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America's Kingdom: Disneyland as a Performance of American Family Identity in the 1950s

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AMERICA’S KINGDOM: DISNEYLAND AS A PERFORMANCE OF AMERICAN FAMILY IDENTITY IN THE 1950S

By

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For my grandfather who saw me enter graduate school, thank you for my first ticket to Disney.
And to all my angels.
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ABSTRACT

Disneyland theme park’s significance draws from its development as the first themed park in conjunction with its position as representative of a 1950s suburban American psyche. In attending a themed space, a visitor supplements and completes the park’s narrative by acting as the protagonist. The continued popularity of this fifty-five-year-old park speaks to the significance of Disneyland as a cultural and social destination.

This thesis focuses on the way in which the performance of a normative American identity coincided with Walt Disney’s shaping of Disneyland. Focusing on 1955 and 1956, I examine the engagement of the audience with the narratives presented in Disneyland in order to explicate the performance of a postwar suburban American identity as idyllic and patriotic. I suggest that visitors’ emotional attachment to the theme park speaks to the idealization of Disney as well as visitors’ idealizations of their own suburban American identities through Disney.

In the second chapter I consider the ways in which Walt’s conservative personal agenda transferred into his corporate persona and productions to identify with White, middle-class suburbia. Chapter three utilizes Robbins Barstow’s amateur home film *Disneyland Dream* as a case study of one suburban family’s response to Disneyland park and the Disneyland television program. The fourth chapter employs Louis Marin's postmodern view of Disneyland, interrogating the ways in which visitors create both nostalgic memories of idealization and hyperreal experiences of their suburban lives through Disneyland’s tropes. Indeed, by attending Disneyland in the 1950s, families created their idealized suburban America mythos as real.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

To all the memory makers,

The ones who know there are only so many moments before the sword is past,

Only so many mountains left to climb together,

And only so many days before she finds her own Prince Charming,

So to all those who know the best memories in life are the ones you hold onto for a lifetime, don’t wait.

Let the memories begin at the place where dreams come true.

-- Disney Parks, "Together as One"

Disney Parks, the branding name for all Disney Company theme parks, recently launched a new television commercial campaign invoking the idea of traditions and memories made by families at Disneyland. The camera pulls out on picture frames of iconic Disney images: children running down Main Street, USA toward Sleeping Beauty’s castle as their parents stroll behind them and cheer; a mother and son gleefully riding a rollercoaster in Frontierland; and Prince Charming wooing a young girl in front of the castle as her approving father looks on with a smile. The advertisement marks the Disney theme parks as places where families gather to cement bonds across generations as they "hold onto the memories that were made on their family vacations."¹ As the accompanying song, "Good Life" by One Republic, informs the viewer, "This could really be a good life." The ad suggests Disneyland theme park is not only representative of the "good life," but also the place that calls the American family that seeks the "good life"; it is a special place where parents and children solidify bonds, and loving memories are made of wholesome, family fun. In this ad, and in many others, the Disney Company plays upon the capital Disneyland has built since the park’s opening in the 1955 to recall the cultural

signification it holds as a location for American families to perform the identification of togetherness.²

Description

Today Walt Disney’s creative empire permeates American culture; it creates a connection between Walt (the man), the park, and perception of America’s identity. Beginning as an animation studio in the 1920’s, Disney gained worldwide success through such popular characters as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Snow White.³ As the animation studio grew it expanded into live action while capitalizing on a broad marketing base with merchandise. Disney further diversified by opening Disneyland, the prototype for their eleven theme parks, on July 17, 1955 in Anaheim, California. ⁴ Disneyland’s cultural significance derives not only from its historic importance as the first theme park, but also its contemporary popularity. The cornerstone of the Disney empire, Disneyland took in an estimated 15,980,000 visitors in 2010, second only to its East coast counterpart with 16,972,000 visitors, Walt Disney World’s Magic Kingdom in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, in both the North American market and internationally.⁵ While the Magic Kingdom enjoys the local support (and commercial drawing power) of three other Disneyworld theme parks, only two parks comprise the California property, with the oldest, Disneyland, far outpacing California Adventure.⁶ These attendance figures mark the continued

³ For more information concerning the history of Disney’s business strategy, see Steven Watts, The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
⁵ In comparison, the next most popular theme park after all of the Disney offering, Islands of Adventure at Universal Orlando, Florida, had only 5,949,000 visitors even after the opening of their most popular Harry Potter attractions. Gene Jeffers, Theme Index: The Global Attractions Attendance Report (Themed Entertainment Association: 2011).
⁶ Opening in 1971, the Magic Kingdom is one of four theme parks on the Walt Disney World property, which also includes Epcot, Hollywood Studios, and Animal Kingdom. The Magic Kingdom takes its moniker from a common nickname for Disneyland. To some Disneyland and the Magic Kingdom may seem clones; however each park contains some exclusive attractions or lands as well as emotional ties to their local regions. California Adventure attracted an estimated 6,278,000 visitors in 2010. Walt Disney Company, "Company Overview," The Walt Disney
popularity of the fifty-five year-old park and speak to the significance of Disneyland as a cultural
and social destination. In total, Disney theme parks attract an estimated 120.6 million people
annually, the most of any amusement park chain worldwide. Year after year, a mysterious draw
brings millions of visitors to California, making Disneyland one of the most popular and well-
known entertainment spaces in the world. I investigate how Disney has cultivated this
popularity by responding to a specific American identity to create a space where said identity has
the potential to be performed.

While scholars have discussed various aspects of the Disneyland phenomena for several
decades, a curious absence remains; the personal experience of the non-academic visitor to
Disneyland has yet to be addressed. I seek to illuminate this proverbial gap in scholarship,
leaving the well-posed questions of feminism, Marxism, and colonialism to such scholars as José
Piedra, Richard deCordova, and Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto in Disney Discourse. Instead, I spotlight
a different aspect of Disney production by examining the pivotal historic moment of 1955 in
which Walt opened Disneyland and began the company’s long transition from a small film
production studio to the entertainment media superpower of today. Focusing in on this moment
of impetus, I examine the engagement of the audience with the narratives presented in
Disneyland in order to explicate the performance of a postwar suburban American identity as
idyllic and patriotic. Many of the authors in the above works examine themselves as the receiver;
I posit a shift toward the audience—those Americans who were the consumers of Disneyland in
the 1950s—through their response to Disney’s image by attending the park. While other works
focus on the authors’ own contemporaneous response to the park and the permeation of Disney
into American and Western culture, I suggest a two-tiered study. First, I will use cultural history
to place Walt Disney and Disneyland in this pivotal historic moment. I will then examine

Company and Affiliated Companies, accessed November 3, 2010,
http://corporate.disney.go.com/corporate/complete_history_2.html; Gene Jeffers, Theme Index: The Global
7 "In 2006, Disneyland welcomed 12-year old Emmalee Mason of Colorado Springs, Colorado, as she became the
honorary 2 billionth guest to visit a Disney park (nearly the combined populations of China and India)." Disneyland
8 Piedra, José. "Pato Donald’s Gender Ducking." In Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom, ed. Eric
Childhood, consumerism, and Disney Animation," In Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom, ed. Eric
Disneyland and Japanese Cultural Imperialism," In Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom, ed. Eric
Disney’s branding practices through a postmodern lens, such as Marin proposes, by viewing the representation of America presented in Disneyland. This combined methodological strategy will illuminate the construction of receptivity to a themed environment, which sets the stage for similar performances of the latter twentieth century. An examination of the shaping of American values and interests during the 1950s, in conjunction with corresponding presentations of these tropes in Disneyland’s themes and measured through the participation and response of the spectator, reveals a mediation and guidance contributing to the performance of the 1950s suburban American identity.

Disneyland structures the experience of visiting around a narrative idea that ties a singular land together. Located a short distance south of the working Disney Studio in Burbank, Disneyland sits on eighty-five acres in Anaheim, California.\(^9\) As a location of amusement and consumption, the park contains within its defined borders the physical realization of the Disney Company’s cinematic creations. The construction of each particular theme or idea reflects its title: Main Street, USA; Tomorrowland; Fantasyland; Frontierland; and Adventureland.\(^10\) A land maintains its themeing throughout all elements contained within the geographic border, including restaurants, rides, shops, and bathrooms. Every supporting element then also constructs a narrative to complement the overall unifying theme of the land. This narrative, which continually directs the visitor into a given land's storyline, serves as one of the hallmarks of Disneyland. This structure of discrete narrative themeing prompts the visitor into responding to—and participating in—the park and its presentation of self.

A cursory survey of the plethora of websites and blogs devoted to Disney parks speaks of the enthusiasm across such disciplines as travel, architecture, cuisine, and even postcard art.\(^11\) I argue that this evidence of visitors’ emotional attachments to and involvement in the Disney experience effectively transforms the park into the bastion of the theme park experience. Modern

\(^10\) Although Disney titles the land "Main Street, U. S. A.," I will follow from here forward the Chicago Manual Style Guide format of “Main Street, USA.” Originally, the park divided into these five lands. It has since expanded to also include New Orleans Square, Critter Country, and Mickey’s Toontown. More information on the additions to Disneyland, see Alex Wright, *The Imagineering Field Guide to Disneyland: An Imagineer's-Eye Tour* (New York: Disney Editions, 2008); Eileen Flick O'Shea, "Disneyland Beginnings." *Los Angeles: Past, Present & Future*. University of Southern California Information Services Division. Accessed December 7, 2010, http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/la/disneyland/.
visitors respond to Disneyland through their attendance and fandom, but what specific park elements do visitors respond most strongly to? These works, through their exalting of the Disney product, attempt to connect with Disneyland and participate in the park’s greater representations of community. I suggest that the sense of ownership of the park seen in these websites speaks to the idealization of Disney as well as visitors’ idealizations of their own identities through Disney, including their identity as Americans.

In this interplay between identities and culture the visitors’ self-definition transforms, not only through their choice of attendance, but also their performance at the park. Today, Disney prompts the consumer to enter the park’s narrative using a variety of tactics, beginning with televised marketing campaigns such the recent commercial described above. A daughter practices falling in love in the shadow of the castle with the character Prince Charming; a mother becomes her teenage son’s companion through enjoying a rollercoaster. In attending a themed space, the visitor supplements and completes the park’s narrative as the protagonist. Indeed, as scholars such as Louis Marin and Richard Francaviglia have argued, Disneyland uses theme to suggest the myths of America as simultaneously universal and essential to being American. While the park may represent an overtly commercial, contrived, and colonialist children’s playground today, at the time of its 1955 opening, the park was a financial risk that depended on the attention of a country in the midst of redefining itself even as Disneyland defined itself.

The vast Disney empire includes two primary branches—animated film studio and themed parks—both of which are based on the leadership and mantras set forth by the now-deceased public helmsman, Walt Disney. For the sake of clarity, from this point on, I will refer to the Walt Disney Company, also known as the Disney Studio, as "Disney," and the individual, Walt Disney, as "Walt" so as to mark the distinction between the man and the corporation. In 1923, Disney began as a film studio that specialized in animation, creating such recognizable

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animated stars as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and Snow White. Following two decades of financial success, the studio began struggling commercial and critically, so Walt began pursuing other creative avenues. Conceiving of a family-focused entertaining park, Walt turned his attention to the task for a variety of personal and business motivations. He desired: 1) a physical space for his extensive train collection; 2) the preservation of the family unit; 3) diversification of the company; and 4) a site of access for the public and dignitaries to physically interact with the studio. Walt’s personal motivations each manifested as a major function of Disneyland, particularly as a place to unify and strengthen his family bond. Walt’s emphasis on family, present throughout many Disney works, coupled with his right political leanings as he retreated to an increasingly suburban lifestyle. For a park adjacent to the working studio, "surviving drawings show this was conceived in a much more classical and park-like style than the eventual Anaheim version, but it did include a railroad and—as a hint of the inventions yet to come—a singing waterfall." Thus Walt began exploring a physically accessible, living cinema experience, which would guide the viewer through a participatory narrative so as to supplement the film studio.

Walt’s personal influence within the studio and his tireless promotions of the company affected the public’s reception to Disney, and subsequently Disneyland. During World War II, Walt and the studio supported the federal government by creating a variety of training and propaganda films. Following the war—and as work on Disneyland began—Walt continued promoting his wartime positioning of himself and the company as "All-American," patriotic, and family-oriented. This persona derived from both his films’ family-friendly content and the studio’s contributions to the war effort. During World War II the studio housed U.S. government officials close to factories and created a series of propaganda films both commissioned by the government and privately funded. These films made use of many of the well-known animated

characters as dutiful and supportive citizens in pieces focusing on boosting moral, home-front instruction, and military training. Walt even personally earned a civic award from the City of Los Angeles in 1949 following the Soviet Union’s rejection of his films due to their anti-communistic, patriotic overtones. Walt’s performance of citizenship and family values constructed a clear identity—for the man and the work—which built on his testimony for the House on Un-American Committee and other anti-communistic propaganda of the 1940s in order to cement his own reputation. This wholesome and specifically American identity mapped Walt's constructed identity onto that of Disney as well. In other words, Walt and Disney were frequently perceived as one in the same—synonymous images of one another. This played into the definition of the resulting park and the representations contained within as one of patriotic, family-oriented, responsible citizens who remain active in their respective communities.

Disney utilized this wholesome image in creating the tropes of the first fully themed park, their creation, Disneyland and its narratives, now functions as the model copied by many entertainment companies. Following in the footsteps of Disneyland, all theme parks contain the structure of a permanent amusement park in addition to thematic or genre-specific elements that locate the activities within a fictional idea or narrative. In contrast, an amusement park exists as a collection of rides, games, and restaurants without any link or reference between any two locations, such as a ride and a neighboring restaurant, while also acknowledging phenomenological reality. The reliance on theme differentiates both the design and the reception of a theme park. Disney park designer, Joe Rohde, explains his understanding that "[t]heme is a noun. It is not a verb. You cannot theme a thing. A theme is the underlying value system upon which a story is built. It is not the fake wood detailing on the outside of a box." A theme park therefore is consciously distanced from reality; as Baudrillard suggests in "The Precession of Simulacra" it must be semiotically read as a constructed narrative written in the paint colors, building design, costume and language choices of the artificial space; "Disneyland is a perfect model of all the entangled orders of simulation. To begin with it is a play of illusion and phantasms." Here, a trash can references a poster which references the pavement, all creating

an agreement of a "world," much like a theatrical set filled with props, lights, and a supporting cast played by the park’s employees. The only theatrical element Disneyland lacks are the leading actors, which are played by the visitors. Though the degree of themeing varies among parks, Disneyland differentiates itself from the preceding amusement parks through the collaboration between all of the different components of the part so as to convey a specific, focused theme reflected in each land.

Strengthening the vitality of themeing within the Disney parks, the Disney Company invented its own language to reflect the fundamental role the visitors play in the simulacra. Disney's linguistics re-imagine the visitor as a "Guest" and the employees as the "Cast." Through this intentional structuring, the park becomes a site of experiential performance rather than merely amusement. The themeing of language into a constructed script continues in other areas of the park as well, thus reinforcing imposed realities. Guests experience "On Stage," and the obligatory "Backstage" becomes the location of costumes and scene changes, break rooms, and anything that may otherwise detract from the experience constructed in the themeing. As the lands reflect a singular identity, so too do the clothes worn by the cast in their transition to "Costumes" picked up from "Wardrobe." The language reflects the company’s film background and the theatricality self-evident in the space. Each of the Disney parks share this performance-oriented vocabulary as they each present a crafted other world for the Guest. Epcot encourages discovery, innovation, and exploration, Hollywood Studios in Florida and Disney Studios in France celebrate the glamour and excitement of Hollywood’s film industry, Animal Kingdom promotes conservation and an appreciation of wildlife, and Disneyland, Florida's Magic Kingdom, and sister parks around the world combine all of these foci to create a reality of fantasy.

