images, namely *Psycho* (1960), to create a frightening landmark that would communicate its contents to diverse populations without so much as a word" (Lainsbury 2000: 61). While official Disney sources agree that the aim was to create a look that would be universally readable as frightening, they do however not mention *Psycho* (which might have copyright reasons, given that the movie was produced by Universal Studios), but real-life sources such as the "Fourth Ward Schoolhouse [in Tombstone, Arizona], a four-story Victorian structure still standing today, as well as the Addams Family-like[8] mansion seen in that first Harper Goff sketch from 1951" (Surrell 2015: 44). Goff was one of the most influential Imagineers working on the original Disneyland, and again it was a "back to the roots" approach with a local twist that ultimately defined the attraction. Frontierland's storyline following the Gold Rush also extends into the attraction: it ends with a scene set in a quite literal Western ghost town instead of the graveyard featured in its American counterparts. Thus, the Phantom Manor is another example of a successful glocalization of the original Disneyland.

A further example for this approach was the Lucky Nugget Saloon, a dinner show venue that can be found in both American castle parks and in Tokyo Disneyland, yet it received a specific French overhaul for Euro Disneyland. In Anaheim, this show was referred to as the Golden Horseshoe revue, but in France, it reemerged as the Lucky Nugget saloon show with Diamond Lil and her French boyfriend, Pierre Paradis. Myriam Hervé-Gil, who worked as a choreographer on the show, has spoken in an interview about the changes to the script, both for characters and choreography in types of comedy that had to be made to appeal to a local audience (Kaplan 1995: 157). The setting of the saloon and other design aspects such as costumes however did not have to be specifically localized (except for the incorporation into the Gold Rush storyline with the name change). As I will address later in this chapter, and as has also been discussed in the context of Tokyo Disneyland, audience reaction in terms of behavior and social interactions is much harder to predict or glocalize than design, and ultimately the show was closed (although mostly for cost reasons). Still it represents, like the rest of Euro Disneyland's Frontierland, an effort to translate to a local audience the essence of the original Disneyland.

The most significant change made to Adventureland meanwhile was the omission of the Jungle Cruise, which in the other Disneylands had always been the

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[8] This is a reference to the non-Disney produced TV show *The Addams Family* that ran from 1964 to 1966 and could not have served as an actual inspiration to the 1953 drawing by Harper Goff.

central focal point for the land. The speculation on why the attraction was not included are manifold, but most academic accounts of the park assume it was "in order not to offend post-colonial sensitivities" (Bryman 1999: 262–63), as Bryman has put it, or van Maanen who speculated that it "is no longer around in Euro Disney to remind visitors of their colonial past. Perhaps Disney surveys showed that Third World peoples are less amusing to the French, English, or Dutch than to the Americans or Japanese" (van Maanen 1992: 26). Yet, in the first concepts for the park in 1986, the Jungle Cruise was indeed still referenced as a possible attraction (The Walt Disney Company 1986: n.pag.), and most importantly, the colonial history of Europe could still be found within the land, such as at the Explorer's Club Restaurant. The restaurant, housed in a colonial estate, featured actors entertaining guests as Dr. David Livingstone and Ernest Hemingway, as well as a jungle-themed dining room with audio-animatronic birds. One could consider the Explorer's Club Restaurant as a spiritual successor of the Enchanted Tiki Room, originally planned as just such an entertainment restaurant (see the first chapter of this book); it also borrowed from the popular night club Adventurer's Club, which had opened in Walt Disney World's Downtown Disney in 1989.[9] Yet as I will discuss later, the park needed to convert many of its table service restaurants to quick service, and so this was changed in 1993 at the expense of the unique entertainment, and eventually completely rethemed in 1995 to Colonel Hathi's Pizza Outpost. The name references a character in Rudyard Kipling's jungle book (and the popular character in Disney's animated film version), and as Freitag has pointed out, thus continues the reference to British colonialism (2014: 187).

The actual reasons the Jungle Cruise was never built in Europe were in fact much more practical. Cost and time for this huge ride with its artificial jungle, the climate to make it work in, but also one rather intriguing circumstance, pointed out in an American Disney Cast Member publication: "Euro Disneyland has no *Jungle Cruise* attraction, since two nearby German theme parks adapted the original Disneyland concept as their own" (Harmon 1993: 19). The two theme parks referenced here are likely Phantasialand in Brühl, Northrhine-Westphalia, opened in 1967, and Europapark, in Rust, Baden-Württemberg, opened in 1975. Phantasialand operated a boat ride between 1968 and 1998 called "Seeräuberfahrt nach Carthagena" [Pirate Ride to Carthagena] that took guests on a tour across a lake and through scenes featuring elephants and rhinoceroses (it was rethemed to "Wikinger Bootsfahrt" [Viking Boat Ride] in 1978) (Anon. "Wikinger-Bootsfahrt," n.d.: n.pag.). Europapark has, since 1978, operated a more obvious Jungle

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[9] The Adventurers Club was a guest favorite that garnered a cult following, yet it was closed despite fan protests in 2008. A themed nightclub, it featured animatronics and live actors performing improvisational comedy and engaged its guests in roleplaying.

Cruise clone called "Dschungel-Floßfahrt" (Anon. "Dschungel-Floßfahrt" n.d.: n.pag.) (which translates to Jungle Raft Ride, or well, Jungle Cruise). As both of these theme parks were and are rather popular in Germany but are also visited by a larger Western European audience (especially Europapark, because it is situated close to the French and Swiss borders), Disney's decision to not open the Jungle Cruise seems wise. Many visitors would likely have compared Disney's ride to what they would have perceived as the original "jungle cruise" ride, having not experienced the attractions in the United States or Japan before, and so the comparison would have hurt the Disney brand.

Adventureland in Euro Disneyland is thus structured very differently than in the other Disneylands and can be divided into roughly three sections: the entrance area (Adventureland Bazaar and an adjacent more rural North African area), the discussed colonial inspired Asian jungles section (that would see the addition of the roller coaster Indiana Jones et le Temple du Peril in 1993), and Adventure Isle. The Bazaar and other North African elements of the land were inspired by the *Tales of the Arabian Nights*, or *1001 Nights*, as research had found that these tales were very recognizable to a Western European, but especially French audience. As Baxter noted: "Here we found there was a strong tie to the romance of the Baghdad story book setting, and so we created a bazaar as a setting of the gateway to Adventureland. We took our cue from Moroccan and North African styles, but then we layered on pure Hollywood" (Baxter 1992: 79–80). Again, the idea of a mixture of exoticization but also familiarity with the fictionalized version played a major role, as these stories "evoked visions of exotic faraway places. Visiting a fantasy of the Middle East is just as exotic for the French as visiting a storybook French village is for an American," so Baxter (quoted in Littaye and Ghez 2012: 125). The North African theming has also been interpreted as a part of an "overarching motif of French colonialism" by Lainsbury (2000: 65), again counteracting the claim that depicting colonialism was no longer deemed appropriate. However, the fantastic and fictional elements in the Bazaar are clearly the main focus (such as the inclusion of the nest of the giant Roc from Sinbad) (Harmon 1993: 17) and a truer to life colonial Africa is – unsurprisingly – not represented (Legnaro und Birenheide 2005: 205). Parallel to the design and construction of Euro Disneyland, from 1988 to 1992 (Rhodes 1992: n.pag.), Walt Disney Animation Studios was developing the animated film *Aladdin* (1992), which tied in nicely with the themed area – and in 1993, Le Passage Enchanté d'Aladdin, a small walkthrough attraction, was added to it in the spirit of true Disney synergy.

Adventure Isle then is the biggest section of Adventureland, and features the La Cabane des Robinson (the Swiss Family Robinson Tree House), Captain Hook's Pirate ship and Skull Rock, a large area of intricate caves, as well as Pirates of the Caribbean and its adjacent Blue Lagoon restaurant. This area is the clearest

homage to the "original" Disneyland, as both the Pirate Ship and Skull rock, representing Peter Pan's Neverland, had been included in the Californian park's Fantasyland until 1983, when it had been completely remodeled. Not quite coincidentally it seems, they now found their way to Europe, as Tony Baxter had also been the Imagineer in charge of this Fantasyland redesign (Anon. D23, n.d.: n.pag.). The caves inside Skull Rock are a playground for children and thus are the glocalized version of Frontierland's Tom Sawyer Island, which had been omitted in Euro Disneyland, because of a lack of popularity of these characters. Baxter argues that "Adventure Isle, which is more of an international fantasy; the dream of going away to a pirate island and finding buried treasure is something that *everybody* is interested in no matter where they live" (Surrell 2007: 74, original emphasis). While this can be debated, pirate stories, as well as J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan undoubtedly have cultural relevance in Europe. Hence, the inclusion of Pirates of the Caribbean also made sense; here the ride is housed in a Pirate fort, somewhat similar to its setting in Florida. The attraction featured new audio-animatronics and a reversed storyline that now had a moral to the story, as the scenes featuring dead pirates' skeletons surrounded by all their riches were placed at the end of the ride (Surrell 2005: 60–65), and the otherwise leisurely ride took two drops instead of just one. The addition of this second drop was actually inspired by the old Disneyland television show, as when "'Disney previewed the attraction on the Sunday night TV show, they placed the second waterfall right after the pirate with the dangling leg,' Tony [Baxter] says. 'I guess they thought it was a great way to end the ride, even though it wasn't that way in reality'" (Surrell 2005: 64). Baxter and his team thus decided to "deliver on this false promise" (Surrell 2005: 64).

In the early planning stages in 1986, Imagineers still considered to include New Orleans Square as an additional land in the park (The Walt Disney Company 1986: n.pag.), which would then have likely housed Pirates of the Caribbean. Renaut has speculated that the area would have been a good fit for the French audience (2011: 132), and the 1986 brochure also touts the "French settlers [that] created America's most flamboyant and exciting city" (The Walt Disney Company 1986: n.pag.). Unfortunately, I could not find any source materials for why this idea was eventually abandoned, but given that the geographies of both Frontierland and Adventureland were shifted, it would have likely been hard to include it in the lands' theming in an organic way.

Comparatively, Fantasyland is the land where glocalized efforts can be felt the least – which is somewhat ironic, given that Disney's marketing for the park touted it as a de facto "homecoming" of the Disney fairy tales to Europe (Freitag 2014: 176), and efforts were made to put focus on their heritage. Robert Fitzpatrick, the first president of Euro Disney Resort, explained: "It seemed appropriate and politically astute to underline that Pinocchio was an Italian boy, Peter Pan used

to fly out of London and Cinderella was a French girl. We've tried to re-emphasize the European roots of these stories" (Greenhouse 1991: n.pag.). This was done by grouping the attractions (featuring the classic staple of dark rides) in line with their geographical setting and theming the buildings accordingly (Freitag 2014: 188). Yet an early idea that the characters one could meet and greet "would also support the multinational flavor of Disney's Fantasyland-scape by speaking the tongues of their mother countries, whether on-stage or during personal autograph sessions with guests" (Lainsbury 2000: 67) was never realized. While the resulting Fantasyland is still beautifully themed and brims with detail, it still seems barely glocalized and more like a perfected version of the remodeled Californian Fantasyland with its European fantasy architecture. After all, as Baxter has pointed out: "I believe that Americans see Europe as a series of romantic villages and historical cities. We don't think of Europe in the perspective of the modern world, because that's what we see every day" (1992: 79).

Fantasyland houses just one unique attraction (at least until the opening of Shanghai Disneyland), Alice's Curious Labyrinth, that was apparently included because Europe had in the late 1980s and early 1990s "experienced a resurgence in the popularity of an ancient pastime, the maze" (Kurtti 1990: 37). Yet a special focus on the *Alice* stories is also something the original Disneyland shares, as its Fantasyland is home to two different *Alice*-based attractions. Furthermore, Euro Disneyland's Fantasyland received an addition called Le Pays des Contes de Fées in 1994, an area with miniature scenes from fairy tales that you can traverse by boat or by riding the Casey Junior Circus Train from *Dumbo* (1941) – two opening day attractions from the Anaheim park. Euro Disneyland's Fantasyland even includes Toad Hall Restaurant, based on the rather obscure *Wind in the Willows* (1908), a children's novel by Kenneth Grahame and the Disney animated short from 1949. One of the original Fantasyland attractions in Anaheim is Mr. Toad's Wild Ride, a dark ride based on the same character. Such inclusions have left Legnaro and Birenheide to wonder how much previous knowledge visitors have to have of European's children's literature or of Disney's versions of them to fully appreciate Fantasyland (2005: 207). This, again, is nothing new, but Disney-typical synergy at work, and an important component of the success of their theme parks. Opening a Disneyland in Europe would have not made much sense if the Disney movies did not have an audience there, but the general knowledge of European fairy tales and children's books could potentially suffice for the enjoyment of Fantasyland. Yet the inclusion of Mr. Toad does indeed seem more of a nod toward the original Disneyland than an effort to appeal to a local audience, as he is not particularly well-known in Europe.

An integral part of both the land and the whole park is its icon, Le Château de la Belle au Bois Dormant (Sleeping Beauty Castle). Although it has the same name

and pink hue as the castle of the original park, it is much bigger and its design much more sophisticated. "Because Europe is home to genuine medieval castles, Imagineers chose to create an all-new 'storybook' castle for Euro Disneyland" (Harmon 1993: 19). The castle's inspirations came from Mont St. Michel, as well as *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (The Book of Hours of the Duke of Berry), an illustrated work from the fourteenth century (Harmon 1993: 19: Littaye and Ghez 2012: 184–86; Baxter 1992: 79), which was allegedly suggested to the Imagineers by architect I.M. Pei (Lainsbury 2000: 70). Yet, Disney art also played an important role, as animator Eyvind Earle's illustrations for *Sleeping Beauty* (1958) inspired the castle's look and especially its rather distinct landscaping. Just like its Californian counterpart, its first floor features a walkthrough of the movie told on its stained glass windows. The castle also houses two shops and a small attraction, La Tanière du Dragon (The Cave of the Dragon) with a huge and rather realistic looking audio-animatronic of the dragon that the villain Maleficent transforms into in the film. The attention to detail and impulse to wow the European audience that drove the rest of the park is exemplified in the castle and thus it is no wonder that, according to Michael Eisner, it "ended up costing millions of dollars more than the one in Tokyo Disneyland" (1998: 272).

"It is in Discoveryland that we can see the European 'plus,'" claims Renaut (2011: 133), and Miles Orvell muses: "Is this [change from Tomorrowland] the result of seeing Europe as a more traditional, a more literary culture, one more interested in the history of discovery than in its future?" (1993: 250). Indeed, Euro Disneyland is the only Disneyland in the world that has replaced Tomorrowland with something else, and Discoveryland is de facto "based on French or European culture," or so Baxter claims at least (1992: 65). Discoveryland is themed to the inventions and visions of the future by Jules Verne, Leonardo da Vinci and H. G. Wells. The resulting look is that of "retro-futures," "a timeless world of 'yesterday's tomorrows'" (Harmon 1993: 20). The signature attraction of the land is Space Mountain – De La Terre á La Lune (changed to Space Mountain: Mission 2 in 2005), which is a rethemed version of the popular roller coaster based on Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865). Outside the attraction is a lagoon home to Les Mystères du Nautilus, a walkthrough of Captain Nemo's submarine from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954). However, both of these attractions did not open until 1994. At the opening of the park in 1992, as in previous parks, the Tomorrowland section was the least finished. Yet the retro-futurist approach was visible in Hyperion Café, whose outside front features the dirigible from the forgotten Disney adventure film *The Island at the Top of the World* from 1974, and most importantly, Le Visionarium, an attraction created especially for Euro Disneyland (although it would later open in Tokyo and Florida as well, and has since closed everywhere).

Le Visionarium housed a Circle Vision 360 film (a staple of the Tomorrowland experience), yet an enhanced version that also featured audio-animatronics. The film was called *From Time to Time* and told the story "of Timekeeper, 9-Eye and well-known futurist Jules Verne as they confront dinosaurs in 65 million BC, and traffic jams in the 1990s!" as a Disney Cast Member publication described it in 1993 (Harmon 1993: 20). The film featured a cast of well-known European actors (among others, Gerard Depardieu and Jeremy Irons) and took a journey to popular European destinations and historic moments in time, such as the 1889 Paris World's Fair. The attraction thus filled the quota the French government demanded – one attraction that dealt with European culture. Yet the fact that it also had successful runs in Japan and the United States speaks to its more general appeal.[10]

The remaining retro-futurist attractions in Discoveryland are however not actually concessions to the European context. In fact, most of them were originally intended for Disneyland in California. As I have written about elsewhere, Tony Baxter had helmed a project in the early 1970s that would have added a new land adjacent to Frontierland based on Jules Verne's works and *Island at the Top of the World* (Mittermeier 2017: 171–87). While the Discovery Bay concept called for more elaborate and unique attractions than those that can be found at Discoveryland, the overall design is clearly derived from it, and gave Baxter a chance to incorporate previously discarded ideas. The Nautilus walk-through attraction Les Mystères du Nautilus also would have been part of Discovery Bay, and "was conceived partly as a tribute to the past of Disneyland in California" (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 248–49). After all, Disney's own 1954 screen adaptation of *20,000 Leagues under the Sea* was the inspiration for the attraction – both for the version that had been part of the original Disneyland from 1955 to 1966 (as discussed in the first chapter) and for the one in Euro Disneyland. It thus represents not just a general nostalgia inherent in the retro-futurist style, but also a more specific tribute to Disneyland in its early years (Mittermeier 2017: 177).

The same goes for Autopia: another of the original Disneyland's opening day attractions, it can also be found in Discoveryland. Now with a (barely noticeable) retheming, it takes riders on "the four-lane highway through the City of the Future. This futuristic motor way evokes H.G. Wells and Albert Robida's vision of colossal utopian metropolises connected by integrated communication links, high-speed transportation systems and super highways," according to a park guidebook from 1994 (Shrager and Verkroost 1994: 44). Show producer Tim

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[10] However, some voice acting changes were made, such as casting American actor Robin Williams as the Timekeeper in the US version of the attraction.

Delaney however reveals that "the look of the attraction was inspired by animated visions of superhighways in Walt Disney's 'Magic Highways' television episodes of the 1950s" (Harmon 1993: 20). *Magic Highway, U.S.A.* was part of the Disneyland TV show segments that represented Tomorrowland, and airing in 1958, had presented the time's typical utopian visions for the future – indeed taking direct inspiration from 1930s visions of "freeways of the future" as depicted in magazines like *Popular Science* (Littaye and Ghez 2012: 280). Again, the nostalgia intrinsic to Discoveryland harkened back to 1950s America and specifically, Disneyland, and not to European futurists such as H.G. Wells – the fact that the guidebook to Euro Disneyland mentions him seems more or less a ploy in line with the general marketing strategy for the park.

Additionally, Discoveryland also featured two attractions that did not fit this European "agenda," or even a general retro-futurist theming: Captain EO, the 3D film starring Michael Jackson and Star Tours, a motion simulator based on the popular *Star Wars* franchise. They both speak toward another main idea for Discoveryland – the general need to replace the concept of Tomorrowland that had become outdated. While Tomorrowland had struggled from the beginning, and had thus been continuously updated even while Walt Disney was still alive, it had become even more necessary to revisit and ultimately, completely remodel the idea. After more optimist, or outright utopian visions for the future had slowly lost relevance beginning with the 1970s, Tomorrowland was slowly becoming a hodge-podge for fiction-based futures – and not just classic science-fiction. Discoveryland thus was the first foray into a restructuring of this land, and rethemes in the American parks based on some of the work done here were consequently implemented (Mittermeier 2017: 182–83). Thus, while the retheming to past futures ultimately solved many issues, a glocalization effort to a European audience was indeed not high on its agenda.

Euro Disney Resort

The Disneyland-style theme park was not the only thing that was designed and built in Marne-la-Vallée. From the beginning, Michael Eisner had aimed to open a full-fledged resort in France – a Euro Disney Resort and not just Euro Disneyland. This meant that instead of having outside contenders build hotels or just build one of them and add on if the need arose, as had been done in California or Tokyo, the French venture encompassed a whopping six official Disney hotels, as well as a ranch with cabins and a shopping and dining district – much like Walt Disney World Resort in Florida (but even that had started smaller). To sustain visitors to the resort, it would also contain at least one conference center as well as a golf course, and a future second phase of construction that

would include a second theme park by 1995, the Disney MGM Studios Tour Europe, modeled on Walt Disney World's third theme park (The Walt Disney Company 1991: 10).

For the hotels' design, Eisner recruited a slew of famous postmodern architects (Eisner 1998: 277)[11] who quickly decided to follow an overarching American theme for the resort. The following concepts were realized: Hotel New York (designed by Michael Graves), Newport Bay Club (Robert A. M. Stern), Sequoia Lodge (Antoine Grumbach), Hotel Santa Fe (Antoine Pedrock), and Hotel Cheyenne (also Stern). Frank Gehry designed Festival Disney, the shopping and dining district that evoked Route 66. Early on, a New Orleans-themed hotel was suggested by Aldo Rossi, but he withdrew when too many changes to the design threatened his original vision (Lainsbury 2000: 78).[12] Robert M. Stern explained the decision for the American theme over a more obvious European one like this: "Disney can't pretend to be French, it's an American idea that has become international, but it should maintain its identity, otherwise it would be like a bad French restaurant in Kansas City" (Stern and Chao 1992: 46). For him, Disney would have stopped being Disney had it also given up its American flavor – much like the Disneyland theme park turned out to be only a slightly glocalized effort, and not a completely new, "European" concept. The themes represented in the hotels also corresponded to what market research on European travel had shown – the three locations tourists were most interested in visiting in the United States were "New York, Disneyland, and the West" (Anthony 1992: 10).

Only Disney's Davy Crockett Ranch that served as Cast Member housing before the resort's official opening, and the Disneyland Hotel were designed by Imagineers. The Disneyland Hotel, the first hotel to frame the entrance area of a Disneyland theme park[13] was built "in the style of the turn of the century" (Aiken 1992: 23–24). It is close to both the RER and the TGV stations, and also the Disneyland railroad's Main Street, U.S.A. stop. As Dana Aiken, the hotel's main designer, points out: "In the late 19th century in the United States, it was not uncommon for the railroad barons to build a hotel as a resort at the end of their railroad lines and this became our story line. Usually from that terminus point little towns would grow, as represented in this case by Main Street" (1992: 23–24). The architecture and pink color

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[11] Eisner managed to secure the luminaries by transferring a dinner held by *Architectural Digest* editor Elizabeth MacMillan to the WDI campus; Gehry and Stern were part of this original meeting (Eisner 1998: 277).

[12] This is notable in light of the fact that Euro Disneyland featured a New Orleans Square section in early plans.

