The Happiest Virtual Place on Earth

Theme Park Paratextuality

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Introduction

In his 2011 *Touristifizierung von Räumen* ("The Touristification of Spaces"), German tourism scholar Karlheinz Wöhler conceptualizes tourism as the "realization of the virtual."[1] What he means is that tourists arrive at their destination not just with their luggage, but also with a mental image of the site that they then, over the course of their vacation, performatively concretize and continually refine by sensorially experiencing and interacting with the space.[2] The tourist's "virtual" image of the destination that is thus "realized" during their stay there, Wöhler argues, is in turn based upon "medial constructions"—representations of the place as a tourism site in print media, radio, TV and movies, on websites, etc.[3] Tourism destinations are, of course, aware of these depictions (some of them are even created by the sites themselves) and may seek to more closely conform to them in order to facilitate the touristic "realization of the virtual," through processes of "Disneyfication."[4]

1. Karlheinz Wöhler, *Touristifizierung von Räumen: Kulturwissenschaftliche und soziologische Studien zur Konstruktion von Räumen* (Wiesbaden: VS, 2011), 72; my translation.
2. Ibid., 77.
3. Ibid., 77.
4. Ibid., 83; 172.

There are at least two ways in which Wöhler's model of tourism can be productively applied to theme parks. On the one hand, and as already suggested by his use of the term "Disneyfication,"[5] Wöhler offers us an interesting approach to the notion of "theming." Conventionally defined as "the use of an overarching theme or key concept (like Western) to organize a space,"[6] theming could also be conceptualized as the "realization of the virtual," i.e., the translation of medially constructed images of specific places, periods, cultures, etc., into instantly recognizable three-dimensional spaces. For example, several scholars have argued that the various pavilions at the World Showcase at Epcot in Orlando, Florida, do not simply represent the nation-states they are named after, but rather offer visitors precisely what, based on tourism media campaigns, they would expect to see on an actual vacation to these countries, and have therefore described the pavilions as "simulacra of the touristic world"[7] or "metatouristic spaces."[8]

On the other hand, and more importantly for my present purpose, the concept of the "realization of the virtual" can be related not only to the theming of theme parks but also to the parks themselves. Having been exposed to various medial representations of the site prior to their visit, even first-time visitors to a park may already have a quite specific idea of what it has to offer and how their experience will unfold, thus a mental or virtual image of the site that visitors then concretize and refine—in short, realize—over the course of their stay by experiencing and interacting with the space. The medial constructions upon which this virtual image of the

5. Coined by Richard Schickel in *The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), 220, the term "Disneyfication" has frequently been used to criticize (especially Disney) theme parks for formularizing, oversimplifying, and even grossly misrepresenting their themes in the interest of mass appeal and, hence, profitability. Among the first to use it in the context of urban planning and place-making outside of theme parks was Richard V. Francaviglia. See Francaviglia, "Main Street U.S.A.: A Comparison/Contrast of Streetscapes in Disneyland and Walt Disney World," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 15, no. 2 (1981): 146.
6. Scott A. Lukas, *The Immersive Worlds Handbook: Designing Theme Parks and Consumer Spaces* (New York: Focal, 2013), 68.
7. Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 223.
8. Florian Freitag, "'Who Really Lives There?': (Meta-)Tourism and the Canada Pavilion at Epcot," in *Gained Ground: Perspectives on Canadian and Comparative North American Studies*, ed. Eva Gruber and Caroline Rosenthal (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2018), 167.

theme park is based may include printed and online travel guides, trip reports, etc., but—as in the case of other tourist destinations—also and especially the site's self-representations in poster, radio, and TV ads, in travel brochures, and on their websites and social media accounts.

Theme parks are private spaces of commerce, yet they are also creatures of media.[9] The medial self-representations listed above can thus be thought of as the parks' "paratexts." Introduced by French literary critic Gérard Genette in his *Palimpsestes* (1982), the term originally described "verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations" that accompany and surround a literary text "in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book."[10] Genette himself later opened the concept to other media; in *Paratexts* (1987) he granted that "some, if not all, of the other arts have an equivalent of our paratext," naming music, sculpture, painting, and film as examples.[11] In fact, referring to *Palimpsestes*, Robert Stam had applied Genette's concept to film as early as 1985,[12] and paratextual analysis remains popular within film studies.[13]

Given the close intermedial relationship between the cinema and the theme park,[14] it is somewhat surprising that it was not until very recently that the concept of paratextuality was also used in theme park scholarship. In her *Theme Park Fandom*, Rebecca Williams describes themed food

9. As early as in 1968, Richard Schickel spoke of Disneyland as a "new and unique medium." Schickel, *The Disney Version,*18.
10. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1987]), 1; emphases original.
11. Ibid., 407.
12. Robert Stam, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 22–24.
13. See Alexander Böhnke, *Paratexte des Films: Über die Grenzen des filmischen Universums* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007).
14. See Florian Freitag, "'Like Walking into a Movie': Intermedial Relations between Disney Theme Parks and Movies," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 50, no. 4 (2017): 704–22.

and drinks as "hyperdiegetic paratexts."[15] Here, I broadly sketch the field of theme park paratextuality by suggesting different categories of theme park paratexts in order to examine how they "medially construct" the theme park and, hence, to discuss their role in the parks' virtualites (i.e., visitors' "virtual image" of the park). Mainly, I will argue that, like other paratexts, these medial artifacts seek to guide the parks' "'reception' and consumption"[16] by establishing "frames and filters"[17] through which visitors experience the sites. Moreover, I will show that these frames and filters often closely resemble the "politics of inclusion/exclusion"[18] that theme parks use to avoid issues that might offend or alienate potential customers. By contributing to virtual images of the parks that layer on top of the physical space and the actual experience, theme park paratexts apply the techniques of theming to theme parks themselves.