While this vocabulary has been documented in books such as Working for the Mouse, I have used my own knowledge to compile this list from numerous visits to Disney parks as well as employment at Disney’s Animal Kingdom.

Again, I have created this interpretation based upon my own knowledge of the various parks. Detailed information regarding each park may be found on the Disney website. Walt Disney Company, "Company History," The Walt Disney Company and Affiliated Companies, accessed November 2010, http://corporate.disney.go.com/corporate/complete_history_2.html.
Literature Review

Disneyland, Disney theme parks, and the marketing dominance of the Company increasingly attracted scholarship in the late twentieth century. Interestingly, the confluence of postmodernism and the opening of Disneyland led to its now-established role as a model for postmodern theorists in describing their work. Perhaps one of the most examined works relating to Disneyland is Jean Baudrillard’s discussion of simulacra in "The Precession of Simulacra."\(^{24}\) His examination of Disney theme parks became a case study for postmodernists to discuss the parks as locations of hyperreality.\(^{25}\) Baudrillard's study of Disneyland provides a lens through which to view constructed elements of fantasy and their effects on a particular viewer, but his work limits itself to only focus on Disneyland in opposition to the outside world:

But this conceals something else, and that "ideological" blanket exactly serves to cover over a third-order simulation: Disneyland is there to conceal the fact that it is the "real" country, all of "real" America, which is Disneyland. . . Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, when in fact all of Los Angeles and the America surrounding it are no longer real, but of the order of the hyperreal and of simulation.\(^{26}\)

Baudrillard proposes Disneyland’s significance to the viewer derives from the possibility for escape from the "real" America, which is in fact less "real" than is the fantasy of Disneyland. Americans seek a connection, or "religious reveling," with the representation of the nation embodied in Disneyland. However Baudrillard does not examine how the visitor accomplishes this connection once inside the park.\(^{27}\) Baudrillard’s work explores an interesting aspect of escapism inherent in an entertainment park, but leaves much to research as this seminal work lacks a serious consideration of the act of attending such a park. To better define this action I have developed the term "Disneylanding" to encompass the process of interacting with and participating in the themes of the park.


\(^{25}\) Alan Bryman in Disney and His Worlds looks the way Disney parks, and in particular Walt Disney World, have been evaluated by postmodern theorists. He dissects the way the parks have become a living case study by summarizing major works on the subject. His emphasis lies in the understanding of the postmodern viewpoint rather than arguing for any lens. Alan Bryman, "Intimating Postmodernity and the Problem of Reality," in Disney and His Worlds (London: Routledge, 1995), 161-183.


\(^{27}\) Ibid., 1565.
A referent in Baudrillard’s work, Louis Marin posits Disneyland as a location of mediation between real and fantasy. Marin reads the geographic format of Disneyland as a map of America’s cultural values. He finds that American visitors mediate their experience through an anchoring—"real"—experience of Main Street as they move between the lands. The reader of the park then marks American identity as constructed and nostalgic:

That is, the systems of representation of signs, symbols, and values which recreate, as significant for them, the real conditions of their existence. So Disneyland shows us the structure and the functions of utopia in its real topography and through its use by the visitor.\(^{28}\)

The American ideals presented in the layout of the park create a fragmented utopia for Marin. I explore his ideas further, arguing that Disneyland itself holds this identity as a reference point in American society; the park acts as a mediation point between the real life of the American visitor and the idealized fantasy they wish to portray.

Many of the publications regarding Disneyland split their emphasis between Walt’s role in the creation of the parks, the design of the parks, and the examination of the commercial enterprise of the Disney Company as seen in the theme parks. Scholars such as Marc Elliot, Richard and Katherine Green, and Richard Schickel examine the park and its relation to Walt’s interests.\(^{29}\) These pieces suggest Disneyland initially functioned as an outlet for Walt’s controlling personality and model train hobby by providing a space entirely under his exclusive control.\(^{30}\) Other authors continue this biographic thrust to posit a direct correlation between Walt’s values and experiences and the structures and narratives in the park, such as Walt’s hometown as Main Street.\(^{31}\) These works provide a framework for reading the specificity of signifiers in the park, but in this piece I examine the cultural significance and codes of 1950s

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\(^{31}\)Walt lived in Marceline, Missouri for a very brief period of his childhood, but he promoted it as his hometown throughout his lifetime. Steven Watts, *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 22.
suburban American identity available in Disneyland and its lands for its audience in developing a presence for an American Dream.

The Disney Company also produces many publications celebrating its heritage and products. John Hench, one of the lead Disney Imagineers, wrote or contributed to two such books, *Designing Disney: Imagineering and the Art of the Show* and *Building a Dream: the Art of Disney Architecture*. Both pieces highlight Disney's use of design elements like scale buildings and color choices to create the fantasy and narrative of the parks. Additionally, Disney released a companion travel guide for tourists with the same design focus as the previous books. While these clearly glorify the Disney artists and executives, these pieces also provide access to concept artwork and the design process. Additionally, an examination of the content of the chosen narratives provides insight into Disney's intended messages, thus allowing further analysis of the relationship between the official presentation of the park and individual visitor experiences.

A number of recent pieces about Disney examine consumption and representation within the theme park. In *Inside the Mouse: Work and Play at Disney World*, the "Project on Disney" collects essays examining a variety of practices of both the employees and the vacationer at the Orlando, Florida grouping of Disney theme parks. Some particularly notable works contained within this book include Susan Willis’s "Public Use/Private State," about the level of control Disney exerts or attempts over a space and people, and Jane Kuenz’s "it’s a small world After All," looking at Disney's colonial and social constructions of the visitor’s identity in the Epcot theme park. This collection purports to emphasize the experience; however the authors' focus remains on their own professional distancing from the visitor in viewing the parks. This separation prevents identification with the visitor to question how non-scholars experience the park. Without looking to the other viewers we miss the dominant reading of this themed park as

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32 Disney created the title Imagineers to describe employees of the division of the company which creates the non-film or television work for the studio. They are responsible for the practical and creative aspects of designing new theme parks or attractions. This is further explored by John Hench, and Peggy Van Pelt, *Designing Disney: Imagineering and the Art of the Show* (New York: Disney Editions, 2003); Beth Dunlop, *Building a Dream: The Art of Disney Architecture* (New York: Abrams. 1996).


seen in the park’s cultural placement by Disney and the recorded responses of visitors within these early years in the mid-1950s.

**Methodology: Disneyland and America’s Identity**

Disneyland's early years—1955 and 1956—served as the company’s prototype for the rest of the Disney theme park empire. Though often immortalized by company park lore, very little scholarly work deals directly with this period. The financial and commercial risk of drawing people to a totally themed park for the purpose of amusement, leisure, and consumption modeled the success of themeing, one of the most ubiquitous marketing tactics of our modern world. As Alan Bryman’s concept of "Disneyization" suggests, themeing has become a popular marketing strategy, enticng people to experience a New Orleans-themed mall in Canada or a library-themed hotel in New York.\(^3\) Despite the permeation of themeing in today’s environment, theatre and performance studies lacks analysis or theorization of the act of attending or participating in a themed, narrative-based park for the postwar spectator. In exploring the efficacy and reception of Disneyland for the historic visitor, I explore this particular moment in American history and consider the ways in which Disney both capitalized upon and shaped the fears, goals, and identity of the postwar United States. By examining the historical moment in which Disneyland became engrained into the national psyche, the scholar may better understand Disney’s positioning of the park that tied the family-oriented and idyllic values the company projected onto the American family in the 1950s and the complexity of the performance of suburban identity.

In order to delve into the creation of Disneyland in 1955, as well as the cultural history of "America" in this historical moment, I examine a firsthand account as read through a guest's video of their park experiences. The primary difficulty inherent in reliance on such material stems from the limited accessibility and archiving of photographs and home film recordings regarding this topic in this specific era; systematic archiving of such materials simply does not exist at this point, so data are necessarily selective. In one of the few filmed records of the 1950s

Disneyland experience not specifically mediated by Disney, the Barstow family's *Disneyland Dream* documents the conditions and proposed participation for one family in 1956. The film exhibits the vacation destination Disneyland became for many American families in this time, as well as displaying a point of comparison between the visitors’ lived experience and the official televised portrayal of the park opening on the series *Disneyland.* Hosted by Walt Disney himself, *Disneyland* presents the narratives and use of the park through the mediation of the Disney Company. Though the participant selection process and the level of participant awareness remain unknown, these videos offer one record of the public face of Disneyland, particularly the "ideal" guest Disney targeted in public representations disseminated to the American public. These sources provide evidence of the "script" for an individual’s visit, the way visitors structured their day and selection of themes with which to engage. Additionally, they provide a record of the vacationers encountering varying degrees to which the narratives presented in the park suggest American tropes, opening a view of the accessibility of said themes to the guests. The interactions with the presentation of these tropes through consumption, dress, and the reflection of the themeing indicate awareness, whether consciously or not, of such tropes contributing to the construction of an idealized American identity mediated and modeled through Disney.

My study highlights the levels of narrative design and participation that distinguish Disneyland from other theme parks during the risky early years of operation. I focus on the conditions and attitude of the 1950s that aided in the success, attendance, and overall social positioning of the park in the United States. Disneyland’s prototype of immersive themeing and narration translates to the framework of other public use spaces such as the shopping centers.

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37 Select episodes of the *Disneyland* program have been released on DVD including the first episode introducing the Disneyland park, "The Disneyland Story," and the opening ceremonies of the park for invited guests and celebrities. Recorded individuals may be a random sampling of park guests, linked to the company, or simply seeking fame on television. In some instances, the population observed originates as background crowds for the event featured on camera, and the same caveats of awareness continue to apply. "Dateline Disneyland," *Walt Disney Treasures: Disneyland USA*, DVD, Directed by Wilfred Jackson, Stud Phelps, and John Rich (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Inc., 2001).
restaurants, and theatres found in abundance in most major metropolitan areas of contemporary America. One particular element separates Disneyland from previous amusement-based parks—the participatory narrative experience. Through the multiple levels of reinforcing narration, distinctions between lands, and designs of the attractions, Disneyland asks its spectators to become a part of the story. What personal, economic, and social choices are being made by the producer and the consumer in Disneyland? How does the choice of selecting Disneyland as a vacation destination affirm a social and political constructed identity for the postwar market? How does the identification with Walt Disney through media inform the performance of an American? It is my hope that the information to follow provides a basis for the examination of these issues by looking at Disneyland as a case study. In this instance, the conditions surrounding the park's development position a product to reflect and re-inscribe a time and conditions in which a specific demographic of the American people performed an idealized identity through a participation in fantasy.

This thesis does not evaluate the structure or tactics used by the Disney Company in choosing a population to present over others, but does recognize the omission of many populations of people who may have had the opportunity to visit the park. The White, well-dressed guests seen in the Disneyland program typify the visible population of postwar America, both at Disneyland and in other Disney work. Additionally, Disneyland’s presentation of narratives of times and places within the lands addresses a targeted spectator, expressly ignoring distinguishing markers of race, class, sexuality, gender, and nationality and creating a uniform visitor. Some of the attractions in Adventureland and Frontierland create an assumed otherness and colonialist attitude toward the peoples and cultures depicted. For the purposes of this

38 I wish to mark a caveat in my discussion of the use of target market or core audience in this study. I recognize that these terms and the participant group consists implies a limited population consisting of people privileged to be afforded the opportunity of leisure travel, particularly for an entire family. This population for mid-century Disneyland generally consists of White, upper or middle-class, Christian, American families in a husband/wife domestic pairing with some, but not many, children. During this period of suburban conformity, these nuclear families often followed clearly delineated hierarchical structures in terms of gender roles within and outside the household.

39 The invited guests on the opening day of Disneyland were typical of the families represented in Disney’s works such as the Mouseketeers. "Dateline Disneyland," Walt Disney Treasures: Disneyland USA, DVD, Directed by Wilfred Jackson, Stud Phelps, and John Rich (Burbank, California: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Inc., 2001).

thesis, I limit the focus my discussion to Disney’s targeted audience as seen through both Disney’s works and in evidence in the television program. This group, consisting of White, Christian, middle and upper-class families, models the alleged "average" identity in 1950s America as recognized by Hollywood, and therefore, for the most historically consistent evaluation, my study engages said group to examine its shaping as both "average" and American.

With returning GIs spurring the Baby Boom and the radical shift of the burgeoning white, middle class to suburbia, Disney's focus on the wholesome image of the nuclear family reflects a larger movement toward an attitude of highly patriotic, mild-mannered, nostalgia in the home and communities. As the dramatic social shifts of the 1960s began to build support, the suburbanites secluded themselves in an effort to raise the Baby Boomer generation on a diet of family values. This combination of values essentially constructed Disneyland as the ideal environment for leisure. Disney and Disneyland posit the myths and tropes of America as universal and essential to being "American" at this moment in history. Thus, my exploration of privilege, culture, and identity as represented in Disneyland offers one way in which to deconstruct these hallmarks of American culture.

Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter Two, I explore historic and cultural shifts of the 1950s to determine the aspirational tropes of America. In doing so, I examine the ways in which Walt’s construction of self as family-oriented and patriotic aligns the company with the ideals of white, middle-class Americans. I use Walt’s political views and activities to identify values he goes on to promote as right and good. His conservative, anti-communist stance leads Walt to adopt a position encouraging patriotic citizenship. The creation and popularity of the new suburban spaces such as Levittown presents a location for performance for this citizenship, both on a national level and by Walt. Walt’s identity ties into the performance of the new suburbanite as he increasingly parallels and identifies himself in this position, particularly in the emphasis on family. Thus, I argue that, by presenting a domestic persona in the national sphere through television and themes

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in Disney’s films, Walt assists in creating an identity of the suburbanite aligned with his beliefs as wholesome, patriotic, and family oriented.\textsuperscript{44}

My third chapter explores the ways in which Disneyland’s presentation of narrative reflects these tropes and calls the viewer to participate. Using the home film \textit{Disneyland Dreaming} and the television program \textit{Disneyland}, I examine the way guests experience and participate in the fantasy of the park and vacationing to position themselves within those American and Disney narratives. I use the construction of suburbia to follow one family, the Barstows of Wethersfield, Connecticut, and consider Disneyland’s placement in the family vacation.\textsuperscript{45} Robbins Barstow, the family patriarch, recorded the 1956 trip, which they won through a contest, for a home film, \textit{Disneyland Dream}. This recording, along with Barstow’s narration, provides a detailed and constructed view of the family’s pre-trip anticipation, journey, and attendance at the park. The film paints the Barstows as matching the construction of a 1950s suburban family unit, thus mirroring Disney’s brand. Their act of vacationing in Southern California locates a trip to Disneyland as one piece of a mythology of the West, seen through other vacation destinations. \textit{Disneyland Dream} exhibits the vacation destination that Disneyland became for a family and allows a point of comparison between the visitors’ lived experience and the televised portrayal of the park.

