

“They tore it to the ground without a second thought:” Emotion, Legitimacy, and Connection in Fan Narratives Surrounding Closed Attractions in the Disney Theme Park Fandom

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Abstract

It is well known that Disney as a brand has fans and that the Disney theme parks have fans, but there is also a specific community within the wider Disney theme park fan community that focuses on attractions with the parks that have since closed. Current academic research surrounding the Disney theme parks focuses on the implications of the parks' design, namely the Disney brand's selling of ideologies in the park, and the attempt to engender a positive view of the brand to visitors. However, current research on the Disney theme park fan community is lacking study on how fans discuss and mourn shutdown attractions in the parks. Using the fandom study theories surrounding emotional connection, and the creation of fan community narratives, I will be using online interactions between fans, such as forum posts and online comments, to show how fans talk about these rides, and how they interact with each other when discussing attractions that have closed. I aim to show how fans create community-wide narratives surrounding the Disney theme parks, what these narratives are, and how those narratives in turn affect how fans view closed attractions. I hope to show that fans create narratives within the fandom space in order to establish a stronger, more cohesive sense of community.

The Disney fandom is a large, expansive community that encompasses a wide variety of media forms. Even within the more specific realm of the fandom surrounding the Disney theme parks, there is a wide range of rides, shows, foods, and souvenirs for fans to latch onto as their favorite, or to discuss with other fans. But what happens when one of those things that fans love goes away? How do fans react when that element of the parks that they love so much is gone, probably never to return? This is a particularly salient set of questions when it comes to attractions within the parks. To keep the parks up to date, relevant to guests, and provide new reasons for visitors to go to the parks, rides and shows are commonly shut down or replaced to keep things fresh. But there are often fans who become upset at the decisions made at the parks, especially regarding the closure of attractions. So those fans react, in a myriad of ways: anger, grief, protest, sadness, and reminiscence. Fans keep discussing the closed attractions and mourning them. Common narratives arise regarding an attraction's closure, and those discussions and narratives even lead newer fans, ones who never even experienced the closed attractions, to become fans of the closed rides themselves.

When a ride closes, fans cannot visit the fan object, which is an important object to the fandom, any longer. Thus, the fans must find a way to continue engaging with the fan object in a way that does not require visiting the ride. The way fans do this is through the creation of fan narratives, as they allow fans to recreate the experience of engaging in the fandom of the ride without having to ride the attractions. Fans read and reinterpret the attractions and create ways for

fans to build a mythology surrounding the rides that have since closed.¹ Fans use their memories, other fans' memories, and videos of the attractions to construct these narratives, allowing the attraction to move from a physical space to become an abstract concept for fans to continue engaging with. For this community, fan objects are undoubtedly important, but they can be reconstructed if needed, even if the fandom will not be happy about it. Fan narratives are what help this collective fan reconstruction to form, they provide a way for fans to still engage with the fan object.

The Walt Disney World Resort, often abbreviated as WDW, is located in Orlando, Florida, and consists of four theme parks: the Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Hollywood Studios, and Animal Kingdom.² The Magic Kingdom was the first park to open, in 1971, followed by Epcot in 1982, Hollywood Studios in 1989, and finally Animal Kingdom in 1998.³ The entire complex spans 27,400 acres and includes hotels, water parks, and a shopping area.⁴ While there are other Disney theme parks across the globe, the discussions surrounding attractions that were open at Walt Disney World will be the focus. This is because Disney World often is the focus of fan discussions when it comes to closed rides and most of the well-known examples of closed attractions come from that resort. Furthermore, the evaluation of fan narratives will be focused on former attractions in the Magic Kingdom and Epcot. The analysis of other attractions at other parks is a worthwhile endeavor, but this decision has been made to keep the scope of the discussion to a reasonable range. The creation of fan narratives surrounding attractions at Disney World that have since been closed allows fans to cope with the loss of their fan object, and lets the fans reenforce their feelings and memories regarding the ride through interactions with other fans, which in the case of the Disney theme park fandom includes discussing the attraction with other fans, and watching videos of the ride. These interactions allow fans to share their memories with other fans, and keep the attraction alive in their memories.

The narratives fans construct around closed attractions allow them to both grieve the loss of a physical space they enjoyed so much and let them critique the Disney corporation over those closures. Fans can connect with each other even if the ride they are fans of is closed permanently, which allows them to create their own views and narratives surrounding the closed attractions, the Disney brand, and the theme parks. The discussion of closed attractions also results in fans ensuring a sense of personal legitimacy, a way for them to set themselves apart from more casual fans who do not know about closed rides. The emotions fans express regarding closed attractions allow them to keep the memory of the attraction alive well past the attraction's closure.

¹ Noah Cohan, *We Average Unbeautiful Watchers: Fan Narratives and the Reading of American Sports* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), muse.jhu.edu/book/65867, x-xi. (Cohen is arguing that sports can also be interpreted by fans, and thus this concept extends beyond regular fan texts.)

² Cher Krause Knight, *Power and Paradise in Walt Disney's World* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014), muse.jhu.edu/book/29432, 19.

³ Knight, 19.

⁴ Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (New York: Routledge, 1992), <https://doi-org.libproxy.uccs.edu/10.4324/9780429267093>, 10.

Fandom studies and fan culture

Mark Duffett defines media fandom as “the recognition of a positive, personal, relatively deep, emotional connection with a mediated element of popular culture.”⁵ Henrik Linden and Sara Linden point out that the definition of a fan, a key term in understanding fandom, is complicated by the consumerist nature of fandom, stating “fans are *consumers* of goods, experiences and interaction. Our own identities are increasingly constructed in relation to consumerism, as no other terrains are available in a consumer society.”⁶ They further elaborate, describing the “tendency to label them *anything but* consumers or customers—with descriptors ranging from “followers” to “brand advocates” to “fans,” and even *raving* fans.⁷ In terms of the importance of the internet to the definition of fandom, fandom scholars Lori Hitchcock Morimoto and Bertha Chin state that it is often framed as a “simultaneous, shared popular cultural experience,” where communities can connect, although they further argue this view results in those on the outskirts of fandom getting ignored.⁸ These definitions establish a series of salient points for the Disney theme park fandom. Firstly, the importance of an emotional connection for fans, which takes an individual form for each fan. Secondly, the importance of consumption to the fandom, a notion that can be problematic if it is the only element considered by scholars, but it is still deeply embedded in the community. Finally, the connection of fans to each other, and the formation of a community often privileges those who participate the most in the group.