This chapter contributes to the fields of both theme park studies and paratext studies by shedding more light on the complex relationship between park landscape and visitor behavior. In theme park criticism, this relationship has, as I will argue below, long been taken to be a highly deterministic one, with the park layout and design supposedly exercising almost complete control over visitors' movements and emotions—an assumption to which more recent scholarship has reacted by empha-

15. Rebecca Williams, *Theme Park Fandom: Spatial Transmedia, Materiality and Participatory Cultures* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 163; emphasis original. Of course, earlier works sometimes discussed theme parks as paratexts (for movies; see Angela Ndalianis and Jessica Balanzategui, "'Being Inside the Movie': 1990s Theme Park Ride Films and Immersive Film Experiences," *The Velvet Light Trap* 84 (2019): 24), and critics have also analyzed medial artifacts that could be classified as paratexts (see Jay P. Telotte, *The Mouse Machine: Disney and Technology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 96–116; Stephen Yandell, "Mapping the Happiest Place on Earth: Disney's Medieval Cartography," in *The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairy-Tale and Fantasy Past*, ed. Tison Pugh and Susan Aronstein (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 24; and Carol J. Auster and Margaret A. Michaud, "The Internet Marketing of Disney Theme Parks: An Analysis of Gender and Race," *SAGE Open* 3, no. 1 (2013)) as well as the paratexts of one particular part of a park (see Andrew Lainsbury, *Once Upon an American Dream: The Story of Euro Disneyland* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 85–124; and Florian Freitag, *Popular New Orleans: The Crescent City in Periodicals, Theme Parks, and Opera, 1875–2015* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 160–64)—without, however, identifying them as such and thus also without considering them as part of the larger field of theme park paratextuality.

16. Genette, *Paratexts*, 1.

17. Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 3.

18. Scott A. Lukas, "A Politics of Reverence and Irreverence: Social Discourse on Theming Controversies," in *The Themed Space: Locating Culture, Nation, and Self*, ed. Scott A. Lukas (Lanham: Lexington, 2007), 277.

sizing the agency of visitors in general and fans in particular. Studying theme park paratexts, in turn, reminds us that control over visitors is exercised not just via environmental cues in the park landscape, but also via paratexts, whose consumption has become increasingly mandatory prior to, after, and even during the theme park visit. Indeed, it is the fact that visitors sometimes need to consume the park itself and its paratexts simultaneously that sets theme park paratexts apart from their literary, cinematic, and other counterparts.

Paratextual Control and Visitor Agency

Much has been written about Genette's distinction between "peritexts" (located close to the text itself; e.g. within the same work) and "epitexts," located "at a more respectful (or more prudent) distance" from a work.[19] Besides location relative to a work, Genette also suggested categorizing paratexts on the basis of their "*temporal* situation," i.e. their date of publication relative to the date of publication of the main text (prior, original, later, and delayed paratexts) and the lifetime of the latter's author (anthumous and posthumous paratexts).[20] Similarly, the temporal typology of paratexts offered by Jonathan Gray in *Show Sold Separately* differentiates between "entryway" and "in medias res" paratexts, "the first being those that we encounter before watching a film or television program, the latter those that come to us in the process of watching or at least interpreting the film or program."[21]

Yet even in the case of "original" (Genette) or "in medias res" (Gray) paratexts, text and paratext(s) are never quite consumed simultaneously. Tellingly, Gray chooses as "the most clear-cut example of an in medias res paratext" the "previously on…" segments of serial television programs, where the paratext links individual episodes and program segments rather than "intruding" into them.[22] Of course, theme parks have also been compared to television, with Karal Ann Marling considering

19. Genette, *Paratexts*, 4.
20. Ibid., 5; emphasis original.
21. Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, 18.
22. Ibid., 43.

the individual rides "slotted in among snacks, trips to the restroom, and 'commercials' in the form of souvenir emporia."[23] To this list of elements that link the park's rides by filling the gaps between them and creating what TV scholars term "flow,"[24] one could also add the consumption of such theme park paratexts as maps or apps—for which the parks, after all, even provide special places in the shape of "decision spaces."[25] Moreover, "in medias res" paratexts, such as souvenirs, could be argued to provide links and fill the gaps between theme park visits.

As obvious as it may seem—Disneyland (Anaheim, California) originally was a TV show, after all[26]—comparing theme park rides to television programs (and restaurants, shops, etc. to mere "fillers"), as Marling does, as well as categorizing theme park food as paratexts, as Williams does (see above), somehow misses the point of a theme park: what distinguishes the theme park from the amusement park or the fun fair is precisely that restaurants, shops, walkways, etc. are themed, too, and thus firmly integrated into and part of the overall experience. As is illustrated by the examples of decision spaces or so-called photo spots—locations marked by signposts that allow visitors to take supposedly well-composed photographs as souvenirs—theme parks do encourage visitors to consume and even produce their own paratexts at the very same time that they are in the park. And with online reservation systems for rides, restaurants, and shows, such theme park paratexts as apps sometimes even need to be consulted during the visit.