In my fourth chapter, I examine the role mediation plays into experiencing a theme park and the act of leisure. Utilizing Marin’s examination of Disneyland I examine the development of a willing participant for the park in entering into the fantasy. I then explore the use of the televised persona of the company and the park to mediate the experience of Disneylanding as a form of rehearsal for the participant before attending the park. In developing the memory of visiting the park with their family a visitor creates both a nostalgic memory of idealization and a hyperreal experience of their suburban life through the tropes within Disneyland. This then

\textsuperscript{44} Anna G Creadick, \textit{Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America}, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010).

reveals the multiple layers of construction of the Disneyland experience as a mutual production by Disney, the family, and suburban America to create an imagined optimistic reality. Instead of looking to break away from reality by going to the park, guests created an idealized world as real.

**Conclusion**

The spectator’s participation though attending Disneyland positions them to enact a 1950s construction of an idealized American identity. In designing a location for guests to enact their collective mythology of that idealized American identity, citizen, and family, Disneyland positions itself as a location to not only display but also to participate in this construction as real. In doing so, the Disney Company increases the visibility and viability of their park as a vacation destination. The selection of particular myths and narrative by the Disney Company acknowledges and reflects the political, cultural, and social shifts of attitudes of the postwar era in America. The company constructed a space to not only be viewed, but to be used by the spectator, and even imposed a participating character onto the spectator through the pervasiveness of the narration in the lands and attractions. Through their choice to participate in the performance and reinscribing of these myths, the 1950s spectator effectively sought this transformation so as to conform to or realize these myths.

The public’s reaction to and use of Disneyland lie in the shifting American dynamic between reality and fantasy. By returning to the source of this impetus we may better understand its use and success as a strategy to engage the masses. Disney holds a significant role in mediating family construction and identity of today, but perhaps by looking at the way the first Disney park positioned itself to provide a service for Americans we can better understand the continued desire to participate in themed environments.

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46 Scholars such as Richard Francaviglia and Douglas Brode have already begun important investigations into this relationship between Disneyland and identity, delving into the reflection of mythology during focused social shifts. Richard V. Francaviglia, "Walt Disney’s Frontierland as an Allegorical Map of the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1999): 155-82, JSTOR; Douglas Brode, *From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney Created the Counterculture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).
CHAPTER TWO

CONSTRUCTING 1950S AMERICAN FAMILY VALUES
THROUGH WALT DISNEY’S PERFORMANCE OF SUBURBAN PATRIOTISM

Through the examination of Walt Disney as both an individual and a brand, I hope to develop an understanding of his role in developing and perpetuating the cultural identity of postwar America. I will examine the incorporation and exploitation of this American identity by Disney into the persona of the Disneyland park as continuation of the brand identification of Disney in the 1950s. In shifting the emphasis onto Disney and America in their propagation of anti-communist political performances and the defining of the suburbanite, I seek to move the conversation onto those who assisted in shaping this national discourse. Such a focus creates an emphasis on the reactionary practices of a culture rather than simply addressing the way the media presents the dominant ideology. The construction and presentation of mainstream values constitute a necessary area of development of academia to thereby illuminate the fears and ideals which develop those values. Although Warren Susman’s argument suggests evaluating the American middle class during the 1930s, the same principles apply to the 1950s in the development of the suburban sensibility:

For the story of American culture remains largely the story of this middle class. There is a tendency, when treating this period [the Depression], for historians suddenly to switch their focus and concentrate on the newly discovered poor, the marginal men and women, migrant workers, hobos, various ethnic minorities deprived of a place in the American sun. There is equally a tendency to see the period [the Depression] in terms of the most radical responses to its problems, to see a Red Decade in which cultural as well as political life is somehow dominated by the Left. Yet, the fact remains—and it is a vital one if we are to understand the period and the nature of American culture—that the period, while acknowledging in ways more significantly than ever before the existence of groups outside the dominant ones and even recognizing the radical response as important, is one in which American Culture continues to be largely middle-class culture.47

Although a number of culture shaping issues originated in or came to head during this timeframe, such as blacklisting, Civil Rights, and beats, the path of the middle class and their influences remains a vital component in understanding mid-century America. We again see political ideologies debated between the Left and the Right, and the values and affiliations of the middle class affecting perceptions of nation. Mary Caputi acknowledges in her work, *A Kinder, Gentler America: Melancholia and the Mythical 1950s*, that the championing of resistant works in the 1950s propagates the view of art, film and theatre as a predominantly politically left expression. However, Walt’s performance of self as an American and family man creates a brand for himself and his work that challenges this association. In constructing Disneyland, the suburban middle class of the 1950’s becomes engrained in the identity of the park through the presentation of very specific Disney values—values which come to be identified as foundational to "American" identity—in a singular location.

While Walt’s life has been the subject of scholarship before, I argue that connecting his biography to Disney history provides access into a larger conversation about the creation of America’s desire to express its identity through the behavior he models. Steven Watts briefly touches on this association: "In the Cold War era, Disney became a kind of screen for the projection of national self-definition." Although I agree with Watts’ analysis, I extend it further, suggesting that Walt consciously shaped his performance to present a parallel to a national trend of values associated with suburbia. I argue that Walt did this as more than just a front for wholesome, patriotic, "American" values, and that he developed them along with the American public through country-wide events. In particular, these shared ideals arise out of the geo-social development of suburbia and the poli-social anti-Communist movement. Through Walt, these movements converge as he develops a synthesizing location embodying a mutual identity in Disneyland.

Following Susman’s call for a focus on the middle class and Disney’s propensity for depicting White characters and storylines, this chapter seeks to identify the values and morals

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suburban middle class White households had during the 1950s. In distinguishing this group, it becomes necessary to specify the demographics of this new suburban population. Walt Disney stood as a model for this group due to his public positioning of his private life as mirroring those demographics. Walt Disney's personal life and his studio’s productions aligned their performances with suburbia by creating an image of shared makeup, background, and activities. I argue the performances and values set forth by Walt Disney illuminate a model of behavior identified as wholesome, patriotic, and American; this presentation of self shaped the suburban identity in the 1950s. Walt transferred these qualities into the Disneyland park to appeal to suburbanites and to further his ideals. In examining Walt’s anti-communist efforts through his work with the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals and his testimony to HUAC, a political map of Walt may be drawn as coinciding with a national movement of hyper-patriotism through the propagation of capitalist ideals.

I explore these issues through a study of the historic and cultural shifts of the 1950s to determine the aspirational tropes, or common private goals seen in performed in society, of America. Walt’s conservative and anti-communist political views and activities to identify the ways in which he promotes specific values as right and good, and to adopt a position encouraging patriotic citizenship in line with prevailing resistance to Communism and foreignness. The popularity of newly created suburban spaces such as Levittown presents a domestic location for the performance of this citizenship, on a national level and by Walt. In placing Walt’s construction of self as family-oriented and patriotic into this context I argue that he aligns the company with the ideals of the suburbanite. Walt’s identity ties into the performance of the new suburbanite as he increasingly identifies himself in this position, particularly in the emphasis on loyalty, hard work, and family. By presenting a domestic persona in the national sphere through television and film, Walt assists in creating and propagating his

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51 Levittown was the first pre-planned housing and community development. It represents the prototype suburb, isolating work in the city from personal life in the suburb. Additionally, it created neighborhoods noted for their sameness and uniformity. David Halberstam, The Fifties (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 131-143.
established fame into a specific identity of the American suburbanite as wholesome, patriotic, and family oriented which he leverages into map and public understanding of Disneyland.\textsuperscript{52}

**Loyalty and the FBI**

First, a study of the historic and cultural shifts of the 1950s in the national political realm determines the aspirational performance of Americans. In the years following World War II, the United States found itself an international power while much of the developed world started the work of rebuilding.\textsuperscript{53} With the three major national adversaries of Japan, Germany, and Italy eliminated from power the U.S. was in need of a reconstruction, both in political affiliations and social roles. Once again, fear of Communism and the struggle against the Soviets rose to the forefront. Though the two world powers allied forces during WWII, they soon fell back into conflict. In revisiting the antagonism and resistance to Communism of the 1930s America entered an internal Cold War that demanded the redefining of patriotism in private citizens.\textsuperscript{54}

As political conservatives gained more clout, the FBI became involved in their campaign against anti-Capitalist Communism and the Communist Party of America. The FBI researched and tracked any individual or organization, particularly within Hollywood as the business and creative workers were in a position to shape national opinions as proven in the propaganda effort during World War II. The bureau concerned itself with material that might support or promote the attack of themes the FBI identified as American: the free enterprise system, industrialism, the profit motive, success, or the independent man.\textsuperscript{55} These themes the FBI sought to protect reflect an identification of Capitalist ideology as American:

Communism was ‘un-American’ because it was atheistic, collectivistic, and international. This linking of Americanism to a highly specific set of values – organized religion, private property, and nationalism – made it un-American, hence Communist, to be critical of, or to wish to change or challenge, those values and the institution and polices which reflected them.”\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{52} Anna G Creadick, *Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010).

\textsuperscript{53} Although a number of books, films, and articles provide information regarding the aftermath of the Second World War, David Halberstam’s *The Fifties* covers the material in a thorough manner. David Halberstam, *The Fifties*.

\textsuperscript{54} Anti-Communism during the 1930s manifested primarily in resistance to unionization and labor reform as opposed to the heavily nationalistic themes of the 1940s and 1950s. Larry Ceplair and Steven England, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community 1930-1960*.


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 203.
In such an environment, an individual would fear appearing defiant or opposing tenants of the national agenda against Communism and thus being isolated from the community. Political beliefs became intrepidly tied to the performance of American citizen, particularly as something to publicly display so as to declare allegiance. This was particularly true in the field of entertainment and media; filmmakers, actors, screenwriters, and other celebrities were targeted by the FBI and then called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Executive Order 9835, signed by President Truman in 1947, extended the proclaiming of faithfulness to civil servants and private individuals implies such demands previously targeted high profile positions, such as politicians and celebrities. The order speaks to the identification of growing national fears of deception and disloyalty, two attributes later displayed in resistance in Disneyland by creating a space which proposes historic America to as truthful and unified. It also acts by creating an imagined national community unified against the threat of the perceived government and social subversion of the Communist community.

Walt began cultivation public image displaying his loyalty to and support of the federal government during World War II. As detailed in the 2009 documentary Walt Disney & El Grupo, the United States government invited Walt and some of his top staffers to visit South America on a diplomatic cultural goodwill tour in 1941. The trip served the dual purpose of promoting the U.S. within various South American countries even as it used the inspirational material collected to encourage a positive image of South America within the USA. Walt’s compliance with the government’s request positioned his celebrity and his company as representative of America and as the positive, friendly, creative image the nation wanted projected internationally.

Additionally, Disney more directly aided the war effort through the creation of propaganda films. Ranging from the practical military training films of "Four Methods of Flush Riveting" and "Stop that Tank," to the general audience short films "Donald Gets Drafted," and

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"Der Fuehrer’s Face," these films present Disney’s iconic animated characters and the company’s design style as synonymous with the representation of a very specific "America." Donald Duck or Minnie Mouse stand as everyman characters suggesting a national association between the work of Disney with patriotism and civic duty. Disney’s propaganda films work as instruction and moral relief for the general public in their commiseration with the characters’ strife and foibles in dealing with the effects of the war on their lives.

In it interesting to note that, in response to Walt’s position as a high profile figure allied with the government, the Los Angeles desk of the FBI developed a file on him. Marc Eliot explores this relationship though Walt’s now declassified case file. In it he discovered that Walt both grew a positive relationship with the director of the desk and served as an informant through his celebrity position as a Hollywood producer. While communications with the FBI were a part of Walt’s private sphere, they further the performance of his citizenry. When placed alongside the government-supported goodwill tour of South America and the propaganda films Disney created during WWII, Walt’s role as a responsive, supportive, and loyal citizen of the U.S. becomes both clear and prominent.

Walt Disney and HUAC

Through Walt’s Conservative and anti-Communist political views and activities he presented his values as right and good, furthering his position by encouraging patriotic citizenship. Watts notes this civic involvement dramatically increased and became more exterior during the 1940s and 50s from Walt’s previously more latent residual liberal populism from his childhood. Walt proposed ordered, peaceful, citizenship as a means of creating a middle-class life, "No matter how disordered the world appears, [Walt] Disney and his Mickey Mouse—any of his heroes or heroines—can find their way back to happy achievement by following the announced rules of the game." Yes, by following the "rules of the game," namely conservatism and domestic investment in family, an American "succeeds" in reaching the proposed middle-

59 Walt Disney Treasures: On the Front Lines, (1943; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Video, 2004), DVD.
61 Steven Watts, The Magic Kingdom.
62 Warren Susman, Culture As History, 197.
class suburban American dream of perceived perfection, wealth, and sufficiency. Chiefly, he accomplished the projection of this persona through his public rejections of Communism.

Walt manifested his displeasure with Communism in his work to publicly expel professed or suspected communists from the Hollywood community during the 1940s. He aided in the creation of the Motion Picture Alliance by serving as the inaugural Vice President in 1944 to speak out against labor unions and Red material in films. The group attracted other celebrity followers in their capacity as private citizens including Sam Wood, Gary Cooper, Robert Taylor, Hedda Hopper, John Wayne, and Charles Coburn. The MPA worked to present their ideals as the true representation of American thought:

We believe in, and like, the American way of life: the liberty and freedom which generations before us have fought to create and preserve; the freedom to speak, to think, to live, to worship, to work, and to govern ourselves as individuals, as free men; the right to succeed or fail as free men, according to the measure of our ability and our strength.

The association structures their mission to reflect the seminal American texts as the Constitution and Bill of Rights by utilizing such phrases as "the freedom to speak" and "we believe in." In developing a relationship between the founding fathers and MPA their language suggests an intrinsic alliance between their goals and the formation of the country. These Hollywood producers and creative workers espoused the merits of capitalism, much as with the era’s national trend of expression of conservative ideals in the government. Although there is little record of Walt’s individual contribution to the group after its creation, the values represented above in the "Statement of Principles" parallel both his public and private attitudes as recognized by many of his biographers, including Alan Bryman, Bob Thomas, and Steven Watts. Theses authors chronicle Walt’s continuous proclamation throughout his life championing the idea of America as history as positive and productive along with faith in the founding fathers, and the success of the individual. Thus, by tying himself with a group publicly seeking to further a

65 United States Constitution, preface, amend. 1.
Conservative, anti-Communist agenda, Walt encouraged the connection between his political activities and Disney to enhance his public persona.

In addition to serving as an office in the Motion Picture Alliance, Walt personally spoke out in opposition to Communism. As a part of HUAC’s interrogations of the media’s loyalty to America, a variety of known government supporters from the Motion Picture Alliance testified to their allegiance to the democratic process. Walt’s antagonism toward Communism and belief of its destructive nature greatly stems from the aggressive labor strike that divided his studio in 1941. During the October 1947 hearings of the committee Walt proclaimed, "at the present time I feel that everybody in my studio is one-hundred-percent American." He overtly shapes his public persona through this proclamation as pure and true. His singular identity as American aids in transforming Walt into a model citizen. Walt continues this performance in his response to a question about whether he feels threatened by Communism, "I think the industry is made up of good Americans, just like in my plant, good, solid Americans. My boys have been fighting it longer than I have. They are trying to get out from under it and they will in time if we can just show them up." In characterizing Disney employees as not just non-Communist, but "good, solid Americans," he continues the company’s positive alliance with the government. Walt’s persona as shared with his company work together to identify each as "friendly witness[es]."

