“Get into the Movies!”

The Theme Park’s Relationship with Post-Classical Cinema

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Abstract

This discussion examines the growing relationship between cinematic texts and the theme-park industry. Primarily focused on the post-classical period in Hollywood and its relationship to theme-park environments, this thesis analyses the evolution of the movie-based attraction from a passive retelling into an immersive and inclusive experience. The post-classical cinematic style, usually identified with the contemporary blockbuster movie, has its origins in the sensory experience of early cinema. I draw similarities between the two eras, emphasising the distinctiveness of a modern "cinema of attractions" that develops as films and theme-park rides become more closely intertwined. I elaborate the concepts of "immersion" and "inclusion" to describe and explain this process, identifying these as the distinguishing features of the evolving relationship between movies and theme-park attractions. Film-based attractions such as *Back to the Future* (1985), *Star Wars* (1977-2015) and *Avatar* (2009) exemplify how immersive and inclusive techniques are developed out of post-classical film aesthetics in order to enhance the affective experience of customers. Similarly, attraction-to-film adaptations, such as Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise (2003-present), combine immersion and inclusion with strategies of narrativization, incorporating film and attraction into a unified and self-referring storytelling world.

Table of Contents

CONTENTS	PAGE NUMBER
Introduction	1
Chapter One: A Post-Classical Hollywood	7
Chapter Two: Movies into Rides	
I. The Playground of the Blockbuster	40
II. A Land of Immersion	64
Chapter Three: Rides into Movies	
I. A World of Immersion	85
II. The New Franchise	107
Conclusion	118
Bibliography	123

Introduction

Set on the fictional Isla Nublar, Jurassic Park is a theme park threatened by its main attractions: dinosaurs. Theatrically released in the summer of 1993, Steven Spielberg's eponymous blockbuster hit is one of the foremost examples of a post-classical Hollywood film style, through its use of state-of-the-art technological spectacle and expanded commercial exploitation.

Within the film, shots of 'Jurassic Park' merchandise are shown in the park's visitor centre gift shop, explicitly referencing the film's own tie-in merchandising and playfully drawing attention to its hyper-commerciality. In reality, *Jurassic Park*'s "multiple revenue streams had created sales of over $5 billion before the release of the third movie in the series in 2001" through video sales, merchandising and licensing deals.[1] Audiences can also experience the wonders of *Jurassic Park* in Universal Studios' theme parks, first through 'Jurassic Park: The Ride' at Universal Studios Hollywood (1996) and again since 2001 at Universal Studios Japan. The most immersive experience, however, is undoubtedly at Universal's Islands of Adventure in Florida where a proportion of the park's land has been allocated to recreate *Jurassic Park*. Here the 'Jurassic Park River Adventure' places visitors in the narrative of the film as they enjoy a boat ride through the park, only to be jeopardised by the escape of several dinosaurs. The attention to detail and spectacle of the ride's environment enhance the illusion of reality for visitors on the ride, creating feelings of suspense and thrilling anticipation more powerful even than those the film evokes.

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[1] Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), p.208.

Some theorists suggest that, rather than just having the ability to be adapted into a theme-park ride, post-classical aesthetics transform films themselves into theme-park rides. *Titanic* (1997), for example, is often referred to as an "emotional rollercoaster."[2] However, *Jurassic Park*, with its theme-park setting and deliberate evocation of the theme-park experience, is the most explicit embodiment of this concept. As film critic and historian Leonard Maltin notes, the movie boasted "the most astonishing special effects of this nature in cinema history: the dinosaurs seem *alive*. The story can't bear such close scrutiny, but while this thrill ride is going, you won't be bothered with such details."[3] Yet Maltin also touches here on another important debate about post-classical cinema: the extent to which the modern blockbuster represents a transformation of film style in which coherent narrative is abandoned. As will become clear in the forthcoming analysis, there are scholars who argue for the merits of blockbuster narrative while others assert that comprehensible narrative has been overwhelmed by extravagant spectacle in such films.

The distinction between classical and post-classical Hollywood is not only a matter of film aesthetics and whether narrative has given way to spectacle in contemporary filmmaking. It is also a question of changes in the business structures and commercial priorities of the film industry itself. As Richard Maltby states:

> Where Classical Hollywood produced a full range of products used in the presentation of an evening's movie entertainment, including shorts and newsreels, the major Hollywood corporations are now involved in the

[2] Sheila Marikar, "'Avatar' Eclipses 'Titanic' to Become Top Box Office Earner", *ABC News*, 26 January 2010, http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/Oscars/avatar-titanic-reasons-mega-movie-hits/story?id=9628723 (26 January 2016).
[3] Leonard Maltin quoted in Geoff King, *Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster* (London: Tauris, 2000), p.41.

> production and distribution of a chain of interrelated cultural products: books, television shows, records, toys, games, videos, T-shirts, magazines, as well as tie-ins and merchandizing arrangements with the entire panoply of producers of consumer goods.[4]

In pursuing research regarding the relationship between Hollywood films and amusement parks, it becomes immediately clear that modern theme parks have become promotional spaces for film studios, just as the physical 'Jurassic Park' promotes the film and its merchandise. This raises questions about changes in film marketing and the integration of synergistic marketing strategies into cinema (for example, a narrative that lends itself perfectly to a video game or theme-park ride) that cause a change in its relationship with other cultural and entertainment forms. *Jurassic Park* acts as an example of synergy through its explicit textual references to its own tie-in merchandise and the theme-park format as a commercial space. Therefore, in order to comprehend fully the extent and significance of film's integration into theme parks, one must first examine scholarship relating to the (continuously contested) periodization of Hollywood film production. This is the focus of my first chapter. As will become clear, debates about a 'post-classical' Hollywood are particularly relevant to this research due to the prominence of conglomerates that operate across a multitude of commercial platforms, with the theme-park format acting as only one such platform. Yet there are examples of corporate synergy in earlier eras of film, as my examination of *Snow White* (1939) will illustrate.[5]

Post-classical Hollywood is often linked to the process of globalization. The global nature and increasingly international audience of the

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[4] Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema*, p.190.
[5] Corporate synergy, as a term, refers to the working relationship between different entities to financially benefit the corporation as a whole. For example, film production executives may consult with a consumer products division in order to integrate the corporation's merchandising objectives into the movie.

contemporary American film industry in relation to its past underpins these era classifications. *Jurassic Park*, as an example, rose to first place in the 1993 Worldwide Gross charts with 63.7% of its box office deriving from the international market, proving just how important global revenues have become in modern filmmaking.[6] The idea of a post-classical Hollywood rests on a view of the increasingly internationalized nature of the film and entertainment industries. What some commentators tend to overlook, however, is that Hollywood has always been global, and it is the evolution and intensification of international film marketing strategies, rather than their mere existence, that defines post-classical film.

Working with these debates about post-classical film aesthetics and the new business and marketing priorities of a globalized entertainment industry, later chapters examine in detail the increasingly interdependent relationship between blockbuster texts and theme-park environments. Chapter two focuses on rides derived from blockbuster films which exemplify the concepts of "immersion" and "inclusion." These, I argue, are an intensification of post-classical aesthetics evolved from a "cinema of attractions."[7] This term is utilized by Tom Gunning when describing the form of early cinema which sought to provoke intense sensory and emotional affect in audiences through the use of spectacle. As cinema evolved, however, it became more concerned with narrative coherence, realistic storytelling, and naturalistic styles of representation. This regime, defined as the classical Hollywood style by critics such as David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, emerged in the 1910s and became dominant with the arrival of sound and the establishment

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[6] N.A., "1993 Worldwide Grosses", *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?view2=worldwide&yr=1993&sort=wwgross&order=DESC&p=.htm (26 January 2016).

[7] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde" in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), p.57.

of the studio system in the 1920s.[8] However, since the 1980s, according to many film historians, a post-classical style has emerged, harkening back to the spectacle of early cinema while also incorporating narrational aspects of the classical style and responding to the economic demands of the global conglomerates that now dominate the entertainment industry. Transferring the narratives of these films into theme-park attractions increases the immersiveness of the original texts by physically placing theme-park visitors in the landscape of the film, and including them in the narrative by allowing them to act as a character in the experience.

The final chapter of the thesis considers the reverse of the process explored in chapter two: the creation of film texts based on an existing theme-park ride. Disney is the only studio to do this so far, the feature films in question being *Mission to Mars* (2000), *The Country Bears* (2002), *The Haunted Mansion* (2003), *Tomorrowland* (2015) and the continuously expanding *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise (2003 to present). But the process exemplifies the broader drive in the post-classical era to create new avenues for profit in film production, and to exploit cultural properties through novel forms of intertextuality. In this respect Disney exemplifies the post-classical business models characteristic of Hollywood filmmaking in the conglomerate era, as explained in chapter one. Moreover, in turning theme-park rides into movies Disney shows how the techniques of immersion and inclusion outlined in chapter two can be combined with novel strategies of narrativization. These are designed to bring film and ride closer together, drawing customers into a unified storytelling world which provides a more

[8] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p.54.

intense affective experience, further illustrating the evolution of post-classical Hollywood into a new "cinema of attractions."[9]

[9] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction" in Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema*, p.57.

Chapter One

A Post-Classical Hollywood

There are fierce debates around the concept of a 'post-classical' Hollywood, in regards to periodization, the usefulness of the phrase itself and — most importantly — whether a post-classical style exists at all. In general terms, the theory of post-classical Hollywood holds that the movie as an event (or, as more commonly referenced, a spectacle) is now fragmented across a variety of media and commercial platforms, such as musical soundtracks, merchandising, video games and theme-park rides. This evolution in film style is largely attributed to the "conglomeratisation of the Hollywood film industry," highlighting arguments of commercial and economic forces determining film style through the development of Hollywood film studios as part of larger corporations.[1] Typically, these conglomerates have subsidiaries in diverse industries to extend their reach, often in mutually beneficial relationships. For instance, The Walt Disney Company is divided into the subsidiaries of Media Networks, Parks and Resorts, Disney Consumer Products and Interactive Media, and Studio Entertainment, all of which can be segmented further into individual acquisitions.[2]

A particular difficulty faced in researching this subject matter is the terminology used to describe periods of filmmaking since the classical era. One issue on which most film historians agree is that the period of time which saw the dominance of the studio-system can be labelled 'classical' Hollywood. That being said, however, there is some debate as to when the classical era ended. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson's acclaimed text,

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[1] Catherine Constable, *Postmodernism and Film: Rethinking Hollywood's Aesthetics* (London: Wallflower Press, 2015), p.23.
[2] N.A., *The Walt Disney Company*, https://thewaltdisneycompany.com/about/ (11 February 2016).

The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960 (1985), plainly states that the classical era remained in effect until 1960, yet later chapters within the book suggest that films after this period contain attributes of the classical style. Some critics argue that classical Hollywood was followed by the Hollywood Renaissance, while others simply suggest that there was a kind of mutation from the classical into the post-classical or New Hollywood era, with no stage in between. The most common phrase associated with this later era appears to be 'New Hollywood', implying that (as will be addressed at a later point) the post-classical aspects of modern filmmaking are stylistic techniques rather than indicators of an entirely new period of filmmaking. Justin Wyatt summarises this view by stating that "[m]ost frequently, a 'post-classical' period is aligned with the 'New Hollywood' of the '60s and the '70s, a period characterized by auteurs and the media conglomeration of the film industry."[3]

Crudely put, the major periods of American filmmaking since the mid-1920s are characterised by the terms classical, Hollywood Renaissance, and post-classical, as chronological categories. The classical era encapsulates a period known for films that exhibit linear narratives and continuity editing, and functions as part of Hollywood's studio system era which endured roughly from the mid-1920s to 1960. The Hollywood Renaissance, some argue, arises out of the decay of the major studios. Considered to be a brief interim period (1967-1980 in most accounts), this renaissance is linked to ideas of an 'auteur cinema' in which directors acted as artistic innovators and experimenters, through a certain amount of filmmaking freedom.[4] Finally the post-classical,

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[3] Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), pp.7-8.

