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VISITING THE VIDEOGAME THEME PARK

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Abstract: Theme parks have been depicted as places of adventure and play throughout the history of videogames by adapting their architectural form, sights and sounds, and activities. Theme parks are a form of spatial media that remediates the already remediated that shares a number of common qualities with videogames. A survey of games set in theme parks demonstrates how they have been constructed to support types of play and reveals expectations about interactivity and player agency. The primary difference in these participatory expectations—communal versus individual action—is manifest in the way videogames create a "theme park for one" in which the player becomes a special actor. This chapter examines how games set in both familiar and fictional theme parks find ways of justifying the shifted role of the individual as they attempt to adapt the traditional values of theme park design into a different interactive medium.

Balloons slowly ascend to the sky overtop a familiar arch in celebration of the dawning of another day at Universal Studios. But, in 2001, one did not need to travel to Hollywood or Orlando or Osaka to watch this scene unfold if they owned a Nintendo GameCube videogame console. Instead, Kemco's *Universal Studios Theme Parks Adventure* offered a virtual trip to the famous vacation destination, complete with attractions such as Jaws and Back to the Future: The Ride. Produced to promote the then newly opened Universal Studios Japan, the game depicted a type of place not often represented in videogames—the theme park, with all of its amusements and spectacle—an experience not easily translated to the screen. Despite the similarities in the participatory and spatial qualities of the two forms of entertainment, it is typically only the techniques for constructing these environments that are shared.[1] While it can be argued that when

[1] Don Carson, "Environmental Storytelling, Part I: Creating Immersive 3D Worlds Using Lessons Learned from the Theme Park Industry," *Gamasutra*, March 1, 2000, http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/131594/environmental_storytelling_.php.

we build videogame worlds of all kinds we are building something akin to a theme park,[2] games like *Universal Studios Theme Parks Adventure* provide a fascinating design experiment: what happens when we adapt a theme park from its original medium into the medium of videogames? Themed environments, characterized by their "pervasive use of overarching symbolic motifs that define an entire built space" have a long architectural tradition in pleasure gardens, world's fairs, and amusement parks.[3] Margaret J. King formulates that theme parks are "four-dimensional symbolic landscapes" that can be understood by examining their form, function, and values.[4] They draw from screen-based media, theater, and architecture; use the practices of storytelling, performance and play; and must integrally account for the participation of their mass-audience in an expansive built environment.[5] This environment requires huge expanses of land, massive financial investment, and significant upkeep. Though the parkgoer is removed from all but the outward-facing performance, theme parks must ensure that "every material object, sound, smell, or performance, together with the outside factors such are income levels, oil prices or weather, is designed as an adaptable, relational unit within a dynamic system."[6] And though theme parks in videogames do not need to take into account the tangible demands of their real-world counterparts, their physical form is inextricably linked to their image. Parkgoers and game players alike enter into a world separated from ordinary life.[7]

The theme park's function—"to express a coherent but multi-layered message"—is achieved by immersing their visitors in a place that focuses their attention on simulation and symbols.[8] They create imaginary worlds that engage visitors with their architectural decoration, theatrical performance, spectacular attractions, and resonant fictions. Park designers must balance manage parkgoers' individuality and communion as they join together around the illusion of this particular commodity.[9] In doing so, they distill and echo back mediations of thematic cultural values.[10] In Disneyland, for example, these values reflect Americans' beliefs that they are

[2] Ibid.
[3] Mark Gottdiener, *The Theming of America: Dreams, Media Fantasies, and Themed Environments* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).
[4] *Margaret J. King, "The Theme Park: Aspects of Experience in a Four-Dimensional Landscape," Material Culture* 34, no. 2 (2002): 2.
[5] Mark J. P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation* (Routledge, 2014).
[6] Miodrag Mitrasinovic, *Total Landscape, Theme Parks, Public Space* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 19.
[7] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (Beach Press: 1971), 19–20.
[8] King, "The Theme Park," 9.
[9] Scott A Lukas, *Theme Park* (London: Reaktion, 2008), 28.
[10] King, "The Theme Park," 2.

exceptional individuals and are represented through stories of adventure, freedom, progress, heroism, and self-determination.[11] But despite this focuses on individualism, attending a theme park also a social experience. When the booming voice of Thurl Ravenscroft observes that The Haunted Mansion foyer has no windows and no doors and offers the "chilling challenge to find a way out!" he is at once speaking to each person, each family, and also the collective whole who happened to be clumped in the queue together. In places like the Wizarding World of Harry Potter (est. 2010) at Universal's Islands of Adventure, Florida, parkgoers exhibit a fascinating relationship to the environment they inhabit. On the one hand, wandering through Hogsmeade—whose images have been conjured in both the book reader and film watcher's imagination—transports the visitor into a magical fantasy realm designed to evoke an emotional response in the individual. On the other hand, when the number of visitors in either Hogsmeade or Diagon Alley approaches capacity, the individual escape may be superseded by the experience of crowds. Yet, with the exception of a few massively-multiplayer online games, videogames that use theme parks as a setting are designed around the singular experience of the player who possess expectations about the agency they will carry into a videogame world. As such, theme park videogames downplay the role of the other participants in their worlds and subsequently explore the concept of a theme park designed for one.

Applying King's framework of form, function, and values to a survey of videogames that use theme parks as their setting demonstrates the unique relationship between these two media. Only a few videogame companies and developers have undertaken the challenge of adapting this setting as the framework for their game—and most of these have been based on popular, existing parks. Disney properties have been portrayed in games such as *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom* (NES, 1990) (Figure 1), *Mickey no Tokyo Disneyland Daibōken* (*Mickey's Great Adventure in Tokyo Disneyland)* (Super Famicom, 1994), *Disney's Epic Mickey* (Wii, 2010), *Kinect: Disneyland Adventures* (Xbox 360, 2011), and *Disney Magical World* (3DS, 2014). Two of the other largest park operators have brought their own brands to life in games such as *Universal Studios Theme Parks Adventure* (GameCube, 2001) and *Six Flags Fun Park* (Wii & DS, 2009). Not all games that use the theme or amusement park setting fall under the purview of a study of adaptation. "Simulation management" games like the popular Frontier Developments, Ltd.'s

[11] Ibid., 12.