Through his political activities with the Motion Picture Alliance, his alliance with the U.S. government, and his testimony before HUAC, Walt became publicly branded as a model American within his conservative, democratic definition. In proclaiming himself within this facet of the national imagination, Walt demonstrates one of Elizabeth Theiss-Morse’s tenants in creating an American: "Civic republicanism highlights the importance of feeling that one is part of a community and recognizing the obligations that promote the common good." Walt’s development of a political identity that works to create a true America through civil involvement and cooperation highlights his performance as an American by his civic republicanism. This persona prepares the nation for Disneyland by creating positive real-life associations with Disney

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69 Ibid.
outside of the movie theatre. Walt creates himself as a trustworthy, loyal, "pure" individual, exemplifying capitalist success, which the America public should support.

**Identification of the Suburbanite**

The performance of identity of the nation in postwar America in the overt public arena continued into the more localized realm in the home. The creation and popularity of the new suburban spaces in the 1950s present a location for the performance of this model of American citizenship. The 1950s marks a time of social upheaval, particularly for the white, middle-class, American nuclear family unit, though it is important to note that this does not imply that these changes went unopposed. It may be easier to define who composed this group through the resistance to them. In her exploration of who constituted the "average" individual in 1950s America, Anna G. Creadick concludes that through rejecting the 1950s character, "the oppositional quality of identity movements of the 1960 and '70s may even have reified the idea of a ‘sameness’ in the middle, and strengthened the cultural associations between normality and whiteness, middle-classness, heterosexuality, and even masculinity." Creadick helps identify the hegemony within the 1950s by naming that which it was not, chiefly that reveals a dominancy in society of white, middle-class , heterosexual patriarchy. She prefaces this construction, "While some continue to look to the 1950s with a strong sense of nostalgia—for the supposed nuclear family, prosperity, religiosity, or clearly defined gender roles—the evidence suggest that Americans in the 1950s were themselves [original emphasis] backward-looking." Again, Creadick affirms the social group possessing agency during this era as this suburban, nuclear, family, but also this family was attempting to recapture something. Disneyland capitalizes on nostalgia by suggesting the turn of the century as an idyllic in the first land encountered through Main Street, USA. The limited defining of expectations concerning race, class, sexuality, and religion for the so-called typical family prepares the way for the limited social structure exhibited in the new suburbia.

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72 Anna G. Creadick, *Perfectly Average*, 146.
73 Ibid., 145.
In response to the calls for nationalism by public leaders, private citizens created their own need for a unified community within the home. The residents of the suburban communities represented a fundamentally changing social structure in America: "for the first time in history, anywhere—more white-collar than blue-collar workers, more middle- than working-class people."74 This rise of the middle-class population brought with it a greater emphasis on family and domestic life. In Allan C. Carlson’s examination of the America family during the Cold War he notes:

From the late 1940s into the early 1960s, most Americans came to share a common view of what they wanted for themselves, their families, and their country. Symbols of normalcy and respectability—a stable family life, home ownership, a rising standard of living, a good education for one’s children, position in the community—were strongly reinforced.75

Although this "common view" may not have been accessible to the whole of the nation due to limitations from race, creed, or class, it does present a specified value set for those within the white middle-class whose privileged decisions became marked as the will of the nation.

Developers such as Bill Levitt catered to this "average" group to create the suburbanite.76 Through the building of Levittown, Pennsylvania and the creation of the suburban space as a distinct location that was neither urban nor rural, and was entirely disconnected from industry, suburbia suggested a unified, ideal, family oriented community. As the first pre-planned housing and community development Levittown represents the prototype suburb, isolating work in the city from personal life in the suburb. Additionally, it created neighborhoods noted for their sameness and uniformity. This ability to separate work from home life encouraged the performance of a unified family:

This vision regards the family not only as a domestic alliance that creates a household to take care of its members' basic needs for food and shelter, but also as a group of people who enjoy one another's company and share leisure pursuits. This is a vision of family

76 Halberstam examines the construction of Levittown, the first planned community or created suburb, through a biographical study of Bill Levitt and a social study of the GI. He notes that non-white—or any group deemed undesirable by the dominant group—families were explicitly excluded from purchasing this new idealization of domestic life. David Halberstam, The Fifties, 131-143.
togetherness, meaning that husband, wife, and children choose to spend the time not claimed by wage labor or school with one another, preferring each other's company to the competing attractions of the outside world. The social structure of the middle class suggested an idyllic 1950s America by creating an emphasis on the suburban model and their activities, particularly in their mutual activities which preferences family over society as a source of pleasure. Walt reflects this orientation toward his own nuclear family within the home by his own public persona in popular media. Through a series of articles by members of his family, Walt presented himself as a part of family oriented suburbia. Published in *McCalls*, a traditional woman’s magazine, Mrs. Lillian Disney’s "I Live With a Genius" presented Walt as husband and father within the domestic sphere. The seminal piece, written by his perpetually media-shy wife suggests Walt as a dutiful member of the family while creating a separation between his work responsibilities and his caring home life. Three years later, one of his daughters provided the medium through which to present Walt, praising her father as devoted and family oriented. Reiterating the values propagated through the construction of suburban space, Walt created a link between his own identity and that of the suburbanites. This tie established the trusted Walt as a relatable "everyman" and prepared the stage for him to serve the community by constructing a space to celebrate family togetherness in Disneyland.

**Suburbia in Disney**

Walt’s construction of self as a patriotic, family oriented American works to align the company with the rapidly rising suburbanite population, and also presenting Disney as a means of reading the suburban self through their films. Critics such as Leonard Martin praise Walt’s ability to accurately read national tastes and reflect them through his films. Disney’s

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77 Laura J. Miller, "Family Togetherness and the Suburban Idea," *Sociological Forum* 10: 3 (Sep., 1995), 394, JSTOR.
80 Maltin very frequently introduces or comments in books and films about Walt Disney by making this claim. *Disneyland,USA,* (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Inc., 2001), DVD.
interpretation of America’s consciousness enters beyond the cinematic discipline and his construction enters into a reading of cultural history:

Walt Disney, one of the true geniuses of the age who often created its most important symbols (and used the science and technology of the machine age to do it), seemed to know precisely how to take American fear and humiliations and transform them in acceptable ways so Americans could live with them. From The Three Little Pigs in 1933 to "Night on Bald Mountain" (the terrors of the natural order) and "The Sorcerer’s Apprentice" (the terrors of the technological order), and both in episodes of Fantasia (1940), Disney provided a way to transform our most grotesque nightmares into fairy tales and pleasant dreams.

Just as Walt tapped into the consciousness of America in the 1930s through the emotional themes of his films, he shaped postwar America by providing interpretations of peaceful suburbia. His emphasis on family and loyalty through the subjects of projects continues to place the company within the suburban lifestyle. Following the themes of Walt’s political beliefs and the characterizations by his family, the Disney films of the 1950s demarcate themselves by emphasizing the preservation and respect of the family unit and of America’s heritage.

Disney identified its classic animated characters with suburbites through both the short and full-length film formats. In the Donald Duck cartoon "Out of Scale," featuring Donald’s chipmunk nemeses Chip and Dale, the characters take part in Walt’s hobby of model trains. Located in Donald’s spacious backyard, not only does the film take place within a suburban community, but Donald recreates a scale version of domestic suburban life for Chip and Dale in their two story home. The chipmunks go through the routine of home life, even fighting over that will have the privilege of latching the white picket fence. Another cast classic character, Goofy, demonstrates the perils of navigating life as a suburbanite in "Motor Mania." Again focusing on a home in suburbia, the narration describes the main character, Goofy, as "the typical, average man." Both animated short films remain within the scope of the home or the commuter traveling between the city and suburbia. This positions the iconic characters in the middle-class suburban sphere, and concurrently shifts Disney into this realm.

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81 Warren Susman, Culture As History, 196.
84 "Motor Mania," directed by Jack Kinny 00:01:16.
Even in the feature length films of the 1950s, Disney emphasizes qualities seen in Walt’s persona. In 1950, *Cinderella*, the title character’s transformation from poor worker to financial and domestic security reflects Walt’s political emphasis on capitalist triumph as well as the achievement of the American Dream through her aspirational marriage.\(^{85}\) Elsewhere, Disney again uses title characters to emphasize the importance of protecting family life and the home front, this time through their live action feature films. Other feature films highlight values that Walt has identified as ideally American as he reinscribes the past with a display a nostalgic Americana. *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier* (1955) and *Johnny Tremain* (1957) portray the formation of America by active patriots working for the good of the country out of their civic duty, in the settling of the nineteenth century American frontier and during the American Revolution respectively.\(^{86}\) By creating films in line with Walt’s ideals, Disney shapes the emotional connection of the public to also identify with those values by looking to Walt as a leader and emulating him. Due to the company’s positioning to reflect the experiences of the suburban American in the short film format, they created a market receptive to this shaping.

In addition to Disney’s traditional medium of film, the 1950s marks the company’s entry into the then-new medium of television. Through television, Disney’s message reached not only the public space of the movie theatre, but also the private domain of the home. The significance of this method of communication cannot be overstated; "American industry introduced three major new appliances in the late forties and set them in American Living rooms by the mid-fifties: tape recorders, hi-fidelity systems based on the long-playing record, and television."\(^{87}\) Beyond Walt’s decision to enter the unproven market of television, his choice to personally host the *Disneyland* program provided an important step in broadcasting his public persona.\(^{88}\) His character built upon his previous identity as trustworthy and loyal from his political work and expanded his paternal and avuncular image from the publicity written by his own family. Often characterized as Uncle Walt, "his avuncular on-screen personality had endeared him to viewers

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\(^{85}\) *Cinderella*, produced by Walt Disney (1950; Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Inc., 1995), VHS.

\(^{86}\) *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier*, directed by Norman Foster (1955; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Video, 1997), VHS; *Johnny Tremain*, directed by Robert Stevenson (1957; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Video, 2003), VHS.

\(^{87}\) W. T. Lhamon, *Deliberate Speed*, 12.

of all ages. And his re-creation of American recreation through the dual marketing of the two
Disneylands had forged new patterns in American cultural history, inextricably linking television
to the film and amusement industries.”

Walt joined his televised persona and the brand of Disney into the location of the
Disneyland theme park during the park’s opening ceremony in 1955. The special program,
"Dateline Disneyland," presents the park as an extraordinary place exhibiting qualities
particularly for the patriotic, middle class, nuclear, suburban American family. Much like Walt
and other Hollywood citizens’ involvement with the Motion Picture Alliance, the use of high
profile celebrities suggested an identification of the public with individual star and their
positions. The carefully selected celebrity families—including the smiling, well-dressed families
of Art Linkletter and Danny Thomas—model the happy domestic life associated with suburbia.
The program even utilized one of the Walt’s fellow "friendly" witnesses from the HUAC
testimonies, actor and future-president Ronald Reagan. In displaying these individuals as the
representational guests, Disney suggested that Disneyland was a destination catering to the
preferences of like patriotic suburban families.

Even in the design of the park, Disney speaks directly to suburbanites by emphasizing the
use of the automobile. This same tool that allowed the commuter to distance themselves from the
city also acts as the means for the family to escape the sprawl of the suburb, and to draw the
family closer together in vacationing. During the opening broadcast, Linkletter boasts of the
scale and capacity of the parking lot as the camera pans back and forth over the blacktop. The
necessity in creating a place for cars links to their growing importance in the 1950s; "Without the
family car most vacations would be quite impractical. But somehow all the confusion of a week-
end excursion can be loaded into an automobile and secured by locking the door. That is one
reason seventy million people head for vacation by car." This provision for the automobile
places the vacation to Disneyland within the economic means of middle- and upper-class

89 Tinky "Dakota" Weisblat, "Disney, Walt" The Museum of Broadcast Communications, . accessed December 12,
DVD.
91 Ibid., 00:07:17.
92 Wilfred Owen, "Automotive Transport in the United States," Annals of the American Academy of Political and
America. Again returning to Walt’s political ethics, the possession of this symbolic means of transportation effectively positions the visitor as one who has succeeded within the capitalist system.

The shaping of the public’s reading of Walt illuminates the construction of the associated character of Disneyland. Walt’s identity ties into the performance of the new suburbanite as he increasingly identified himself in this position. This development particularly emphasized his role as a family man and civic leader. Through his political activities and support of the anti-Communist movement in Hollywood, Walt built a persona in alliance with the government. By presenting a domestic persona in the national sphere through television and film, Walt assisted in creating and propagating a specific identity of the American suburbanite. Walt Disney’s model of behavior as wholesome, patriotic, and American shaped the suburban identity in the 1950s. He then leveraged these public and private personas to transfer these qualities into Disneyland through representations in the media. With these values the visitor could then identify with the park and those values where they could then enact and exhibit Walt’s model through the act of visiting the park. These performances can be witnessed through the documented visits of vacationers, such as the Barstow family of Wethersfield, Connecticut in their archived home movie *Disneyland Dream.*

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CHAPTER THREE
CALIFORNIA DREAMING: THE REPRESENTATION OF FAMILY AND VACATION IN DISNEYLAND DREAM

"Follow our dreams to Disneyland."

-- Robbins Barstow

Smiling faces of children dressed in homemade Mickey Mouse ears and Mouseketeer shirts flicker in the warm tones of 1950s film stock (Fig. 3.1). Lined up in front of their white suburban home in Wethersfield, Connecticut, the children proudly display their preparedness for their upcoming trip to Disneyland, with Trans World Airlines travel bags slung over their shoulders. A recent addition to the Library of Congress’s National Film Registry, the film depicts the family—parents Robbins and Meg, and children Mary, David, and Danny—preparing for and traveling on a prize trip in July 1956.


Figure 3.1. Mary, David, and Danny Barstow in preparation for their trip. Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, July 1956. Film.

Although there is limited information regarding the family's private life outside the parameters of the many home movies that Robbins created, I argue that they epitomized the normative construction of the suburban family of the 1950s, living in a close-knit neighborhood featuring a car in every garage in the bedroom community outside of Hartford (Fig. 3.2). Similarly, the film portrays the suburban mother, Meg Barstow, as located within a domestic realm exclusively depicting her either at home or in relation to her children while on vacation. Narrated by Robbins Barstow, family patriarch and avid filmmaker of home movies, the amateur film follows the Barstow family's journey toward living out their collective American Dream. This film follows in a line of Barstow's other archived home movies by demonstrating crafted cinematography, directing, and editing in the process of creating a clearly constructed narrative.
Figure 3.2. The Barstow's neighbors waving the family goodbye. Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, July 1956. Film.