In addition to "entryway" paratexts (consumed before the visit) and "in medias res" paratexts (consumed after or in-between two visits), then, theme parks also feature paratexts that serve as medial interfaces between visitors and the park landscape during the very process of experiencing and consuming the site. These can therefore be termed "in situ"

23. Karal Ann Marling, "Disneyland, 1955: Just Take the Santa Ana Freeway to the American Dream," *American Art* 5, no. 1–2 (1991): 206.
24. See Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974), 95.
25. Using the example of Disneyland's Central Plaza, David Younger defines a "decision space" as "an open, wider area that allows guests to . . . discuss their plans for the day, without causing a bottleneck." Younger, *Theme Park Design & the Art of Themed Entertainment* (N.P.: Inklingwood, 2016), 298.
26. *Disneyland*, broadcast weekly on ABC under this name from 1954 to 1958, could be regarded as one of the park's paratexts—or vice versa.

paratexts. If we subscribe to Genette's (and his followers') idea that paratexts seek to guide a text's "'reception' and consumption" by providing "frames and filters," then the fact that theme parks provide their visitors with such interpretive guidelines or scripts even during the visit points first and foremost to the extraordinary amount of control that the parks seek to exert over their virtual image. Besides their intricately designed landscapes (and the carefully scripted behavior of their front-line employees),[27] which seek to regulate visitors' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to and their interactions with the themed space, theme parks also enlist paratexts to ensure a "proper" reading.

Theme park scholarship has long focused on the spatial determinism supposedly inherent in theme park landscapes. As early as 1968 and 1973, respectively, Richard Schickel and Christopher Finch commented on the techniques of forced perspective and *wienies* (Disney's concept of a visual magnet) used at Disneyland to subtly guide both visitors' emotions and their movements.[28] By the late 2010s and early 2020s, however, the scholarly debate shifted towards stressing visitors' agency.[29] Far from questioning visitor agency, my point here is simply that it is not, as Tom Robson maintains, just "[t]hrough their organization of the spatial text that is the

27. See John van Maanen, "The Smile Factory: Working at Disneyland," in *Reframing Organizational Culture*, ed. Peter J. Frost, Larry F. Moore, Meryl Reis Louis, Craig C. Lundberg, and Joanne Martin (Newbury Park: Sage, 1991), 58–77.
28. See Richard Schickel, *The Disney Version*, 323–24; and Christopher Finch, *The Art of Walt Disney from Mickey Mouse to the Magic Kingdoms* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1973), 390–93. More recently, Sharon Zukin, Norman Klein, Miodrag Mitrasinovic, and Brian Lonsway have all examined the deterministic strategies of (Disney) theme park landscapes, referring to them as "landscapes of power," "scripted spaces," "total landscapes," and examples of the "spatialization of control," respectively (see Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Norman Klein, *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects* (New York: New Press, 2004), 10; Miodrag Mitrasinovic, *Total Landscape, Theme Parks, Public Space* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006); and Brian Lonsway, *Making Leisure Work: Architecture and the Experience Economy* (London: Routledge, 2009), 174–75).
29. See, for example, Jennifer A. Kokai and Tom Robson, "Introduction: You're in the Parade! Disney as Immersive Theatre and the Tourist as Actor," in *Performance and the Disney Theme Park Experience: The Tourist as Actor*, ed. Jennifer A. Kokai and Tom Robson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 9; 14; or Williams, *Theme Park Fandom*, 9.

Magic Kingdom" that theme parks "seek to condition audience members to interpret that text in a particular way,"[30] but also through the paratexts that accompany this "spatial text." These paratexts, in turn, may also be spatial, but they come in many other forms and media as well.

The following discussion therefore uses not only the three temporal categories of theme park paratexts introduced above—entryway, in situ, and in medias res paratexts—but also six medial categories or genres of theme park paratexts—images, narratives, maps, historiographies, behind-the-scenes looks, and spaces and objects—to show how paratexts collaborate with the park landscape and with each other to create and maintain a specific "virtual" image of a given park. While spatial constraints allow me to focus on a mere selection of examples here, note that the two sets of categories, temporal and medial, freely intersect: for example, there are entryway, in situ, and in medias res narrative paratexts, just as in situ paratexts may come in the shape of images, narratives, maps, historiographies, behind-the-scenes looks, and spaces and objects. As it is its temporality that differentiates the theme park model from other paratextualities, however, my discussion is primarily organized according to temporal categories, starting with entryway paratexts in general and with paratexts published before the opening of a theme park in particular.