RollerCoaster Tycoon series (1999–2005) and Bullfrog's *Theme Park* (PC, 1994) place the player in the role of park operator rather than visitor and have less to do with producing experiences around compelling themes than they do building rides that will attract customers. A handful of

Figure 1. Big Thunder Mountain Railroad and Cinderella's Castle appear in *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom* (1990) for the Nintendo Entertainment System

games, like *Carnival Games* (Wii, 2007) and *Wonder World Amusement Park* (Wii, 2008), use the construct of the midway/carnival as a place where various games like ring-toss and whack-a-mole are compiled together as the justification for mini-game collections. *Nintendo Land* (Wii U, 2012) structures its mini-games under the guise of a theme park, though the extent of the similarity is that there is a hub that connects twelve different mini-games in which the player can walk around. Ubisoft's *Rabbids Land* (Wii U, 2012), which was released alongside *Nintendo Land* at the launch of the Wii U, uses a theme park as background scenery for what is otherwise a digital board game that has mini-game events when players land on particular squares. For these mini-game collections, the theme park serves as little more than a justification for disparate activities that have elaborate menus. And edge cases like *Marvel Land* (Sega Genesis, 1989) and *Tiny Toons Adventures 2: Trouble in Wackyland* (NES, 1993) demonstrate that merely adapting components such as rides and visual imagery does not address what makes theme parks special. Remediating theme parks requires reproducing a particular type of experience.

The process of adaptation addresses expressive possibilities and interactive affordances while revealing assumptions about the unique properties of the theme park as a medium. This article begins with a brief history of the theme park as a form of spatial media that remediates the already remediated. It examines the form and function of theme park spaces and their virtual equivalents to identify trends and outliers in the construction of theme park videogames. Most significantly, theme parks produce a particular type of experience that is adapted in numerous ways in videogames. The effect of this—the common values these games share—is the way games create a "theme park for one" in which the player is a special actor at the center of the complex system that defines this "total-sensory-engaging environmental art." And it concludes by touching upon the slow transformation parks are undergoing that personalize the individual parkgoer's experience in a way that had previously only been possible in videogames.

I. Remediating the Remediated

Theme parks are part of a historical tradition of leisure, entertainment, and curiosity that emerge from 18th and 19th century pleasure gardens, world's fairs and expositions from the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries, and the amusement parks of the early 20th century.[12] These architectural efforts occupied a substantial amount of physical land and their design as "total, unified spaces" of visual architecture and landscaping were a part of their appeal to tourists and visitors.[13] Unlike temporary carnivals or fairs, amusement parks such as Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen (est. 1843) and Luna Park in New York (est. 1903) were established as permanent homes for leisure and excitement—but most eschewed thematic unity because their appeal resided in the rides and attractions. Privately owned amusement parks like Cedar Point (est. 1870) and Kennywood (est. 1906) assembled leisure activities in one convenient location for the express purpose of entertaining those with disposable income. Underlying these entertainment spaces was the notion that they were at their best when they were participant directed.[14] Theme park historian Scott Lukas

[12] Edward Hardwood, "Rhetoric, Authenticity, and Reception: The Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden, the Modern Theme Park, and Their Audiences," in *Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations*, ed. Terence G. Young and Robert B. Riley, vol. 20 (Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 53–56.
[13] Scott A Lukas, "How the Theme Park Got Its Power: The World's Fair as Cultural Form," in *Meet Me at the Fair: A World's Fair Reader*, ed. Laura Holden Hollengreen et al. (Pittsburgh, PA: ETC Press, 2014), 396.
[14] Karal Ann Marling, *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance* (Montréal; Paris: Centre canadien d'architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture ; New York : Flammarion, 1997), 27.

suggests that theming in particular is used to "orient the guest to the space" to direct their activity.[15] Theme provides structure both in terms of wayfinding and applying narrative techniques that help create mental models of the theme park experience.

The line that delineates theme park from amusement park has grown increasingly blurry. Yet, it is worth considering some of the definitions that attempt to describe their differences in order to identify the set of videogames applicable to this study. Margaret King defines theme parks as "a social artwork designed as a four-dimensional symbolic landscape, evoking impressions of places and times, real and imaginary," which contrasts with amusement parks that are "limited experiences whose attraction focuses on the immediate physical gratification of the thrill ride."[16] Thus, while amusement parks in the United States had been popular throughout the late 19th and early 20th century, it was Knott's Berry Farm's (est. 1940) use of the 19th century western Ghost Town theme that earned it the moniker of the first "theme park." Brenda J. Brown attributes the "theme" of the theme park to the use of reference material, such as Disney's use of their animated characters and television series that gave Disneyland (est. 1955) its specificity.[17] The connection may not need to be as explicit as adapting Snow White or Peter Pan, as in the case of the more general approach that Walt Disney took in appropriating a swath of cultural sources when devising the Pirates of the Caribbean (opened 1967), but the use of source material to create a specific experience characterizes the venue known as the theme park. In part, the theme/amusement naming dynamic has been viewed primarily as a semantic argument in which theme parks are treated with higher regard.[18] While Disney and Universal dominate the current landscape of American theme parks with their California and Florida properties, other companies contribute as well: the SeaWorld parks of San Diego (est. 1964), Orlando (est. 1973), and San Antonio (est. 1988) use marine life as their central theme; Busch Gardens in Tampa Bay, FL (est. 1959) functions as an African-themed safari park that also incorporates thrill rides; and Six Flags' nineteen North American locations and Cedar Fair's eleven parks incorporate television, film, and even videogame intellectual property into themed areas within the park. Whereas the Magic Kingdom

[15] Scott A Lukas, *The Immersive Worlds Handbook: Designing Theme Parks and Consumer Spaces* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2013), 16.
[16] King, "The Theme Park," 3.
[17] Brenda J. Brown, "Landscapes of Theme Park Rides: Media, Modes, Messages," in *Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations*, vol. 20, Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture (Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 237.
[18] King, "The Theme Park," 3.

(est. 1971) and Universal's Islands of Adventure (est. 1999) function as places composed of different themed lands, parks like Tokyo DisneySea in Japan (est. 2001) or Ferrari World in Dubai, UAE (est. 2010) exhibit greater consistency throughout. Examining how these themes are realized in the parks addresses what makes them different from other amusement venues.

II. Theme Park Remediations

Theme parks bring together both new ideas and adaptations of existing material. Opening Day at Disneyland in 1955 featured movie-based dark rides such as Snow White's Scary Adventures and Peter Pan's Flight alongside rides not based explicitly in Disney's properties such as the Jungle Cruise boat ride and Autopia raceway. At the scale of the attraction or ride, the former two examples are clearly adaptations of existing material while the latter are mediations of broader popular imagination. Constructed over a decade after Disneyland's opening, Pirates of the Caribbean (opened 1967) was itself a pastiche of multiple-sources.[19] At the scale of an area within the Magic Kingdom, such as Adventureland, blending different attractions and shops and eateries produces thematic consistency that is well-appointed while also being purposefully vague. But at the scale of the park as a whole, the effect of adjacent spaces rarely produces a thematic narrative. As Disney historian Karal-Ann Marling describes, Walt Disney's "devotion to tangible things" such as props, actors, and architecture are the "believable detail" that makes the fictional worlds portrayed in the parks coherent.[20] Visual techniques based on models, imagery, and theatrical staging favor "style over content, clear and simple emotions over a range of more difficult choices," which is why the narrative significance of theme parks is not the specific stories they tell but rather the illusions they create.[21] The "theme" of the theme park is one of being in and experiencing a theme park: immersion in fantasy, corporeal play, and the pleasures of breaking from everyday life.[22]