[13] A hotel on Main Street had been considered for both of the American Disneyland parks as well, but was ultimately never implemented.

scheme represent "West Coast turn-of-the-century architecture […] vocabulary" (Aiken 1992: 23–24), thus also harmonizing with the more West Coast-style Main Street behind it. In front of the hotel are the Fantasia Gardens, about which Tony Baxter, comparing it to the grandness of places as Versailles in layout, has said that

> for cultural and historical reasons we felt that it was necessary to make the entrance much more spectacular, which is why the Disneyland Hotel complex has been built over the ticketing area. We offer a very grand public space that is American in its imagery, but European in terms of its layout and its function (Baxter 1992: 63)

The result of all these efforts was that not only were hotel prices raised from what they had originally been set at, as their construction became a lot costlier than expected, but the theme park itself with its lavish design and attention to detail had also gone over budget (Eisner 1998: 280). Yet, as Eisner would later write, "[a]mbitious as this seemed, it lay at the heart of our strategy to build Euro Disney into a destination resort where guests would come to vacation for several days, just as they did at Walt Disney World" (Eisner 1998: 276). One goal was also to counteract any competition from the outside when it came to lodging – as Philippe Bourguignon, who would become president of Euro Disney in 1993, explained:

> the idea was […] to create the market and take advantage of it before competition comes. First we decided there would be 5,200 rooms, because that was the figure that our projections led us to. Once this was done, we had to size each hotel category from the top level down to 3-star hotels. (Bourguignon and Reininger 1992: 16)

To offset the enormous costs of building and maintaining all these hotels was to eventually sell them to a third party at profit (Lainsbury 2000: 75). The room estimates seemed high, yet all the predictions by market researchers and shareholders were expecting the resort to be successful, with an attendance of 11 million visitors during the first year (Anthony 1992: 2). They even had to be adjusted after the fall of the Iron Curtain, as Eastern European visitors now became a likely possibility; this was one of the reasons that "[w]hen Robert Fitzpatrick, the first president of Euro Disney said, 'My biggest fear is that we will be too successful,' he was not in fact being facetious" (Lainsbury 2000: 47).

On April 12, 1992, Euro Disney Resort was opened and dedicated by Michael Eisner with familiar words, but now geared toward the idea of a European homecoming:

> To all who come to this happy place, welcome. Once upon a time […] a master storyteller, Walt Disney, inspired by Europe's best loved tales, used his own

special gifts to share them with the world. He envisioned a Magic Kingdom where these stories would come to life, and called it Disneyland. Now his dream returns to the land that inspired it. Euro Disneyland is dedicated to the young and the young at heart […] with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration for all the world. (Eisner 1992)

The Issue of American Cultural Imperialism

Yet before the resort had even opened in April 1992, resentment against it had started to mount. Early on in the planning stages, the location in Marné-la-Vallée picked by the French government was met with resistance from the local communities. The land had been home to sugar beet fields, and so farmers protested its reappropriation by the government, as did the inhabitants of the local villages (Matusitz 2010: 226). These residents and local landowners who also formed protest groups mostly felt betrayed by their own government and not necessarily Disney, as Lainsbury argues (2000: 25–26). However, several local politicians in the region favored the project as it would bring necessary development, jobs, and infrastructure to the region (Lainsbury 2000: 25–26), and eventually, their protests were in vain. Yet it was a more ideologically motivated opposition that was the biggest threat to Euro Disney.

Anti-American sentiment in France was at an all-time low during the 1980s (Kuisel 1993: 219), as Stanley Meisler, writing for the *LA Times*, proclaimed in 1986,

> this is not the time to be anti-American in France. It was fashionable in the days of President Charles de Gaulle to sneer at the United States […]. That attitude is passé. […] [A] backlash against American cultural imperialism is the least of Disney's worries (1;11)

And while he had a point at his time of writing, things changed significantly over the coming four years, and Disney suddenly faced severe backlash from a French elite, proclaiming Euro Disney resort a new bastion for American cultural imperialism.

Voices from French intelligentsia famously dismissed the resort as a "cultural Chernobyl" (Ariane Mnouchkine,[14] a theater director) (Matusitz 2010: 226), "a horror made of cardboard, plastic and appalling colors, a construction of hardened chewing

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[14] As Lainsbury reports, Mnouchkine was a personal friend of Euro Disney's first president Robert Fitzpatrick and had visited California's Disneyland with him shortly before making this statement – she had even taken a picture with Mickey Mouse. Fitzpatrick was shocked when he heard what she had said (Lainsbury 2000: 156), and this backstory makes all of this more bizarre.

gum and idiotic folklore taken straight out of comic books written for obese Americans" (writer Jean Cau; quoted in Lainsbury 2000: 35), or "a terrifying giant's step toward world homogenization" (writer Alain Finkelkraut; quoted in Riding 1992: n.pag.). Other statements were not just blatantly anti-American but also French nationalist, describing it as "a black stain on the soul of France" (quoted in Lainsbury 2000: 33) and "the mother cell of an American virus that would taint the blood of French culture" (quoted in Lainsbury 2000: 33). *Le Nouvel Observateur*, a well-known left-wing news magazine, published a special issue titled "Is the Mouse Dangerous?" (Balter 1990: 80). The tenor throughout all of this was that Disney's presence would brainwash the masses and especially the children; following in the footsteps of the criticism of a "culture industry" as proposed by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer in 1944. According to Lainsbury, many critics "were careful to point out that their revulsion for the 'Euro Dismal' project, as they gleefully called it, was not rooted in anti-Americanism, but rather in a general distaste for mass-produced simulations of reality" (Lainsbury 2000: 35). Not coincidentally, one of the greatest proponents of such a critique, the widely read and in the context of Disneyland, often-cited, philosopher Jean Baudrillard, should be read in the same vein. Besides his theory of Disneyland as the prime example of such a "hyperreality," as he called it, in *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981), he also elaborated on his ideas in another work titled *America* (1986). Such academic criticism thus came from the same place of anti-Americanism that had been deeply ingrained in France's Left Bank. So, while the criticism was certainly not new, it was surprising that it returned to a public discourse with such fervor in the early 1990s. What had happened?

Historian Richard Kuisel has traced the changes in French attitudes toward America since the 1970s, and argues that the end of the de Gaulle presidency marked a turning point (as anti-Americanism had been particularly strong under his rule) (1993: 212–18), as well as the arrival of the consumer society:

> By the mid-1980s outsiders were saying, and with some astonishment, that France had become the most pro-American country in Western Europe. The French had apparently replaced anti-Americanism with unqualified enthusiasm for all things associated with America. (Kuisel 1993: 212)

The French stereotypes for Americans had however largely survived this change; in the popular imagination, they were still seen as *les grand enfants* (the big children), as "optimistic, wealthy, informal, and dynamic" people who lived in a consumer paradise, a society "marked by conformity, rootlessness and violence" (Kuisel 1993: 218). The French saw themselves as clearly culturally superior. Yet during the 1980s, American culture was no longer seen as a threat, as the focus had momentarily shifted toward Soviet totalitarianism – American cultural imperialism

via pop culture seemed "ridiculous" an issue by comparison (Kuisel 1993: 222). So, while resentment could still be found within the intelligentsia (Kuisel 1993: 222–23), public attention had turned elsewhere. When Jacques Chirac became minister in 1986, an even more American-friendly administration took office, and even "cowboy president" Ronald Reagan was hailed as a "French hero" (Kuisel 1993: 223) – he had led the West out of stagflation, and popular opinion shifted toward almost "unqualified approval" (Kuisel 1993: 224) of the United States. Even *Le Nouvel Observateur* agreed: "Anti-Americanism […] is the socialism of imbeciles" (quoted in Balter 1990: 80). And yet, it did not take long for a shift in opinion: when the Soviet Union collapsed and no longer posed a threat, and the end of the Cold War and efforts toward an overarching concept of Europe were slowly put in place, it fueled a quick resurgence in nationalism (Pells 1997: 331). In the end, it was not hard to rekindle old fires when they had never gone out.

Historian Richard Pells has noted that the idea and criticism toward Americanization that had once been about economic issues had long turned into a debate about American culture. Post-World War II that specifically meant popular culture, mass culture and its inherent commodification (1997: 204), and this criticism was not just present in France. The predominance of American film, TV, and consumer goods fueled such discussions in Europe and these concerns were framed as American cultural imperialism. It proved especially fruitful in a Western European (and particularly a French) context, as the

> Europeans regarded culture as a public service, not as a chance to make money. […] Because the American media treated books, music, and movies as commodities, all aimed at the widest possible audience, the lines between high culture, folk culture, and mass culture were continually blurred. (Pells 1997: 237)[15]

As Pells argues, American mass culture thus presented a direct threat to the European intellectual elite (Pells 1997: 238), and France had a particularly strong one.

And yet, the specific historic moment can explain how it ever even (re)gained so much leverage in public discourse. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, there were attempts to establish a European union, and other supra-national agreements. Globalization became a buzzword (and would soon replace Americanization as the biggest perceived threat) (Pells 1997: 329), and this led to a resurgence of nationalism in many European countries (Pells 1997: 331). In 1993, the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), meant to eliminate or reduce international

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[15] This different understanding of culture in France and fear of commodification was also pointed out to me by Prof. Dr. Klaus Zeyringer, who lived there for many years in the 1980s and 1990s; I want to thank him for his input.

trade barriers, originally established in 1947, was updated, resulting among other things in the establishment of the WTO (World Trade Organization). Negotiations for this agreement had begun in 1986 and ran until 1994 (the so-called "Uruguay round"), and surrounding these, anti-American sentiment was sparked again in French public discourse, as the French feared a homogenization of their culture, resulting in "often overheated" discussions with the United States (Pells 1997: 274). This was exacerbated by the fact that, as Pells claims, the Americans "could not understand what Europeans meant by cultural imperialism or why the concepts of free trade and open markets sounded so dangerous to intellectuals, movie and television directors, and the cultural ministers on the other side of the Atlantic" (1997: 264). The clumsy and often arrogant reactions by Disney executives when confronted with cultural imperialism claims also seem to confirm this ignorance.

As a consequence of these discussions, the French government under Mitterrand put in effect several laws meant to protect French culture and language, most notably, quotas for radio and TV, and the establishment of a French Academy to protect the French language from foreign terms and replace them with French words (the development of this has been traced by Altman 1995: 54; Newell 2013: 203–04; Tempest 1992: 26; Pells 1997: 272). In 1994, Jacques Toubon, then the Minister of Culture, even tried "to pass a law banning three thousand English phrases from all commercial and governmental publications, radio and television broadcasts, and advertisements" (Pells 1997: 272). Euro Disney was directly affected by these measures; as already discussed, the French government had demanded as early as 1987 that one attraction would represent European culture and the park generally would pay respects to its guest culture. Yet, later they also stipulated that the park would use French names for its attractions (Newell 2013: 203–04), and just after it had opened, precisely in the years of 1992 and 1993 when the government established these quotas, many attractions that had English audio tracks were forced to change to French or bilingual "spiels" – most notably Phantom Manor, that had secured famous horror movie actor Vincent Prince for its narration but had to re-record everything with a French actor (Surrell 2015: 44). Notably, it was changed back to its original version in May 2019, after the whole resort was refinanced by its American parent company. Until today, however, the theme park uses French terminology for Disney-specific terms that even the Asian parks use in their original English, such as *personnages* for the Disney characters.

Yet, even though anti-American sentiment eventually had concrete political ramifications, the uproar against American popular culture in France still mostly remained a thing of the elites. When polled about Euro Disney before its opening, 86% of the French population was in favor of the park (Lainsbury 2000: 38). France was also a huge market for Disney products (as for that matter, were other Western European countries such as Germany), particularly for comic books

(Matusitz 2010: 228). Arguing, as the French elite did that the French (or Europeans in general) are not interested in mass or "low" culture such as the Disney films or theme parks was and is thus simply wrong, counteracting the often-propagated idea of a veritable brainwashing of the masses.

The "Mauschwitz" Scandal

One area, however, where cultural difference was actually felt was that of employment and worker's rights. The construction of the park had hit bumps because of such basic but important issues as conversion to the metric system, and also a "familiarization with a variety of European products and vendors" (Kurtti 1990: 38), but the biggest issue was that American and French construction standards clashed severely, so much in fact that "sixteen European construction firms filed a lawsuit against Euro Disney to collect on $170 million allegedly cost overruns" (Newell 2013: 205). This issue was solved when a settlement was paid to all of them and Disney brought in more of their own workforce from the United States (Eisner 1998: 281).

To make the process of working with the French easier, on March 12, 1987, Robert Fitzpatrick was named the first president of Euro Disney – he spoke French fluently, had a degree in medieval French literature, and was married to a Frenchwoman, and had been the president of CalArts, among other similar academic positions (Lainsbury 2000: 29). There was not much to do in the early stages of the resort's planning process, so, he "unofficially was a 'goodwill ambassador' to the French cast members" (Newell 2013: 206) that would soon be hired and trained. Disney had planned to hire employees of different nationalities, proportional to the expected visitors – "45% French employees, 30% other European, and 15% from outside of Europe, but by opening day the cast was 70% French" (Anthony 1992: 12). This happened largely because of the high unemployment rates in France in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a situation that was exacerbated when Europe entered a recession after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The hourly wage Euro Disney resort paid most of its employees was $6.50, and on the resort's opening day in April 1992, exchange rates from dollars to francs meant that this was a salary 15% above France's minimum wage (with 169 hours work hours per month, and not accounting for possible gratuities) (Anthony 1992: 12; Lainsbury 2000: 94). Originally, Disney only wanted to hire bilingual or trilingual employees, with English and French as their main languages (Newell 2013: 207), yet soon had to adjust their demands when it came to English language skills or other credentials (Renaut 2011: 131), as many of the low-skilled workers that applied did not fulfill these requirements. Yet this turned out to be the least of the problems – Disney's excessive service standards and demands toward its employees did not translate well to France's

code du travail (employment code); in fact, Disney was quickly accused of trying to "rewrite" it (Forman 1998: 252).

Disney University, the institution all Disney Cast Members have to attend before starting to work, was framed as "a brainwash training camp" (Renaut 2011: 131), as it trained the employees to be courteous, smile while working, and learn about the Disney history and company "spirit." As Alan Bryman has argued in his influential work on Disneyization (2004), this so-called "emotional" or "performative labor" was always an integral part of Disney's theme parks, yet in a European context, this concept was and is rather alien for both the employees and the visitors confronted with it, as it is often perceived as fake or insincere. Disney's grooming standards, such as forbidding men from growing a beard or women from wearing nail polish and similar restrictions, also clashed with French attitudes (Forman 1998: 251), as did the rules that forbade them from smoking, eating or drinking publicly as well as arguing with guests or using profanity (Newell 2013: 209). Additionally, as the resort was open year-round, Cast Members were required to work during the summer and often long hours, which clashed with holiday and overtime compensation policies common in France (Newell 2013: 209; Forman 1998: 251). The press covered resulting conflicts in detail, calling it the "Mauschwitz scandal" (Lainsbury 2000: 97). *Le Nouvel Observateur* even assigned an undercover journalist, Natacha Tatu, to apply for a job at Euro Disney and go through the training process – while she was discovered early on, she later admitted to have been impressed by the "*esprit de corps*" (Tempest 1992: 27).

Conflicts continued after the initial training period into the early months of the park's opening that were often difficult and hectic for Cast Members, at times even chaotic, for which a lack of communication between management and employees was blamed – the tough conditions unsurprisingly led to high employee turnover, yet things reportedly stabilized after the first few months (Anthony 1992: 13). Unionization played a big role in this improvement,[16] although strikes continued to break out regularly until the late 1990s (Debouzy 2003: 19–21) – labor conflicts would continue hurting the resort for years. Yet cases of resistance toward Disney's practices were most noticeably in the months after opening:

> Cast Members who were asked to take group photos purposefully cut guests'
> heads from the pictures; ride attendants charged entrance fees for attractions
> because guests did not know they were free; and, perhaps most egregiously
> flouting Disney's family focus, Cast Members costumed as Disney characters
> stared down children and refused to give them autographs. (Newell 2013: 209)

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[16] It should be noted that unions are generally important for French labor culture, something Disney underestimated. I want to thank Prof Dr. Klaus Zeyringer for pointing this out to me.

Among early visitors, the park was regarded "as disappointing to those who had visited the American parks as well, almost because it was insufficiently American" (Bryman 1999: 267) – yet in terms of its service culture, and not in its design. Even though conflicts were eventually settled, insufficient service standards are still among the highest gripes visitors have with the resort until today – especially American visitors or those who are frequent visitors of the other Disney parks around the world.[17] The general problem of misunderstanding or even outright rejection of performative labor by both employees and guests in the European setting continue, as my own research and discussion with both Americans and Germans on the subject have shown[18] – as mentioned above, while Americans tend to see it as a normal part and necessity of work in the service sector, French, Germans, and many other Europeans tend to see overtly courteous behavior as fake and insincere or even as a personal affront. As a French employee of Euro Disney put it: "The foreigners are used to being smiled at, but the French don't understand it. They think they are being taken for idiots" (Forman 1998: 252). Lack of at least publicly displayed enthusiasm also extends toward guest behavior, as can be seen at the performance of shows and parades in the park, as well as at character greetings; Renaut writes about this (2011: 134–35), and my own experience on countless visits to the parks back this up. The same goes for guest behavior among themselves and toward Cast Members – queuing in an orderly fashion seems to be something that comes more naturally to, say, British or Japanese visitors, but not necessarily to Spanish or French (Renaut 2011: 125). A British visitor interviewed in 1992 even went so far as to say that queuing simply did "not work" in the park: "There's a lot of conflict and tension" (Veverka 1992: 7). As concluded an article in the Orange County Register: "The park's pan-European mandate has been its strong suit and its Achilles Heel" (Veverka 1992: 7). An American guest, also interviewed in 1992, came to similar conclusions:

> "The park has a strange kind of feel to it. They haven't yet figured out whether it is going to be an American park, a French park, or a European park. This is in the atmosphere of the park itself, and it is compounded by the behavior of visitors from various parts of Europe, which can be quite different. Little things

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[17] This is based on my own observation in online communities and among my personal contacts that are frequent visitors of the parks.

[18] I discussed these issues, among other occasions, with a class of American students at the University of Berkeley, CA, in March 2016. I would like to thank Dr. Andrew Shanken for this opportunity. I also conducted a similar discussion in a seminar with German students on Immersive Spaces, which I co-taught with Dr. Florian Freitag, Prof. Dr. Filippo Carlà-Uhink, Ariane Schwarz, and Dr. Jan-Erik Steinkrüger in July 2016 at the JGU Mainz, Campus Germersheim. I would like to thank all of them for an inspiring seminar that sparked many compelling discussions.

> like the attitudes of different nationalities with respect to disposing of trash are very noticeable. And differences in waiting-line behavior is striking. For instance, Scandinavians appear quite content to wait for rides, whereas some of the southern Europeans seem to have made an Olympic event out of getting to the ticket taker first." (quoted in Anthony 1992: 14)

Cultural differences thus did and do affect Euro Disney because of its multicultural audience, and not in the way it is most often discussed in terms of design, or possible lack of interest in theme parks or Disney products, proving once again that reception should be an integral part of the study of these spaces.

Bad Press

While it is hard to actually judge how much Euro Disney's reputation had been hurt by the increasingly bad publicity – first the struggle over the cultural imperialism claims, then the working rights disputes – it is possible to analyze the way the media reported. Particularly the print media was a driving force at the time, both French and international. Janis Forman has conducted a study of French magazines and newspapers reporting on the opening of Euro Disney and identified that these were the major themes discussed: the issue of American cultural imperialism among the French elite, the site of Marne-la-Vallée and the exclusion of local inhabitants in the negotiations and environmental concerns, as well as Disney's employment policies and practices (Forman 1998: 247–58). She found that "the French press reflected three dominant roles that the company seems to have represented to at least a portion of the French population: an American cultural imperialist, a destroyer of a French pastoral setting, and a totalitarian system impervious to the rights of employees as individuals" (Forman 1998: 253). Forman concludes that "the French media's failure to dissuade people from attending the park suggests that the power of the press to harm Euro Disney's prospects was negligible" (1998: 256), as during first year, visitor numbers were high. Indeed, foreign visitors seemed to be less deterred from visiting the park, however, the lack of French visitors was astounding, and they were likely most affected by the bad press – the resort's coverage in their country had been the worst, and most of the criticism came from their own ranks. Gottfried Korff has compared the French press coverage to that of other European countries and concluded that French newspapers were much more negative and radical in their assessment of Euro Disney compared to a more moderate tone in other countries – while he says that no foreign press seemed overly enthusiastic in the early years, the differences are quite noticeable (1994: 209). Forman has found similar differences in her comparison between the French and the American press at the time (1998: 252), even though "[i]nternational media reports rarely

acknowledged the much greater levels of popular support for Euro Disney in France and Europe" (Lainsbury 2000: 45). For instance, one critical event covered internationally was the launch of the Euro Disney shares at the Paris Bourse on October 5, 1989, where members of the French Communist party protested Michael Eisner and threw eggs, flour, and tomato sauce at him and the other Disney executives. Yet the fact that the shares sold remarkably well (86 million shares within the first days, with a price jump of 20 percent by the first end of trading) (Eisner 1998: 269) was less reported on (Lainsbury 2000: 44–45).

Korff however notes that there was an incredible paradox in the press coverage of several European newspapers in 1993 and 1994, when Euro Disney struggled severely and almost faced closure. While the feuilletons usually reported a failure of the project because of lack of visitors, the numbers in the papers' business section usually did not match these assessments (1994: 210). He thus concludes that the press wanted to explain economic failure of the park with cultural differences, as a European resistance against the American entertainment offerings (Korff 1994: 210). This is in line with what I have found, and even extends to academic accounts that try to explain Euro Disney's failure (as I have discussed in the context of Europeanization of the park's design). One such example would be Orvell who argues that Disneyland's function within the United States, that he says is an "escape to a realm of imagined European culture," does not work "in France, within a stone's throw of the chateaux of the Loire Valley" (1993: 252).[19] While such explanations thus emerge as factually wrong, or at least reductive in their analysis, they are an interesting phenomenon and point toward the impulse of trying to explain everything through a very narrow and culturally essentialist lens. Nevertheless, the negative coverage Euro Disney received particularly in the local press did seem to have had an impact on the French audience, which hurt the park severely. This thesis can be backed up by the fact that, as Lainsbury reports, once the media made a drastic turnaround in their opinion, the situation of the park improved (Lainsbury 2000: 122); Korff also notes this change in press demeanor (1994: 209). Lainsbury consequently characterizes the role of media in the failure and eventual success of Euro Disney as unique in their impact when compared with other Disney parks around the world (Lainsbury 2000: 122).

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[19] Another example would be economist Peter Curwen who wrote in 1995: "Clearly, Euro Disney was unfortunate in that, at the time of its opening, mainland Europe was beginning to suffer from recessionary conditions which have only recently begun to lift. Also, it had no control over the value of the franc, which moved against sterling and the lira to such an extent as to raise the cost of a visit by British and Italian holidaymakers. To a lesser extent, it was the victim of French cultural snobbery. Nevertheless, it largely had itself to blame. It should have given more thought to climatic conditions and it should have considered why Europeans would choose to visit a fake castle when surrounded by the real thing" (1995: 17).