Entryway Paratexts

Images and other visualizations—conceptual drawings and architectural renderings, physical and virtual models, and, as construction progresses, photographic and film images—have played a pivotal role in promoting new theme parks (or new additions to existing theme parks). For the *Euro Disney Resort Paris Führer* guide book (1992), the undated *Euro Disney: The Heart of Make-Believe* booklet, and other pre-opening brochures of the Euro Disney Resort (now Disneyland Paris; Marne-la-Vallée, France), the Walt Disney Company relied heavily on existing photographs of its US-based parks and resorts, with Walt Disney World's Main Street, U.S.A.,

30. Tom Robson, "'The Future Is Truly in the Past': The Regressive Nostalgia of Tomorrowland," in *Performance and the Disney Theme Park Experience: The Tourist as Actor*, ed. Jennifer A. Kokai and Tom Robson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 32–33.

and Grand Floridian Beach Resort "standing in" for the new park's Main Street section and the Disneyland Hotel, respectively.[31] As its retro-futuristic design radically departs from that of its Tomorrowland counterparts in Anaheim and Orlando, however, Euro Disney's Discoveryland section is frequently visualized in pre-opening brochures through conceptual drawings and paintings, which already instruct future visitors how and specifically when to experience this area of the park.

At least two panoramic views of Discoveryland were created during the design process: an aerial "daytime" view by an unknown artist and an eye-level "nighttime" rendering by Tim Delaney, the lead designer of the "land."[32] Both prominently feature the Space Mountain roller coaster, which would not open until 1995, three years after the park's debut, thus inviting visitors to imaginatively add the massive building to Discoveryland's skyline from the very beginning (as well as inducing repeat visits through anticipatory priming, a common practice also on in medias res souvenir maps; see below). However, to visualize Discoveryland pre-opening brochures primarily relied on (details of) Delaney's "nighttime" view,[33] which showcases lighting designer Michael Valentino's dramatic illumination of the area against a dark blue sky, thus more or less subtly encouraging potential visitors to experience Discoveryland after dark, when the "land" shows itself—quite literally—in its best light.[34]

Fittingly, it was also through a film shot after nightfall—and one which opens with an actor playing Jules Verne turning on the show lights in the area—that Discoveryland was introduced to viewers of the *Grand Opening of Euro Disney* television special,[35] another important visual pre-opening

31. See Régine Ferrandis, *Euro Disney Resort Paris Führer*, trans. Iris Michaelis et al. (Bern: Fink-Kümmerly Frey, 1992), 68; 121; and N.N., *Euro Disney: The Heart of Make-Believe* (N.P.: N.P., 1992), 3; 13.
32. Both artworks are included in Alain Littaye, "The Disneyland Paris That Never Was—Part 6: Discoveryland," *Disney and More,* April 25, 2010, https://disneyandmore.blogspot.com/2010/04/disneyland-paris-that-never-was-part_25.html.
33. See N.N., *Euro Disney: The Heart of Make-Believe*, 12.
34. In fact, a comment in *Disneyland Paris de A à Z* (2017) suggests that the nighttime lighting constitutes an integral part of Discoveryland's steampunk aesthetics, with the "modern" neon lights counterbalancing the Victorian design of the buildings. See Jérémie Noyer and Mathias Dugoujon, *Disneyland Paris de A à Z* (Chessy: Euro Disney S.C.A., 2017), 115.
35. See Gilles Amado and Don Mischer (dir.), *The Grand Opening of Euro Disney*, Buena Vista Productions, 1992, 01:12:10–01:12:42.

entryway paratext for this park. The success of the *Disneyland* television show prior to the opening of Disneyland itself, the live-televised broadcast of the opening of that park, and its later promotions in that medium throughout the 1950s and 1960s were evident to the Walt Disney Company. Hence, this media strategy was repeated for the opening of the Euro Disney Resort in 1992 with the weekly *Disney Club* television show on various European channels[36] and the *Grand Opening of Euro Disney* TV special aired in Europe and the US on April 11. But the television gala primed the resort's future visitorship in other ways as well.

Examining the *Grand Opening* special in his book *Once Upon an American Dream*, Andrew Lainsbury notes that the show sought to "forg[e] an all-new identity for the Euro Disney Resort."[37] Indeed, perhaps in response to the virulent public debate about American cultural imperialism sparked by the announcement of the project,[38] the *Grand Opening* included several segments that stressed the European roots of Disney in general and Euro Disney in particular: a "film clip of Roy Disney on location in the small village of Isigny-sur-Mer (from which the Disney name was derived) dramatized his family connection with France" and a "collage of Disney movies dubbed in continental languages demonstrated that Mickey Mouse and his friends were indeed citizens of Europe."[39] Much more than "just a preview,"[40] the *Grand Opening* thus sought to present—in Genette's use of the term (see above)—the Euro Disney resort to future visitors as a place where European folk tales and myths finally come home[41] or as Disney's "return gift" to Europe.

And the *Grand Opening* wasn't Euro Disney's only pre-opening paratext to do so. Just as they did for the opening of Disneyland in California with *Donald Duck in Disneyland* (1955), Disney also published a comic strip for the opening of Euro Disneyland in Paris in 1992. Written and drawn by

36. Lainsbury, *Once Upon an American Dream*, 89–90.
37. Ibid., 101.
38. See Richard Kuisel, *The French Way: How France Embraced and Rejected American Values and Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 167–69.
39. Lainsbury, *Once Upon an American Dream*, 101.
40. Ibid., 85.
41. The *Euro Disney Resort Paris Führer* explicitly speaks of European fairy tales "coming home." See Ferrandis, *Euro Disney Resort Paris Führer*, 17, my translation.

