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THE MAGIC OF THE MAGIC KINGDOM:

FOLKLORE AND FAN CULTURE

IN DISNEYLAND

by

David M. Giles

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

FOLKLORE

Approved:

Lynne S. McNeill Major Professor	Claudia Schwabe Committee Member
Jeannie Thomas Committee Member	Mark McLellan Vice President for Research and Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2017

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ABSTRACT

The Magic of the Magic Kingdom: Folklore
and Fan Culture in Disneyland

by

David M. Giles, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2017

Major Professor: Dr. Lynne S. McNeill
Department: American Studies

As fandom studies are becoming more popular and important, one fandom yet remains largely unstudied: the fandom surrounding Disneyland. The Disneyland fandom is unique in a number of ways, chief among them the fans' relationship to the content creators: unlike many other companies in similar positions, Disney seeks to put boundaries on fan participation and to discourage or stamp out behaviors it deems unacceptable. And yet, in spite of this official meddling, the fandom continues to thrive.

I propose that the reason for this unique dynamic is the Disney "Magic"—that is, fans' recognition of a unique emotional experience inherent in visiting the park, composed of a mix of nostalgia, immersion in the park experience, and the unique Disney atmosphere, all of which is often described using quasi-spiritual language. I posit that the Magic is what keeps fans coming back: they feel that something is special about the park,

and seek to engage with it more deeply through various fan activities—activities which, paradoxically, seem to threaten that same Magic that inspires such dedication in the first place.

In this thesis, I look at three specific fan activities, both to explore this concept of Magic further, and to learn more about this understudied fandom. The first topic is urban legends of ash scatterings in the Haunted Mansion ride, which appear to simultaneously be a commentary on harsh working conditions inside the park, and, more importantly, a perhaps-misguided attempt to pay respect to the deep connections fans have to Disneyland. The second is pin trading, which functions both as a folk activity guests can use to build their public identities, and also as a market for cheap fakes that tarnishe the Magic. The third is Disneybounding, a costuming activity that expresses fans' love of the park, while carefully stepping around Disney's regulations preventing such activities.

Even in the diverse and fascinating array of fandoms, the Disneyland fandom deserves some additional attention. Disney Magic, and its resultant fan behavior, has no clear parallel elsewhere. Understanding what makes Disneyland fans tick will lead to a better understanding of how fandoms work in general.

(137 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The Magic of the Magic Kingdom: Folklore
and Fan Culture in Disneyland
David Giles

A strong and vibrant fan culture surrounds Disneyland, despite the fact that Disney itself, in many cases, works hard to quash it. This surprising relationship dynamic is likely a result of the so-called "Disney Magic"—a term appropriated from Disney marketing material and applied to the unique emotional experience found in the park, often described with quasi-spiritual language.

This thesis examines three aspects of Disneyland's fan culture in an attempt to understand the Magic and how it manifests in and sustains its fan culture. First is urban legends surrounding ash scatterings at the Haunted Mansion ride, which speak to dedicated fans' desires to actually be buried there; second is a discussion of the pin trading subculture, through which fans construct their own identities using Disney merchandise; third is Disneybounding, in which fans find ways to dress as their favorite characters in defiance of Disney regulations to the contrary.

Disney Magic is a unique aspect of the Disneyland fan culture, and one that deserves more examination. The idea of the Magic contradicts our understanding of how fan cultures should work, and, for this reason, its effects should be studied and catalogued in more detail. This thesis serves as a thorough introduction to the topic, and provides suggestions for further research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would not be possible without the contributions of many people.

First are the members of my thesis committee: Jeannie Thomas, Claudia Schwabe, and Lynne McNeill, all of Utah State University. They were kind enough not only to review this thesis and to offer suggestions to improve it, but to do so at a rather demanding time of year for all of us. I am especially indebted to Lynne, my thesis advisor; as a fellow fan of Disney parks, she served as a valuable soundboard and guide, and helped me polish my rough ideas nearly every step of the way.

I would also like to thank my family, who, as I state in the introduction, furnished the underlying traditions that helped to inspire this work. Special thanks goes to my father and stepmom: when I was struggling with this project, they provided some much-needed encouragement and helped me chew through the rather-substantial task I had bitten off for myself.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to my aunt, “Barbara”; she both provided the initial spark that piqued my interest in applying my folklorists’ training to Disneyland, and, as a Disneyland cast member, was able to provide me a few tickets for free. As a struggling college student who could barely afford to *park* at Disneyland, much less get in, her assistance was invaluable. Without her, the final product would be a mere shadow of its current form.

Thanks everyone. Couldn’t have done it without you.

David Giles

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CHAPTER 1

"TO ALL WHO COME TO THIS HAPPY PLACE—WELCOME": INTRODUCTION

"To all who come to this happy place—welcome. Disneyland is your land . . . [and] is dedicated . . . with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world."

—Walt Disney, Dedication of Disneyland, 1955

My experience with "The Happiest Place On Earth" began in about 1995, when I was ten years old. My family had just moved from Washington State to Southern California, which came with a number of side-benefits: the weather was nicer, our house had a pool, and, most exciting of all, we could start going to Disneyland. Even back then, a trip to Disneyland for a family of seven was prohibitively expensive, but luckily, one of my great-aunts had worked for the park long enough to allow relatives into the park for free. Each December, when the crowds started to die down, we took advantage of this opportunity, and our yearly trip to Disneyland quickly became a family tradition.

Within this customary trip, we developed a number of smaller traditions: for example, our visits included ritual behavior (certain rides, chief among them Pirates of the Caribbean and the Disneyland Railroad, needed to be visited at certain times of the day), ritual speech (we punctuated the Jungle Cruise narration with exhortations for the tour guide to "*Shoot it!*" with his cap gun, whatever "it" happened to be at the moment),

legends ("Remember when Uncle Joe accidentally banged little Sally's head on the brick archway there?"), folk speech (we called the explorable caverns on Tom Sawyer Island "the pee caves," referencing our parent's beliefs that they were unsanitary), ritual clothing (garish, high-visibility t-shirts, to make us stand out among the crowds), and traditional foods (in our case, Disneyland-branded "Sour Balls," similar to over-sized jellybeans, without which no visit to the park would be complete). Though we were not what I would consider *serious* fans (among other things, my family did not get our first Annual Passes—important marks of insider status—until after my brother and I had already left for college), Disneyland was an important part of who we were, and who we considered ourselves to be as a family.

As I began to study more and more about folklore, I began to realize the importance of these experiences. True, these folk items belong specifically to the micro-folkgroup of a single family, but we are not alone; the Magic Kingdom has spawned a great deal of folklore in all its forms. For example, ritual clothing manifests in the in-park "Disney Gangs," who wear the leather and chrome commonly associated with motorcycle gangs, but with Disney iconography replacing the traditional skulls and flames; many urban legends are told about the park, some claiming that Walt Disney's cryogenically frozen body is stored somewhere on the property; and traditional foods, chief among them Dole Whip[1] and foot-long churros, are so important to so many that they are used in

[1] An ice-cream-like treat made primarily with (Dole-branded) pineapples. Historically, Dole Whip has been available in very few locations worldwide, chief among them Disneyland. However, in recent years, Dole Whip has become more widely available; for example, a number of restaurants in Utah now sell Dole Whip, many of them with minimal fanfare (which suggests that the novelty has worn off somewhat).

fan art as a sort of shorthand for a "genuine" experience of Disneyland. To be fair, some of these behaviors are inevitable by-products of modern consumerist culture (after all, those churros *are* tasty), but, to me, these folk items (and many others like them) suggest a greater-than-normal investment into the Disneyland experience. Indeed, I posit that these are more than simple folk activities—they are signifiers of a full-blown Disneyland *fandom.*[2]

This particular fandom is more than a little unusual, which makes it all the more fascinating to study. For one thing, participation in many fandoms seem to carry an element of social stigma, but the Disneyland fandom is actually socially acceptable, if not, at least in some areas, *encouraged*: for example, while living in Utah, a good ten to twelve hour drive away from Disneyland itself, I have seen a surprising amount of bumper stickers, backpacks, and license plate frames bearing the Disneyland brand. On the other hand, Disney has put strict boundaries around when and how people can participate in said fandom, and would like to see parts of it stamped out entirely—an astonishing find in an era in which fan support is often critical to the success or failure of any given enterprise. Despite this official discouragement of the more fanatical fans, the fandom itself shows no signs of stopping, and only grows larger, more widespread, and more creative as time goes on. As far as I can observe, this dynamic does not exist elsewhere—other theme parks do not have as fervent a fanbase, even those, like

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[2] A "term used by members of the related groups self-identified by their interest" in any of a number of different media properties—or, in this case, a theme park—to signify both the people and the activities associated with their particular fan group (Bacon-Smith 1994, 309).

Universal Studios Hollywood, that carry the name of a movie studio. Further, most other fandoms are allowed a little more free reign by the content creators; the fact that the Disneyland fandom not only survives, but *thrives* in such an environment, is, to say the least, remarkable.

Surprisingly, very little research has been done on this fandom. Meyrav Koren-Kuik (2014) has done some work on the fandom in general, and others have written on isolated aspects of the experience, but, to my knowledge, no one has done an in-depth study of the folk behavior, the traditions, or the urban legends present in and around the park. This apparent lack of interest may be due to many folklorists' long-standing bias against Disney, a byproduct of the negative effects that Disney films tend to have on the popular perception of the folktales they are based on. Nevertheless, I find this reluctance a glaring oversight: as fan culture becomes a bigger and bigger subject of study, continuing to overlook such a unique fandom is unacceptable.

This thesis will focus on the Disneyland fandom, with special emphasis on some items that separate it from other, similar fandoms. Specifically, I will be focusing on three aspects of the Disneyland folk culture: urban legends of ash scatterings on the Haunted Mansion ride, folk aspects of Disney pin trading, and Disneybounding, an in-park costuming tradition. Though these are similar, in several respects, to traditions from other fandoms, they are unique enough (and belong to a unique enough folk group) that they deserve some attention of their own. My goal in this analysis is two-fold: first, to provide a window into the rarely-studied fandom of Disneyland, and, second, to

demonstrate that such a fandom is indeed, worthy of study, despite the stigma (and expense!) of doing so.

The Method to the Magic: Methodology and Demographics

Though it was, to be sure, a great deal of fun, researching Disneyland—legendarily expensive for the layman to visit, to say nothing of the travel time—presented a number of difficulties for a student on a shoestring budget. For this reason, I would like to spend a moment describing the methodology I used for my research.

First and foremost, I did my best to actually visit Disneyland whenever possible. It is important for folklorists to participate in activities and communities they are studying in order to gain an emic perspective on the issues studied—not to mention, this was an excellent excuse to say I was in Disneyland "on business." On each of these trips, I strived to integrate into the community as much as I could: I tried foods, rides, and other experiences outside of my own norms, and made a point to dabble in the various activities I was writing about—for example, my own first experiences with both pin trading and Disneybounding happened while doing research for this thesis. I also made a point of talking to as many people as I could, especially Disneybounders and pin traders, and took plenty of pictures every time I went. I should add that talking to people while waiting in line tended to yield good results—since there was usually little else for us to do but wait, most guests were more than happy to chat about their experiences with the park. I also found that many people were interested in what I was doing: for the most

part, all I had to do was say I was working on a research paper about the park, and many guests would ask me for more information of their own accord.

During the course of my research, I was able to make three trips: one in April 2015 (timed to correspond with the Western States Folklore Society meeting in Los Angeles), one in October 2015 (to correspond with the American Folklore Society meeting in Long Beach), and one in late December 2015 (when I was visiting home for Christmas). Though these trips were quite helpful, the majority of my research was done online, both through integration with fansites, as well as through surveys I sent out to contact fans directly.

My most important site of research was a website called Reddit (pronounced "red it"). Reddit is a primarily user-run website that is divided into a very large number of smaller forums called "subreddits," each organized around a particular interest—video games, fashion, funny cat photos, and so on. In my case, I made sure to spend plenty of time on some of the Disneyland-related subreddits, chief among them the Disney pin trading community, called "Disney Pin Trading" (later, "Disney Pin Swap"), and the main Disneyland subreddit, called simply "Disneyland." Though these communities are, admittedly, somewhat narrow in scope—regular Reddit usage implies a high degree of technical literacy, among other things—these communities, which are created, staffed, and populated by dedicated, self-identified fans, seemed an ideal location to find the sort of especially-fanatical fans I wanted to focus on. Frequent users of Reddit tend to identify themselves as "redditors," a term I use several times throughout this paper.

My other major method of engagement was two online surveys that I created and distributed.[3] The first survey was intended to be rather broad, and sought to learn more about the fandom, as well as to learn more about the topics I was interested in covering. I posted this survey to a few of the Disneyland-related subreddits, to Facebook (where much of my annual-passholding extended family could see it), and e-mailed it to one or two Disney fansites. Though this first survey did not gain as much publicity as I had been hoping, it still yielded hundreds of interesting responses.

The second survey was much more focused, and was intended to find informants on the topics I had chosen. I distributed it personally on my later two visits to Disneyland, in the form of small business cards with a link to the survey on the front. On the advice of Lynne McNeill, my thesis advisor, I was careful in to distribute these cards sparingly, and tried to gauge whether the other guests would be receptive before giving them the card (my caution was justified, as will be seen later). This survey received fewer than a dozen responses, but they were likewise valuable and interesting.

While my surveys did not gather demographic data—I focused more ne engagement with the parks and feelings regarding the fandom than on age, ethnicity, or gender—my experience shows that the appeal of the Disneyland fandom, like the appeal of Disneyland itself, cuts across a very large segment of the populace. During my visits, I spoke to guests of all ages, genders, and places of origin—I even met guests from places as far-flung as Pittsburg, Canada, and Australia.

That said, the people I talked to seemed to tend, very broadly, towards being

[3] The questions for these surveys can be found in the Appendices to this thesis.

white, between twenty and thirty years old (many with young children), and from Southern California. I feel like these trends are due primarily to the practical concerns of visiting Disneyland, rather than some inherent bias; due to the time and expense required to make frequent visits, those who have integrated most deeply into the fandom appear to be young adult Southern California residents of higher socioeconomic status—i.e., those who have the free time and income to spend on frequent visits to the park, and don't have to travel so far to do so (not to mention, those who have access to the cheaper California Resident tickets). That said, concrete demographic data would be fascinating to see; I will make a point of recording such demographic data in future surveys.

The Key to the Kingdom: History and Context

Before we begin a proper analysis of the implications of this fandom, it would be prudent to lay some groundwork: that is, before we can talk about the Disneyland fandom, we must first talk about Disneyland itself.

Disneyland does its best to shroud its origins in the trappings of myth; from observation of the park alone, with only one very small, out-of-the-way museum to chronicle its history, one would think that the park sprung, fully-formed, from the head of Walt Disney himself, like some benign Athena. And, though some incidents may be less forgotten than others—for example, Disneyland's disastrous opening day, which continues to be the butt of the occasional joke—the birth of the world's first theme park was a very real, very difficult process.

The exact origin of Disneyland, like any good fairy tale, is a mystery. There is no clear consensus on when the original idea for the park first occurred to Walt.[4] Some say that the stories Walt's father told of working on the Chicago World's Fair sparked a desire in him to create something similar; others say the idea came from Walt's love of model trains, which inspired him to build a large-scale model; some say that the idea occurred to him during a visit to an amusement park, where he complained about how filthy and disordered it was; some say it began during preparations for the 1937 premiere for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, when Walt inadvertently whetted his appetite with the construction of a child-sized cottage to be placed outside the theater; and one source claims it began in 1940, when Walt suggested installing some sort of display to entertain those who visited the Disney studios. However, the "official" version is the same given by Walt's daughter, Diane: on Sunday afternoons, Walt would pick up his girls from church, then take them to the nearby Griffith Park to ride the merry-go-round there. Diane quoted Walt as saying, "There's nothing for parents to do . . . you've got to have a place where the whole family can have fun" (Larson; Gabler 2007, 484). This version—which portrays "Uncle Walt" as family man, rather than a businessman—is the version preferred by Disneyland; in fact, the park bench on which Walt is said to have been sitting when he came up with the idea for the park is now enshrined in the small museum mentioned earlier, located in the foyer of the Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln show.

[4] To avoid confusion between Disney, the company, and Disney, the man, I will refer to Walt Disney exclusively as "Walt" (a practice still followed in the park, where "Uncle Walt" is still invoked as the ultimate authority on in-park matters), and Walt Disney Studios as "Disney."

Walt wanted to do something *different* with Disneyland, much as he had done with his early cartoons. The world had plenty of *amusement* parks, but he wanted to build a *theme* park—that is, he wanted to add a context and narrative to his park in order to create "a full imaginative experience . . . rather than a series of diversions" (ibid., xiii). Disneyland would not be a simple incoherent mess of discrete rides, as one would see at a county fair—Walt's park would form a united whole, and would let guests insert themselves into the story, where- and however they pleased. His park would be clean, shining, and well organized. His park would be, as he told his daughter, "a place where the whole family [could] have fun" (ibid., 484).

Over the course of several years, Walt continued to tinker with ideas for the park. As his plans finally materialized, Disneyland would be composed of five themed "Lands." Clockwise from the entrance at the south of the park, these would be: Main Street USA, where guests would be transported back to turn-of-the-century small-town America (which happened to look suspiciously like Walt's hometown of Marceline, Missouri); Adventureland, an exploration of the impenetrable jungles of Africa and India; Frontierland, a journey back into America's Wild West; Fantasyland, where guests could immerse themselves in the fairy-tale world of Disney's films; and Tomorrowland, a vision of the then-distant future of 1986 (Weiss 2010). Each land would be a self-contained world, with its own rides, restaurants, and shops, each striving to be as authentic as possible, to help guests believe that they really *were* in Africa, or the future, or the long ago and far away of fairy tales. These lands would be self-contained worlds;

the only place at which they would connect would be the "hub," a simple, circular plaza at the center of the park[5] (see Figure 1-1).

Walt and his company began to work on the park in earnest in 1952, with the founding of WED Enterprises (named after Walt himself, whose full name was Walter Elias Disney). WED would be attached to, but separate from, Disney Studios, and would focus primarily on making Walt's dream of Disneyland a reality (Gabler 2007, 493). The park was initially planned for Burbank, California, on a lot adjacent to the studio itself, but Walt's plans grew rapidly, and Burbank quickly became too small for his vision. In 1953, Walt hired the Stanford Research Institute, who had done land surveys for other major enterprises, to find him a 100-plus-acre lot for his park. After some research, SRI suggested an area known as the Ball subdivision, off Ball Road, in Anaheim, California—at the time, a remote area consisting of nothing but orange orchards. SRI claimed that Anaheim had the mildest climate in the region, would be relatively inexpensive to purchase land in, and, most importantly, would be the future center of growth in the Los Angeles area. Walt jumped at the idea, and quickly bought out each of the owners in the Ball subdivision (ibid., 500).

Though Disney was well-regarded, the company did not have the cash needed to

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[5] Several researchers have noticed troubling implications to the stories told by the layouts of the various Lands. For example, Richard Francaviglia identifies imperialist themes in the original design of Frontierland, and reads it as an attempt to frame the American West as an empty space made hospitable through the effort of private industry (Francaviglia 1999). In addition, Gabler has read the layout of the park as a symbolic mirror of Walt's own life: guests walk down the streets of Walt's childhood home towards the fairy-tale castle in the distance, until they reach the hub, at which point, limitless possibilities unfold in every direction (Gabler 499). Though rather poetic, this description of Disneyland strikes me as something like a wish-fulfilment fantasy on Walt's part, which makes the design of the park itself feel somewhat disingenuous.