[4] Proponents of this innovative renaissance include Peter Biskind and Geoff King, who argue that the independence of filmmakers marks a move away from exclusively commercial imperatives and towards new artistic trends. However, these brief years of creative filmmaking are reversed in the commercially-minded era of post-classical Hollywood.

contrary to Wyatt's suggestion, moves away from the individual auteur and back towards the influential conglomerates that now own the original film studios. The intentions of these conglomerates are firmly rooted in the financial imperatives of the modern filmmaking industry: mainly, the distribution of films to international audiences as domestic box office revenues are stagnating.[5]

Post-Classical Hollywood: Stylistic Conventions

Evidently, there remains a central debate about whether there is a distinct post-classical style or simply a continuation of existing techniques and approaches from the classical era. Addressing the vast amount of research in this subject area would be a huge task, and so this chapter focuses on the arguments of scholars in the forefront of this debate and is structured around their perspectives on the existence of a post-classical Hollywood. Those that contend there is a continuity of classical filmmaking principles in contemporary Hollywood include Kristin Thompson, David Bordwell and Jim Hillier. In contrast, others such as Barry Langford, Geoff King and Justin Wyatt argue for the distinctiveness of post-classical films, placed in the context of the scholar's own definition of the New Hollywood era. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson contend that the classical style consists of narrative logic, defined by the particular use of cinematic time and cinematic space. Classical films have a clearly defined 'beginning, middle and end' structure with a conclusive resolution. Displaying goal-oriented characters motivated by psychological rather than social concerns, the cause-and-effect narrative presents only scenes that are relevant to the resolution of the plot. Cinematic time demands that these sequences be exclusively linear, with the only

[5] N.A., "Theatrical Market Statistics, 2014", *Motion Picture Association of America*, http://www.mpaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2014.pdf (25 January 2016).

acceptable exception being the use of flashbacks. Cinematic space hinges on the audience's belief that the scenes exist in reality, not just on the screen. This is achieved through shot composition that generally relies on close-up, medium and long shots to convey the reality of the scene by attempting to present the scene as a whole (much like the audience would see in a theatrical performance). There is also an absence of extreme close-ups in classical films "as if cutting the face completely free of the background made the close-up too fragmentary."[6] In contrast, it is argued, post-classical style moves toward a more fragmentary presentation of character and action, as exhibited in figures 1 and 2. Classical cinematic space is also achieved through the "volume" of the set and 'sound perspective', the belief that "the acoustic qualities of dialogue and noise had to match the scale of the image" to enhance the realism of the sequence.[7]



Figure 1: A close up shot from the 1942 film *Casablanca*, utilizing the background to situate the scene within the known realistic framework of the film.



Figure 2: An extreme close-up of a dinosaur in *Jurassic Park*, meant to add a sense of chaos to the scene, amidst screams of help from the parks construction workers. The use of different camera shots fragments the scene away from one viewing perspective.

[6] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p.54.
[7] Ibid., p.53.

Despite ending their study in 1960, the final chapter, titled 'Since 1960: The Persistence of a Mode of Film Practice,' indicates that Bordwell et al. (1985) believe the classical style continues into modern film. That is not to say, however, that they disavow the possibility of a new era in Hollywood film, but rather that they examine such examples within their own paradigm. They argue that "[t]he strongest argument for a New Hollywood rests upon the claim that the directors' works constitute a non-classical approach to narrative and technique," acknowledging central features attributed to a post-classical style.[8] Yet they conclude that while "The New Hollywood can explore ambiguous narrational possibilities . . . those explorations remain within classical boundaries," offering specific examples that illustrate the continuity between the two eras of production in terms of persistent narrative conventions.[9]

In the early 1990s Jim Hillier supported this position, arguing that "[i]n spite of all of the changes that have taken place, Hollywood in the late 1980s and early 1990s does not look that different from the Hollywood of the previous forty years".[10] And in the period since, Kristin Thompson has offered more analysis and evidence contesting the existence of a post-classical Hollywood, particularly in regards to the contention that narrative styles have noticeably altered. In the preface to her book *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique* (1999) she writes that a major goal of her work is to "contend that modern Hollywood narratives are put together in much the same way as they were in the studio era."[11] At a later point in the text, Thompson announces (in much the same strain as her earlier work) that "Hollywood filmmaking, contrary to the voices announcing

[8] Ibid., p.373.
[9] Ibid., p.377.
[10] Jim Hillier, *The New Hollywood* (London: Studio Vista, 1992), p.18.
[11] Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.x.

a 'post-classical' cinema of rupture, fragmentation, and postmodern incoherence, remains firmly rooted in a tradition which has flourished for eighty years and shows every sign of continuing."[12] It is such statements that make Thompson's perspective clear: the classical film style has not only continued from the studio era, but is flourishing in modern film.

Barry Langford's *Post-Classical Hollywood: Film Industry, Style and Ideology Since 1945* (2010) highlights the lack of clear differentiation between the categories of 'post-classical' cinema and the 'New Hollywood'. Geoff King, in *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (2002), indicates that the term 'post-classical' is not a period of film history, but rather a film style within the New Hollywood era. I would argue that post-classical Hollywood is both a style, in its differences from the classical conventions outlined by Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, and a period of production due to the prominence of conglomerates in this era. King, however, notes that the post-classical style relies heavily on "departures" from an emphasis on "narrative events" and "conventions of continuity editing," both of which are considered to be stylistic components of the classical Hollywood style.[13] In emphasising that stylistic conventions of a post-classical style are "departures," King argues for the distinctiveness of New Hollywood films. Yet he concedes that "[n]arrative is far from being eclipsed, even in the most spectacular and effects-oriented of today's blockbuster attractions. These films still tell reasonably coherent stories, even if they may sometimes be looser and less well integrated than some classic models".[14] Thus King demonstrates that while film theorists and historians argue that the post-classical favours spectacle over narrative, to imply that narrative is completely redundant would be incorrect.

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[12] Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood*, p.336.
[13] Geoff King, *New Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p.4.
[14] Geoff King, *Spectacular Narratives*: *Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster* (London: Tauris, 2000), p.2.

In this context, the 'blockbuster' is seen (in many accounts) as the defining phenomenon of post-classical American cinema, while others imply that the blockbuster format reduces the classical emphasis on narrative and character to sheer spectacle.[15] The term blockbuster is an informal definition of a film "that is a great commercial success"[16] but as a form, the blockbuster is linked to the idea of 'spectacle' and the creation of emotion or 'affect'. Focusing on the concept of 'spectacle' primarily, the inclusion of highly complex visual effects such as car chases, explosions and prolonged action sequences attempt to 'affect' audiences through emotional responses to the film (whether that be the thrill and suspense of a car chase, for instance, the awe inspired by exceptional visual effects, or the fierce emotional response to scenes in a 'weepie' film such as *Titanic*). These emotions can then be transplanted and replicated in theme-park rides due to similarities between the 'blockbuster' narrative and the format of a ride, and the concept that rides are the physical manipulation of 'affect'. Even *Titanic* (1997) with its emotionally charged disaster narrative is planned to be adapted into a ride in a Dubai resort owned by the conglomerate Al Ahli Holding Group, "creating an immersive experience that includes motion theatre simulators and will allow you to experience what it was like to be on the Titanic in an exciting way."[17]

In chapter two below, this idea of spectacle and the adaptation of this concept into a real, tangible experience in amusement parks will be explored further, with special consideration given to rides in the Universal Studios theme parks. Scott Bukatman even calls such spectacular films "theme park

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[15] Thomas Schatz, 'The New Hollywood' in Jim Collins, Hilary Radner, and Ava Preacher Collins (eds.), *Film Theory Goes to the Movies: Cultural Analysis of Contemporary Film* (New York; London: Routledge, 1993).
[16] *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), Eleventh Edition (revised).
[17] Jeffrey Godsick quoted in Andrew Pulver, 'Titanic Ride set for launch as Fox clinch Dubai deal', *The Guardian*, 3 November 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/nov/03/titanic-ride-fox-dubai-theme park-aliens-planet-of-the-apes (3 March 2016).

movies," and perhaps understanding the 'blockbuster' in this way is indicative of the film's potential future integration into the physical theme park and the increasing interdependence of the two forms in the contemporary entertainment industry.[18] A negative inflection of this position views New Hollywood as a machine for making big, simplified movies that rely upon spectacle as the narrative becomes superfluous.

What is overlooked, however, is that the attempt to transform the 'flat' medium of film into an experience of sensual and bodily immersion is akin to early cinema's use of technology to depict sensory effects, notably Lumière's 1895 *L'Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de la Ciotat* (also known as *Arrival of a Train*). Rumored to have caused panic in the auditorium when it was first exhibited, *Arrival of a Train* presents a train approaching a station and the passengers that disembark:

> The arrival of the train—virtually 'on camera'—made spectators scream and dodge. As we see passengers leave the train, some pass close to the camera, seemingly unaware of it. The use of movement from a distance toward the viewer, and the surprising depth of field in the sequence, offered audiences an experience quite foreign to the theater.[19]

While post-classical films are often derided for their emphasis on visual effects, the innovative spectacle of early film is celebrated as a "cinema of attractions" which, as Tom Gunning writes, is an "exhibitionist cinema . . . willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator."[20] Gunning's notion that early cinema attempted to

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[18] Scott Bukatman, "Zooming Out: The End of Offscreen Space", in Jon Lewis (ed.), *The New American Cinema* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), p.266.
[19] Erik Barnouw, *Documentary, A History of the Non-fiction Film* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), Second Revised Edition, p.8.
[20] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde" in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), p.57.

transcend that "self-enclosed fictional world" through spectacle bears comparison to the new relationship between film and the theme-park environment that has developed in the post-classical era. We can see this in the way that, as will be discussed in chapter two, the fictional worlds of *Back to the Future*, *Harry Potter* or *Star Wars* break free of cinema's limitations and cross over into the concrete landscape of the ride, combining spectacle with bodily movement and sensory interaction to immerse and include audiences in narratives and landscapes that blur the distinction between representation and physical reality. The films discussed in chapter three (the attraction-to-movie adaptations) reinforce these developments, illustrating cinema's kinship with and rootedness in the sensory attractions of the amusement park. Inspired by existing theme-park attractions, films such as *The Haunted Mansion* or the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise intensify this process by basing their spectacle on the original ride and the experience it offers, creating a narrative "world" of circular or interrelated narratives alongside an array of synergistic products. The "self-enclosed fictional world" that Gunning attributes to early cinema is intensified, even more so than in the examples of chapter two, through the interaction of film, attraction, merchandise and other forms to saturate the media marketplace.

In merging the experiences of movie-going and theme-park rides in the post-classical period, filmmakers are taking cinema back closer to the way early film operated as an intensely physical medium devoted to spectacle, sensation and violent 'affect'. Tom Gunning comments on this notion by asserting that "[t]he cinema of attractions persists in later cinema, even if it rarely dominates the form of a feature film as a whole."[21] By this, Gunning recognizes the abundance of spectacle in the blockbuster form, but as a series

[21] Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator", *Art & Text* no.34 (Spring 1989), p.38.

of scenes rather than the entirety of the movie, as was the case in early cinema. Yet, the scale and grandeur that a modern 'cinema of attractions' can exhibit has evolved to incorporate many of the narrational conventions that became established within the classical paradigm. Therefore, it is not that post-classical cinema has returned simply to early film's emphasis on sensory spectacle, abandoning classical Hollywood's prioritization of narrative, but rather has taken that early form and evolved it through narrative elements and technological capabilities, in response to the synergistic demands of post-classical entertainment conglomerates.

What was considered an attraction at the time of early cinema was determined largely by the amusement parks of the era, mainly consisting of simple rollercoasters, ferris wheels and variations on the dark ride format. Now, of course, technology has developed to create simulative attractions, complex roller coasters and thrill rides that offer a more *intense* experience than their predecessors, indicating that the 'affect' experienced by audiences in these new entertainment forms has been *intensified* to reflect technological innovations and meet audience demand. As Linda Williams writes, "It would be a mistake . . . to think of these new forms of attractions as simply reverting (or regressing) to the spectatorial sensations of early cinema. Rather, we need to see them as scopic regimes demanding specific kinds of spectatorial discipline."[22] Thus the audience's experience is not the same as in early cinema. Rather, the ride-like nature of post-classical films rests on narrative foundations, enabling narratives to be experienced as sensory attractions. Thus post-classical cinema has not sacrificed narrative for spectacle but has rather combined the visceral sensations of the cinema of attractions with the

[22] Linda Williams, "Discipline and Fun: *Psycho* and Postmodern Cinema" in Christine Glendhill and Linda Williams (eds.), *Reinventing Film Studies* (London: Arnold, 2000), p.358.

"narrativization"[23] of film which early cinema lacked, while enhancing the sensory experience.