Adaptation in the theme park is rooted in the wide variety of media that construct the landscape. The sheer scale of the theme park as a media artifact tests the scope of Mikhail Batkhin's concept of dialogism in which all texts are entered into conversation with one another

[19] Bobby Schweizer and Celia Pearce, "Remediation on the High Seas: A Pirates of the Caribbean Odyssey," in *Reader in Themed and Immersive Spaces*, ed. Scott A Lukas (Pittsburgh, PA: ETC Press, 2016).
[20] Marling, *Designing Disney's Theme Parks*, 79.
[21] Ibid.
[22] *Lukas, Theme Park.*

to produce meaning.[23] Stam and Raengo's work shifts the discussion of adaptation from fidelity to Kristeva's notion of intertextuality and Genette's transtextuality, methodologies that are borne out in this messy media landscape of architecture, theater, film, sound, play, and more.[24] Their assertion that Genette's "hypertextuality" is the most relevant form of intertextuality is highly evident in this domain of the conglomerations of media forces that Bolter and Grusin call "hypermediacy."[25] Looking at these hypermedia spaces, Angela Ndalianis proposes that Deleuze's concept of "folding" is a useful way for examining how spectacular architecture are brought together and turned inside-out to create inhabitable, illusionary places.[26] Theme park attractions, according to Ndalianis, strive to create ambiguous boundaries between mediation and reality through special effects, kinetic experience, and technological simulation. Miodrag Mitrasinovic describes the rhetoric of theme parks as "system of totalizing forces" that creates "a set of 'entertaining experiences', 'once-in-a-lifetime adventures' that are 'comfortable', recognizable (through familiar images or music), perfectly organized, predictable and controlled 'for your convenience'."[27] The purpose is to keep operations of the park running smoothly, to look out for the safety of parkgoers, and to ensure that there's nothing that would drive potential customers away. Videogames often function similarly: players expect software stability, are afforded the protective qualities of virtual play, and encounter design that typically promotes a positive player experience. In games, the ephemeral experience of the parkgoer's "once-in-a-lifetime adventure" is translated into the possibility of a recurring series of adventures that coexist with the novelty of interacting with an otherwise predictable world.

In both the immaterial space of the videogames and material space of theme parks, participants activate the immersive narrative qualities of the symbolic environments.[28] Though the technology differs, the design principles share much in common—particularly when it comes to real-time 3D (polygonal) virtual space. In the 1990s, the advent of the virtual environments that surround the

[23] M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (University of Texas Press, 1981), 278–279.
[24] Robert Stam, "Introduction" in *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation*, eds. Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 24–31.
[25] J. David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (MIT Press, 1999).
[26] Angela Ndalianis, "Architecture of the Senses: Neo-Baroque Entertainment Spectacles," in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (MIT Press, 2003), 363.
[27] Mitrasinovic, *Total Landscape, Theme Parks, Public Space*, 22.
[28] Don Carson, "Environmental Storytelling, Part II: Bringing Theme Park Environment Design Techniques to the Virtual World," *Gamasutra*, accessed December 22, 2015, http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/131593/environmental_storytelling_part_.php.

player's point-of-view and allow them to move in three-dimensional space required borrowing design conventions from architecture, theater, and movie set design.[29] As described by game scholar Michael Nitsche, the computer game *Half-Life* (PC, 1998) and its contemporaries were unlike the 2D games popular before the mid-1990s because "modern 3D worlds take us into the event space and onto the stage."[30] Being situated in 3D worlds connects to the design of theme park rides in particular because they "create an expertly directed sense of place and context in a fictional universe within the shortest possible time."[31] *Half-Life* even goes so far as to borrow from attraction design with its use of a dark-ride like sequence during the beginning of the game. Before the late 1990s, narrative exposition in games was typically accomplished used sequences that removed control from the player, forcing them to watch a pre-rendered animated scene or press buttons to advance through text dialogue exchanged between characters. However, in *Half-Life* the player retains control over their character's first-person camera as they ride a tram car into work. The tram car, like a dark ride, constrains where the player can move yet allows them to freely look around at the environment they are traveling through. This four-minute long sequence establishes the sights and sounds of the Black Mesa scientific research complex while the train's pre-recorded narration sets the tone of the top-secret, dangerous work that is being conducted in the facility. This simple technique represents the share design language of tangible and virtual immersive spaces: both engage their participant as situated in a space; both offer drama that unfolds over time; and in both the participant chooses where to look, how to maneuver their body, and how respond to the environment. Theme parks are similar to games that take place in a 2D or 3D navigable space (as opposed to abstract games like *Tetris*) in that players subscribe to limitations of a closed system while partaking in the illusion of freedom of movement. We find parallels to theme park experiences even in the physically active participation required to manipulate a controller that "involves a certain urgency, immediacy and physical stimulation […] akin to the transitory diversions of the amusement park."[32] But while all of these modes of interaction support the closeness of theme park and videogame design, their points of divergence pose the real challenge for adapting one to the other. Interactions in a theme park are subtle and

[29] Carson, "Environmental Storytelling, Part I."
[30] Michael Nitsche, *Video Game Spaces: Image, Play, and Structure in 3D Game Worlds* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 12.
[31] Ibid., 13.
[32] Andrew Darley, *Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres* (Routledge, 2002), 56.

the environment rarely reacts to any one individual's presence. Parkgoing's permitted interactions are composed primarily of walking, riding and viewing, which offer little agency to make lasting changes. This is at odds with the expectations of videogame players who are afforded greater agency over the kinds of decisions they will need to make and how the world of the game will respond. Videogames offer alternative ways for designers to shape the theme park experience.

A theme park might be chosen as a setting for its structural, ludic, or narrative affordances. They have an inherent organization: rides, attractions, and games are organized around an easily traversed space. They offer opportunities for using the overall experience of parkgoing in addition to the individual experiences of their component features. Others may have chosen to set their game in a theme park because of its pleasurable properties: parks and rides engage us in two fundamental components of Roger Callois' classification of play: ilinx (vertigo) and mimicry (make-believe).[33] Not only do thrill-rides excite by exacting forces upon the human body, but there is also fun to be had in breaking the rules of what the body should be doing. Not only does mimicry involve the desire to be the one who pretends, but it also addresses the pleasures of watching illusions, especially replications and simulations, as they unfold in media.[34] As role-players, we allow ourselves to be situated in imaginary situations and suspend our disbelief. In the theme park videogame, we encounter fictional worlds about fictional worlds. It is not just that Hogsmeade at Universal's Islands of Adventure *looks* like the place from the movie—it remediates the filmic world's remediation of the book world in order to extend the fiction into physical space. If, as Vivian Sobchack describes, "hyper-real" contemporary entertainment spaces like the theme park "stand for and replace all other space," which aspects of the physical experience are recreated and simulated for the videogame screen? [35] Games abstract and recompose elements of the theme park by borrowing structure, stories, and sights while introducing the player as an active participant. Formally, they not only use the images of rides and attractions, but the topography of park space. Functionally, they situate the player in storyworlds in which they can participate in the familiar

[33] Callois' other categories of agon (competition) and alea (chance) are more likely left to midway games in the broader view of the amusement park, however shooting gallery rides do introduce skill and antagonism. For further reading, see Russel B. Nye, "Eight Ways of Looking at an Amusement Park," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 15, no. 1 (June 1, 1981): 63–75.
[34] Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge, 2012), 114.
[35] Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film*, 2nd Edition, (Rutgers University Press, 1997), 255.

activities of parkgoing. The end results are remediations value the player as an individual who takes on a special relationship to a theme park as not just a space of leisure but a place of belonging.