Additionally, the perception of Disney in the public eye had shifted dramatically over the years (Lainsbury 2000: 7) since the death of Walt Disney, but also because a general loss of trust in companies occurred in the United States after the 1970s (as previously discussed in the context of Walt Disney World), as well as internationally. During the Eisner years, "Mickey Mouse ha[d] morphed into a symbol of corporate power and greed" (Lainsbury 2000: 7). This made it even easier to attack Disney in general, but especially on the grounds of cultural imperialism. Yet, while some of the leftist criticism arguably veered toward extremes, the way Disney acted and dealt with this backlash during these years was also to blame for some of the bad publicity. Eisner would later admit that he and his executives made some "fundamental errors" in the way they dealt with the media – especially when they were quoted making arrogant statements such as "We're building something immortal, like the pharaohs built the pyramids" (quoted in Eisner 1998: 281). They also somewhat clumsily tried to counteract the claims of American cultural imperialism with what can be described as a "it's not America, it's just Disney"– rhetoric (Freitag 2014: 173), which focused on framing the resort as "mere entertainment" and not an "important cultural phenomenon" (Kuisel 1993: 229). They tried to find their footing with the previously mentioned marketing strategy of highlighting Disney's European roots and their inclusion of European themes into the park, yet it is hard to say if these truly resonated with an audience – or if these even mattered to the people that ended up coming to the park. Yet, as I will address later in this chapter, people did indeed come, although the negative publicity certainly hurt.

Before the official opening on April 12, 1994, Disney threw a lavish opening gala that was televised in several European countries and featured celebrity guests such as Tina Turner (Lainsbury 2000: 98–102). Even "Bernard Kouchner, a well-known left-wing politician [and] Bernard-Henri Levy, a famous member of the Parisian intelligentsia," showed up at the event, suggesting previous disagreements had been smoothed over (Renaut 2011: 131). Yet, while the public discussion about cultural imperialism seemed forgotten for a moment, two terrorist bombs set off the night before almost caused a blackout in the park on the public opening day, but luckily only damaged the electricity pylons; residents from nearby Meaux demonstrated against the nightly fireworks noise, and a 24-hour rail strike almost shut down the RER line to the park (Lainsbury 2000: 103). In many ways, problems for Euro Disney had only just begun.

The Resort's Financial Failure and its Reasons

Needless to say, the first few years in the life of Euro Disney did not go all too well. The negative publicity did take its toll, yet attendance was not as affected

by it as one would assume – in fact, by October 1992, almost 7 million people had visited the park (Lainsbury 2000: 114); by the end of the fiscal year, it was 9.5 million (highlighting the significant attendance drop in the winter months) (Spencer 1995: 104). As estimates had been 11 million total for the first fiscal year until April 1993, this was not too far below these numbers (Anthony 1992: 2). In fact, the resort had become the leading tourist destination in Europe in less than two years (Euro Disney S.C.A. 1993: 1). Yet what seemed to hurt the most was the lack of French visitors: in the first year, only "36 percent had been French and the remaining 64 percent (including 16 percent British, 14 percent German, and 8 percent Benelux) came from other parts. Most foreign visitors had indicated that Euro Disney was their first reason for visiting France" (Lainsbury 2000: 114). Yet the lack of local visitors would prove to be a problem – local visitors are often repeat visitors, and they also help drive attendance in low season (Altman 1995: 44), which in France mostly means the winter months, when attendance dropped significantly.

Foreign visitor numbers also dropped in 1993, as Richards and Richards argue, because some of "the novelty factor began to wear off" (1998: 370)[20] and because reviews were ultimately mixed. "Many visitors found in Euro Disney everything for which they had hoped. Others complained that the park did not meet the US standard, suffering from long lines, poor service, and operational glitches," according to Robert Anthony. "Themes echoed by visitors less enthusiastic with Euro Disney included a lack of appreciation with the multi-cultural nature of the park, and the high cost of a day at the park" (Anthony 1992: 13). However, a significant increase in cost because of extraneous circumstances was likely the most pertinent factor, as I will discuss shortly.

Drawing visitors to the theme park itself was never really much the problem – getting people to stay longer (Spencer 1995: 104) and fill the hotels was a much bigger issue: "In the first three months the average occupancy level was only 70 percent […] and during the winter months occupancy fell to disastrous levels. The average room occupancy for the first year of operation was only 55 percent" (Richards and Richards 1998: 370). Another issue was that while visitors paid for entry into the park, they often did not spend enough on food and merchandise, with average spending way below that of the American parks (Richards and Richards 1998: 370). The losses in 1992 amounted to a devastating 2,463 million francs, in 1993 it was 5,337 million (Euro Disney S.C.A. 1993: 5). As economist Yochanan Altman has pointed out, Euro Disney could however still be called a success (in its design and its visitor popularity, among other things), but initially, it was a financial failure (1995: 46).

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[20] Spencer also highlights the importance of the French visitors for the park's success (1995: 111).

One of the major factors leading to Euro Disney's financial troubles was that Europe entered a severe economic crisis in the early 1990s, in fact just at the time of opening, "Europe was enduring its worst recession in a decade" (Pells 1997: 311). Thus, the admission charge was too high for many to afford – and those that still made the trip spent as little as possible on food or merchandise, the so-called "secondary spending" (Matusitz 2010: 228).[21] While local audiences likely had other reasons not to come, foreign visitors were mostly driven away by the cost. The number of foreign visitors during the first six months after opening were still satisfactory, they sharply declined after that. Some claimed it might have been the novelty factor that wore off, more likely, however, it simply became too expensive to visit France: "After the September 1992 collapse of the Exchange Rate Mechanism, it became 10–20% more expensive for some European tourists to visit, and attendance declined by as much as 50% in the affected countries" (Newell 2013: 214). Other sources even say that British, Italian, and Spanish currencies were so greatly devalued as a consequence of the recession that vacationing in France became approximately 25 percent more expensive (Lainsbury 2000: 128). This hit especially hard, as the prices that had been set on opening day had been somewhat "ambitious," as Michael Eisner would later put it (Eisner 1998: 283), mostly as a result of the higher than expected construction costs. Euro Disney's financial projections had been based on a study conducted by the consulting firm Arthur D. Little (ADL), and they had estimated that visitors would stay longer because of the high-quality hotels, and per capita spending had been estimated based on other Disney parks around the world (Anthony 1992: 9). Admission prices were set higher than for other European theme parks, but in line with other family attractions in the Paris region, as were prices for food and beverages (Anthony 1992: 9). Yet they had not calculated for a recession and the extreme fluctuations in currency at the time. As a consequence, a single-day adult ticket cost $41 at the time of opening ($27 for children, at April 1992 exchange rates), and hotel prices were set at $130 to $410 per night (with each room sleeping four people, instead of the usual two) (Lainsbury 2000: 104) – making it roughly 20% more expensive than a visit to Walt Disney World at the time (Anthony 1992: 3; Spencer 1995: 113). As Lainsbury concluded: "At one point, it was actually cheaper for British tourists to cross the Atlantic and visit Mickey Mouse in his natural habitat than go to France where the pound was greatly devalued" (2000: 148). Many foreign visitors could thus simply not afford to visit Euro Disney any longer, not to mention stay for an extended amount of time. Some analysts have

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[21] Matusitz writes, "Per person spending in the park was less than 50% of what was spent, per person, at Tokyo Disneyland. Hotel occupancy rates were 37%, a sharp contrast with the rest of Disney's US properties, where occupancy rates were 92%" (2010: 226).

made a direct comparison with Tokyo Disneyland at the time of opening, pointing out that "the Japanese economy and especially the very strong yen must have contributed to making things easier" (Renaut 2011: 136) and that

> Tokyo Disneyland has also benefited from superb timing – one of the reasons, analysts say, that Euro Disneyland has done so poorly. While the European Magic Kingdom opened in the midst of a deep recession, the Tokyo park opened in 1983, early in one of the most economically vibrant decades in recent Japanese history. (Sterngold 1994: n.pag.)

This is the conclusion I have previously come to, among other pertinent factors that contributed to Tokyo Disneyland's enormous success, yet the economic situation at the time of Euro Disney's opening deserves more attention; particularly from cultural historians and other academics that often forego it for other ways of interpretation.

The dire economic situation did not simply affect the income of Euro Disney, it also greatly impacted its loan structure and the original plan to sell some of the hotels. Land prices declined sharply as a consequence of the recession, leading to a negative equity, a decline in interest rates and expensive loan servicing (Altman 1995: 45). The French property market collapsed, leaving "Euro Disney in possession of all of its hotels, which were generating insufficient cash to service the borrowings because of poor occupancy rates" (Curwen 1995: 18). Thus, it became impossible for the resort to generate any black numbers in its first years.

*Euro*Disney?

One of the biggest mistakes Disney had made in branding was to attempt to create a product aimed at a "European" market, a true *Euro* Disney; after all, it is hard to pinpoint what that would actually entail. While there is an argument to be made for the existence of shared values and ideas among at least the several Western European countries they targeted as potential visitors – France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain – it seemed a stretch to be able to represent all of them in equal measure. Thus, the idea of a culturally European design would have been flawed from the beginning – the finished product, a slightly glocalized version of the original Anaheim Disneyland however seems to resonate with such a diverse audience. After all, truly (g)localizing something to such a diverse setting is, I would argue, impossible. The differing guest behavior from the United States also proved problematic, and Disney's misunderstanding of tourism habits is something I will come to later. Yet what Disney also simply seemed to have misunderstood was that there was indeed not really a homogenous European culture,

and that the idea of a united Europe was in fact something severely contested at the time. Disney's European focus is especially puzzling in light of the fact that

> [u]ntil the 1980s, the idea of a common European culture was largely a fantasy. Western and Eastern Europe were still divided, politically and geographically, by the Cold War. Despite the Common Market, Western Europe remained a collection of nation-states that jealously guarded their borders, their separate economic and monetary systems, their languages, and their national identities. (Pells 1997: 322)

Yet, there had been a "European myth" (*europäischer Mythos*) even long before 1989, surrounding among other things the so-called "master narrative" (*Meistererzählung*) of European integration, according to historian Andreas Wirsching (2012: 72). And this is likely what Disney picked up on in the late 1980s and especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall in the early 1990s, when the idea of a European union suddenly seemed plausible. For a while there was indeed a trend of being "European," especially among young people, following Germany's unification, and the establishment of such programs as the Erasmus student exchange – and American journalists in particular picked up on this phenomenon "as if it were a new and startling trend. According to the Americans, national origins now mattered less to the European young than did a shared generational outlook" (Pells 1997: 324) Yet, and this is important, "American reporters probably exaggerated Europe's emerging cultural unity, particularly at a time when 'Europe' was being inundated with refugees from Bosnia to Asia" (Pells 1997: 324). Indeed, an influx of refugees had been another factor in reviving nationalism in many European countries (Pells 1997: 331). However, what could be described as a "European sentiment" was propagated in order to eventually establish a European union.

Historian Andreas Rödder describes some of the imagery and narratives that were essential toward driving this forward (2015: 298). One example is the idea that Europe could only retain its importance and position in a globalized world as a union; what he calls the "narrative of Europe's assertiveness" ("*Narrativ der Selbstbehauptung Europas*") (Rödder 2015: 299). There was a continuing dichotomy between union and diversity; while there were processes that aligned everyday lives, consumer goods, and the general ways life was experienced, there was still a radical pluralization of lives on the European continent (Rödder 2015: 307). Following the Treaty of Maastricht in February 1992, and the already mentioned update of GATT in 1994, there was renewed skepticism toward a planned European monetary union and the whole European project (Winkler 2015: 37), that some even described as a "larger identity crisis" (Kaplan 1995: 165) – no wonder given also the deep economic recession at the time. A Parisian was overheard in

her hometown in 1993 saying that "Euro-Disney was organized around an idea of the new Europe, but Europe is an idea that is dying: the park can't decide whether to be French or European – either way, they come up short" (quoted in Kaplan 1995: 154). Indeed, while the spirit of a united Europe and a true European identity had presumably driven Disney to pick the name and inspired their marketing efforts, they soon realized that "the prefix 'Euro' was seen in a bad light at a time of political unrest over the unification of Europe" (Richards and Richards 1998: 372). As Michael Eisner would later admit: "As Americans, we had believed that the word 'Euro' in front of Disney was glamorous and exciting. For Europeans, it turned out to be a term they associated with business, currency, and commerce" (1998: 292). On October 1, 1994, Euro Disney resort was officially renamed to Disneyland Paris.

European Tourists

Another pertinent mistake Disney had made was in misunderstanding guest behavior – the market studies seemed to have prepared them for design aspects, but not sufficiently for vacation habits of their visitors. One of the factors several journalists have commented on, the often cold or wet weather outside of Paris,[22] however did not play as big a role. Robert Fitzpatrick's remark that "Tokyo had […] taught us that Disney parks are weatherproof" (Greenhouse 1991: n.pag.) is not entirely correct, as Spencer has rightly argued that the Tokyo winter season is drastically different from the one in Paris, because of a higher population, higher income (43% greater per capita in 1985!), distance from the park to the city, number of leisure offerings, and also an overall different climate (Spencer 1995: 106). Yet, as economic studies show, for example a comparison of the parks in California, Tokyo, and Paris done by Taylor and Stevens, "'seasonality of attendances' is relatively unimportant in determining the profitability of the park. Of much greater significance is the total number of admissions into Euro Disney and the profile of secondary spend activities" (1995: 30). And this was one of the areas where Euro Disney struggled most – spending on food and merchandise, and not bad weather or expected lower attendance during the winter.

  Disney made several miscalculations when planning for food and merchandise spending. As several sources point out, they assumed that most of their visitors would only want "grab and go" breakfasts such as croissants and coffee and full table service meals for dinner with a snack to tide them over, but in

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[22] See for example an article in *The Economist* that notes "it is more likely to be the fault of the weather than any French cultural chauvinism. The queues are constant, and no one likes to stand around in the cold and rain" (Anon. 1992: 58).

fact the opposite was true: guests expected full sit-down breakfasts included in their hotel stay and opted for quick service, fast food meals later in the day while touring the theme park (albeit with a sit down option) (Newell 2013: 215; Solomon 1994: 37). As Eisner surly put it: "Everyone arrives at 9:30, leaves at 5:30, and they want lunch at 12:30" (quoted in Pells 1997: 311). Many of those guests that did not stay in the resorts also brought their own snacks – the motivation likely was to save as much money as possible, as food in the park was expensive. Thus, the often-made cultural claim that Disney erred by forbidding alcohol inside the theme park seems to be factually wrong. The French press had made fun of Disney's no alcohol policy (a rule also still in place for all other Disneylands at the time), and many academic accounts have also pointed this out: "Not offering wine was more than a culinary faux pas among the French; it was an insult" (Matusitz 2010: 230). Yet when Disney finally allowed alcohol (most importantly, wine), to be served at selected table service restaurants in the park, revenues from alcohol turned out to be insignificant (Eisner 1998: 283). Disney however changed many of the table service restaurants to quick-service, fast food establishments, such as the aforementioned Explorer's Club Restaurant.

Disney had also expected European visitors to be more interested in buying sophisticated, tasteful merchandise such as collectibles, yet as it turned out, most visitors wanted "unapologetically cartoonish" items (Newell 2013: 217), such as colorful character merchandise – this speaks toward not only the wish for a "classic" Disney experience as people expected it to be, but also to spend as little extra money as possible. As a study found: "The Europeans spend about $12 a visit [extra], that is half of what the Americans spend" (Renaut 2011: 133–34). Yet did this really just point toward a cultural difference?

Euro Disney was supposed to provide for a European audience what Walt Disney World did for Americans – a resort where one could easily spend a full week of vacation time without ever having to leave the property, because entertainment, food, and lodging for all members of the travel party were taken care of. However, the whole idea of a resort was not very established in Europe at the time – even Nicolas de Schoenen, then spokesman for Euro Disney had pointed out that there were misunderstandings with the workers' union "because people in Europe don't understand what an American-style 'resort' is" (quoted in Renaut 2011: 126). Lainsbury equally notes that the concept of a "vacation destination" was new for a European audience at the time (2000: 95).

The Disney company had been ecstatic at the premise of Europeans having so many more vacation days a year than Americans usually did; the French and Germans, for instance, usually received five weeks of vacation time, whereas most Americans had only two or three (Greenhouse 1991: n.pag; Lainsbury 2000: 18).

Yet Disney had apparently not studied how Europeans would usually spend these long weeks of vacation compared to Americans:

> For Americans, with 10-15 days holiday a year, a visit to a theme park is often regarded as a holiday, rather than a day trip. Europeans, with 5 or 6 weeks holiday, can afford to take a 3-week main holiday and a shorter second holiday, and still have days left to visit theme parks. Theme parks in Europe are therefore seen as day trips rather than holiday destinations. (Richards and Richards 1998: 377)

Spencer adds that the longer vacation times Europeans usually receive also has an impact on how vacation budgets are allocated, and Euro Disney was expensive in general, but especially during the financial crisis. "As a result, many families limit[ed] their Euro Disney visit to just one day, on the way to their final destinations" (Spencer 1995: 104). This points toward another habit: the longer vacation times often result in many tourists taking longer trips across a country, stopping at many destinations along the way. Additionally, as school holidays in Europe generally all fall within the months of June to August, and around major holidays such as Easter and Christmas, the resulting high seasons drives up prices in tourist regions, as well as crowds. While Americans often take kids out of school to visit Disney theme parks in lower season (Spencer 1995: 104), or are more flexible if they home school, both of these options are nearly unheard of in Europe, further changing the vacation patterns Disney was accustomed to.

Disney also made errors in how they marketed the resort. Lainsbury has devoted an entire chapter of his book on the resort on the massive marketing campaign Disney ran in several European countries before opening using using a variety of media (2000: 85–124) – I will therefore not talk about the campaign itself here. Yet the key errors they made, as Newell and Richards and Richards observed, were first, that they still treated Europe as a homogenous market, ignoring that each country had distinct tourism habits (Newell 2013: 213; Richards and Richards 1998: 377), and second, that their marketing was too often targeted at children (Newell 2013: 213–14). Altman points out that child-targeted marketing works well in the United States, but not in France, as here, children are expected to tag along with adults or enjoy separate activities, whereas in American families, children are often active decision makers when it comes to travel (1995: 48).

Disney also underestimated the important role travel agencies played in European markets. Whereas the majority of American visitors made their reservations directly with Disney, Europeans usually used travel agents to book arrangements (Matusitz 2010: 228) (this all happened before the advent of online booking changed this significantly) – only 25% of all bookings ended up being made

directly, a fact that Eisner would later lament because it meant further reductions in Disney's profit margins because travel agents and other wholesalers were entitled to discounts (Eisner 1998: 285). This was likely also the reason Disney had not even bothered to train travel agents in France and foreign markets, but it resulted in a vicious cycle, as it reduced the number of total bookings (Matusitz 2010: 228).

Another factor they had misunderstood was how expensive train travel within Europe was. While the Euro Disney resort was indeed well connected by TGV and RER, with good connections within France and to other countries, most notably Germany, and with the opening of the channel tunnel, also England, they had not accounted for the high costs of this transportation option. The same went for flights – even short-distance flights between major European cities usually get expensive quickly, especially considering that airlines usually do not offer cheaper tickets for children. Also, while the TGV also connected to the airport, as well as a bus transport, this added on extra cost to get from door to door (a fact that is cost prohibitive even to this day, especially because the actually cheaper TGV connection is poorly advertised). Car travel still seemed a good option for many visitors, with Euro Disney also being well connected to the French highway system; yet while Americans are known to often drive long distances by car, this is not necessarily something all European vacationers are prone to do. Thus, one of the most popular options to get to the resort was by bus and coach – something Disney severely underestimated. During the opening days of the park it quickly became clear that they had by far not built enough parking space for buses and resting facilities for the drivers. "Disney expected most public transport business to come via the TGV and the Channel Tunnel, not understanding that rail is relatively expensive for the theme park public," write Richards and Richards on this subject (1998: 370). Yet the term "the theme park public" is an interesting one. Who exactly do they assume is this demographic? As I would argue, this is likely the decisive factor that explains all the problems Euro Disney had: a dichotomy between Disney's target and the actual demographic that visited their theme park.

The Theme Park Public?

The self-proclaimed target demographic for Disney theme parks had always been the middle to upper class. As I have argued in the first chapter, the original Disneyland in California explicitly targeted the new middle class of 1950s America, and when Walt Disney World opened in Florida in 1971, the vacation destination concept also invited a wealthier clientele. The overwhelming success of Tokyo Disneyland can equally be credited to a strong and financially very well-off middle class. Disney clearly tried to target a similar demographic with their European resort, but seemed to have failed, at least in its early years, as becomes clear when

looking more closely at the issues just discussed. The focus on more upscale table service restaurants, such as Auberge de Cendrillon (an expensive restaurant in Fantasyland), Walt's or the Explorer's Club and several table service restaurants in the resort's 4- and 5-star hotels, in lieu of fast food venues is a move that makes sense if the main target demographic is the middle or upper class – people that spend more time and money at the theme park. The fact that the majority of visitors bypassed these offerings suggests that the clientele was largely different. Similar upscale venues exist in all other Disney resorts and usually do not fail to draw crowds. The same goes for merchandise offered – while the company line was that a European or French audience would expect more sophisticated offerings, collectible items and even designer merchandise are things that do also sell well in the other parks, in addition to cheaper items. Yet the demand for mainly cheap and standard products such as character t-shirts, what could be described as "touristy" fare, speaks first, for a clientele not necessarily so invested in the Disney brand or its theme parks as could be found in the American or Japanese resorts, and second, again for a clientele not willing to spend much extra. These financial losses in secondary spending, in addition to lack of long-term overnight stays at the hotels (another cost factor) is what hit the resort the hardest.

The idea of a vacation destination did also not just backfire because it was an unfamiliar concept to a European audience, but also because a theme park was not something connected to the more upscale experience that this usually entails. The hotels that Disney built outside of Paris also largely cater to a middle- to upper-class audience willing (and able!) to spend the necessary cash to stay in a themed hotel and use all of the amenities it provides, as well as to spend more than one day at the theme park. The fact that most of the stays were booked via travel agents, and many guests arrived via the cheaper coach and bus travel companies in lieu of trains or planes also adds to this. Disney's concept did not fail to translate to a European audience, it failed to translate to a European middle-class clientele. Indeed, the above-mentioned term of the "theme park public" seems to suggest that theme park visitors are usually visitors that are financially less well situated. While this is stereotyping, and upon closer look seems to also suggest a somewhat derogatory view of lower class, it rings true to an existing stereotype that theme parks, or particularly amusement parks cater to a lower-class audience as they offer shallow entertainment for the masses. This directly plays into the claims by French intellectuals that a European Disneyland would "brainwash" its visitors. Disney's signature concept of immersive entertainment, cleanliness, and high service culture was not something that people connected to the form of the theme or amusement park – while established parks in western Europe such as the already mentioned Europapark or Phantasialand had begun to imitate Disney as early as the 1970s, they still were closer in their concept to Copenhagen's Tivoli than to

Disneyland; as Renaut points out: "most French people and many around France didn't really know what the Disney park was all about" (Renaut 2011: 126).[23] The repeated claims[24] that the European and particularly the French public were too sophisticated to enjoy what Disneyland had to offer thus merely played on these classist ideas. Renaut's assessment that "[t]he European visitor is not the same as the American one. He won't spend his money the same way, or won't spend it at all" (2011: 133–34), that also makes the same argument as many other so far discussed culturally essentialist claims and is thus, if at all, only partly true. Indeed, it simply meant that European lower-class visitors did not spend as much money as the usual American middle- to upper-class visitors to Disney's theme parks. In addition to such stereotyping and public expectations of what a theme park should look like, and most importantly, what it should cost, hurt Disney the most, as they sold their product in Europe as they did in the United States (even including a television show called the Disney Club),[25] and expected audiences to understand that it was a middle-class experience. They also failed to build a loyal visitor base with the French locals because of the same issues. The historical circumstance of the recession also exacerbated the fact that European countries (at least at the time) had a smaller middle class than America (or for that matter, Japan) (Solomon 1994: 36) to begin with, and one with less discretionary income to spend – thus further reducing their potential audience (Eisner 1998: 284). To make Euro Disney profitable, and most importantly, prevent it from closure, extensive measures had to be taken to adjust to this new situation.