However, the general concept of fans and fandom lacks one standard definition, and the term itself tends to vary by context and usage. Daniel Cavicchi states that “Even though fans would certainly tell you that their fandom is ‘real,’ in that it encompasses specific feelings and practices, it is not easy to define universally.”⁹ To complicate things further, three different waves of fandom studies, each with different views on what fandom and fans are, define those concepts differently. The first wave is often referred to as the “Fandom is Beautiful” phase and saw scholars argue that fandom is “the tactic of the disempowered, an act of subversion and cultural appropriation against the power of media producers and industries.”¹⁰ The second wave saw the argument that fans and

⁵ Mark Duffett, *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Fan Culture* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 2.

⁶ Henrik Linden and Sara Linden, “Fans and (Post)Subcultural Consumerism,” in *Fans and Fan Cultures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), https://link-springer-com.libproxy.uccs.edu/chapter/10.1057/978-1-137-50129-5_1.

⁷ Henrik Linden and Sara Linden, “Introduction,” in *Fans and Fan Cultures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), https://link-springer-com.libproxy.uccs.edu/chapter/10.1057/978-1-137-50129-5_3.

⁸ Lori Hitchcock Morimoto and Bertha Chin. “Reimagining the Imagined Community: Online Media Fandom in the Age of Global Convergence,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World Second Edition*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington. (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 174.

⁹ Daniel Cavicchi, “Fandom Before ‘Fan’: Shaping the History of Enthusiastic Audiences,” *Reception: Texts, Readers, Audiences, History* 6 (2014): 52–72. <https://doi.org/10.5325/reception.6.1.0052>.

¹⁰ Sandvoss, Cornel, Jonathan Gray, and C. Lee Harrington. Introduction to *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World Second Edition*. Edited by Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington. New York: New York University Press, 2017, 2-3. (The authors provide the stages, but do not provide any specific dates for them.)

fandom were reflective of wider social and cultural conditions.¹¹ Finally, third wave scholars focus on intrapersonal relations, both between fans and between fans and the object of their fandom.¹² These different stages of fandom studies result in some confusion about how fandom should be defined and showcase how fandom is not a singularly defined concept. Daniel Cavicchi argues that trying to define fandom “likewise entails identifying, connecting, and interpreting a discrete circumstance over time, which has itself existed as the result of repeated identifying, connecting, and interpreting.”¹³

The third stage lens is the one most applicable in analyzing the fandom surrounding the Disney theme parks. Within this community, the primary focus for the fans is on the fan objects, the elements of the parks that fans concentrate on, such as a specific ride or an entire park, and how the fans interact with each other and create a sort of fan mythology surrounding elements of the parks. Scholars emphasize “participatory culture,” an important element of fandom which Henry Jenkins describes: “One becomes a ‘fan’ not by being a regular viewer of a particular program but by translating that viewing into some sort of cultural activity...by joining a ‘community’ of other fans who share common interests.”¹⁴ This participation results in active engagement with a particular media, as opposed to a passive one. Consumption of the fan object then becomes a collective process. Fans form a self-mythology, which creates narratives about both the fan object and about themselves as fans, which is then internalized in the minds of fans on an individual level.¹⁵

The behaviors of fans take many forms, but the three most salient to the discussion of the Disney theme park fandom are the formation of fan narratives, attempts to establish authenticity, and consumption. The creation of fan narratives, in this context, revolves around how fans in the Disney theme park community interact with and discuss rides or parks. This fan mythology affects how fans discuss closed-down rides in particular, as seen in fan discussions over what rides should not have been removed or replaced, and what those changes say about the state of the parks. In terms of establishing authenticity, fans attempt to negotiate fan identity. According to Matt Hills, “fandom is both felt within the self and encountered, projected or imagined as a (communal/massified) audience for one’s own affective relationships with specific media texts.”¹⁶ Finally, the concept of consumption is ever-present in the Disney theme park fandom. Consumption within the fandom takes the common form of consumption of fan objects and merchandise. However, the most important form of consumerism to the Disney theme park fandom is fan tourism or fan pilgrimage, which is when fans go visit places associated with their fandom.

¹¹ Sandvoss, Cornel, Jonathan Gray, and C. Lee Harrington. Introduction to *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World Second Edition*, 5.

¹² Sandvoss, Cornel, Jonathan Gray, and C. Lee Harrington. Introduction to *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World Second Edition*, 6.

¹³ Cavicchi, “Fandom Before ‘Fan’: Shaping the History of Enthusiastic Audiences.”

¹⁴ Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), <https://hdl-handle-net.libproxy.uccs.edu/2027/heb.08235>, EPUB, 41.

¹⁵ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), <https://hdl-handle-net.libproxy.uccs.edu/2027/heb.05936>, EPUB, 3-4.

¹⁶ Matt Hills, “Always-On Fandom, Waiting and Binging: Psychoanalysis as an Engagement with Fans “Infra-Ordinary” Experiences,” in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click & Suzanne Scott, (New York: Routledge, 2017), https://doi-org.libproxy.uccs.edu/10.4324/9781315637518_21.

Fan tourism refers to the practice of visiting locations associated with the fandom, and according to Rebecca Williams, allows fans to “learn more about fan objects, immerse themselves in fictional worlds, and make connections with others who share their interests.”¹⁷ In the case of fandoms surrounding destinations, fan tourism allows fans to actively participate in discourses, and partake in fan activities.¹⁸ The Disney theme park fandom is, at its core, a community based around a physical space, thus the concept of fan tourism is important. Fans of the theme park visit them to either visit a fandom object or out of nostalgia for their fond memories of the parks.¹⁹ In this case, the parks serve as both a tourism spot and a fan text, given that, as Cornel Sandvoss defines “both texts and places are socially constructed through symbols, discourses and representations.”²⁰

When fans cannot partake in tourism, they may make a form of “symbolic pilgrimage,” which as Will Brooker writes allows fans “a form of communion with a text, with a process, and sometimes with other participants, seems to offer a productive approach to the experience”²¹ These symbolic pilgrimages can be the result of nostalgic reminiscences, and the pilgrimages allow fans to experience a “homecoming” to the community.²² Using these frameworks, a location becomes a conceptual representation for the fandom, and how a media producer markets or designs the destination can affect fan narratives.²³

The main fandom sources analyzed were chosen from two sites, both to provide insight into what the fan narratives are surrounding the closed attractions, and to provide a variety of fan communities to investigate. The majority of the fan comments used come from either YouTube videos that are about the attractions discussed, or from the fan forum website WDWMagic, which focuses on discussing the Walt Disney World Resort, although some sources that do not fall into these categories were also consulted. WDWMagic and YouTube were chosen as the main sources of fan discussion for several reasons. WDWMagic has fan discussion that is older chronologically, including posts that date more closely to an attraction’s closure. Additionally due to the way forums are structured, sometimes WDWMagic provides discussions that focus more generally than on one particular ride, such as asking fans their favorite closed attraction. Comments on YouTube videos were chosen because YouTube videos often serve as an entry point into the fandom surrounding a closed ride, and thus often provide the perspective of fans who never personally experienced the attraction. Furthermore, the discussions on YouTube videos often offer many comments reminiscing about a ride or show, giving a view as to what the most common narratives are.