III. Form and Function

The physical manifestation of the theme park is designed such that "visitors easily memorize strong environmental images, and organize their experiences into a clear narrative form."[36] In the theme park, "no longer are rides simply a short lived thrill, now guests are fully immersed in stories, where they play the main character."[37] It is not that the amusement park rides lack any sort of representational quality—the log flume ride's origin in the lumber industry remains compositionally intact at least until new themes supplant it—but that the landscape of the amusement park ride does not exhibit thematic cohesion. These particular stories are rarely shared between rides, but they are typically under a framing mechanism in the form of the "land" designation that divides a park thematically and geographically. More than just rides, theme parks are "architecture, public space design, landscaping, musical cueing, detailing, and the use of symbols, archetypes, and icons."[38] Taking theme or amusement parks as the subject for their setting and activities, videogames that have chosen this location for their activities have drawn on a number of points of representation. The organization of the park itself—points of interest segmented into distinct regions—mirrors the familiar patterns of video game level-design divisions and activity structures. Videogames of all kinds commonly theme these segmented spaces to show progression and create gameplay variation. In *Super Mario Bros. 3* (NES, 1988), for example, Desert Land gives way to Water Land and then to Giant Land. Not only is this naming scheme reminiscent of Disneyland and the Magic Kingdom, they are also all contained within the similarly named "Mushroom Kingdom."[39] Within this structure, these games are typically composed of the park itself as an organizing framework that serves as a traversal space and the rides/attractions contained within that provide specific activities for the player. Parks provide what Brenda J. Brown terms a "landscape of rides" that create a space marked by the visual distinction between points of interest.[40] These may be represented through the material form of the ride mechanism itself such

[36] Mitrasinovic, *Total Landscape, Theme Parks, Public Space*, 23.
[37] Carson, "Environmental Storytelling, Part I."
[38] King, "The Theme Park," 3.
[39] These Land names were the translations of the original Japanese names and what most English speaking players would have seen.
[40] Brown, "Landscapes of Theme Park Rides," 237–239.

as the visible twisted steel of a rollercoaster or the elevated carousel that propels a chair-swing ride, or through the colorful facades that conceal rides housed within interior spaces such as *It's a Small World* and fun-house mazes. Broadly speaking, most theme park games have been structured around a sequence of related, yet distinct activities that represent the segmented nature of the park. Rides, attractions, and carnival games provide the framework for the player who travels between activities most commonly referred to as "mini-games." The term mini-game describes "a game nested or situated within another game of comparatively larger scope" that "privilege one mechanic in the pursuit of having a player achieve a 'parent' game's tertiary of voluntary goals."[41] Piloting a runaway rollercoaster in one sequence and playing a ring-toss game in another may seem like disparate activities, but the amusement park framework justifies the odd juxtaposition. This pattern has been common throughout decades of games, as is illustrated in the differences between *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom* in 1990 and *Kinect: Disneyland Adventures* in 2011.

Adventures in the Magic Kingdom for the Nintendo Entertainment System lays out its landscape of rides with the fidelity and abstraction of an "overworld map," as if the player's character is a token moving around a place that is the scale of a poster. The game revolves around a boy who arrives at the Disney theme park only to be informed by Mickey Mouse that the keys to unlock the Cinderella's castle have been misplaced by Goofy in various places around the park. When the Mickey, Donald, and Goofy address the player directly to enlist help, the game establishes a special role that uses the smooth day-to-day operation of the theme park as a form of motivation. Because merely participating in recreations of the park's rides is a passive form of entertainment that offers little challenge, the game instead adapts a number of well-known rides into short mini-games: Space Mountain is adapted into a flight simulation controlled by timed button presses; the Grand Prix Speedway becomes a race like the arcade game *Bump 'n' Jump* (1982); Big Thunder Mountain Railroad requires the player pilot a runaway train car through a maze of tracks, and the Haunted Mansion and Pirates of the Caribbean assume the familiar form of the side-scrolling platformer genre (Figure 2).

[41] Nis Bojin, "Minigames," in *Encyclopedia of Video Games the Culture, Technology, and Art of Gaming*, ed. Mark J. P Wolf (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Greenwood, 2012).

Figure 2. Familiar faces populate the challenges of the Haunted Mansion in *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom*

Far from recreations, these "rides" are more like the familiar videogame levels whose form they take. J.P. Telotte introduced the concept of a "ride aesthetic" to describe the adaptation of the Pirates of the Caribbean ride into the *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003) film. Telotte's description of the ride aesthetic alludes to narrative techniques such as "broadly drawn and invariably visually characterized" characters, numerous plot through-lines, and an open-ended story.[42] Capturing a ride aesthetic also means translating the motion of one medium—in this case, the dark ride—into the motion of another. The Pirates of the Caribbean level in *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom* positions the player as an active participant rather than a passive rider. Opening with a direct connection to the ride, the level begins with a small boat bringing the player to a dock. Once they disembark, they encounter a game level that loosely follows the progression of the ride but tasks them with rescuing six captured villagers in the rowdy streets of Tortuga, a burning village, and a skeleton-filled treasure trove. The player controls a character that can walk across a scrolling screen as they jump on platforms, climb ladders, dodge enemies and collect items. Through indexical reference, vague narrative motivation, and the forward motion of gameplay, the game level remediates a part of the aesthetic that defines the experience of Disney's most famous dark ride.

[42] J. P Telotte, *The Mouse Machine: Disney and Technology* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 176.

At the opposite end of the spectrum of representation is *Kinect: Disneyland Adventures* (2011), whose structure is similar but whose portrayal is quite different. It is a fully 3D game whose character-to-world scale is much closer to the real Disneyland that the earlier Nintendo incarnation. The input for the game is the Microsoft Kinect, a body-tracking camera that enables motion control. To move around, the player holds their arm out in front of their body to move their character in that direction (Figure 3). Players traverse the park in a manner that adapts an essential part of the theme park experience: the sequential nature of the sights and sounds that compose a mental image of the park as a continuous landscape. Like *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom*, the primary task of the player is to visit the attractions around the park that serve as mini-game segments that typically consist of on-rails levels based on the themes and motion of the rides. These are not all that different than the mini-games in *Adventures of the Magic Kingdom*, though the fidelity of the representation changed with technical capabilities of the Xbox 360 and the Kinect motion-tracking camera. For example, both Peter Pan's Flight and Space Mountain have the player soaring through the sky, arms outstretched like wings, to collect coins. Splash Mountain and Pirates of the Caribbean both use down-river rowing sequences where the player leans left and right and moves their arms to paddle while navigating obstacles along the course. This mode of interaction allowed for a new type of vertigo-inducing "phantom ride" effect based on computer graphics technology.[43] *Kinect: Disneyland Adventures* establishes a language for interacting with its mini-games in the same way that the boat/dark ride or narrative rollercoaster, with its contained vessel moving along a track, is a pattern that typifies the theme park experience.