Aftermath

For a moment, Euro Disney's situation seemed so dire that Eisner admitted later that he had considered closing it down in late 1993 (Eisner 1998: 287). A Frenchman in early 1994 described it as "Disney's 'Berezina,' the icy Russian river where Napoleon lost 10,000 men in his retreat from Moscow" (quoted in Solomon 1994: 35). Yet, actually letting the resort go bankrupt or selling it would have dealt

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23 A study among French students by Guyot from the late 1990s also found that "the vast majority of interviewees had never been to a theme park abroad, and only 28.2 percent of the sample had visited Disneyland Paris since its opening in April 1992" (Guyot 2001: 127).

24 As Anthony sums up: "some observers felt that the idea of Euro Disney was out of character for the French population. Comments included claims that many French were too individualistic and private to appreciate the standardized and crowded Disney theme park experience. Others felt that the French tended to enjoy entertainment which was more intellectual in nature than Euro Disney" (1992: 14).

25 Modeled on the Mickey Mouse Club from the 1950s, it aired in several countries, such as Germany and France, before the park's opening.

such a massive blow to Disney's image that they likely would have not recovered from, at least not in an international market. The first change made was one in management: Philip Bourguignon succeeded Robert Fitzpatrick as Euro Disney's president on April 12, 1993. Bourguignon, a Frenchman, appeased surly Cast Members by changing work practices (such as introducing hourly work schedules); adjusted toward the new demographic by lowering park admission prices, changing restaurant and merchandise in the aforementioned ways (Lainsbury 2000: 135–36), and offering special promotions for the winter months. He also made it more affordable again for foreigners to visit, this time with promotions aimed at individual national markets (Newell 2013: 217) and fostering better partnerships with travel agencies (Euro Disney S.C.A. 1993: 1). Most importantly, he also took measures to build a local French visitor base, with seasonal pricing, Paris-area residents discounts and more adult-targeted marketing (Newell 2013: 216–17) – and the name change to Disneyland Paris in October 1994. This change also implied a clear step away from a pan-European idea and toward embracing it as a French theme park. The aforementioned changes to include more French names and voiceovers in the park also cemented Bourguignon's ultimate agenda of "Frenchizing" the resort (Altman 1995: 45). The voices against American cultural imperialism that were still particularly loud at the time were additionally silenced with concessions such as the introduction of European holiday festivities as Oktoberfest instead of American ones like Halloween (Newell 2013: 218; Lainsbury 2000: 132) and the aforementioned allowance of alcohol (Lainsbury 2000: 135) – Bourguignon still publicly claimed that "[t]he blame for the calamitous first year is on its excessively pro-American stance" (quoted in Richards and Richards 1998: 375). Another "powerful symbolic endorsement" (Eisner quoted in Lainsbury 2000: 155) was when Francois Mitterrand finally paid his first visit to the park on July 29, 1994. He met with Michael Eisner and former American President George H. W. Bush for a meal in the Auberge de Cendrillon restaurant (Lainsbury 2000: 155).

On a financial level, Euro Disney S.C.A. agreed on a big restructuring and refinancing plan on March 14, 1994, and got a major influx of cash when on June 1, 1994, Saudi prince Al-Waleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud became its second biggest shareholder after the Walt Disney Company. The refinancing agreement also included the plan to build several new attractions that would draw new visitors and deal with the often extensive crowds in the park (Lainsbury 2000: 129), as the earlier plan for a second phase including the MGM Studios tour theme park was abandoned for financial reasons (the second theme park, Walt Disney Studios, would eventually open in 2002). Among the new attractions were smaller additions such as Le Pays de Contes de Fées in Fantasyland, but also two new roller coasters

and headliner attractions: Space Mountain: De la Terre à la Lune in Discoveryland and Indiana Jones et le Temple du Péril in Adventureland.

With the change to Disneyland Paris as its moniker, the resort also stepped away from trying to market itself as such and switched toward embracing the idea of being a short-stay destination: "'We are positioning Euro Disney as the number one European destination of short duration, one to three days,' commented one spokesman. 'One of the primary messages is, after all, that Euro Disney is affordable to everyone'" (Lainsbury 2000: 148). The claim to be "being affordable to everyone" clearly marked the first time that a Disney theme park resort did officially no longer cater to a middle-class clientele. Now called Disneyland Paris, the resort reported its first profit on July 25, 1995, after attendance and hotel occupation rates had risen (Lainsbury 2000: 163).[26]

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[26] In 2002, Walt Disney Studios finally opened, and the resort changed its name to Disneyland Resort Paris and began to market again for longer-term stays. As of 2019, it has also been completely bought back by its parent company, resulting in further changes and plans for massive expansion over the coming years. It would however exceed the scope of this book to go into more detail on its twenty-plus year history here.

5

Hong Kong Disneyland (2005): A Site of Local Pride and Conflict

Plans for a Chinese Disney theme park surfaced even before Euro Disney had reached an agreement – Michael Eisner and his team were eager to further expand internationally, especially given the still very optimistic outlook on the European park in the late 1980s. In an LA Times article from May 21, 1987, Jim Cora, head of the Disneyland International division, stated that once Euro Disney would be completed in 1992, he would "get ready for China" (quoted in Galavante 1987: 2). It was clear Disney was aiming for several more international theme parks at that time – allegedly, the company had even gotten an inquiry to build a park in what was then the Soviet Union (Galavante 1987: 2). China had only recently allowed foreign visitors back into the country, and had re-integrated into the world economy under the "reform and opening up" policy under Deng Xiaoping that began in 1978, following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 (Pinggong 2007: 54). Yet it was already clear that China, just because of its sheer size, would become an important market. Tourism was one of the areas that the Chinese government pushed with favorable policies from the early 1990s on, by investing in the country's preservation of natural and cultural heritage (Pinggong 2007: 3). They also fostered the construction of new tourist sites, leading to (mostly cultural) theme parks (such as the Folk Culture Villages in Shenzhen) to "[spring] up like bamboo shoots after a rain" (Pinggong 2007: 4).

The struggle of Euro Disney likely contributed to the postponing of the Chinese Disneyland project for a few years, yet by 1996, "Disney appeared to be on the verge of announcing plans to build a park in Shanghai when the Chinese government suddenly ceased negotiations because the company had backed the film *Kundun* (1997) directed by Martin Scorsese, which dramatized the life of the fourteenth Dalai Lama and China's invasion of Tibet" (Groves 2011: 138). Working with the People's Republic of China (PRC) would continue to be difficult, and thus for the moment, Disney turned to what seemed to be the next best solution: building a park in Hong Kong. This option had also been considered back in 1985 (Matusitz 2011: 670).

Hong Kong was and is a unique location. It had been a British colony from 1843 to 1997 and thus had developed largely independent from the rest of China. During the 1946–49 civil war between the Communist Party of China (CCP), and the Kuomintang (KMT), the British government had restricted contact between the colony and the mainland. During the Cold War, Hong Kong was even integrated into the US' Pacific strategic circle "to contain the potential threat of an emerging socialist China" after the PRC was founded in 1949 (Pinggong 2007: 54). The relationship with Mainland China hence was always complicated: when the Communist Party took over, many Chinese fled to Hong Kong (Fung and Lee 2013: 46). From 1951 on, Hong Kong people required entry permits to even be able to access Mainland China, and in the 1980s, there were still strict immigration controls. Yet on July 1, 1997, Hong Kong was officially handed over to the PRC, and British colonial rule ended, although the region continued to be (and still is) governed independently.[1] Hong Kong was supposed to be democratized, but on June 30, 1997, the Beijing authorities dissolved the Legislative Council, and the Basic Law authorized also stipulated that the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government was to be elected by an electoral commission instead of a popular election (Choi 2010: 580). Thus, when the official negotiations between Disney and the HKSAR government got underway in 1999, the new administration had only officially been acting for roughly two years (Choi 2007: 139).

While there had been rumors in the media of talks between Disney and the HKSAR in 1998, the negotiations were initially held in secret, leading to criticism from legislators about their lack of transparency; an official announcement containing all the details was made only after the deal was reached on November 2, 1999 (Choi 2010: 578). The chosen location for the park was a 130-hectare location on Lantau Island, the largest of the islands that comprise Hong Kong (Groves 2011: 138) – most other potential sites would have "compromised the Disney experience" (Groves 2011: 138) because of surrounding high rise buildings. Lantau Island was left untouched by comparison and only a mountain range now surrounds the park, which raised environmental concerns (Choi 2010: 574). Hong Kong Disneyland was a joint venture between The Walt Disney Company and the HKSAR government, called Hong Kong International Theme Park Ltd., that held ownership (Choi 2012: 393). Disney invested $316 million in the project and

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[1] It goes beyond the scope of this chapter to go into further detail on the long and complicated history between Hong Kong and Mainland China that also recently resulted in the violent protests in 2019 and 2020. It would make for a worthwhile study to also eventually chronicle the effects of these events on tourism in Hong Kong and thus also Hong Kong Disneyland in the long term.

received 43% stake in the company, HKSAR invested $419 and holds 57 percent (Groves 2011: 139); yet HKSAR also

> Loaned Disney $718 million over 25 years; it spent $1.81 billion to build the new theme park; and it spent another $1.75 billion on associated infrastructure works. The latter included a new rail link between Sunny Bay station on the suburban line and Hong Kong Disneyland capable of carrying over 7,000 passengers per hour. (Groves 2011: 139)

The Walt Disney Co. received royalties (10% on admission, 10% participant, 5% merchandise, 5% food and beverage, and 5% hotel revenue), as well as a base management fee of 2% (Choi 2010: 578). Many thought of the deal as unfair (On 2006: n.pag.), yet the government agreed to it because in the late 1990s, following the East Asian economic crisis, Hong Kong struggled with recession and a rise in unemployment, and pushing tourism seemed a good strategy to counteract both of these issues (On 2006: n.pag.). Hong Kong Disneyland or HKDL, as it is often abbreviated, was not just going to attract visitors (an estimated 5.6 million during its first season) (Matusitz 2011: 670), but was also expected to create up to 30,000 jobs (Matusitz 2011: 670), and "produce an estimated US$19.2bn boost to the economy over 40 years, equivalent to 6% of gross domestic product" (Hills and Welford 2006: 48). Thus, besides environmental concerns and the non-transparent negotiations, the project apparently received overwhelming public support (Choi 2010: 574), and consequently, "[f]acing a *fait accompli* and fervent public approval of the HKDL project [...] the Legislative council approved" (Choi 2010: 579) the deal and Hong Kong Disneyland begun its official planning phase. The ground-breaking ceremony took place roughly three years later, on January 12, 2003, a date picked with the help of the Chinese almanac that promised luck and prosperity for the venture (Groves 2011: 146).

Designing Hong Kong Disneyland

> To all who come to this happy place, welcome. Many years ago, Walt Disney introduced the world to enchanted realms of fantasy and adventure, yesterday and tomorrow, in a magical place called Disneyland. Today that spirit of imagination and discovery comes to life in Hong Kong. Hong Kong Disneyland is dedicated to the young and the young at heart – with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration, and an enduring symbol of the cooperation, friendship and understanding between the people of Hong Kong and the United States of America.

With these words, spoken by Michael Eisner and Donald Tsang, then Chief Executive of HKSAR, Hong Kong Disneyland was officially opened on September 12,

2005 (another date picked in accordance with the Chinese almanac). HKDL was planned as a rather small and modest park in the beginning, much different from the lavish Euro Disney – possibly to avoid the issues the high cost of this park had caused. Its design resembled the original Disneyland in Anaheim with few glocal-ization efforts. The most obvious concession to local culture was the consultation of feng-shui experts. "Feng-shui is the ancient Chinese system of siting buildings in the landscape in order to obtain good fortunes for their inhabitants. […] While the Chinese Communist Party banned feng-shui on Mainland China, it thrived under British rule in Hong Kong" (Groves 2011: 143). Yet, as architecture scholar Derham Groves has pointed out, Disney's design strategies were in many ways already close to feng-shui practices (such as the avoidance of outside intrusions) (2011: 144) and its influence is hardly noticeable. The cooperation with feng-shui experts was thus done out of respect for the local culture, but also for marketing purposes – besides Groves' academic account of it, it was also frequently positively mentioned in press coverage of the park (Ashman 2005: n.pag.). Other Chinese elements (besides Fantasy Gardens in Fantasyland) were not integrated into the park, even though the HKSAR government had suggested to do so, yet apparently Disney rejected this idea so that the park "should provide an authentic [American] experience for visitors" (Fung and Lee 2013: 49). Only the food served in the park is mostly Chinese or of other Asian origin, and the official languages spoken are Mandarin, Cantonese, and English. Hence, Hong Kong Disneyland followed a similar idea as Tokyo Disneyland had – providing an authentic American, and most importantly, an authentic Disney(land) experience – "Disney wants tourists to feel as though they were visiting the original park in Anaheim" (Fung and Lee 2013: 45). Yet a short overview will show that the Hong Kong park lacked many attractions in comparison to Anaheim and thus was, at least when it first opened in 2005, a comparatively cheap theme park that saved Disney money and time in its design. Glocalization really is almost only reflected on an operational level, such as through food and beverage offerings. No wonder that as soon as the park opened, "a significant number of Hong Kongers believed that the HKSAR had been shortchanged by Disney, which the Hong Kong media eagerly pointed out at every opportunity" (Groves 2011: 139).

Starting at Main Street, U.S.A., the entrance area to Hong Kong Disneyland closely resembles the quaint, charming street of the original Disneyland park, down to the Disneyland Railroad departing its circle around the park from here. Smaller changes were made to some of the locales, such as the Corner Café at the right end of the street toward the Central Plaza. The Corner Café, in addition to Chinese and American dishes, serves afternoon tea, a British tradition highlighting the Hong Kong setting more than the Midwestern, turn-of-the century theming – a trend that continues throughout the park. The Plaza Inn, however, while looking

the same from the outside, now resembles a Chinese restaurant as one would find it in the United States and thus tells a story of Chinese immigrants in America. Aside from that, Main Street, U.S.A. is in almost all regards a carbon copy of its Anaheim counterpart. It feels more expansive because of the unusual vista of the mountain range right behind Sleeping Beauty Castle, but also less lively, as it lacks many of the transportation vehicles of the other Main Streets.

Sleeping Beauty Castle, the park's icon, as usually found on Central Plaza, had originally been another clone from Anaheim. Yet, in November 2016, as a reaction to the opening of Shanghai Disneyland, the park announced expansion plans until 2023, including a milestone of any Disneyland to date, the re-design of its castle set to open in 2020. This was likely motivated by the need to have a bigger and more imposing offer in comparison to Shanghai Disneyland's icon, especially as allegedly, there had been a miscommunication and the HKSAR government had thought that the park would feature the more lavish Cinderella castle from Florida and Tokyo. It is unclear if this means the castle will eventually be rechristened, but it definitely signals a change for the park to become more unique.

Leading away from Main Street, U.S.A. to the left, Adventureland makes up the biggest part of Hong Kong Disneyland, and features the unique design choice of placing the Jungle Cruise's rivers at the center of the land, making it overall feel lusher and fitting to its subtropical location. As there is no Frontierland in Hong Kong Disneyland, the rivers of the jungle also stand in for the Rivers of America. The Jungle Cruise also is one of the attractions where the park's location is most recognizable – guests can enter different queues according to their preferred language; Mandarin, Cantonese, or English and will be guided by a skipper narrating in either of these. The Tarzan Treehouse (a rethemed version of the Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse that can also be found in Anaheim since 1999) is surrounded by the rivers and can only be accessed by boat, similar to Tom Sawyer Island in the American and Japanese parks. The Festival of the Lion King show, based on the animated film from 1994, rounded out the attractions found at Adventureland on opening day. As of 2018, the section also features a live show based on *Moana* (2016).

In 2013, as part of a first wave of significant expansions to the park, Mystic Point opened. It is a unique land that thematically ties in with the adjacent tropical jungles of Adventureland and the colonial backstory of the Jungle Cruise (Surrell 2015: 51). Its backstory is connected to a narrative surrounding the fictional Society of the Explorers and Adventurers (S.E.A.) that can also be found in the aforementioned Tokyo DisneySea theme park, as well as in the now-defunct Explorer's Club Restaurant in Euro Disneyland/Disneyland Paris, among other attractions. It is a conscious effort on part of Walt Disney Imagineering to practice transmedia storytelling across its parks (Mittermeier 2020a). The land's main

attraction is Mystic Manor, which takes on the function of the missing Haunted Mansion. Much like in Japan, the attraction had to be changed because of Chinese views of ghosts, who believe spirits should be "honored and respected – and avoided at all costs!" (Surrell 2015: 49), and is more lighthearted in tone. It is housed in a uniquely styled building, a "Colonial British traveler's house with worldwide influences as varied as Lord Henry's travels: Gothic arches, Cambodian temple features, and a Russian onion dome," (Surrell 2015: 53). The ride makes use of a trackless ride system to tell the original story of Lord Henry Mystic, a collector of rare artifacts, and member of S.E.A. and his monkey Albert, who curiously opens an enchanted music box and brings to life all the artifacts in the house. In addition to the ride system (also used in Tokyo Disneyland's Pooh's Hunny Hunt), it makes use of sophisticated audio animatronics and is set to original score by composer Danny Elfman.

Frontierland was completely absent in the original design of Hong Kong Disneyland, possibly because of the perceived lack of resonance with Chinese culture. Yet, since 2012, Grizzly Gulch de facto makes up for this, as it is themed to an abandoned mining town. It however does not feature any of the well-known Frontierland attraction staples. As Imagineer Joe Lanzisero has put it: "It wasn't a traditional Frontierland, by any means, but it certainly possessed the same kind of feeling" (quoted in Surrell 2015: 48). It is home to a unique roller coaster ride, Big Grizzly Mountain Runaway Mine Cars, set in an area reminiscent of the California Sierra Nevada Mountains during the gold rush days, and follows a storyline of grizzly bears wreaking havoc in the mine. It combines the theme of Big Thunder Mountain and Disney California Adventure's Grizzly Peak raft ride (Surrell 2015: 48) and thus presents a Western theme largely devoid of any kind of frontier ideology.

Hong Kong Disneyland's Fantasyland features the usual remediated attractions such as Dumbo the Flying Elephant, The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh, and Cinderella Carousel, yet pales in comparison to other Fantasylands around the world, as it lacks many of the other classics. Even It's A Small World was not added until 2008; likely because it is a fairly elaborate attraction and consequently expensive to build. However, the only truly unique attraction in Hong Kong Disneyland as it was on opening day can be found in Fantasyland: The Fantasy Gardens, an elaborate Chinese garden where guests can take pictures with Disney characters "to satisfy the Chinese public's passion for taking photographs" (Groves 2011: 142). While such meet and greet locations are a feature of all Disney parks, the feng-shui styled garden is unique to the Hong Kong park. The overall design of the land follows in the footsteps the medieval fairground theme of its Californian counterpart, but because of its small size, feels rather uninspired and is overall much less immersive than other parts of the park.

In 2011, the first bigger addition to the park was the Fantasyland-adjacent Toy Story Land, themed to the Pixar movie franchise of the same name that features several attractions aimed at smaller children. As it is also found at Disneyland Paris' second park, Walt Disney Studios, it was a rather cost-effective expansion. A *Frozen* (2013)-themed land is slated to open in 2021, further expanding on the Fantasyland area; it will feature two headliner attractions, a clone of Epcot's Frozen Ever After dark ride, as well as a roller coaster called Wandering Oaken's Sliding Sleighs.

Another rather uninspired land here is Tomorrowland, as it does not pay so much homage to the original Anaheim Tomorrowland than to its post-1994 rethemed incarnation and the lack of thematic coherence that came with it. Its design is so lacking because it does not truly present any visions of the future – the only attractions found here on opening day were clones of the American parks' Space Mountain, the Orbitron spinner ride and Buzz Lightyear's Astro Blasters, an interactive attraction based on the Toy Story movie franchise that had become a staple of all the Tomorrowlands after it first opened at the Magic Kingdom in 1998. In 2006, the land received two new attractions, Stitch Encounter, an interactive movie presentation mostly aimed at children (and presented in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English), and a modified version of the original Autopia. Hong Kong Disneyland's version is the "first *Autopia* powered by electricity instead of gasoline" (Choi 2007: 289). According to Kimburley Choi, "[l]ocal Disney production staff objected the suggested use of electricity because Hong Kong's hot and wet weather is not suitable for electricity-powered racing cars. Nevertheless, the US-based Disney Imagineers insisted on the new *Autopia*" (2007: 289). This apparently led to the attraction having problems and being delayed (Choi 2007: 289) – the electric cars were likely an attempt at infusing Tomorrowland with a bit of actual visions of the future, yet it seems the attempt was overshadowed by more pressing problems of the present.

Recent expansions have focused on the *Marvel Cinematic Universe* that also brought much needed variety to the attractions roster, but replaced both the Buzz Lightyear ride and Autopia. The Iron Man Experience, a 3D-motion simulator ride, as well as an Iron Man character greeting opened in 2017, followed in 2019 by Ant-Man and the Wasp: Nano Battle!, an interactive target shooting ride. An *Avengers*-themed attraction has also been announced for 2023, rounding out the offerings of what is overall called the Stark Expo Hong Kong. Much like the aforementioned S.E.A.-themed attractions, the Marvel lands, such as the upcoming Avengers Campus at Disney California Adventure park in Anaheim, will narratively tie in with each other and foster transmedia storytelling.

Despite only featuring one theme park, Hong Kong Disneyland has also always been home to two resort hotels, the upscale Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel and the

moderate Hollywood Hotel, and reflecting the vast expansions, added a third, the Explorers Lodge, in April 2017. It took all of the here discussed expansions for the park to really come into its own, and to be more than a somewhat lackluster version of its Anaheim counterpart. Hong Kong's early expansions were the first instance of a Disneyland park deviating from the classic layout, which seemed much more in time with the zeitgeist of the twenty-first century, as the original offerings in 2005 were not only sparing, but in many ways no longer comparable to what Walt Disney Imagineering was designing elsewhere.

It thus seems no surprise that Hong Kong Disneyland originally struggled with drawing enough visitors, and on days that it did, because of its small size, had a hard time controlling the crowds, leading to long lines (Matusitz 2011: 671). The original plans and discussions surrounding its opening warrant a closer look, especially as there were also local conflicts that ultimately contributed to its initial problems.