Figure 1-1: The “Partners” statue, installed in 1993 at the center of the hub connecting the various lands. The statue depicts Walt Disney holding Mickey Mouse by the hand and gesturing genially at the guests. The plaque at its base bears a quote attributed to Walt himself: “I think most of all what I want Disneyland to be is a happy place… where parents and children can have fun, together.” The statue has become a major Disneyland landmark, but, more importantly, contributes prominently to the narrative of the park: the statue helps to establish Disneyland as a) a celebration of Disney films and cartoons, b) the creation of a benevolent Uncle Walt, and c) an organization primarily dedicated to the happiness of its guests. Photo courtesy of the author.

build and furnish Walt’s dream, so Walt began to aggressively court sponsors, most importantly the American Broadcasting Company. Television was still in its infancy, and relative newcomer ABC was struggling to compete with the other two established networks, CBS and NBC. Walt approached ABC and made them an offer: he would make them a show if they helped to finance his park. Such a partnership was unprecedented: at this point in time, many movie studios thought of television as the mortal enemy of cinema, and refused to work with the new medium. ABC snatched up Walt’s offer in April 1954, and began airing the show *Disneyland* on October 27, 1954

(ibid., 508; 511). *Disneyland* was a multifaceted program, one that sought to entertain, instruct, and, most importantly, advertise the park itself. The show became immensely popular, "partly [as] a function of the generally feckless fare on television at the time and partly [as] a function of the . . . power of the name 'Walt Disney'"—and consistently attracted up to a mind-boggling 50% of viewers in its time slot (ibid., 511). Nationwide sensation *Davy Crockett* first aired as a segment on *Disneyland*, as did *Man In Space* (produced with the help of Wernher Von Braun, and credited with spurring national interest in space exploration) (ibid. 515; 517). The show proved so popular, in fact, that in December of that year, ABC asked for—and got—a similar deal for a second show, which eventually became the iconic after-school children's program *The Mickey Mouse Club* (ibid., 520).

With funding secured, Walt broke ground for Disneyland on July 16, 1954, and the park opened a folkloric year-and-a-day later, on July 17, 1955—"a Sunday, a family day, in the height of summer" (Koenig 2014, 85). Disney had intended for that first day to be a small, invitation-only "soft open," which would put the park through its paces and allow them to work out any kinks before opening it to the public at large. Invitations were extended to "contractors who worked on the park, their families, studio employees, the press dignitaries, [and] suppliers and officials of companies offering exhibits," with an estimated attendance of 11,000. However, the simple invitations were easily copied, and the *Disneyland* show had apparently worked wonders, which lead to unexpected swarms of guests: the official attendance figure for opening day was 28,154 (Koenig 2006, 23).

The result was an almost-legendary disaster. A number of women lost high-heels

in the freshly-poured asphalt. The lack of drinking fountains—casualties of a local plumber's strike—led to accusations of attempting to sell more soda for Pepsi, one of Disneyland's major sponsors. Unexpected traffic patterns within the park led to massive bottlenecks. Rides broke down, and restaurants ran out of food. Adding to the chaos was the live ABC telecast of the event, which, with 22 cameras, made it the largest live-casted event in history; the amount of space blocked off for the equipment and wiring only exacerbated the overcrowding. (ibid., 23; 24). The chaos and the crowds continued over the course of the next several weeks, until an August heat wave drove attendance numbers down (ibid., 27). And, though no one was sure if, or how long, Walt's crazy experiment would last, history has proven his gamble justified: Disneyland's one-millionth guest would enter the park in September of that year, and would host a total of 3.6 million visitors by the end of its first year of operation (Gabler 2007, 537).

Yet, Walt was determined that Disneyland would never be finished—there was always more to do, more to tinker with. There have been remodels, additions, and revisions almost since before the paint had dried—for example, Walt added a short-lived but disastrous circus to the park in the winter of 1955—but the most important changes came with the addition of ride tickets, and, later, the 1964 New York World's Fair (Koenig 2006, 29).

When the park first opened, the cost of admission was very low: $1 for adults, and $.50 for children (about $9 and $4.50, respectively, in 2016 dollars; in contrast, modern tickets cost around $100 each) (Gabler 2007, 537). However, guests needed to pay cash for each additional attraction, at prices ranging from $.10 to $.25. Guests complained

about the additional charge, so, that October, Disneyland began to sell booklets of ride tickets, each ticket representing pre-paid admission to one of the rides: the tickets were labeled A, B, and C, and were used for the least- to most-spectacular attractions, respectively. These tickets proved so popular that a D ticket was added in 1956, and an E ticket in 1959, each allowing for more, more exciting, and more elaborate rides (ibid., 537). Though these tickets were done away with in 1982—now, the admission prices are higher, but all the rides are free—the idea of an "E Ticket" as an intense, thrilling experience has lingered; for example, impressive or exciting rides are still often referred to as "E-Tickets" (Koenig 2006, 68). Perhaps more telling: Sally Ride, when asked to describe her first Space Shuttle launch, responded, "Have you ever been to Disneyland? This is definitely an E ticket" (Sherr 2012).

Another great opportunity for growth came with the 1964 New York World's Fair. Though Disneyland was hard at work on its first major expansion, New Orleans Square, Walt put the work on hold and instead offered WED's services to sponsors looking for exhibits for the World's Fair, with the stipulation that Disney would be able to move the attractions back to Disneyland when the fair was over. Disney was able to use these sponsorships as a sort of subsidized R&D effort, to help improve Disneyland's own attractions as well as to raise goodwill for the as-yet-unannounced Walt Disney World. The resulting attractions included the Carousel of Progress (an innovative automated stage show sponsored by General Electric), It's A Small World (sponsored by Pepsi and UNICEF), the PeopleMover (a high-capacity, slow-moving ride used as part of Ford Motors's exhibit), and, most importantly, "a robotic Abraham Lincoln that could

deliver the Gettysburg Address" for the state of Illinois. Mr. Lincoln was a more advanced "audio-animatronic" actor (a robot synced with sound, in this case, a speech) than Disney had been able to produce before: Mr. Lincoln not only turned and gestured as the speech required, but also moved his lips more-or-less realistically in time with the speech and sat down when he was finished. This new technology was rapidly integrated into the park, and the technology quickly became iconic of Disneyland itself, especially for its use in both the Pirates of the Caribbean and the Haunted Mansion rides (Koenig 2014, 21).

Many years have passed since then, and much has changed at Disneyland—but, for the most part, things have remained true to Walt's vision. Three new lands have been added in intervening years: New Orleans Square (opened in 1966), framed as a trip to the winding streets of that riverside city; Bear Country (1973), a visit to the deep backwoods (named for the Country Bear Jamboree stage show; the area was renamed "Critter Country" in 1988 to honor the wider variety of animals brought by the pending opening of Splash Mountain); and Mickey's Toontown (1993), a whimsical neighborhood where the Disney cartoon characters "lived" (see Figure 1-2) (Martin 2005, 24; 37; 34; 56). A fourth new land is currently under construction under the working title of "Star Wars Land," which would transport guests to famous locations from the *Star Wars* films, such as the fictional city of Mos Eisley.

Two larger-scale construction projects have been added as well. In 2001, Disney's California Adventure opened to the south of Disneyland proper, built over much of what used to be the Disneyland parking lot; though it had an initially-rocky reception, a

Figure 1-2: An excerpt from the Disneyland Guidemap brochure, showing the park as it appeared in 2015. Star Wars Land has not yet been added to this map, but is planned for the area north of Frontierland (in orange) and west of Mickey’s Toontown (in yellow). Source: Disney 2015.

number of aggressive remodels have brought it into line with the Disneyland standard (Koenig 2006, 237-8). Later, Downtown Disney opened adjacent to both parks: Downtown Disney is not a park proper, but instead a large, Disney-designed shopping district, with a great deal of Disney’s signature whimsy; for example, the security doors on the LEGO store are designed to look like two enormous LEGO bricks, and the Rainforest Cafe is built in what appears to be an old jungle ruin.

However, despite the high price of tickets and the addition of the shopping district, Disneyland still tries to think of itself as a *show*, rather than a commercial enterprise. This thinking manifests, in part, as the “Disneyfication” of park vocabulary,

much of which is drawn from the theater. Disneyland does not have "employees," it has "cast members," who wear Disney-provided "costumes" rather than "uniforms." Disneyland does not have "customers," it has "guests," who, in a group, are the "audience" (Koenig 2006, 63). Rides, shows, and concerts—anything that the audience can actually *do*—are all called "attractions." Public areas are "onstage," while private business and support areas are "backstage." While onstage, cast members must even adhere to a "script," which specifies vocabulary that they can and cannot use; most notably, the script supposedly forbids the use of the words "No" and "I don't know."[6] The vocabulary even extends to janitorial duties: a puddle of vomit is called a "protein spill" or "Code V," and garbage is "waste" (which leads to the somewhat-unfortunate construction, painted on all Disneyland trashcans, of "Waste Please"). Over the course of this thesis, I will use both the standard and Disneyfied terms interchangeably, as I feel is appropriate in-context (with, of course, a preference for the Disney terms).

Such a corporate culture is all well and good, but the park would be nothing without its audience—and the audience would be nothing without the fans.

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[6] In my experience, cast members tend to redirect questions rather than answer in the negative. For example, during a 2014 visit to Splash Mountain, I found a small piece of plaster scenery that had broken off in the queue area; when I asked a cast member if I could keep it as a souvenir, she responded with "That's actually a safety hazard" and a grimace. During my December 2015 visit, when I asked a cast member at the Star Wars Launch Bay, a gift shop-slash-meet and greet locale, if they stocked trading pins, he informed me that Darth Vader had forbidden them on the premises. In both cases, the response was clearly negative, but neither actually used the word "no."

"The Club That's Made For You And Me": The Disneyland Fandom

As I said in the introduction to this piece, Disneyland has become important enough, to enough people, to generate and sustain a fandom. I am not the only researcher to think so: for example, Meyrav Koren-Kuik writes extensively on the Disneyland fandom in her piece "Desiring the Tangible: Disneyland, Fandom, and Spatial Immersion." Though useful, her analysis focuses more on the "why" than the "what" of the fandom, in contrast to this thesis. Her primary argument is that the Disneyland fandom is an extension of the Disney film fandom: that is, fans of the films visit the park out of a desire to immerse themselves in the world(s) of the films they so love (Koren-Kuik 2014).

Though I appreciate much of her work, I disagree with Koren-Kuik's analysis on this point. The way her argument is stated, she appears to claim that Disneyland has no fandom that it can strictly call its own—that is, that all its successes belong, first and foremost, to the films. Though I would agree with her that the two fandoms cannot be entirely divorced, I feel that the Disneyland fandom is largely tangential to the Disney film fandom; that is, fans of Disney films come to experience the movies, and fans of Disneyland come to experience the *park*. Evidence for this includes a large corpus of fan work, including websites, YouTube channels, blogs, and books, that focuses on the park to the exclusion of the films (for an example of such creativity, see Figure 1-3). Another piece of evidence includes the urban legends and traditional foods of the park itself: true, the legends may revolve around Walt Disney, and the foods may come in the shape of

Figure 1-3: A screenshot from "Journey to Splash Mountain," a fan-made campaign for the zombie survival video game *Left 4 Dead 2*. "Journey to Splash Mountain" tasks up to four players with searching a zombie-infested Disneyland for shelter, supplies, and, ultimately, escape. In this campaign, many areas of Disneyland have been digitally recreated in exacting detail, including the Enchanted Tiki Room, the Haunted Mansion (pictured here), and, most notably, a complete ride-through of Splash Mountain itself. This sort of effort contradicts Koren-Kurik's analysis: though love for the films may draw fans to the park, the love of the park itself is strong enough to generate and sustain a surprisingly vibrant and creative fandom. Screenshot courtesy of the author; "Journey to Splash Mountain" created by Steam user [Digital Cybercherries] Dives.

Mickey Mouse, but, in my opinion, legends of Walt Disney's ghost haunting the park are of a fundamentally different character than rumors of scandalous drawings in *The Little Mermaid*. That is, there is a distinct separation between the traditions of the park and fans' appreciation of the films, even when those interests overlap. For this reason, I will discuss primarily in-park issues, and attempt to exclude the fandom surrounding Disney films. Though I am sure there is a great deal of fan creation and energy poured into the film fandom, it remains outside the scope of my work here.

One thing I find particularly compelling about the fandom surrounding Disneyland is how strikingly different it is from other fandoms. In 2006, Henry Jenkins, writing of the Star Trek fandom, said that Paramount, who held the rights to *Star Trek*, tended to regard fan activity with “benign neglect”—that is, as long as fans were not attempting to turn a profit, nor to damage the brand itself, they were generally left to their own devices (Jenkins 2006, 42). Ten years later, this statement continues to be true of most fandoms, and, though the rise of the internet and social media has made engagement with fans more important in recent years, commercial involvement with fandoms tends to take the form of little more than of the occasional nod to fans’ preferences. However, the Disneyland fandom is a major exception to this rule: Disney encourages fan participation, both in the park and elsewhere, but only within strictly controlled boundaries, and reacts with disdain or even open hostility to those who transgress them. In regards to Disneybounding, for example (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4), Disney has decreed that costumes are not allowed in the park for guests age 14 or older, effectively forbidding cosplay (a common form of fan expression, especially expressions of love for or connection with the source material), despite fans’ apparent desires to the contrary.

In a somewhat surprising twist, however, the Disneyland fandom remains vibrant and creative, even in the face of official discouragement. Disneybounders, for example, have found ways to wear their costumes regardless of these restrictions: in this case, they use carefully-chosen street clothes, intended to represent, rather than replicate, the character they are mimicking, subverting Disney regulations. This example shows that,

even as Disney would like to see at least certain parts of the fandom stamped out, the Disneyland fandom remains popular and innovative.

I have a theory as to why this dynamic exists--and it deals with the "Disney Magic" that lies at the very foundation of the park. According to both Disney itself and its adoring fans, Walt Disney's Magic Kingdom is possessed of a certain Magic (henceforth, written with a capital "M") that makes the Disneyland experience completely unique. Disney and its fans both use this term to describe such uniqueness: in a recent internet ad, for example, Disney encouraged guests to "Wind Down the [summer] Season with a *Magical* Stay!" (emphasis mine), while one redditor, wanting to announce their pregnancy to their family at Disneyland, asked for "Any ideas on how to do the announcement more *magical?"* [*sic*] (lovest, 2016, emphasis mine). However, though both groups use the same term, there appears to be a disagreement over what the Magic actually *is,* which both inspires and perpetuates the conflict between the two groups.

For Disney, Magic is used primarily as a marketing term—after all, it *is* called "The *Magic* Kingdom." The way Disney uses it, the term "Magic" appears to signify the more theatrical aspect of the experience, i.e., the illusion of being whisked away to a different time and place. Author David Koenig refers to this idea as Disneyland's capital-I "Image," a term I will continue to use to limit confusion with the more-important fan interpretation of the Magic, described below. Disneyland has built its business model on preserving that Image, that is, on ensuring that it remains "The Happiest Place on Earth," a safe, fun-filled place for the entire family.

Disney works hard to create and maintain its Image: this control manifests in a number of different ways, including deliberate control of what the fans see (Reportedly, Anaheim city law, at the insistence of Walt himself, does not allow new buildings to be built that can be seen from within the park), hear (Disney music fills nearly every corner of the park), touch (among other things, wooden handrails have been aggressively sanded down to make them smooth and splinter-free), taste (Disney foods are, for many, as important an aspect of the Disneyland experience as their favorite rides), and even smell (reportedly, Disney uses "smellitzers" to perfume certain areas of the park; for example, Main Street USA smells like vanilla and baked goods, intended to evoke feelings of home). And this effort pays off: as will be discussed shortly, this aspect of the Image really does create something special for guests.

However, fighting to maintain the Image of the park also impacts those same guests, sometimes in tragic ways. For example, in 1981, 18-year-old Mel Yorba was fatally stabbed during an altercation with another guest. However, despite his dire condition, Disney refused to call paramedics or to allow an ambulance on-site, feeling that such would threaten the Image, instead opting to send Yorba to the hospital in an unmarked Disney-owned van. In the later court case over the matter, a witness testified that Yorba's injuries were so severe that he did not "think that he could have survived this wound if he had been stabbed in the operating room"—however, the jury still handed down a rare "guilty" verdict against the park for negligence (Koenig 2006 151; 153; 155).

Though this case is admittedly an extreme example, Disney has a (deserved) reputation for being somewhat hostile to its fans, and has few qualms against suing those

it feels threatened by. An easy, though admittedly out-of-park, example is a 1989 incident in which Disney threatened legal action against three Hallandale, Florida daycares, in order to force them to remove unlicensed murals featuring Disney characters from their walls[7] ("Cartoon Figures," 1989). David Koenig, author of the *Mouse Tales* series of books (which purport to offer a "behind-the-ears look at Disneyland"), had a legal tangle of his own with Disney: reportedly, when he informed Disneyland of his intentions to write such a book, Disney's PR department "asked that [he] clear all potential interview subjects with them first. Those who [he asked about, he] never heard from again." Disney's legal department also got involved, who told him in no uncertain terms, that he would not write such a book; later, their various contacts "ranged from vague offers of assistance to threats and outright lies" (Koenig 2006, 15). I, myself, have also run into this sort of behavior: as I said, during a few of my visits, I distributed small cards with links to an online survey to many people I met. In one instance, I accidentally did so in front of a security guard, who, rather gruffly, told me to stop distributing them, even implying that I would be escorted from the park if I continued. Though each of these activities—fan art, fan books, and inter-fan discussions—are accepted and often *encouraged* in other fandoms, Disney has its Image to protect, and, as such, tries to limit what its own fans can do.

On the other hand, fans have adopted the idea of Magic as a sort of rallying cry.

[7] To be fair, Disney's hand was somewhat forced by US copyright law—a perceived inability or unwillingness to protect their copyright would make it more difficult to combat future infringements—but the fact remains that they threatened legal action against daycares attempting to pay tribute to their work, which looks *really* bad from a PR perspective, to say the least.

For them, Disney's idea of Magic does carry some weight, as, in some contexts, "Magic" is used to refer to the illusion of the experience (for example, the rules of the Disneyland subreddit require that all behind-the-scenes information be marked "NSFM," or "Not Safe For Magic"; such terminology puts these revelations in the same category as "Not Safe For Work" content, including pornography and extreme violence) ("Rules"). However, for many fans, the Disney Magic is a much greater, and more profound, idea than mere illusion.

In my surveys, I asked, among other things, why fans enjoyed the park so much. To my surprise, many indicated the Magic as a major appeal. Few respondents actually identified what they meant by Magic—indeed, many responses seemed to almost take the term for granted—but their comments seemed to indicate that, for them, Magic was a combination of a number of related concepts, including atmosphere, nostalgia, immersion, and the impression of "otherworldliness" inside the park. As a testament to the power of Magic, some respondents said that visiting the parks was "like going to visit a loving family member," that "[they felt] happiest when at the parks," that they got "that good feeling" inside the gates, that the parks felt like home, or that a visit to the park was "more than a vacation" (Kathryn 2015; Melinda 2015; Thompson 2015; Jen 2015; Welch 2015).

Fans are not the only ones to have noticed this unique aspect of the park: Disney biographer Neal Gabler, in trying to quantify the appeal of Disneyland, cites a number of reporters, critics and analysts who variously described their Disneyland experience as "a state of mind, in the real meaning of the term," an encapsulation of "the feeling of being

alive and in love with life," possessing "an almost-religious aura," and, in "a single descriptive word . . . wholesomeness" (Gabler 2005, 534; 535). Gabler himself describes the Magic manifests as "a sense of absolute well-being" (ibid., 535). Not even Elie Wiesel, most famous for his heartwrenching Holocaust memoir, *Night*, was immune to the Magic; writing for the Yiddish-language newspaper *The Forverts* in 1957, Wiesel described his visit to the park as follows:

> I don't know if a Garden of Eden awaits adults in the hereafter. I do know, though, that there is a Garden of Eden for children here in this life. I know because I myself visited this paradise. I have just returned from there, just passed through its gates, just left the magical kingdom known as Disneyland. And as I bid that kingdom farewell, I understood for the first time the true meaning of the French saying 'to leave is to die a little' [partir, c'est mourir un peu] (Butler, 2016)

Though these descriptions are, of course, more eloquent than you are likely to find in many online discussions, the sentiment is the same: the emotional experience of a visit to Disneyland is special and unique, something that you rarely experience outside the park.