¹⁷ Rebecca Williams, “Fan Tourism and Pilgrimage,” in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click & Suzanne Scott, (New York: Routledge, 2017), <https://doi-org.libproxy.uccs.edu/10.4324/9781315637518>, 98.

¹⁸ Henrik Linden and Sara Linden, “Fans and Tourism,” in *Fans and Fan Cultures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), https://doi-org.libproxy.uccs.edu/10.1057/978-1-137-50129-5_6, Cornel Sandvoss, “I ♥ IBIZA”: Music, Place and Belonging,” in *Popular Music Fandom*, ed. Mark Duffett, 115-146 (New York: Routledge, 2014), 117.

¹⁹ William McCarthy, ‘Meet me on main street’: Disneyland as place attachment for Southern Californians,” *Tourism Geographies* 21 no. 4, (2019): 586-612, DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2018.1545252.

²⁰ Sandvoss, “I ♥ IBIZA”: Music, Place and Belonging,” 115

²¹ Will Brooker, “A Sort of Homecoming: Fan Viewing and Symbolic Pilgrimage,” in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World Second Edition 1-26*, ed. Jonathan Gray, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 160.

²² Brooker, “A Sort of Homecoming: Fan Viewing and Symbolic Pilgrimage,” 170-171.

²³ Linden and Linden, “Fans and Tourism.”

The design of the parks, and its effect on fans

The design philosophy behind the Disney theme parks provides some insight into why fans develop such strong feelings towards attractions in the park. From the inception of the first Disney park, Disneyland, there has been a concentrated effort to design the parks in a way that separates them from the reality outside the gates.²⁴ This separation is one that the Disney corporation has tried to encourage on a planning level, sometimes more successfully than others. The large amount of land bought for the construction of Walt Disney World was in part an attempt to control the area directly surrounding the park and help to isolate it, as Disneyland was quickly surrounded by motels and other tourist amenities that ruined the immersion.²⁵ Inside the parks, a fantasy world is constructed that is by no means realistic but is still created to seem so.²⁶ The term “theme park” itself means an amusement park that creates a cohesive environment with consistent theming.²⁷ The immersion provided by the Disney theme parks invites a high level of emotional connection for guests and fosters a guest’s acceptance of the world-building of the park itself.²⁸ Stephen M. Fjellman writes, “WDW is an intended shrine. It was built by a corporation for corporate purposes, and it has, as intended, transcended that corporation by assimilating and even inventing key symbols of the version of the United States it presents.”²⁹ Walt Disney World is ultimately a product meant for consumption, but by enmeshing itself with the iconography of America as a nation, the parks have managed to inspire fans to have a deep amount of devotion to the resort.

The aesthetics of the parks, along with the theming, are used to construct the narrative the parks are imparting to the visitor. In the Mainstreet U.S.A area of Disneyland, designers used forced perspective to make the buildings appear taller, but still small and cozy, an effect that results in the buildings seeming both slightly too small, but still large enough to not seem like a “play-town.” This helps aid the narrative of Mainstreet U.S.A representing a small, American town of the past.³⁰ This construction of a fantasy of small-town life in America tries to engage the guests in the narrative of the area. However, the narratives created in the parks can be weakened by the passage of time. The Future World section of Epcot was designed to both entertain guests, and educate them on future

²⁴ Josef Chytrý, “Walt Disney and the Creation of Emotional Environments: Interpreting Walt Disney’s Oeuvre from the Disney Studios to Disneyland, CalArts, and the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT),” *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (June 2012): 259–78, doi:10.1080/13642529.2012.681194.

²⁵ Deborah Philips, “Narrativised Spaces: The functions of story in the theme park,” in *Leisure/tourism geographies: Practices and geographical knowledge*, ed. David Crouch, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 92-93.

²⁶ David Allen, “Disneyland: Another Kind of Reality.” *European Journal of American Culture* 33, no. 1 (March 2014): 33–47. doi:10.1386/ejac.33.1.33_1, 34.

²⁷ William McCarthy, “The pedigree of pixie dust: Disneyland and theme parks as a remediation of playful places throughout history.” *Journal of Leisure Research* 53 no. 2, (2022): 253-271, DOI: 10.1080/00222216.2021.1931990.

²⁸ Rebecca Williams, *Theme Park Fandom: Spatial Transmedia, Materiality and Participatory Cultures* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020), muse.jhu.edu/book/72949, 47.

²⁹ Fjellman, 21.

³⁰ Peter H. Steeves, “Becoming Disney: Perception and Being at the Happiest Place on Earth,” *Midwest Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 176-194. <https://search-ebSCOhost.com.libproxy.uccs.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=8948013&site=ehost-live>, 180-181.

technologies.³¹ However, as time passed from the opening of the park, it became less inviting, due to corporate sponsors stopping their support of the rides they funded over time.³² The state of Future World is often something fans lament about, as several of the more beloved closed attractions resided in that area of the Epcot Park.

This style of narrative building within the parks is done to engender a positive view of the Disney brand and to impart certain values to visitors. The result, according to Janet Wasko, is that while the Disney company and its fans want the parks viewed solely as venues for family-friendly entertainment, “the result of Disney’s efforts is a value-laden environment, which extends Classic Disney into a material or physical existence, as well as providing a strong dose of All-American ideology.”³³ The design of Future World in Epcot was initially meant to invoke a sense of futurism, with several of the attractions centering on a narrative of technological progress.³⁴ These ride narratives were often uplifting, showing an optimistic view of the future, a quality that resulted in fans feeling a deeper sense of affection for these rides as they made them feel hopeful for the future.