Disney in China

Groves claims that "it was very important for Disney to strike the right cultural balance at Hong Kong Disneyland – not too American and not too Chinese" (2011: 140). The changes to adapt to location were largely focused on food and beverage, and unavoidably in service culture, when Disney's labor practices largely failed to resonate with locals. Matusitz argues that Hong Kong's park is still an example of glocalization, and also counts such changes as reduction of prices, as well as the adaptation to local visitors' customs as a glocalized effort (2011: 667). I agree with him, especially as the original design of the park was largely lacking in glocalization practices. Yet as soon as the park started to expand and include more, and unique attractions, such as Mystic Manor, it drew more visitors, as they also resonated more with them. Locals (both those in charge of Hong Kong Disneyland and its visitors) had wanted "bragging rights. […] They wanted original content," according to Imagineer Joe Lanzisero (quoted in Surrell 2015: 49). Local pride did play a big role in the audience reception of Hong Kong Disneyland.

Matusitz however also claims that "employees complained that Disney's labor practices, restaurants, and various outlets were not 'Chinese' enough, and Disney's rides, shows, and events were not appealing to Chinese visitors" (2011: 667). I could not find any other source backing this point of view, although the biggest problems surely were the labor conflicts, which I will come back to. Yet his take that attractions were not "Chinese enough" echo discussions surrounding Euro Disney not being "European enough," or "too American" – a theory I have already discussed in previous chapters in connection to Tokyo Disneyland and Euro Disney as too culturally essentialist, and not really at the heart of the matter why Hong Kong Disneyland initially underperformed. In fact, the original formula for HKDL

seemed similar to that of Tokyo Disneyland when it opened in 1983. Yet, while the Oriental Land Co. in charge of the Japanese park explicitly strived to provide its visitors with a truly American experience, for Hong Kong the focus was already more clearly on providing a *Disney* experience. While arguably, Disney is in many ways intrinsically American in its ideology, the focus in Hong Kong had shifted more toward Disney as a brand as the main draw for visitors. As Roy Tan Hardy, the park's vice president of sales and marketing, remarked: "This is Disney, and we know that people come to the park for Disney" (quoted in Gluckman 2005: n.pag.).

China was not a completely new market for Disney, yet the company's products had by far not the same popularity here as they had in Japan or western Europe, where it could build on an already existing customer base for its park. While Disney's early animated films had been shown in China in the 1930s (such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,* 1937, or the Mickey Mouse cartoons produced from the late 1920s onwards), they had been banned in Mao's China (Groves 2011: 141), "publicly defamed as symbols of capitalist imperialism" (Altehenger 2013: 59). Only after 1986 was Disney allowed to enter China again (Altehenger 2013: 59), as part of the aforementioned "reform and opening" policies. Yet until this very day, the PRC government still controls national media, with often draconian regulations – foreign media companies, for instance, are only allowed to expand to China if they form a joint venture with local companies (Fung and Lee 2013: 48). Disney's first foray into Chinese national media was thus *Dragon Club*, a spin-off of the American *Mickey Mouse Club*, a joint production with Beijing TV that had been airing since 1994 and had reached an estimated 60 million households by 2013 (Altehenger 2013: 60). Disney also has had great success in China with comics, as well as materials to teach English to both children and adults (Altehenger 2013: 68). Yet, in the PRC, only 20 foreign films are selected each year to be shown in cinemas, and hence it is still a tough market to crack. As a result of this policy, bootlegged copies of foreign films (including Disney's own) prevail in both the PRC and Hong Kong (Altehenger 2013: 72), as do other non-licensed merchandise articles (Fung and Lee 2009: 199), and their power in promoting brands should not be underestimated, even if the companies do not directly financially benefit from them. Therefore, opening a theme park in China was always a strategic move to introduce Disney products to the country on a broader scale (Fung and Lee 2013: 48), but also counteract counterfeits.[2] Disneyland's trademark synergistic powers were therefore ideal to open up the market.

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[2] Before the opening of Shanghai Disneyland, Disney took extensive steps to counteract copyright infringement in China (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.).

Following in the footsteps of the original *Disneyland* program and the *Disney Club* it had produced for European markets, Disney began marketing their films and the upcoming theme park with the help of another TV show: *The Magical World of Hong Kong Disneyland* aired on Hong Kong television from 2003, coinciding with the beginning of construction of Hong Kong Disneyland (Groves 2011: 141). Hosted by Chinese actor and singer Jacky Cheung, it

> featured Disney animated films that had inspired many of the park's rides. Cheung also presented behind-the-scenes reports about Hong Kong Disneyland; interviews with the park's designers or imagineers; and film footage from the classic 1950s American TV series Disneyland of Walt Disney speaking about his first theme park in Anaheim (with Chinese subtitles). (Groves 2011: 141)

Disney's marketing efforts also included local activities organized with the help of the Communist Youth League of China (Groves 2011: 141):

> The biggest challenge of bringing a Disney park to this part of the world is that not all audiences grew up with Disney stories and characters, so there are varying levels of familiarity and understanding. Our priority has been to introduce audiences all over the region to the classic Disney experience. (Roy Tan Hardy quoted in Groves 2011: 141)

Similar to Japan, and much in contrast with the French's outrage over Disney's expansion into their country, Disney's foray into China was never met with big public discussions of Americanization or American cultural imperialism. As Anthony Fung argues, "Disneyfication is no longer regarded as a form of cultural imperialism because ordinary citizens and consumers of China have localized, internalized and integrated Disney into their own culture, and this is the ultimate contributing factor of Disney's success in China" (2013: 8). This is similar to what had happened when TDL opened. Choi adds that "American popular culture and Japanese popular culture had been prominent since the late 1960s; today, the idea of American cultural imperialism is bizarre to many Hong Kong people" (2007: 172). Japan had indeed been another major influence on Chinese, and particularly Hong Kong's popular culture; generally, Japan is a leading producer of popular culture in all of East Asia (Iwabuchi 2011: 263–72). Remarkably, Disney merchandise products popular in Hong Kong often follow the Japanese *kawaii* style (Choi 2007: 28–29), as the *kawaii* craze has also invaded youth culture in Hong Kong (Choi 2007: 27–28). Merchandise in HKDL also banks on this trend, as exemplified by the recent introduction of the Duffy and Friends merchandise products, which had originated in Tokyo DisneySea and garnered a cult following

there. Tokyo Disneyland's popularity in Japan also directly helped with selling the idea of a Disney theme park to the local audience. As Fung and Lee argue:

> Chinese learn and derive modernity from the Japanese. [...] It is undeniable that Japanese popular culture has had a significant influence on Hong Kong popular culture. Prior to the opening of Hong Kong Disneyland, many Hong Kong residents had already visited the Tokyo park; in the eyes of many Hong Kong locals, the Tokyo park is the original Disneyland. (2013: 56)

Yet, issues still arose with visitors' understanding of Disneyland and the "classic Disney experience," particularly with elderly visitors from Mainland China. Matusitz mentions people were confused about "how to behave or what to enjoy" in Hong Kong Disneyland and apparently, some "were entering the park, snapped a few pictures, and then turned around to leave" (2011: 671). Yet, Disney synergy seemed to succeed more often than not: as Fung and Lee report, they encountered visitors from Mainland China who did not know Disney's *Lion King* beforehand, struggled with the English-language songs and dialogue, yet still enjoyed the live show in Adventureland – and then even proceeded to buy the show's merchandise (Fung and Lee 2009: 204). Bob Iger, who took over for Michael Eisner as Disney's CEO shortly after the park's opening, remarked to its Cast Members:

> It is our hope that this new Disney theme park experience will spark a deep and lasting affinity for our fantastic Disney stories, characters and other creative content. [...] [Y]ou now hold in your hands not only the future of Hong Kong Disneyland, but the future of the Disney name and the Disney legacy here in Hong Kong and throughout China. (Eisner and Iger 2005: n.pag.)

Indeed, it seemed that this approach had paid off, and Hong Kong Disneyland had paved the way for Disney's future in all of China.

The Park's Controversies and Problems

Although Disney's products and the theme park were generally well received, Hong Kong Disneyland did not open without opposition or controversies. Environmental advocacy groups had been especially vocal about the building of the park on Lantau Island, but also several other issues they had with Disney's practices. In the months before opening in 2005, protests arose over Disney's announcement that it would serve shark's fin soup on its wedding banquet menus. The soup is a Chinese delicacy, but as sharks are caught and brutally killed for it, it had long come under public scrutiny – environmentalist organizations such as Greenpeace

and the Hong Kong Marine Conservation Society thus pressured Disney to remove the item from their menus (Matusitz 2011: 674). Disney did not handle the issue well. HKDL's public relations manager Esther Wong released the following statement: "Hong Kong Disneyland takes environmental stewardship very seriously and we are equally sensitive to local cultures. It is customary for Chinese restaurants and 5-star hotels to serve shark's fin soup in Hong Kong as the dish is considered an integral part of Chinese banquets" (quoted in Hills and Welford 2006: 49). Yet there was severe backlash to this comment for framing the inclusion of the dish as a concession to local culture, as many Chinese groups in fact oppose it. Disney then announced in early June 2005 that it would remove the dish from menus, but would prepare it upon request (Hills and Welford 2006: 50), when local groups then called for opening day boycotts of the park, Disney decided to completely remove it only two weeks later (Hills and Welford 2006: 51).

In August 2005, complaints also arose because Disney was not planning to use the more environmentally friendly air-launch technology for its fireworks in Hong Kong as they were in other parks, such as in Anaheim (Hills and Welford 2006: 51). In the same month, there were also claims of labor violations among Disney's suppliers (Hills and Welford 2006: 53). Shortly before opening, during a trial period, Disney clashed with local authorities as a Cast Member did not let food inspectors onto the premises wearing their hats and badges as not to cause alarm among guests (Matusitz 2011: 671), which Disney later explained as a misunderstanding (Hills and Welford 2006: 53). As a consequence, "a local academic and 30 students," established an NGO called "Disney Hunter," "to raise public awareness over issues related to Disney" (Hills and Welford 2006: 51), yet the group's small size and internal conflicts never gave it much leverage (Choi 2007: 338–43).

The biggest problem Hong Kong Disneyland faced, however, was labor issues. As Choi has written on these in great detail (2007: 315–80; 2012: 383–97), I will just touch upon them here. She had interviewed some local Cast Members in 2005 and 2006 and found that many were disappointed and unhappy with the lack of possibility to receive internal promotions, the massive supervision they were under and the often negative behavior of guests; they also said the park was understaffed; resulting in high employee turnover (Choi 2012: 387–88). Matusitz also reports that "cast members and construction workers complained of short lunch breaks, long hours, and an insufficient number of staff […]. Their complaints also concerned low pay (as compared to other Disney parks) and differentials between cast members" (2011: 676). Thousands of the original 5000 employees left, but the remaining ones later organized in a union that improved the situation (Matusitz 2011: 676). Originally, HKSAR had seen the presence of Disney as an opportunity to improve on the local guest service standards and the tourism sector overall (On 2006: n.pag.), their training and service practices clashed with

local culture. The concept of performative labor had proven difficult for both Cast Members and visitors in France, and it was similarly hard to implement in Hong Kong, as, "in Hong Kong, people who are overly friendly are looked upon with suspicion" (Matusitz 2011: 675). Cast Members also report that when they "make eye contact and smile at local customers, customers may feel suspicious of the smile and some even intimidated and reply, "What are you laughing at?" Others may feel nervous and go away" (Choi 2007: 325). Dissenting behavior by many guests also exacerbated this situation, such as frequent quarrels or outright fights, queue jumping or even public urination (Choi 2012: 391). When the park struggled with lower attendance than expected in the beginning, the situation got direr for Cast Members when cost cutting measures set in. Consequently, the early reviews for the park were not positive:

> For the first few months after Hong Kong Disneyland's rehearsal days, the commentary from various press sources (ranging from scholars and local stars to common people) characterised the park as too small, the park operations as chaotic and the management as highhanded, as disrespectful of local legislation, as exploitative towards workers and even as crass proponents of Americanism. (Choi 2012: 383–84)

That this criticism of Americanism only surfaced when the park struggled is telling, since it had not played much of a role before – or has since.

The first-year attendance figures did not meet the estimated target of 5.6 million, but fell about half a million short; they plunged by more than 1 million in the second year (Choi 2012: 384). Because the park was not legally required to disclose their finances, the first financial results are from January 2010, where it reported a net loss of HKS\$1.315 billion for 2009 (Choi 2012: 384). Yet, since the massive expansions, the park has been doing better with both attendance and finances (also because of higher secondary spending in the park on merchandise and food), marking seven years of consecutive growth in February 2017 (Hong Kong Disneyland 2017: n.pag.).

The Importance of Local Identity in Shaping the Park

Hong Kong Disneyland has had high public approval ratings from the beginning, which eventually were instrumental in its legislative approval. Many people had been skeptical that the park could fulfill its goals of strengthening the economy or hamper unemployment, and found the deal the HKSAR had made unfair (Choi 2007: 160–61). Yet, remarkably, in a survey from January 1999, 90% of all respondents supported the project (Choi 2007: 160–61). This massive public

support can be explained by the historical circumstance of the Hong Kong Hand-over and its consequences, shortly before the park's initial planning years, and the more general cultural context of Hong Kong citizens' identity.

The Asian financial crisis occurred in 1997, right after Hong Kong had been handed over to the PRC, which severely hit the local economy, including a decline in property values and also negatively affected inbound tourism (Choi 2010: 580). Consequently, the HKSAR government set a goal to make Hong Kong a "cosmo-politan" city again – a status that authorities claimed Hong Kong had lost or at least was threatened to lose after the handover, especially as competition from other East Asian cities, such as Shanghai, was growing stronger (Choi 2010: 581). This meant that Hong Kong had to strengthen its status as both an economic hub and as a tourist destination. Tung Chee Wa, then Chief Executive of the HKSAR, defined cosmopolitan cities as "international financial centers, tourist destina-tions, homes for the headquarters of multinational corporations and international communication, and transportation centers" (quoted in Choi 2010: 581). As Choi argues, in doing so, he "restricted the meaning to 'cosmopolitan city' to strictly economic terms and ignored the democratic and pluralistic cultural values held by these vibrant cities" (2010: 581). Examples he used for major cosmopolitan cities included London and LA (Choi 2010: 581); thus, this rhetoric needs to be understood in a larger context of strive to be "modern" in Hong Kong, and a larger (East) Asian culture. As Fung and Lee argue, "modernity in Asia has always been linked to and related to the West. The building of Disneyland in Asia should, there-fore, be considered as a part of the modernity project" (Fung and Lee 2013: 43). Indeed, the HKSAR government framed their deal with Disney as a vital part in advancing Hong Kong to the cosmopolitan city status (Choi 2010: 582). News media at the time helped promote this idea. Choi has done a comprehensive study of media coverage of Hong Kong Disneyland between October 1998 (when rumors started) and November 1999 (when it was formally announced), looking at both local newspapers and television channels. She has reached the conclusion that they voiced almost unanimous approval because they favored urban development after the financial crisis, and highlighted the competition with other cities such as Shanghai and the fear that they could surpass Hong Kong in economy and status (Choi 2010: 583). They argued that HKDL would advance the retail industry, boost employment and the tourism industry (Choi 2010: 585).

When the deal was officially announced, most local news media praised the govern-ment's decision (Choi 2010: 586), newspaper Apple Daily even "devoted four full pages" to Hong Kong Disneyland and titled it "Millennium dream comes true" (Choi 2010: 586). As Choi however argues, this did not mean that there were no alternative voices, but that they "were lost in the framework of 'prosperity' and 'stability'" (2010: 587). Yet, the government's agenda proved successful: the Disneyland project inspired

confidence in HKSAR's abilities. According to a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Policy Research Institute Ltd., "37% of 967 respondents had more confidence in the HKSAR government after the success of the Disneyland deal in 1999 than they had before the deal" (Choi 2007: 139). Years later, when the park drew more negative headlines before and shortly after its opening in 2005, public opinion swerved sharply. Media sources claimed that the local Disneyland was turning "Hong Kong's 'millennium dream' into a 'Hong Kong shame'; and the HKSAR government also characterized certain requests made by the park as 'unacceptable' […] and 'requested' that the park 'make improvements'" (Choi 2012: 383–84). Yet, even though many Hong Kong people were critical of Disney's practices (such as the discussed labor issues), locals continued to visit the park (49% of visitors were local in the first years) (Choi 2007: 344–48). Why they did so remains speculation, but one reason may have possibly been that they did not want the park to be a public failure – local pride and the connected idea of Hong Kong Disneyland advancing Hong Kong's global status as cosmopolitan and modern after all continued to play an important role.

A major part in Hong Kong's strive to be cosmopolitan was and is a deep-seated rivalry with Mainland China, and a wish to differentiate from major Chinese cities such as Shanghai. Before the handover, Hong Kong had been unique in their position as a British colony and orientation toward the West. The city was usually not perceived as one among other Chinese cities, but as something superior by its locals (Choi 2007: 162; Choi 2010: 48; Fung 2013: 48); therefore, the wish to distinguish themselves grew even more important after the Handover, when Hong Kong's economy and political future was suddenly dependent upon the relations with Mainland China (Choi 2007: 25). Hong Kong identity is formed over ideas of westernness, modernity and internationality (Choi 2007: 22), and resentments between Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese run deep and do extend far beyond a mere economic rivalry:

> The difference between the Hong Kong Chinese and the mainland Chinese is so ingrained among the locals that they have come to view the mainland China as the inferior other. The Hong Kong Chinese is believed to be modern, western, street smart, and money minded, while the mainland Chinese is viewed as culturally backward and poor. (Fung and Lee 2013: 47)

Based on a survey conducted in 1997 among Hong Kong locals, they viewed themselves "as open-minded, courteous, and knowledgeable; [whereas Mainland] Chinese were seen as traditional and self-centered" (Choi 2007: 21). In a political context, this, for them, translated to "Hong Kong people […] pursuing democracy, liberty, equality, and a system of fairness," while Mainland Chinese are not perceived as striving for these civic values (Choi 2007: 21).

Inhabitants of Hong Kong largely perceived themselves not as Chinese, but as *Heung Gong Yan* (Hong Kongers) – according to the survey from 1997, 60% described themselves as such, and still did so in 1999 (Choi 2010: 577), yet the number had decreased by 10% in 2004 (Choi 2007: 21). However, this did not mean that Hong Kongers started to think of themselves as "Chinese" in the sense of Mainland Chinese in the years after the handover, according to Choi (2007: 21). She found that, while more young Hong Kongers described themselves as Chinese, they still saw themselves as having a better personality, as being more modern, open-minded to foreign culture, and more civilized (in a cultural and political sense) than mainlanders (Choi 2007: 22). This Hong Kong identity has also been described as "Chineseness plus" (Choi 2007: 4).

Yet, the Mainland Chinese that Hong Kongers wanted to distinguish themselves from so vehemently were also estimated to eventually make up a third of Hong Kong Disneyland's visitors (Matusitz 2011: 672). While travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland had long been difficult, beginning with July 2004, Mainland Chinese from 30 different cities were able to travel to Hong Kong via a new "Individual Visit Scheme" (Fung and Lee 2009: 205). Hong Kong was a popular destination for them, as the city in general, but also particularly HKDL, allowed them "to have a global experience without going overseas" (Fung and Lee 2009: 205). As Ho Chun On argues, Hong Kong Disneyland similarly functions as a "gateway to China" for both foreign tourists as well as Mainland Chinese: "Since the Mainlanders are eager to connect with a global pop culture that poverty and Communist policy had previously kept out of reach, most of them nowadays want to experience the foreignness" (On 2006: n.pag.). Fung and Lee even claim that both the local Disneyland and Hong Kong itself even provide "a free, individualist American atmosphere that sharply contrasts with the repressive state in which they reside. Unintended by Disney, the Hong Kong Disneyland may serve as an alternative, creative counterforce for Mainland Chinese visitors" (Fung and Lee 2009: 207). Whether this is true or not, or the park just provides a unique and westernized experience, it proved popular with the Mainlanders.

When Hong Kong boosted its tourism after the Asian Financial Crisis, Disney was one part of a larger package (Gluckman 2005: n.pag.), and this also resulted in an influx of more tourists from Mainland China – a demographic that has contributed to the fact that particularly on Chinese holidays, attendance levels at Hong Kong Disneyland are often too high and the park had to fear overcrowding in its early years before the expansions (Matusitz 2011: 676). However, public opinion by Hong Kongers quickly formed that Mainlanders were behaving badly in the park, such as fights between guests or line jumping (Choi 2007: 354–57). Yet, as Cast Members reported, while this behavior did indeed exist, it came from both locals and Mainlanders – allegedly even more often from local visitors that felt a

sense of entitlement to "their" park (Choi 2007: 354). In fact, differences in the park regularly arose *between* the Mainlanders and the locals over such behavior, exacerbated by language barriers – the Hong Kong local dialect, Cantonese, is often difficult to understand for Mandarin native speakers from the PRC and vice versa (Choi 2007: 358). Media coverage of the theme park worsened this situation:

> The local media of Hong Kong are always keen on pointing out the "uncivi-
> lized" behavior of the mainland Chinese in the park; […] [p]erhaps these actions
> are not as common as the media claim, but local Hong Kong media uses the
> case of Disneyland to maintain and reinforce the differences between mainland
> Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese. (Fung and Lee 2013: 47)

Hong Kong Disneyland thus turned into a site where Hong Kongers could enact their perceived identity as superior to the mainlanders, further cementing the park as a bulwark of modernity in their eyes.

The Role of Class in Hong Kong Disneyland's Reception

While both Choi and Fung & Lee have discussed the conflicts between Hong Kongers and Mainlanders and how they affect Hong Kong Disneyland, what so far has been ignored is the underlying class factor that plays a role here – and has contributed significantly to the park's attendance and financial issues. Matusitz remarks that "Disney experienced unanticipated success in Japan but an equally unanticipated lack of success in Hong Kong, even though both places are in East Asia" (2011: 669). His assessment that Hong Kong Disneyland performed under-whelmingly in the beginning, is true – his implications that the park should have fared better just because it is also in East Asia is a generalizing, somewhat ignorant assumption. Again, the specific historical and cultural context the parks exist in is vital in understanding their success or failure. Hong Kong and Japan have very different cultures, even Hong Kong and the PRC have an interwoven but radically different background. Yet in all cases, economy and class play a central role, as Disneyland is inherently still a product aimed at the middle class.