The feeling of otherworldliness, alluded to in these quotes, deserves some additional attention. The physical design of the park itself feels handcrafted to encourage guests to believe that they have traded the real world for the Disney one. The journey from the freeway, to the parking garage, to the park gates is a lengthy one, which leads the guest through an increasingly-whimsical, Disneyfied landscape. This gradual introduction of Disney elements suggests that guests are transitioning from the real world into the Magic Kingdom. Further, Disneyland is surrounded by a surprisingly subtle twelve-foot-high earthen berm, intended to completely block the outside world from view (Koenig 2014, 18). It is difficult to describe, but this separation creates a distinctive feeling of being "far away," in the sense of the "long ago and far away" of fairy tales—

for example, complaining about personal troubles feels inappropriate in Disneyland, as it is the Happiest Place on Earth, where no sorrow or pain can abide. Some of this feeling is expressed in the fan responses I have catalogued above, but, at the same time, these fan responses are both deeper and more fervent than this mere feeling of otherworldliness can account for.

To be fair: this idea of a "Magical" experience—that is, a unique, ephemeral, quasi-spiritual experience—is not entirely unique to the Disneyland fandom. For example, a friend once told me of a supernatural experience she had visiting J.R.R. Tolkien's gravesite, and, during a visit to Graceland on the 30th anniversary of Elvis's death, I was struck with the reverential, almost sacred attitudes of the visiting pilgrims. However, what sets the Disneyland fandom apart is that these sorts of experiences have entered the fan discourse: that is, encounters with Disney Magic happen often enough, and to a large enough portion of the fanbase, that fans have given a name to their experience. I feel that this sort of commonplace encounter with the super-normal (if not the supernatural) is what helps to create and maintain such a fandom: a trip to the park, which comes with a lengthy immersion into the Magic, is a special, unique, and fundamentally different experience than, say, watching a television show with other fans, and prompts a very different reaction.

As stated, I feel that these two different ideas—the Image and the Magic—are both what drives the Disneyland fandom, and causes Disney to react so strongly against it: fans, who have a transcendent emotional experience in the park, want to engage more deeply with the park itself; however, Disney works hard to create and maintain its Image,

and feels that many of the ways fans try to do engage threaten that Image, and try to stop fans from so engaging.

I will be examining three of these specific elements of the Disneyland fandom that bring the fans into conflict with the park. These activities separate the fans from the rest of the crowd, and are of the type described above: they have the strange distinction of being a sort of homage to the Magic, while, at the same time, seeming to jeopardize the Image. The first of these activities are urban legends of ash scatterings on the Haunted Mansion ride, incidents which, if they actually occur, are both a profound tribute to a fan's love of the park and a severe violation of its health and safety guidelines. The second are the folk elements of Disney pin trading, wherein guests identify themselves as fans of the park, while, in many cases, simultaneously cheating it. The third is the previously-mentioned Disneybounding, where fans express love of Disney characters while pointedly ignoring the park's guidelines regarding costumes. In each case, these activities are done out of love for the park, but, at the same time, appear to threaten the very Magic that makes it all function; this is a fascinating contradiction, one that deserves more attention that it has gotten to date.

CHAPTER 2

THE THOUSANDTH HAPPY HAUNT: LEGENDS OF BURIAL AND HAUNTING AT DISNEYLAND'S HAUNTED MANSION

An early draft of this chapter was presented at a meeting of the American Folklore Society, held October 2015 in Long Beach, California.

"Welcome, Foolish Mortals":[1] Introduction

One of the most iconic attractions at Disneyland is the strangely compelling (and, given its dour tone, somewhat-out-of-place) Haunted Mansion. The Mansion is what is commonly known as a "dark ride"—that is, an indoor, slow-moving, special-effects-heavy ride kept mostly in darkness (hence, a "dark ride") (see Figure 2-1). Such rides tend to focus more on an automated show that the riders pass by or through rather than on the physical experience of the ride itself (unlike, say, a roller coaster or a merry-go-round). The Haunted Mansion in particular is a child-friendly haunted house ride (though anecdotal evidence suggests that many young children would take issue with this description): that is, it has a spooky atmosphere, but lacks many traditional "horror" motifs such as violent murders, demonic possessions, and the like, and those few that

[1] This quote, as well those used in the other headings in this chapter, has been taken from the ride itself. Quotes are drawn either from the narration of the "Ghost Host" that accompanies the ride, or from the lyrics of the ride's theme song, "Grim Grinning Ghosts."

Figure 2-1: Example “dark ride” scene, taken from the Haunted Mansion’s attic sequence. In this scene, the shadowy piano player plays an off-kilter version of Wagner’s “Bridal Chorus,” with both the shadow and the piano keys moving in time to the music. The song is chosen to accompany the appearance of the murderous bride elsewhere in the room. Source: Dave Decaro, 2013.

remain are quickly defused by comic relief or dark humor.

One of the most memorable moments in the Mansion comes during the opening walkthrough segment, before riders climb aboard the “Doom Buggies” that will take them on their tour of the house. While walking down a spooky hallway decorated with shifting portraits, creepy wallpaper, and busts that seem to watch the guests as they pass, the Ghost Host, the ride’s disembodied narrator, describes some of the Mansion’s residents: “We have nine hundred and ninety-nine happy haunts here,” he says. “But,” he adds ominously, “there’s room for a thousand. Any volunteers?” (Atencio and Baker

2005)

Over the years, a surprising number of guests have apparently sought to take the Host up on his invitation, as the Mansion has become the site of a rather macabre brand of folklore. Specifically, legends claim that many park guests have spread the ashes of their loved ones inside the ride—and, if the tales are to be believed, at least one of them has stuck around as a permanent member of the Mansion's "swinging wake." The juxtaposition between these two very different images—death and Disneyland, fake ghosts and real burials—is intriguing, to say the least. Studying these legends and trying to figure out what they say—not only about Disneyland, but about the fans who, apparently, continue to scatter—teaches us much about those who would, as the ride's theme song encourages, "join [the] jamboree" (Atencio and Baker 2005).

"The Boundless Realm of the Supernatural": Foundations and Folklore

The Haunted Mansion was actually planned for Disneyland from the very beginning. When Walt Disney first began to formulate the idea for a "Mickey Mouse Park," he asked Harper Goff, one of the Disney artists, to sketch out some initial plans, and explicitly instructed that he include a "church graveyard and haunted house" in the illustration (Baham 2014, 4). The idea of a "Ghost House" of some kind persisted, with early concept art (including a 1953 concept map used to sell the idea of Disneyland to investors) locating it just off Main Street USA, close to the park entrance. Despite these intentions, the Mansion did not actually make it into the park by opening day; instead, it

was included in the plans for the first major expansion to Disneyland, New Orleans Square. Construction on the Mansion began in 1962, with the Mansion's façade[2] being completed in 1963; however, due to a number of production delays (including preparations for the 1964 World's Fair and the death of Walt Disney in 1966), the ride itself would not open until 1969 (Baham 2014, 5).

Neal Gabler describes how, when Walt was designing Disneyland, he sought to capture the popular ideal of whatever it was he was working on at the time: for example, Gabler describes Sleeping Beauty's Castle, which forms the heart of the park, as "the Platonic castle of everyone's imaginations" (Gabler 2007, 498). Apparently, this design philosophy carried over to the Haunted Mansion as well, for the Mansion is very carefully designed to encapsulate the folkloric image of the haunted house. Sylvia Ann Grider, in her essay "Haunted Houses," describes this image:

> Depictions of the archetypal haunted house contain some combination of the following distinctive motifs: multistoried, mansard or gambrel roof, turrets or towers, and broken or boarded-up windows with "spooky" inhabitants peeking out. Furthermore, the darkened house is generally on an isolated hilltop, surrounded by a high broken fence, with leafless dead trees and/or a witch on a broomstick silhouetted against a full moon.
> . . . Once inside the haunted house, the action of the ghost story usually takes place in the attic or the basement or on the connecting staircase, locations rich with psychological symbolism of isolation and evil. (Grider 2007, 147; 152)

The Haunted Mansion conforms with surprising regularity to this description. The façade of the Mansion is built in a Southern Colonial style, chosen so as to appear alien to a

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[2] To be clear: the façade is the public-facing building that guests use to enter the ride, i.e., the "house" part of the Haunted Mansion. The majority of the ride track is actually located in a nondescript warehouse just outside the earthen berm that marks the border of Disneyland; in fact, most of the early part of the ride, including the famous "Stretching Rooms," are subtle ways of herding the guests towards the ride track.

primarily-Californian audience; it does, indeed, boast multiple stories, and carries a small turret on top (Baham 2014, 78). It also sits on a small rise—definitely not Grider's "isolated hilltop," but enough of a climb so that guests have to look upwards to actually see the structure, earning, to some extent, the same effect. Furthermore, the three interior locations described feature prominently in the narrative of the ride: the Doom Buggies begin the ride by ascending a staircase; the attic, packed with all kinds of junk, is where the riders meet the murderous bride, one of the ride's more memorable characters; and the famous "hitchhiking ghosts" that bid the guests farewell appear in the underground crypt, which answers quite nicely for a basement.

The Mansion does depart from Grider's description in a few important details—most importantly, the apparent condition of the façade. The archetypal haunted house is in grave disrepair, but the Haunted Mansion is immaculately maintained, reportedly on the insistence of Walt Disney himself. Walt, recalling memories of dirty, unkempt amusement parks that may have inspired his desire to build Disneyland in the first place, insisted that everything in Disneyland appear pristine at all times. However, the designers were able to work around this restriction in a number of ways. For one, the Mansion's yard is surrounded by a low, red-brick wall, topped with intricate wrought-iron fencing—not broken-down by any means, but still imposing, with the gaps in the wrought iron perhaps suggesting the gaps in the archetypal run-down fence. Additionally, the Mansion is built in a grove of magnolia trees, carefully arranged to partially obscure the Mansion itself. Though these trees still have their leaves, their veiling presence adds to the intimidating, mysterious nature of the structure. The yard is also creatively landscaped

with plants that appear unkempt and alien, even when properly maintained; these include close-packed mondo grass (suggesting an overgrown lawn), medusa's head (placed in several vases around the edge of the property), and several "weeping" trees, including weeping mulberry and weeping juniper (Baham 2014, 77). And finally, though no ghostly visitors can be seen in the windows, parked in front of the Mansion is an antique funeral hearse[3], drawn by an invisible horse (suggested by its elaborate tack, which hangs motionless in the air) (see Figure 2-2). Once inside the structure, the required disrepair is more apparent—thick cobwebs cover every surface, with flickering, dripping candles all along the walls—but the exterior remains sufficiently spooky, even without having to resort to such props.

This attention to detail apparently paid off, for, within months of its opening, the Haunted Mansion had already become the site of some rather grim folklore. Six months after the ride opened, the elevators hidden in the Stretching Rooms, which lowered the guests from ground level down to the underground ride track, suddenly stopped working. After some investigation, park workers found that a crack in the lining of the nearby Rivers of America attraction was allowing water to leak into the elevator shafts, shorting out the motors, which required require a lengthy repair of both the Haunted Mansion and

[3] A tidbit of Mansion folklore—urban legends claim that the hearse was originally used to carry the body of an early Mormon leader, either Brigham Young (as most commonly told) or Joseph Smith (as reported by Baham) (Baham 2004, 77). However, the associated Snopes.com article points out that the hearse was purchased at auction without any kind of documentation, and that the manufacturer's plate had been removed, making it impossible to track down its history with any degree of certainty. More importantly, Young's funeral, at the explicit instructions of Young himself, did not actually use a hearse ("Hearseay" 2007).

Figure 2-2: The hearse parked outside the Mansion. Note the partially-obscured horse tack, to the right of the frame; the tack suggests the presence of a ghostly horse to the guests. Source: Dave Decaro, 2007.

the Rivers of America (Koenig 2002, 111). Guests, however, were not aware of the maintenance problems, and began to spread rumors that the ride was so scary that it had given a guest a heart attack, which necessitated a complete remodel of the ride.[4] Though

[4] Other sources, including Snopes.com, claim this legend was used to explain the long wait between the completion of the ride's façade in 1963 and its official opening in 1969—that is, the heart attack and subsequent delay happened during an early preview, rather than shortly after opening ("Haunted Mansion" 2007). Of course, these versions are not mutually exclusive—perhaps the legend morphed to reflect the circumstances of the later closure—but no source I have found mentions such a connection. In any case, these legends are granted additional credibility by the fact that Disney *has* had to redesign certain attractions due to safety concerns. One such attraction is Walt Disney World's "Mission: Space," which needed to be remodeled after a number of guests reported injuries including, notably, heart trouble ("Incidents" 2016).

legends such as these are interesting in their own right, I find the fact that they exist at all even more important: Disneyland worked hard to create a haunted house in line with what its guests expected to see, and they were so successful that, within months of opening, the guests had already begun to supply their own ghosts.

Given this folklorically-charged atmosphere, it is somewhat curious to note how the Mansion was advertised. Early reports repeatedly emphasized that ghosts (which, of course, could not be *native* to Disneyland) were being recruited to populate the Mansion, with many such ads actually inviting ghosts to apply for positions. One such source is Walt Disney's 1958 interview with the BBC, in which he stated, among other things, that ghosts needed to re-enact "their crimes" for mortals for a certain amount of time before they could move on, and that Disneyland would provide the best possible audience for such demonstrations. Walt even took pains to invite "the disenfranchised ghosts of England," whose "old houses were torn down and . . . [who had] no place to go," to "come to California" (Baham, 2014, 26). A more immediate invitation once stood outside the Mansion itself: to help explain the ride's apparently-vacant façade, a sign was hung from a wrought-iron frame out front (see Figure 2-3), advertising the benefits of (un-)life in the Mansion, and concluding with an invitation for interested ghosts to send their resumes to the Disneyland Ghost Relations Department. "Please!" it added, "Do not apply in person" (Baham 2014, 44). An abbreviated version of this sign remains today: a small card, displayed inside the hearse in front of the Mansion, advertises that reservations for future residents are still being accepted at the Ghost Relations department—once again, pleading that interested parties "*Please* do not apply in person!"

Figure 2-3: The Haunted Mansion's original advertisement sign, which once hung outside the Mansion to explain the apparently-vacant building's purpose. The sign references several features that did not make it into the final attraction, which was initially conceived as a walk-through museum rather than a ride. Source: Chef Mayhem 2011.

(Emphasis in original) (ibid. 136). This is not to mention the Ghost Host's requests for volunteers to fill a vacancy, nor the so-called Ghost Hostess, a small, female figure located by the exit who, as the guests are leaving, invites them to "Hurry back . . . [with their] death certificate[s]" (Atencio and Baker 2005). The placement of these two invitations—one before the ride has actually started, and one after it has ended—greatly emphasizes the apparent fact that Disneyland is more than happy to have the ghosts of the recently deceased living in their park. Given how insistent Disney has been that they are looking for more ghosts, perhaps they should not be entirely surprised that some guests have chosen, at least in the folklore, to stick around.

“Is This Haunted Room *Actually* Stretching?”: Facticity and Genre

While discussing my research into these ash scattering legends, both with scholars and with Disneyland fans, I have been asked a number of times whether such scatterings actually take place, and, if so, how often. For this reason, I would like to take some time to address these questions before I begin my analysis in detail.

In short: I have found enough evidence to believe that, yes, these ash scatterings do, indeed, take place—but, since Disney has yet to release a formal statement on the matter, and I have yet to speak to someone who has actually performed a scattering or personally dealt with the aftermath themselves, I am unable to definitively lay the issue to rest.

As I have said, there is a fair amount of evidence to support the idea that ash scatterings actually take place. An easy example, reported by Al Lutz of Disney fansite MiceAge.com, supposedly took place November 9, 2007: a woman riding the nearby Pirates of the Caribbean attraction was seen scattering an unidentified powder on the ride, either on the elaborate set pieces (as Lutz reported) or directly into the water (as told by news outlets, which spread the story within days of Lutz’s report) (Lutz 2007; Yoshino 2007). According to Lutz, the woman was briefly detained by the cast members working the ride, and, when asked what had happened, she said that the powder was simply baby powder; despite her assertions, however, security identified the powder as ashes, and called for a specialized cleanup team (Lutz 2007). There are enough factual gaps and contradictions that this account by itself is not conclusive, but the fact that it was widely

reported in the news as an actual ash scattering gives it some weight.

As an additional piece of evidence, this particular story gained enough traction to prompt an official response from Disney, in which spokesman Rob Doughty claimed that there was no definitive evidence that the powder was human remains, nor that such a scattering had ever taken place. However, he did admit that Disneyland receives requests about twice a year from people who would like to scatter ashes, which requests are always denied (Schoetz 2007). I would like to point out that, to me at least, this particular statement feels less like an honest disclosure and more like an attempt at damage control. The language used, at least in (Disney-owned) ABC News's summary of the statement—the only source I have been able to find for it—is very firm, yet just vague enough to be meaningless: "the park has never had a *confirmed* case where human ashes *were found*" (emphasis mine) (ibid.). For this reason, I am choosing to discount the truthfulness of this statement—which, in turn, suggests that this is far from an isolated incident.

I would also like to mention one particular account of an ash scattering I collected—an account given by David Koenig in his book, *Mouse Tales*. Koenig's account closely conforms to the specifications I will describe shortly, but is related in very great detail: he gives a specific date (December 14, 2002), uses quotes from cast members (the substance scattered was "'gray, like ash'"), describes contemporary events (this being 2002, people were worried the powder was anthrax), and even lists the numbers of the cars used by the culprits (Doom Buggies #49 and #50). Though certain elements of this tale do feel somewhat unrealistic (the ash-scattering family requests that they be given their own private elevator on a busy night—an unusual imposition that

would hold up the line rather dramatically), the fact that such exacting details are used lends some credence to the claim that such an event actually took place[5] (Koenig 2006, 141).

The most compelling evidence in favor of these ash scatterings, is, somewhat ironically, also the most vague. The official Disneyland website includes a lengthy list of items not allowed in the park, most of which are ones that might be expected—weapons, drugs, alcohol, glass bottles, etc. However, towards the bottom of the list is a curious item: along with everything else, guests are prohibited from having "Cremated remains (e.g., urns, vases, boxes)" ("Theme Parks"). Despite Doughty's assurances that ashes have never been scattered in Disneyland, the park feels that scatterings are enough of an issue that they are willing to spend internet real estate in an effort to prevent future incidents. To me, this feels like a disproportionately strong response to the polite, twice-a-year requests Doughty describes, which, in turn, suggests that Disneyland has a bigger problem with ashes than it would like to admit.

In discussing this topic, another common question I have gotten is "how often do such scatterings happen?" Again, without definitive figures it is difficult to say for sure, especially given the very wide range of responses I have gotten from my various research sources and informants. Estimates I have received range from less than once a year to multiple times a month, averaging very roughly once a month. Again, without a firm

[5] This level of detail might not be surprising—after all, one of the identifying features of urban legends is the use of specific detail. However, the greater-than-normal specificity found in this account, especially its use of numerical data such as dates and car numbers (not to mention the thoroughness of Koenig's other research) makes this account seem to be something more than a simple urban legend.

consensus or a statement from Disney, it is difficult to nail down the frequency of these events with any confidence; however, one cast member told me that, any time you see the gates to the Haunted Mansion closed during the day, it is a good indication that someone has scattered ashes.

Given the wide range of responses—"yes they do," "no they don't," "once a year," "once a month"—it remains difficult to confirm whether or not, or exactly how often, these events take place. Even if we are dealing with folk practice, my research is hampered slightly by the fact that I have yet to locate anyone who claims to have scattered ashes themselves, or a cast member who has, personally, had to deal with the cleanup.[6] Given this confusion, I have, for the purposes of this discussion, made the decision to treat these incidents as legends rather than practice. Despite this difference, I feel that there is still plenty to discuss, even if these stories *have* been invented out of whole cloth.