The sensory assault of Gunning's "cinema of attractions" utilized spectacle to 'affect' audiences, an important context in this analysis. Affect is, as Eric Shouse suggests, "a non-conscious experience of intensity . . . Affect is the body's way of preparing itself for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of an experience."[24] He argues that the notion of affect is often confused with feelings and emotion, explaining that "feeling is a sensation that has been checked against previous experiences and labelled" making it "personal and biographical."[25] Emotion, then, is the "projection/display of a feeling" implying a consciousness in expressing said feeling. Yet affect is non-conscious, informed by the visual spectacle in film; it is a response to what the body has just witnessed. Shouse continues, "[b]y resonating with the intensity of the contexts it infolds, the body attempts to ensure that it is prepared to respond appropriately to a given circumstance."[26] Therefore, affect as experienced by a film's audience is an involuntary physiological response to the images, dialogue and narrative on the screen. Post-classical cinema elicits affect in response to overwhelming spectacle within the text, often consisting of explosions, fights, vehicle chases, or other thrilling elements, causing the viewer to respond as though personally experiencing it. The intensity of affect generated by these movies is born out of what is described as "apparent motion" by Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White.[27] The phrase "explains our perception of movement when watching films" as "the brain is actively responding to the movie's visual stimuli exactly

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[23] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction", p.57.
[24] Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect", *M/C Journal,* 8.6 (2005), http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php (22 August 2016).
[25] Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect".
[26] Ibid.
[27] Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction* (Boston, Massachusetts: Bedford/St. Martins, 2012), p.97.

as it would in actual motion perception."[28] Especially pertinent to post-classical films which seek to emulate the physical experience of theme-park attractions, audience perception of movement and the increasingly realistic representations portrayed on screen (due to technological advancements) create an emotional and intensely physical cinematic experience. As Shouse suggests, affect "is the body's way of preparing for action"[29] and that action is portrayed on screen quite vividly through visual spectacle and motion.

Despite its affective capabilities, many question the quality and value of post-classical film, making this issue the underlying focus of the blockbuster debate. Justin Wyatt's *High Concept* (1994) discusses the titular notion as "perhaps *the* central development" of post-classical cinema, "a style of filmmaking molded by economic and institutional forces."[30] A high concept film is a film that can be easily pitched or summarised, garnering broad audience appeal and often indicating the film's narrative content through the title alone. When describing the concept Stephen Prince notes that: "More than any other eighties productions, the Simpson-Bruckheimer films embodied the "high concept" approach to moviemaking. The storylines were simple and easily described but were punched across by aggressive editing and a skilful blend of visual imagery and popular music."[31] However, Richard Schickel argues that the term is a misnomer in that the phrase is used to describe overly simplistic, action-oriented films whose organising concept "is so low that it can be summarized and sold on the basis of a single sentence."[32] Schickel suggests that there is a lack of value in such films in comparison to an

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[28] Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience,* p.97.
[29] Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect".
[30] Wyatt, *High Concept*, p.8.
[31] Prince's reference to producer Jerry Bruckheimer is especially pertinent to this analysis. Bruckheimer is synonymous with the post-classical style. His role as producer of attraction-to-film franchise *Pirates of the Caribbean* is explored in chapter three below. Stephen Prince, *A New Pot of Gold: Hollywood Under the Electronic Rainbow, 1980-1989* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2002), p.210.
[32] Richard Schickel quoted in Wyatt, *High Concept*, p.13.

earlier cinema that was richer in terms of narrative and character development. The exploitation of other media platforms extends this belief, for some, by emphasising the commercial imperatives behind post-classical filmmaking and creating a distinction from what are seen as the more adventurous and experimental releases of the Hollywood Renaissance in particular.

Geoff King argues that in an era dominated by conglomerate control, "the prevalence of spectacle and special effects has been boosted by a growing demand for products that can be further exploited in multimedia forms," clearly referencing the influence of other media platforms in altering stylistic techniques.[33] As a staunch defender of the 'quality' of the blockbuster (meaning that he argues against critics who claim that the post-classical film is "dumbed-down" as a result of commercialization and conglomeratisation), King's *Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster* argues that "even the most spectacular and effects-led contemporary blockbuster offers a blend of appeals, mixing elements of spectacle and narrative."[34] In this framework, the blockbuster does not disregard narrative, but integrates it with spectacular scenes to increase the film's visual impact. Using case studies of films such as *Twister* and *Independence Day* (both released in 1996) King draws attention to the blockbuster's ability to have both a 'surface' and 'underlying' narrative depending on the spectator's willingness to analyse the text.[35]

Conglomerate Control

Most scholars recognize that a major cause of whatever changes in stylistic convention that might have taken place since the classical era have been due,

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[33] King, *Spectacular Narratives*, p.2.
[34] Ibid., back cover.
[35] Ibid., pp.17-18.

as Catherine Constable phrases it, to the "conglomeratisation" of the film industry.[36] Barry Langford's in-depth discussion of Hollywood's history since the studio era is extremely helpful in contextualising the impact of conglomerate control in the scope of business strategies both before and after the synergistic business model. He also places great importance on the fact that "[t]he industrial logic of the New Hollywood was relentlessly expansionist," reflecting the expansionist logic of America in discovering new western 'frontiers'.[37] Geoff King comments that "[o]ld-style vertical integration exists in the combination of production/finance and distribution," indirectly implying that new business and marketing strategies allowed horizontal integration across a variety of platforms.[38] King elaborates:

> [I]n an age in which the big Hollywood studios have become absorbed into giant conglomerates, the prevalence of spectacle and special effects has been boosted by a growing demand for products that can be further exploited in multimedia forms such as computer games and theme park rides – secondary outlets that sometimes generate more profits than the films on which they are based.[39]

In this vein, the ability to exploit the film product through other cultural forms and merchandising avenues moves the film itself away from being a singular product to becoming part of an immersive experience and 'consumption platform'. Companies now insist that viewers not simply consume the movie, but to go further and consume the variety of secondary items inspired by and promoting the film. The trajectory of this consumption is generally experienced in stages, first through the film, then merchandise, then the release of the film in a home video format (VHS, DVD or Blu-Ray mainly) and

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[36] Constable, *Postmodernism and Film*, p.23.
[37] Barry Langford, *Post-Classical Hollywood: Film Industry, Style and Ideology Since 1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p.193.
[38] Geoff King, *New Hollywood Cinema*, p.71.
[39] Geoff King, *Spectacular Narratives*, pp.1-2.

then, when commercially and socially successful, through a ride that seeks to physically "immerse" and "include" audiences in the narrative and iconographic universe of the film. As chapter three will show, however, this cycle has been taken further by Disney in developing theme-park rides into feature films with additional narratives and merchandise, the most prominent example of this being the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise.

I would argue that the characteristics and conditions of post-classical Hollywood have facilitated these processes of adaptation by privileging intertextuality and the synergistic exploitation of cultural properties. James Schamus is among those critics who believe that narrative fragmentation is a stylistic convention of the post-classical film:

> The supposed 'identity' of the filmic text comes increasingly under the dissolving pressures of its various revenue streams. Do *Volcano* (1997), *Mission Impossible* (1996) or *ID4 [Independence Day]* (1996) need 'classical Hollywood' narrative construction, when it is precisely the fragmentation of their narratives into soundtrack albums, somatic theme park jolts, iconic emblems stuck on T-shirts, and continuous loops of home entertainment that are really being sold? I don't think so.[40]

This thinking suggests that classical narrative structure cannot survive when the film text is divided into multiple commodities and potential revenue generators. Or, in simpler terms, why focus the narrative specifically on the film text when more money can be gained from splitting the narrative across various media forms and experiences? Spin-off video games and comic books, for instance, offer additional character narratives unseen in the original film due to movie running-length constraints. Such is the case in the *Star Wars* canon where officially licensed media (television shows, video games and

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[40] James Schamus, 'To the Rear of the Back End: The Economics of Independent Cinema' in Steve Neale and Murray Smith (eds.), *Contemporary Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p.94.

animated films), generally referred to as the '*Star Wars* Expanded Universe', present storylines that do not appear in the original seven Lucasfilm movies. While Kristin Thompson forcefully challenges the argument Schamus presents, her acknowledgement of its relevance concedes a possible fragmentation of audience interest across separate consumer platforms. Known as 'saturation marketing', with inherent connections to the rise of the blockbuster, this type of widespread promotion "bombarded the public" with a variety of advertisements across different media platforms to ensure consumption of the film through, at least, one platform.[41]

As a preliminary summation, debates surrounding this topic hinge on two interpretations of the period of film history after the breakdown of the studio-system era of classical Hollywood. The first centres around the argument that the classical paradigm, as established in the older setting, continues to shape contemporary filmmaking even under considerably changed economic and cultural conditions, thereby making assumptions about a post-classical style questionable. On the other hand, critics who see a fundamental break between distinct periods of Hollywood filmmaking tend to favour the argument that a 'New Hollywood' or post-classical era exhibits the specific characteristics of heightened spectacle and narrative fragmentation while illuminating the contextual importance of the rise in conglomerate ownership in the entertainment industry. The blockbuster is offered as evidence of these developments, with its emphasis on spectacle and its importance in an increasingly global culture that multinational entertainment conglomerates seek to exploit. Yet, as I argue in the chapters that follow, the post-classical film style can be seen as reminiscent of early cinema's attempt to create a sensory experience, utilizing spectacle as a means of evoking

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[41] Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis, *Film: A Critical Introduction* (London: Laurence King Publishing Ltd., 2005), p.390.

emotional, psychological and physiological responses. And the new levels of interdependence between movies and theme-park rides in the post-classical era is the best illustration of this, as will become clear at a later point.

Post-Classical Hollywood: Conglomeratisation and Changes in the Industry

What should now be apparent is that conglomerate control of the film industry is seen by some commentators as a motivating factor in the emergence of a distinct post-classical era. These multinational corporations facilitate cross-promotion, another defining factor of the period, through multifaceted control of many segments of consumer demand. However, while this strategy benefits the conglomerate as a whole, there are scholars who consider conglomeratisation to be damaging to the aesthetic quality and cultural value of Hollywood film due to the corporations' explicit commercial intentions. In this sense, the periodization debate is a proxy for a 'quality and value' debate. As expressed at an earlier point, the blockbuster is synonymous with these ideas due to concerns about spectacle overshadowing (aesthetically pleasing) complex or coherent narrative. I would argue that it is the audience's engagement with the text that determines the 'value' of the narrative (as suggested by Geoff King through his use of 'surface' and 'underlying' narrative terms). However, it is clear that those who condemn the blockbuster see a discernible trajectory of decline from the artistic innovation of the Hollywood Renaissance to the commercially-oriented aims of the post-classical era.

In this sense, the real debate around the categorisation and periodization of Hollywood film centres on these issues of quality and value. Specifically, we need to consider the distinction between the notion of the 'Hollywood Renaissance' of the 1960s and 1970s, known as a cinema of auteurs influenced by artistic European films, and the 'New Hollywood'

understood as a period encapsulated by the blockbuster and global media conglomerates.[42] More explicitly, the 'Hollywood Renaissance' is identified as a creative and challenging cinema which, to a certain degree, broke away from and revised classical Hollywood paradigms in light of art-film and international cinema influences, whilst the 'New Hollywood' is seen by some as suppressing the Hollywood Renaissance and returning the American film business to a highly commercial, intensified genre system based on a new integrated corporate apparatus.

Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland have noted five key stylistic features of post-classical narratives that are particularly useful in examining the concepts of film quality and value during this period. Among them is the claim that "they are more self-aware and often (quite deliberately) offer two levels of interpretation."[43] They suggest that films of this style and period could be consumed at a 'mundane' level for the passive audience or at a higher level for the more critical viewer, as previously mentioned in a discussion of the blockbuster format. The most obvious examples of this theory can be seen in Pixar animation feature films that offer narratives suitable for younger audiences while still maintaining an older audience through specific methods, most notably comedic sequences and jokes that younger audiences may not understand (almost equivalent to an inside joke between the studio and the adult audience).[44] Pixar states that their films are "intentionally produced to entertain all ages" by ensuring that "the story and the humour doesn't pander to a child's sophistication" often including "a more discreet, mature humour

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[42] Geoff King, *New Hollywood Cinema*.
[43] Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland, *Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis* (London: Arnold, 2002), pp. 66-77.
[44] One instance of this can be seen in *Toy Story* (1995) during an interaction between Buzz Lightyear and Woody. Lightyear addresses Woody and says, "I thinks the word you're searching for is Space Ranger" to which Woody replies "the word I'm searching for I can't say because there are preschool toys present," implying that Woody would use profanities to describe Lightyear. This is a small comedic element of the film that younger audiences may not understand or appreciate.

that you only understand once you watch the film as an older viewer."[45] This observation then implies that the quality of a post-classical film is dependent upon the audience itself, and their level of engagement with the text.