Another game that uses a verisimilitudinous environment as its setting is *Universal Studios Theme Park Adventure*. The 2001 Nintendo GameCube game used 3D graphics to create a relatively accurate model of the Osaka park on which it is based. Players move through an environment by traversing adjacent screens in which the camera is fixed in place (rather than a real-time 3D world where the camera follows the player through one continuous space). Breaking the videogame equivalent of the 180-degree rule in cinematography, camera angles abruptly changes between these adjacent screens in a disorienting way that makes it difficult to mentally

[43] Carter Moulton, "The Future Is a Fairground: Attraction and Absorption in 3D Cinema," *CineAction* 89 (2012): 4–13.

model the physical layout of the park. And yet, though disorientation is frustrating from the perspective of gameplay that asks the player to learn the space, it replicates the kind of experience

Figure 3. Members of the website GiantBomb.com appear superimposed over Kinect: Disneyland Adventures to demonstrate how it uses motion tracking for interaction.

of a first-time parkgoer. The game is more reminiscent of the interactive CD-ROM games and software of the 1990s that became popular when media storage capacity enabled the use of pre-rendered video and large image formats to represent realistic images that offered virtual tours of landmark locations. So, while *Theme Park Adventure* appears to be an accurate recreation of the space of Universal Studios, its mediation of the source material that forms the rides is quite different.[44] Universal Studios was intended to simulate a Hollywood film studio lot where movie-magic was being made so that parkgoers could find themselves inside their favorite films. Similarly, *Theme Park Adventure*'s mini-games eschew the form of the rides in favor of adapting the original source material (Figure 4). For example, the Jurassic Park "ride" plays similarly to the arcade game that was released when the film originally debuted in 1993. The Jaws mini-game involves throwing barrels and crates at the attacking shark, Backdraft involves putting out fires in a burning building, and the Wild Wild Wild West stunt show is a shooting gallery. Only Back to

[44] Nitsche, *Video Game Spaces: Image, Play, and Structure in 3D Game Worlds*, 13.

the Future: The Ride (a racing game) and the E.T. (a side-scrolling cycling game similar to Nintendo's 1985 *Excitebike*) use the same form of conveyance as their theme park counterparts in a way that maintains any of the motion of each rides' aesthetic.

Figure 4. A park map provides players with the location of the different rides that comprise the tasks they need to complete in Universal Studios Theme Park Adventure

WaterWorld, the part of the game that is most like one of the park's attraction is a five-second long, pre-rendered computer animated scene that can be viewed from multiple angles. Doing away with any pretense of interaction or game-like qualities, its recreation of a Universal stage show theater is complete with rows of plastic seats and a canopy overhead. And though the game was created to promote the newly opened Universal Studios Japan, the narrative never specifies its geographic location and it can be reasonably assumed that most American players would associate it with either the Florida or California parks. To this end, the game's title was localized for North America and Europe from Kemco's original title *Universal Studios Japan Adventure*. The game generalizes its adaptation such that it could be any incarnation of Universal's parks and any architectural inconsistencies might be attributed to limitations in the videogame console and software technology.

Somewhere toward the middle of the representational spectrum is *Six Flags: Fun Park* (Wii, 2009). The game's layout is not based on any particular Six Flags park, offering instead a whole new park for the game. Of the parks five distinct lands, Hometown Square, Astro City, and Funville are original to the game. Hurricane Harbor, the water park section of Six Flags, is repurposed as a pirate-themed land, while Fright Fest, which is normally a special October event for Halloween, is used to create a spooky themed area. Rather than adapt existing types of rides into mini-games, *Fun Park* eschews these major attractions in favor of booths for themed carnival games. In this way, it can accommodate a greater number of games without needing to justify the space that forty-some attractions would require. In the game, the player takes on the role of a kid whose leisurely theme park trip has turned into a series of errands. The area immediately after the entrance to the park is framed as a town square and its Mayor stands on a "Town Hall" themed stage, establishing the park as more of a community (or perhaps commune) than an entertainment destination. After helping a groundskeeper who requests that the player plants trees in Hometown Square, a handyman who has a package needing delivery, and even absolving a falsely accused fellow parkgoer stuck in the park's jail, the player "earns" the right to work at various places around the park. Completing these tasks provides the player with tickets that can be spent playing carnival games that earn the player prizes needed to progress the story. As the player progresses through the game, they learn about the history of Fun Park, unlock access new games and areas, and interact with the colorful characters who seem to have taken up residence inside the park. So, even though it excludes rides, *Six Flags: Fun Park* is a cohesive representation of how the theme park's structure works to produce a recognizable space.

By way of comparison, games that forgo the traversable-hub structure in favor of more traditional videogame levels illustrate why theme park form does not always result in theme park experience. Wackyland in *Tiny Toon's Adventures 2* (1992) for the Nintendo Entertainment System is depicted only as an illustrated map of rides that functions as a menu through which the player can select which level to embark upon. The layout of the park is not experienced and, despite having the fiction of the Warner Bros. cartoon series to draw on, there is little else in the game that characterizes Wackyland as an identifiable whole. In both the *Looney Tunes* and *Tiny Toon Adventures* cartoons, Wackyland is the absurd realm in which the Dodos live (as originally seen in the 1938 cartoon with Porky the Pig). By naming the park "Wackyland," the game is able to connect to both the internal absurd fiction of the show and also to the "-land" suffix commonly

used to denote theme and amusement parks. Levels in the game—such as the High Speed Log Ride which tasks the player with balancing on a floating log as it moves up and down a flume and the Roller Coaster's car that the player hangs form while zipping along a winding track—adapt the shape and motion of rides. Yet, this is not enough to convey theme park experience. Similarly, the Japanese Super Famicom game *Mickey no Tokyo Disneyland Daibōken* (*Mickey's Great Adventure in Tokyo Disneyland)* (1994) has the player traversing the Japanese version of the park in order to rescue Minnie, who has been kidnapped by Pete. The game turns rides into the kind of platforming stages common to Disney games of the 1990s. Beginning in Adventureland with a Pirates of the Caribbean stage that uses a handful of indexical references and concluding with a decrepit version of Cinderella's Castle, the game visits six of the park's landmark attractions. Between levels, the game returns to a map of the park, though the game dictates which areas are visited in what order. The effect of this automated progression and the discrepancy between the levels and their rides they attempt to adapt produce a game that feels little like going to a theme park. Edge cases like *Tiny Toon's Adventures 2* and *Mickey no Tokyo Disneyland Daibōken* that appear in form to be more like theme parks than just minigame collections yet fail to evoke what makes theme parks unique demonstrate the importance of looking at how the function of theme parks is to produce a particular type of experience.