Romano Scarpa, the 76-page "Die Jagd auf Karte Nr. 1" ("The Quest for Ticket No. 1") was first published in German in 1992 as the title story of volume 177 of the *Lustiges Taschenbuch* monthly comic book series. The "quest" motif is a popular one in comics and other narrative theme park paratexts, regardless of the temporal category, as it allows the creators to send the protagonists through the park in order to showcase its various attractions and landscapes. In *Donald Duck in Disneyland*, for example, Donald Duck roams the entire site in search for his nephews Huey, Dewey, and Louie, with whom he had planned to spend a "quiet visit" to the new park, but who had quickly abandoned him at the entrance to explore the premises on their own.[42]

By contrast, in the 1992 Euro Disney comic, the park merely appears as a construction site at the beginning and during the opening ceremonies at the end of the comic. In between, Scrooge McDuck, his family and friends, as well as his archenemies and rivals Flintheart Glomhold and the Beagle Boys, travel all over Europe—from London to Odense, Brussels, the Lorelei, the Cave of Altamira, Venice, and finally to Paris—on a scavenger hunt for the first ticket to Euro Disney, which is all part of the park's opening promotional campaign. Somewhat ironically, then, the comic dedicates much more space to Europe's established tourist destinations than to its newest one. However, it once again depicts the park as Disney's return gift to Europe: it was, we learn in a flashback, a Frenchman by the name of Gérard who gave a young Scrooge his very first gold nugget.[43] Now the "main shareholder" of Euro Disney, McDuck returns the favor by offering the Euro Disney resort to the French (and the titular "ticket number one" to a young French boy named Gérard).[44]

42. See Annie North Bedford, *Donald Duck in Disneyland* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955). For a similar storyline revolving around the Osmond Brothers, see the March 22, 1970, episode of *The Wonderful World of Disney* television series, which sought to promote the then newly opened Haunted Mansion ride at Disneyland. See Freitag, *Popular New Orleans*, 164.
43. Romano Scarpa, "Die Jagd auf Karte Nr. 1," *Lustiges Taschenbuch* 177 (1992): 75–76.
44. Ibid., 78–79.

In Situ Paratexts

While entryway paratexts are intended to be consumed before travelling to a theme park, paper guide maps are consumed on site during the park visit. Such maps also demonstrate the potential of a historical approach to paratextual artifacts: like theme parks themselves,[45] their paratexts constantly evolve and change—not just along with the parks, as they necessarily do in the case of guide maps, but also with respect to the particular virtual image of the site that they create. In a 2012 article, Stephen Yandell has examined Disney souvenir poster maps—the in medias res equivalent of the in situ guide maps that I focus on here, so to speak—arguing that they "manipulate [visitors] to preserve an illusion of perfection."[46] Indeed, in addition to sometimes also anticipating future attractions (see above), souvenir maps use innocuous "groves of trees, the default symbol used [on theme park maps] to indicate off-limit spaces,"[47] or blank spaces to hide whatever visitors are not supposed to notice during their visit—from construction and maintenance works to backstage areas and the outside world.

Hence, like in medias res souvenir books whose pictures always show comfortably populated yet not overcrowded theme park landscapes in a perfect state of maintenance and in ideal weather,[48] in medias res souvenir maps let visitors know exactly how to remember the site. Usually handed out for free at the park entrance, in situ guide maps, in turn, use the very same groves of trees and blank spaces in order to tell visitors how to perceive and experience the site during their visit. In fact, in listing the park's various attractions and services, guide maps may profess

45. Alan Bryman, *Disney and His Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1995), 83; and Stephen Yandell, "Mapping the Happiest Place on Earth, 24.
46. Yandell, "Mapping the Happiest Place on Earth," 24.
47. Ibid.
48. The 1992 Euro Disneyland souvenir book provides an interesting example since it was printed before the park opened and thus before such pictures were available. Therefore, in addition to a few extremely carefully framed photographs of the unfinished park, it mainly features, much like the pre-opening brochures discussed earlier (see above), pictures of Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom and especially conceptual drawings of Euro Disney, which show the site in an even more highly idealized manner than any photograph ever could (see European Creative Center, *Euro Disney* (N.P.: Walt Disney Company, 1992)). Bypassing visitors' actual experiences in the park itself, the souvenir book thus invites visitors to remember the park exactly as the designers had originally envisioned it.

to inform visitors about their possibilities, but, like other maps, they also "reflect limitations."[49] Simply by suggesting that there is nothing to be seen or experienced there, the maps direct our attention away from backstage areas and the world beyond the park's boundaries and tell us "where we can't go and what we can't (or must [not]) do."[50] In this, guide maps are directly contradicted by yet another in situ paratext—namely, behind-the-scenes guided tours, which lead visitors backstage and thus suggest that there is indeed quite a lot to be seen there.[51]

Compared to traditional printed guide maps, contemporary virtual in situ maps may reflect even more limitations. The parks' websites and apps usually feature multiple filter options that allow visitors to look for the nearest restrooms, interactive rides suitable for small children, restaurants offering vegetarian food, or shops selling specifically themed merchandise. In addition, search results usually offer links to detailed descriptions of the respective space, including pictures and videos, technical data and safety restrictions (for attractions), and review options, and they can all be put on a personal "favorite" list.[52] Hence, the already highly selective paratextual representation of the park landscape on the printed guide map becomes even more selective in the electronic version as elements that do not match the visitor's filters are not even indicated. Indeed, on the virtual map, elements that have been filtered out by customers become as invisible to them as those already filtered out by the map designers.