Elsaesser and Buckland also claim that such films recognise their existence in a "transnational/post-colonial/globaliz[ed] world," while commenting on the situation at the same time.[46] Therefore, films discuss issues on this theme, even though the film is (in itself) a part of the globalisation process. Post-classical films therefore rely upon audience engagement with the text to discover the complex, "sophisticated" issues and themes beneath the surface spectacle. This further suggests the idea that the quality and value of post-classical films depend upon individual viewers deciphering their own meanings and discovering compelling subtexts. As Elsaesser and Buckland conclude, the films are adorned with "sliding signifiers," for example, the inclusion of verbal and visual puns to express the professional and sophisticated nature of New Hollywood.[47]

In addition, Kristin Thompson has commented that there are perspectives that view the recycling of existing texts into new texts (including the increasing presence of the sequel in modern cinema) as the "decline of Hollywood into crass commercialism."[48] Yet, she argues, "such borrowing and repetitions have been common in the history of all art forms" using literary examples, classical music, operatic performances and visual culture to illustrate her point.[49] Therefore, one might suggest that Thompson also argues that post-classical films display no overall decline in quality and value. In fact, by her comparing the use of recycled texts Thompson connotes that the post-

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[45] N.A., "Older Audience", *Pixar*, http://pixar-animation.weebly.com/older-audience.html (7 March 2016).
[46] Elsaesser and Buckland, *Studying Contemporary American Film*, p.66.
[47] Ibid, p.66.
[48] Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p.6.
[49] Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise,* p.5.

classical style has a similarity to earlier filmmaking styles and cultural texts, presenting a continuity of style.

The careers of directors such as George Lucas and Steven Spielberg also illustrate continuities between the Hollywood Renaissance and the post-classical era. Both came to prominence as 'auteur' directors in the Hollywood Renaissance, yet their later films gravitated towards the spectacular and commercial nature characteristic of the post-classical style. Caught up in the possibilities that the 'blockbuster' format offered, such directors created the quintessential post-classical blockbusters that had the potential to develop into multifaceted franchises, most notably the *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones* and *Jurassic Park* series. These films became global money-spinners, signalling a new understanding of the audience for Hollywood films as a result of changes that have occurred within the industry, predominantly the "conglomeratisation of the Hollywood film industry" - a concept important to this thesis on movie and amusement ride 'synergy'.[50]

Media analysts have argued that a newly global Hollywood accounts for increased revenues in the film industry and allows synergistic products to flourish due to the sheer power and industrial reach of the media conglomerates now in charge of film studios. Furthermore, as Ben Goldsmith points out, "[o]ne of the characteristics of Global Hollywood is that films are . . . made in several locations with finance, actors and crew drawn from a number of countries" thereby illustrating that the global nature of post-classical Hollywood includes the production process itself, not just the international box office revenues.[51] As Barry Langford notes:

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[50] Catherine Constable, *Postmodernism and Film*, p.23.
[51] Ben Goldsmith, Susan Ward and Tom O'Regan, *Local Hollywood* (St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2010), p.1.

> Today Hollywood is the location of the corporate offices of the filmed entertainment divisions of the enormous media conglomerates, while the production process itself is widely dispersed across a huge range of territories and specialist service providers located not just in the US but globally.[52]

Implicit in this statement, and others made regarding globalisation of the film industry, is the understanding that the role of the conglomerate in modern society has transformed business practices. While this may seem obvious, the international nature of the conglomerate facilitates film promotion to audiences that may have been previously overlooked. In considering this notion Barry Langford discusses the geographical dispersion of film production and consumer demand in his conclusion to *Post-Classical Hollywood: Film Industry, Style and Ideology Since 1945* (2010), particularly in a section under the subheading "Is It American?"[53] However, it should be noted that Langford suggests that there are academic writers who "overstate the novelty" of globalisation in the post-classical period.[54]

In critiquing scholarship that insists on the novelty of international involvement and orientation in film production Langford acknowledges the existence of Hollywood's international presence long before the post-classical period, arguing that conglomerate takeovers of film studios did not create a global film industry, rather that they just enhanced and built upon what already existed. *The World According to Hollywood, 1918-1939* by Ruth Vasey establishes that the American film business has always been global in scope and structure.[55] Vasey illustrates that beginning in the early twentieth century an expansionist logic characterized all divisions of the film industry,

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[52] Barry Langford, *Post-Classical Hollywood,* p.270.
[53] Ibid.*,* pp.272-275.
[54] Ibid., p.274.
[55] Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918-1939* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997).

exemplified in the increasing international demand for American films after the First World War. That being said, over the years, the nature of international corporate activity has changed and adapted, and therefore Hollywood might well be global in a different respect in the post-classical period than it was in previous eras: for instance, it could be argued that it is now more globally interconnected.

Langford suggests as much when he states that "[n]one of the modern media conglomerates describe themselves as film studios because that is not what they are," evidently due to the various revenue streams that they generate.[56] Kristin Thompson, in *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood*, also attributes the current state of globalisation to the conglomerate and highlights the consequences of conglomerate control on the film industry. Mainly, she notes, there is a greater emphasis placed on the "bottom-line" due to increasing costs that eventually led to the point where the theatrical release of big-budget motion pictures was not turning a profit.[57] In response to this crisis, conglomerates sought to raise profits through alternative methods, especially the home video and tie-in merchandise markets. Incidentally, Thompson also attributes the prevalence of the modern movie franchise model to the multinational conglomerate due to the fact that:

> The studios also sought to bring some predictability to the business of making movies. Franchises offered an obvious method for increasing ancillaries. A continuing series brought with it automatic name recognition once its characters and story gained wide currency.[58]

By this, Thompson discusses the notion of a pre-sold narrative that already has an audience and should, in theory, be successful due to the existing

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[56] Barry Langford, *Post-Classical Hollywood,* p.275.
[57] Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise*, p.5.
[58] Ibid.*,* p.5.

support from that audience. Prominent instances of this can be seen in film adaptations from comic books, namely those that bear the Marvel or DC Comics brand. Such examples (notably Marvel's characters that formed the basis of the hugely successful 2012 film *The Avengers*) utilize existing characters and plots from comic books and adapt them for feature films and television shows. Equivalently, in recent years, film studios have turned to video games as a source of inspiration. The 2001 film *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* is just one example of a pre-sold model originating from a video game, albeit the most successful transfer grossing more than £216 million as a film franchise (the sequel was released in 2003).[59] In a similar vein, as I explore in more detail in chapter three, original Disney theme-park rides have been transformed into film franchises, albeit with varying degrees of success. One should not underestimate the importance of this strategy, as there is a kind of brand loyalty among consumers guaranteeing a certain degree of recognition or interest among theme-park enthusiasts in particular. Even amidst complaints of a recent ticket price increase at Disney parks, demonstrations of loyalty to Disney are described in relation to the "emotional connections between its fans and the company's parks that will lead those fans to believe that the Disney Parks provide a unique, personal experience *for which there is no substitute.*"[60]

Before examining issues concerning the global audience, however, it is perhaps appropriate to first discuss the nature of globalisation in relation to the Hollywood feature film. The authors of *Global Hollywood 2* discuss, at

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[59] N.A., 'Lara Croft picks up six Guinness World Records', *The Telegraph*, 21 January 2010, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/video-games/7037574/Lara-Croft-picks-up-six-Guinness-world-records.html (16 January 2016). Other Examples of Hollywood films originating from video games include *Resident Evil* (2002), *Hitman* (2007), *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* (2010) and *Need for Speed* (2014).

[60] Robert Niles, 'Is Loyalty a Luxury You Just Can't Afford?', *Theme Park Insider*, 26 February 2015, http://www.themeparkinsider.com/flume/201502/4438/ (7 March 2016).

length, the international nature of the 'New Hollywood' period of filmmaking.[61] The second chapter of this book is devoted to the New International Division of Labour (NIDL), yet Miller adapts this to create the concept of the New International Division of *Cultural* Labour (NICL). Essentially, this discusses the means by which Hollywood protects and intensifies its authority over foreign cultural labour markets. Using the conventional definition of 'division of labour' the authors illustrate the internationally collaborative nature of modern film production, while maintaining that Hollywood remains the dominant driving force. This, in Marxist terms, casts the American film companies as the "ruling class" in a hegemonic relationship with any international divisions.

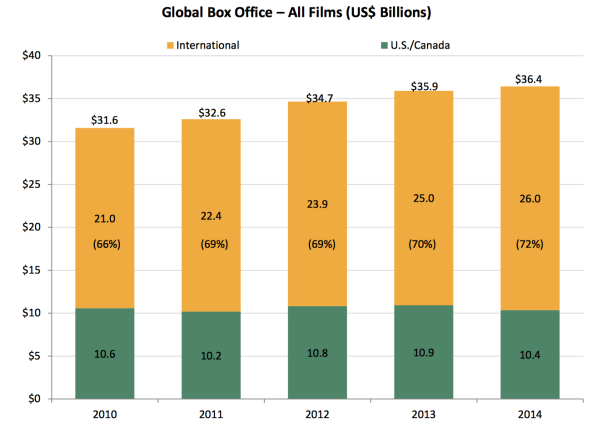
Through the perspectives of *Global Hollywood* (and its sequel) other critics have examined the global nature of filmmaking in modern society. One such text is *Local Hollywood* written by Ben Goldsmith et al. This explicitly comments on the work of *Global Hollywood* and uses its underlying argument as a foundation for further analysis. Goldsmith et al. suggest that the earlier book's perspective is based inside the U.S. (rather than exploring international standpoints) and focuses too heavily on the influence of the Hollywood majors as a global force, thereby creating a "top-down" standpoint.[62] However, the authors argue, the international nature of American cinema is simultaneously global and local. Thus "smaller players and places" collaborate with the Hollywood majors in the filmmaking process, complicating and nuancing the top-down perspective presented by Miller et al.[63] That is, the geographically and internationally dispersed nature of contemporary film production is more collaborative than Miller et al.'s model of Hollywood hegemony allows for. The contrasting perspectives of Miller and Goldsmith indicate that there is an

[61] Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell and Ting Wang. *Global Hollywood 2* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005).
[62] Goldsmith et al., *Local Hollywood*, pp.27-28.
[63] Ibid., pp.27-29

underlying question concerning the extent of American dominance in the global film industry. Yet Goldsmith et al. do not appear to reject the 'hegemony' argument put forward by Miller et al.; rather, they claim that hegemony operates through local collaboration and "coordination" with the central powers, suggesting varying degrees of hegemonic behaviour.

Most importantly, international box office returns have grown to overtake domestic revenues, meaning that contemporary Hollywood films must be successful on a global stage in order to be considered financially viable. As figure 3 shows, international box office revenues are steadily increasing year by year while U.S./Canadian box office values are decreasing. Therefore, it is impossible to sever the contemporary film from notions of a global film community as the Hollywood movie becomes more integrated in a global culture, rather than being a distinctly American product. This becomes even more apparent in consideration of the arguments put forward in the previous section by Miller and Goldsmith, in relation to integrative aspects of film production. Aptly, a film-production executive has called the international box office "the lifeboat on the Titanic."[64]

[64] N.A., "Split Screens: A tale of two Tinseltowns", *The Economist*, 23 February 2013, http://www.economist.com/news/business/21572218-tale-two-tinseltowns-split-screens (2 February 2016).



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	% Change 14 vs. 13	% Change[2] 14 vs. 10
U.S./Canada[3]	$10.6	$10.2	$10.8	$10.9	$10.4	-5%	-2%
International[4]	$21.0	$22.4	$23.9	$25.0	$26.0	4%	24%
Total	**$31.6**	**$32.6**	**$34.7**	**$35.9**	**$36.4**	**1%**	**15%**

Figure 3: Global Box Office statistics taken from the Motion Picture Association of America's "Theatrical Market Statistics, 2014" report.[65]

While the international box office is increasingly important, the domestic audience is nonetheless still regarded as the foundation for overall success. King notes that the blockbuster emerged as a means of overcoming the increasingly segmented nature of movie audiences following the post-war consumer boom and threat posed by television:

> The blockbuster format of the last quarter century has evolved as part of an effort to create a much wider audience for certain films, an industrial strategy that might in the process give these attractions a larger measure of cultural centrality.[66]

In fact, at a later point he also writes that "[v]iewers are likely to bring a range of different orientations, and blockbuster films are designed to accommodate these as far as possible," which reminds us of the contention that post-classical films can offer multiple interpretations and appeal to different audience

[65] N.A., "Theatrical Market Statistics, 2014", *Motion Picture Association of America*.
[66] Geoff King, *Spectacular Narratives*, p.9.

fragments.[67] That being said, however, the importance of mass-market appeal in the post-classical era has fed into arguments about declining quality or value due to the blockbuster's inclusive, accommodating nature. This again leads back to the issue of aesthetic or cultural value in post-classical era texts. Increasingly common, and an attempt to appeal to international audiences even more, certain scenes or characters are being replaced in the foreign release of films. When describing the Chinese release of *Iron Man 3*, Matt Singer notes that the film "had extra scenes and extra characters who were barely in – or not in at all – the American version. If you saw the film at a movie theatre in China you had this extra subplot that involved Chinese characters."[68] What Singer describes extends beyond the mass-market appeal of blockbusters towards country-specific marketing to increase international box office figures. Of course, the same cannot be said for all films, with many flourishing in foreign markets without alteration, even inspiring theme-park rides overseas.