Nostalgia plays a significant role in fans forming emotional attachments to the parks, and in understanding why fans react so strongly to the closure of rides. This nostalgia takes the form of either personal nostalgia, for example, an individual’s personal memories of the parks, or a more wide-scale nostalgia for the constructed idealized America seen in the parks.³⁵ The fans develop an emotional connection to places in the parks, including rides, so thus the removal or replacement of rides can cause significant upset amongst fans.³⁶ Fans may also feel threatened by the removal or replacement of rides, as it endangers their ability to partake in the fan activity of riding attractions, and is a change in the physical space a fan moves through in the fandom.³⁷ As the Disney theme parks themselves are the focal point of the fandom, fan tourism allows for the fans to create a connection to the fan object, and the changing of the space can result in internal turmoil for an individual or the whole fandom space.

The visitor’s behavior in the parks, and how they perform their tourism, can result in fans either upholding or subverting the park designer’s intentions for how fans should interact with the parks. Jennifer A. Kokai and Tom Robson argue that while the parks do expect guests to view the parks with “childlike wonder,” something that many guests do, they do further state that this childlikeness should not be viewed narrowly, but instead can mean a wide array of behaviors.³⁸ The parks purposefully foster this “childlike wonder,” so guest behaviors that fall into this category do mostly uphold the expectations the designers have for park-goers. However, some fans do transgress how the Disney company wants fans to act, through behaviors such as trespassing into attractions or recording their trespassing and uploading it to the internet, as seen in the cases of a

³¹ Knight, 123.

³² Knight, 128-129.

³³ Janet Wasko, *Understanding Disney* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 153.

³⁴ Knight, 123.

³⁵ McCarthy, ‘Meet me on main street’: Disneyland as place attachment for Southern Californians.”

³⁶ Rebecca Williams, “Replacing Maelstrom Theme Park Fandom, Place, and the Disney Brand,” in *Everybody Hurts: Transitions, Endings, and Resurrections in Fan Cultures*, 1st ed., (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2018), muse.jhu.edu/book/58491, 170.

³⁷ Williams, “Replacing Maelstrom Theme Park Fandom, Place, and the Disney Brand,” 169.

³⁸ Jennifer A. Kokai and Tom Robson, *Performance and the Disney Theme Park Experience: The Tourist As Actor*, (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.libproxy.uccs.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2320246&site=ehost-live>, 8.

Youtuber who explored the closed River Country water park, or in the case of Hoot and Chief, who ran a blog that detailed and documented their unauthorized excursions on the Horizons ride shortly before its closure.³⁹ Both the representative and transgressive sides of tourism performance contribute to the creation of fan narratives. For the representative, it provides the nostalgia-based views of rides, with the rides being symbols of a preferred state of the parks for fans. For the transgressive, the unauthorized photographing of closed rides is a relatively commonly seen phenomenon in the fandom, one that is mostly passively accepted by fans as a way to see how closed rides look currently, and to gain an “insider” view of these rides. These behaviors aid to create and proliferate fan narratives surrounding closed attractions, which in turn sets the discourse around closed rides.

A Study of Six Rides and the Fan Narratives Surrounding Them

There are several types of narratives fans employ surrounding closed rides, some more forgiving towards the Disney corporations than others. These narratives can influence fan behaviors, and fan behaviors can affect narratives in turn. In the case of some rides, fans will simply mourn the closure of the attraction, missing the ride, having mixed feelings about a ride that has replaced it, and reminiscing about the ride. Fans will also use narratives to establish a sense of legitimacy, as they use their ability to discuss closed attractions as proof that they are big enough fans to not only know about current attractions but also ones that have been removed from the parks. However, another kind of narrative can be formed surrounding closed attractions: the belief that the parks were better when the attractions were open, and thus their closure represents a downturn of quality for the parks. This narrative especially is often seen when discussing closed attractions in Epcot. Fans often hold the belief that Epcot was better when certain attractions were open, such as Horizons and Journey into Imagination. Ultimately fans want to both remember the attractions that they miss, and they want the ability to evaluate the worth of the rides, the rides that may replace them, the theme parks, and the Disney corporation.

Horizons

Horizons opened in 1983 and the ride’s story was divided into two parts; firstly, several vignettes about how people in the past envisioned the future, and secondly a more focused vision of how a family in the future may live.⁴⁰ The ride’s vision of the future in the second half was optimistic, featuring underwater cities and wide-scale farming in the desert. The ride also allowed guests to choose the ending of the ride.⁴¹ After the ride’s closure in 1999, fans recalled fondly the idealistic view of the future sold by the ride. One fan on the WDWMagic forum described their understanding of the ride’s message, writing, “As long as we continue to live and walk and learn, we will always pave the roads for horizons: all shining and new - our world really is a dream come

³⁹ Kokai and Robson, 11-12.

⁴⁰ “Horizons,” Extinct Disney, accessed February 26, 2022, <https://www.extinctdisney.com/horizons/>.

⁴¹ “Horizons.” Extinct Disney.

true!”⁴² Another commenter responded, “Wonderfull way to put it, to always remember its teaching skills i placed a picture on my class ring that says new horizons to commorate the destrction of a true work of art.”⁴³ Fans commonly claim that Horizons’ closure was a mistake on the part of the Disney company, and this narrative extends to how fans discuss other rides’ closures as well. The level of affection fans have for the ride reaches into the personal, with one commenter writing on the WDWMagic thread “I always saw Horizons as a wise teacher...more like a mother. ‘She’ was wonderful ...May you rest in peace. Nothing will replace you - you really are a true member of my family, and I love you very much!! You will ALWAYS be alive in our hearts, souls, and dreams.”⁴⁴

However, other fans mourned the ride in ways that are not condoned by the Disney company. One of the most infamous examples of this occurred with Horizons in its final months of operation, with the “explorations” of Hoot and Chief. Starting in March 2009, about ten years after the ride's closure, Hoot and Chief started the Mesa Verde Times blog, on which they posted pictures they took exploring the attraction while the ride was operating.⁴⁵ Hoot and Chief would make sure there were empty cars ahead and behind their car, to make sure no one would see them, and then jump out of the car and look around and take pictures of the show scenes.⁴⁶ Hoot states multiple times on the blog that they risked their safety to capture these pictures, stating that he fractured his foot and that Chief cut his head once or twice.⁴⁷ In one post Hoot gives an impassioned defense of their actions, writing:

We hear all the time that people hate this blog because they feel that we somehow ruined the very attraction we tried to preserve. It's painful for us. It leaves us sad and empty because we can't understand how our work was about anything but love. We risked our lives to preserve Horizons.....OUR LIVES.