The depictions above, ranging from abstract to representational, illustrate how developers have adapted the architectural language that is used to structure the theme park's form. The setting gives designers a chance to expand on the fictional worlds created in physical theme parks and developers have chosen to use a number of approaches to frame the premise of their park and attraction adaptations. Broadly speaking, the park serves as a way of partitioning thematic activities into interconnected regions. The "theme" of a theme park is rarely consistent throughout. The less-eloquent phrasing of "a park of themes" may serve as a more accurate description to describe how the environments are designed to make the participants feel a part of a cohesive narrative space. In *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom* and *Universal Studios Theme Park Adventures*, the connective threads that link the ride/levels portrayed are almost nonsexist, save for a few details in the environment. *Six Flags: Fun Park* and *Kinect: Disneyland Adventures* give the thematic regions more attention in the detail and composition of the environment. So, even though *Fun Park* has no "rides" in the traditional sense, the image of it as a coherent theme park remains strong. *Tiny Toons Adventures 2* and *Mickey no Tokyo Disneyland Daibōken* forgo the

navigable structure connecting the landmark rides that is so integral to the theme park experience. Fidelity of the depiction alone is not enough to convey the uniqueness of being in a specific place—the roles that players inhabit define how theme parks are remediated into videogames.

IV. Stories of a Theme Park for One (Values)

Parkgoers participate in the total-sensory engaging environment of the park through what Walt Disney Imagineer John Hench describes as a "sequence of related experiences." Throughout this sequence, parkgoers are told they are being given unprecedented access to spectacles, sights, sounds, and stories contained within the walls of imaginary places. The specialness of the parkgoer is first imprinted as they take on the "guest" moniker that has come to replace the consumeristic term "customer" and is repeated by narratives that justify why the parkgoer is witnessing these events. Rides and attractions position their participants as visitors, tourists, unwitting trespassers, and special witnesses.

Take, for example, a trip to Walt Disney World's Epcot (est. 1983) as an example of a day-long journey. Epcot is one the parks—alongside the Magic Kingdom, Hollywood Studios, and Animal Kingdom—that comprise Disney's sprawling Orlando resort. "Guests" arrive at the gates of Epcot by one of a number of modes of transportation, including car, bus, resort ferry, or the iconic monorail system. Proceeding through a security checkpoint in which bags are searched, parkgoers either scan their fingerprint and either a plastic card ticket or their wrist-worn Magic Band at a stanchion that lights to invite them in. Epcot is divided into two sections: Future World at the front of the park and the World Showcase to the rear. Future World is divided into six main pavilion buildings: The Seas, The Land, Journey into Imagination, Test Track (formerly World of Motion), Mission Space (formerly Horizons), and the Universe of Energy. Pavilion attractions are influenced by the "Future World" theme that harkens back to the technological showcases of science, technology, and industry at 20th century world's fairs (and with which the Walt Disney company was engaged).[45] The average parkgoer moves between pavilions by either walking to an adjacent building or crossing the central hub to the other half of Future World. There is no set order in which to visit the pavilions and guests are free to construct their own path by choosing what to see at particular times. Reconciling this compositional structure of the park with other

[45] J.P. Telotte, "Disney and 'This World's Fair Thing,'" in *Meet Me at the Fair: A World's Fair Reader*, ed. Laura Holden Hollengreen et al. (Pittsburgh, PA: ETC Press, 2014), 409–22.

factors such as crowd levels, attraction preference, and other whims, parkgoers experience the theme park through the rhythms of both space and time as it blends interactive and passive activities in a form that engages the senses and body. Most significantly, Epoct emphasizes the parkgoer's individuality and specialness by involving them in the narratives of the attractions. Visitors to The Land pavilion might first watch a film about environmentalism starring characters from The Lion King who implore that change starts with "you." This is followed by a slow-moving boat tour through a working agricultural center that showcases how farming technology will benefit "you." And this "series of related experiences" concludes with the Soarin' (est. 2005) "special tour" that simulates the thrill of hang gliding high above the California landscape. Guests are framed as special test pilots for a new Mars program on the Mission: SPACE flight simulator ride (est. 2003), unsuspecting passengers in Ellen DeGeneres's dream about being on Jeopardy and needing to learn where the Earth's energy comes from, and an audience that has unprecedented access to the undersea habitat of Crush the CGI talking turtle from *Finding Nemo* (2003). Venturing into the World Showcase, parkgoers become tourists meandering through the eleven country showcases that echo the national pavilions of 20th century world's fairs. Watching Chinese acrobats perform a floor routine may be immediately followed by a boat ride across Mexico hosted by the stars of Walt Disney's 1944 animated feature *The Three Caballeros*. On paper, the attractions across Epcot could not seem more disparate, but the day's event makes sense of it all as a part of a journey of technological, inspirational, and cultural tourism.

Experience describes how we synthesize our sensorial perception and interaction with the environment across time, and theme parks are designed to promote feelings of wonder, excitement, intrigue, and comfort. The rhythms of this hypothetical Epcot trip are quite different from the typical structure of popular, thrill-ride laden amusement parks. But even as theme parks begin to incorporate more thrilling kinetic attractions to entertain through g-forces and high speeds, such as the numerous rollercoasters of Universal's Islands of Adventure (est. 1999), the familiar rhythms of highly themed spaces are reinforced through themed queues and the narrative hubs that structure the landscape. The use of the word "adventure" in Islands of Adventure suggests an important part of the theme park experience that is replicated in games. This term, which is used in the titles of *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom*, *Mickey no Tokyo Disneyland Daibōken*, *Universal Studios Theme Park Adventure*, and *Kinect: Disneyland Adventure*, serves as a rhetorical framing mechanism that implies moments of discovery and excitement, a sense of

progression, and a narrative arc. Even though these games are won by completing activities on a checklist, the adventure they promise is meant to evoke a particular experience that is different from the constraints of visiting a real theme park. The player is no longer one of the masses of attendees who all share an equal role and power dynamic. Instead, as the singular focus of the game's attention, players adopt new roles that give them significance in the park's hierarchy. Examples include the player as someone receiving special treatment, who acts as a helpful assistant as they take on an employee-like role, or someone with special permission to break the traditional rules of the park. Notably, but not surprisingly, the protagonist of these games is almost always either a kid or a cartoon character that the games' target demographic might identify with whose imaginations would revel transforming an orderly, safe experience into a playground. Such a yearning is even present on occasion in parks, in which the playground of something like the Honey, I Shrunk the Kids: Movie Set Adventure (1990–2016) at Walt Disney's Hollywood Studios begs to have its structure subverted by more adventurous climbers. Theme parks encourage excitement and adventure but, for safety and organizational reasons, must enforce rules and boundaries. The alternative relationships that theme park videogame protagonists adopt shapes the remediation of theme park experience.