Opening in October 2016, Dubai Parks and Resorts acts as a transnational comparison with earlier examples cited in this chapter. It illustrates that the increasing interdependence of movies and theme-park attractions is central to the synergistic marketing strategies of transnational entertainment conglomerates in a globalized marketplace. The Dubai resort includes a theme park dedicated to Bollywood and Hindi cinema offering sixteen rides and attractions in five themed areas. Aside from the content, the format of the park adheres to the accepted theme-park layout with a central street that then branches out into immersive themed lands based on popular films or iconic settings. The resort also features Legoland Dubai, a Legoland

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[67] Ibid., p.45.
[68] Matt Singer quoted by Tom Brook, "How the global box office is changing Hollywood", *BBC Culture*, 21 October 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/culture/story/20130620-is-china-hollywoods-future (25 August 2016).

Water Park and Motiongate Dubai, reflecting the global nature of the film industry by including characters and narratives from Hollywood movies. Motiongate Dubai is especially telling in this regard. Divided into four parts, the park concept art shows that an area will be entirely dedicated to *The Smurfs* (1955-present), while Sony Pictures Studios has inspired seven attractions, Dreamworks is represented through twelve attractions and Lionsgate through two. In a park that promises to "relive your favourite Hollywood movies" it becomes clear that international success can secure a film's presence in non-domestic theme parks.[69] The *Kung Fu Panda* franchise (2008-2016) is a good example of this, boasting larger international box office figures than domestic, resulting in the 2012 creation of a themed land in the Dreamworld theme park in Australia and inclusion in Motiongate Dubai, but no appearances in domestic theme parks.[70]

On a domestic level, as demonstrated in Geoff King's *Spectacular Narratives*, audience segmentation after World War II led to an increasing demand for films that would appeal to more than one demographic. What is unclear, however, is whether the quality of such films suffered as a result of this narrative generalisation (as some scholars argue) or whether, as Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland suggest, there are varying levels of simple or complex interpretation that depend upon the audience's desire to engage with the film. Furthermore, similar debates have emerged regarding the dominance of major Hollywood film studios in the global arena, with the idea of a globally hegemonic Hollywood being challenged by the view that films became more of a collaborative process with the 'Local Hollywoods' that contribute to their development. Inescapable, however, is the fundamental cause of the

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[69] N.A., "About Motiongate", *Motiongate Dubai*, http://www.motiongatedubai.com/about-motiongate (9 March 2016).
[70] "Kung Fu Panda Total Grosses", *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/franchises/chart/?view=main&id=kungfupanda.htm&p=.htm (9 March 2016).

globalisation of Hollywood, and that is the conglomerate takeover of the major film studios with an existing international presence and the resulting drive to create successful synergistic opportunities for films and franchises of the post-classical era. It is this conglomerate presence that is particularly relevant to research about the theme park and film connection.

Walt Disney as a Post-Classical Commercial Pioneer in the Classical Era

In the context of debates about a post-classical Hollywood, Walt Disney's first feature film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) serves as an interesting case study. The film's 1937 release sets it firmly in the 'classical' era, yet Disney's promotion and marketing of the picture appear to anticipate future conglomerate strategies of brand extension. Henry A. Giroux notes that "Disney was to become a pioneer not simply in marketing Disney toys but also in licensing Mickey Mouse, Snow White, and every other character turned out by the Disney Imagineers to every conceivable advertising outlet."[71] The very definition of "pioneer" is "an innovator or developer of new ideas or techniques"; thus Giroux's classification of Disney highlights the novelty of cross-promotion.[72] Moreover, Disney's use of "every conceivable advertising outlet" foreshadows the synergistic priorities of conglomerates in the post-classical era, implying that Disney was one of the first to employ these techniques, long before the end of the classical era.

Among the promotional techniques used by Disney for *Snow White*, wide release and distribution of press materials from the Disney studio heavily influenced the content of reviews at the time of release.[73] Jonathon Frome

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[71] Henry A. Giroux, *the Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1999), p.32.
[72] *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, Eleventh Edition (revised).
[73] For more regarding reception to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* see: Jonathon Frome, "Snow White: Critics and Criteria for the Animated Feature Film", *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 30:5 (2013), pp.462-473.

infers from these reviews that Disney influenced the press by highlighting aspects of the film that were deemed especially marketable to advance audiences, mainly through regurgitation of impressive statistics regarding the film's production. Frome's evidence for this is shown through multiple articles from different sources which review the same aspects of the film, for example, the use of colour in the animation to differentiate the dwarves. This suggests that the original source of the information was Disney press releases. Despite the fact that this was hidden from the general public, the company's manipulation of contemporary media sparked further interest in the film, with the ultimate objective of increasing box office revenues.

Eric Schlosser, in examining the revolutionary force of brands, states that "*Snow White* proved a turning point in film marketing: Disney had signed seventy licensing deals prior to the film's release. Snow White toys, books, clothes, snacks, and records were already for sale when the film opened."[74] This licensing and merchandising of the film's intellectual properties forcibly situates the film as 'pioneering' in its promotional campaign, employing methods replicated (albeit possibly to a greater extent) in the post-classical period. Disney archivist, David Smith, has stated that the film had "even then, one of the biggest merchandising efforts for a movie," which included toys, a board game and tea sets, to name but a few of the items tied to the picture.[75] Furthermore, in an article for *The San Diego Reader*, Scott Marks presents multiple advertisements that utilize characters from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* in licensing agreements. The extensive range of products marketed through licensing deals, presenting the characters of the film, encompassed furnishings, clothing, groceries, restaurants, and laundry

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[74] Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (London: Penguin, 2002), p.40.
[75] David Smith quoted in Aljean Harmetz, "A Promotional Blitz for Snow White", *The New York Times*, 29 April 1987, http://www.nytimes.com/1987/04/29/movies/a-promotional-blitz-for-snow-white.html (16 January 2016).

facilities, all in an attempt to increase revenues for the film and for the advertised products.[76]

Disney's synergistic enhancement of *Snow White* also included the film's presence in the Disneyland theme park, which opened in 1955, in a ride format and multiple character "meet and greets" that continue to this day. Even the opening of Disneyland and Snow White's presence in the park illustrate that theme-park promotional efforts were in effect long before the post-classical era. 'Snow White's Scary Adventures' follows the format of the theme-park staple 'Dark Ride', an enclosed ride in which guests are escorted to different scenes in a ride vehicle. This format is a slight variation of the old 'mill ride' popularised in the amusement resorts of the late nineteenth century, such as the classic 'Tunnel of Love', which guided passengers on a boat floating along a decorated path. Disney's 'Snow White's Scary Adventures' allows ride vehicles (which resemble the dwarves' beds from the 1937 film) to guide audiences through crucial scenes from the film presented through audio-animatronics. In such a "book report ride" guests are simply moved passively from one scene of the film to the next.[77] There are some movements of the ride vehicle in relation to specific scenes but in comparison to later rides that create an immersive participatory experience and extend the original stories narrative and characters, the narrative from the film is simply repeated. This passivity contrasts with the examples I explore in later chapters in which the rides engage and interact with visitors, a phenomenon that becomes increasingly common as technology develops. As previously mentioned, then, the real issue at stake in this sense is the *extent* to which

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[76] Scott Mars, "Anatomy Of An Ad Campaign: Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*", *The San Diego Reader*, 25 July 2011, http://www.sandiegoreader.com/weblogs/big-screen/2011/jul/25/anatomy-of-an-ad-campaign-walt-disneys-emsnow-whit/# (16 January 2016).
[77] Alex Ben Block, "Why Theme Parks Need Movie Tentpoles Too", *The Hollywood Reporter*, 14 June 2012, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/theme parks-tentpoles-disney-cars-land-337086 (1 June 2016).

theme park and film cross-overs have altered the landscape of the Hollywood film industry in recent years, and how the advancement of technology, changing business structures and new aesthetic paradigms enable this.

Even moving past the *Snow White* example and considering the wider contextual picture of the Disney marketing strategy, licensing deals and cross-promotion across platforms had been established before the conception of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* and continued long after:

> Walt Disney pioneered the marketing strategy of 'synergy.' During the 1930s, he signed licensing agreements with dozens of firms, granting them the right to use Mickey Mouse on their products and in their ads … Disney later used television to achieve a degree of synergy beyond anything that anyone had previously dared… In the guise of televised entertainment, episodes of *Disneyland* were often thinly disguised infomercials, promoting films, books, toys, an amusement park – and, most of all, Disney himself, the living, breathing incarnation of a brand, the man who neatly tied all the other commodities together into one cheerful, friendly, patriotic idea.[78]

While this is surely an incomplete description of Disney's synergistic history, Schlosser's summation acts as an indication of the extensive reach of the Disney marketing machine. Further analysis of synergy and promotion within and around the Disney theme parks will follow in later chapters, yet this glimpse into the early marketing of Disney's intellectual properties illustrates that the concept of synergy is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, Gary Cross highlights the marketing of Mickey Mouse in the 1930s through the use of imagery on "blankets, watches, toothbrushes, lamp shades, radios, breakfast bowls, alarm clocks, Christmas tree lights, ties and clothing of all kinds."[79]

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[78] Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, p.40.
[79] Gary Cross, *Kid's Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.105.

Although this is a brief example of a film's multi-dimensional marketing campaign and inclusion in a theme park, it offers some insight into the way that categorisations of 'classical' and 'post-classical' Hollywood are open to questioning and contestation. *Snow White* proves that a certain level of cross-promotion and synergy involving both entertainment formats was in effect before the post-classical era. However, what distinguishes the relationship between films and theme parks in the contemporary period is the *degree* to which it has developed and the novel techniques and strategies which surround it. These embody and highlight many of the key features of the post-classical era, such as the focus on aesthetic spectacle, an emphasis on audience affect, the exploitation of cultural properties through intertextuality, and concern for the demands of the international market. We can see these characteristics emerging as entertainment conglomerates turned increasingly to the adaptation of blockbuster movies into theme-park attractions in the 1990s. Thus this is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Movies into Rides

Here You Leave Today and Enter the World of Yesterday, Tomorrow and Fantasy.

—Walt Disney, quoted on a plaque welcoming visitors to Disneyland

I. The Playground of the Blockbuster

The plaque welcoming guests to Disneyland reiterates the words that Walt Disney spoke on opening day, July 17th 1955. This idea of escaping the reality of the present into a universe which blended fiction, history and futurology became a model for theme parks around the world. Disney's opening-day speech continued: "To all who come to this happy place: Welcome . . . Disneyland is dedicated to the ideals, the dreams and the hard facts that have created America – with the hope that it will be a source of joy and inspiration to all the world."[1] Certainly, Disneyland fulfilled its inspirational objective, not least in prompting rival film studio Universal and a range of conglomerates in the latter part of the twentieth century to imitate its model. As discussed, the period of conglomeratisation (and by extension, the post-classical era of filmmaking) has been characterised by a new kind of synergistic relationship between the theme park and the moving image. Yet as Kristin Thompson has argued, cross-promotion in this form began significantly before the post-classical era. As we saw in the previous chapter, the 1955 opening of Disneyland acts as a prime example of this. However, in this chapter I will

[1] Walt Disney in Wilfred Jackson, Stu Phelps and John Rich (dirs.), *Dateline: Disneyland* (United States of America: Walt Disney Productions, 1955).

argue that the theme park-moving image relationship has taken on a new level of importance since 1990, shaping the economic and business structures of the entertainment industry, significantly influencing film style and marketing, and reflecting a new position for Hollywood with respect to globalised mass culture.

Accepting the precedents for theme park and movie synergy, with Disneyland leading the way, I argue that the contemporary theme park illustrates a significant leap in such synergy through the wholesale incorporation of movie aesthetics into theme-park design. The blockbuster film has been defined in terms of a new intensity of spectacle and pace, with its physical assault on the viewer leading critics to argue that these movies aspire to be theme-park rides. But in turn, in this post-classical era, the theme-park industry has appropriated the aesthetics of the blockbuster to build environments and attractions that increasingly seek to disrupt distinctions between representation and reality. Harkening back to the sensory impact of early cinema, post-classical blockbusters seek to produce the kinds of audience response that *Arrival of a Train* evoked in 1895. Drawing on the 'affective' power of the cinema of attractions, they use spectacle to further blur representational boundaries through the physical experience of a theme-park ride. The movie-based theme-park attraction develops these aesthetic strategies to the next level, becoming a physical intensification of the emotional and physiological responses of the film which has inspired it. Furthermore, the creation of rides based on films acts as a physical representation of the way in which a "cinema of attractions" attempts to break free of the "self-enclosed fictional world" of cinema by moving

beyond the temporal and spatial limitations of film and towards the physical experience of an attraction.[2]

Known for a multitude of post-classical blockbuster hits, Universal Studios has evolved from a film studio into a diverse conglomerate with an array of subsidiaries primed to promote its cinematic texts, not the least being its theme-park division. As the third largest theme-park group in the world, behind Walt Disney Attractions and Merlin Entertainments Group, Universal Parks and Resorts make use of the intellectual properties under the conglomerate's control, either by direct association in the production process or through licensing agreements.[3] Founded in 1912, Universal Pictures was one of the classical era film studios, eventually acquired by the Music Corporation of America (MCA) in 1962 as part of the MCA-Decca Records merger and renamed Universal City Studios two years later. In that same year the studio opened a backlot tram tour to increase profits at the studio commissary, inviting guests to get close to the filmmaking process, which sparked the studio's transformation into the theme park: Universal Studios Hollywood. Other Universal theme parks then materialized in Orlando, Florida (1990 and again in 1999 with Universal's Islands of Adventure), Japan (2001) and Singapore (2011).