In 1956, the Barstows entered the Scotch Brand Cellophane Tape contest and won a trip to Disneyland. Robbins Barstow's home video of this family trip provides a unique, user-based glimpse—from the suburban family's perspective—into the rarely documented first year of the park. This video, documenting the Barstow family's trip to Disneyland, offers a case study of the white, middle class, American family experience within Disneyland in the mid-1950s, and exemplifies the suburban family targeted and reflected by Disney as discussed in the previous chapter. Much like Disney Parks’ current marketing efforts to highlight the anticipation and pleasure of family vacations as enshrined in its theme parks, the Barstow film continues the

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96 The digitized version of the film utilizes the narration Robbins recorded in 1995. In doing so, he followed the script originally written by him in 1956 which he continued to utilize during the film’s annual neighborhood presentation. Rich, "Who Killed the Disneyland Dream."
narrative established at the park’s opening in 1955; like Disney Park’s marketing campaign, the Barstow film captures only the joyous moments of travel; in it, Robbins Barstow consciously constructs a narrative that supports the magical myth of Disney.\footnote{Disney Parks is the current organizational structure of the Disney Corporation under which the theme parks are managed and marketed. Thomas Smith, \textit{Disney Guests Become Stars of TV Ads, Castle Show as Walt Disney World and Disneyland Let the Memories Begin} \textit{Disney Parks Blog}, September 23, 2010, accessed October 4, 2011, \url{http://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2010/09/disney-guests-become-stars-of-tv-ads-castle-show-as-walt-disney-world-and-disneyland-let-the-memories-begin/}.} In this chapter I argue that \textit{Disneyland Dream} demonstrates the construction of a 1950s suburban family unit, the act of vacationing in Southern California, and the excising of displeasure; the Barstow film becomes a reflection of the Disney Studio’s illusion of magic as it depicts an idealized family vacation. In so doing, the film exhibits the vacation destination that Disneyland became for one archetypal American family and allows a point of comparison between the visitors’ lived experience and the televised portrayal of the park in the popular "Disneyland" show hosted by Walt Disney.

The Barstow film has yet to be introduced to scholarship on the early years of Disneyland. Upon the amateur film’s induction into the Library of Congress National Film Registry in 2008—along with Hollywood’s \textit{The Invisible Man} and \textit{The Asphalt Jungle}—the press release notes the necessity in preserving home films: "These films are not selected as the ‘best’ American films of all time, but rather as works of enduring significance to American culture […] Home movies have assumed a rapidly increasing importance in American cultural studies as they provide a priceless and authentic record of time and place."\footnote{Library of Congress, "Cinematic Classics, Legendary Stars, Comedic Legends and Novice Filmmakers Showcase the 2008 Film Registry 2008," \textit{The Library Today}, 30 December 2008, accessed October 4, 2011, \url{http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2008/08-237.html}.} While the dearth in scholarship about home films reflects the cultural bias toward the medium, it is important to note that the "authenticity" of any home movie must be treated with skepticism. Just as the writers and directors of commercial films choose those elements that will be included or excluded, so too does the home movie maker consciously craft the preservation of any moment. And so, though this genre of film does present an additional process by which to capture people and places in a historical moment without the overt theatrical production of the cinema, it still involves the process of direction, cinematography, editing, and performance. Simply because these processes are performed in a non-professional capacity, the viewer should not discount this crafting and thus, must be wary of the authenticity preserved. In fact, home films can quickly
seduce the viewer into trusting their constructed version of history without question. As Frank Rich of the New York Times commented after the death of Barstow, "to watch ‘Disneyland Dream’ now as a boomer inevitably sets off pangs of longing for a vanished childhood fantasyland: not just Walt Disney’s then-novel theme park but all the sunny idylls of 1950s pop culture." For both baby boomers and non-boomers alike the film presents a perfection of family and the American way of life through the warm emphasis on leisure and kin; for Rich, this presentation evoked a tempting desire for nostalgia. This glossed over version of memory distorts the preservation of history by projecting a disconnection between the world of now and the world of then as lacking negative or disjunctive elements.

Disney's television series offers an opposing view that both complements and complicates the Barstow's home film. Art historian Karal Ann Marling examines the construction and reception of the program along with the park, but confines her focus to the park itself rather than the individuals attending. She looks at the contemporary popular culture reactions as a means of descriptively surveying the televised program’s positive portrayal of Disneyland and restating Walt’s mythical creation and development of the park. In my work, I will extend Marling’s work by exploring that facet of Disneyland that remained outside of her scope—those visitors who attended the park and responded to Disney's established, televised narrative. This program cultivated a national audience by capitalizing on Walt’s persona to introduce and familiarize the country with the park in the year preceding and continuing after the opening of the park. The tactical use of the television show by Disney provides a tool for reading the disseminated message available to the audience in the 1950s.

When considered together, the Barstow family film and the Disney television series provide one way to begin assessing and isolating the actual impact of Disney on the American nuclear family. As a historic document, the film allows the modern viewer to glimpse the position that Disneyland held within family psyche, its placement among other attractions in the California area, and, most of all, the function Disneyland served for families as a means of

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99 Robbins Barstow passed away in 2010 at the age of 91. Rich, "Who Killed the Disneyland Dream."
100 The regular "Disneyland" program began two years previously, in October 1954. It also included the Davy Crockett series of 1954-55. Much more information about both of these two programs and their national impact may be found in either of Marling’s works: Karal Ann Marling, *As seen on TV : The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994); "Disneyland, 1955: Just Take the Santa Ana Freeway to the American Dream," *American Art* 5:1/2 (Winter - Spring, 1991):168-207.
unification and performance of a very specific, constructed, American identity in the year after it opened. This film provides a useful dialogue with official television program as it responds to the broadcasted images.

In order to examine Disneyland's impact on the American family, I first establish the Barstows as viable representatives of the white, middle-class, suburban American family that was idealized in the 1950s. I then discuss the practice of family vacationing in California. How does the trip become a part of a larger mythology connected to traveling West—particularly to California? In examining the Barstow’s travel accommodations and leisure activities, their construction of a family vacation (paid for by Scotch Brand Cellophane Tape Company) places Disneyland as a centralized embodiment of an idealized perception of Southern California. Third, I utilize a critique of Robbins Barstow’s editing of the Disneyland Dream film narrative to analyze the presentation of a family vacation as idyllic and carefree. What identity is propagated for the family by recording their vacation? Finally, I place the amateur depiction of Disneyland in conversation with the representation Disney Company chose to forward in the "Disneyland" television show. I will argue that the Barstow’s construction of fantasy displays an understanding and conscious maintaining of the illusion of reality associated with Disneyland, thereby reinscribing Disneyland's public identity.

**Suburbia in the 1950s**

One of the defining characteristics of the Barstow’s vacation lies in their construction as representatives of a 1950s normative suburban family—an identity that was synonymous with the way Disney publicly constructed the American family. Explored by David Halberstam in his book *The Fifties*, this pivotal decade presents the shift to a suburban construction of identity and family. As many scholars have argued, the idealized family of the postwar era consisted of white, middle-class, Christians, and specifically excluded those groups that were outside of this

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101 Halberstam examines the construction of Levittown, the first planned community or created suburb, through a biographical study of Bill Levitt and a social study of the GI. He notes that non-White—or any group deemed "undesirable"—families were explicitly excluded from purchasing into this new idealization of domestic life. "By 1955 Levitt-type subdivisions represented 75 percent of the new housing starts." David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Villard Books, 1993), 131-143.
norm. One important component marking suburbia was the familial structure of two heterosexual, married, fertile adults to head the family unit. As Anna Creadick opines in her work on mid-century normality, "what could be more normal than a car, 2.5 kids, and a house in the suburbs?"

The Barstows—a white, middle-class, suburban family consisting of two married, heterosexual parents and their children—demonstrate "normalcy." Creadick points out that this cultural illusion is based upon an assumption of the presence of a singular, normal identity to be achieved. As a marker within this domestic ideal, suburbanites, such as the Barstows, indicate middle class economic foundations of meeting financial needs without exceeding wealth. The rising median family income far outpaced living costs during the 1950s, leading to an excess of disposable income for the Middle Class. As seen in the father’s film hobby and the television set in the living room, to the ability to purchase numerous packages of Scotch Tape for the contest, the Barstow’s displays this tempered financial comfort. Even the children reflect this suburban identity all the way down to 0.5 child, four-year-old Danny. In addition to the familial demographics, Robbins enacts the idealized domesticity of suburban life through the family interactions that he chooses to include. He turns his camera onto his own wife and children to feature in his hobby of filmmaking rather than using co-workers or friends. Indeed, the family members’ activities demonstrate attention to and pride in their communal bonds; they share in the submission process for the contest (Fig. 3.3), playing in the yard, and watching television together. These activities, carefully documented in the family film, reveal the important role of

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102 A number of historians and cultural scholars have identified this focused demographic through depictions in the media as well as representations in politics and economics. David Halberstam, The Fifties (New York: Villard Books, 1993); Anna G. Creadick, Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010); Laura J. Miller, "Family Togetherness and the Suburban Idea," Sociological Forum 10:3 (Sep., 1995), 393, JSTOR.

103 Anna G. Creadick, Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 120.

104 "For example, census figures show that between 1947 and 1959 median family incomes rose more than twice as fast as living costs—from $4,000 to $5,400, after taking inflation into account—and that by 1959 roughly 40 percent of the nation’s families were in the $5,000 to $10,000 bracket." Anna G Creadick, Perfectly Average: The Pursuit of Normality in Postwar America, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 67.

105 It was little Danny’s submission of a poster simply explaining that the tape lets him fix things that ultimately was chosen as a winning entry. Robbins Barstow, Disneyland Dream, 00:05:32.
"family togetherness" in postwar America. Laura J. Millar writes about this idea as characteristic of the suburbanite family, as it creates an "emphasis on home maintenance and home-centered entertainments." Robbins Barstow’s home and family reflect the suburban life, not only in their external surroundings but also in their internal dynamics, making their family film an ideal case study for my analysis. As explored in my previous chapter, Walt targeted the "ideal," middle-class American family—like the Barstows—when marketing his products, and particularly Disneyland.

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106 Laura J. Miller, "Family Togetherness and the Suburban Idea," *Sociological Forum* 10: 3 (Sep., 1995), 393, *JSTOR.*
Just as Walt created a crafted persona for himself to place his identity in the domestic suburban household, Barstow generated an image of the family through media. In Robbins Barstow’s hobby of home filmmaking, he created a piece that captured the family’s trip to Disneyland, and he then showed this film to neighbors, friends, and family. By creating an evening out of these annual summer screenings—complete with live narration—Barstow showcased the family’s good fortune and reaffirmed the identity he captured in the film. The corresponding script, recorded by Barstow in 1995 for the now digitized film archived in the Library of Congress collection, creates an eternal inscribing of their identity as aligning with the Disney suburbanite. The recording of the original 1956 script by Barstow preceding his passing established an illusion of permanency of the narrative as the viewer is invited to fulfill the role of the 1950s neighborhood even after Barstow is no longer able to replicate his original screenings. Preserving this film by transferring it from film stock to a digital medium, and then to upload it to the Internet aids in creating a mythical impression of the American family visit to Disneyland as a place where there exists an eternal youth for children and an enduring family unit.

California Bound

The Barstows represented a specific population of Americans in the 1950s, which makes their chronicle of their visit to Disneyland ideally suited to my study. However, their Scotch Brand awarded trip also allowed them to participate in the larger mythology of voyaging to California. The idolization of the Great American West and westward migrations has manifested in the expansion of the country for over two hundred years, and the state of California held a particular and singular place in the national consciousness. Extending beyond the Old West and the gold rush era, the idea of California continues to exude a sense of hopefulness and prosperity in the national imagination. Highlighting America’s attitude toward Southern California and the suburbia of the West as prosperous, attractive, and a place of perfection, Elizabeth Carney writes,

"By the 1950s, western suburbia epitomized the middle-upper-class good life." This identification contributed to—and may have been solidified by—the public performance of Walt Disney and the middle-class suburban leisure depicted by his company in the 1950s.

In many ways, the Barstow family’s trip to the west coast is the epitome of this desire to experience the "good life." Both their eagerness to visit Disneyland and their concerted effort to win the contest gesture towards the family's conscious or unconscious subscription to this Arcadian ideal. Yet the mythology was more than simply the destination; the process of journeying from the comforts of the East added to this pioneer narrative of the middle-class American family in pursuit of the "good life." The Barstows began their trip with the decidedly twentieth-century method of travel—flight. Decked out in full travel regalia complete with Mickey Mouse Club ear hats, the children in apparent anticipation rehearse a Disneylanding traveler as an act which begins at home before even receiving the tickets (Fig. 3.1). In his narration, Robbins Barstow noted this as the first flight for the kids, "But just being in an airplane like this was a tremendous experience for all of us." His glee in describing flying over their town and in switching planes in New York speaks to the postwar novelty and glamour associated with air travel. Barstow’s wonder follows their joining the national trend for the Middle Class of increased flying to exotic locations for leisure as air travel became more financially accessible. Scotch Tape clearly capitalized on this contemporaneous yen for travel as part of the increasingly "good life" of the American middle class in the era of postwar prosperity—particularly via lengthy plane trips. It is interesting to note that Disney also observed the allure of technology and travel when constructing the park; major themes captured in Tomorrowland include technological advancements, travel, and family togetherness. One attraction—the TWA-sponsored Moonliner rocketship—even suggested the future of family travel. The Barstow’s journey through the mythology of the US began with their flight. Following the path pioneered by explorers, homesteaders, and Gold Rush miners, the family

110 Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, 00:05:14.
111 Ibid., 00:07:34.
113 The same airline the Barstow children took their first flight on proposes through the attraction to one day take the family on their first space flight, perhaps as a new rite of passage for the family of tomorrow. "Dateline Disneyland," *Disneyland, USA*. 00:54:28.
remarks at passing such icons of America as the Empire State Building, the Mississippi River, the Gateway City of St. Louis, Missouri, and the Sierra Mountains from the plane before finally arriving at their destination—the great state of California, by this time even more appealing due to Disneyland.

The Barstow’s dream vacation was both prescribed by the terms of the Scotch Tape contest (flight, hotel choice, tickets to Disneyland, etc.) and chosen by the family (specific activities to fill most days); these choices highlighted the mythological glamour of the West, and of California specifically. Picked up at the airport in a limousine, the family soon settled into their accommodations at the Huntington Sheraton. This grand hotel differed wildly from the typical budget motel model of many middle-class vacationers in the 1950s. Instead of predictable and modestly priced rooms, like those of the then-new Holiday Inn hotel chain, the opulent and historic Huntington Sheraton, located in Pasadena, traced its lineage back to 1907. Barstow remarked that they "had never stayed in a luxury resort like this before." He marveled over the property and its connotations of extravagance and wealth, particularly after receiving an exotic gift of fresh California fruit (Fig. 3.4). When the family partakes in swimming in the huge hotel pool, they happily show off to the camera: "You know everything about this trip was magic. All we had to do was think about leaving the pool and we’d rise, right up, out of the water, and back onto the diving board." The emphasis on the ease of life out West and the extraordinary quality of their vacation plays into the suburban performance of perfection and social climbing; the Barstow family would continue to perform perfection in the film, almost seeming show off their experience for the neighbors to whom they would annually screen their film once they returned home.

115 Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, 00:07:51.
116 Ibid., 00:12:28.
In addition to performing the leisure of traveling West, the Barstows took the opportunity to visit Southern California landmarks. In selecting the locations to visit in the Southern California area, the Barstows participated in and highlighted three distinct regional identities and placed Disneyland within a dialogue that incorporated the area and an idealized American identity: Knott’s Berry Farm, a ghost town/theme park memorializing the expansion era; a Grey Line Bus tour of Hollywood; and a trip to the Pacific coastline. Each of these locations serves as destinations that offer unique insight into the Barstow’s experience and performance of American identity.

First, their choice of going to Knott’s Berry Farm speaks to California’s association with the Old West and the dual appeals of exploration and wealth within the mythologized American
Dream. Focusing on the cowboy Ghost Town, the family panned for gold nuggets, which they brought home as souvenirs (Fig. 3.5). The family toured the town, observing historic artifacts from the old West, including deserted buildings salvaged from the gold rush era, letting the Barstows reenact the historic identity of the settling of America. Of note is the fact that the Barstows follow another iteration of this reconstructed storyline as part of their Disney adventure; Disneyland’s Frontierland incorporates the craze over Davy Crockett and rugged historic figures. In both instances the family watches the supposed daily life of the West, however where in Knott’s they see trained animals representing the townspeople Disney creates a less conspicuous, yet still constructed, illusion of the Frontier where the visitor can partake in the act by performing such activities as riding in a stagecoach or trading at a post.