Did Disney try to persevere [sic] Horizons? Hell no. They tore it to the ground without a second thought. We knew this would happen so we did what we did. We had to. We risked our existence on Earth to make sure Horizons would be remembered.⁴⁸

The story of Hoot and Chief and their escapades demonstrate a sense of personal connection and investment in a ride. Hoot and Chief’s actions were reckless, but they do show fans’ concerns over the preservation of a ride, and how to keep the memory of a ride alive. Additionally, they managed to record the ride in its last months of operation. Hoot recounts on the blog that the

⁴² Buford, December 5, 2002, comment on HorizonsMan, “Horizons.” Past Attractions, WDWMagic. <https://forums.wdwmagic.com/threads/horizons.17324/>. (Any misspellings present in the original fan comments will be retained, as long as they are not indecipherable.)

⁴³ HorizonsMan, “Horizons,” Past Attractions, WDWMagic, December 5, 2002, <https://forums.wdwmagic.com/threads/horizons.17324/>.

⁴⁴ Buford, comment on “Horizons.”

⁴⁵ Hoot Gibson, “Bye and Bye,” *Mesa Verde Times* (blog), March 1, 2009, <http://mesaverdetimes.blogspot.com/2009/03/bye-and-bye.html>.

⁴⁶ Hoot Gibson, “The how to...,” *Mesa Verde Times* (blog), June 5, 2009, <http://mesaverdetimes.blogspot.com/2009/06/how-to.html>.

⁴⁷ Hoot Gibson, “Bath Time,” *Mesa Verde Times* (blog), June 4, 2009, <http://mesaverdetimes.blogspot.com/2009/06/bath-time.html>.

⁴⁸ Hoot Gibson, “DESTROYED!” *Mesa Verde Times* (blog), November 29, 2009, <http://mesaverdetimes.blogspot.com/2009/11/destroyed.html>.

motive behind their explorations was the fact that Horizons was about to close, and he did not have enough pictures or videos to remember the ride.⁴⁹ This statement reflects the anxiety that many fans feel at the loss of the fan space and the fear of that transition from being able to practice fan tourism to having to practice symbolic pilgrimage. Ultimately, fans can make that transition, but the early fan discussions surrounding Horizons represent anxiety over the loss of the fan space.

Cranium Command

Cranium Command was a show in the Wonders of Life pavilion located in the Future World section of Epcot that was open from 1989 until 2007.⁵⁰ The show's narrative centered around a command center inside a 12-year-old boy's head, piloted by an animatronic named Buzzy.⁵¹ The ride was initially not discussed particularly frequently outside of general mourning, but this situation changed. Cranium Command was left mostly intact within its show building, resulting in it gaining a reputation as a place for "urban exploration," or unauthorized exploration. In 2014, one WDWMagic user explicitly asked if it was possible to "sneak around," which other users warned against, resulting in the original poster writing "ok ill keep it in mind. i wasn't thinking of actually sneaking back but maybe it can pull it off"⁵² The exploration of Cranium Command remained a controversial topic in the fandom, there is a divide between fans who think it is acceptable and those who do not.⁵³ This discourse exploded in frequency when a rumor started in December of 2018 that the Buzzy animatronic was stolen from the park.⁵⁴ Debates then started as to whether Buzzy had been stolen, or simply removed from the building, although, in May of 2019, the Orange County Sheriff's Office released a statement saying that Buzzy had been stolen.⁵⁵ The discussion fans have surrounding the ethics of the urban exploration section of the fandom both mirror and push back against the reasoning Hoot gave regarding his actions; on one hand, fans argue that urban exploration is acceptable because it allows for fans to experience these attractions as they exist today, but on the other hand, many argue that these explorations are dangerous, stupid, and should not be encouraged.

The people who do explore the space that Cranium Command occupied are practicing a form of fan tourism, albeit a controversial type. Fans who engage in this activity do it out of a curiosity over the state of the attraction currently, a curiosity that often is born out of a fondness for

⁴⁹ Hoot Gibson, "Bye and Bye."

⁵⁰ "Cranium Command," Extinct Disney, Accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.extinctdisney.com/cranium-command/>.

⁵¹ "Cranium Command," Extinct Disney.

⁵² KingOfEpicocity, "can I still see WOL?," Past Attractions, WDWMagic, May 24, 2014, <https://forums.wdwmagic.com/threads/can-i-still-see-wol.884617/#post-6114633>.

⁵³ Jwhee, "*CONFIRMED* Cranium Command & Body Wars Current State," Past Attractions, WDWMagic, September 29, 2013, <https://forums.wdwmagic.com/threads/confirmed-cranium-command-body-wars-current-state.874383/page-11>.

⁵⁴ DreamfinderGuy, (@DreamfinderGuy), "Okay, I've got an update on BackDoor and a major new story to break. Buzzy was stolen from Wonders...." Twitter, December 21, 2018, <https://twitter.com/DreamfinderGuy/status/1076308687986352128>.

⁵⁵ Gregory, John. "Orange County Sheriff's Office: Disney World animatronic Buzzy 'is stolen'." Theme Park Tribune. May 20, 2019. <https://www.themeparktribune.com/orange-county-sheriffs-office-disney-world-animatronic-buzzy-is-stolen/>.

the attraction in question. Symbolic pilgrimage and fan tourism are both important concepts for the discussion of Cranium Command, as both ideas are often present in the fan commentary about the attraction. Some fans engage in fan tourism in order to see the current state of the attraction, and some of those trespassing fans then record videos of the attraction as it exists when they visit. Then fans who do not engage in that activity can still watch the videos about the show, thus engaging in a symbolic pilgrimage. These types of pilgrimage, both physical and symbolic inform what narratives arise, leading to a cycle of fans trespassing, fans viewing the trespassing videos and photographs, which in turn increases interest in Cranium Command and more trespassing. A commenter on the WDWMagic forums wrote about a Youtuber, MattSonswa who snuck into the Wonders of Life pavilion. Expressing the dichotomy of fan feelings on trespassing, the commenter writes, “[T]he law abiding adult mom in me hates that he's getting away with this, especially so blatantly. The version of me that is obsessed with extinct attractions and lives to see peeks behind the scenes...can't hate that this video is a thing. I'm grateful for the feeling it gives me to see this stuff but...he should be arrested.”⁵⁶ For the commenters on MattSonswa’s video, many believe that trespassing is justified if it is being done to record the area for posterity, with one writing “I've been begging someone to do this for years at this point. You've gone way above and beyond what I would have expected someone to do when going backstage.”⁵⁷ The debate over whether it should be acceptable to enter the closed off areas that house former attractions often come down to concerns over safety and legality, and whether the perceived importance of recording how the attraction exists in its closed state outweighs those concerns.