"If You Would Like to Join Our Jamboree": The Scattering Legends

In my research, I have managed to collect about eleven accounts of ash scatterings from a number of sources, including interviews with fans and employees, fan-published

[6] Redditor sheambulance came close, though: reportedly, on Thanksgiving Day in 2013, they were close to the front of the line for the Haunted Mansion when the ride closed down unexpectedly. Frustrated, they asked a Cast Member what was going on, and the cast member indicated that someone had spread ashes in the ballroom area. Reportedly, the cast members needed to vacuum up the ashes, then replace the "fake dust" when they were done (sheambulance, 2013). I have not been able to verify this account, but it is nevertheless tantalizing.

books and blogs, news reports, and one account in particular, gleaned from a conversation with a Mansion employee (which will be discussed in greater detail later). Some of these accounts took place at the nearby Pirates of the Caribbean attraction, and one in the Haunted Mansion at Walt Disney World, in Florida; these accounts have been included in my analysis as supplementary research.

Most of these stories are strikingly similar, at least in broad details. One such account, sourced from a former cast member, follows:

> Well, I've heard . . . at least a couple of times a month, people are taking in ashes, and trying to scatter them in the ride . . . then, of course, everyone is like, 'oh, the ashes are haunting the Mansion!' but, y'know, you can never prove that. And what the public doesn't know is that [the ashes] just get swept up or vacuumed up. The public for the most part doesn't know that. So they just think all these ashes are in [the ride], somewhere. ("Liz" 2015)

In my analysis, I have noticed several characteristics common among these accounts. From these characteristics, I have assembled a brief overview of what the typical ash scattering legend looks like, arranged into five incidents. Not all accounts feature each incident—for example, several of the accounts I found ended at "Yes, people scatter ashes." That said, each account relates at least one of the following five incidents, with most including at least a couple of them:

1) A guest scatters ashes. Nearly every one of these accounts begins *in medias res*, with the scattering or discovery of ashes. In many cases, the scatterer is actually explicitly described as doing the scattering, but, in many others, the scattering is implied; in these cases, the ashes are most often not discovered until much later (for example, one account, given by Al Lutz, describes an enormous pile of ashes not found until closing

time) (Lutz 2007). In either case, background details on both the scatterer and the deceased are sparse, if they are given at all.

2) An employee tries to stop the guest, to no avail. In some stories, an employee working the ride notices the scatterer either before or during the scattering itself, and attempts to stop them (usually addressing the scatterer over the in-ride intercom). In such cases, the employee is always ignored. No account I collected included the scatterer prematurely stopping their scattering, or an employee or fellow guest preventing them from continuing.

3) The scatterer disappears. Even when the scatterer is clearly seen on camera—and even in one account, the previously-described 2007 incident at the Pirates of the Caribbean, when employees actually stopped and questioned the scatterer—the scatterer is always able to avoid punishment and disappear into the crowd (Lutz 2007). In many cases, especially when the scattering is not noticed until afterwards, the scatterer is not seen by the employees at all. In either case, the scatterer remains almost—if not entirely—anonymous.

4) The ride is temporarily closed. If the ashes are noticed during the regular operating day, the ride is closed. Guests currently on the ride are allowed to finish and exit normally, but no new riders are allowed on. Almost always, ambiguous "health and safety concerns" are cited as the reason for the closure, with a smaller emphasis on the cleanliness of the ride.

5) The ashes are vacuumed up. After the ashes are discovered, employees clean up the scattered ashes with a vacuum. Several specify that Disneyland has a specialized

HEPA filter vacuum, which is used to trap the particulate matter (one of my informants described it as a "shop vac" style vacuum, rather than the traditional upright model). It is not uncommon for these accounts to stress the mundanity or irony of the situation: despite what romantic visions the scatterer may have had for their deceased loved ones, the employees simply vacuum them away. I should add that no account specified what happens to the ashes after they are vacuumed up—that is, it is not clear whether the ashes are disposed of "properly," or simply go in the trash with the rest of the garbage.

Usually, only a few of these points are included in the accounts I have collected—as stated, many of my accounts consisted of a simple statement like "People scatter ashes." Of the eleven stories I have found, including the published and supplemental accounts I described, the most commonly featured elements, from most- to least-featured, were "the guest scatters ashes" (all eleven accounts), "the ashes are vacuumed" (seven), "the ride is closed" (six), and "the scatterer disappears" and "an employee tries to stop the guest" (two each).

I should mention that a few of these elements can be implied: for example, "the guest disappears" is only made explicit in two accounts, but the guest vanishes from the narrative after the scattering in seven more cases.

"Materializing The Disembodied": Analysis and Application

In my research, I noticed several striking details about these stories that can teach us much about those who tell them. Universally, these accounts are told from the

perspective of the employees—that is, these stories feature a scatterer that remains part of the faceless crowd until they start to misbehave, give little detail about the background of the scatterer or the deceased, and tend to put a disproportionate emphasis on the cleanup process—all elements we would expect if an employee, not a guest, were telling the story. Further, every Disneyland employee I spoke to knew of these stories, and many could relate them in some detail; in contrast, most of the guests I approached for these same stories had never heard of them. For these reasons, I believe that these legends originate among park employees, and spread outside the park itself primarily through those close contact with an employee (e.g., via friends, family members, or frequent guests).

With this idea in mind, these stories begin to reveal a great deal about the employee culture of Disneyland. For one thing, each of these stories is primarily a narrative of disempowerment: in nearly every one, the employees are powerless to stop the scatterings, or to punish—or even to *locate*—the scatterer. To me, this makes these stories feel like persecution legends—that is, "these dumb tourists are ruining our park, and we can do nothing to stop them."

These stories reveal something a little deeper as well: a reaction to certain elements of Disney corporate policy. In both *Mouse Tales* books, David Koenig takes special glee in relating tales of rude, dishonest, uncooperative, and even violent guests. At the same time, he takes pains to describe how staff can be reprimanded, disciplined, or even fired if they receive negative comment cards from those same guests, which leads to employees being afraid of standing up to all but the most out-of-line tourists (Koenig

2006, 133). Additionally, a number of sources, including Koenig, suggest that, in the name of good customer service, staff members are prohibited from restraining or detaining the guests in any way, and, further, must follow the aforementioned "script," which forbids the use of words like "No" and "I don't know." Such a script would remove the cast members' ability to offer even token resistance to such guests, leaving them feeling even more powerless.

These factors apparently combine to create a work environment in which employees are *afraid* of the guests. The massive crowds—up to twelve million guests a year, by some estimates—all too often run rough-shod over the park and its employees, and, both due to corporate policy and out of fear of losing their jobs, the employees must watch helplessly as they do so. This feeling of powerlessness, I am sure, is a frequent topic of discussion, in one form or another, in the various break rooms of Disneyland. In either case, such tensions can clearly be seen in these legends, in which guests scattering ashes—an act which would provoke shock and horror from most of us—is something that is not only within the realm of possibility, but is one that occurs, at least in legend, on a regular basis.[7]

I would also like to emphasize the peculiar nature of some of the narratives I

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[7] This assertion is supported by some snippets of cast member folklore collected by Koenig. He describes that, among employees, many in-park accidents are attributed to the stupidity of guests, and that such accidents, especially grisly ones, often result in jeers, jokes and songs. One example: in 1984, a woman named Dolly was killed on the Matterhorn Bobsleds, apparently because she removed her safety belt during the ride. After the accident, employees named the location of her death "Dolly's Dip," and made up songs about her to the tune of "Hello Dolly" (Koenig 2006, 195). The fact that folklore mocking guest behavior has already been documented makes it a little more likely that tales like these could be told at the expense of Haunted Mansion guests.

collected. As I said, a number of narratives I collected began and ended with "Yes, people scatter ashes." These short narratives bring to mind Bill Ellis's "half-lives of legend," which describe five stages of a legend's life cycle; stage four is "Metonym," in which the legend is reduced to a small snippet of the original tale, which, in a community familiar with the narrative, is enough to stand for a full retelling (Ellis 2001, 64). To be fair, my method of questioning may have inadvertently signaled insider status (e.g., "Have you heard the stories about the ash scatterings at the Haunted Mansion?"), which may have prompted a disproportionate number of metonym retellings; in either case, the prevalence of these metonyms makes me think that these legends are rather mature. That is, these metonyms suggest that crazy guests are no recent phenomenon, and stories about them even less so.

"An Aura of Foreboding": An Account from the Mansion's Staff

There is one last account I would like to discuss, one I have largely omitted from my previous analysis. This narrative is simultaneously the most authoritative and the most problematic that I collected, especially given the circumstances under which it was given. Specifically, I was able to have an informal, unrecorded interview with a couple employees of the Mansion itself—and their account contradicts the above analysis in several important, and illuminating, points.

During my April 2015 trip to Disneyland, I made a point of visiting the Mansion several times to do research for this chapter. While there, I managed to find two Haunted

Mansion employees standing outside the attraction. I approached them, briefly introduced myself, and launched right into my interrogation, asking them a number of detailed, rapid-fire questions about ashes in the Mansion—when, where, how often, and so on.

Unfortunately, my approach had an unintended side-effect: I think I gave them the impression that I wanted to scatter ashes myself, and was using this opportunity to "case the joint," so to speak. Though one of the employees, an older man, readily answered my questions about procedures and so forth (with some interjections from his younger female coworker), he was rather aggressive in his answers, which makes me think he was trying to scare me off of my apparently-intended course of action. Interestingly, the answers he gave me still matched in broad outline with my other accounts, despite the fact that they differed significantly in tone and intent.

In response to my questions, this employee informed me that yes, ashes are indeed scattered at the Haunted Mansion, perhaps as often as two or three times a month. However, he said, the employees are able to catch every single scatterer on camera, either just before or during the scattering. When they spot a scatterer, the employees issue a verbal warning over the in-ride intercom (according to the young lady, something along the lines of "Your tour is being monitored"), which is usually enough to deter most scatterers. When a scatterer persists, however, employees alert the "authorities" (probably park security), then pause the seven-minute ride to give them time to arrive.[8] The

[8] Such pauses are not unusual on the Haunted Mansion: the ride cars are all part of a single continuous chain, so any kind of hold-up (for example, by employees helping a disabled guest into or out of one of the cars) temporarily halts the entire ride. Of the past several times I have ridden the Mansion, easily 75% of them have featured a pause, often quite a lengthy one. Given the commonality of such stops, it is unlikely that the

authorities then catch the scatterer at the exit to the ride and escort them from the park. Employees must then shut down the ride and vacuum up the ashes before it can be reopened.

In this account, some of the important details outlined above are obviously changed—most importantly, the scatterer is caught, rather than disappearing into the crowd—but the difference I find most striking is the change in tone. As I said, the majority of the legends I gathered were stories of disempowerment (e.g., "the unwashen masses are too much for us"), however, this account is a story of *em*powerment (to paraphrase Liam Neeson from *Taken,* "We have a very particular set of equipment, and we will find you, and we will catch you."[9]). Though it is difficult to draw conclusions from a single account, especially given the circumstances in which it was collected, I get the impression that this account may be indicative of the stories the employees of the Mansion tell each other.

If this is the case, this story tells us a lot about those who work at the Mansion: specifically, this story portrays the Mansion employees as much more competent (and successful) than other accounts, a marked difference from the helplessness I described earlier. Besides the obvious difference in who is telling the story (the teller is also, in some sense, the subject), I feel this change marks an important difference in attitude. For most employees, there is an element of distance in these tales: they can tell these stories

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scatterer—much less the other guests—would see anything out of the ordinary with such a delay.

[9] To be absolutely clear: the two quotations in this sentence are intended as short summaries of my own impression of the emotional tone of these two sets of stories. These are not quotations from my research, nor from my informants.

about a public gone mad and shake their heads, because it is not happening to *them*. In contrast, the Mansion employees find themselves at ground zero for these tales, among the grisliest told about the park. Tales like this one seem to be a reassurance—or, perhaps, a determination—that they do, indeed, have control over their home turf, and that they can, and will, protect it from those to seek to do it harm.

"Sympathetic Vibrations": The Boy in Red

Closely related to the legends of ash scatterings are the stories of the Boy in Red, a ghost who, reportedly, had his mortal remains scattered at the Haunted Mansion. For this reason, no analysis of ash scatterings at the Mansion would be complete without at least a mention of the Boy.

The Boy in Red is so named for his distinguishing feature—a red article of clothing, most often a jacket (which, I should add, would make him stand out from the artificial ghosts of the attraction, each of which are painted in ghostly blues and greens). The Boy himself is said to appear in several different locations: some claim he can be seen in the Mansion's exterior windows (which are nothing more than glass and paint, with no space behind them for anyone to stand), some say he wanders between the Haunted Mansion and the nearby Pirates of the Caribbean attraction (which, legends claim, used actual human bones as props for many years), and some say that he just wanders the more general New Orleans Square area, containing both the Mansion and the Pirates ride. However, the Boy is most often said to be confined to the Mansion itself,

and that he can be heard by the exit, crying—"as if [he is] unable to get out, and desperately want[s] to" (Jensen 2011).

The stories surrounding the Boy in Red are, by and large, very similar: in life, the Boy was a big fan of Disneyland. However, he was terminally ill (some stories specify cancer or leukemia), and, after a long, difficult illness, he passed away. His mother had him cremated, and, knowing his love for Disneyland, she took his ashes to the park and scattered them in the Mansion. She was not caught, of course, but, as a result of her scattering, her little boy is now condemned to haunt the park.

These stories are quite different from the legends I have analyzed previously. First, these stories are told from the perspective of the park guests: we get a great deal of background on both the deceased boy and his mother, and, if the park employees appear at all, they appear as antagonists, trying to stop the mother from completing her righteous quest. Second, the tone of these stories is, once again, radically different. Most of the ash scattering legends are, indeed, legends—that is, they are told as if they are true. However, most of the Boy in Red narratives are told with an element of *un*reality: "But you can never prove that," as the cast member I quoted earlier said.

But the biggest difference I have noticed is the change in the apparent purpose of these tales. The general ash-scattering legends, as I described, appear to be primarily occupational folklore, expressing frustration at how park guests act. However, stories of the Boy in Red feel more like interdictory tales, warning the hearers away from a course of action—in this case, scattering ashes. These stories draw on old traditions, which claim that improper burials raise vampires, ghosts, and other monsters (some such traditions are

described in detail by Paul Barber in *Vampires, Burial, and Death*, e.g., Barber 2010, 13). In line with these traditions, the fact that this mother scattered her child's ashes in Disneyland, rather than giving him a more proper burial, leads to him becoming a ghost—and, furthermore, given the method of his burial, ensures that he will be confined to the Mansion for all of eternity. And even dedicated fans of Disneyland *have* to admit that an endless chorus of "Grim Grinning Ghosts" would make for a far-from-ideal afterlife.

Given these differences, it seems to me that these stories are folk reactions to the ash scattering legends: that is, these stories begin with a sorrowful tale of a boy dying far too young, then a mother who pays tribute to her child in the only way she knows how—and, by doing so, these stories recognize the (probable) good intentions of the scatterers. However, the story quickly turns dark, warning scatterers that, despite their best intentions, going through with their plans will either a) ruin their loved ones' afterlife by trapping them in the Mansion, or b) ruin the park itself by causing it to be haunted. Given that, on the whole, potential scatterers are most likely hardcore Disney fans, both these reasons should be enough to at least give them pause.

"A Ghost Will Follow You Home!": Conclusion

As I established earlier, I believe these legends of ash scatterings at the Haunted Mansion are born from actual incidents, and spread, at least inside the park, as a reaction to the working conditions and corporate culture. Nevertheless, I feel that the fact that

these legends persist *outside* the park—not to mention that people, apparently, continue to scatter—is indicative of a greater shift in our perceptions of death and burial.

Several researchers have noted that our ideas about death and burial have shifted over time (e.g., Kselman, 1993, and Thomas, 2003). Graves from long ago tended to give little information about the deceased, sometimes even packing the dead into catacombs, ossuaries, or other mass graves, completely anonymous. However, as time has marched on, burials have begun to individualize the dead more and more, including, in the past century or so, etchings on gravestones showing hobbies, interests, and even portraits of the deceased.

What I have found in my own research has both confirmed and expanded this idea. Judging from the Logan City Cemetery in Logan, Utah (which, admittedly, caters to an audience of more conservative tastes than most), gravestones have become more and more complex over the last fifty years or so, showing not only portraits, hobbies, and occupations, but also places of origin, statements of faith, family trees, and, in one memorable example, a number of snarky quotes to indicate the personality of the deceased. I also noticed an increase in asymmetrical headstones, often shaped to look like unworked rocks, which stood out easily, even at a distance, against the reigning uniformity. Though earlier gravestones were often more elaborate, these more modern examples *screamed* for attention, demanding that *these* dead be recognized as unique individuals.

This same trend of individualization is easily observable with a quick flip through any mortuary catalog. In addition to the expected wide variety of materials and designs

for both gravestones and caskets, one can also find a startling number of customization options, including personalized urns and embroidered “head panels” for caskets. These latter options can display religious images, statements of faith or love, and even (in the agricultural community of Logan, at least) professions of loyalty to a particular breed of cow or brand of tractor.

Such catalogs, along with Thomas and Kselman’s work, my cemetery research—and, of course, these legends about the Haunted Mansion—suggest that, nowadays, we expect that where and how we are buried should say something about who we were in life. That is, if we are a music enthusiast, we can realistically expect to be buried with sheet music to our favorite hymn carved on our headstone; on the other hand, if we are a Disney fan, we can expect (or at least desire) to be buried in the Happiest Place on Earth. Indeed, initial research suggests that this desire is more common that might be expected: an apparent fan, quoted in connection with the 2007 Pirates scattering, said "I've just heard people joke about it, how much they love Disneyland and that they'd like to be buried there, have their ashes scattered there. I've even said it” (Shoetz 2007).

Curiously, at least among theme parks, ash scatterings appear to be restricted exclusively to Disney parks. When I asked a representative from Knott’s Berry Farm, a theme park about 15 minutes away from Disneyland, they claimed that no one had asked to scatter there (Castro 2016). I asked the same question of Lagoon, a small Utah theme park with its own “Haunted House” dark ride, and got a response directly from the president of the park; he likewise confirmed that they had never received such a request, though he added that, if a guest were to be sneaky about it, there is little that the park

would be able to do to stop them. “However, at this time,” he added, “our thought is that we let Disneyland have the exclusive as an ash scattering venue” (Freed 2015).

Though I have not been able to get this sort of direct response from other parks—several others did not respond to my emails—a series of quick google searches appears to confirm this theory. Searching for terms like “Ash Scatterings in Disneyland” immediately returns several pages of ash scattering legends and rumors, while the same is not true of searches like “Ash Scatterings in Six Flags Magic Mountain” or “Universal Studios Hollywood,” both located within two hours’ drive of Disneyland.

For both of these reasons, I posit that ash scatterings—and, of course, the spreading of ash scattering legends—is a rather morbid, but nonetheless legitimate, Disneyland fan activity. The desire to be scattered in a Disney park, as well as the act of scattering itself, is a commemoration of the life of a truly dedicated fan. Many who request to be cremated ask to have their ashes scattered at their homes, or perhaps on their native soil; that a fan would make a similar request of Disneyland is a profound measure of devotion. Additionally, the fact that the legends appear to have taken on a life of their own, far separated from the original incidents, may also reflect an element of jealousy, a secret, hidden desire to be buried at Disneyland oneself—or, at the very least, an acknowledgement that such behavior is becoming more acceptable. Further, especially given that, at least among theme parks, such scatterings appear to be exclusive to Disneyland, the legends and apparent practice of ash scatterings form yet another testament to the power and the effect of the Disney Magic.

However, we still have the stories of the Boy in Red, which appear to represent a

backlash against such thinking. The horror and revulsion implied in these narratives naturally extends to the practice itself: that is, these stories see the apparent scattering trend and urge fans to fight against it. Thus, though many fans may want to be buried at Disneyland, many others continue to be repulsed and horrified by the implications of such an act.

In any case, examining these legends has been fruitful. Doing so has given us a window into the rather insular community of Disneyland employees, and given us an idea of what it feels like to actually work there. By examining the account from the Haunted Mansion separately, we have also been able to uncover a hidden tension within the park, showing that employees are fiercely loyal to, and protective of, their own attraction. More importantly, we have seen that these stories may also have a greater meaning, expressing an unexpected avenue of fan activity. In short, by learning more about legends surrounding a very artificial, very fabricated haunted house, we have been able to learn more about the actual ghosts that still haunt us as a people.