118 Robbins Barstow, Disneyland Dream, 00:27:42.
119 Ibid., 00:28:13.
The family continued their iconic journey around Southern California with a Grey Line tour of Hollywood. While sightseeing, they traveled on the freeway, passed Hollywood and Vine, the Disney Studio, and numerous Beverly Hills homes to movie stars, and finally stopped at Grauman’s Chinese Theatre (Fig. 3.6). The Barstows then went to Universal Pictures Studio where they "were all greatly impressed with this behind-the-scenes look at the world of moviemaking." This portion of their trip both reinscribed and illuminated the modern myth of Hollywood glamour, celebrity, and filmmaking. It achieves this by displaying the Barstow’s wonder and interest in all things, both glamorous and not, associated with Hollywood, including watching a commercial being shot and the former home of Will Rodgers. Again, this encounter

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120 Robbins Barstow, Disneyland Dream, 00:17:39.
reverberates through their Disneyland experience. Disney captures this spirit of the film industry by producing sites of interaction with live, physical representations of their cartoon work in the attractions, the structures, and characters. A notable example of this comes in the form of one of the most recognized symbols of the park, Sleeping Beauty’s castle.¹²¹

Figure 3.5. The sidewalk prints of Marilyn Monroe outside Grauman’s Chinese Theatre. Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, July 1956. Film.

Finally, tapping into the timeless draw of water for humans, the Barstow family visited the Pacific Ocean coastline and the exotic Catalina Island (Fig. 3.7).¹²² Their final excursion took


them to the luxury tourist island where the family’s focus remained on the water. The family rode a glass-bottom boat through the crystal waters of the Pacific, observing fish and other ocean life around the island, and then went for a swim on the beach. Robbins Barstow emphasized the importance of this encounter as located in the Pacific, saying they had reached "the fabled Pacific Ocean beach of Santa Monica" as the camera sweeps across a view of expansive surf.

Figure 3.7. The Pacific Ocean as seen from Santa Monica. Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, July 1956. Film.

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123 The island was a regular destination for some of the country’s most prominent families, including the Wrigleys as well as a popular filming location for tropical movies. "Catalina Island: Frequently Asked Questions," County of Los Angeles Public Library, accessed April 10, 2012, http://www.colapublib.org/history/catalina/faq.html#t6.

124 Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, 00:18:16.
Thus, the Barstow’s journey west became much more than a simple family trip to Disneyland. By engaging with Knott’s Berry Farm, the Grey Line tour of Hollywood, and Catalina Island, the Barstows enacted a national mythology in which America’s past united with its present and the potential in its future. Southern California became a physical manifestation of paradise. In writing about suburbanites, Carney notes, "[the] West’s aura [was] as a place of new possibilities, a place where people felt free to create their own version of the good life." By visiting these three myth-evoking locations, the Old West, Hollywood, and the West Coast, the Barstow’s interacted with pleasant, aspirational aspects of California. This then opened a place for Disneyland within this Southern California dialogue as an element of the "good life." Moreover, as I have noted above, Disney has made a concerted effort to replicate and synthesize these experiences—contextualized as fantasy-in-reality—within Disneyland.

In 1965, Southern California historian Doyce B. Nunis identified four attractive qualities of mythic California, "economic opportunity, climate, health, and romantic myth." By visiting each of the above attractions, the Barstows interacted with several of these qualities throughout their journey west. They create economic opportunities by panning for gold, symbolically gaining wealth from gold nuggets in the Old West. Their outdoor activities—swimming, boating, and visiting theme parks—mark a clear enjoyment of the summertime climate that characterizes Southern California; in fact, Robbins noted the momentous occasion that the family reached the Pacific Ocean, particularly while visiting a resort island. Finally, the Barstows witnessed American royalty—a romantic myth—in the form of Hollywood glamour witnessed from the windows of the Grey Line tour vehicle. The ways in which the family interacted with the particular myths of California, as well as the luxury of their accommodations and transportation, suggest that this vacation to Disneyland represents an aspirational existence for the Barstows. In this way, Disneyland joins other western locations as a place to not only interact with, but also to live out a part of a national mythology that would otherwise be all but unattainable from their Wethersfield, Connecticut, suburbanite lives.

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126 Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., "California, Why We Come; Myth Or Reality," California Historical Society Quarterly 44:2 (Jun., 1965): 126, JSTOR.
127 Robbins Barstow, Disneyland Dream.
Idyllic Shaping

As previously noted, Robbins Barstow’s artistic direction shapes Disneyland Dream’s narrative to privilege a certain idyllic and carefree characterization of the family and the vacation. While the Library of Congress praises this film for its use of selective construction—the press release describes it as "a fantastic historical snapshot"—that same selectivity creates an altered historical record.\footnote{Library of Congress, "Cinematic Classics, Legendary Stars, Comedic Legends and Novice Filmmakers Showcase the 2008 Film Registry 2008," The Library Today.} The film cannot act as a strictly historic documentary as it does not record all aspects of the Barstow visit to Disneyland; indeed, the Barstow family’s vacation was a week long while the film is a mere 30 minutes. Moreover, Robbins Barstow recorded the narration for the film from a script he claims to have used each summer during the annual screenings for his neighborhood. That said, the film certainly does have immense historical value, and as I have shown above, it contains intriguing possibilities as one tool through which to examine the construction of American identity in this historical moment. In studying the privileges and omissions of the film during the Barstow’s time in the Disneyland theme park there arises a motif of "easy living" and quick satisfaction. An examination of the editing reveals Barstow’s predisposition toward viewing Disneyland as an encapsulation of the themes of 1950s middle-class family togetherness and California ease.

Revisiting the unified collaboration demonstrated in the Scotch Tape contest submission process, the family remains physically together in Disneyland just as throughout the film. This unified family, documented and preserved on the screen, suggests a world in which each member of the family unit equally or willingly agrees on activities. This focus on family cohesion pervades the piece, as seen in their entrance to the park. Barstow narrates: "The first thing we decided to do was to ride the Skyway."\footnote{Robbins Barstow, Disneyland Dream, 00:19:26.} He speaks of the family as a singular entity, collectively participating in the decision-making process. In fact, Barstow continually uses "we" to describe the family’s activities, returning to ideas explored by suburban scholar, Laura Miller, of the isolating and internalized familial structure.\footnote{Laura J. Miller, "Family Togetherness and the Suburban Idea."} Barstow displays a slippage of their suburban identity the recording of the riding of the Skyway attraction, where the camera briefly captures at least two of the children, identifiable by their matching homemade jackets, sitting in a
separate car. This interesting fissure in the previously particular presentation of the family shows, for but a brief moment, the fashioning of the family through their film selves, and serves as a reminder of the lens of the home movies as still a constructed image. Disneyland capitalized on the 1950s predisposition to American family values by celebrating the idea of family togetherness and family fun. Disneyland rides often challenged guests to find community within their family while on an attraction; most were created for the use of all age groups and laid out in such a way as to encourage families to experience the thrill of the ride together. With the Jungle Cruise, for example, the boats for each exertion holds entire families who sit very close together as the narrative story takes them through a simulated adventuresome journey encountering tempered wildlife. As demonstrated in the film, the family is able to experience the attraction physically together rather than separated by interest or age. In this way, the Barstow family film and Disneyland were united in their reification of the specific, 1950s family values.

Through cinematic shaping, Barstow also removes the mediation between rides by eliminating queues, thus enhancing the "magic" and fun of Disneyland. This editing from one attraction to the next eliminates any unpleasant experiences from the park visit and creates a construction of Disneyland as the place for the perfect family vacation, though it is interesting to note that this narrative of pleasantness sometimes overshadows that of family togetherness. Throughout the film, the viewer, by way of the camera, instantly transitions into the ticketed event or attraction, never has to wait. For example, Barstow sets up a horse-drawn carriage ride using an establishing shot of the horse pulling the trolley down Main Street followed by a point of view as they, presumably together, ride into the park. By structuring the film this way the viewer may visualize the ride and better understand the experience, and this strategy also promotes a specific narrative (Fig. 3.8). Barstow shortens this form for the Dumbo the Flying Elephant attraction, and eliminates the introduction altogether for the Tea Cups to jump directly into the experience. Similarly, Barstow uses editing to his advantage to dramatize the entrance into the mouth of Monstro the Whale during the Storybook boat ride. Instead of the excitement in building anticipation or the unpleasantness of waiting for a turn, the film instantly gratifies and creates the park as a place of immediate pleasure. In these instances, Barstow’s focus remains primarily on the elements of the attraction rather than his family members, presenting the experience of the ride so the viewer may attend vicariously through the film. Just as on the Disney television show, this emphasis forwards the Disneyland’s attraction narratives as primary above direct familial
interactions. The viewer remains passive in the encountering the attraction, much as with Disney’s films. Although Barstow may have adopted this strategy overtly in anticipation of the summer screenings for his neighbors, it creates an interesting commentary on the centrality of Disney to the identification of the family vacation. In eliminating the queue portion, Barstow also removes the mediation of tickets, weather, or crowds, and with these elements, the coherent whole. The Disneyland of his film only exists as a string of pleasant memories.

Figure 3.7. A horse drawn carriage on Main Street, USA in Disneyland. Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, July 1956. Film.
The Disney in Disneyland

Finally, Barstow’s amateur depiction of Disneyland positions the family and the narrative structure of the film in support of the Disney Company’s televised marketing campaign and brand. As Karal Ann Marling suggests in her article on the early years of Disneyland:

And by rehearsing the proposed features of the park, the TV show eliminated all ground for apprehension; Disneyland—the theme park—was just as safe, wholesome, and predictable as the living room setting in which the family gathered to watch Walt talk all about it. Going to Disneyland was just like watching the other ‘Disneyland’ on TV.\textsuperscript{131}

Marling points to specific ways in which the constructed identity of Disneyland appealed to middle-class American families—where they perform "safe and wholesome" in their suburban homes, so too does the park reinforce that "safe" and "wholesome" opportunity for middle-class family togetherness. As I have already shown, Robbins Barstow’s suburban family and idealistic view both reflect and aspire to much of Marling’s characterization. Within the film, the Barstows enact this dual journey, first metaphorically, by consuming Disneyland through television, and second, by physically traveling from their living room to Disneyland. Robbins Barstow then emulates the concept of Disneyland forwarded by the television program by painting it as a magical realm in his own family film. Shortly after entering the park he narrates their excursion by inviting the viewer to "follow our dream through this Magic Kingdom,"\textsuperscript{132} mirroring Walt’s common pet name for the park. Disneyland becomes ethereal as a dream for the family, just as the television show arrived from the airwaves to bring the park into their home. However, these momentary memories transform from ethereal to eternal by being transcribed onto a film which can be watched and re-watched as a means of revisiting a temporal location.

Moreover, it is clear that the family planned to emulate the public face of Disneyland long before entering the park. The family actively designed costumes for various areas, demonstrating the degree to which they identified with the tropes of televised Disney. Robbins Barstow purchased space helmets for his sons in support of the imaginary adventures of Tomorrowland. More notably, the whole family donned homemade Davy Crockett jackets,

\textsuperscript{131} Karla Ann Marling, "Disneyland, 1955: Just Take the Santa Ana Freeway to the American Dream," \textit{American Art} 5:1/2 (Winter - Spring, 1991): 204. \textit{JSTOR}.
\textsuperscript{132} Robbins Barstow, \textit{Disneyland Dream}, 00:20:22.
which served as a constant reminder of the influence of the television program in linking their home life with the extraordinary trip. The male children further enacted a televised fantasy by changing out of their Mickey Mouse ear hats before entering Frontierland: "The boys naturally had to exchange their Disneyland hard hats for the Davy Crockett coonskin caps, which had been brought all the way from Connecticut just for this occasion" (Fig. 3.9). By constructing their clothing in this way, the family literally costumed its members so as to better play their roles in the park and live out a Disney-mediated American myth.

Figure 3.9. David (facing camera) and Danny (in red) Barstow put on their coon skin caps in front of the entrance to Frontierland. Robbins Barstow, Disneyland Dream, July 1956. Film.

133 During the park opening celebrations Davey Crockett featured heavily in the ceremonies, and was even featured to introduce Frontierland. Robbins Barstow, Disneyland Dream, 00:21:18; "Dateline Disneyland," Disneyland,USA, DVD (Burbank, CA: Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Inc., 2001), 00:28:32.
134 Robbins Barstow, Disneyland Dream, 00:27:42.
Continuing to play with themes of magical enchantment, Robbins Barstow used the narrative structure of the film to mirror the fantastical elements of the park. This element of magic is particularly clear in the featured moment when the family stopped for lunch one day. Mrs. Meg Barstow demonstrated a magic lunch by holding up an empty bag while her husband narrated, "Knowing that everything here is magic, Meg had brought all of our meals wrapped up in this little plastic case" (Fig. 3.10).\(^{135}\) Seemingly instantly, the children reach into a bag filled with hamburgers and milk that apparently materialized in Mrs. Barstow’s hand. In Disneyland, as in the image of a perfect suburban life, the essentials of life just appear—an afterthought rather than a struggle. This ease particularly emphasizes the era, as the nation transitioned from the struggles of World War II to a new age of postwar prosperity. Just as the television program proposes that magic truly occurs in Disneyland, the same fantastic qualities transfer to the visitor.\(^{136}\) The Barstows not only visit Disneyland, but they also become Disneyland through their mirroring of the televised elements. In this way, Disneyland effectively becomes suburbia by identifying with and as the family unit.

\(^{135}\) Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, 00:27:01.  
\(^{136}\) “Dateline Disneyland,” *Disneyland, USA*. 00:54:28.
A visit to Disneyland in 1956 did not exist in a vacuum, but instead was shaped by the people who attended the park. As evidenced by the Barstows, a middle-class American family from Connecticut, a family vacation represented much more than a simple trip. The suburban character created such families to be aspirational yet inwardly focused. A visit to Disneyland became an indispensable part of the total journey to California, as yet another component of the "must-do" mythos of prosperity. In constructing the record of the vacation, Robbins Barstow created an idyllic experience marked by unity, satisfaction, and the experience of the "good life." The identity recorded in the Barstow family film placed their experience in conversation with the official televised identity of Disney’s image. The projected suburban persona of the Barstows creates a window into the experience of Disneyland’s early visitors, and although the record was

Figure 3.10. Meg Barstow holds a plastic case purportedly holding their lunch as David and Danny look on. Robbins Barstow, Disneyland Dream, July 1956. Film.
shaped by the family, it nonetheless serves to position the trip for the typical vacationer. As Robbins Barstow remarked upon entering Disneyland, the marvel of such a place was astounding: "then the spell takes place. Children’s faces looking up, holding wonder like a cup."\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{137} Robbins Barstow, *Disneyland Dream*, 00:20:34.
CHAPTER FOUR

FANTASYLAND:

MEDIATING THE REALITY OF DISNEYLAND

For the visitor-performer, Main Street USA is an axis which allows him to tell his story.