Universal Parks and Resorts now resides in the NBCUniversal subsidiary of the Comcast Corporation, the largest media conglomerate in the world.[4] For this study I am examining the Hollywood and Florida parks as a

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[2] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde" in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), p.57.
[3] Judith Rubin (ed.), 'TEA/AECOM 2014 Theme Index and Museum Index: The Global Attractions Attendance Report', *Themed Entertainment Association (TEA)*, 2015, http://www.teaconnect.org/images/files/TEA_103_49736_150603.pdf (December 12, 2015).
[4] N.A., "Media Data Base – International Media Corporations 2015", *Institute of Media and Communications Policy*, http://www.mediadb.eu/en.html (16 April 2016).

direct comparison to the Disney theme parks, which are located in the same states. Universal Studios Hollywood, for instance, is less than one hour's drive from the original Disneyland Park in Anaheim; The Universal Orlando Resort is even closer to its competitor, Walt Disney World Resort, located in the same city. The competition between the two companies is often remarked upon, regularly inviting comparisons of the rides, entertainment, hotels and overall experience each offers. As one might expect, the competitiveness is intensified with regards to the Florida theme parks due to their closeness, leading some promotional material to dissuade visitors from experiencing the competitor's parks. A Universal Press packet, for instance, states that the resort "is the only Orlando destination where guests are not just entertained but where they become part of the most exhilarating entertainment ever created."[5] In utilizing the phrase "the only Orlando destination," Universal implies that other theme parks in the area (Disney) fall short in actively engaging visitors. Even in promotional leaflets, Universal Orlando is marketed in terms of taking guests "right into the middle of your favorite movies, TV shows and pop culture" rather than simply offering amusement rides.[6] It is, as one reporter notes, "[o]ne-upmanship [that] increasingly drives this intensely competitive business," a fact that is very unlikely to ever disappear.[7]

The Universal theme parks include intellectual properties generally considered to be 'blockbusters' or, at the very least, movies that rely on spectacle. In fact, almost every ride or experience offered at a Universal Studios property takes inspiration from a film or television show. Post-classical films defined by their "ride-like" narratives are especially prevalent in Universal theme parks; the Florida park is even marketed as the place "where

[5] N.A., "Company Overview", *Comcast*, http://corporate.comcast.com/news-information/company-overview (16 April 2016).
[6] N.A., "Universal Orlando Resort: Resort Guide" (2016).
[7] Brooks Barnes, 'Will Disney Keep Us Amused?', *New York Times*, 10 February 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/10/business/media/10ride.html (18 December 2015).

Blockbusters come to life."[8] Barry Langford remarks:

> [T]he ride-like address of films such as *Jurassic Park* or *Armageddon* – simultaneously immersive yet non-identificatory – has a somatic (rather than emotional) orientation that produces 'embodied' spectators, recalling them to their physical presence in the auditorium, like tourists on a theme park attraction – or indeed like the distracted, thoroughly socialised audiences of early cinema. This leads ineluctably, and by corporate design, to the elision of the distinction between movies as rides, and rides as, or licensed from movies in actual theme parks: as the Universal Studios Hollywood tour guide has it, promoting *Terminator 2: 3D* ride, 'a multi-dimensional adventure so real you can't tell what is film and what is live action'.[9]

Here Langford draws attention to the post-classical tendency to disintegrate the barriers between film representation and actual physical experience, allowing the film to become a 'thrill ride' in itself. This is done through narrative structure and the use of special effects to 'affect' audiences as though they were experiencing the scenes first-hand. In discussing 'affect' Stephen Presence notes that "the cinematic spectacle is affective by nature, and that there is thus a definite continuity between the affective responses of early spectators and the affect experienced by contemporary viewers."[10] Presence emphasises the similarities between modern spectacle and that of early film in its affective capabilities. He argues that affect "is a fundamental process in "bridging the chasm" of th[e] distance" which is "an integral part of the film

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[8] N.A., "Universal Studios Florida", *Universal Orlando Resort*, https://www.universalorlando.co.uk/Theme_Parks/universal-studios-florida.aspx (16 April 2016).
[9] Barry Langford, *Post-Classical Hollywood: Film Industry, Style and Ideology Since 1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p.251.
[10] Stephen Presence, "An Investigation of Affect in the Cinema: Spectacle and the Melodramatic Rhetoric in *Nil by Mouth*", *Frames Cinema Journal*, http://framescinemajournal.com/article/an-investigation-of-affect-in-the-cinema-spectacle-and-the-melodramatic-rhetoric-in-nil-by-mouth/ (22 August 2016), p.1.

viewing experience."[11] He brings attention to the audience's simultaneous proximity to and distance from the screen; we are up-close and personal yet still detached. Affect is a means of bringing the audience closer to the action in film, making them experience scenes of a spectacular nature emotionally, psychologically and physiologically, while not physically. That is where a theme-park attraction comes in. It can physically recreate the thrilling experiences that are only represented in the narratives and characters of sensory film spectacles.

Consider, for a moment, *Jurassic Park*'s tense scenes in which the film's characters are chased by a Tyrannosaurus-Rex. The camera angles and use of various shots throughout the sequence add to the chaos of the scene and prompt the audience to feel as though they are also being chased by carnivorous dinosaurs. The pace of shots creates a tempo that builds to a climax, quickening heartbeats against a sense of urgency, the sound of an approaching dinosaur enveloping the auditorium, immersing the senses in the action and delivering the affective experience promised by the blockbuster genre. Understanding these movies as 'thrill rides' highlights the possibilities of adaptation into theme-park attractions and makes the transition seem like an obvious one. Furthermore, the development of technology and film style has enabled a more complete breakdown of the separation of representation and 'reality' by evolving theme-park attractions into spaces that emphasise the reality of film landscapes. Therefore, I argue that the new generation of theme-park rides operates on two levels: immersion and inclusion. By this I mean that visitors are immersed in the landscape of the ride's source film as part of the queue and pre-show experience; they are then made feel included in the film's narrative by being given an active role in the attraction's storyline, which may be more or less faithful to the source film's narrative. Somewhat

[11] Stephen Presence, "An Investigation of Affect in the Cinema", p.8.

abstract at the moment, I intend to make this concept clear through the analysis of particular rides that exemplify immersion and inclusion as post-classical aesthetic strategies.

The Park of Movies

Universal's Orlando resort makes it clear that intellectual properties and franchises are essential sources of inspiration. Consisting of two theme parks, four hotels and an entertainment district, the resort has become an entertainment centre, almost self-sufficient in its existence. 'Islands of Adventure' offers six different worlds of escapism including Hogsmeade of Harry Potter fame, a land based on *Jurassic Park* and a section dedicated to the tales of Dr Seuss. The resort's theme parks are very obviously 'themed': that is, they are clearly organised into specific zones each with its own identity, purpose and relationship to a particular film or movie franchise, as shown on the resort's map. This theming exemplifies the notion that modern theme parks are allied by a common set of post-classical aesthetics, based on the concepts of immersion and inclusion. At this point, I am primarily focusing on the resort's 'Universal Studios' park due to its links to post-classical cinema through carefully chosen blockbuster examples that erode distinctions between representation and reality through the deployment of post-classical aesthetics. In a press packet the resort is described as follows:

> The Universal Orlando experience begins with its two theme parks. Along with Academy Award-winning producer/director Steven Spielberg as creative consultant, Universal Orlando set out to change the way people think about and enjoy theme park entertainment.[12]

[12] N.A., "Universal Orlando Resort Overview", Press Packet, *Universal Orlando Resort*.

The Spielberg connection amplifies the park's legacy as a movie studio, rather than just its conception as a theme park. But as Spielberg is in many respects the archetypal post-classical director, it also reminds us that the Orlando parks are synonymous with notions of the blockbuster and its accompanying conventions of spectacle. Indeed, Universal's publicity emphasises this:

> Universal Studios, which opened in 1990, has evolved into an innovative entertainment experience with a personality all its own. Its cutting-edge attractions – based on pop-culture icons, Hollywood blockbuster films and hit television shows – transport visitors into a highly imaginative world where they can become heroes of their own adventures.[13]

Universal Orlando is therefore conceived as a playground for the blockbuster. But what distinguishes it from other parks which draw on blockbusters for inspiration, however, is the inclusion of actors portraying their characters in rides sourced from film material. Distinct from Disney's longstanding integration of animated characters in their theme parks, Universal's decision to use famous actors again blurs distinctions between representation and reality. While this is not found in every ride at the park, this trend furthers a guest's immersion in the film/ride and adds to the authenticity of the ride as part of the film's narrative universe. The use of familiar actors and their characters adds another level to the theming of the park, area or ride. This is especially prominent in rides based on very specific eras of time or unique locations, such as Ancient Egypt in the case of 'Revenge of the Mummy: The Ride'. The ride format and the organisation of the visitor's experience are designed to enhance immersion and inclusion in the source film's narrative space.

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[13] N.A., "Universal Orlando Resort Overview", Press Packet, *Universal Orlando Resort*.



Universal Orlando Resort Map, showcasing the films and other media in the park.

Universal Orlando Resort.

A Part of the Movies: Immersion

As I suggested in the previous chapter, earlier examples of movie-based rides could be considered 'passive' in that the interactivity with the visitor is limited. In their article "Trends in the amusement park industry," Sandro Formica and Michael D. Olsen argue that the turn towards interactivity is linked to "multi-segmentation strategies," a concept characteristic of the period of post-classical Hollywood. This was made necessary by a shift in marketing strategy towards "older visitors, singles and couples without children" in the mid-1980s.[14] Formica and Olsen argue that "[t]he main goal focuses on actively involving adults with the attractions, instead of passively participating in their children's entertainment," implying that a different kind of ride emerges from this change.[15] As mentioned earlier, Universal parks aim to place visitors "right into the middle of [their] favorite movies" by offering experiences based solely on those movies and creating rides that invite participation or, at least, commentary on how the ride fits with its source film text. For example, the 'Men in Black: Alien Attack' ride (2000, Orlando) welcomes riders through a disguised MIB training facility, which is in fact the queue for the actual ride, showing short videos relating to the storyline of the ride with characters that the audience recognize from the original 1997 film, particularly Will Smith reprising his role as Agent Jay. The ride itself is an enhanced 'dark ride' that allows visitors to aim at and shoot aliens with a laser gun provided in the ride vehicle, all the while racking up points to compete with the other guests in their vehicle. In this instance, the ride is premised on the concept of interactivity within a PG-rated film's environment, suggesting that it was created in accordance with the shift to appeal to older and multiple

[14] Sandro Formica and Michael D. Olsen, "Trends in the amusement park industry", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 10:7 (1998), pp.303-304.
[15] Formica and Olsen, "Trends in the amusement park industry", pp.303-304.

demographics. However, the ride's intention to include guests in a film-based narrative is an example of the "inclusion" concept discussed below.

Particularly important to the concept of "immersion", through which guests feel embedded in the cinematic environment of each film, is a distinguishing factor of Universal rides, especially at the Orlando Resort: the queue and pre-show experience. It may seem odd to emphasise the importance of these aspects when every amusement park ride features a queue, but what is different at Universal is the extension of the source film's themes, characters and visual universe into every aspect of the ride to the point that visitors feel part of that narrative. The pre-show and queue experience encapsulates the notion of 'immersion' that I argue is typical of the way modern theme-park rides adopt and extend post-classical film aesthetics, blurring barriers of representation and reality. In discussing 'Revenge of the Mummy: The Ride', Creative Director John Murdy argues that visitors who have not seen *The Mummy* (1999) will be immersed in the Ancient Egyptian storyline through the "themed queue line and pre-show experience," meaning that each guest can respond to the ride's context even if they have not seen the film that the material is drawn from.[16] Based on the 1990s franchise, 'Revenge of the Mummy' is an indoor rollercoaster featuring in Universal Studios Hollywood, Orlando and Singapore. Each manifestation offers a unique track layout and storyline to match the resurrection of the film's villain, Imhotep.