Ironically, the reason the park had been built in the first place, the wish to boost Hong Kong's economy after the late 1990s Asian financial crisis, affected it negatively upon opening in 2005, as

> The area had not fully recovered from [it]. In the beginning, the admission
> ticket to the theme park was too high for local visitors. Because China was still
> a nation with low income levels, the lack of affordability of the Disney vacation
> experience did not help. (Matusitz 2011: 672)

Disney did end up adjusting prices, lowering them overall and offering a seasonal pricing structure, as well as special pricing for senior citizens (Matusitz 2011: 672). Mainlanders were especially affected by the high prices, at least in the early years of the park. They usually did not spend a full day at Hong Kong Disneyland, as they tended to book all-inclusive packaged tours taking them to different sites, and only allocate a few hours at each location (Matusitz 2011: 672). They thus also did not contribute significantly to secondary spending on food and merchandise, and as mentioned above, were reported to struggle with how to "enjoy the park," often just walking around and taking pictures (as in other tourist venues) (Fung and Lee 2013: 50). Disney however reacted to this, and began to work with tour operators and travel agents to profit from this trend (Matusitz 2011: 672). Group bus tours however are mostly modes of travel for lower-class visitors with less discretionary income – a fact also important in the context of Euro Disney. When Hong Kong Disneyland opened, the price for admission and other expenses were

> affordable by Hong Kong standards but on the higher end for visitors from China. Even in the commercial hub of Shanghai, which enjoys a much higher standard of living than most Chinese cities, the minimum monthly wage [was] a paltry $85. […] Admission [was] $45 for the weekend and public holidays, $38 on weekdays – the cheapest among Disney's five parks around the world. (Lee 2005: n.pag.)

Yet, incomes in Hong Kong, but also Beijing and Shanghai have been steadily rising (Matusitz 2011: 672), and the middle class in both Hong Kong and Mainland China has been growing. And when the economy and general financial situation improved – and HKDL expanded to truly offer something to its guests – so did the park's attendance and visitor spending (Ren 2007: 102).

An even more pertinent class factor that affects Hong Kong Disneyland's popularity is the aforementioned deeply ingrained conflict between locals and Mainland Chinese visitors. At the heart of the conflict is a perceived cultural superiority, and one that relates to class. Race does play a role here, yet as both groups are ethnically Chinese, the class factor seems more pertinent. The markers attributed by the Hong Kongers to the Mainlanders on why they are "the inferior other" mostly seem to be based on class mores and income; such as the perception of Hong Kongers as "money minded," while by comparison, the Mainland Chinese are seen as "backward and poor" (Fung and Lee 2013: 47). The arrival of Disneyland was perceived as a sign of Hong Kong advancing as a cosmopolitan city, and the Mainlanders seen mostly as a nuisance and hindrance in this process – although the reality often looked different. Yet the conflict hurt not only the park's image, but also often contributed to a negative atmosphere in the park. Hong Kongers took pride

in "their" Disneyland. When Mainlanders were perceived to spoil this experience and thus Hong Kong's modern image, it hurt local pride; "[b]ut an even greater blow to the collective pride of the locals was Disney's desire to build another theme park near Shanghai in the not too distant future" (Groves 2011: 139). As argued in the beginning of this chapter, this had always been Disney's intention, and in 2016, Shanghai Disneyland finally opened to the public. In many ways, Hong Kong Disneyland had not been more than "a warm-up act for Shanghai" (Matusitz 2011: 677) – much to the Hong Kongers' chagrin.

6

"Authentically Disney, Distinctly Chinese" – Shanghai Disneyland (2016)

Shanghai Disneyland had been considered as an alternative to Hong Kong Disneyland as early as the late 1980s, and earnest in 1999, before a deal was made with the HKSAR government. Hong Kongers thus saw Shanghai as a "major rival" (Choi 2010: 584) in their strive to become a truly "cosmopolitan" city, fueled on by almost daily reports about the competition between the two cities in local newspapers (Choi 2010: 584). Disney eventually had to build in Hong Kong first, as the PRC had almost completely severed ties in 1997, after the pro-Tibetan film *Kundun* (1997) was released – a mistake then-CEO Michael Eisner personally apologized for, to then new prime minister Zhu Rongji in October of 1998 (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.). Eisner then also introduced Bob Iger as the man in charge of the project (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.). It was a few months after this meeting, in 1999, that Iger, then president and COO of Disney, visited the eventual site of Shanghai Disney Resort, in the city's Pudong district (Schoolfield 2016: 60). Yet it took the company several more years to finally make a deal with the notoriously difficult Communist government of the PRC. After discussions had been on hold, and further negotiations in 2002 had failed, Iger, now CEO, met with Shanghai's new Communist Party boss, Yu Zhengsheng in the city in February 2008 and renegotiated, agreeing to several concessions that Disney previously had not been willing to make (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.).

Among them was giving up on the idea of a television channel within the country – Disney had planned as usual to use a television platform to promote the park and their movies ahead of opening (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.). In lieu of this, they opened the world's largest Disney Store in Shanghai in May 2015 as a preview of things to come and managed to draw massive crowds (Chan and Chow 2015: n.pag.). The company also put together a road show previewing the park that traveled to malls throughout the country. It featured several displays containing illustrations and models of the park's attractions, but also photo opportunities and other hands-on activities, as well as "a stage show, including a presentation

about all of the new park's attractions" (MacDonald 2019: 127) and proved a valuable marketing tool.

Thus, making concessions initially was more than worth it for Disney, the Chinese market was and is too important – Iger himself compared the opportunity to build in Shanghai to Walt Disney's own coup of buying land for "The Florida Project" in the 1960s (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.). The Chinese government also benefits from the deal – the theme park resort pushes tourism immensely, and helps with cementing Shanghai as a "showcase city for all the world to see" (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.) and Disney also agreed to work with China's Ministry of Culture to help bolster the local entertainment companies, as well as the local animation industry (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.). For the Communist party, the partnership with Disney also serves as a calling card for China's willingness to open up to the world. In 2009, Disney and the Chinese government reached an official agreement (Du 2016: 231).

Shanghai Disney Resort was funded through a joint venture between The Walt Disney Company and the state-owned Shanghai Shendi Group, made up of two ownership, and one management companies. In this arrangement, Shanghai Shendi holds 57% interest of the ownership company, and Disney 43%; however, Disney owns 70% of the management company and is thus responsible for creating and operating the resort (Schoolfield 2016: 38). Groundbreaking on the site took place in 2011 (Schoolfield 2016: 38), within the so-called "Shanghai International Tourism and Resorts Zone." The Zone comprises a total of 9.7 square miles (25 square kms), of which 1.5 square miles (4 square kms) were reserved for Shanghai Disney Resort's "phase 1" (Terry 2016: 7) – the location was already planned with future expansion in mind (possibly up to three Disney theme parks), and is also home to other leisure developments. This first phase of the project, consisting of Shanghai Disneyland, the Disneytown shopping and dining district, as well as two hotels operated by Disney, the Shanghai Disneyland Hotel, and the Toy Story Hotel, cost $5.5 billion in total (after the initial budget was increased by $800 million in 2014) (Martin and Makinen 2016: A1; A4). This makes it the most expensive theme park resort ever built.

Originally, the resort was scheduled to open by the end of 2015, but with the budget increase in 2014, the opening date was pushed back several months and eventually set for June 16, 2016. The additional budget and time were needed because of problems with Chinese contractors that did not meet Disney's standards (Makinen 2015a: C1), and also because Disney decided to up the number of offerings in the park for opening day. The estimated number of visitors for the first year of operation was set at 12 million (Terry 2016: 7), with an eventual target of 30 million visitors once the resort would expand beyond Phase 1 (Terry 2016: 7).

Given that Tokyo Disney Resort with its two theme parks draws 30 million visitors per year, and Shanghai has become a major tourist destination, with 113 million people visiting the city in 2013 alone (Du 2016: 230), these numbers seemed a realistic goal.

Yet, what about the competition with Hong Kong Disneyland? As argued in the previous chapter, the park has always been highly dependent on visitors from Mainland China, and still is: in 2015, Mainlanders made up 41% of its visitors (Law and Makinen 2016: n.pag.). Given these numbers, and the local pride Hong Kongers took in "their" Disneyland, it seems hardly surprising that "[w]hen plans for a Shanghai park were announced […] [local] media reports described a sense of shock – and betrayal – among the public" (Law and Makinen 2016: n.pag.). Yet, as Mike Rowe, a retired government official of HKSAR pointed out, they had always known about Disney's plans to build another park on Mainland China, but had tried to persuade them to build in Beijing instead, 400 miles farther from Hong Kong than Shanghai (Law and Makinen 2016: n.pag.). Still, one has to consider the sheer size of China. For many people living in Southern China, for example, Hong Kong Disneyland is still much more convenient than the Shanghai park (Law and Makinen 2016: n.pag.). In fact, Disneyland in Anaheim and Walt Disney World in Florida are about as far from each other as Shanghai is from Hong Kong. As Bob Weis, current president of Walt Disney Imagineering has made clear: "There is a certain amount of the fan base that insists on visiting both, but for the most part they draw from the regions they're located in," (quoted in Makinen 2015b: C3) again much like the market in the United States works, where many see one of each resort as "their" Disneyland that they tend to visit more regularly or even exclusively. As argued in the context of Euro Disney, establishing such a local fanbase is crucial to any theme park's success. As Fung and Lee mused, many "Hong Kong locals compare their Disneyland to the Tokyo Disneyland; perhaps Hong Kong Disneyland is viewed as the 'original park' to the Mainland Chinese and will be the main park to compare the Shanghai park [to]" (2013: 56).

Because of comparisons like this, and for the visitors that make the trip to both parks in the same country (or for that matter, internationally), it is important to strike the right balance of attractions so that they still work complimentary to each other. While drawing on staples of attractions that can be cloned to save on money, offering several unique attractions is key, as Disneyland and Walt Disney World have shown. Weis confirms this agenda for the Chinese market: "So we see the advantage in having a park in Shanghai to draw from this region and [in the meantime] continuing to develop Hong Kong and invest in new attractions" (quoted in Makinen 2015b: C3). The Hong Kong resort has recently greenlit a major expansion project that includes many new attractions and shows that cannot

(so far) be found in Shanghai (or anywhere else for that matter). As Disney spokeswoman Angela Bliss explains:

> Disney representatives expect that some mainlanders who have their first taste of Disney in Shanghai will be enticed to experience other parks, including Hong Kong's. […] From the beginning, our strategy was to create two complimentary parks that have their own distinct experiences […]. The U.S. supports two Disney resort destinations, with six theme parks, and the population is relatively smaller than China's. (quoted in Law and Makinen 2016: n.pag.)

So, while some claim that market cannibalization from Shanghai has hurt Hong Kong Disneyland's visitor numbers in its first months (Harashima 2016: n.pag.), the likelihood is that visitors from both Mainland China and Hong Kong will become interested in visiting both resorts, especially as incomes in China continue to rise and traveling farther distances becomes more popular. Consequently, the design of Shanghai Disneyland was in many ways influenced by the need to differentiate its offerings from those of Hong Kong Disneyland.

Deviating from the Template: Shanghai Disneyland's Design

> To all who come to this happy place, welcome. Shanghai Disneyland is your land. Here you leave today and discover imaginative worlds of fantasy, romance and adventure that ignite the magical dreams within us all. Shanghai Disneyland is authentically Disney and distinctly Chinese. It was created for everyone, bringing to life timeless characters and stories in a magical place that will be a source of joy, inspiration, and memories for generations to come.

While Bob Iger's dedication of Shanghai Disneyland strikes a familiar note, Shanghai Disneyland's design deviates remarkably from the classic Disneyland template. It seems to have followed two complimentary agendas: to differentiate its offerings from its counterpart in Hong Kong, and to market Disney characters and brands to the Chinese, in lieu of a more explicitly American ideology. While the Hong Kong park had also explicitly been built to use its synergistic potential, it had still done so with a more classic idea of Disneyland; upon opening, with an almost direct clone of many of Anaheim's lands and attractions (see previous chapter). Yet the changes to Shanghai's park are radical: it does away with all the lands that more overtly promote an American ideology, such as Main Street, U.S.A., and Frontierland, but also Adventureland, with its 1950s inspired exotica. The only familiar lands that remain are Fantasyland and Tomorrowland. Many of the by now classic attractions, such as It's a Small World, the Haunted Mansion,

or Space Mountain are missing completely, and Pirates of the Caribbean has received a significant update. As Jeremy Schoolfield, writing for the theme park industry-targeted *Funworld* magazine, has summed up:

> Much of the park's design and attractions are geared toward helping Chinese visitors fall in love with Mickey, Minnie, and all the other Disney characters and stories that cultures elsewhere in the world have cherished for nearly a century. You see this mission in everything from the entrance plaza to the parade floats to the selections of the attractions. (2016: 38)

Disney's IPs (Intellectual Properties) are taking center stage, "primarily based around the oldest and newest properties, the in-between years having gone largely unseen in China (a situation Disney's media networks are trying to address)," according to theme park expert David Younger (2016a: 66). Disney thus first promotes the properties that have already been shown to Chinese audiences, but is trying to establish these even more – as Bob Iger has remarked, Disney has "grown tremendously here [in China] in the last five years. Marvel in particular has," (quoted in Fritz 2016: n.pag.)[1] and they are building on this momentum. The theme park has emerged as the best medium to promote content to a new audience, and China is such a huge potential market for Disney that the smaller Hong Kong park is not enough to penetrate it. Indeed, the theme parks are so important for Disney synergy that Bob Chapek, chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts at the time of Shanghai's park opening and current CEO, put it like this: "Disney builds parks, but parks help build Disney" (quoted in Schoolfield 2016: 38).

Shanghai Disneyland's entrance area is the area where it is most apparent that Disney is trying to sell their classic characters to a Chinese audience. Mickey Avenue functionally serves the same purpose of Main Street, U.S.A., in that it mainly provides shopping and dining opportunities to guest on the way in and out of the park, but design-wise it is radically different. Gone is the Victorian-era small town America, replaced by a hodge-podge of both European and American architectural styles, each building home to a Disney character. Most of the characters represented here are considered "classic," such as Minnie's family home that houses the Sweetheart Confectionary sweets shop, or the Mickey and Pals Market Café that has nods to more obscure works such as the 1947 short *Mickey and the Beanstalk*, Duckburg, the hometown of the Duck family, or the *Three Caballeros* (1944). Yet more recent works also find mention, among them, Remy's Patisserie, a café themed to the protagonist from Disney/Pixar's *Ratatouille* (2007). Overall,

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[1] Marvel Entertainment was acquired by Disney in 2009.

the streetscape showcases quite a spectrum of the Disney oeuvre. As MacDonald argues, "Disney wants its park guests to actively engage with the brand, learning about Disney characters, stories, and traditions" (2019: 135).

Another marked change is that there are two entrances/exits to the park, and one of them directly leads from Mickey Avenue to Disneytown, the resort's shopping and dining district. Much of the district's architecture was influenced by *shikumen* (Schoolfield 2016: 56), a traditional Shanghai style mixing both western and Chinese influences that blends in nicely with Mickey Avenue's own mixture of styles.

A glaring omission at the park, especially noticeable at the entrance, is the Disneyland Railroad. While the building at the entry way still resembles a train station, and there is a store called Whistle Stop Shop that pays homage to Walt Disney's love for trains, this is one of the most obvious deviations from the original template. Allegedly, the change was made as trains lack "the same romance that they inspire in the west" in China (Younger 2016a: 66). It also seems hard to imagine the classic railroad trains chugging through the reimagined park without clashing too much with the theming of Treasure Cove or even the redesigned Tomorrowland. Yet, on two separate occasions, I have had the chance to talk to Cast Members that work the Railroad in Anaheim, they were most outraged about this change as they felt it broke with the original Disneyland spirit.

They would likely feel the same way about the omission of the traditional Main Street, U.S.A. although Mickey Avenue does have its charms. Bob Iger has stated that they "didn't think it would resonate here, even though we brought it to Paris and we brought it to Tokyo and we put it in Florida" (quoted in Anon. ABC News 2015: n.pag.). And "they" had also put it in Hong Kong, which he curiously omits here – a possible sign that one of the goals was to try to diversify from the other Chinese park. Its omission was thus not (solely) done out of fear of its theming not resonating with a Chinese audience, as it apparently did so in Hong Kong, although the PRC government is stricter when it comes to issues of "Americanization" than HKSAR. Replacing Main Street, U.S.A. with Mickey Avenue, however, does de facto shift Disneyland's focus tonally away from an overarching American theme that had still echoed the Cold War reassurance, to one of a seemingly global idea of Disney. Miles Orvell, a cultural historian who has written on the idea of Main Street in American popular culture, muses that while there are "variations" in the design of Disneyland around the world, "the basic structure, with Main Street at the center, is constant, a dream of America, a theatrical space at once deeply appealing to Americans and eminently exportable" (2014: 41–42) and that "in the peculiar Disney cosmogony, […] the center […] is Main Street America, in whatever theme park one might enter" (2009: 105). He wrote this before it became clear that Shanghai Disneyland would make this

change, but he is right about Main Street's significance for the park's overarching theme regardless. Without Main Street, U.S.A., the park truly moves away from its underlying idea of Americana.

Mickey Avenue is also rather short in comparison to Main Street, U.S.A., but instead of just opening to Central Plaza, it leads to an entirely new land, the Gardens of the Imagination. Inspired by traditional Chinese gardens, the land "embodies the 'distinctly Chinese' aspect of Shanghai Disneyland" (Schoolfield 2016: 41). The Gardens house two classic attractions usually found in Fantasyland, Dumbo the Flying Elephant and the Carousel, here themed to *Fantasia* (1940). They also provide ample standing room for the Nighttime Spectacular taking place on and around the castle (a staple of all Disneylands around the world; in the past only fireworks were shown, now there are more elaborate mixed-media shows that use the castle as a canvas). The Gardens are also home to a traditional Chinese tea house, the Wandering Moon Teahouse, a Meet Mickey character greeting location, and oddly, as somewhat of an afterthought, Marvel Universe, a small pavilion housing also a meet and greet and showcase for props from the Marvel Cinematic Universe films. Another part of the land is the Garden of the Twelve Friends, a small area with murals featuring twelve Disney characters reimagined as the Chinese zodiac signs. The land is completely unique to all Disney parks around the world, but it elaborates on the Fantasy Gardens concept that can be found – albeit in much smaller form – in Hong Kong Disneyland's Fantasyland.

Adventure Isle, curiously placed to the East of the park, is Shanghai Disneyland's version of the classic Adventureland, or as Schoolfield puts it, it "expanded the narrative scope of Adventureland's tried-and-true concept" (2016: 44). It does follow a central storyline in its theming, surrounding the fictional Oceanic Arbori tribe. The land houses two headliner attractions, Soaring over the Horizon, a flight simulator originally built for the Disney's California Adventure and Epcot theme parks, which takes passengers on a trip around the world, and Roaring Rapids, a water raft ride rethemed from a similar attraction found also in California Adventure, as well as Animal Kingdom in Florida. The Arbori storyline connects both rides, and thus Soaring over the Horizon has a different theme than its two sister attractions. The backstory as told in the ride's preshow is a mythical flight visitors take from the tribe's "celestial observatory – said to be an enchanted portal connecting the physical and mystical worlds" (Anon. "Soarin Over the Horizon" n.d.: n.pag.). Here, "shamans channel the spirit of the condor to help adventurers realize one of mankind's most ancient and elusive dreams: to soar like a bird," so the description on Shanghai Disneyland's official website (Anon. "Soarin Over the Horizon" n.d.: n.pag.). On Roaring Rapids, the ride's climax takes place in a cave where the riders are confronted with the Q'aráq, a crocodile-like creature, one of the Arbori's legends. The Arbori storyline extends to a regular show where

actors dressed as members of the tribe sing songs in their own (fictional) language about these legends.

Another original attraction in Adventure Isle is Camp Discovery, a rope course that thematically expands on the Arbori backstory, and adds a familiar element of the classic Adventurelands: the idea of friendly colonialism.

> For millennia, the Arbori people have called this lush and beautiful island their home—living in harmony with their natural world. When, in 1935, an expedition of the League of Adventurers was blown off course and discovered Adventure Isle, the peaceful Arbori welcomed them. It turns out the tribe was just as curious about this intrepid band of scientists as the explorers were about the Arboris' customs, artifacts and natural surroundings. With so many natural and man-made marvels to be found on this remote tropical island, the League welcomes inquisitive explorers like you to help them with their ongoing investigations. (Anon. "Camp Discovery" n.d.: n.pag.)

By casting the theme park visitor as an explorer into this foreign territory of a native tribe, the attraction follows in the footsteps of the problematic undercurrents that the original Jungle Cruise was built on, with its ties to British colonial rule in the 1930s. The description that suggests a peaceful coexistence and mutual curiosity has a definite tinge of *National Geographic*'s armchair colonialism, even if it refers to a fictional tribe. The reference to a "League of Adventurers" seems to be a potential tie-in with the aforementioned S.E.A. backstory that also connects Mystic Manor in Hong Kong with attractions at Tokyo Disney Sea and that is similarly steeped in colonial imagery. Thankfully, the attraction itself does not elaborate too much on these ideals, but is in fact a creatively themed rope course that provides a level of interactivity on par with the classic Disneyland staple Tom Sawyer Island, but this time is also appealing to adults.

The depth of theming here is nevertheless striking, although somewhat broken by other more familiar Disney additions, such as a meet and greet location where guests can meet characters from *The Lion King* (1994) and *The Jungle Book* (1967), as well as a show building housing the acrobatic musical show "Tarzan: Call of the Jungle." These attractions promote Disney's animated films in true synergy. The rest of the lands' offerings contain both "best of" headliner attractions from other Disney parks and unique ones – and none of them found in Hong Kong Disneyland. It does offer the perfect blend of the two general design agendas at work in Shanghai Disneyland: Disney synergy and brand promotion, while providing complementary offerings to Hong Kong Disneyland.

Treasure Cove and Adventure Isle are situated around the same lake, similar to the Rivers of America in Frontierland – you can even traverse them via the

Explorer Canoes. Treasure Cove is solely based on the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movie franchise and has similarly coherent storytelling and immersive design as Adventure Isle. The popular films, based on the classic Disneyland attraction, have also been very successful in China. Imagineers that had been working on the land's headliner attraction, Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Sunken Treasure, were rather surprised by just how familiar especially young Chinese actually were with the films – a fact that as it turned out was mostly credited to the pervasiveness of pirated content in China (Sklar et al. 2016). As discussed in the context of Hong Kong Disneyland, pirated movies and other merchandise play a huge role in promoting brands in the country because of its strict government media censorship. As the billion-dollar franchise continues to grow (a fifth film was released in May 2017, and another one is in the works), it makes sense for Disney to build on its already existing popularity in China.

Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Sunken Treasure, the headliner ride of this land, is a reverse remediation (Grusin and Bolter 2000) of the original Pirates ride. While the movies were based on the original ride, this ride is directly based on the movies. It is still a boat ride, yet its technology is at the height of theme park ride design: it mixes sets, props, audio-animatronics, 3D film and music in seamless fashion, allowing for an incredibly immersive experience. The riders are taken through several scenes inspired by the movies and follow protagonist Jack Sparrow battle Davy Jones both on and under the sea.