-- Louis Marin, "Disneyland: a Degenerate Utopia"

What do visitors take away from Disneyland? What do they seek to gain through their participation in the park? How does this understanding of the park’s incentive contribute to the conversation about the state of White, middle-class, American families and the ways in which they constructed and performed a unique American identity in this historic moment? In this chapter, I will consider the ways in which the Barstow’s encounter with Disneyland records both their individual trip and the era’s White, middle-class suburbanite’s collective "trip." As explored in the previous chapters, the act of Disneylanding was a mass-produced effect disseminated to many homes across America through television and the avuncular Walt Disney. The constructed experience of Disneylanding—repeated in the Disney television show and in suburban neighborhoods across the country—produced the effect whereby the visitor emotionally connected with the reality of the contained fantasy. By not only attending the park, but also participating in it, the Barstow family as representative of the American family embodied the conservative suburban ideals of the 1950s as actualized within their own experience so as to assert the reality of their home life. The family prepared itself for this occurrence by first recognizing its desire to be a willing participant in the fantasy and developing a relationship with the park from a distance, then by rehearsing their performed roles by regularly viewing the "Disneyland" television program, and finally, by developing a nostalgic memory for their visit to create a hyperreal world as stabilized in their practice. For families like the Barstows, they reinforce the hyperreal characterization of Disneyland not only through their own visit to and participation in the park, but also through their creation of "memories" that reinscribe the park’s mythos for their own family, and also for their neighborhood via the annual screenings of their
constructed family film; like many suburban American families, the Barstows spread the hyperreal throughout their community in a way that forwarded the idealization of the "perfect" American family.

The difficulty in examining the responses and memories for visits from over fifty years ago lies in unpacking moments that these events recorded and persevered. The value of the memories increases by merely continuing to exist. This widespread decision to safeguard the experience speaks of the cultural value that such a trip could bestow on a family, both within their community and within the family’s memory. Although the archive of firsthand accounts of visiting Disneyland during the 1950s remains small, the Internet has spurred the process of opening the vaults of individual personal histories. That so many people documented their vacations to Disneyland, saved that documentation, and then chose to post elements of it on the Internet decades later, speaks to the recognized significance of this trip in the creation of their familial and communal lore. Parents gratified their children and promoted the idea of family togetherness by taking them to the park, then preserved the memories of that gratification and family togetherness in a form of pleasurable nostalgia that they in turn pushed out into their respective communities. As exhibited by Barstow, the recording of the family at Disneyland, whether in still or moving pictures, provides a means by which the singular moment may continue beyond its chronologic timestamp and into the ether of memory. This tradition continues today with the encouragement of Disney in their partnership with Kodak. As art historian David T. Doris suggests, the placement, taking, and keeping of the photographed memory furthers a moment into a continuous, and thus eternal, vacation. Indeed, this attention to the preservation of memories over more than six decades positions a family trip to Disneyland on par with other momentous occasions in domestic life, such as a birth or wedding.

Marin and the Visitor

One of the first theoreticians to utilize Disneyland as a laboratory, Louis Marin develops an understanding of the park’s relationship to its visitors by considering the ways in which those visitors actively respond to Disneyland. In viewpoint that contrasts that of Baudrillard, Marin proposes the Disneyland guest experiences not a distancing hyperreality, but instead a grounding reality through the recognition of the park’s fantasy. Marin supposes:

Image is duplicated by reality in two opposite senses: on the one hand, it becomes real, but on the other, reality is changed into image, is grasped by the ‘imaginary.’ Thus, the visitor who has left reality outside finds it again, but as a real ‘imaginatre’ [author’s emphasis]; a fixed, stereotyped, powerful fantasy.  

The singularity of the unreal circumstances (i.e. I am standing at the base of Princess Sleeping Beauty’s castle) in conjunction with the tangibility of the theme park (i.e. I am standing in front of a large, castle-shaped structure), harmonize the two tangential worldviews. The willing visitor does not have to divorce himself from the ability to read the park critically; instead, he thrives by participating in the illusion. The "fixing" of the fantasy allows to the participant to claim a reality in the image, and for the 1950s suburban family, this realizing became a way to stabilize the image of family togetherness. Marin further elaborates:

But Disneyland is more interesting from another point of view which is the second aim of our analysis; . . . how the utopian representation can be entirely caught in a dominant system of ideas and values and, thus, be changed into a myth or a collective fantasy.

Marin’s visitors sought the fantastic element of Disneyland to actualize and process their reality. Whereby "utopian" stands in for the idyllic suburban middle-class family—a notable choice on Marin’s part—the performance of self while in the park transforms into a personal and social "collective fantasy" of continuous gaiety throughout the communal life of the family.

140 Marin, "Disneyland: a Degenerate Utopia," 54.
Marin explores the method of processing the park by identifying himself with an individual actually going to Disneyland. He develops the mindset of the visitor by exploring the entrance point of Main Street, USA:

Main Street USA is a universal operator which articulates and builds up the text of Disneyland on all of its levels. We have discovered three functions of this operator, (1) phatic: it allows all the possible stories to be narrated; (2) referential: through it, reality becomes a fantasy and an image, a reality; (3) integrative: it [Main Street, USA] is the space which divides Disneyland into two parts, left and right, and which relates these two parts to each other. It is at the same time a condition by which the space takes on meaning for the viewer and a condition by which the space can be narrated by the visitor (the actor).¹⁴¹

First, I want to note Marin separates the type of guest by action. This study isolates the active visitor from the discrete viewer, and supposes that viewers transform into visitors through the act of attending the park. Second, the importance of the initial land a participant encounters cannot be overemphasized; Main Street USA features prominently in both the opening ceremony as well as the Barstow’s film. This space holds such stature due in part to the strategic location Disney gave it as the only entrance into the park and the physical connector between each of the other lands within the park. As a "land" that collectively replicates the most important elements of Main Streets from all over the country, Main Street, USA presents the least mediated theme, and thus serves as the most accessible starting point for the visitor. While still constructing a highly fictionalized realm, this land suggests an American community featuring strong personal connections, safety, and the "good life;" this quality of Americana appealed to many suburban communities. This idealized Americana, which may or may not actually exist anywhere in the "real," creates that sense of community to which many 1950s suburbanites aspired. By entering into the fantastic through the smaller step of Main Street USA, the visitor may better accept and relate, and thus act within, more elaborate lands such as Tomorrowland or Fantasyland. Both Marin’s first and second proposed functions use the access point to lower the participant’s threshold for mediation away from reality while the third provides a tool by which to cope with this lowered threshold and access the park. Marin grants the visitor agency to construct the narration of their time at Disney; however, he also assumes that the visitor needs a way to lower their threshold of mediation upon arrival in order to take advantage of Disneyland’s hyperreal.

¹⁴¹ Marin, "Disneyland: a Degenerate Utopia," 58.
While this transition is certainly helpful and necessary in most cases, I also argue that Disney radically increased his visitors’ need for transition by producing a population whose threshold had already been lowered by television.

Continuing the exploration into the act of Disneylanding, Marin’s emphasis turns to the reassurance provided by attending the park. He notes:

Disneyland is the representation realized in a geographical space of the imaginary relationship which the dominant groups of American society maintain with their real conditions of existences or, more precisely, with the real history of the United States and with the space outside its borders.142

More so than understanding and processing the external word, Marin proposes a method through which the visitor develops a relationship with the daily lives of Disney’s guests through his attendance and participation in Disneyland. In this way, a visiting family could not only see itself reflected in the attractions, such as the familial spirit of bedtime stories of Peter Pan’s Flight, Casey Junior, and the quintessential Storybook Canal, but also in the homogeneity of those visitors around them. As I previously established, Walt Disney catered to a particularly White, Middle-class, suburban population that was replicated in the attendance at Disneyland. Guests received from the park a reassurance of the reality of their domestic, suburban lives as normative, universal, and "American."

Though Marin entertains doubts about the potential for Disneyland’s visitors to engage in a "critical process" of realization—visitors are not spectators observing the show, after all; they are performers "without being aware of performing"—he omits the vital role of Disney’s television program in effectively creating the ideal park participant.143 Through this additional level of manipulation the families are groomed to identify with and replicate the performances witnessed on the "Disneyland" show. This sentiment continues as Marin examines the lack of distance between performer and the narrative of the park; "In ‘performing’ Disney’s utopia, the visitor realizes the models and the paradigms of his society in the mythical story by which he imagines the social community has been constructed."144 In their living rooms, families witness

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142 Marin, "Disneyland: a Degenerate Utopia," 54.
143 Ibid., 54.
144 Ibid., 54.
myths being projected on the television screen, and then in Disneyland they have the opportunity to continue those myths in performance while at a location designed to evoke fantasy created by an entertainment studio who originates those myths. In recognizing the art of persuasion and politics closely mirroring this swaying of the masses for alliances or gain this context of the medium, television, becomes the key. As I pieced out in chapter one, the Disney Company developed a particular strategic position in the realms of film, television, celebrity, and travel destination, which they utilized to shape the literal and emotional response of the viewer.  

Through his practical reading of Disneyland in use, Marin develops the possible character role the guest might have inhabited. Baudrillard and Marin attempt to discover the mindset of the Disneyland visitor, but it was Disney who directed the actors visiting the park through mediating the experience by way of the corresponding television program.

**Rehearsing the Part/**

A continuation of Walt’s conscious shaping of his public persona to reflect White, middle-class, suburban American values, his new television program’s portrayal of Disneyland created a prescription for the viewer to reflect and enact while at the park. "Disneyland" aired on Wednesday nights at 7:30, beginning in October 1954, and highlighted a storyline in conversation with one of the park’s lands. Within two months, the show ranked within the top ten programs in the nation. The television show worked in conjunction with the Disney identity that Walt so carefully nurtured, and led the viewer to become a virtual participant in the park each week. Soon hundreds of thousands of Americans put this performance of identity into practice by traveling to Disneyland. By combining the virtual and "real" experience in this way, the company acted as the director of the family vacation. As Marin concedes when he notes that "possible tours in Disneyland are absolutely constrained by the codes which the visitors are

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145 Music may also be included in this list of industries, although to a less successful degree. Tim Hollis and Greg Ehrbra, _Mouse Tracks: The Story of Walt Disney Records_ (Jackson, Miss.: University of Mississippi Press, 2006.)


147 The program is also noted for being one of the longest running television shows, albeit under a number of names. In Walt Disney’s time as host before his death the program moved networks from ABC to NBC and made a major switch to color while maintaining its popularity. Tinky "Dakota" Weisblat, "Disney, Walt" The Museum of Broadcast Communications.. accessed December 12, 2011.  
given, the freedom of choice for the visitor within the park is an illusion; visitors enact the narratives provided and prompted by Disney. Marin challenges the ability of the park to perform as a utopia of fantasy due to constraints the park confronts the visitors with in the illusion of freedom. For the visitor in the 1950s, everything from the suburban viewers’ selection of Disneyland as a family vacation destination to the ways in which they interacted with and emotionally connected to specific attractions, and even their documenting the trip in a way that highlighted family togetherness and harmony, was predetermined through the mediation of Disney.

"Disneyland" provided an extraordinary popular way for Disney to turn the park into an icon of middle-class American identity. The popularity and structure of the television program provided a script—sent into millions of American homes each week—for families to read the park. From the moment the opening titles reveal the featured land for the week, the emotional connection and understanding of the highlighted land is prescribed. This can be seen in the seminal series of episodes beginning with "The Saga of Davy Crockett" which focused on the element of Western settlement, as well as pioneer ruggedness and traditional masculinity. In portraying Davy Crockett, Disney connects three important points of reference: the experience of watching Frontierland’s cowboys and their trademark shootouts; the actualized process of rooting on the "good guys" from one’s living room; and the performance of enacting a piece of the America’s mythic past while at Disneyland. Steven Watts characterized Disney’s Davy Crockett as "a homespun folk hero, he stood proudly as the embodiment of a virtuous, jocular, but tough American manhood. Here was a Cold War icon who gave his life defending freedom." Such relationship to this narrative is reflected in the Barstow’s manifestation of the television program within their home film. Recall the Barstow’s fascination with Davy Crockett on their own visit to Disneyland; not only did Meg Barstow sew matching Davy Crockett jackets for the family, but the boys also donned Davy’s iconic coonskin caps before entering Frontierland (Fig. 3.8). With these performances, the Barstows emulated their hero in a more

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tangible reality than could be achieved from their living room.\textsuperscript{151} The family not only recognized the theatrical role assigned to them, they then enacted that role though their participation in Disneyland proper.

The Barstow family’s embodiment of the Davy Crockett programming offers one way in which park visitors followed specific, pre-planned scripts while in Disneyland, as does their use of the omnipresent Mickey Mouse Ear hats. Indeed, acts propagated by the show encouraged the solidification of familial ties through common acts. Disney’s marketing propagates the individualistic nature of attending their park, yet with the television show, Disney scripted the experience while they sat at home and consumed it remotely. Even for the early adopters who made up the first million to pass through the gates, Disneyland was pre-digested as many had seen the referenced films or watched the television show. As Marin notes, the actual process of visiting cannot exist without first performing the choices made by Disney on behalf of the family:

Not only are the different possible tours strictly determined, but the map of Disneyland can be substituted for a visit. In other words, Disneyland is an example of a \textit{langue} reduced to a univocal code, without \textit{parole}, even though its visitors have the feeling of living a personal and unique adventure on their tour.\textsuperscript{152}

"Disneyland," as presented in the 1950s, invited suburban viewers to imagine themselves as visitors, to rehearse their trip, whenever that might be, and—through the television camera and Walt—to pre-meditate their adventure. Guests performed the same discrete events at the park because this visit was pre-processed through anticipation and media. Doris later explores the extent this permutation reached at the turn of the millennia of this prescription for the visitor by examining the homogeneity of the designated photo locations in the park and the acts that were recorded in snapshots.\textsuperscript{153} Rather than creating distinct memories, visitors both, then and now, replicated the character called for by the park’s narrative script. This repetition by participating families speaks to the recognition and response of the family members to their designated roles within the park’s narrative and within their family unit.

\textsuperscript{151} Robbins Barstow, \textit{Disneyland Dream}, 00:27:42.
\textsuperscript{152} Marin, "Disneyland: a Degenerate Utopia," 59.
Through the "Disneyland" television program, Disney mediated the experience of the park for the audience by prescribing how a visitor should attend the park and participate in her assigned role. Disney achieved this through Walt’s personal branding, his emphasis on the American family, and the themes of the material portrayed in the show, as I explored in the first chapter. The public responded by attending the park as families and enacting that conservative domesticity of an idyllic America. This practice can be observed in the background throughout the Disneyland opening ceremonies on television and the Barstow film; guests did not typically visit the park as singletons or collections of adults. In the opening ceremony, for example, Danny Thomas and family walk under the train station tunnel to enter the park flanked by other such groupings of visitors comprised of old and young children, parents, and even grandparents all grouped into family units. These groups speak to the way Main Street, USA is positioned as an imagined place potentially near the home where residence have deep communal ties and are safe. Though it is certainly possible that the extant films have survived expressly because they show these groupings, they coincide with Walt’s mythologized placement of the park as a location where the whole family could share in the amusement: "Disneyland has been designed for the enjoyment of all—a magic place where every family can find and share happy hours and experiences together." Both Disney’s established relationship with suburbia and Walt’s constructed emphasis on his domestic responsibilities as father and patriarch produced the founding of the park as continuing and maintaining this family-oriented image. By disseminating the Disney identity through the television, the company inserted its prescription for a "good" and "wholesome" American family into the American home.