Initially entering through a façade of the 'Museum of Antiquities' from *The Mummy* film, visitors embark upon an archaeological dig that, they are informed, will be the basis for the next film in the franchise. Television screens are placed throughout the queue area playing a mock documentary about the making of this fictional sequel, featuring the film's director (Stephen

[16] John Murdy quoted by Clint, "Special Report: Revenge of the Mummy – The Ride", *Moviehole.net*, 5 July 2004, http://moviehole.net/20044803special-report-revenge-of-the-mummy-the-ride (16 April 2016).

Sommers) and main actor (Brendan Fraser) frequently commenting on strange occurrences on the set, with other crew members blaming the curse of Imhotep (the film and ride's villain). The abundance of screens forces visitors to become invested in the ride before they have even got in the rollercoaster vehicle. It also organises the ride into a narrative structure in which the opening scenes occur during the queue, providing contextual background for the spectacular, special-effects climax embodied by the rollercoaster ride itself, eventually reaching a resolution in the defeat of Imhotep's curse.

The same can be said for 'Back to the Future: The Ride', which opened in Orlando in 1991. The queue in itself is rather straightforward and basic, but again there are screens offering videos of the film's character Doctor Emmett Brown welcoming visitors to his Institute of Future Technology as volunteers to test his new time machine. In these videos, Doc warns guests that Biff Tannen (the franchise's villain) has disappeared from the year 1955 with the intent of disrupting the future. Of course, this is Universal's way of laying the groundwork for the ride's narrative: Biff steals one of Doc's Delorean time machines and guests must chase him through time to stop him from altering history. In the last moments of the ride, we catch up to Biff and hurtle back to Doc victorious, saving the universe as we know it. The way that the experience is laid out, much in the same way as 'Revenge of the Mummy' and other rides at Universal, creates a narrative-like structure that further links these post-classical films to thrill rides through an extension of their storylines, themes and characters into the 'real' time and space of the park. They also exemplify the transferrable nature of these post-classical texts into physical attractions, and the evolving nature of a "cinema of attractions."[17]

Even Spielberg's post-classical blockbuster *Jaws* (1975) has received the theme-park treatment. Often heralded as one of the first post-classical

[17] Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction", p.57.

films and a turning point in cinematic history, *Jaws* appears an obvious choice for theme-park adaptation in accordance with post-classical synergistic principles. As Noel King notes:

> The post-*Jaws* world . . . was one in which blockbuster films were conceived as "multi-purpose entertainment machines that breed music videos and soundtrack albums, TV series and videocassettes, video games and theme park rides, novelizations and comic books."[18]

Initially featured in Universal Hollywood's backlot tour, theme-park visitors could experience the infamous shark attacking their tram while driving through an Amity Harbour set. Opening only a year after the film's release, the animatronic shark at the Hollywood park set a precedent for its own dedicated ride at the Universal Studios park opening in Florida (1990), with Spielberg acting as creative consultant.[19] In what is now an area dedicated to Harry Potter's 'Diagon Alley', the *Jaws* ride was surrounded by the film's town of Amity, a tourist area known for its holiday beaches. Slightly different to the other examples referenced here, the *Jaws* ride does not include any of the famous characters from the film (aside from the occasional reference) and revolves around the attempt to revive the town's tourist trade after Chief Brody, Matt Hooper and Quint destroyed the shark that terrorised the island in the original film. In an attempt to do this, local business owner Captain Jake has opened Amity Boat Tours inviting tourists to "safely" visit the sites of the shark attacks that inspired Spielberg's film. Even before reaching the queue area guests are immersed in the film's environment by allowing them to

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[18] Noel King, ""The Last Good Time We Ever Had": Remembering the New Hollywood Cinema" in Thomas Elsaesser, Alexander Horwath and Noel King (eds.), *The Last Great American Picture Show: New Hollywood Cinema in the 1970s* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004) p.23.
[19] Jason Garcia and Dewayne Bevil, "Universal Studios to close Jaws to make way for new attraction", *Orlando Sentinel*, 2 December 2011, http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2011-12-02/business/universal-to-close-jaws-20111202_1_wizarding-world-new-attraction-kongfrontation (17 May 2016).

stroll through the streets of Amity. The reality of the environment is then enhanced in the attraction's queue which, as is typical of Universal Studios rides, plays multiple videos for guests to watch whilst waiting.



Universal Studios Orlando's 'Jaws' attraction.[20]

These videos consist of a WJWS Channel 13 Amity news report, a talk show about the shark attacks, various comical adverts and promotional videos of Captain Jake's Amity Boat Tours, all intended to immerse guests in the environment of Amity, and by extension, the original *Jaws* film.[21] Reaching the docks, tourists board one of these boat tours whereupon it soon becomes clear that another shark is terrorising the waters of Amity and attacking their boat. After numerous attempts to kill and escape the shark, it appears that tourists are trapped. Luckily, a well-placed power cable from a nearby barge electrocutes the shark and everyone can live to tell the tale.

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[20] Photo taken from Germain Lussier, "Universal Studios Orlando Will Close 'Jaws' Ride", *Slashfilm.com*, 2 December 2011, http://www.slashfilm.com/universal-studios-orlando-close-jaws-ride/ (17 May 2016).

[21] To watch any of these videos visit *Amityboattours.com*, an unofficial website dedicated to the *Jaws* rides at Universal Studios parks in Florida, Hollywood and Japan. http://amityboattours.com/explore/media (17 May 2016).

In setting the attraction after the events of the film, the ride becomes a sequel to the original text, illustrating a concept that has become common in theme-park landscapes. These techniques show that post-classical Hollywood and the theme-park rides that take inspiration from it have developed a common set of aesthetic strategies that seek to immerse the spectator/visitor in the narrative universe of the source film and extend the blockbuster experience into the 'real' world beyond the screen. They also suggest that theme-park attractions are increasingly seen as movie sequels in themselves. Creative Director of 'Revenge of the Mummy' John Murdy comments on this phenomenon in a recent interview:

> [Rides are] kind of an extension of the movie experience. People go to the movies and a movie like *The Mummy* is almost a ride in itself in terms of its pacing and the action in the movie. Being a movie studio, where 99.9% of everything we do is drawn from movies and television shows, we are in a unique position where we get to collaborate with filmmakers. So to them, it's a big deal but they want to extend their story of the movie into a ride experience so that you can keep on reliving it on and on and on.[22]

Narrative extension, then, is the central device employed in the incorporation of films into theme-park landscapes. If we liken that to the common notion of 'brand extension' which aims to saturate different market segments and product lines using the brand's already established profile to further its parent company's profits, narrative extension uses the source film as a starting block for further storylines in other media products (such as video-games and theme-park rides). The theme-park attraction's narrative extension is similar to a book or video-game spin-off, offering unseen narratives, or narratives that are not showcased in the original film, that feature familiar characters and

[22] John Murdy quoted by Clint, "Special Report: Revenge of the Mummy – The Ride".

environments. Distinct from typical brand extension achieved by merchandising outlets, this form of narrative extension seeks to disintegrate barriers of representation, creating spaces of 'reality'. Fans of the films flock to immerse themselves in new adventures in Egyptian mythology or shark hunting, while visitors that have not watched the films can experience a narrative that the film did not show (in the same way that a film-based video game offers alternative storylines), perhaps even inspiring them to watch the films. Therefore, the extension of narratives in this way promotes the film and ride simultaneously, furthering the reach and financial rewards of the film.

Universal's immersion techniques are enhanced through the inclusion of characters, actors and technical personnel from the source material. As we have seen, pre-show videos increasingly feature these elements, showcasing the links between the original text and the ride. Guests thus become immersed in the film's environment even before the ride begins, adding to the feeling of 'realism' surrounding it. Richard B Schwartz has commented on this technique:

> The characters in the narrative are drawn from the original film and are played by the original actors. Thus, the ride brings the audience into the ethos of the film itself in a realistic way. In some ways it is far more engaging than cruder interactive or pseudointeractive experiences. [23]

Giving guests the possibility of engaging with these actors or characters in a storyline heightens the tension leading up to the ride itself. The ride then takes on the characteristics of a film narrative in which we are physically as well as imaginatively immersed. In the movie theatre we are positioned as spectators, regardless of the efforts of post-classical Hollywood to make watching movies

[23] Richard B. Schwartz, *After the Death of Literature* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), p.132.

like experiencing a roller-coaster ride; in the theme park, however, we are invited to become “agents”.

Through the emphasis placed on the queue and pre-show experience, visitors are physically immersed in the different eras or even worlds depicted in the films that inspired the rides, escaping everyday life for a trip to the past to save the universe or to Ancient Egypt to defeat an evil mummy’s curse. These aspects ensure that visitors are invested in the resolution of the ride’s narrative, through their interaction and engagement with the pre-show elements. Strategies of immersion emphasise that the ride and the original film are both of the same storytelling universe, irrevocably linking them to each other. And the extension of the film’s characters, themes and narrative into the ride itself allows visitors to become physically active participants in that universe in ways that are not possible in the cinema.

A Part of the Movies: Inclusion

After immersing visitors in a film’s particular thematic and visual universe, these rides also focus on including them in the narrative. Universal’s mission to transport guests “right into the middle” of their favourite films, would indicate that they intend to make guests feel included in film narratives from the outset of their theme-park adventure. The concept of ‘inclusion’ within the theme-park attraction is a deeper form of the ‘immersion’ made possible by the queue and pre-show experience. After being immersed in the film’s environment, whether that be an Egyptian tomb or a secret training facility, guests are able to experience and participate in the narrative offered by the attraction, thereby feeling more deeply included in the storytelling process. To be even clearer, ‘immersion’ refers to a more generalized sense of experiencing the film’s environment in a more profound way than can be had at the cinema,

whereas 'inclusion' refers to the idea of feeling like a character within the ride's (and film's) narrative.

'Back to the Future: The Ride', as explained earlier, is a motion simulator ride, generating the realistic experience of a moving vehicle, enhanced by video projection on a large IMAX screen. Guests board the ride vehicle (a replica of the DeLorean car made famous in the *Back to the Future* franchise, creating a tangible link to the movies) which is then elevated to a point that the cars seem to be hovering above the ground. A specially made film sequence is then projected on a gigantic, dome-shaped screen with the vehicles simulating the motions that are being shown there. Chasing the film's antagonist Biff Tannen through time, visitors become crucial in the plot's resolution as they are the only ones that can stop Biff before he changes the past. In this way, visitors are propelled into the narrative as participants and actors, rather than mere spectators. Rather than simply presenting scenes from the original film (as was the case with Disneyland's Snow White attraction) Universal have created a ride whose narrative outcome is apparently dependent on riders. Of course, the ride/narrative does not rely upon the agency of the visitor as the resolution was always predestined to be successful, but it is the thought that we are involved that is most powerful. An illusory experience, these attractions utilize spectacle and physical experience to further "bridge the gap", to use Stephen Presence's phrase, intensifying the affective power of cinema into a sensory adventure.

'Back to the Future', then, can be seen as an attempt to move the visitor beyond passivity and incorporate the film's narrative universe into a participatory attraction. Douglas Trumbull, director of the ride's film, "has

said the ride was a high point in his career since audiences were treated as 'participants' rather than passive observers."[24]

> It took you out of your seat and put you into the movie. You were in a DeLorean car. You became Marty McFly. You became a participant in the movie. The movie was all around you . . . This was a moment where, for the first time in history, you went inside a movie.[25]

Here we are again reminded of post-classical Hollywood's foundations in early cinema. As an extension of the blockbuster's attraction-like status, theme-park rides are the next step in an ongoing evolution. Rather than simply emulating a well-known film narrative, these movie-based attractions are physical manifestations of cinema's affective capabilities. The viewing experience is made more active and participatory. Rather than passively viewing Lumière's *Arrival of a Train* we could be on the train, experiencing the motions. Or, rather than watching Marty McFly and Doc Brown we can become them through the attraction at Universal Studios. This development from passivity to inclusion is made even clearer when comparing this new generation of rides to 'Snow White's Scary Adventures' in Disneyland, an attraction that simply guides passive audiences through reproductions of scenes of the original film, recreated using audio-animatronic figures and well-designed sets. 'Back to the Future', in contrast, allows audiences to enter locations from the film alongside the film's characters. Rather than simply viewing scenes, audiences experience them through the motion simulator format.