Journey Into Imagination

Journey Into Imagination was an Epcot ride that was open from 1983 until 1998, that focused on the concept of imagination and the fields that use it, guided by the characters of Dreamfinder and Figment.⁵⁸ The ride was replaced with the short-lived Journey Into Your Imagination, which was open from 1999 until 2001, and the most recent version of the ride, Journey Into Imagination with Figment, opened in 2002.⁵⁹ With Journey, there is an argument to make that the ride never truly shut down, as the two rides that replaced it were still based on the original, with the latest one still open as of writing. However, many fans do not view it this way. Many feel that Journey Into Imagination counts as a closed ride because the versions that followed differ so much from the original. Most discussions surrounding Journey treat the three versions as stand-alone experiences, with one commenter on a video about Journey Into Your Imagination writing that they “always found it hilarious* that they replaced a creative ride about imagination with a bland science-based version...Then, they replaced that ride with a new version making fun of the prior ride's

⁵⁶ ExtinctJenn, July 10 2017, comment on Jwhee “*CONFIRMED* Cranium Command & Body Wars Current State” Past Attractions, WDWMagic, September 29, 2013.

<https://forums.wdwmagic.com/threads/confirmed-cranium-command-body-wars-current-state.874383/page-9>.

⁵⁷ Wes M, 5 years ago, comment on Disney Cranium Command Epcot.

⁵⁸ “Journey Into Imagination,” Extinct Disney, Accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.extinctdisney.com/journey-into-imagination/>.

⁵⁹ “Journey Into Your Imagination,” Extinct Disney, Accessed April 8, 2022, <https://www.extinctdisney.com/journey-into-your-imagination/>.

science-based take that also lacked imagination.”⁶⁰ The original version of Journey is a widely mourned ride, even being mourned by fans who never actually rode the ride. One commenter on WDWMagic wrote that Journey Into Imagination is “the greatest Disney ride in history that I never got to ride.”⁶¹ A commenter on a YouTube upload of a video ride-through of Journey into Imagination echoes that sentiment, writing, “This ride is so beautiful that it literally brings tears to my eyes. I wish I could have experienced this.”⁶² The example of Journey into Imagination shows another interesting element of the fans of closed attractions, which is that their exposure to the ride might be second or third hand. Many fans are exposed to these rides through fan interactions on forums or videos of the attractions, and they become fans that way, as they have no other way to experience the ride. YouTube is often a gateway into the fandom, through channels that recount the history of a closed attraction, which then drives new fans to check out videos of the attraction itself.

The case of Journey Into Imagination demonstrates fans using sources that straddle the line between objective recollection and community-constructed subjectiveness. The video recordings of the ride are fan-created, they are not necessarily official sources, resulting in these videos both preserving the ride as it existed and while also helping to create fan narratives. Fan narratives arise based on the actual ride, but those collective narratives can hardly be separated from individual fan comments on the ride. There are two types of fans for Journey: the fans that personally experienced the ride, and the fans whose exposure to it is second-hand. For those second-hand fans, their experience of the ride is intrinsically linked to how fans discuss Journey. Those narratives are either a part of the video itself through video creator commentary, or through the easy access of fan comments on the video itself.

Maelstrom

Maelstrom was a ride located in the Norway Pavilion in the World Showcase at Epcot that was open from 1988 until 2014.⁶³ The ride took guests through scenes of Norwegian mythology and history.⁶⁴ The ride was replaced by Frozen Ever After in 2014, because of the popularity of the movie Frozen and because the fictional nation from the film was loosely based on Norway, however the replacement of a ride based on Norway’s history and mythology with a ride based on a popular movie was a controversial one for fans.⁶⁵ Many fans felt that the purpose of Epcot was educational and that the World Showcase’s function is to display real cultures, not a film’s depiction of that culture. One commenter on a forum post stated, “Maelstrom brought the history of Norway with that ride while Frozen Ever After has not. It isn't that I don't like Frozen, but taking away what is

⁶⁰ Rarietty, 5 years ago (edited), comment on Yesterworld: The Troubled History of Journey Into YOUR Imagination.

⁶¹ FigmentJedi, June 21, 2005, comment on Connor 002, “What was the original Journey into your Imagination?,” Past Attractions, WDWMagic, <https://forums.wdwmagic.com/threads/what-was-the-original-journey-into-your-imagination.58055/#post-1084210>.

⁶² Jan, 5 years ago (edited), comment on Journey Into Imagination January 1996 Widen Your World.

⁶³ “Maelstrom,” Extinct Disney, Accessed April 7, 2022, <https://www.extinctdisney.com/maelstrom/>.

⁶⁴ “Maelstrom.” Extinct Disney.

⁶⁵ “Frozen’ Attraction Coming to Epcot,” *Disney Parks Blog*, September 12, 2014, <https://disneyarks.disney.go.com/blog/2014/09/frozen-attraction-coming-to-epcot/>, Williams, “Replacing Maelstrom Theme Park Fandom, Place, and the Disney Brand,” 173.

the actual history in the ride in what the Maelstrom was that was plain wrong in my opinion.”⁶⁶ Commenters on a video upload of the last ride the ride took echoed similar sentiments, writing things such as “I’m really sad they are replacing this with a Frozen attraction, even though I like Frozen. Isn’t the point of Epcot to showcase different real world cultures?” and “...While Frozen Ever After is technically superior, what really makes Maelstrom is the film at the end about Norway’s history. It’s part of the whole point of EPCOT: teaching visitors about other countries.”⁶⁷ The idea that Epcot should remain educational surrounds the closure of many Epcot rides, but in the case of Maelstrom, it is the predominant discussion point.

The view of Epcot as an educational place is the result of fan narratives surrounding Epcot as a whole. The reason some fans have latched onto the idea of Epcot as an educational park is that it provides a way of justifying their love of the park. If Epcot is viewed as educational, it would be given more intellectual worth, as opposed to if it is viewed like any other park. The supposed educational value of the ride is also used to give the fans of the ride a more general sense of superiority, one that establishes the fans as engaging in an intellectual activity. Those opposed to the closure of Maelstrom often claimed that Maelstrom was a more accurate representation of Norway’s history and culture than Frozen Ever After, and that thus closing Maelstrom would represent a loss of Epcot’s educational nature. For these fans, Maelstrom represented a legitimate attempt by Disney to teach guests about Norway, while Frozen Ever After is seen as less authentic and lacking in educational value. The perception of Epcot as an educational space results in fans upholding certain rides as worthwhile, and other rides as not fitting the purpose of the park. In the case of Maelstrom, it was viewed as more authentic than Frozen Ever After because Maelstrom was not based on a movie. Maelstrom was based on Norwegian culture but given that it was a roughly six-minute-long ride, there is only so much depth it could impart on riders.⁶⁸ The fans of Maelstrom have then chosen to read their fan text as an accurate depiction of Norway and its culture, and this is a reading that lends the fans legitimacy in both their love of the ride and their anger at its closure.