Disney extended this prescription to include patriotism and work ethic as well. Main Street, USA flies countless American flags, overtly portraying its allegiance to the nation, while propagating a friendly, hard-working neighborhood through the presence of roaming employee citizens happily performing their routine jobs such as sweeping up in front of the firehouse.

154 Disney has since allocated a portion of its marketing to appeal to a broader demographic included couples and adults. Most often this sort of advertising plays up the desire for fantasy, the luxury of royalty, and reclaiming childhood. Thomas Smith, *Take 5: Adult Fun with Disney Parks and Resorts*, Disney Parks Blog, posted March 31, 2012, accessed April 13, 2012, http://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2012/03/take-5-adult-fun-with-disney-parks-and-resorts/.
155 "Dateline Disneyland," *Disneyland, USA*. 00:08:08.
157 "Dateline Disneyland," *Disneyland, USA*. 00:09:53.
Walt’s personal political and social agendas inspired these sites of performance for the Disneyland guest—whether at home or in person—to acknowledge and understand these scenes as customary, or even encouraged, models of behavior. Marling comments on the power of television as a medium for mass consumption in the 1950s: "Television was the family entertainment medium of choice in the new, isolated, gadget-happy ranch houses of suburbia."\textsuperscript{158} The intimacy created by remotely experiencing Disneyland within the private confines of the home positions the 1950s Disneyland guest to avoid a distinct separation from prescribed reality when attending the park; instead the act of Disneylanding transforms into a practiced, normalized and ingrained part of family life which reinforces Walt’s ideals within the suburbia. As the park guest participates in the attractions and narratives of the lands they realize the rehearsed fantasy performance as lived, thereby normalizing the patriotic sensibilities forwarded by Main Street USA and viewing hard work as fundamental to the success of the country.

"Disneyland" portrayed an idealized America, which was transmitted directly into the sanctity of the home:

Through the medium of "Disneyland," the American family became part of the process of building the park and thus acquired an emotional stake in its success. It was Walt’s American Versailles, but it was a part of the Wednesday night home lives of countless viewers, too.\textsuperscript{159}

Not only was the park able to be partially consumed (or pre-consumed) by viewers of the television program, but it was also available as an actual destination. Unlike other film and television productions, the ideal viewer had the ability to experience this fantasy personally; Disneyland exists not only as some dreamed-up fantasy on television, but also as a real, physical location:

Disneyland is the representation realized in a geographical space of the imaginary relationship that the dominant groups of American society maintain with their real conditions of existence, with the real history of the United States, and with the space outside of its borders. Disneyland is a fantasmatic projection of the history of the American nation, of the way in which this history was conceived with regard to other peoples and to the natural world. Disneyland is an immense and

\textsuperscript{158} Karla Ann Marling, "Disneyland, 1955: Just Take the Santa Ana Freeway to the American Dream," \textit{American Art} 51/2 (Winter - Spring, 1991): 201. \textit{JSTOR}.
displaced metaphor of the system of representations and values unique to American society.\textsuperscript{160}

Such a place as Disneyland reinforces Disney and America’s illusions of success and home as a truth—or at least a truth made possible—by being at a park that could be experienced firsthand. Indeed, in a nation built at least partially on the ideal of realizing dreams, this potential of a grand project to create an American Dream had extraordinary power that connected Disneyland to one of the country’s foundational utopian myths.

Hyperreal Nostalgia

In Jean Baudrillard’s discussion of simulacra in "The Precession of Simulacra," he examines visitors who utilize Disneyland as a mean of distancing themselves from the world; however his analysis of the hyperreal provides insight into the means by which the performing visitor connects with the park both during and after their trip.\textsuperscript{161} Due to its timing in history and the rise of the postmodern era, Disneyland became the real-world working laboratory for such theorist as Jean Baudrillard and Louis Marin. Both men utilized the park to explore their theoretical arguments and their readings of the American people through visitors’ attendance; though both men wrote fifteen years or more after the opening of the park, their readings became foundational texts in the subsequent scholastic understanding of attending Disneyland.\textsuperscript{162} Notably, although Baudrillard’s discussion of hyperreality became the more prominent theoretical model for the consideration of Disneyland, it was Marin who exhibited a perspective that incorporated what seems to be an actual visit to the park.

Contrary to Baudrillard’s suggestion that the visitors were "abandoned at the exit," the suburban family could carry the knowledge that such ideals exist in some form—even if they are part of an imagined, fantasy existence—both within the park and within their familial memories. Through this embodied knowledge, the American family participated in an immediate nostalgia


\textsuperscript{162} Baudrillard references Marin within his piece and many works, such as the Project on Disney follow Baudrillard’s reading of the park. Project on Disney, \textit{Inside the Mouse: Work and Play at Disney World} (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).
for the event, and thereby the place. They both long for ideas represented in the vacation to Disneyland and memorialize this imagined presence as a part of their past. The vacation itself is simultaneously a vacation in that moment in time, but also an evocation of nostalgia for a time that has not happened, but could through their participation in the mythical American tropes presented in the park of both the past and future. The family uses the idealization of their own image in reflecting about their trip to "turn it into a private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space."\(^{163}\) In the memorializing of the vacation, such as with filming the Barstow trip or photographing moments, the suburban family reaffirms their role within Disneyland and their family’s role as within the Disney citizen model. This speaks to the multiplicity of constructions occurring within a visit by numerous players, including Walt, Disney, a family, and suburbia, in an attempt to establish an attainable identity of an idyllic, if not imagined, American family.

With each reflection of memory the visitor returns to their performance of happy family as a real, lived event. The park creates Walt’s vision of suburban America in practice for the suburbanite to both strive for and maintain after the visit. This coincides with Baudrillard’s statement, "We need a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of going to reassure us as to our ends, since ultimately we have never believed in them."\(^{164}\) While Baudrillard maintains a pessimistic view of the visitors’ expectations in the ideals of the park, he, as well as Marin, fail to recognize the unavoidable persistence of the United State’s cultural predisposition for optimism and hope. Particularly within the socio-economic comfort of the suburban Middle class in the 1950s, a family might not be dissatisfied or disillusioned with their particular worldview. In this understanding suburban Americans then sought not to remove themselves from the surrounding country, but to fully experience their understanding of the country through a particular presentation within Disneyland. Disneyland was not acting as a means of a break from the understanding of reality, but a pushing past it reality, beyond it; in this way Baudrillard’s notion of "hyperreality" applies itself to the park. As willing participants choosing to enter into this hyperreality a family attempted to build their own foundational myth through the fictional narratives presented by Disney. Once again the embodiment of this act serves to affirm suburbanites’ worldview by creating a space wherein their morals and aspirations as a family unit are sustained. However, this performance of family remains just that, a performance, a

\(^{164}\) Baudrillard, 1563.
theatricalized fiction representing life, as none of the countless constructions contained within the park can be maintained without the mediation of the park. Disneyland is not a residential space, and any achievement or attempt thereof of these performances of identity must be either continually visited or rigorously preserved like salted meat. The family must go to Disneyland to practice the performances Disney created for them, and they must return home with the knowledge that they too were a part of the space. In moving forward from a trip to the park the suburban family carries with it, "[i]mages of the past and recollected knowledge of the past [that] are conveyed and sustained by ritual performances and that performative memory is bodily experienced." The use of Baudrillard’s hyperreality in Disneyland reveals the constructed world of 1950s suburban America by which the guest could expand through their everyday lives to a fanciful understanding of their identity as a remembered experience that reveals an idyllic disposition, and perhaps imagined ability, on the part of the family in maintaining their own myths.

Conclusion

The act of visiting Disneyland is an act through which the guest processes the experiences through fantasy. Due to the disjunction between normative reality and the narrative structure of the park, postmodern theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Louis Marin have noted clear demarcations between the Disneyland experience and the visitor’s "real" life. Disneyland reveals the process by which the visitor chooses to connect with the location:

This imaginary world is supposed to be what makes the operation successful. But what draws the crowds is undoubtedly much more the social microcosm, the miniaturized and religious reveling in real America, in its delights and drawbacks. You park outside, queue up inside, and are totally abandoned at the exit. Baudrillard allows the visitor agency in desiring to enter the fantasy and seeking to commemorate the interior narrative of the park as reflecting their life, which may be an image of their real or imagined life. Yet, in choosing to experience the park as a willing participant in the fantasy, rehearsing the anticipated narratives, and then enacting the role through a bodily act, the

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166 Baudrillard, 1564-5.
1950s White, middle-class, suburban family affirms their own cultural ideals. In creating a shared, lived moment among the family unit, the fantasy portrayed in the park becomes real, and then returns home through memory to create a mythology—ahistorical and unattainable though it may be—for the family to maintain. As the Barstow family demonstrates, it is possible to think of the Disneyland visitor as attempting to heighten their own lived experience; perhaps the trip Disneyland served as a way to imagine and perform a common middle-class American identity practiced in the park. Perhaps many of these suburbanites sought out not a disconnection from the world through fantasy or escape, but rather a connection with others like themselves, a "social microcosm" of affirmation. They sought to realize their ideal America—the America they struggled to build in the suburban community, an America they believed to be founded on principles such as Walt’s patriotism, belief in capitalism, and the importance of family togetherness; the fact or fiction of this America was irrelevant. Within the multiple layers of construction by those both producing and experiencing Disneyland, that this park was presented under the guise of illusion only strengthens the draw to safety and comfort in the ability to exist in totality and without the constraints of reality. The American family could be what it hoped to be, what it wished it was, what it was supposing it ought to be by a pilgrimage to this Mecca.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In order to enter into a dialogue about the current American way of life it is necessary to know the shaping factors. Disney is now a multinational corporation with some of the most recognized products and properties in the world. Yet, once upon a time this conglomerate was just transitioning into its first venture outside of Hollywood. As the studio began a transition of identity based on location, so too did the middle class. The social and political performances associated with the Disneyland theme park reveal the structure of the suburbanite’s worldview in the mid-1950s. Both of these groups became markers of their time and country, creating associations that have alternately been resisted and accepted in an ongoing cycle of political clashes that still occur today. A deeper appreciation of the factors influencing the crafted reception and response from White, middle-class suburban families for the creation of their identity by Disney aids in the understanding of like practices by media, corporations, and entertainment for the second half of the twentieth century and beyond.

By focusing on 1955 and 1956, I examined the engagement of the audience with the narratives presented in Disneyland in order to explicate the performance of a postwar suburban American identity as idyllic and patriotic. This thesis focused on the way in which the performance of a normative American identity coincided with Walt Disney’s shaping of Disneyland. I found that visitors’ emotional attachment to the theme park spoke to the idealization of Disney as well as visitors’ idealizations of their own suburban American identities through Disney. Walt's conservative personal agenda transferred into his corporate persona and productions to identify with White, middle-class suburbia. This personalized identity displayed itself in suburban families as seen through Robbins Barstow's amateur home film Disneyland Dream, a case study of one suburban family's response to Disneyland park and the Disneyland television program. The fourth chapter employed Louis Marin's postmodern view of Disneyland as a way which visitors such as the Barstows created both nostalgic memories of idealization and hyperreal experiences of their suburban lives through Disneyland’s tropes. Indeed, by attending Disneyland in the 1950s, families created their idealized suburban America mythos as real.
Disney’s careful crafting created a presentation of Disneyland as representative of a proposed 1950s America that encompassed a universal image of loyalty to both family and country. And so, when Soviet premier Nikita S. Khrushchev requested a visit to Disneyland as part of his 1960 visit to the United States at the height of the Cold War, the US State Department resisted.\(^{167}\) This hesitation against the possibility of a Communist leader visiting Disneyland follows the oppositional stance established by Walt in creating his national personality. By connecting the public identity of the Disney company to the persona of company president Walt Disney, the corporation crafted an image directed toward a conservative ideal of the newly formed, White, middle-class suburbia. Walt’s own rags-to-riches story and successful navigation of the American Dream, his conservative personal values, and his performance of a very specific public identity connected him to broad American ideals including patriotism, the need for a strong work ethic, and wholesomeness. In identifying himself, as well as the content of his company, as sharing suburban interests he connected with this population to create a unifying audience base for his work. Walt’s vehement rejection of Communism and emphasis on family crafted his public persona as a model for the suburbanites to emulate, thus encouraging the perception that the middle-class suburban American dream of perceived perfection, wealth, and sufficiency could be achieved. Disney imbued Disneyland with these qualities through Walt’s televised identity and the Disneyland television program. All of these elements then worked together to propose a physical destination wherein the 1950s suburbanite could enact and perform the American identity demonstrated by Walt.

Whereas many other foreigner leaders such as King Mohammed V of Morocco in 1957 and King Hussein of Jordan in 1959 received formal welcome to Disneyland, Walt, the Disney Company, or some branch of the US government refused the State Department to allow Khrushchev entry.\(^{168}\) This rejection gestures toward a marked association between the park and something that required protection from the Soviets during the Cold War. Conversely, the denial of Khrushchev’s request to enter Disneyland—and thus participate in the performance of the mythic American Dream—creates a symbolic barring of Communism and the Soviets from the American home/psyche. Khrushchev’s gesture potentially recognizes the park as having achieved


a symbiotic relationship with a projected American identity. One such suburban home, the Barstow family, documented their own Disneyland experience through an amateur home film, which shows the heightened status the park already held in the American suburban family consciousness by 1956. It also demonstrates a recognition of the need to continue the act and performance of going to the park as a collected family as a means of reinforcing the unity of the family. It is possible to see the significance of the park’s ability to capture the allure and mythology of the region by placing Disneyland among other Southern California destinations. Adding to the significance of the perceived associations from its neighbors, the performance of family within the park exhibits Disneyland’s prompting of the image of idyllic relationships through both the narrative and the television program, which then continue on through memory and recordings.

As America fought to reject Communism from other countries, the possible presence of a Soviet leader in the park represented a symbolic threat—the possibility that Communism could pollute the sanctity of the American home. In a continuation of Walt’s conscious shaping of his persona to reflect White, middle-class, suburbia to further his own conservative ideal of America, so too did the television program’s portrayal of Disneyland create a prescription for the viewer to reflect. The family embodied the conservative suburban ideals of the 1950s by experiencing and participating with the park so as to assert the reality of their home life. Through rehearsing the reading of the park by watching the "Disneyland" television program, the suburban family readied itself to be a willing participant developing a relationship with the park. The performances occurring within Disneyland thus reinforced the narratives of American family projected through Disney’s work and presented a hyperreal suburbia sustained and stabilized in an imagined and nostalgic memory.

Although it is not known if or to what extent Walt may have been involved in the process of blocking the Soviet leader’s visit, the choice to ensure that the park remained free from Soviet influence suggests that Disneyland had indeed become, as Karla Marling argues, a version of the American Versailles, worthy of such considered protection and replete with the symbolic wealth of the nation. Disneyland's significance draws from its position as representative of a 1950s suburban American psyche and the popularity of the fifty-five-year-old park speaks to the
continued significance of Disneyland as a cultural and social destination. Disneyland was simply too precious to risk.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michelle Dougherty was raised outside of Minneapolis, Minnesota, but traveled to Walt Disney World many times throughout her childhood. She graduated *cum laude* from Saint Mary's University in Winona, Minnesota with a B.A. in Theatre and a minor in Public Relations. Michelle went on to participate in the Disney College Program and study Entertainment Production at Walt Disney World. Her interests are in theme parks as sites of integrating the public in performance. Additionally, she is interested in the convergence of live performance, cinema, and television, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s.