Earlier Disneyland in situ guides, in turn, feature highly schematic park maps with the names of the park's various subsections as well as maps of each "land" labeled with numbers and symbols that allowed visitors to locate the area's specific attractions, shows, restaurants, shops, and ser-

49. Yandell, "Mapping the Happiest Place on Earth," 24.
50. Mark Monmonier, *No Dig, No Fly, No Go: How Maps Restrict and Control* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 1.
51. See David L. Pike, "The Walt Disney World Underground," *Space and Culture* 8, no. 1 (2005): 47–65; and Mathew J. Bartkowiak, "Behind the Behind the Scenes of Disney World: Meeting the Need for Insider Knowledge," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 45, no. 5 (2012): 943–59.
52. See, for example, the Europa-Park & Rulantica App.

vices.[53] What is important here is the order in which the individual park sections are introduced to readers of the booklet: having arrived at the end of Main Street, U.S.A., visitors to Disneyland find themselves on Central Plaza, a decision space that offers equal access to all of the park's "lands."[54] This is where the booklet intervenes by ordering the sections and suggesting that visitors experience them in a "clockwise" or "chronological" way, from Adventureland and Frontierland (the past) to Tomorrowland (the future). Unsurprisingly, this order was kept for early in situ guides of Euro Disney, which thus identified Discoveryland as the last area to be visited, towards the end of the day and after nightfall.[55]

The very same order of lands is also suggested in "C'est magique/Feel the Magic," a musical revue performed at Disneyland Paris's Fantasy Festival stage from 1992 to 1994 (i.e., the first two years of the park's operation). Featuring scenes dedicated to each of the park's five themed "lands," the show could be considered an attraction that doubled as an in situ paratext (or vice versa). "C'est magique/Feel the Magic" may thus be regarded as part of an entire array of spatial and performative entryway and in situ theme park paratexts, with examples ranging from the "Espace Euro Disneyland" preview center (1990–1992)[56] to the stage show that toured China before the opening of Shanghai Disneyland in 2016[57] and from the "Europa-Park Historama" revolving theatre show (2010–2017)[58] to the Efteling Museum (since 2003).[59] Whereas the former two mainly sought

53. See the 1972 Disneyland guide map, which can be viewed at https://disneylandresortdaily.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/1972-SpringW.pdf.
54. The only exceptions here are the subsequently added "satellite lands" of New Orleans Square (1966), Critter Country (1972), and *Star Wars*: Galaxy's Edge (2019), which can only be reached via Adventureland, Frontierland, and Fantasyland.
55. See the 1993 Euro Disneyland guidebook (author's collection).
56. Lainsbury, *Once Upon an American Dream*, 87-88.
57. See Laura MacDonald, "Rising in the East: Disney Rehearses Chinese Consumers at a Glocalized Shanghai Disneyland," in *Performance and the Disney Theme Park Experience: The Tourist as Actor*, ed. Jennifer A. Kokai and Tom Robson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 127.
58. See Freitag, *Popular New Orleans*, 132–35.
59. See https://www.efteling.com/en/park/attractions/efteling-museum.

to explain to visitors the concept and layout of the upcoming parks, the latter two have also offered visitors of Europa-Park and Efteling a highly selective look back at the histories of the respective sites and could therefore be considered both spatial and historiographic paratexts.

In Medias Res Paratexts

The soundtrack of "C'est magique/Feel the Magic" that was sold on cassettes and CDs at the park's souvenir shops, in turn, could be categorized as an in medias res narrative paratext that not only allows visitors to remember the show but also offers them a script of how to organize their entire next vacation there. The soundtrack contains two additional scenes that, by fall 1993 at least, had been cut from performances of the show at the park:[60] "Thank God, I'm a Country Bear" and "Night Life/Macho Duck," which refer to the Disneyland resort hotels (specifically the Davy Crockett Ranch and the Hotel Cheyenne) and the Festival Disney shopping and entertainment district, respectively.[61] With these two songs placed before and in between the musical tour of Disneyland's various "lands," the soundtrack not only introduces listeners to the park and its layout but scripts an "ideal" (from the point of view of the Walt Disney Company at least) two-day vacation at the resort, a truly—to use the title of the second scene—"Supercalifragi Euro Disneyland vacation."[62]

Just like other theme park paratexts, the "C'est magique/Feel the Magic" soundtrack is notable as much for what it includes as for what it excludes: the journey to the resort and back, rides closed for maintenance, money spent, and the time it took to wait in line (which, had it been included, may well have turned out to be the longest scene of the show). In their depictions of the theme park, paratexts frequently rely on the very same "politics of inclusion/exclusion" (see above) as the parks in their representations of particular themes. Another "spatial" in medias res paratext also illustrates this point: in the early 2000s, the then-newly opened Dis-

60. See amateur video recordings of the show, available at e.g., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3v6TmPSm3ng&t=296s.
61. N.N., *Euro Disney: Feel the Magic* (N.P.: Walt Disney Records, 1992), 06:35–08:12; 08:13-10:45.
62. N.N., *Euro Disney: Feel the Magic*, 03:26–06:32.

ney California Adventure park in Anaheim sold toy models of some of its signature rides, including "the *Orange Stinger*, complete with yellow-and-black bee abdomen seats, and the *Sun Wheel*, with the smiling California sun face in the center of the wheel."[63] In contrast to architectural models of these rides, what was missing from the toys were, of course, the waiting lines.