ExtraTERRORestrial Alien Encounter

ExtraTERRORestrial Alien Encounter was an attraction in the Tomorrowland section of the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World, which was open from 1995 until 2003.⁶⁹ The science-fiction horror-themed show’s story focused on a company “X-S Tech” demonstrating a teleportation machine, a demonstration that goes wrong and results in a hostile alien getting teleported instead of an X-S employee.⁷⁰ The alien then terrorizes the audience before being contained and killed. The

⁶⁶ *Cinderelly*, May 24, 2020, comment on General Grizz “What should NOT have been replaced?” Past Attractions, WDW MAGIC, October 23, 2003. <https://forums.wdwmagic.com/threads/what-should-not-have-been-replaced.29964/>.

⁶⁷ Michael Haneline, 5 years ago, comment on The Last Ride Ever on Maelstrom at Epcot Walt Disney World for TPR POV, Hanskah. 5 years ago, comment on The Last Ride Ever on Maelstrom at Epcot Walt Disney World for TPR POV.

⁶⁸ Ithemepark, “Maelstrom Boat Ride at Epcot Ultimate Ride Experience and Tribute - Norway - Walt Disney World,” YouTube, September 12, 2014, 23:51, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIMpJ2OO3Ng&t=4s&ab_channel=ithemepark.

⁶⁹ “EXTRATERRESTRIALALIEN ENCOUNTER,” Extinct Disney, Accessed March 26, 2022, <https://www.extinctdisney.com/extraterrestriallien-encounter/>.

⁷⁰ “EXTRATERRESTRIALALIEN ENCOUNTER.” Extinct Disney.

dark tone of the ride led to it being unpopular with visitors, but it did develop a cult following among some Disney fans.⁷¹ Following the show's closure, it was rethemed to Stitch's Great Escape, which was also quite an unpopular ride, due to its crude humor and the fact that enough of the original structure of the ride was maintained, making it still too intense for young children.⁷² The cult classic status of ExtraTERRORestrial has resulted in the attraction becoming venerated by many fans, with a common narrative surrounding the ride being that not only was the closure of the show a mistake, and that its replacement with Stitch was a bad decision. A book written by the host of a popular YouTube series, Defunctland, which covers closed attractions, states that Stitch's Great Escape "kept most of ExtraTERRORestrial: Alien Encounter's technology and none of its charm...the attraction as a whole is immature and awful."⁷³ This sentiment is echoed in other fan spaces, such as some YouTube comments on a video recording of ExtraTERRORestrial that reads, "One of the best attractions ever created. Such a shame it was replaced by Stitch's Great Mistake for being 'too scary'" and "People clearly loved that attraction. A few complained that it was too intense and Disney caved. There were plenty of warning signs. Too bad it's gone."⁷⁴ The case of ExtraTERRORestrial is interesting because the common fan narratives about the ride are focused as much on displeasure at what replaced it as a remembrance of the ride itself.

Given that ExtraTERRORestrial was a divisive ride for most visitors when it was open, it is a bit surprising that it became such a beloved attraction among fans. The poor reception of Stitch's Great Escape resulted in fans missing ExtraTERRORestrial more, and because ExtraTERRORestrial's status had risen more in the fandom, it resulted in Stitch's Great Escape becoming even more hated. The connection between Stitch's Great Escape and ExtraTERRORestrial is deeper than the fact that one replaced the other, they are connected through the narrative fans have created. Stitch's Great Escape became a symbol of Disney's failings in managing the parks, a narrative that then raised ExtraTERRORestrial up to an unjustly closed attraction. ExtraTERRORestrial's closure has become a way for fans to exorcise their negative feelings about decisions made by Disney in the parks, while allowing fans to maintain their loyalty to the parks when critiquing them. Criticisms about the status of the parks have the potential to be seen by other fans as too complaintive. By focusing their grievances over a ride's closure, fans who have issues with the way the parks are run can focus their ire on past decisions, rather than the current state of the parks, allowing fans to view the discussion not as an attack on the parks, but rather on the way they have been run. Of course, the fans do have genuine affection for ExtraTERRORestrial, but their love does have another effect on the fandom. By placing

⁷¹ Brian Delpozo, "Why Disney World's Scariest Ride Ever Had to Close," AllEars. April 3, 2020, <https://allears.net/2020/04/03/what-happened-to-alien-encounter-why-disney-worlds-most-thrilling-ride-ever-had-to-close-its-doors/>.

⁷² Delpozo, "Why Disney World's Scariest Ride Ever Had to Close.", Brian Krosnick, "Stitch's Great Escape!: The Animation Invasion Behind Disney World's "Worst Attraction Ever," Theme Park Tourist, July 31, 2016, <https://www.themeparktourist.com/features/20160710/32052/stitches-great-escape?page=4>.

⁷³ Kevin Perjurer, *Defunctland Guide to the Magic Kingdom*, Tallahassee: Defunctland LLC, 2018, 60.

⁷⁴ Matthew Heid, 3 years ago, comment on Alien Encounter ExtraTERRORestrial FULL Experience 1996 - Tomorrowland, Magic Kingdom, Disney World, John Sisti, 3 years ago, comment on Alien Encounter ExtraTERRORestrial FULL Experience 1996 - Tomorrowland, Magic Kingdom.

ExtraTERRORestrial on a pedestal, fans can signal that they know enough about former attractions to complain about a closure, while also expressing displeasure at the current state of the parks.