CHAPTER 3

SAINTS AND SCAMMERS: THE FOLK ASSEMBLAGE AND FOLK WISDOM OF DISNEY PINS

Collectible pins have always been sold in Disney parks, but the official Disney Pin Trading brand, first introduced in Disneyland in 2000, truly popularized and formalized the act of pin trading at Disneyland ("Disney Pin Trading"). Nowadays, it is difficult to walk down the streets of the park without passing at least one display of pins or pin trading, and a number of online communities (including the Disney Pin Swap subreddit, which has provided the majority of my research for this topic) have sprung up to facilitate trading and collecting. In fact, pins and pin trading have integrated themselves deeply into fan culture: fans establish group membership and specific interests by the pins they choose to purchase and wear, likely in harmonious accord with what Disney intended by introducing these pins in the first place.

However, something is rotten in the land of Disney.

As with any major merchandising movement, a number of counterfeits have cropped up. These counterfeit pins—called "scrappers" by the fans—intrude upon this once-harmonious relationship, turning what was intended to be a safe, happy way for Disney and its fans to interact into a potential minefield, where traders of all kinds must tread carefully to avoid being cheated.

This paper will examine two sides of this strange dichotomy—a fan community that straddles both the line between mass- and folk-culture, as well as the divide between

peaceful accord and outright theft. Specifically, I will begin by describing Disney pins more in-depth, before moving on to an analysis of pins as wearable body art. I will then move on to talk about the counterfeiting scene, focusing on the folk wisdom surrounding scrappers rather than their commercial aspects. Through the course of this discussion, I hope to demonstrate that pin trading and collecting is a legitimate folk activity, rather than a purely commercial one, and one that deserves more in-depth study.

What Is A Disney Pin?

Before analysis can really begin, some background information on pins themselves is necessary. At their most basic level, Disney trading pins are relatively intricate, high-quality lapel pins. They tend to be about an inch-and-a-half to two inches across, and are made of cloisonné enamel—a metal frame filled with colored enamel that creates an appearance not entirely dissimilar to stained glass. Most pins depict a Disney character, a Disneyland attraction, or both: it is very common to see, for example, Mickey Mouse dressed as a ride attendant, or Chip and Dale in a ride car. Other popular themes include Disney characters represented as objects (candied apples, keys and padlocks, high-heel shoes) and nearly-infinite variations on the Mickey Mouse icon.[1]

Most pins are relatively simple, but they can rapidly get quite complex. The most basic pins are a single, flat sheet, but variations include multiple layers (called "pin on pin"; an example would be for a three-dimensional banner flying over an attraction),

[1] i.e., the familiar Mickey Mouse "head" design, composed of three connected circles.

hinges (for example, the hinges on a pocket watch), spinning or sliding parts (e.g., ride cars moving along a track), three-dimensional rubber accents (e.g., the rubber strap on a sandal), and glossy photo inserts (e.g., a portrait of Walt Disney himself) (See Figures 3-1 and 3-2 for examples). The most intricate pins are the Piece of History series, which include a tiny fragment of a park attraction in a clear bubble; these pins act as a sort of reliquary for the park, serving almost to fetishize the given attraction.

Pins can be purchased in a variety of ways—for example, by buying a travel package through certain agencies, or by buying special merchandise (gift cards, etc.) with pins attached. However, by far the most common method of obtaining pins is by buying them in the park, off the massive racks found in many stores (see Figure 3-3); pins available for purchase by this method are identified as “rack pins.” Other pins are only

Figure 3-1: A “Piece of History” pin, showing many of the defining features of Disney pins in general. These include: a Disney character (Mickey Mouse) interacting with a ride (the “Redhead” character from Pirates of the Caribbean), three-dimensional rubber accents (the “bricks” around the outside edge), specialized pearlescent enamel, and, most importantly, the Piece of History itself, in the clear bubble to the lower-left (in this case, a small piece of the Redhead’s dress). Photo courtesy of the author.

Figure 3-2: A rather intricate pin, based on a famous scene from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. This pin includes hinges, allowing it to fold shut, and a photo insert in the center. Note the inconsistent lettering seen on the top portion of the pin: some of the letters are glossy, while others are not. These flaws will be discussed in more detail below. Photo courtesy of the author.

available in small production runs, identified as Limited Edition pins. Such pins are usually identified with the letters "LE," followed by the size of the run: for example, a relatively common LE pin would be identified as LE10000.[2] Such LE pins can be exceptionally rare: for example, the Caesar's Ghost pin, which will be discussed in greater detail later, was initially released as part of an LE25 set.

Disneyland, is, of course, eager to support pin traders. Besides the pins

[2] Note that not all pins with a limited print run are identified in this way; for example, only limited quantities of seasonal, holiday-themed pins may be produced. However, proper LE pins are special, typically more expensive, and are usually kept behind the counter or under glass. In contrast, limited, but not LE pins, are stocked on the racks, and are considered rack pins while still available.

Figure 3-3: Myself, posing in front of a rack of pins at Embarcadero Gifts in California Adventure. This display is actually somewhat small: at the more important pin stores, similar displays fill at least one full wall. Note that in this photo I am Disneybounding as Goofy; this costuming tradition will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Photo courtesy of the author.

themselves, Disney sells a number of accessories to help organize, display, and store pins, including themed lanyards, wearable pin books, and extra rubber pin backs to replace those that might have been damaged or lost. Also available are locking pin backs; these are metal, and much more expensive than the traditional rubber backs, but will lock closed with an included tool. These are used to more-or-less permanently attach a pin to a lanyard, and are intended for use with pins special to the wearer. Also important are the pin starter sets: designed for the beginning pin trader, these sets include a set of six to ten pins, a matching lanyard, and a plastic card with a description of basic pin trading protocols.

It is also interesting to note how, exactly, pins are marketed in the park. There are a number of trading pin shops throughout the parks (including Store Command in Tomorrowland, Westward Ho in Frontierland, and Pooh Corner in Critter Country), but the stock is slightly different in each store, with no apparent pattern as to what is available where. This encourages a shopper looking for a particular pin to visit each store in turn, just to make sure they have not missed the one they are looking for—a strategy, which, undoubtedly, leads to more sales. Also, certain pins are kept under glass, reserved for those who qualify to purchase them: a display in Westward Ho, for example, claimed that these certain, rather ornate pins were reserved for "Annual Passholders, Disney Vacation Club Members, D23 Members [the official Disney fan club] or Disney's Visa Cardmemebers." Such a display serves as a backdoor advertisement of sorts, enticing the buyer to sign up for one or more of these programs in order to secure those coveted pins.

Though this paper does not focus much on the actual act of pin trading, one aspect does need to be discussed: certain pins are available only through trade with Disneyland cast members. Cast members who wish to participate are provided pins by the park, among which are the coveted Cast Member (CM) pins, formerly called Hidden Mickey (HM) pins. These pins are available only through trade, not purchase, and can be identified by a small, silver Mickey Mouse icon somewhere on the front of the pin—the eponymous "Hidden Mickey." Disney actively encourages guests to trade with cast members, and has established a number of protocols to help protect traders: for example, cast members cannot refuse a trade, as long as an official Disney pin is being offered. Such policies help to lower the barrier of entry significantly for traders with low-valued

pins or small collections.

Once pins have been obtained either through purchase or trade, they must then be displayed in some fashion—and the most common, and most important, way to display pins is to actually wear them.

Hearts on Their Sleeves: Wearable Pin Displays

In *The Grace of Four Moons*, Pravina Shukla describes in great detail how women in India create a form of folk art through the purchase, arrangement, and wearing of bangles. Bangles, quite important in India, are made in a wide variety of colors, materials, and patterns, and range from cheap plastic offerings to intricately decorated metal-and-glass art pieces. Women wear these bangles in sets, ranging from a single bangle on each wrist, up to over a couple dozen per arm. To insiders, these sets act as indicators of identity: bangle sets "often designate not only [a woman's] marital status, but also her region of origin and possibly her region of residence", as well as "social status, . . . ethnic and regional identity, her personal tastes, . . . her level of *shauk* [enthusiasm] for ornaments," religious affiliation, level of wealth, destinations of recent pilgrimages and perhaps (via color symbolism) her personality (Shukla 2008, 185; 193; 190; 193; 185; 188).

Shukla takes pains to point out that what, at first, might appear to be a mere commercial activity—much like shopping for jewelry in the United States—is, in fact, a multifaceted folk activity. Meaning and beauty is communicated not only by which

bangles are worn, but how they are grouped and arranged (e.g., married Bengali women wear "the customary pair of bangles, one in red *lac* [shellac] or plastic, and the other of the traditional conch shell or a cheap white imitation in plastic") (Shukla 2008, 185). Thus, the assembly of bangle sets is a careful, deliberate act, undertaken both by the bangle salesman and the woman making the purchase, to craft how she will be perceived by her peers. The actual manufacture and sale of individual bangles is of limited folkloric value, but, "creativity . . . is most often clearly expressed by the artful combination of these purchased things with other items of personal adornment" (Shukla 2008, 190).

Wearable displays of Disney pins—including pin lanyards and pin vests—function much the same way. Like bangles, these products are used to form *assemblages*, a term coined by Jack Santino to describe a folk item consisting of "the combining of a variety of symbolic elements within a single frame, and the creation of a single aesthetic entity by grouping together disparate things" (Santino 1986, 159). Also like bangle wearers, these assemblages are used by Disneyland fans to establish their own public identities—for example, the wearing of any sort of pins identifies the wearer as someone interested in pins, and often (but not always) someone who is interested in trading.[3] Additionally, the pins (and lanyards) can be used by fans to "signify their affiliations," including favorite rides or characters (Lamerichs 2011). A lot can be learned about a

[3] To distinguish these two types of participants, I will use the term "collector" to indicate someone who is more interested in amassing pins than trading, and "trader" to indicate someone who is more interested in swapping pins than collecting. To be sure, this distinction is somewhat artificial—both "collectors" and "traders" usually participate in both trading and collecting, to varying degrees—but these categories may be useful to an academic.

fellow fan by what pins they display, and how they display them.

A wearable pin display consists primarily of two elements: the "wearable," and the "pin[s]"—that is, a selection of pins for display or trade, and an article of clothing to attach them to (which I will call the "base"). Theoretically, any article of clothing can be used as a base, but the best are easily removable, and allow easy access to the pins themselves. Easily the most common display bases are lanyards and vests, both of which are described below, though I have also seen baseball hats used for this purpose.[4]

The most common and identifiable base is a lanyard—often, a themed lanyard sold by Disney for that explicit purpose. Disney lanyards can be purchased at most major pin trading stores, and come in a wide variety of themes, the most prominent of which include favorite rides and characters (much like the pins themselves). Also available are "extra-wide" lanyards, designed to hold more, or larger, pins than normal lanyards. As stated above, the choice of lanyard is important; though much of the design may eventually (and hopefully?) be covered by pins, the lanyard, as a base, is an important first step in a pin collector's choice of how to present themselves to their fellow fans. For example, a trader wearing a Buzz Lightyear lanyard—even one that is mostly full of other pins—is portraying themselves as a fan of Buzz Lightyear, and, therefore, someone

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[4] Please note that I will be excluding pin books from this analysis. Pin books—small pouches containing several pin "pages," with an attached belt loop or shoulder strap—are intended to hold a large number of pins. However, though pin books are indeed "wearable," they are not really "displays" —their function is to protect (and therefore hide) pins, rather than to show them off. Additionally, though pin books do have some customization options (especially the design embroidered on the cover) there appears to be a rather limited number of styles available, making the choice of pin book much less important than a corresponding choice in lanyard.

that might be more interested in trading for pins featuring Buzz or other *Toy Story* characters. The lanyard can also carry personal significance: Jen, one of my informants, said that she started by choosing a lanyard that “resonated” with her, usually one that reminded her of a particular visit or event, though she does own at least one lanyard simply because she likes the color (Gulick 2016).

After lanyards, vests are probably the second most common base. Vests are useful, especially for avid traders, as they can hold a very large number of pins, and allow relatively easy access to any given pin in case of a trade. These vests tend to be relatively thin (often made of denim or similar rugged material), which has the dual benefit of making it easy to add or remove pins without adding too many additional layers of clothing (an important consideration for a park in located in sunny southern California). Though vests tend to lack the theming inherent in lanyards, a vest instead indicates a dedicated (and prolific) trader, as opposed to a simple collector. Many trading vests have every square inch covered in pins, including the back; indeed, a trader with a full vest is something of an awe-inspiring sight. However, such vests can quickly get very heavy, and make sitting on or leaning back against a hard surface uncomfortable; this would make it difficult to enjoy other, more mainstream Disneyland activities, like the rides. Instead, the vest signals very clearly that person is there for one thing, and one thing only: to trade pins (see Figure 3-4).

Once a base has been selected, it must be loaded with pins. In the case of a display lanyard—that is, a lanyard intended primarily to display pins, rather than to

Figure 3-4: A guest who identified himself as "Ben the Pin King," wearing a pin vest. Though his accumulation of pins is impressive, it is not unusual among those who prefer vests to lanyards. The apparent lack of organization to his pin collection is discussed in greater detail below. Photo courtesy of the author.

advertise potential trades—this is a very important process.[5] The act of assembling a lanyard—of choosing pins, of arranging them, and of adding them to the lanyard—is actually an artistic process, one that focuses as much as on aesthetics as it does

[5] Note that this section focuses only on display lanyards, to the exclusion of display vests, as vests, in my experience, are rarely used strictly for display. However, if someone *were* to assemble a display vest, I would assume that the same general principles would apply.

functionality.[6]

One important consideration in the assembly of display lanyards is the physical construction of the lanyard itself. Disney lanyards are fundamentally similar to other commercially-available lanyards: they consist of a narrow strip of tight-woven material, with the two loose ends connected so they overlap. Thus, the lanyard is shaped something like an inverted teardrop—the curved "top" of the lanyard is draped across the back of the wearer's neck, while the "bottom"—the point of the teardrop—hangs over their chest. Additionally, given the way the ends are connected, one "strand" is partially obscured; for ease of reference, visible strand will be called the "front" strand, while the hidden one will be called the "back" strand. Disney lanyards, at least, usually have an additional piece of hardware at the bottom of the lanyard, usually a D-ring or a keyring, intended to hold additional medallions, tags, or other identifiers (For an example, see Figure 3-5).

The first step to assembling a lanyard is to choose the pins themselves. In my own observation, pins on display lanyards tend to have a common theme; for example, one lanyard might be composed entirely of pins themed around a given holiday, a specific character, or a ride. Jen described, for example, how she had a Christmas lanyard, composed of Christmas pins attached to a festive, jingle-belled lanyard; she also mentioned she was considering assembling a Winnie-the-Pooh lanyard, pulling pins both from her on-hand stock, and from other, already-assembled lanyards (ibid.).

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[6] A major aid in helping me understand this process was Jen Gulick; she described, in detail, how she assembled her own lanyards, which, by and large, fit with my own previous observations. The next several paragraphs consist of my own analysis, supplemented with examples from my interview with Jen.

As I said, the construction of the lanyard is an important consideration when assembling a display lanyard. The bottom of the lanyard, where the two ends overlap, is prime real estate—all lanyards I have seen start loading their pins at the bottom and work towards the top. The front strand is greatly preferred: Jen described how she tended to place a beloved, important, or otherwise noteworthy pin on the bottom-front strand, to make it the post prominent pin on the lanyard. However, the bottom-back strand, which is partially obscured by the front strand, is actually one of the *worst* spots for pins; Jen would purposely place a large or unusually-shaped pin there, just so that *some* part of the pin remained visible.

The order in which the pins are placed is also important. To my understanding, aesthetics is the primary concern determining placement. Jen described how, when she assembled her lanyards, she liked to arrange them so that the shape of the pins “fit” together—for example, if part of one pin stuck out (e.g., a character’s head poking above the frame of the pin) she would complement it with a pin with a concave edge (e.g., the bottom of an arch). She compared this process to the video game *Tetris*, evoking the image of carefully manipulating playing pieces to find the perfect, tight fit (see Figure 3-6). Other lanyards I have observed held only five or six pins, widely spaced around the lanyard, perhaps due to a lack of themed pins, or to make sure the design was visible. In any case, this sort of organizational scheme is important in communicating meaning, as will be described shortly.

Finally, most pins are attached to display lanyards with metal locking backs. The rubber backs that pins are sold with are cheap and convenient, but wear out relatively

Figure 3-5: One of my own trading lanyards, which illustrates the construction of Disney lanyards in general. Note that the way the two "strands" overlap, the gray pin on the "bottom-back" strand is partially obscured. In this photograph, the D-ring at the bottom of the lanyard is covered by the oversized "Honorary Citizen" button, and is therefore not visible. Note that this is a trading lanyard, and as such does not conform to the careful organization of a display lanyard. Photo courtesy of the author.

quickly; most collectors I have spoken to have lost at least one pin when the rubber backing holding it onto the lanyard fell off. For this reason, a specially-assembled lanyard, especially when the pins are dear to the wearer, usually makes extensive use of the locking backs, to ensure that they cannot be removed without deliberate effort. This

Figure 3-6: A screenshot from my Skype interview with Jen, who is demonstrating her preferred organization scheme. Though Jen has accidentally moved the pins out of alignment, it is easy to see how the peak of the carousel pin on the bottom would fit neatly into the dip on the bottom of the Minnie Mouse pin above it, and how the flat upper edge of the Minnie Mouse pin, in turn, more-or-less complements the relatively flat bottom edge of the pin above it. Photo courtesy of the author.

careful construction carries meaning both to the wearer and to the viewer. As I described above, a pin on the bottom- front of the lanyard is perceived as the most special or important on the lanyard, which can often signal the tastes of the wearer to others. Additionally, pins on a display lanyard are usually well-organized, which signals to potential traders that this lanyard is "off-limits" (in contrast to the disorganized trading lanyards, described below). The lanyard itself can also serve as a signal to others of the wearer's interests: Jen, for example, showed me a lanyard prominently labeled with the phrase "Every Mile Is Magic," a slogan common at the various Disney marathons. To

one familiar with such an event, the slogan would signal that this particular wearer likes to participate in Disney footraces; to one unfamiliar with the races, the strange but distinctly-Disney slogan (with its emphasis on Magic) would, at minimum, identify the wearer as a Disney fan, and even perhaps act as a bit of a conversation starter.

In this regard, the previously-mentioned “starter sets” are fascinating. These starter sets are marketed to beginners, and are readily available at the major pin trading stores. Each retails for about $30, and consists of a themed trading lanyard pre-loaded with between 6-10 matching pins, with a small plastic card attached describing basic trading protocols. These ready-made lanyards serve as a means of instilling and reinforcing existing fan culture in new participants: the pins and the lanyard match, and identify loyalty to a ride, a character, or a specific pin aesthetic, and, though the attached card encourages pin trading (only with cast members, I might add), the set functions equally well as a display lanyard. In fact, these particular sets, with the attached “how-to” card, may even serve as a signal to other traders that the wearer is new to the game, and, thus, deserves help--or, perhaps, that they are vulnerable to exploitation. In this way, Disney is helping to reinforce the traditions of the community: these starter sets, which serve as an entry point for many traders, conform to existing traditions and values, help to identify the wearer’s tastes and experience level to others, and make it easy for beginners to take part in either the trading or display of pins (see Figure 3-7).

In contrast to this careful assembly, trading lanyards (i.e., lanyards used specifically to display pins for trade, rather than to simply show them off) are assembled with much less care. They do follow several of the same criteria outlined above—i.e.,

bottom-front is prime real estate, bottom-back is avoided, pins are applied from the bottom to the top—but the aesthetics are much less important. Ideally, a trading lanyard will see high turnover, with many pins being added and removed throughout the day, and, as such, the organization of these lanyards is much less of a priority. In fact, a disorganized lanyard is often read as a signal that these pins are available for trade (for an example, see Figure 3-8). Another important difference is the pin back. As stated above, the rubber pin backs often wear out and come off, but, in this case, a locking pin back would be cumbersome and time-consuming to remove; instead, many traders opt to stab the pointed pin post directly into the rubber, creating a new hole. Though this does not entirely solve the problem—the new hole tends to not be good for very long, and might actually destroy the pin back—it holds a little better than the intended hole, at least for a few applications.[7]

From my observations, trading vests follow the same general guidelines as trading lanyards: the front breast of the vest is favored, and the bottom edge or back of the vest is saved until later. Like trading lanyards, there does not appear to be any sort of rigorous organization scheme to the pins; they may be grouped by theme, but are primarily stuck wherever they will fit (see, for example, Figure 3-4).