In games such as *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom*, *Six Flags: Fun Park*, *Kinect Disneyland Adventures*, and *Universal Studios Theme Park Adventure*, the story makes reference to why the player has found themselves in the park with special privileges that supplant the normal restrictions of passive entertainment with roles that give the player freedom and agency. The minigames that comprise many of these theme park videogames introduce elements of the videogame medium not often found in theme park attractions: skillful participation, choices that affect the outcome, and even the possibility of failure. The mode of developing videogames in the era of *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom* was dominated by these kinds of reflex-based challenges and, by using them, the game necessarily shifted the virtual visitor's relationship to the park. The premise of *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom* is that the player has been given the responsibility of helping Mickey, Donald, and Goofy collect the six silver keys scattered across the park to open the gate to Cinderella's Castle so as to start the parade. As the three characters converse about their predicament, they turn to screen and speak to the player to ask for assistance. Without any justification in the narrative of the game, the player is left to assume that the mere act of purchasing

and playing has granted them special access to the Magic Kingdom. Players are free to choose the rides in any order but their activity has been refigured as goal-oriented.

Yet, though the Magic Kingdom's leisurely pursuits are replaced by the effort required to master challenges, the experience of moving between fictional spaces structured ride-like thrills and adventure remains guest-centric. Rather than acting a mere passenger on a Caribbean or haunted house tour, the player is asked to intercede and explore these fictional worlds. Even games that do not explicitly give the player a unique role through the narrative frame the player as special. *Kinect: Disneyland Adventures* opens with a magical "golden ticket" blown into the scene by the wind that comes to life as an anthropomorphized cartoon figure that welcomes the player and directs them to customize their appearance. Even if this in-game avatar does not exactly match the player's appearance, the illusion of choice at least gestures beyond a stock embodiment. The player first encounters Mickey Mouse, who proceeds to welcome them into Disneyland and establishes a goal-oriented structure to the visit by requesting that they collect autographs from the characters around the park. An odd request from Disney's Chief Executive Mouse, but Mickey goes on to explain that actually the autographs are intended for Goofy. Between the collecting autographs and the presentation of a "magic" meter that fills as tasks are completed, the player is given responsibility that structures their interaction. Disneyland in the game is populated with visitors in small numbers, which grants the player immediate access to the mascots around the park—a far cry from the typical character "meet and greet" schedules and queues. Players receive immediate boarding on all the rides in the park, even when a line is present. Their role is also changed on the rides themselves as they become the center of the attraction while riding a toboggan down the Matterhorn with a skiing Goofy, floating on balloons alongside Winnie the Pooh, shooting water cannons at wild creatures aboard a Jungle Cruise, and even dancing with the many animatronic peoples of It's a Small World. In all, the 15 sequences based on the park's major attractions transport players to levels that re-position them as a special actor who is a participant (not just observer) in the story of the ride. Like *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom*, *Kinect: Disneyland Adventures* sells the ultimate dream of entertainment personalization: no lines, immediate access, and a place that magically revolves around the visitor. By way of contrast, *Universal Studios Theme Park Adventure* does not put the player in any unique role and, as a result, is a peculiar adaptation. The player is treated like every other park visitor who already populate the space. Structure is provided by an encounter with mascot Woody Woodpecker, who tells the player about

a scavenger hunt taking place in which stamps are earned by visiting the various Universal attractions to provide a goal to an otherwise unstructured visit. Functionally, the game appears similar to *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom* and *Kinect: Disneyland Adventures* but relies primarily on how the player acts as a tourist in the spectacle of graphical recreation. It centers its experience on the interface between player and software, not player and parkgoer.

Six Flags: Theme Park (Wii, 2009) took a vastly different approach by positing that a specially-designed, entertainment space of commercialism could function as a working community. Taking the concept of Disney's "main street" one step further, the hub area of Hometown Square does not just depict a possible community with building facades—it enforces it with characters. The odd civic theme of *Six Flags: Fun Park* establishes a world with an elected official, employee citizens, law enforcement, and parkgoers who attend so often that they appear to have formed a community. These roles lend a sense of permanence and history to the park and justify why the player is helping the park's attendees do favors for one another. The profit-driven motives of theme parks like Six Flags are also reframed in the narrative when the Mayor laments to the player that though Fun Park was originally built by his father as a place of recreation and imagination something had gone terribly wrong at some point in its history. As the game progresses, the player learns that the Mayor grew too serious for frivolity and shunned his father, shutting him away in the oldest part of the park. The player's role in the game is not only shifted from visitor to host, but the constant attendance required to keep the park running and its residents happy provides a subtle critique of the business of fun. *Disney Magical World* (3DS, 2013) follows a similar strategy to *Six Flags: Fun Park* by positioning its environment as a theme park-like place where characters live. Even more so than *Fun Park*, *Disney Magical World* does away with the attractions and rides commonly adapted into in-game places and activities. Instead, *Disney Magical World* takes place in Castleton, a familiar hub-and-spoke town where Disney characters live in the open courtyard area in front of Sleeping Beauty's Castle that also branches off to different themed lands. Each of these lands—Cinderella's kingdom, Winnie the Pooh's Hundred Acre Wood, Alice's Wonderland, Aladdin's Agrabah, and Jack Sparrow's Tortuga—has its own self-contained narrative and activities that are unlocked over the course of the game. The premise is that the player has been invited to live in Castleton and, oddly enough, has been tasked with managing a café alongside Disney's marquee characters who each have their own jobs in the town. For example, Daisy Duck runs a clothing boutique, Chip and Dale operate a workshop that builds

furniture for the café, and Huey, Dewey, and Louie manage a general goods located inside the castle. While *Disney Magical World* is not a specific adaptation of one of Disney's castle-based parks, it relies on the idea that the hub-and-spoke and themed lands are natural ways of ordering the world. At first blush, the absence of rides, attractions, and queues would seem to preclude the possibility of this representing a theme park experience. Yet, the activity structure and sequence of related experiences in a familiar narrative environment remediate Disneyland around the concept of what it might be like to live in the "Happiest Place on Earth." And it, like *Disney Epic Mickey* (Wii, 2011) before it, is grounded in the premise that the real theme parks themselves are remediations of other fictions.