Overall, I agree with Younger's assessment that Treasure Cove stands in for Frontierland and its original extension, New Orleans Square, in many ways: "Reapplying successful templates from the past fifty years, shadows of Disneyland's experientially rich New Orleans Square can be seen reinvented in the twisting streets of Treasure Cove's Voodoo Alley and Barbossa's Bounty Restaurant" (Younger 2016a: 67). Frontierland, as argued above, was dropped because of its inherent American ideology, and also "because of the decreased prevalence of westerns in cinema and the subsequent unfamiliarity Asian guest have with the theme" (Younger 2016a: 67). As Hong Kong Disneyland does not have any pirate themed attractions at all (the original Pirates ride was likely not considered because of its high cost), yet, as Western theming was introduced in 2008 with the opening of Grizzly Gulch, Treasure Cove is a fitting replacement. Besides the headliner, the only other attractions here are Siren's Revenge, a walkthrough attraction on an anchored pirate ship, and Shipwreck Shore, an interactive water play area for children, as well as a meet and greet with Jack Sparrow, the movies' main protagonist. The offerings are rounded out with an original stunt show surrounding the character called Eye of the Storm: Captain Jack's Stunt Spectacular.

Fantasyland, then, is the land in the Shanghai park that is closest to its original roots. It features the usual remediated (dark) rides in their most advanced form,

such as Peter Pan's Flight or the Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh, but also newer attractions cloned from other parks, such as the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train roller coaster that opened in Florida's Magic Kingdom in 2012.

Original to Shanghai is its castle that for the first time, is also home to several attractions. It is also not dedicated to a specific princess, but to the overarching Disney Princess franchise, encompassing all Disney princesses from Snow White to Rapunzel. The Enchanted Storybook Castle, as it is called, is significantly bigger than the other Disneyland icons and houses a princess meet and greet, a restaurant, as well as an interactive walkthrough attraction called Once Upon a Time Adventure that retells the Disney classic Snow White – one of the only original films shown in China at the time of its release, before Disney's movies had been banned under Mao's rule (Altehenger 2013: 59). Voyage to the Crystal Grotto, a boat ride also unique to Shanghai takes guests along sophisticated models of several Disney animated films (such as *The Little Mermaid* 1989 or *Aladdin* 1992) and is reminiscent of the classic Disneyland attraction Storybook Land Canal Boats, but serves as an introduction to many movies. It ends with a scene inside the Castle.

The Castle's courtyard is home to the Alice in Wonderland Maze, yet while its counterpart in Disneyland Paris was themed after Disney's animated version of the film, this one is designed in the style of the Tim Burton–directed live action films (from 2010 and 2016) that were very popular in China. Fantasyland is also home to a stage show showcasing the music from the massive success *Frozen* (2013), which was also shown in several other Disney theme parks and equally found a huge Chinese audience. Overall, Fantasyland thus showcases a broad spectrum of Disney's animated creations, and serves as a direct counterpart to the characters represented on Mickey Avenue.

In 2018, Toy Story Land was opened adjacent to Fantasyland, home to more rides mainly appealing to children. Notably, it features attractions not found in Hong Kong Disneyland's take on the land, such as the Slinky Dog Spin coaster, again providing complimentary offerings to the other Chinese park.

"No land within Shanghai Disneyland is more dramatically reimagined from previous versions than Tomorrowland," claims Imagineer Scot Drake, the executive creative director of the land (Schoolfield 2016: 48). While the land has indeed been redesigned – and in a curious twist, is located on the left-hand, or western side of the park, while Adventure Isle and Treasure Cover are on the right – the reimagining is not as drastic as it sounds, especially not when compared to the other thematic changes in the park. The land's headliner attraction is no longer Space Mountain, but the TRON Lightcycle Power Run roller coaster. Situated under a massive geodesic canopy that is lit up at night in changing colors, it is also one of the park's weenies. *TRON* is a movie franchise originally based on a cult film from 1982 that Disney rebooted with *TRON:Legacy* in 2010, but the

sequel was a relative flop, which resulted in the cancellation of a planned third installment. However, because Imagineering had developed a new motorcycle-type roller coaster vehicle, the IP was chosen despite the flop, as the cycles resembled the so-called "lightcycles" featured in the films. As Bob Iger put it: "It's not just about bringing the best [intellectual property] here, it's about building the best experiences" (quoted in Fritz 2016: n.pag.). However, it is likely that Disney had in fact banked on the film being a success and had originally chosen the attraction based on this hope – and a retheme would have been either too expensive or thematically difficult with such a huge headliner attraction.

Yet, the ride works on its own and will also be found in Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom in the near future. Other attractions in the land are an overhauled version of Buzz Lightyear's AstroBlasters, the interactive show Stitch Encounter (based on *Lilo & Stitch* 2002), a Jet Packs spinner ride (a version of the Orbitron found in other Tomorrowlands), and Star Wars Launch Bay, a meet and greet/ exhibit hybrid like Marvel Universe.

While largely IP-based, as all Tomorrowlands now are, the land is, according to Scot Drake, "[e]voking a blend of nature and technology, […] [and] is meant for guests to be 'inspired to think about a hopeful future'" (quoted in Schoolfield 2016: 48). Interestingly, given Disney's history with World's Fairs, its overall design is inspired by "real-world architectural futurism present in contemporary World's Fairs, particularly the 2010 Shanghai World Expo which would have inspired project stakeholders when the park's design began" (Younger 2016a: 67). Indeed, the land looks contemporary cosmopolitan; it has an urban feel to it – a curious choice to present a theme that is de facto based on their everyday surroundings to a local audience. There seems not much utopian or "hopeful" about the design, and one of the once central features of Tomorrowland, utopian ideas about urban transportation and living is also absent – after all, "who needs a monorail when Shanghai itself has a real maglev train, as well as a regular bullet train?" (Makinen 2016: C5).

Still struggling with evoking a truly positive outlook on the future in our current times, the land seems largely uninspiring – leaving the question why Imagineering did not instead envision a complete retheme such as Discoveryland in Disneyland Paris? My theory is that in fact, the whole land was not so much based on Shanghai World Expo or other contemporary real-world urbanities, but on another IP: the Disney film *Tomorrowland* from 2015. The film was first announced in 2011, when Shanghai Disneyland was still in its design phase, and was directed by Brad Bird, who also wrote the screenplay with Damon Lindelof, and starred George Clooney, Hugh Laurie, and Britt Robertson. It is another curious case of remediation – the movie is partly set at the 1964/65 New York World's Fair, that Disney developed many attractions for, among them It's A Small World, which

is also featured in a key scene. The title-giving Tomorrowland is a place set in another dimension, and is largely inspired by Walt Disney's original ideas for EPCOT (see Chapter 2 of this book), as well as Disneylands' Tomorrowlands. It is home to a group of the world's smartest inventors and scientists. The movie features a scene in which the young protagonist Frank Walker (Thomas Robinson, played by George Clooney as a grown-up) presents a prototype jet pack to the group of scientists at the New York World's Fair. Both this scene in the movie, and the Shanghai park's jet pack attraction are paying homage to the retro-futurist Disney film *The Rocketeer* (1991) – yet this film is relatively obscure and was never even released in China, so why would it be used in the theme park, if not for its connection to *Tomorrowland*?

The *Tomorrowland* movie is deeply tied-in with Disney theme park lore and its visions for the future; its depiction of the Tomorrowland realm contains nods to Space Mountain and other Tomorrowland and Epcot attractions, and the song "It's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow" from Carousel of Progress is featured in one of the film's scenes set at the World's Fair. The architectural style at Shanghai's Tomorrowland resembles the one depicted in the movie, a cosmopolitan high-tech cityscape. The film promotes a utilitarian idea of how to change the future for the better, and would have been a perfect way of introducing a Chinese audience to the idea of Tomorrowland before the park opened. Yet, it flopped: in the United States, it opened to a slow $41 million weekend (the film had cost $190 million), and Disney then had high hopes it would recoup much of its money in the Chinese market, as the Chinese box office has proven to be a safety net for many Hollywood blockbusters (Cain 2015: n.pag.). Yet, it also did not do well there (Cunningham 2015: n.pag.), and so it seems likely Disney scrapped all direct references to the film from its theme park. As it remains, Shanghai Disneyland's Tomorrowland again proves to be the problem child, lacking more coherent theming, and while TRON: Lightcycle Power Run is a state-of-the-art ride, the land proves hardly more than another hold-all for sci-fi–related IP-based attractions.

The Question of Glocalization

The central question regarding Shanghai Disneyland's design by media outlets however still remained whether it was Chinese "enough" or "too" American; Disney's own tagline "Authentically Disney, Distinctly Chinese" that Iger repeated mantra-like in interviews certainly invited such discussion. Iger was careful to stress that Disney and their employees "are invited guests in China, it's a privilege for us to be here, so we need to show great respect for the people and the culture. […] That was the foundation for everything that we did, and it became the mantra of everyone involved. We didn't just build Disneyland in China – we built China's

Disneyland" (Schoolfield 2016: 38). Certainly, after the difficult negotiations with the PRC government, caution was a wise choice; the same arrogance that Disney executives had shown when Euro Disney was built would not have served them well here. Especially, given that in media reports on Shanghai Disneyland, journalists still tend to refer to Euro Disney's financial failure almost 25 years later. China's government has recently also gotten "more assertive and nationalistic," (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.) according to an article in the *New York Times*, that also reports that

> Shanghai Disneyland is triggering concerns about American cultural imperialism. At a gathering of China's political leaders in Beijing in March [2016], an official called for limiting Disney's expansion and growth. "I suggest we shouldn't allow too many Disneyland theme park to be built in China," said Li Xiusong, the deputy head of culture in the eastern Anhui Province. "If children follow Western culture when they are little, they will end up liking Western culture when they grow up and be uninterested in Chinese culture" (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.)

Julie Makinen, writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, equally argues that

> Mainland China has long been seen as a different market – less Westernized, and perhaps more sensitive to matters of cultural imperialism. Even in recent years, the Communist Party authorities have stressed the need to protect "traditional Chinese culture" amid the rising popularity of Western movies, TV shows, music and clothing. (2016: C5)

Yet while these concerns are certainly troubling the nation's government and its members of the Communist Party, they seem not to affect Shanghai Disneyland's visitor base. In fact, when a group of young Shanghai locals were questioned about what they expected or wanted from the park, they did "not want Shanghai Disneyland to be too localized but rather want it to retain its more original American flavor," favoring for example American food offerings over Chinese and other Asian dishes, and were excited about Disney character merchandise being sold (Quiting et al. 2013: 6). They specifically cared about Disney as a brand, but were also thrilled to be experiencing American culture – proving again that ultimately, Disney and America are intertwined in people's minds.

Disney thus did well by applying their usual glocalization efforts, in this case possibly even too well – it is unclear whether a Frontierland or Main Street, U.S.A., would have really failed to resonate or even caused outrage over cultural imperialism. Yet the fact that Disney worked so closely with Chinese government officials

and they also reviewed the design process makes it likely that this was at least one of the reasons. The park's design is largely unique, and so are at least a few of the attractions (for now), but the wish to differentiate from Hong Kong, as argued, did play a big role in this. Disney's Imagineers and marketing researchers made several research trips to China "to look at architecture, visited Chinese schools and homes, and conducted online and in-person focus groups to test ideas" (Makinen 2015b: C3), and "[t]he company [also] hired Chinese architects and designers and sent teams around China researching ways to incorporate Chinese cultural elements" (Martin and Makinen 2016: A4), yet these, as argued above, still ended up being few and far in between. The fact that Disney developed ride scripts in Mandarin first with the help of local Imagineers (Sklar et al. 2016), as English is not widely spoken in Mainland China, is one of the only true concessions to local audiences – again, actual glocalization was mostly done on operational levels, such as food and beverage or crowd control. "Approximately 70 percent of Shanghai Disneyland's cuisine is Chinese, with 20 percent Asian and 10 percent western. With 95 percent of visitors expected to be Chinese, [Paul] Chandler [director of food and beverage] says 'we wanted to bring food into the park that resonates with our guests'" (quoted in Schoolfield 2016: 52).

Ironically, however, the food that proved most popular turned out to be American snacks, such as turkey legs or corn dogs – reflecting the above-mentioned survey and surprising Disney executives, including Iger, who claimed: "That's something you can't possible know going in" (quoted in Fritz 2016: n.pag.). With the amount of market research done ahead of time, this is surprising – one could speculate that advisement by the Chinese government possibly did not reflect public opinion on the matter. In an article for The Los Angeles Times, local correspondent Julie Makinen also reported that several

> Chinese guests who visited the park […] said they didn't expect – or want – too many Chinese elements. "We know it's an American theme park, so we don't expect to experience much that's Chinese here. If we want a Chinese experience, we won't come to Disney," said Sun Lei, 33 […]. "For those of us who have never been to the United States, this is our chance to have a taste of American culture." (2016: C5)

Again, the idea of experiencing America in Shanghai Disneyland seems prevalent at least among younger demographics, reminiscent of Tokyo Disneyland's opening in 1983.

So, while Disney continues to stick to the tagline of "Authentically Disney, Distinctly Chinese," and wants to make "sure that the people who visit this park feel that it's theirs" (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.), the end product is indeed not

a Chinese Disneyland, but "a Disney park with Chinese elements here and there," as Stefan Zwanzger, a German expat and theme park expert, has put it (quoted in Makinen 2016: C5). Disney has applied their usual glocalization principles to the park's operations – when it comes to food, possibly even too strictly. Laura MacDonald has recently argued that glocalization principles also extend to the live performances in the park, as well as the musical theater performances in Disneytown (2019: 138–43). Yet the changes in the park's design remain not so much a question of Americanization or lack thereof, but concern mostly Disney's wish to introduce China to their brands and characters. Shanghai Disneyland is certainly "authentically Disney" – whether it's "distinctly Chinese" is in fact largely irrelevant to its success.

The Park's Success and Controversies

At the time of writing, Shanghai Disneyland can be called a success. After the end of its first fiscal year in June 2017, the resort was already close to breaking even, in spite of its massive $5.5 billion price point, and had more than 11 million visitors, meeting its set goal (Chang 2017: n.pag.). The park had proven popular even before its opening – when the official website first went live in March 2016, it registered 5 million hits in less than half an hour, and tickets for the opening days and the first two week sold out almost instantly (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.). I personally can attest to this fact, as I was responsible for one of the 5 million hits in order to book my research trip for September 2016, and other international Disney fans who had made the trip to the opening also reviewed it favorably (e.g. Bricker 2016: n.pag.). Before the park was accessible to the public, in May 2016, more than 100,000 locals took the metro to the newly opened station at the resort to visit Disneytown, although none of the stores or restaurants had been open yet (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.).

Shanghai Disneyland was the seventh most visited theme park in the world after its first-year attendance, ahead of Hong Kong Disneyland and Disneyland Paris, but behind the Magic Kingdom in Florida, the original Disneyland in Anaheim and Tokyo Disneyland; in China, it is the most visited theme park (Chang et al. 2017: n.pag.). Shanghai Disneyland seems to resonate with the Chinese audience, as David Swanson, writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, observes:

> The Chinese enter the park wide-eyed, gleeful […]. At the revamped version of Soaring, they swing their legs and squeal over the sweep of visuals, cheering when the camera lands at the Great Wall. At the "Frozen" stage show they sing along at the top of their lungs in a jam-packed theater. (Swanson 2016: L4)

During my own visit, I witnessed similar things – people seemed enthusiastic about the park. Just like Swanson (2016: L4), I had read about possible disturbances

ahead of my visit, reports of vandalism in Disneytown before park opening in May 2016 (Barboza and Barnes 2016: n.pag.) and also in the park after open- ing (Shanghaiist 2016: n.pag.), that even prompted a release of etiquette guides (Lindner 2016: n.pag.). The claims sounded similar to those made about Mainland Chinese visitors in Hong Kong Disneyland, with people jumping lines, being rude, or letting small children urinate in public – yet the reports about this behavior (at least in English) largely came from the news blog *Shanghaiist.com*, that is mostly read and written by Shanghai urbanites and expats. The comment sections of the articles reporting of these incidents were full of users blaming who they referred to as "Nongs" – a derogatory slur for Mainland Chinese from rural areas, which comes from the Chinese word "nongmin" (farmer), usually describing "Chinese white trash." Comments included such statements as "Honestly […] why is this a shock? It was guaranteed that the park was going to be hit by Hurricane Nong, and it happened" on an article describing the "uncivilized behavior" of visitors to Disneytown (Shanghaiist 2016: n.pag.), or regarding the released etiquette guide: "A paper guide is totally useless […] They don't know how to read! But it will be very useful as a personal fan, before people throw it on the road/gardens! Ahaha!" (Lindner 2016: n.pag.). The racist and classist bias here is strongly reminiscent of the attitude of many Hong Kongers toward Mainland Chinese that view them- selves as culturally superior, and is apparently also common among many Chinese that live in bigger cities such as Shanghai.

Yet in reality, much like in Hong Kong Disneyland, such incidents were few and far in between after Shanghai Disneyland had opened. Although Disney hired additional security to handle the crowds better, most reviews, even of the crowded opening days, reported few problems (Bricker 2016). During my own visit, I only witnessed attempts to skip queues on two occasions, there were no cases of public urination inside the park, and no rude behavior among guests, although I often encountered long lines at the attractions, even though I was visiting during an official off-season period during the week in early September 2016. Littering did also not seem to be more of a problem than in other Disney parks I had visited. I have also experienced rude guest behavior, such as trying to push ahead of others in every Disney theme park around the world I can attest to the fact that this is not a Chinese-specific problem. Swanson also backs up the fact that for the most part, visitors followed the rules: "No smoking rules were observed, selfie sticks were tucked away, spitting was tamed and – considering the take-no-prisoners etiquette I've witnessed on Shanghai's Metro – line-jumping was nonexistent" (Swanson 2016: L4). By contrast, MacDonald, who has provided the so far only other academic account of Shanghai Disneyland writes that "veteran park goers still report cutting in and pushing in lines for attractions at the park, and express shock over spitting, smoking, littering, and general disobedience of boundaries

and rules set by Disney" (2019: 136). However, she also notes that especially public comments from western fans on this "may be repeating orientalist attitudes about Western visitors' role in Asia" (2019: 136) and thus further complicate these narratives.

Shanghai Disneyland's Cast Members also contributed to keeping up the park's etiquette. The service standard is high in the park (and at the resort's hotels), and Disney seems to have had no issue training workers and implementing their strict rules here; in fact, the service culture was reminiscent of Tokyo Disneyland that is widely regarded as having even higher standards as the American parks. It remains to be seen if there will be any more issues in the future.

For now, the only real problem the park seems to have[2] – besides long lines on busy days, which are to be expected – is high prices, especially for food and merchandise, hampering secondary spending, and hurting its public image. Tickets are priced seasonally, with an adult one-day ticket costing 499 CNY (about $77) on a high season day or on weekends, and 370 CNY ($55) on an off-season day in 2016 – this made them more expensive than both Hong Kong and TDL on peak days, which is a clear sign for China's strong economic power (Yoshii 2016: 64). To not lose momentum in slower seasons, and to build a local base of repeat visitors, the park has however also started selling season passes (Harashima 2016: n.pag.).

Chinese visitors have not complained much about ticket costs, but about those of food and merchandise. Shaun Rein, founder and managing director of China Market Research Group, says that "Chinese consumers tend to hesitate on these types of costs, […] adding, 'I would actually raise ticket prices and lower prices for food'" (Harashima 2016: n.pag.). Bob Iger has similarly admitted that while park attendance is even higher than expected, as well as "extremely high" occupancy rates at the hotels, the food and beverage and merchandising divisions have "faced some challenges" (Chang et al. 2017: n.pag.). This has also started to affect the park's public image, as "[o]n Weibo, China's answer to Twitter, a topic titled 'Shanghai Disney is too expensive' received 9 million clicks and more than 9,000 comments" in early May 2016 (Yang and Liu 2016: C1). An article headlined "The first group of Shanghai Disneyland visitors have wept to the point of fainting inside the park, because it's too expensive" meanwhile went viral on We-Chat, a Chinese messaging platform (Yang and Liu 2016: C1). Local correspondents for

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[2] One article from Japanese news website Nikkei.com claims that service is bad (after questioning 20 visitors of which one complained about the service), but it also argues that the hype is already dying down because in early December, in frigid temperatures and in off-season, there were few visitors at the park. I am not sure about the author's motivations here, but the statements seem biased toward trying to create bad publicity for the theme park; it does not correspond with any of my other research (Harashima 2016: n.pag.).

the Los Angeles Times have equally reported on the prohibitively high prices for food, especially when compared to local food prices within Shanghai (Yang and Liu 2016: C1; C4). Disney has reacted to this by "offering 100-yuan gift certificates, usable at other restaurants and other facilities inside the park, to get potential customers in the door" (Harashima 2016: n.pag.).

From an observer's perspective, the complaints are not too surprising. Ticket prices are usually easy enough to justify by the high quality of the park's attractions and shows, as well as its massive size. The extremely high hotel occupancy is for now also easy enough to explain – there simply were no third-party contenders (yet). When I personally tried to make hotel reservations for my stay, I could not find any practical alternatives to staying in one of the Disney resort hotels, the only option was staying significantly farther away in Shanghai's city center and take the metro every day, and Shanghai is generally not known for its affordable accommodations. While the Disney hotels remain expensive for many Chinese visitors, their rates are comparatively cheap to those in other Disney resorts around the world, especially those of the Toy Story Hotel. Merchandise pricing however is on par with other Disney resorts around the world, but is understandably cost prohibitive for many Chinese visitors, as are food and beverages – as many are used to bringing their own packaged foods (and presumably even more do so now that they have been "warned" up front of the high prices), there is no reason to spend so much extra money. While the food offerings in the park are of good and occasionally even high quality, they are not much different from most of the food that can be found locally at a much cheaper price (Yang and Liu 2016: C1; C4). This argument is backed by fact that western food, especially characteristically American snacks such as corn dogs or turkey legs, is so popular. These snacks are a novelty to most visitors and also moderately priced. It remains to be seen if Disney will indeed lower food and merchandise prices, or at least offer discounts more regularly to counteract this problem.