The construction and use of wearable pin displays is unique amongst the topics I cover in this thesis because, unlike my other subjects, pin trading is actually *encouraged* by the Disney establishment. This may be due, in large part, to the expenses required of a

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[7] Disney sells extra rubber pin backs in packs of fifty, so traders are at no risk of running out anytime soon.

dedicated pin trader: individual pins can cost upward of $10 each, and lanyards can cost up to $25. And these costs can add up *very* quickly—during my December 2015 trip, when I first tried my hand at purchasing pins of my own, I picked up what I thought was a very modest order: a lanyard, two or three pins for gifts, and two or three more for myself. When I got to the register, I was astonished to find my order topped $80—a *fortune* to a struggling college student—every dollar of which went into Disney's pockets. Though these pins are certainly a cash cow for Disney, I like to think that Disney supports this particular subculture for another reason—for the way that fans use them to help define their own identities.

To an outsider, the wearing and display of pins may not appear to carry much meaning—the pins and/or lanyards worn may seem to be just like any other fashion accessory, and, even if the deliberate assembly is noticed, it may appear to be due to simple aesthetics rather than careful consideration. However, to Disney fans—especially Disney pin traders—the wearing and arrangement of pins is deeply significant. Just as an insider can read an Indian woman's bangles and understand more about her, a fellow pin trader can take note of a fan's tastes, willingness to trade, and level of investment or involvement. These are, of course, practical concerns in a trading environment, but also can help to establish membership and position in the pin trading subculture. For Disney, seeing its most devoted fans shape their identities and hobbies around a piece of merchandise that is hard to obtain outside the park is, doubtless, something they're more than happy to encourage—but, despite this sort of commercial involvement, pin trading lanyards say a lot more than might be expected, and are a surprisingly important form of

Figure 3-7: An example starter set still in its packaging, this one themed around the Haunted Mansion (This is the same lanyard seen in Figure 3-5, though it appears in that photo with several pins added and removed). Note that this is technically a Disney World lanyard (note the “Liberty Square” label on the card), but aside from the branding, it is otherwise identical to the corresponding Disneyland set. Photo courtesy of the author.

Figure 3-8: One of my pin lanyards partway through my December 2015 visit. Note the lack of organization to the pins: this is clearly a trading lanyard. This particular lanyard connected at the bottom with a patch of Velcro, which I have separated for easy photographing. This is one of the "extra-wide" lanyards I mentioned, and carries the Disneyland 60th Anniversary branding. I purchased this lanyard both to hold the large number of pins I had brought to trade, and to commemorate my visit during the 60th celebration. Photo courtesy of the author.

nonverbal communication amongst fans.

"Outright Theft, as Far as I'm Concerned": Fakes and Counterfeits

Paul Midler, in the chapter on counterfeiting found in his book *Poorly Made in China*, relates a legend told of an 18th century Chinese emperor named Qianlong. While he was inspecting his various collections, Qianlong noticed a small jade cup that, though it purported to be an antique from the Ming Dynasty, seemed a little strange. He asked one of his artists to take a closer look at the cup to determine its true origin. After a short while, the artist declared that the cup was a recent counterfeit—in fact, one made by his own grandfather. Qianlong was so impressed with the craftsmanship of the counterfeit that, rather than punishing the grandfather, he had a special box made for the cup, and inscribed on it "a kind of treatise on the art of counterfeiting" (Midler 2009, 116). The cup can supposedly still be found in the National Palace Museum in Taipei to this day.

Though Midler shares this story in an attempt to show how counterfeiting is viewed very differently by the Chinese than Americans, it still applies quite well to our present topic. Despite the more-or-less harmonious relationship I have described between Disney and fans so far in this paper—i.e., fans being good little capitalists and consuming Disney's products exactly as Disney themselves would prefer—counterfeit trading pins, called "scrappers," are astonishingly common. Strangely, though, not all scrappers are immediately dismissed out-of-hand—many collectors, even passionate ones, do not know how to tell the difference between a real and a fake pin, and instead will cherish both the

same, while some collectors will actually seek them out—that is, like Quianlong, many traders can see value in the fakery, even when they know for a fact they've been had. In any case, the mere existence of counterfeit pins is a sort of betrayal of the relationship between Disneyland and its fans—a profound subversion and rejection of standards of honesty and fairness expected by both sides.

The term "scrapper" is actually a technical term, though it is often misused for all counterfeit pins, regardless of origin or type. Properly applied, "scrapper" describes a pin that was legitimately made in a Disney-affiliated factory, but either was a production overrun (e.g., extra pins ordered for a limited run to account for mistakes in the manufacturing process) or a pin that did not pass a quality check; in either case, these pins are supposed to be destroyed, or "scrapped," but, for one reason or another, never make it to the furnace. The other major type of pins are called "seconds" or "counterfeits," and are attempts to re-create original pins after the fact, either by building a mold from scratch or by using a castoff mold after production has finished.[8] Despite this distinction, this paper will follow emic usage, and will continue to use the term "scrapper" for all bad pins, regardless of their origin.

Once produced, scrappers need to enter circulation. My impression is that most such pins are sold directly to consumers using sites like eBay. Among serious traders, the most common piece of advice is to avoid large lots of pins going for low prices: legitimate pins retail for $8-12 each, so a large lot of, say, 50 pins selling for $25 is

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[8] A pin so recreated is occasionally referred to as having been "scrapped," in a similar sense to how pirated computer software can be said to be "cracked" —i.e., the secrets to easily copying and distributing it have been discovered and are widely available

almost certainly full of cheap scrappers. Additionally, if a lot is advertised as "100% tradable," it is almost certainly bad; since cast members cannot refuse a trade, such a label offers the appearance of legitimacy while remaining essentially meaningless.[9]

If you know what to look for, scrappers are rather easily identifiable: they tend to share a number of common flaws, which are generally indicative of having less time, less money, and less care lavished on them than legitimate Disney pins. There are a number of such flaws, but commonly-cited ones include: rough spurs along the edges of the pin; dips, pits, or visible "brush strokes" in the enamel; coloring errors or an incorrect color palette; a dull or "flat," as opposed to a glossy, finish; a loss of intricate or fine detail in the design; and feeling very light for its size (indicative of cheaper metals used in construction) (see Figures 3-9 and 3-10). Another common identification is to look at the backside of the pin: pins produced since about 2008 decorate the back of the pin with a "waffle" pattern, made of repeating Mickey Mouse icons,[10] and, in the legitimate article, the pattern goes all the way off the edge of the pin. If there is a consistent gap lacking the

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[9]A concrete example: while searching out such counterfeit pin lots on eBay, I found a listing that was so full of red flags I just had to buy one: it was a lot of 150 "100% tradable" pins going for $63, less than fifty cents a pin. Further, the seller had "more than 10 [lots] available" and had already sold over 1,100 others, suggesting a nearly-limitless stock—a near-impossibility in an expensive collectibles market like Disney pins. Finally, the company doing the selling was called "Dizzney 4 Pins" which felt more like badly-garbled English than an intentionally cutesy misspelling; in contrast, the username of the seller was a generic American-sounding name, which felt to me like an attempt to disguise the seller's identity. I bought one of the lots myself, and true to my suspicions, the entire lot was scrappers, including some truly awful ones (One pin from that lot appears in Figure 3-9, below).

[10] Other backing patterns include "sand," made of a rough, randomized texture, not unlike sand itself, and what I am calling the "linen" backing, consisting of a uniform crosshatch pattern. Backing patterns vary with the age and origin of the pin, so examining the backing is not always reliable.

waffle around the edge of the pin, it is likely a scrapper[11] (see Figure 3-11). Finally, I have noticed that many scrappers look subjectively *off*; that is, there is something strange about them, even if you are not familiar with the genuine article. For this reason, my biggest piece of advice to newcomers has been simply to examine the pin carefully and to trust your judgment.

Certain types of pins are more commonly scrappers than others, and experienced traders tend to be wary of these on principle. Many specific pins have reputations for

Figure 3-9: An example of a scrapper pin. Note the extra "pupil" in Rolf's left eye (likely a result of a dip in the enamel, accidentally filled with black enamel rather than having been properly fixed). This is a rather obvious coloring error, and a good indication of a scrapper. Note also the Hidden Mickey icon, over the "o" in "Rolf." Photo courtesy of the author.

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[11] Many more folk methods for identifying a scrapper exist. These include methods like holding the pin to a strong magnet to see if it will stick (indicative of lower-quality materials), dropping it on a table and listening to the sound it makes (to judge the weight of a pin; heavier pins are genuine), and examining the back of the pin for two small spikes near the pin post, used to help hold the pin into place when worn, and (supposedly) often lost during the counterfeiting process. I cannot speak for the effectiveness of these methods, but they deserve at least to be mentioned.

Figure 3-10: Another scrapper pin. Note the lack of glossy finish, the visible scoring (usually identified as "brush strokes"), and the visible dip in the right ear, all of which are considered reliable indications of a scrapper pin. Note also the "Hidden Mickey" icon in the bottom-center of the photo. Photo courtesy of the Author.

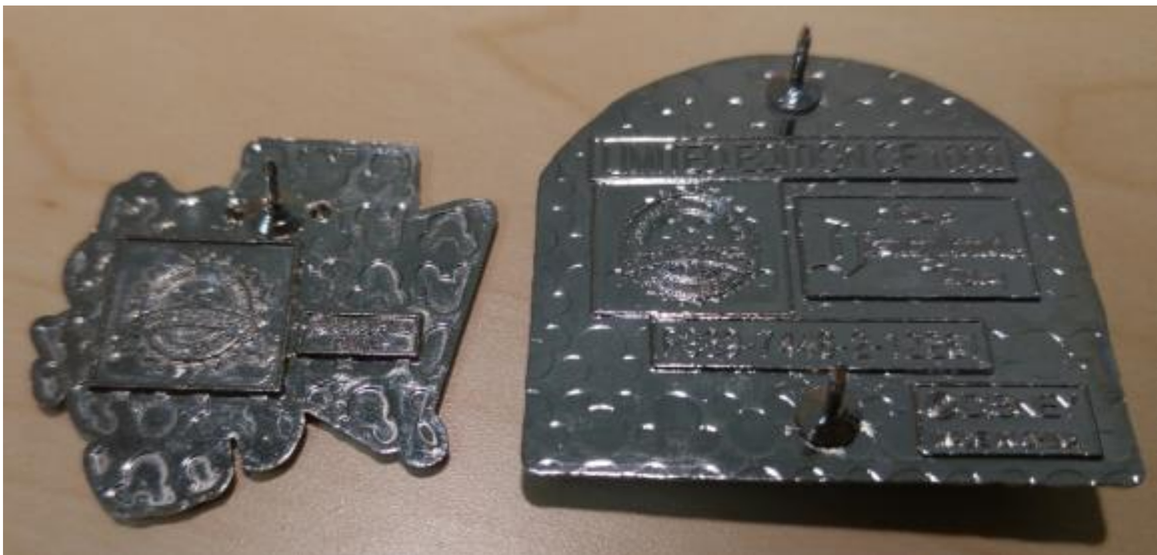

Figure 3-11: An example of incorrect (left) and correct (right) waffle patterns. Note the wide gap in the pattern around the edge of the pin on the left, but not the pin on the right. Photo courtesy of the author.

being scrappers; for example, one redditor advised me that a pin in my collection (an anthropomorphized fountain jet from California Adventure's World of Color water show) was a scrapper based on design alone, though it passes all the criteria above (FuzzyClovR 2016). Additionally, most scrappers are relatively simple pins, with none of the bells or whistles I described earlier—every scrapper that I, personally, have seen is a single, flat sheet, as anything more complex would require additional time, effort, skill, and equipment to produce.[12] For this reason, many common scrappers are Cast Member pins, as these are all relatively simple in design and are perceived as more valuable due to their CM status (in fact, I have heard at least one trader misidentify the Hidden Mickey icon as one way to tell a genuine pin).

However, there is one complication to these methods: Disney has had some problems with pin quality, which can make identifying a counterfeit pin difficult. For example, checking for gaps in the waffle pattern, as described above, used to be a sure-fire way to tell a scrapper from a genuine pin. However, several redditors have reported that recent pins increasingly have small gaps around the edges when they leave the factory, making this method much less reliable.

Another, more concrete example: for the release of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* in late 2015, Disney released a number of pins that were apparently rushed through production. One redditor said that "every single one [they saw] had either scuff marks, errors in the enamel, or other glaring quality control issues," so much so that "they

[12] I have not heard anyone recommend this as a technique to identify scrappers, but, for this reason, my instincts say that, if a given pin is anything *other* than said flat sheet, it is probably genuine.

look like, dare I say, scrappers" (see Figure 3-2 for an example of such flaws) (jacobbigham 2016). Though this set will eventually gain the reputation for low quality, it could still easily trip up a newbie; for this reason, the wisdom goes, the only way to be *completely* sure that a given pin is genuine is to buy it yourself, directly from a Disney park.

As an illustrative example of a scrapper, I would like to describe, in detail, the "Caesar's Ghost" pin, easily the most notorious, if not the most common, scrapper (see Figure 3-12). The pin, which has no official name, was originally released as part of Disney World's "Happy Haunts Ball" series: this series consisted of a number of framed scenes from the Haunted Mansion ride, each with six or seven pins interacting with the printed background (for example, the background might depict a see-saw, with a ghost pin appearing to ride it). The "A Ghostly Birthday" set, from which Caesar's Ghost originates, was released in a limited edition of twenty-five, and retailed for $195 per set. This particular set depicted the famous Ballroom scene from the Mansion, and featured a ghostly, unidentified Roman sitting at the head of the banquet table—that is, Caesar's Ghost. This particular pin had a relatively simple design, a high price point, and, as an LE25, a microscopic supply—and, thus, it was almost inevitable that it would be turned into a scrapper ("Pin 52310").

Caesar's Ghost pins typically share a number of signifiers that they are scrappers. In the sample in my collection (see Figure 3-13), the colors are off: in the official pin, the sash Caesar wears is a sky blue, whereas on my copy, the sash is more of a teal. Further,

Figure 3-12: The photograph of the Caesar's Ghost pin from PinPics.com, a popular pin trading website. Another commonly-cited way to tell if a given pin is a scrapper is to compare it to the PinPics.com listing and look for differences—thus, this likely as official of a photo as we are going see of a real Caesar's Ghost. Source: "Pin 52310."

Figure 3-13: My Caesar's Ghost scrapper. Note the different color palette and the loss of detail on the laurel over Caesar's right ear. Photo courtesy of the author.

the colors simply do not look right—the color scheme is teal, mint green, and neon yellow, choices which look garish and strange, especially compared to the more muted colors of the genuine pin. Additionally, several subtle details are missing: the laurel over Caesar's right ear is supposed to have three visible leaves, while, in my copy, there are

only two, positioned in such a way as to make the laurel look almost like a horn or alien antennae. On my particular pin, the finish is not as glossy as other, more official pins, but the front of the pin otherwise lacks obvious signifiers, like rough edges.

The back of the pin also carries a number of flaws: unlike many pins, Caesar's Ghost bears an inscription, which, on the scrappers, is misspelled ("Happy Hauns" [*sic*], rather than "Happy Haunts"). Finally, the Disney Pin Trading logo, a mark of authenticity that includes the year the pin was manufactured, is mis-printed: on my pin, it indicates the pin was made in 2006, rather than the correct 2003.

This particular pin is so notorious that it has developed a presence of its own in pin trading culture. This pin first came to my attention when I was trading in the park: when I informed a cast member at Westward Ho that I was looking for scrappers for a research project, she immediately suggested I trade for the Caesar's Ghost she had to offer. Given Disney's strict policies on preserving the Image, the fact that she explicitly identified that particular pin as a scrapper suggests her depth of feeling on the matter. Additionally, one trader I met in the parks said that she referred to the pin as "Yoda's Dad," after the character from *Star Wars*; the name is a reference both to its unappealing, alien-looking design, and its greenish color scheme (in fact, several threads on disneypins.com have mis-identified Caesar as an alien, owing to his green skin, strange "antennae," and lack of distinctly-Roman dress; see, for example, kaykayhyde 2011). Another collector said that she actually *sought out* these pins, but for the purposes of removing them from circulation—she said she had collected over a dozen that way, in fact.

To be fair, amassing such a collection would not be exactly difficult: an astonishing number of pins in circulation are scrappers. One redditor said that, in their estimation, up to 90% of all tradable pins in the park are scrappers, and, from my own limited experience, that estimate is not far off (5ive_Star 2015). As stated above, cast members cannot refuse a pin trade, even if they know that they are being offered a bad pin; given other Disney polices, I would not be surprised if they are also restricted from identifying pins as scrappers or discouraging guests from trading for them. Thus, malicious traders can freely trade scrappers (which cost about $0.50 each) for genuine pins (which, in some cases, retail for up to $15), without fear of reprisal. One redditor, apparently a cast member, described how “Once in a while you'll get someone walking up to you with a lanyard of LE pins [indicating an experienced or knowledgeable trader], ask for the only non-fake pins [you have], and pull out a couple of scrappers to trade you,” adding, “It’s outright theft, as far as I’m concerned.” They even claimed to recognize a few of the regular problem customers, and would put away their trading pins when they saw them coming (NaptimeMVP 2016).

However, much more common are the ignorant traders, those who do not know or do not recognize the difference between a legitimate and an illegitimate pin. I actually tried a little experiment on this point: before one of my trips to California, I assembled the trading lanyard seen in Figure 3-5. My offerings on this lanyard consisted mostly of two matched sets—one Star Wars, one Haunted Mansion—but with two scrappers thrown in the mix. These pins had obvious problems: one was a sloppy counterfeit, which had lost a great amount of detail in the recreation process, and the other used a bizarre

color palette, one that anyone with even passing knowledge of the character depicted would be able to notice—or, at least, so I thought. During the small vacation preceding my visit to the park, I handed the lanyard to several of my family members (all of which were Disney fans, but none of whom had any experience with trading pins), told them two of the pins on the lanyard were counterfeits, and asked them to identify them. Most guessed very quickly, without examining the pins in detail, and, judging by the results, guessed apparently at random: only one or two of them were able to find either of the scrappers, but none were able to identify both. Though deeply informal, this experiment suggests that casual or first-time traders—that is, those without the knowledge or ability to identify a scrapper—might not even be aware of, much less able to identify, the presence of scrappers. If my family, even when I explicitly told them there were scrappers, were unable to identify them, then what hope is there for someone who lacks such a guide?

This sort of ignorance is not unusual, even among avid traders: two of my informants, Shayna and her mother Bernadette, belonged to an extended family that all loved to trade pins—for example, Shayna had been willed an LE250 pin by her uncle, and a feud of sorts had sprung up between Shayna and Bernadette over Shayna's refusal to trade her mother a pin she desperately wanted. However, I cringed when they described their collecting method to me: they said that they bought their pins in large lots off eBay, and were quite proud that they had found a way to amass pins so cheaply (the

vast majority of which, sadly but unsurprisingly, were scrappers).[13] In another example, Lynne McNeill, once an avid pin collector herself, accidentally traded for several scrappers that she still proudly displays in her collection. Though she did recognize that a few of her pins looked somewhat strange, she was not even aware that scrappers *existed*, much less that she had traded for some. Given these experiences, it seems apparent to me that part of the reason why scrapper pins continue to stay in circulation is that many people, experienced traders or no, simply do not know that they are a problem, or, if they do, do not know how to tell the difference between a scrapper and a legitimate pin.