Among the Disney games, *Epic Mickey*'s approach to the theme parks covers the greatest breadth of interpretation. It took a historical approach to early Disney lore in the construction of the world of forgotten cartoon characters such as the Ub Iwerk's co-created Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, Horace Horsecollar, and Clarabelle Cow. This world—accessed through an illustrator's canvas—exists "inside" the reality where Mickey Mouse is a major movie star and international icon. The game opens by showing how, early in his career, Mickey accidentally spilled a magical substance on the canvas that devastated the once-happy landscape of old characters. This narrative conceit positions Mickey's cartoon universe as reality and the "Wasteland" universe as media within. Later in his career, Mickey (the player's character) is magically drawn into the Wasteland's reality–an amalgamation the fictions of Disney cartoons and theme parks—and must help rescue it from its inevitable demise (Figure 5). Like *Mickey no Tokyo Disneyland Daibōken*, the player inhabits a role that establishes a specific relationship to the place of play. Yet unlike *Tokyo Disneyland Daibōken*, in which Mickey is the heroic insider saving his theme park, *Epic Mickey* realigns the character with frequent roles taken by parkgoers: tourist, visitor, and even trespasser. Though familiar, the world that Mickey encounters is not his own. The central hub of the game is a representation of Main Street U.S.A. and although the majority of the game takes place in a 3D polygonal space, the "Mean Street" hub is connected to other areas by way of side-scrolling stages modeled after classic Disney shorts such as "Through the Mirror" (1936) and "Mickey in the Beanstalk" from *Fun and Fancy Free* (1947). These connect with themed lands derived from the parks including "Dark Beauty Castle," the Fantasyland inspired "Gremlin Village," Tomorrowland-like "Tomorrow City," pirate-themed "Ventureland," and the New Orleans Square of "Lonesome Manor." The Wasteland is a world populated by elements that evoke the theme park

experience, and because the game plays with the concept of "real" fictions it is possible to read *Epic Mickey*'s theme park world as both remediation and source material. The game suggests that Main Street U.S.A. might actually be based on the world that eventually become "Mean Street." As Lisa Dusenberry observes, the game relies on the player's nostalgia and knowledge of a game world "driven by Disney ideology."[46] Even players unfamiliar with the specific references being made in the game likely recognize the function of rebuilding iconic rides such as It's a Small World to create platforms and traverse a level within typical gameplay conventions.[47]

Figure 5. The ruins of Fantasy Land as depicted in Disney Epic Mickey evoke the devastating effects of a world of wonder left long forgotten.

Though the game provides the player with the option to either use paint thinner to destroy enemies or paint to turn from evil to good, it clearly favors the second path. Mickey the trespasser becomes Mickey the hero as the player endears themselves to the world by helping out its forgotten residents. Much like a Magic Kingdom visitor who, after multiple visits, develops expertise in recognizing the spatial structure and complex dynamics of being in the park, the course of *Epic Mickey* turns the unfamiliar into the familiar.

[46] Lisa Dusenberry, "Epic Nostalgia: Narrative Play and Transmedia Storytelling in Disney Epic Mickey," in *Game On, Hollywood!: Essays on the Intersection of Video Games and Cinema*, ed. Gretchen Papazian and Joseph Sommers (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, n.d.), 184.
[47] Ibid., 186.

V. Playing Games in Theme Parks

Rope Drop: the hour when the early risers who, having scanned their tickets to gain entrance before the park is officially open, are freed from their huddling roped-off corral into the wilds of the amusements beyond. At Disney's Hollywood Studios, these eager parkgoers have typically set their sights not just being first in line for the thrill rides like the Rock 'n' Rollercoaster (opened 1999) or the Twilight Zone Tower of Terror (opened 1994) drop ride, but the extremely popular Toy Story Midway Mania! shooting gallery ride. Midway Mania!, which opened in 2008 and consistently boasts some of the longest wait times in any of Disney's parks, connects Hollywood Studios to its amusement park progenitors that occupied attendees with games. The Midway Plaisance (a rough translation of the French word for pleasantness) of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago was a mile-wide stretch of land connecting Jackson and Washington Parks that held the amusements, shopping, and titillating entertainment on the boundaries of the White City. Following the world's fair, "midway" became a generic term for the location of rides and contests at other state fairs, carnivals, and amusement parks. Drawing on this history, Toy Story Midway Mania! is designed to evoke is the experience of the ever-popular shooting gallery style of game. Seated in a car moving through a carnival play set that mixes physical architecture with screen projections, riders don 3-D glasses that bring the digital sets to life as they fire virtual objects from a pop-gun. Traditional carnival games like target shooting, ball throwing, balloon darts, and ring-toss are recreated using digital technologies and wrapped into a frantic six-minute experience that illustrates the deep connections between video games and theme parks. Though theme parks have eschewed the "velvet rope ethic of the museum or exposition" in favor of "free play of the senses,"[48] they have remained traditionally passive experience. Parkgoers exchange their agency the whims of amusement designers. The fervor surrounding this wildly popular ride is tangible at Disney parks across the globe and even spawned a home console videogame called *Toy Story Mania!* for the Nintendo Wii in 2009. Midway Mania!, along with other shooting gallery rides like Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin, demonstrate how the agency dynamic is slowly shifting as new technologies shape the design of modern rides.[49] Ride customization interfaces at Walt Disney

[48] Margaret J. King, "The American Theme Park: A Curious Amalgam," in *Continuities in Popular Culture*, ed. Ray B Browne and Ronald J Ambrosetti (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 49–60.
[49] Jessie Schell and J. Shochet, "Designing Interactive Theme Park Rides," *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications* 21, no. 4 (July 2001): 11–13, doi:10.1109/38.933519.

World's Epcot such as the Sum of all Thrills rollercoaster simulator (opened 2009) and Test Track have introduced active creation into the amusement process. And narrative variability has been introduced in rides such as Men in Black: Alien Attack (opened 2003) at Universal Studios and Star Tours – The Adventure Continues (refurbished 2011) at Disneyland. Parkgoers increasingly find themselves as not only audience but also player. Through new technologies, the whole of the parkgoing experience is being slowly transformed into a "theme park for one." Disney's MagicBand technology—a radio-transmitter equipped bracelet worn by parkgoers that functions as not only ticket, credit card, and room key, but also location tracker—is being used as "to deliver personalized experiences […] as well as provide information that helps [Disney] improve the overall experience in our parks."[50] Whether it is cast members knowing exactly which table to deliver food to or attractions that refer to its audience by their name, the MagicBand intercedes in the anonymous mass of crowds. In "Welcome to Dataland," critic Ian Bogost suggests that despite the inherent privacy concerns raised by this technology, it is intriguing because it provides the opportunity "to *participate* in the fantasy of the future" rather than just view it.[51] But this is precisely what theme park videogames have offered since *Adventures in the Magic Kingdom* debuted in 1990. Theme park videogames have provided players not only with familiar settings and stories, but have remediated the theme park's experience into a world centered around their individual agency.

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[50] "My Disney Experience – Frequently Asked Questions," *Disney Parks & Travel*, May 20, 2016, https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/faq/my-disney-experience/frequency-technology/.
[51] Ian Bogost, "Welcome to Dataland: Design Fiction at the Most Magical Place on Earth," *Medium*, July 29, 2014, https://medium.com/re-form/welcome-to-dataland-d8c06a5f3bc6.