At the same time, what is rigidly excluded from the park landscape (as well as from some paratexts) may also become the focus of specific paratexts. This particularly applies to in medias res historiographic and behind-the-scenes paratexts such as coffee table books on the history, design, and construction of theme parks. Theme parks generally make enormous efforts to carefully hide their own history from visitors. Except for extremely rare cases in which theme parks choose to commemorate or pay tribute to former attractions (e.g., Disneyland planting characters from the closed Country Bear Jamboree show as "easter eggs" into The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh ride that replaced it), alterations and new additions are subtly integrated into the existing theme park landscape so as to avoid so-called theming palimpsests, i.e., situations "in which themes from different eras are visible in the same spaces."[64]

By contrast, and much like the "Europa-Park Historama" or the Efteling Museum do in situ and in the shape of spaces, historiographic in medias res paratexts such as *Disneyland: Dreams, Traditions and Transitions* (1995), *The Haunted Mansion: Imagineering a Disney Classic* (2015), and similar richly illustrated coffee table books dramatize and celebrate the histories of entire parks and individual rides (or, in the case of such meta-paratexts as *Maps of the Disney Theme Parks: Charting 60 Years from California to Shanghai* (2016), even those of specific paratextual genres themselves). To be sure, the "politics of inclusion/exclusion" have not been entirely suspended, and what Henry Giroux noted about historical theming in theme parks—namely, a tendency towards "historical era-

63. Werner Weiss, "The First Christmas at California Adventure," *Yesterland.com*, last modified December 20, 2019, https://www.yesterland.com/dcachristmas2001.html.
64. See Lukas, "A Politics of Reverence and Irreverence," 282.

sure"[65]—even more fundamentally applies to theme parks' paratextual approaches to their own history: unsuccessful rides, shows, restaurants, and shops, mishaps and accidents, and designs that no longer correspond to current notions of political or social acceptability and appropriateness are routinely excised from these paratexts.[66]

Similarly, while "autothemed" theme park spaces (i.e., spaces that are themed to the parks themselves),[67] such as Disneyland's Club 33 or Walt's—An American Restaurant at Disneyland Paris, frequently use concept art and architectural models for decorative purposes, theme parks usually seek to hide design, construction, and maintenance work from park visitors in back offices and behind themed construction walls and tarps, lest visitors' own visual in medias res paratexts (i.e., souvenir photos and videos) should be "spoiled." By contrast, behind-the-scenes in medias res paratexts such as *Imagineering: A Behind the Dreams Look at Making the Magic Real* (1996), *Imagineering: A Behind the Dreams Look at Making MORE Magic Real* (2010), and similar coffee table books reveal precisely what the construction walls and tarps seek to hide, inviting visitors to take a "revered gaze"[68] at the efforts that have gone into the design, construction, and maintenance of the landscapes they have enjoyed during their visit.

Like their historiographic counterparts, such behind-the-scenes in medias res paratexts use different scopes. Some, including the *Imagineering* books mentioned above, focus on the designs of a specific theme park company; others, like *Designing Disney: Imagineering and the Art of the Show* (2008), highlight the work of one particular designer (here, John Hench); still others, such as *Disneyland Paris de A à Z* (2017), look at one specific park. The latter example is also notable for its "Disneyland Paris around the Clock" segments, which over the course of the book

65. Henry A. Giroux, *The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), 34.
66. See Freitag, *Popular New Orleans*, 165-70.
67. See Florian Freitag, "Autotheming: Themed Spaces in Self-Dialogue," in *A Reader in Themed and Immersive Spaces*, ed. Scott A. Lukas (Pittsburgh, PA: ETC, 2016), 141.
68. Alison Griffiths, *Shivers Down Your Spine: Cinema, Museums, and the Immersive View* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 286.

track twenty-four hours behind the scenes of the resort. Many theme park paratexts—from the in situ guide books and stage shows discussed earlier to reservation apps—seek to precisely schedule the visitors' experiences of the theme park space, resulting in what Aldo Legnaro, H. Jürgen Kagelmann, and Rebecca Williams have termed "Erlebnisarbeit" ("experience work"),[69] "Spaß-Arbeit" ("fun work"),[70] and "anticipatory labor."[71] The "Disneyland Paris around the Clock" segments match this schedule with a behind-the-scenes timetable that makes the employees' tasks seem at least as exciting as a regular visit to the park.