Disney's response to scrapper pins is distressingly hands-off. Disney has a (well-deserved) reputation for being uptight and litigious—however, in the case of scrapper pins, their commitment to positive customer experience above all else seems to win out. Their official policy, at least when working face-to-face with guests, is to not react at all—that is, cast members will accept all trades, even if they know they are scrappers, without question.[14] However, after hours, it seems that cast members screen their various displays for scrappers, removing the bad ones (in fact, one redditor, claiming to be a cast member, said that they used magnets to screen large numbers of pins at once, which turned me on to the fact that many scrappers are magnetic). Scrapper pins, once

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[13] One of my colleagues pointed out that the prevalence and low cost of scrappers carries a socioeconomic element as well—that is, legitimate pins can rapidly get very expensive, effectively excluding those without a great deal of disposable income. Thus, scrappers can be seen as one way to lower the barrier of entry, and allow more people to collect and trade pins—a theory which can be seen in this example. Though I find this line of reasoning compelling, it is outside the scope of the current discussion. I will leave the question to other researchers to follow up on.

[14] A few redditors *have* reported cast members refusing to trade for scrappers, though these incidents seem to be the remote exception rather than the rule.

discovered, are taken to the department's Pin Coordinator—also the source of good, fresh pins—and are taken away to, presumably, be melted down. Thus, Disney is aware of the problem, and is taking steps to solve it, but these steps, to me at least, are too little, too late. There *is* something to be said for this approach—after all, this sort of after-hours screening helps to preserve the Magic of the park experience—but still, it rankles me somewhat that Disney is not being more proactive in protecting its customers from unknowingly trading expensive pins for worthless fakes.

Given the fact that pin traders are dedicated fans who have invested up to thousands of dollars in their hobby, one would expect that scrappers would be universally condemned—which, strangely, is not the case. To be sure, many collectors avoid them when possible: several redditors told me that they avoid scrappers on principle, saying that trading for them feels like a literal waste of money. Further, the rules of the Disney pin trading subreddits require that prospective traders be clear and upfront when they are offering scrappers, so as to protect potential trading partners from being unknowingly cheated. In fact, most of this section up to this point consists of folk wisdom regarding scrappers—where they come from, how they are produced, and how to recognize and avoid them.

Strangely, however, many traders do not seem to mind scrappers—and a few even seek them out. When I asked the pin trading subreddit why, I got many responses—more, even, than to the question of why people *avoid* scrappers. Responses included that the scrappers were aesthetically pleasing, despite their counterfeit nature (one user said that, in one case, they preferred the scrapper's color scheme to the original), that the scrappers

had personal significance (e.g., they were the first pins the user traded for, and they refused to get rid of them for that reason), or that the user wanted to complete a set of pins, and did not mind using scrappers to fill any remaining gaps. One user reported seeking out scrappers for their collection, but added that they were never going to trade them away, so no one was at risk of being hurt. Another user even recommended that I keep any scrappers I really liked; I would never know when I would run into the genuine article, and until that time, the scrapper would work as a good placeholder.

I must admit that I, too, collect scrappers, after a fashion. About two-thirds of my collection by volume is scrappers, and, every so often, I will seek out some more. Of course, I have collected these primarily for research purposes, but I think that this is not necessarily a unique perspective: for example, when I informed Lynne McNeill that some of the pins in her collection were scrappers—both a long-suspected fake and others she had no inkling of—she was actually *excited* at the notion. She later clarified she felt this way because a) I was confirming her longtime suspicions, and b) she was realizing she had been an unwitting participant in this aspect of Disney culture for some time.

Scrappers form an odd part of Disneyland culture. On the one hand, there mere existence of scrappers is something of a breach of trust: Disney does its best to create a safe trading environment for everyone involved, but scrappers poison the well with worthless trash. On the other hand, the fact that scrappers are not immediately and totally rejected, either by Disney or its fans, shows that there is something compelling about them. Perhaps, as was suggested, they do indeed offer a form of access to pins that are hard to find or are no longer widely available; perhaps they are a symptom of mere

ignorance on the part of traders; and, of course, perhaps these are a result of malicious thieves, who seek to cheat the system for their own gain. In any case, scrappers hint at hidden tensions within the fandom, ones that I have only just begun to expose here.

Conclusion

My first exposure to pin trading was actually somewhat underwhelming. I had been going to Disneyland for years, and, of course, I could not help noticing pins and pin traders, but they never really registered—I was there for the rides, not to trade little pieces of metal. Eventually, my sister bought me a pin or two as a gift, and I wore them on my school backpack until they started to fall off, without putting any more thought into it than that.

It was not until I visited Disneyland in October of 2015 that I began to realize just how important pin trading was. Revisiting the park with a folklorist's eye (and on the lookout for potential topics for this thesis), I was astonished by how many pin traders I saw: vests, lanyards, cast members, all of it. Before this point, pin trading had, at best, been on the edges of my awareness, but now, examining it afresh, I realized just how vitally important pin trading was to the park and to those who loved it.

I hope that this chapter has helped the reader come to a similar realization. Pin trading may, at first blush, seem almost trivial—just another especially shiny, especially expensive brick in the wall of the Disney merchandising empire. However, I hope that I have shown that pin trading is an important aspect of the Disney experience for those

who participate, and a surprisingly intricate one at that. Not only do pins form a complex visual language that signals insider status—after all, a first-time visitor to the parks is not going to know how to assemble a well-constructed lanyard—but one that also hints at deeper issues in the Disneyland fandom. In either case, I hope that this examination of pin trading and pin culture has been enlightening, and has helped to show that there is more to this fan activity than might at first be apparent.

CHAPTER 4

"A PRINCE IN DISGUISE": DISNEYBOUNDING AS CRYPTO-COSPLAY

"Well, it's my favorite*—far-off places, daring swordfights, magic spells, a prince in disguise!"*

—Belle, *Beauty and the Beast* (1994)

Cosplay—a portmanteau of "costume" and "(role-)play," a term possibly coined by Japanese author Nov Takahashi in 1984—is an important, though understudied, form of fan expression (Winge 2006, 65). Cosplayers are (usually adult) fans who dress as their favorite characters from comics, anime, and video games. These costumes can rapidly become very intricate, and are often made at considerable expense of time and money to the cosplayer themselves. Cosplay is more than just the costume, however: cosplay usually involves an element of roleplaying, either in an informal setting with fellow fans,[1] or in the context of formalized displays such as cosplay contests, masquerades, skits, sketches, or even full-length plays (Winge 2006, 68). Cosplay usually represents a profound level of engagement with the source material: the expense, time, and effort usually lavished on the costume, not to mention the willingness to publicly portray the chosen character, demonstrates an unusual love for the character or franchise

[1] For example, cosplayers are generally addressed by the name of the character they are portraying (and are expected to respond as such), and may actually take on the role of their chosen character in casual conversation.

represented (See Figure 4-1).

With few exceptions, the primary sites at which cosplay takes place are fan conventions. These conventions (also called “cons”) serve as a hub of fan activity: at cons, fans can meet with other fans to celebrate their shared interests, purchase exclusive or hard-to-find merchandise, and, with events like film screenings and celebrity panels, engage more deeply with their chosen fandoms. At cons, cosplayers are often quite popular, and perhaps almost celebrated: cosplay-centered activities include the above-mentioned contests and masquerades, as well as photo shoots, and, of course, generous

Figure 4-1: Professional cosplayer Courtoon cosplaying as Rapunzel from *Tangled*. Note the detailed dress, use of a specialized wig, and her pose (suggesting similar poses from the film), all of which are hallmarks of high-quality cosplay. Source: Saffels Photography. Used with permission.

opportunities to mingle with other cosplayers and con-goers. Cosplay is so deeply integrated into con culture that, for example, when the Garland Library of tiny Garland, Utah decided to start its own con in 2015, it tried to establish itself as a legitimate fan convention in part by actively encouraging cosplay.[2]

Though Disney fans *do* have some regular conventions available, they have something that works a little better—a year-round convention, in the form of Disneyland. As at other conventions, fans can come to the park to rub shoulders with other fans, buy merchandise (food, pins, clothing, souvenirs) exclusive to the park, and, through interactions with the rides and costumed characters, integrate more deeply into the fandom. However, one major item of fan culture is conspicuously absent from Disneyland: with the exception of Disney employees dressed as the various characters, cosplay is completely absent from the park. This is actually at the insistence of Disney itself: park policy forbids guests older than 14 from wearing costumes in the park, and, even for younger guests, lacks the social events and support structure (e.g., costume repair stations and contests) that many consider necessary for a good cosplay scene.

To be fair: Disney does have a reason for this policy. Disneyland has built its business on its Image, i.e., its reputation as "The Happiest Place On Earth," where "nothing ever [goes] wrong" (Koenig 2014, 131). If there were no restrictions on

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[2] Among other things, semi-professional cosplaying groups (including the Rebel Legion and Umbrella Corporation) were invited to attend, and the library from nearby Tremonton helped staff a special booth to help children make their own costumes. The main event of the con was actually a costume contest that awarded tickets to the larger Salt Lake Comic Con as prizes. Apparently, this focus on cosplay was a success; the con, called "Unmask Con," is, at last update, slated to become a yearly tradition for the Garland Library.

costumes, guests could dress themselves as Disney characters, and, in the guise of official Disney employees, potentially cause all kinds of mischief. Nevertheless, these policies completely rule out an increasingly-popular and important fan activity, one that fans use to express their deep admiration for their chosen source material.

However, the fans, as always, have found a way to work around these restrictions. In this case, Disney fans have developed a specific subgenre of cosplay known as "Disneybounding."[3] Rather than wearing intricate costumes, guests wear carefully-chosen street clothes, used to suggest the general shape and color scheme of a character, rather than to perfectly reproduce their appearance. Disneybounding is not the only costume tradition found in the park: there are, among others, the fan-organized events of Dapper Day (where participants attend the park wearing vintage clothing, especially such as would have been worn on Disneyland's opening day) and Bats Day (where self-described "fledermausketeers"[4] wear Gothic clothing), but Disneybounding is distinctly different. For one thing, both Dapper and Bat Days occur only once or twice a year, and, though certain types of outfits are encouraged, there is usually no greater symbolism than that. However, Disneybounding is not restricted to specific dates, and, further, seeks to represent a specific character rather than a general look. More importantly, Disneybounding flirts dangerously close to violating official Disney policy, and, thus,

[3] There is some disagreement on capitalization: some sources spell the word with only an initial capital, i.e., "Disneybound," while others (especially *Disney Geekery*) capitalize both the "D" and the "B," i.e., DisneyBound. The single-capital appears to be the most common, and, therefore, is the one that I will continue to use.

[4] A portmanteau of the German "fledermaus" ("bat"), and Disney's own "mouseketeers" —a whimsical construction meant to suggest devotion to both Disneyland itself and to the gothic subculture.

may represent a sort of pushback against the park itself.

For these reasons, Disneybounding becomes a sort of “crypto-cosplay”—not completely hidden, as that would undermine the very purpose of wearing a costume in the first place, but instead, a subtle, low-key cosplay: one that is very clearly meant to represent the wearer’s chosen character, but, at the same time, not run afoul of Disney’s prohibitive guidelines on the subject. Despite many Disneybounders’ claims to the contrary, Disneybounding *is* cosplay, and deserves to be studied as such—but, more importantly, represents a sort of rebellion against the Disney establishment.

Bound for Disneybounding: Origins and Definitions

Unlike many folk traditions, the origin of Disneybounding can be traced back definitively to a single individual at a single point in time. In this case, the originator of this tradition is a woman named Leslie Kay, a Toronto native, who just wanted to have a good time with a friend at Disney World.

In April of 2011, Leslie, a self-described “WDW [Walt Disney World] Virgin,” was excitedly planning for her first Disney World trip with a friend, scheduled for that June (Kay 2011a). As part of their preparations, the two of them established a Tumblr blog to catalog their excitement, choosing the name “Disneybound” for the blog—that is, “bound” for “Disney [World].” On May 6 of that year, after several weeks of sharing Disney memes and excitedly soliciting advice for her trip, Leslie posted an image to her blog (Titled “Tangled, by Disneybound”) consisting of a set of clothing meant to mimic

the color scheme and general design of Rapunzel from the film *Tangled* (see Figure 4-2) (Kay 2011b). The outfit consisted of a simple purple dress, golden jewelry (including a necklace and a crown-shaped ring), and a number of flowery accessories (flower-print purse and silk flowers on hair clips and shoes). This simple look apparently struck a chord with her followers, as visitors to her blog immediately began to request more designs based on their favorite characters. Five more film-inspired outfits followed that day: "Pocahontas" (buff-colored dress with turquoise accessories), "Beauty and the Beast" (yellow dress with red rose accents), "The Little Mermaid" (sky-blue dress with

Figure 4-2: The outfit that started it all. Note that most of Leslie's designs are shared this way: collages of clothing and accessories (apparently selected from commercial websites, rather than sourced from her own closet) and presented in isolation, without a model or mannequin to wear them. Contrast this relatively simple outfit with the intricate one seen in Figure 4-1. Source: Kay 2011b.

seashells), “Sleeping Beauty” (Pink dress with silver accessories) and “Enchanted” (Blue dress, pink accessories).

According to a later interview with Leslie, “from there, it took off rapidly,” leading to “thousands of views” within weeks. The blog itself bears testament to the sudden popularity of this trend, with Leslie posting dozens of more outfits over the course of May. Many such outfits represent specific Disney characters (including unorthodox choices such as Wall-E from the film of the same name, and Governor Radcliffe, the villain of *Pocahontas*), but she quickly branched out, including non-Disney characters (e.g., Princess Peach from the *Super Mario* video games, Hermione from *Harry Potter*, Christine Daae from *The Phantom of the Opera*), and even Disney World landmarks (the Animal Kingdom park, the Haunted Mansion ride, and so on). Fans continued to request more outfits, and soon began to create outfits of their own. Eventually, the activity of creating outfits to match Disney characters came to be known as “Disneybounding,” after the blog itself. Now, five years later, as Disneybounding has become more and more well-known, Leslie continues to post creative outfits to her blog, along with links to buy the clothes in each outfit, and advertisements to her own store of Disney-themed merchandise.

Leslie herself defines the act of Disneybounding as “a way for teenagers and adults to show their love and appreciation for Disney and play dress up without actually wearing a costume so it takes trendy clothes and bases the outfits after Disney characters” [*sic*] (Nasserian 2013). As described above, the general idea is to mimic the color scheme or design of a given character using carefully-selected street clothes, rather than

Figure 4-3: Tumblr user edwardnicholas Disneybounding as Donald Duck. Note how the blue shirt, white buttons, red bow tie, and white pants mirror the color scheme and design elements of the official Donald costume, but without an obvious attempt at strict mimetic recreation. Source: edwardnicholas.

replicating the look using a purpose-constructed costume: for example, "A Disneybounder might wear a yellow skirt, blue top, red bow and apple pin as a quiet shout-out to Snow White or go all-green with a feathered fedora to represent Peter Pan" (for another example, see Figure 4-3) (Bevil 2015). The understated, street-clothes look has a number of other benefits as well: Leslie has repeatedly stated in a number of locations that Disneybounding does not necessarily require an intense, dedicated shopping trip, and frequently suggests that aspiring Disneybounders "look in [their] closet first," then work from there (Nasserian 2013).

Perhaps as a result of this fashion-centric self-image, Disneybounding appears to be primarily a female-gendered activity: for example, Leslie's Tumblr blog hosts primarily designs for women's outfits, based mostly on female characters. Male characters (e.g., Disney Princes) are not uncommon—but, when they do appear, they are almost always feminized designs, intended for women, not men, to wear. Additionally, after she began to post her Disneybounding ideas, several users requested that Leslie create specifically-male designs (e.g., "Can u make a beast and a tarzan inspired outfit for men?" [*sic*])—the fact that gender is specified in these requests suggests that men are a minority audience (Kay 2011d). Further, the Disneybound Archive Tumblr, which organizes Leslie's designs by character and theme (rather than chronologically, as on the main Disneybound blog), includes a "Male" tag in its potential search criteria, but no corresponding female tag. Both of these facts suggest pretty clearly that men's outfits are not as common, nor in such demand, as women's. Though Leslie herself has repeatedly emphasized that "Guys can do it too!", judging from photos online, male Disneybounders are in the remote minority (Chambers 2014).

Interestingly, there are several unstated rules involved in the construction of Disneybounding outfits, aside from the implied gender bias. For one, the outfit must represent a Disney character or landmark; when Leslie posted some non-Disney designs to her blog, she referred to them as "rule-breaking," despite the fact that she apparently never posted a concrete description of such "rules" in the first place (Kay 2011c). Additionally, one of my informants described how it is considered improper to blend in-park costuming styles: for example, using a vintage dress to Disneybound as Minnie

Mouse (a mix of Dapper Day and Disneybounding styles), is viewed as a breach of protocol. The fact that such rules that exist—and that the rules can, apparently, be broken—hint at just how important Disneybounding is to those who participate in it.

Pot and Kettle: Disneybounding and Cosplay

There is a clear overlap between Disneybounding and cosplay—in fact, Disneybounding has been described as a form of "closet cosplay," an established cosplay genre in which the participant creates a costume out of existing pieces from their own closet, rather than purpose-constructing a costume (Mallikarjuna 2013). However, Disneybounders position their hobby as a fashion activity, more than a costuming one: for example, Leslie, in her definition above, describes Disneybounding as "play[ing] dress up . . . [using] trendy clothes." In another example, a Buzzfeed article showing off several examples of Disneybounding is titled "39 Stylish People Who Are Secretly Disney Characters"—note that, though this article provided the "closet cosplay" comparison, the title carefully avoids the use costuming language, such as "dressed up as" (Mallikarjuna 2013). Another article describes Disneybounding as "finding a line where Disney and fashion collide," specifying that "it's not as outlandish as cosplaying" (Nasserian 2013). This repeated and vehement disowning of the cosplay connection is striking, and, perhaps, self-defeating; to quote Shakespeare, "the lady doth protest too much, methinks" (*Hamlet* 3.2.254).

I have a several theories as to why this apparent disconnect exists—that is, why Disneybounders *insist* that they are not dressing up as their preferred character, even while in the very act of doing so. The easiest such theory has to do with the negative connotations of the term "cosplay"—that is, cosplay is a fringe activity for "nerds," while Disneybounding is a more mainstream one, intended for the fashion-conscious.

Another potential reason for this disconnect involves concrete differences between the acts of cosplaying and Disneybounding, chief among them, the relation of the participant's identity to that of their subject. In cosplay, the participant's identity is subordinated to that of the character's: as described above, cosplayers are often addressed by the name of their chosen character, and they are expected to roleplay as the character even in informal situations. Further, breaches of this (often-literally) constructed identity—for example, by removing or adjusting a mask (and, therefore, revealing that the cosplayer is not actually the subject in question)—are seen as faux pas.

On the other hand, when Disneybounding, the participant's identity remains their own: Disneybounders work hard to recreate their chosen character's costume, but they do not try to portray themselves *as* the character. Part of this may be due to the aim of the activity: Disneybounders are not seeking an exact mimetic recreation of their character of choice, but instead, are seeking to suggest or channel them. Thus, many of the more-intricate elements of costuming (dramatic makeup, masks, props, etc.) may be perceived as contrary to the nature of the activity itself, and, thus, are not considered appropriate.

Though Disneybounding shares many similarities with cosplay—especially the fact that both groups seek to dress as a character of their choice—an important difference

is that the nature of Disneybounding allows the costumes to be worn in other, more casual settings. Nevertheless, it appears that the primary location for Disneybounding remains the park itself—that is, for both groups, the most important site of participation in their hobby is at a gathering of fellow fans.

Disneybounding in Disneyland

Though Disneybounding originated in preparation for a trip to Walt Disney World, Disneybounders have appeared on both coasts. For example, unofficial Disney news site *Disney Geekery* catalogued an unofficial meetup of about fifty Disneybounders in 2014 at one of the Disneyland hotels (Mitchell 2014). Additionally, during a recent visit to the park where I Disneybounded as Goofy (see Figure 4-4), several cast members and guests recognized my intent and complimented my outfit—which was both an indication that I had done well with my costume, and, more importantly, a good sign that Disneybounding is alive and well in California.