Coming Full Circle: Reasons for Shanghai Disneyland's Success

The reasons for Shanghai Disneyland's success are, as in the other parks, timing, and a successful targeting of the middle to upper class. Even though Disney had actively tried to open a park in Mainland China since the late 1990s, I would argue that having to wait this long actually helped them immensely. When they first discussed a Chinese theme park in 1987, Disney's executive John C. Meyers had pointed out in an article in the *Los Angeles Times* that "[t]he per capita income in China is about $700 annually […]. Consequently, a Disney park […] 'would somehow have to be subsidized by the government'" (Galavante 1987: 2). Yet much has changed since then, and now a steadily growing part of China's population is financially stable enough to afford a visit to the expensive theme parks,

and a cultural need to strive for westernized entertainment makes them popular destinations. Hong Kong Disneyland had mostly struggled because it was an inferior product upon opening, but it also suffered financially from a lack of secondary spending and short-time visits from the Chinese Mainlanders that still make up almost half of their visitors. But since the late 1990s, and even in the eleven years between the opening of the Hong Kong and Shanghai parks, a lot has changed in China. While it has been a burgeoning market for a while now, and Disney was right to try to enter it early, the middle-class demographic that is so important for the success of any Disneyland has truly been booming in the last few years. Many Mainlanders now are

> "middle-class" (*zhongchan*) or "leisure-class" (*xiaofei jiecheng*) consumers whose income level permits them to pursue "leisure" (*xiuxian*) activities […] distinguishing them from the rest of mass consumers (*gongxin jiecheng*) who calculate, on a daily basis, to make ends meet. (Ren 2007: 102)

The timing truly could not have been better, given that

> Disney's target is the country's upper middle class, which is forecast to double to 100 million by 2020, according to the Boston Consulting Group. The Chinese tourism industry represents $610 billion in spending in China and abroad, and the Chinese government predicts that it also will double by 2020. (Martin and Makinen 2016: A1)

So far, half the visitors to Shanghai Disneyland have been locals, and the other half have traveled from other big Chinese cities to the resort (Chang et al. 2017: n.pag.). This is unsurprising given that China has a massive economic disparity between urban and rural areas (Sharon 2016: 1). Further, Shanghai itself is part of the Yangtze-River Delta, that is one of the most populous (125 million people live there) and affluent regions in the country (Aaen and Li 2016: 70). High-speed rail systems are continuing to expand (Aaen and Li 2016: 70), and "domestic tourism is growing rapidly. The Chinese are making more weekend trips to nearby cities by high-speed train. More people have cars and are driving to scenic areas and national parks. […] [T]he Chinese are interested in multi-day stays" (Aaen and Li 2016: 71). Add to this that there are currently around 60 theme parks under construction or being planned in China (Martin and Makinen 2016: A1; A4), and it is abundantly clear just how much the market will continue to grow in the coming years. Overall, Disney "has identified an 'income-qualified audience' within a three-and-a-half-hour travel radius of more than 300 million people. 'It would be as though the whole population of the US could afford a ticket to Orlando and could get there

within three-and-a-half hours,'" according to Bob Iger (quoted in Terry 2016: 7). The numbers are truly mind-boggling, and since China has relaxed its one-child policy (Terry 2016: 7; Palmeri 2015: n.pag.), there is also an even bigger group of potential customers for the theme park, not to mention the other Disney products the theme park is meant to promote. While China's economic growth has been slowing down in the last few years, this is still no concern, as the country's economy is now aiming to transition from a manufacturing to a service economy, and because of the new leisure class, more money is spent on entertainment, such as movies and theme parks, or tourism in general. As Iger put it: "You're entering a market that's huge. No matter what's said about growth rates slowing, this is still a developing market. So that means the future is brighter than the present or past" (quoted in Fritz 2016: n.pag.). Jeffrey Towson, a professor of investment at Peking University, agrees: "Usually in emerging markets, you never quite know if the demand is there before you start selling, but this [Shanghai Disneyland] is a rare exception to that rule – the demand is so abundantly clear" (quoted in Makinen 2015a: C4).

Additionally, Shanghai Disneyland is a symbol of modernity for many Chinese, so the desire to visit will likely not die down anytime soon. "Given the company's Cold War legacies," it is unsurprising that when Disney made forays into China for the first time, "international media quickly turned reports of Disney's business in the PRC into a case study for the alleged clash of Chinese communism and US capitalism," so historian Jennifer Alteheger (2013: 63). Yet in this context, there seems to be less of a clash, and more of a natural symbiosis – at some point US capitalism apparently turned from a bogeyman to a paragon for many Chinese. Consumption is directly connected to an idea of modernity, as Anthony Fung argues:

> Chinese youth are subject to an identity in progress of aspiring to become global, resisting ideas of previous generations, and becoming middle-class. [...] New consumption patterns have cropped up in Chinese society – consumption has become like an ideology that represents a new, liberal generation against the social and economic restrictions of the previous Maoist generation. The rise of a middle-class culture and consumption in China, therefore, inevitably leads to the formation of an ambivalent cultural positivity that alternates between embracing elitist, middle-class culture to criticizing the idealization of a "well-off society." Ironically, Chinese authorities have shown their implicit approval of using western cultural imports [...] to encourage idealizing well-off societies, middle-class culture, and material consumption. (2013: 6)

Shanghai Disneyland, as such a western cultural import, is a symbol for having reached this goal of modernity. According to Rosie Zhang, a Shanghai resident interviewed by the *Orange County Register*: "Chinese people are proud to have

Disneyland built on our soil […]. Chinese people have worked very hard for the past two decades to catch up with the western world. […] It is our moment to make our dreams come true" (quoted in Sharon 2016: 10). Because visiting the theme park is thus seen as an act of social climbing, of proving one's status, many Chinese that can barely afford it have also shown great interest in it – in fact, even more than those members of the middle class that actually have the funds to do so, as a survey has found (Yang and Liu 2016: C4). As Hu Xingdou, a professor of economics and China issues at the Beijing Institute of Technology has somewhat drastically put it:

> People with lower income regard going to Shanghai Disneyland as a dream, so they will seize the opportunity to go the fairy-tale-and American-styled theme park at their doorstep. […] "Disneyland is a symbol of luxury and creativity, a symbol of American culture, which is what the poorer die for." (quoted in Yang and Liu 2016: C4)

The park thus also receives many visitors with lower incomes, who usually travel via packaged bus tours (similar to Hong Kong Disneyland) to make it more affordable. Swanson has also described this demographic in his trip report (Swanson 2016: L4). Learning from Hong Kong, Disney has worked with local tour operators to benefit from these potential visitors (Du 2016: 234). And as its market grows, so will Shanghai Disneyland, that already broke ground on its first expansion in November 2016 (Smith 2016: n.pag.) and opened the resulting Toy Story Land in 2018. In late 2019, construction begun on its eighth themed land, based on *Zootopia* (2016), the world's first. For now, the future for the resort looks more than rosy.[3]

   With its newest theme park, it seems Disney has come full circle. Much like at the opening of the original Disneyland, Shanghai Disneyland has tuned in to the zeitgeist of a Chinese society driven by booming economy and strive for modernization; a culture shaped by a new middle class longing for leisure and escapism. Tokyo Disneyland became an overwhelming success because of similar circumstances, but it also banked on structural similarity to the original, whereas with Shanghai Disneyland, Imagineers truly reinvented the form. While this means that the Americanisms which defined the original Disneyland have vanished in favor of Disney's own brands, the resulting product remains inherently American in ideology. The success of Shanghai's park proves that it is the update Disneyland needed to stay relevant in contemporary times.

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[3] It remains to be seen if the park closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic in effect since late January 2020 and ongoing at the time of writing in April 2020, will have any impact on the park's success or its expansion. It for now seems likely that the resort will recoup and be among the first Disneylands to cautiously reopen.

7

Middle-Class Kingdoms: Then, Now, and Forever?

When Disneyland opened as the world's first theme park in 1955, it targeted a booming, overwhelmingly white, middle-class audience. It provided reassurance during the confusing times of the early Cold War by reveling in civil religion and patriotic spirit, nurturing the conservative values lived by the families in the newly-built suburbs. But it also reflected the paradoxes of the years: nostalgia for the past and hope for the future, foreignness and familiarity, rugged individualism, and national community. At a time when popular culture became more important than ever through the burgeoning medium of television and the commodification of consumer culture, Disneyland allowed visitors close encounters with baby boomers' heroes; whether it was Davy Crockett or Mickey Mouse. The genius of the place was that it appealed to both children and adults: Crockett and his home Frontierland stood for both the gun-slinging heroism children admired, and the continuing perpetuation of the frontier myth and American spirit important to grown-ups. Tomorrowland fostered kids' dreams of becoming an astronaut and traveling to the moon as much as it did their parents' dreams of shiny new cars and brand-named kitchen appliances. Fantasyland provided escapism for all, as did the exoticism of Adventureland, and the daily entrance and exit through Main Street, U.S.A. reassured every guest that the halcyon days of an America past could always be returned to. Disneyland delivered all of this in a package deal; a clean, safe, privately owned environment, a true "happiest place on Earth" – for those that could afford it.

Walt Disney, its creator, soon moved on to bigger things: In the late 1960s, he announced that he would build EPCOT, an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow – his effort to counteract the oft-cited "plight of the cities." The same suburban developments that had allowed for the prosperous middle-class lifestyle of many in the 1950s had left most downtowns struggling. Disney's plans were, however, aimed at the same demographic yet again. They also depended on the cooperation of other big American corporations, as he was building on the contacts he had made through sponsorship deals at Disneyland. His visions emerge in a larger historical context of urban city planning and futures research in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but as many of the utopian notions of these

years, they never materialized. Disney died in 1967, and without his leadership, the plans for EPCOT fell victim to the malaise of the 1970s. President Richard Nixon proclaimed "I am not a crook!" during a televised press conference at Walt Disney World's Contemporary Resort in 1973, foreshadowing the disillusionment that would soon grip the age. The Magic Kingdom theme park, the East Coast version of Disneyland and the surrounding "vacation kingdom" that Disney had originally only envisioned as a source of income for his utopian plans, however, thrived. Disneyland's original baby-boomer audience was growing up and had become accustomed to their yearly vacations, domestic or abroad. Despite economic woes, they continued to travel. EPCOT turned into Epcot Center, and instead of affecting change in dire times, much like the rest of Walt Disney World, it provided mere escapism from them.

The only part of Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom that provided a truly new experience to guests familiar with Disneyland was Liberty Square. The small "land" was themed to the American Revolutionary Era and filled a need for sites that dealt with the American past in an increasingly commodified, simplistic way. This so-called heritage tourism emerged during the year of the United States' Bicentennial celebration in 1976, and grew in popularity over the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1993, the Walt Disney Corporation, which had transitioned from a family business into an international conglomerate since then, decided to bank on this phenomenon when it announced Disney's America, a theme park dealing solely with American history. Yet the venture became caught up in the maelstrom of the (first) Culture Wars that were raging in the United States at the time (which I have written about elsewhere, see Mittermeier 2016), and instead, Disney continued the exoticized portrayal of other continents in its parks, also shifting more toward foregrounding their own brand(s) and characters depicting completely fictional worlds.

The popularity of these characters had meanwhile grown immensely outside of the United States, and Disney had begun to build on this – literally. In 1983, the company opened Tokyo Disneyland as a licensing deal with the Japanese Oriental Land Co. Tokyo Disneyland provided an American experience for a Japanese audience at a time in their national history that bore marked resemblance to the United States' own postwar years. In early 1980s Japan, the economy was booming, the middle class was steadily growing, and many now had more time and money than ever for leisure activities. Pop culture gained new significance as well, particularly for the demographic of affluent young women that formed the *kawaii*-subculture. Tokyo Disneyland proved to be the perfect setting for their fantasies of a cute, fairy-tale like world in which nobody ever had to grow up; a foil for a Japanese society defined by strict mores. Often analyzed as a typical example for Japanese reappropriation of other cultures, Tokyo Disneyland emerges as a case of glocalization, a successful localization of the global product that Disneyland was quickly becoming.

When Tokyo Disneyland proved an overwhelming success, the corporation, under its new CEO Michael Eisner, quickly moved to export their most popular theme park product to other countries, this time aiming for western Europe. Marne-la-Vallée just outside of Paris, France was chosen for its central location on the continent. Both the French government and the public were in favor of the project because it could potentially counteract the high unemployment and low tourism rates at the time. Yet Disney did not expect the overwhelming backlash their Euro Disney Resort received from the French elite and the local media on grounds of American cultural imperialism. Amidst a rekindling of anti-American sentiment in the country, and, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, an even stronger resurgence of nationalism, the French government also began to counteract anything that could even remotely be classified as undermining their national culture. They stipulated a Europeanized design for the park, and after opening, enforced French nomenclature and ride narrations.

Globalization had equally become a bogeyman in the thick of the Treaty of Maastricht's efforts toward establishing a European Union, and a momentarily positive European sentiment was vanishing – shedding additional negative light on the resort's branding as *Euro* Disney. Negative publicity, not just on design, but also concerning Disney's labor practices, mostly deterred locals from visiting the park after opening. Visitor numbers from other European countries, however, were high during the first few months. That is, until western Europe entered a crippling recession shortly thereafter. The resort soon faced severe financial struggles. Disney had miscalculated: while their Imagineers had successfully glocalized the design of the original Disneyland, the overarching concept for the park and its surrounding hotels as a full-fledged resort, a vacation destination, did not resonate with European audiences. Prices for the resort's hotels, especially during the financial crisis, were too high. This was largely Disney's own fault. Euro Disney's main problem was never, as so many have argued, that the French and other western Europeans were too sophisticated to enjoy commodified entertainment. Disney's marketing and design had simply failed to address the middle- and upper-class demographics necessary to sustain their resort financially. In Europe, theme parks were not destinations, but attractions. They were not specifically geared toward the middle-class, but mostly a lower-class entertainment, and many potential visitors at the time did not distinguish between actual theme parks and the more classic amusement parks. For the first time in the history of their theme parks, then, Disney had to rebrand (and refinance) one of their parks to save it from closure. In 1994, Disneyland Paris was born.

Disney's next international venture was a Chinese theme park. Yet after the company's movie division produced a film with a pro-Tibetan stance, the People's Republic of China canceled discussions, and plans for a Shanghai Disneyland were put on hold. Instead, Disney opened Hong Kong Disneyland as a joint venture with

the local government in 2005. Hong Kong's unique history played a central role in this venture, as the once British colony had only been recently handed over to China, and its government and media were pushing for the Disney theme park as a chance to strengthen the region's tourism and counter unemployment (much as had been the case in Paris). In Hong Kong, however, Disneyland was also perceived as a bulwark of modernity. Establishing the theme park became part of an effort to make Hong Kong a truly "cosmopolitan" city again, one that would be able to compete with the rapidly expanding cities on China's mainland. The Hong Kongers' identity was inextricably tied to rivalries with Chinese mainlanders, a conflict that was at its heart about class; it both pushed Hong Kong Disneyland's attendance and negatively impacted the park's image. Local pride was however hurt when it became apparent that Disney had short-changed the region's government with an inferior product: Hong Kong Disneyland was a comparatively small-park with few truly innovative changes in design, and glocalization was mostly felt on operational levels. The park's image and attendance improved when it received several additions, and when the economic situation both in Hong Kong and in Mainland China improved, leading to a growing middle class.

Hong Kong Disneyland had in many ways never been more than a warm-up act for Shanghai. Mainland China had increasingly opened up to the outside world since the 1990s, and had quickly turned into a massive potential market for Disney. The company's then-CEO Bob Iger resumed negotiations with Chinese government officials in 2008, and Shanghai Disneyland was formed as another joint venture, this time with the PRC. In stark contrast to Hong Kong Disneyland, Shanghai's park, opened in 2016, is massive in size. It is also the first Disneyland that strays significantly from the original 1950s template. From the original lands, only Fantasy- and Tomorrowland remain; Main Street, U.S.A. has turned into Mickey Avenue, now promoting Disney characters in lieu of American civil religion; Frontierland has vanished and been replaced with the *Pirates of the Caribbean*-themed Treasure Cove, Adventureland has morphed into Adventure Isle, and the park has received Chinese touches in form of the Gardens of Imagination. Shanghai Disneyland's design strategy is to provide a complimentary experience to Hong Kong Disneyland, but also, and most importantly, to sell Disney's brands and characters to the Chinese, who are only slowly being introduced to the company's oeuvre – although pirated material had made its way into the country despite its strict government regulations on foreign popular culture. Glocalization efforts are strong in the park; perhaps too strong given that the local audience seems to crave an American experience. Here, too, Disney, and in turn the United States (as they are still entwined in people's minds) are a sign of what is perceived as "modernity" reaching China, and being able to afford a visit to Disneyland is equated with social climbing. A growing number of Chinese now have the means to do so. The middle class here

is huge and growing. Shanghai Disneyland's first year has met financial and visitor predictions while exceeding expectations in regards to local enthusiasm. Disneyland, Walt Disney's original idea, has successfully changed with the times, and has adapted to cultures that could not be more different, but in many ways not more similar. With Shanghai Disneyland, it truly has come full circle.

As this book has shown, it is essential to analyze historical circumstances in order to fully understand theme parks. Not only is their design shaped by their immediate context, but so is their audience reception, and thus their ultimate success or failure. The six Disneylands around the world provide a rich case study on how cultures of production inevitably influence products of popular culture, yet such cultural historic treatments are still lacking, even for the much broader subfields of the study of pop culture, such as film and television studies. Historians still shy away from treating pop culture at all, if they do, they are most often concerned with depictions of the past and the complicated subject matter of authenticity – whether in films, video games, or theme parks. Yet to consider the history of these media in and of itself, or particularly the contexts they were born into and what consequences they hold for them, are still often completely overlooked. And yet, as this study has shown, this approach holds invaluable insights.

Theme parks have particularly rich histories to unearth, and in many ways, this book has only scratched the surface. Each one of the Disneylands would benefit from a comprehensive historical treatment individually, as would other theme parks. Even individual attractions have fascinating histories yet to be uncovered, and there are many aspects of the theme park experience that have only been mentioned in passing here – such as the parks' varied entertainment offerings, be it stage shows, parades, or character performers.

As theme parks grow ever more participatory, whether through fan interventions or because of interactive attractions, and even through transmedia narratives implanted by their designers, they also hold increasing relevance for the study in the context of such larger trends in tourism and fandom. While as mentioned in the introduction, this is also what most recent research into theme parks has focused on, the future of theme park design and audience engagement with these spaces points toward this growing exponentially more important field of study over the next few years. This is especially true as an inherently transnational medium, the theme park makes it possible to help us better understand fandom on a global scale – the concept of glocalization might eventually prove fruitful for fan studies as well.

As this book has argued, Disneyland has always targeted a middle- to upper-class demographic in its over 60-year long history, and this has not only shaped its design, but also its reception in different contexts. When the Walt Disney Company failed to attract this target audience, their theme parks failed, or at least struggled, as both Euro Disney and Hong Kong Disneyland have demonstrated. When they

succeeded to attract this demographic, so did the parks – the original Disneyland, Walt Disney World, Tokyo Disneyland, and Shanghai Disneyland all attest to this. The class factor has so far been largely ignored by academic studies of theme parks. This has often led to misunderstandings and much too culturally essentialist readings of these spaces. Future studies thus should always consider class and other economic factors, as these are inherent to any understanding of these spaces. After all, theme parks are quintessential products of consumer culture, leaving out questions of differences in income thus means automatically neglecting a crucial element. This holds true also for literally any other product of popular culture in late capitalism, yet class seemingly still takes a backseat to other factors such as gender and race in cultural studies – more intersectional approaches would surely be a worthwhile effort.

Theme parks are also in a perennial stage of change for both cultural, as well as economic reasons, which means they are often hard to grasp, but also that they will continue to provide food for thought and study. Disney is going to continue to expand and change their existing theme parks around the world, as well as build completely new ones. Where will they go next? Speculations suggests Mumbai or Moscow,[1] as the idea of a Disneyland in the former Soviet Union seems to hold particular fascination for many (Terry 2016: 7), given its Cold War roots. For now, Disney seems content with expanding their existing resorts.

As also detailed throughout this book, major expansions are currently underway or planned for all their theme parks around the world: Disneyland in Anaheim morphed into a proper resort rather than a destination when it added the Disney California Adventure theme park in 2001, and both parks have received steady expansions over the years. In 2019, with the opening of the *Star Wars*-themed Galaxy's Edge, even the original Disneyland has deviated from its original template. This addition is epitomic for developments in theme park design overall: the land is based on an intellectual property rather than a more generic, overarching theme, and takes great pains to immerse guests in this specific story world. Walt Disney World in Florida is similarly going through massive changes, with both Hollywood Studios and Epcot receiving a major overhaul as the resort nears its fiftieth anniversary in 2021. Disneyland Paris, which had fallen into a state of neglect, had received renovations ahead of its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2017, and as the Walt

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[1] More realistic seem Dubai or Latin America, as they are both burgeoning markets for theme parks, but given the relevance of a strong middle-class demographic for Disney, both seem unlikely at this time. Dubai likely lacks in stable local visitor base, and would mean dealing with extreme climate, while most Latin American countries are simply not economically stable enough at this time (although especially many Brazilians visit Walt Disney World). I would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof Dr. Ursula Prutsch for sharing her expertise on Disney and Latin America with me.

Disney Company has now refinanced it, is looking at equally drastic changes over the coming years. With a two-billion-dollar investment from its parent company, the second gate here, Walt Disney Studios, will double in size by 2025, with new lands and attractions slated to open in phases from 2021. Tokyo Disney Resort is equally ever-growing under the leadership of the Oriental Land Company, and the previously detailed expansions to the resorts in Hong Kong and Shanghai also prove that Disney itself is more than willing to continue to invest into its Asian markets. It remains to be seen if Covid19-related world-wide park closures in the first half of 2020 will delay or otherwise impact all of these efforts.

It hence seems unlikely that Disney parks will fade, as sociologist John van Maanen has speculated (1992: 30); at least not any time soon. Disneyland has been a staple of American popular culture for over 60 years now, and has equally established itself as part of the Japanese, European, and Chinese (both Hong Kong and Mainland) cultures. The Walt Disney Company itself is an ever-growing conglomerate, especially after the high-profile acquisitions of Marvel Entertainment in 2009, Lucasfilm in 2012, and 21st Century Fox in 2019. As discussed, both the *Marvel* and *Star Wars* story worlds have taken permanent residency in Disney's theme parks, and it only remains a question of time until some of the newer properties find their way into these spaces. Any scholars of popular culture thus can hardly ignore them any longer.

Since it first opened its gates, Disneyland has constantly evolved and adapted to changing times, cultures, and climates. The answer to the question whether it truly is the "happiest place on Earth," as the company likes to claim, however remains subjective – as much as it depends on personal circumstance whether or not one can, or wants to, afford its price tag. During its grand opening ceremony in 1955, Walt Disney remarked that Disneyland would "never be completed," that it would continue to grow, as long as there was "imagination left in the world." Imagination, yes, but there are other factors that are more important: people's longing for escapism, for entertainment, for leisure. For a place that reflects their culture, their values and the zeitgeist, as well as providing a much-needed break from it. It is because of this that Walt Disney's remarks proved true. Through it all, Disneyland has always been a place of becoming, but the one factor that never changed was that it was only ever open to a selected group of people. It was and is a kingdom where the middle class rules. It will continue to exist and grow, as long as there is demand for it. Whether in the place it began, or anywhere else in the world.

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A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks

Middle Class Kingdoms

When the first Disneyland opened its doors in 1955, it reinvented the American amusement park and transformed the travel, tourism and entertainment industries forever. Now part of a global vacation empire, the original Disney park in Anaheim, California, has been joined by massive complexes in Florida, Tokyo, Paris, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

Spanning six decades, three continents and five distinct cultures, Sabrina Mittermeier presents an interdisciplinary examination of the parks, situating them in their proper historical context and exploring the distinct cultural, social and economic landscapes that defined each one at the time of its construction. She then spotlights the central role of class in the subsequent success or failure of each venture.

The first comparative study of the Disney theme parks, *A Cultural History of the Disneyland Theme Parks* closes a significant gap in existing research and is an important new contribution to the field.

Sabrina Mittermeier is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in American cultural history at the University of Kassel, Germany and has previously worked as a research assistant in the DFG-funded (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) project "Time and Temporality in Theme Parks" and at the University of Augsburg. She is co-editor of *Fighting for the Future: Essays on Star Trek: Discovery* (2020). Her work has also appeared in the *Journal of Popular Culture*, *Queer Studies in Media and Popular Culture* and a number of other edited volumes.