Mr. Toad's Wild Ride

In the case of the Magic Kingdom version of Mr. Toad's Wild Ride, the feelings fans have about its replacement are more complicated. Mr. Toad's Wild Ride was an opening day attraction at Walt Disney World, which was closed in 1998 and replaced with the Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh.⁷⁵ The original ride, which was based on the novel *the Wind in the Willows* and its movie adaptation *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*, infamously contained a scene where Mr. Toad got hit by a train and went to Hell.⁷⁶ Fans protested the announcement of the ride's closure.⁷⁷ One fan site dedicated to trying to save Mr. Toad gave a detailed list of people to contact to try to save the ride, including high-ranking members of the Disney corporation, such as then Disney CEO Michael Eisner.⁷⁸ The operator of the site was bitter about the failure of the campaign, writing:

Well, it looks like that rat fink Eisner has finally done it. Mr. Toad had his last Wild Ride on Labor Day, September 7, 1998. Thanks to everyone who came out and showed that they care more about Walt Disney World than the evil corporate weasels who control its destiny. We did our best, but they just don't care about you.⁷⁹

However, this resentment has not seemed to have remained in the general closed ride fanbase, or even among fans of Mr. Toad's Wild Ride. In a 2019 thread on the forum WDWMagic, a poll was held to see which ride people preferred, Winnie the Pooh or Mr. Toad, and while 62.9% of the 197 respondents said they liked Mr. Toad better, there was a lack of ill will towards Winnie the Pooh in the discussion thread.⁸⁰ The commenters are more mixed on which is better, and there is less negativity in the fandom when discussing the removal of Mr. Toad in favor of Winnie the Pooh.⁸¹ In this case, the anger mostly subsided with time and acceptance of the new ride, leaving fans of Mr. Toad saddened by its closure and missing the ride, but not having much emotion beyond that.

Unlike ExtraTERRORestrial and Stitch's Great Escape, the replacement of Mr. Toad with Winnie the Pooh has been less controversial. This could be for several reasons, it might be because ExtraTERRORestrial, an attraction geared towards teenagers and adults, was replaced by an attraction aimed at children and families, while Mr. Toad maintained its demographic when it was

⁷⁵ "Mr. Toad's Wild Ride," Extinct Disney, Accessed March 26, 2022, <https://www.extinctdisney.com/mr-toads-wild-ride/>.

⁷⁶ FoxxFur, "All Hail Toad," *Passport to Dreams Old and New* (blog), June 6, 2007, <http://passport2dreams.blogspot.com/2007/06/all-hail-toad.html>.

⁷⁷ "Protesters Want to Ride with Mr. Toad," *Tampa Bay Times*, December 6, 1997, <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/1997/12/06/protesters-want-to-ride-with-mr-toad/>.

⁷⁸ "Save Mr. Toad's Wild Ride!" *Save Mr. Toad's Wild Ride*, Accessed March 26, 2022, <https://www.math.miami.edu/~jam/toad/proj.html>.

⁷⁹ "Save Mr. Toad's Wild Ride!" *Save Mr. Toad's Wild Ride*.

⁸⁰ Big Phil, "How many people actually prefer Winnie the Pooh over Mr. Toad's Wild Ride?" WDWMagic, July 29, 2019, <https://forums.wdwmagic.com/threads/how-many-people-actually-prefer-winnie-the-pooh-over-mr-toads-wild-ride.956862/>.

⁸¹ Big Phil. "How many people actually prefer Winnie the Pooh over Mr. Toad's Wild Ride?"

replaced, or because Stitch's Great Escape was a more disliked ride than Winnie the Pooh has been. It could also be that Mr. Toad's closure was not as upsetting because there is a version of it at a Disneyland that is still open, so fans still have a way of experiencing it, even if it is not the same version. All these factors have combined to result in the discussion of Mr. Toad's closure being less vitriolic than the discussion of ExtraTERRORestrial's closure. Discussions of Mr. Toad have not been as closely tied to its successor as discussions of ExtraTERRORestrial have been.

Conclusion

For fans of these closed rides, they physically cannot engage in traditional fan tourism, a practice that allows fans to engage with their fandom and engage with other fans at an important location for the fandom. Those attractions are gone; permanently, thus fans must move past the attractions to a certain degree and create a new way to engage with their fan objects. The fandom surrounding closed attractions use their remembrances of the attractions to reconstruct the rides via fan narratives. Fans use their memories, videos, and other fans' recollections to create a way to keep the attraction alive in the memory of fans. In the case of the fandom surrounding closed attractions, the fan objects play a crucial role in the community, but even when they no longer exist, they can be recreated. Fan narratives about the attractions are an important element of this recreation, as they help to either reinforce or reconstruct the ride in the minds of fans. The narratives that fans construct can take a variety of forms, from distrust in Disney to acceptance of a ride's closure. Ultimately fan narratives serve as a way for fans to continue to engage with the fan text in a way that does not require visiting the location of the fan object physically.

The research presented is by no means completely comprehensive, therefore there are several interesting areas of research that would be worthwhile to investigate. The six attractions chosen were selected because they represented different types of fan narratives, that when evaluated together provide a wider look at how the fandom uses fan narratives. Investigating other closed attractions at Walt Disney World, including ones at Animal Kingdom or Hollywood Studios, or other Disney parks, and how fans discuss them would give deeper insight into what types of fan narratives exist and how they affect the community overall. Evaluating the fandoms surrounding other non-Disney theme parks would be interesting because it could establish whether fan narratives surrounding closed rides are common in all theme park communities, or if that is a phenomenon more specific to the Disney theme park community. In addition, evaluating which attractions, theme parks, or theme park complexes, are the most discussed among theme park fans might provide insight into the hierarchy of those elements within the fandom.

Fan narratives surrounding closed attractions can take many forms: anger, protest, grief, nostalgia, and concern. Fan discussions of the closure of attractions provide a way for fans to connect and criticize the Disney company over its decisions regarding the parks. The narratives that form are then spread throughout Disney theme park fandom spaces, from forums to YouTube videos. Despite these attractions having been closed for years, fans have found a way to keep the fandom surrounding them alive. Even though fans of these rides have lost the physical space for them to visit, they have helped to maintain people's fondness for those attractions or helped to create new fans through their discussions. The Disney theme parks fandom is a community that exists for consumption, travel to the fan space and engagement with a major corporation is inherently part of the fandom, thus, the removal of rides could be seen as nothing more than a company discontinuing a product, resulting in fans of the product getting upset. However, while this is true to a point, it does not negate the genuine affection that fans have towards these rides and the

fan narratives' power in the fan community. The closure of attractions within Disney World is a needed process to keep the parks updated and interesting, but for every attraction that opens, there are sure to be some fans upset if it were to close. The discussions surrounding closed attractions, and the narratives that form among fans provide a sense of closure, a way for fans to either accept the closure of the ride or for them to express their displeasure over the closure in a way that allows them to keep the memory of the attraction alive for fans. The fan's participation in these narratives allows them to interact with their fan object in one of the few ways left, by either reminiscing about the ride with other fans or engaging with media created about the closed ride, such as videos. Fans can then still take meaning from the fan object, through interactions with other fans or by reinforcing their own feelings about the ride. Regardless of the emotions expressed or the narratives established, the Disney theme park fandom can connect and discuss their favorite rides in a way that encourages community engagement and discussion.

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