Interestingly, Disneybounding as such does not appear to be restricted to Disneybounders alone. In my past two visits to Disneyland, I ran into several Disneybounders—in one case, a woman dressed as Minnie Mouse, and, in another, a man wearing a jacket decorated to look like Sulley from *Monsters, Inc.* (see Figure 4-5)—who had never heard of the term. Though they were very clearly dressed as their chosen characters using low-key street clothes—the definition of Disneybounding—they, apparently, had not done so with an eye towards a specific named tradition.

Unfortunately, figuring out how many of these "unconscious" Disneybounders there are would be very difficult; without them self-identifying as Disneybounders, finding such participants on the Internet in any number would be close to impossible. But, knowing that I have found such guests on two of my three recent trips suggests that such

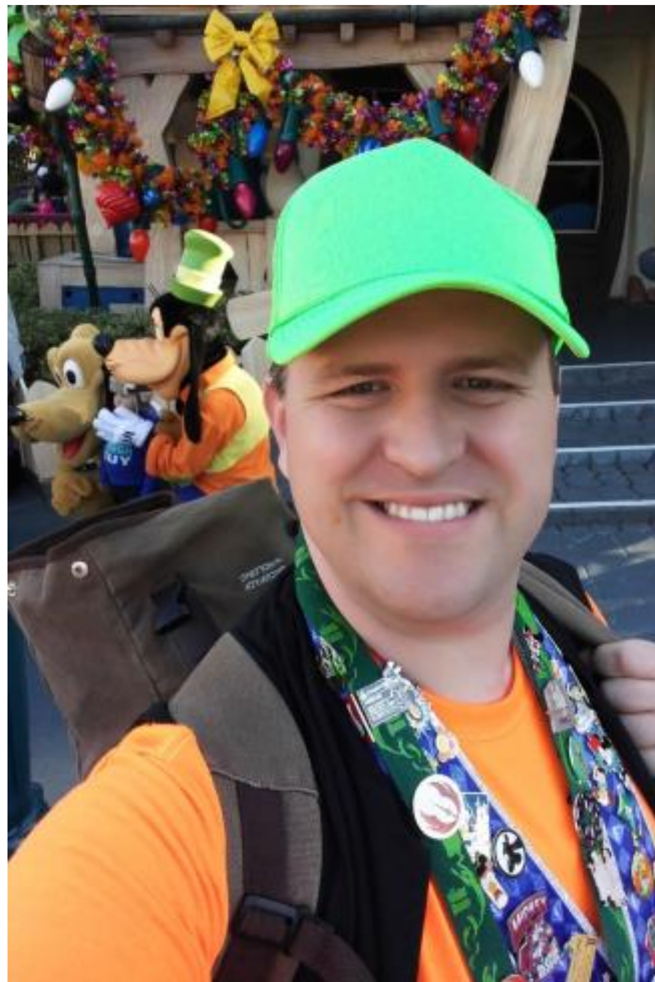

Figure 4-4: Myself, Disneybounding as Goofy. The outfit consisted of a green baseball hat, orange shirt, and black vest (chosen to match Goofy's color scheme in the cartoons, not his in-park incarnation). Despite the photographing tradition described below, I didn't have the time to wait in the half-hour line for a formal meet and greet with the "real" Goofy, hence the at-a-distance selfie. Note that this trip took place during the tail end of the Christmas season, hence the Christmas decorations visible in the background. Photo courtesy of the author.

Figure 4-5: An unidentified man unconsciously Disneybounding as Sulley from *Monsters, Inc.* His outfit, with the added felt, edges closer to a proper costume than most Disneybounders—however, as I said, he, apparently, was not aware of Disneybounding as such, and thus would not know of its traditions and protocols. Photo courtesy of the author.

participants are far from the only cases.

A common part of the experience for in-park Disneybounders is, strangely, seeking out the official portrayal of their chosen character and taking a photo with them (For examples, see figures 4-2 and 4-3). Disney holds frequent meet-and-greet events with important Disney characters throughout the park; many of the more-cartoonish characters appear in full mascot suits, while other, more-human characters will dress in a

film-accurate dress or suit. Though not all characters will be available— for example, in all my years visiting, I have yet to see a Governor Radcliffe—when possible, Disneybounders tend to make a point of attending these meet-and-greets, and snapping a photo of themselves posing with their look-alikes. These photos serve a dual purpose: one, as a form of display for the Disneybounder's costume, and, two, to provide a point of reference—that is, to show what the official design of the character looks like, to allow others to appreciate the Disneybounder's choices in assembling the costume.[5] However, such photos also carry an element of risk-taking: by identifying themselves as Disneybounders, in the context of the easily-recognizable official costumes, they run the risk of infringing on Disney regulations.

Despite the enthusiasm fans have for the Disneybounding, it still remains in a gray area of park regulations. As described earlier, Disneyland rules forbid guests age 14 and older from wearing costumes, including all non-medical masks—and, even during the special Mickey's Halloween Party event, when masks *are* allowed, the guests' eyes must remain unobstructed at all times ("Theme Parks"; "Mickey's Halloween Party"). Though such regulations clearly prohibit traditional cosplay, they leave a little wiggle room for Disneybounding—that is, though a Disneybounder is clearly attempting to represent a character, can their outfits be said to be "costumes" in the same sense as cosplay?

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[5] Such photos may also be able to help identify the character in the first place: for example, Disney Geekery's article on the 2014 meetup, described above, includes a number of uncaptioned photos of Disneybounders. Without information on who the Disneybounder is attempting to portray, it is often difficult to tell, especially in the case of more understated outfits.

Apparently not—because, despite what the rules say, Disney has embraced Disneybounders, at least to a limited extent. For example, Disney.com hosts a number of videos that show off Disneybounding-style fashion, but that carefully avoid the term itself: instead, many of these videos are called "lookbooks," i.e., suggestions for outfits, rather than how-tos for costumes. In particular, when YouTuber Ingrid Nielsen describes how her Mickey Mouse outfit could be worn "out to work . . . or a nice dinner or something," she avoids any mention of wearing the outfit to the park (Nilsen). Further, Leslie Kay contributed an article of her own to Disney.com, giving a number of tips for how to Disneybound, showing that, at least to some extent, Disney seems to want to encourage this practice (Chambers 2014). An article in the Orlando Sentinel even claims that Disney World (briefly) revised its costuming guidelines in October of 2014, changing them to specifically forbid "engaging with other guests or impeding the operation while posing as or portraying any character in costume" (Bevil 2015). The phrasing leaves open the possibility of wearing a costume *without* so engaging with other guests, which, as stated earlier, is less common with Disneybounders than with normal cosplayers; as such, these regulations served to move Disneybounding a little further out of the legal gray area that so many fan activities exist in.

However, despite these official endorsements, Disney regulations still state that "Costumes may not be worn by guests 14 years of age or older"[6] ("Theme Parks"). Why, then, despite being against the rules, does Disneybounding continue to flourish? That is,

[6] The above-stated changes to Disney World policies were apparently rolled back in December of 2015.

why does Disney not put more restraints or boundaries around Disneybounding, as their regulations imply they should, rather than continuing to embracing it?

There are several reasons for these apparently-contradictory positions. The easiest one is plausible deniability on the part of the Disneybounders themselves: that is, it might not be possible to tell when someone is actually Disneybounding, or when they have just worn a coincidentally-chosen outfit for the day. Another reason might be public relations: shutting down a previously-legitimized fan activity would look bad, and might even turn some dedicated fans into enemies.

But for me, the most important reason goes back to what I established in the introduction to this thesis: that is, Disney encourages fan participation, as long as fans' activities stay within tightly-regulated guidelines. Disneybounding flirts with this boundary—but, crucially, stays just inside it. Disneybounders, in most cases, cannot easily be mistaken for official Disney employees, so, unless Disneybounders go to great effort, they will not negatively impact the Disneyland experience of other guests. Further, Disneybounding allows another way for fans to engage and connect with the park, thereby increasing sales and its reputation as a safe place. Thus, though Disneybounding, as a form of cosplay, does, indeed, flirt with the regulations Disney has put into place, Disneybounders are content only to so flirt: they do not attempt to cross those lines, and thus, do not put the Disney Magic at risk—to say nothing of the fact that their continued free reign serves to benefit both Disneyland and the Disneybounders themselves.

Conclusion

As an important expression of fan's love for, and engagement with, their chosen fandom, we really should not be surprised by the fact that cosplay has appeared in some form at Disneyland. This subtle act of rebellion—of wearing costumes despite Disney's attempts to regulate them out of the park—suggests just how deeply people care about Disneyland, and, in turn, how far they are willing to go to express that love. Though Disney should, perhaps, continue to regulate costumes (after all, Disneyland is not really the environment for the full, elaborate cosplays seen elsewhere, for a number of reasons), perhaps they should, at least, be a little more willing to acknowledge the efforts of their fans—maybe even by relaxing regulations again. Disneybounders and cosplayers both put a lot of effort into their respective outfits, and acknowledging such effort can go a long way towards earning continued fan loyalty.

CHAPTER 5:
"DISNEYLAND HAS NOW ENDED ITS NORMAL OPERATING DAY": CONCLUSION

"Ladies and gentlemen: Disneyland has now ended its normal operating day. We hope you've enjoyed your visit to the Magic Kingdom, and that you'll be back with us again soon."

—Disneyland closing announcement, played daily at closing time
(Walt Disney Records 2005)

Though this thesis has been thorough, it has been far from comprehensive. Unexplored avenues for future research include ethnographies on in-park subcultures (for example, cast members and Disney gangs), studies on ritual clothing (especially t-shirts custom-made by fans for use in the park, which are surprisingly common), folktales (including legends of "Disney Jail," where shoplifters and vandals are taken), and rituals (including stealthy in-park engagements and weddings). In addition, I purposely had to narrow my research on pin trading for the purposes of this thesis; other potential topics in this area include pin trading protocols, construction and usage of static pin displays (i.e., pin boards), and investigation into the semi-professional traders known as "pin sharks." Despite this abundance, I feel that this thesis has been thorough enough to demonstrate the validity of this field of research, to draw attention to some understudied aspects of it, and, hopefully, to whet the appetite of future researchers.

The folk items described in this thesis also demonstrate just how well-established and diverse the reaction to Disney Magic is. The topics examined in this thesis include examples of material culture (Disneybounding costumes), expressive culture (Disney pins), and folktales (urban legends about the Haunted Mansion). If we follow Bert Wilson's classic definition of folklore, these subjects clearly demonstrate "things we say [ash scattering stories] . . . things we do [pin trading, pin display] . . . things we make [Disneybounding costumes] . . . [and] things we believe [stories of the Boy in Red—depending on how one feels about ghosts, that is]" (qtd. in McNeill 2013, 38) With these few examples, we can clearly see folklore manifest in most, if not all, of its varied forms within the park.

However, though this work has, I hope, been valuable, informative, and—dare I say it—*fun*, I feel this academic approach risks losing sight of what is truly important about this fandom. For this reason, I hope that you will indulge me as I add a little bit of a personal note.

It was a few days before Christmas, 2015. I had made it home for the holidays, and, though my presents were already wrapped and under the tree, I was far from feeling the Christmas spirit. It had been a long, stressful semester for me, and I still needed to get a great deal of grading done before I could really relax—grading that was proving surprisingly difficult. Finally, after a long day of trying to juggle family time and my own responsibilities, it was time for bed. After a round of "goodnights," my stepmother went to go tuck all the little ones in, and I sat down with my stack of papers and a Dr. Pepper, ready to settle in for the long haul.

I was on my third paper—which strangely, was not helping my mood any—when my stepmother slipped back into the living room, sat down at the piano, and began to play. I paused as the familiar strains of "Feed the Birds" from Disney's *Mary Poppins* filled the house, followed by "Baby Mine," from *Dumbo,* and "Love is a Song," from *Bambi*.

I suddenly realized I was bearing witness to something special: a bedtime ritual of sorts that had helped my family through hard times. I belong to a recently-blended family, originating from nasty divorces on both sides. The transition was especially hard on my step-siblings, ages 3-12 at the time, who were bounced back and forth, good-cop-bad-cop style, between my stepmom's kind and loving home and their biological father's manipulative, neglectful one. During this time, my stepmom, a talented musician, had chosen several Disney songs, one intended for each of her children, to play as they were falling asleep. Each choice was purposeful and deliberate, with each song in her repertoire included to reinforce values important to our family, represent aspects of that child's personality and character, and to give a sense of stability and security as they drifted off to sleep. Now, two years later, though things have more-or-less settled down, my stepmom still occasionally plays these songs at bedtime, as a way of imparting a sense of peace, safety, and love to her children.

As I listened to my stepmother play, I had one of those rare moments of clarity, which changed everything about how I thought about my research. Like many fans we have already discussed, my stepmom had taken what Disney offered to her—a relatively impersonal commercial product—and made it her own. But rather than dressing up in

silly costumes or spending embarrassing amounts of money on Disney pins, my stepmom had taken this music, much of it dear to her from her own childhood, and used it to symbolically communicate profound meaning to those she loved. That is, she invoked some aspects of the Disney Magic inherent in the music to help her children through an incredibly trying period of their lives—and it has, apparently, worked.

Though my stepmom was drawing on the traditions of the films, rather than Disneyland itself, this same feeling can be found among my informants as well. Jen Gulick fell in love with her husband partially through pin trading, and her most prized pin displays the date they were engaged. Lynne McNeill collected pins to preserve her memories of the park, which she still describes with great pride. And, for myself, Disneyland was a place where my family could go to grow closer to one another: for us, it was not the railroad or the candy that made the trip—it was *each other*.

And this is true of more than just my informants: for many people, Disneyland is a special, utterly unique experience, especially for those visiting for the first time. One redditor, for example, described in detail how, as a child, they felt lonely and alienated—but that changed on their first (and "only time so far") visit to the park:

> ...to me, Disneyland isn't a place. It's not a theme park. It's a concept; almost a state of mind. It's a metaphor for everything good in the world. You see, when I first walked into Disneyland, it was like I had found that place over the rainbow. The details of the park and the happiness that was within it completely erased all the insecurities I had. For the first time in my life, I felt totally and completely accepted, and for the first time, I felt truly happy.
>
> To me, the park provided some form of escape from the real world, and it became a certain paradise for me. (missthefrozenbananas 2016)

Another user described how he took a friend and his fourteen-year-old daughter to Disneyland. The girl had apparently been through quite a lot, and rarely spoke to anyone

except her mother—but, once in the park, the Magic was so strong that she "open[ed] up so that she was skipping, singing, dancing, and giggling in the streets! . . . I have been to Disneyland (as a guest) hundreds of times and I am still awed by it's [*sic*] magic every time. I wish Walt could have seen her!" (hhairy 2016). Another redditor described how, when she was still dealing with the ramifications of a nasty breakup, she decided to go to Disneyland to blow off some stress. "When I got there it hit me like a ton of bricks. For the first time in weeks I felt happy. Seeing all the joy around me, and looking at how Main Street lit up that night. For a brief moment, life was perfect" (BetweenTHEmetaphoR 2016). For each of these individuals (whose emotional responses to Disneyland are by no means unique), the Disney Magic is a very real, almost tangible force, and, though their writing is perhaps a little hyperbolic, it is impossible to miss the sheer *joy* that these writers have felt through their experiences with Disneyland.

With this sort of super-normal attachment, it would be almost impossible for there to *not* be a Disneyland fandom: with experiences so unique, rapturous, and powerful as these, *of course* fans would want to revisit, enhance, and extend their experience. This, I think strikes at the core both of what of Disney Magic is, and why it has proved so powerful: as I said in the introduction to this thesis, Disney Magic is something of a quasi-spiritual experience, one that can be found in a single, well-defined location, and, apparently nowhere else: within the gates of Disneyland itself.

In any case, as fandom studies become more widespread and more important, we must keep an open mind. Many may be tempted to turn their noses up at Disneyland, both for its connections to Disney's controversial treatment of fairy tales and its position as an

arch-commercial enterprise. However, what makes Disneyland so special to so many is what also makes it a fascinating location to study: the indefinable Disney Magic, which allows for such rapturous experiences, earns fans' fervent devotion and spurs their own creativity and desire to participate. Despite Disney's often-rocky relationship with its fans, especially their attempts to put boundaries around acceptable behavior, this devotion to the Magic is so strong that the fandom persists, in spite of official attempts to shut them down. Though other fandoms have occasionally had to deal with similar conflicts with content producers, the idea of the Disney Magic that keeps this fandom excited and motivated is, to my knowledge, entirely unique. This sort of dynamic does not exist in other fandoms, and these fans deserve to be studied for that reason alone. However, looking at these issues in strictly academic terms may miss the point entirely: after all, Disneyland *is* the *Magic* Kingdom!

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX:

TEXT OF SURVEYS

As stated in my Methodology section, I distributed two surveys during my research: one “online” survey, which was distributed via email, Facebook, and Reddit, and one “in-park” survey, which I distributed links to during my visits to Disneyland. The first survey was intentionally rather broad, and was intended to get a picture of what the fandom in general looked like, while the second was more focused and sought to learn about specific issues I was zeroing in on.

Both surveys began with a short section that introduced my work, asked for some basic identifying information, and included a standard release statement. I have omitted this initial section from this appendix in order to focus on the questions themselves.

Survey One: “Online” Survey

- Do you consider yourself a "fan" of Disney parks?
- Why or why not?
- What defines a "fan" of Disney Parks?
- As a fan, what sets you apart from non-fans? (i.e., things you do, things you own, things you make)?
- Please mark the following statements as true or false.
    - I have attended a Disney Theme Park.

  - I regularly attend Disney parks.
  - I have had access to Disney Annual Pass (Season Ticket) in the past.
  - I currently have access to a Disney Annual Pass.
  - I have bought a piece of personalized merchandise (for example, a set of mouse ears with your name embroidered)
  - I have bought a souvenir photo from one of the rides.
  - I have traditions I follow at the park.
- How often have you visited the various Disney parks? [Potential Responses: Never, Once, A Few Times, Several Times, More Than I Can Count]
  - Disneyland Resort, California
  - Walt Disney World Resort, Florida
  - Tokyo Disney Resort, Japan
  - Disneyland Paris, France
  - Hong Kong Disneyland, China
- About how frequently have you visited these parks? [Potential Responses: Once A Year, Several Times A Year, Monthly, Weekly, Daily]
  - Disneyland Resort, California
  - Walt Disney World Resort, Florida
  - Tokyo Disney Resort, Japan
  - Disneyland Paris, France
  - Hong Kong Disneyland, China

- How much do you know about the following topics? [Scale of 1-5, with a separate check box for "I have personal experience with this topic”]
    - In-Park Costuming (e.g., Disneybounding, Dapper Days, etc.)
    - Stories of "Disney Jail" (where in-park criminals are kept)
    - Staged/Funny Photos on Splash Mountain (or other rides)
    - Ash scatterings in the Haunted Mansion
    - (Actual) hauntings in the Haunted Mansion
    - Transgressive Activities (e.g., vandalism or theft on the rides)
    - Weddings or Engagements in Disney Parks

Survey Two: “In-Park” Survey

- Have you heard any of the stories about people scattering ashes in the Haunted Mansion? What have you heard?
    - Do you or anyone you know have any personal experience with this topic?
- Have you ever heard of "Disneybounding"? What do you know about it?
    - Do you or anyone you know have any personal experience with this topic?
- Have you seen any funny or staged photos taken on Splash Mountain cameras?
    - Do you or anyone you know have personal experience with this topic?
- Have you heard of people proposing or (secretly) getting married in the Disneyland Park? What have you heard?
    - Do you or anyone you know have personal experience with this topic?

- Do you buy or trade pins?
  - What pin trading activities do you participate in, and why?
  - Do you have any experience with "scrappers" (counterfeit pins)? How can you tell the difference between a genuine and a fake pin?
  - Have you ever purposely traded a scrapper?
- Have you heard any advice on when/how to best ride the various rides (e.g., ride Big Thunder Mountain at night, the purple teacup spins the fastest)
- Do any other topics come to mind that might be interesting for me to study?
- Anything else you'd like to add?
- Would it be alright if I contacted you further about these topics?