Conclusion

Theme park paratexts have sometimes been used as sources for historical approaches to theme parks.[72] More recently, Rebecca Williams has suggested using paratexts and other mediatizations of theme parks to address the ecological and health concerns that physical travel to the sites over long distances and during the COVID-19 pandemic may engender.[73] As my brief overview of the various medial and temporal categories of theme park paratexts has sought to show, these depictions of the parks as historical sources or as substitutes for the actual experience of theme park landscapes should be approached very carefully, as they always depict the site itself and visitors' experience of it in a highly selective manner. More specifically, theme park paratexts frequently employ exactly the same "politics of inclusion/exclusion" that theme parks them-

69. Aldo Legnaro, "Subjektivität im Zeitalter ihrer simulativen Reproduzierbarkeit: Das Beispiel des Disney-Kontinents," in *Gouvernementalität der Gegenwart*, ed. Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasman, and Thomas Lemke (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2000), 293.
70. H. Jürgen Kagelmann, "Themenparks," in *ErlebnisWelten: Zum Erlebnisboom in der Postmoderne*, ed. H. Jürgen Kagelmann, Reinhard Bachleitner, and Max Rieder (Munich: Profil, 2004), 175.
71. Williams, *Theme Park Fandom,* 67–99.
72. See Jon Wiener's short history of Disneyland's Frontierland. Wiener, "Tall Tales and True," *The Nation* (31 January 1994), 133.
73. Rebecca Williams, "Theme Parks in the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic," in *Pandemic Media: Preliminary Notes toward an Inventory*, ed. Philipp Dominik Keidl, Laliv Melamed, Vinzenz Hediger, and Antonio Somaini (Lüneburg: Meson, 2021), 142.

selves use to translate particular themes into three-dimensional immersive spaces, emphasizing certain aspects of the parks while deemphasizing others in order to offer visitors guidelines, frames, filters, and scripts on how to anticipate, experience, and remember the site.

This is precisely the reason why theme park critics should not just draw on paratexts as sources, but also study them as objects in their own right as medial artifacts that significantly contribute to visitors' mental images of the parks or the latter's "virtuality" before, after, and, perhaps most importantly, even during the visit (and that sometimes even constitute visitors' sole access to the sites, as in 2020–2021, when many parks were forced to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic).[74] This is not to deny that theme park visitors have agency, as recent critics have emphasized, but to suggest that this agency is curtailed not just by the deterministic landscapes of the parks but also by their paratexts. To emphasize, it is the option—and sometimes the necessity—to consume text (the park landscape) and paratext (e.g., reservation apps) simultaneously that distinguishes the theme park model from other paratexts. Beyond these temporal considerations, theme park paratexts are above all marked by their medial variety. Quite appropriately so, paratextual portrayals of the hybrid, composite, or meta-medial landscapes of theme parks[75] come in the shape of still and moving images, maps, narratives, performances, and even themed spaces.

74. See Salvador Anton Clavé and Florian Freitag, "Introduction: Theme Parks and Covid-19," *Journal of Themed Experience and Attractions Studies* 2, no. 1 (2022).
75. Coined by Irina Rajewsky (Rajewsky, *Intermedialität* (Tübingen: Francke, 2002), 203), Werner Wolf (Wolf, "Intermediality," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (New York: Routledge, 2005), 253), and Alexander Geppert (Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3), respectively, the terms "hybrid medium," "composite medium," and "meta-medium" denote media in their own right that from a historical perspective but fuse and combine various other media that have been conventionally viewed as distinct. In the case of the theme park, this includes architecture, landscaping, music, film, performance, and language (see Florian Freitag, "'This Way or That? Par ici ou par là?': Language in the Theme Park," *Visions in Leisure and Business* 23, no. 1 (2021): 73).

Of course, paratexts are far from the only medial portrayals of theme parks to have an impact on visitors' mental images of these sites. The virtuality of theme parks is based not just on their paratextuality, but also on their reception in independently produced medial depictions of them, be they the creations of artists (e.g. Banksy's *Dismaland*),[76] critics (e.g. Louis Marin's famous map of Disneyland),[77] journalists (e.g. travel articles), or fans (e.g. Werner Weiss's *Yesterland*);[78] be they created with a commercial agenda (e.g. the *Unofficial Guides to Walt Disney World*)[79] or not (e.g. fan discussion boards); and be they produced and distributed with the tacit approval and even support of the parks (as in the context of Disney's official fan club D23, founded in 2009, or in other cases of "fanagement")[80] or not. As with theme park paratexts, critics appear to have discovered such independent renditions of theme parks only recently, but the publication of Williams's *Theme Park Fandom* in 2020 as well as the much-expanded-on chapter "Disney and the World" in the revised edition of Janet Wasko's *Understanding Disney* (2020)[81] are encouraging signs. Theme parks, their paratexts, and their reception will definitely keep us busy in the future.

76. See Florian Freitag, "Critical Theme Parks: Dismaland, Disney, and the Politics of Theming," *Continuum* 31, no. 6 (2017): 923–32.
77. See Louis Marin, *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*, trans. Robert A. Vollrath (New York: Humanity, 1984), 252.
78. See www.yesterland.com.
79. See Bob Sehlinger and Len Testa, *The Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World 2021* (La Vergne: Unofficial Guides, 2021).
80. Matt Hills, "Torchwood's Trans-Transmedia: Media Tie-Ins and Brand 'Fanagement,'" *Participations Journal of Audience Studies* 9, no. 2 (2012): 409.
81. See Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Polity, 2020), 209–60.

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