'Revenge of the Mummy' also engages guests, but in a different manner. As a rollercoaster, the attraction uses suspense to evoke aspects and

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[24] Douglas Trumbull quoted by Ian Failes, "The Art of the Ride Film (we visit 6 killer rides)", *fxguide*, 12 May 2014, https://www.fxguide.com/featured/the-art-of-the-ride-film-we-visit-6-killer-rides/ (16 April 2016).
[25] Douglas Trumbull quoted by Scott Feinberg, "Future of Film: VFX Legen Douglas Trumbull's Plan to Save the Movies", *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2 September 2014, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/race/future-film-vfx-legend-douglas-729041 (16 April 2016).

emotions of the source film. At this point I would highlight the fact that "[s]ome of us attend the movies for much the same reasons we take the rides."[26] In the case of *The Mummy,* which is classified as exhibiting traits of the action, adventure and fantasy genres, any ride based on the film would need to encourage similar emotional responses.[27] Therefore, a rollercoaster format offers the thrill and suspense reminiscent of that offered by the film. The ride also takes place in complete darkness, making it impossible for riders to guess what will happen next, adding to the suspense.

Each version of 'Revenge of the Mummy' revolves around the curse that Imhotep would incite were he to regenerate. Orlando's version sets the scene in the queue area, establishing a narrative as though the ride were a film, and then reaching the climax or peak through experiencing the motions of the ride. Of course, it is these motions that separate the experience of the ride from that of the film, creating an even more inclusive sensory experience. It is during the ride that guests are affected most noticeably through the sensations and emotions that the ride creates, making them feel as though they were experiencing an adventurous chase to save their souls.

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[26] James Monaco, *How to Read a Film: Movies, Media and Beyond* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p.397.
[27] N.A., "The Mummy (1999)", *The International Movie Database,* http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120616/ (16 April 2016).



'Revenge of the Mummy' promotional material from Universal Studios.[28]

In a report suggesting that thrill rides are good for the human body, Bob Rogers examines the chemical responses that such attractions stimulate in visitors. According to Rogers, the 'Stress Cycle' induced by theme-park rides is healthy so long as it is properly completed.[29] The first phase, or the "natural state" as Rogers describes it, is relaxed. Second is "Alarm Response, waking up neurological systems that are normally dormant," with biochemical responses including:

> Your brain signals your body to release hormones such as adrenaline, cortisol and endorphins to wake up your body and prepare to fight it or run.
> Your heart rate doubles to over 140 beats per minute.
> Endorphins (natural forms of opiates) are released, to mask any pain from exertion or injury.

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[28] N.A., "Revenge of the Mummy", *Universal Orlando*, https://www.universalorlando.com/Rides/Universal-Studios-Florida/Revenge-Of-Mummy-Roller-Coaster.aspx (17 May 2016).
[29] Bob Rogers, "Thrill Therapy: BRC Imagination Arts", *Bobrogers.com*, http://www.bobrogers.com/images/ThrillTherapy_2014_v04.pdf (17 May 2016).

> Your liver releases its sugar reserves into the blood stream for energy. The body's energy is diverted to where it is most needed. Certain blood vessels contract while others expand, causing your blood supply to "shunt," shifting blood away from the skin (reduces bleeding), away from the digestion system and away from other systems which are not immediately needed. (This explains the phrase sometimes used to describe a pale person, "You look like you just saw a ghost.") Increased blood flow surges to the brain, heart and kidneys to keep them well supplied with oxygen and sugar during the coming ordeal.[30]

Phase three is the decision between fight or flight, leading to the final stage of resolution and release where "[a]ll of this natural chemistry makes you feel really great."[31] In placing visitors in a physical 'Stress Cycle', theme-park attractions provide a complex and satisfying physical experience that cinema audiences watching the original film cannot access. Thus the level of inclusion offered through theme-park rides moves beyond the one-dimensional representation of film texts and into the multi-dimensional, physically embodied experience that I have described.

This desire for inclusion drives the attractions at Universal, with each individual park offering unique examples. At Orlando, immersion into sets and storylines set forth in pre-show areas is amplified by ride designs that make visitors participants in the resolution of the ride's narrative. The source material also has an effect on the ride, not the least being its popularity. As a result of the introduction of 'Back to the Future', "Universal Studios Florida reported an attendance increase of 52 per cent in 1991 – a rough year for all its competitors," emphasising that film texts act as great promotional tools for theme parks, and surely vice versa.[32]

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[30] Bob Rogers, "Thrill Therapy".
[31] Ibid.
[32] Formica and Olsen, "Trends in the amusement park industry", p.307.

Conclusion

Utilizing the examples of 'Jaws', 'Revenge of the Mummy' and 'Back to the Future', I have demonstrated the strategies of immersion and inclusion as they have been developed within Universal's theme parks. Immersion in a film's landscape and storytelling universe through the queue and pre-show area ensures that guests become invested in the narrative that plays out through the ride. Their subsequent inclusion in this narrative hits a fever pitch during the ride itself, allowing visitors to feel emotions and sensations that the ride evokes as if they were actually living the ride's plot and participating actively in its resolution. Linking this to notions of affect in post-classical cinema, the ride and the film texts aim to incite emotions and sensations (fear, awe, suspense, excitement, sadness, etc.) in similar ways, especially when such movies are descried as 'thrill rides' in themselves. The concepts of "immersion" and "inclusion" enable us to understand how film-into-ride adaptations seek to deliver an intensification of affect, forcing the desired emotions onto visitors by allowing them a complete sensory and physical experience rather than just a viewing experience.

Another key factor in Universal's development of the theme park as a playground for the blockbuster relies upon the fact that the blockbuster films/rides incorporate extensive live action elements, in contrast to Disney's reliance on animation. This allows the inclusion of the film's actors in the ride, an aspect that I believe is crucial to the immersive quality offered by Universal Orlando's attractions as it adds a sense of heightened authenticity through a more direct connection to the original text. Animation-based rides, such as 'Snow White's Scary Adventures' in Disneyland, employ static audio-animatronic characters that can easily be replicated and thus do not achieve the heightened sense of immersion, inclusion and authenticity that live action characters produce.

Of course, technological advancements have made these examples more complex in comparison to earlier rides, such as those at Disneyland. Formica and Olsen assert that "[t]echnology is leading the major changes in the amusement park industry . . . Reproduction of motion picture characters such as the dinosaurs of Jurassic Park, has vastly improved with the help of computer-assisted technology."[33] This will be considered in the second part of this chapter, in relation to rides that rely upon new and updated technology to further visitors' sense of immersion and inclusion within theme-park attractions. However, Universal Studios should be acknowledged as a post-classical theme park, due to its dependence on the exploitation of spectacular special effects within films to increase the appeal of their parks' attractions and to develop the visitor experience in ways that intensify and translate into 'real' physical time and space the aesthetics of the movie blockbuster. The recent announcement that Orlando will welcome an attraction based on *The Fast and the Furious* action film franchise (2001 to present) indicates that Universal remains committed to the conception of the theme park as a playground for the blockbuster, and that the translation of post-classical film aesthetics into 'real-life' entertainment experiences will continue to intensify.

[33] Ibid., p.305.

II. A Land of Immersion

Chronologically tracking the evolution of film's involvement within a theme-park environment, the material of this section seeks to evaluate the conventions of contemporary attractions. Just as the spectacle of early cinema has evolved into a new "cinema of attractions,"[1] the film-based theme-park ride has matured in its attempts to "immerse" and "include" audiences. Whether they are derived from already successful films or serve as the basis for the development of new movies and movie franchises, modern theme-park rides are invariably based on existing intellectual properties, with Disney and Universal leading the way. Known as "branding in perpetuity,"[2] the extension of popular movie franchises into theme parks perpetuates not only the original film but its characters, merchandise and other related products. Discussing 'The Wizarding World of Harry Potter' at Universal Studios (which will be analysed in more depth later) reporter Alex Ben Block comments on this:

> [L]ong after guests have stepped off their last dizzying ride, stuffed themselves with Hogsmeades sweets and butterbeer and waved goodbye to the costumed characters at the exit gate, their enthusiasm will create a halo effect, generating revenue outside the park in the form of DVDs, holiday gifts and movie tickets, as well as franchise sequels and Imax and 3D versions.[3]

"Enthusiasm" for an intellectual property emphasises an almost cyclical interaction between audiences and the original text. After watching the film,

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[1] Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction", p.57.
[2] Marc Graser, "From 'Harry Potter' to 'Hunger Games,' How Theme Parks Have Caught Franchise Fever", *Variety*, 5 June 2014, http://variety.com/2014/film/news/from-harry-potter-to-hunger-games-how-theme parks-have-caught-franchise-fever-1201210671/ (1 June 2016).
[3] Alex Ben Block, "Why Theme Parks Need Movie Tentpoles Too", *The Hollywood Reporter*, 14 June 2012, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/theme parks-tentpoles-disney-cars-land-337086 (1 June 2016).

enamoured audiences seek to engage further with the characters through merchandising outlets, including spin-off novels and video games, then in an attempt to become immersed in the narrative can (if so inclined or able) participate in the film's landscape and narrative in 'real' time and space in a ride.

Increasingly common in the modern theme-park industry is the use of licensed franchises, with cases in both Universal and Disney. The latter, for instance, had licensing agreements with Pixar Animation and Lucasfilm with the intention to incorporate the *Indiana Jones* and *Star Wars* franchises into their theme parks.[4] In 2011 Disney announced a licensing agreement to exhibit and produce attractions based on James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). Taking the top spot in the all-time, worldwide box office, *Avatar* is the epitome of a modern blockbuster.[5] Using spectacle and technologically innovative techniques, Cameron's film is a culmination of the interpenetration of blockbuster film aesthetics and theme-park attraction strategies. The virtual reality present in *Avatar* enhances its "ride-like" status by demanding that the limitations of conventional cinema be abandoned in favour of the technologically impressive and increasingly affective experience that a virtual world can offer. By this I mean that in creating a film dependent of technology to express itself fully and by using extensive amounts of spectacle, the audience's suspension of disbelief extends far past that of the 1970s blockbuster, consequently enhancing its relation to a theme-park ride. Distinctions between representation and reality blur even further in *Avatar*, as virtual reality transports audiences from the realistic world they inhabit towards the visually stunning and believable world of Pandora. An attraction in itself, the film seems an obvious choice for theme-park adaptation, again

[4] Although originally acting as licensed properties, the Disney corporation acquired Pixar Animation Studios in 2006, and Lucasfilm in 2012.
[5] N.A. "All Time Box Office: Worldwide Gross", *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/ (25 August 2016).

"bridging the gap"[6] further than the sensory affective experience offered by the original text.

Before examining *Avatar* any further, I would like to again draw attention to the use of licensed properties with the modern theme park. Disney's purchase of Pixar in 2006 is a major example of such an enterprise. Despite using the character of Buzz Lightyear from *Toy Story* (1995) in the ride 'Buzz Lightyear Space Ranger Spin' as early as 1998, characters from *A Bug's Life* (1998) from 2002 and the character of Crush from *Finding Nemo* (2003) since 2004, Disney's acquisition of Pixar enabled an expansion of attractions based on the studio's most recognizable characters. Disneyland Resort Paris allocated a significant proportion of its Walt Disney Studios Park to Pixar's animated characters in an area aptly named 'Toon Studio' with the only non-Pixar based ride in this area being 'Flying Carpets Over Agrabah' inspired by Disney's *Aladdin* (1992).

In the California resort, Pixar's presence became a draw for many with the introduction of 'Cars Land' at Disney's California Adventure park in 2012: "In 2010, California Adventure attracted approximately 6.3 million guests. That number rose 22.6% to 7.7 million the year 'Cars Land' opened."[7] The intricately themed area dedicated to the fictional town of Radiator Springs (from the 2006 film *Cars*) is home to three attractions based on the franchise, the most prominent being 'Radiator Springs Racers'. Boarding vehicles fashioned after the film's main character, guests tour parts of Route 66 before visiting Luigi's Casa Della Tires for replacement wheels or Ramone's House of Body Art for a makeover in preparation for the big race against another carful of guests. As with earlier examples, immersion into the film's landscape is enabled through the queue and pre-show experience. In this case the entire

[6] Presence, "An Investigation of Affect in the Cinema", p.8.
[7] Marc Graser, "From 'Harry Potter' to 'Hunger Games,' How Theme Parks Have Caught Franchise Fever".

area of Cars Land acts as the pre-show element, immersing guests into the animated feature and collapsing the distinction between animated representation and reality. Tom Staggs, Chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, recalls: "On the opening day of Cars Land, I overheard one little boy asking his mother if this was where the movie was filmed. At that point, I knew we'd hit the mark."[8] This, along with other recent examples, tends to show that the immersive nature of the entire environment, rather than just the ride queue, is as important as the attraction itself. According to Jeffrey Godsick, former president of Twentieth Century Fox Consumer Products: "It's not a façade . . . It's something you can now walk into and experience, and it better be genuine."[9]

[8] Tom Staggs quoted in Marc Graser, "From 'Harry Potter' to 'Hunger Games,' How Theme Parks Have Caught Franchise Fever".
[9] Jeffrey Godsick quoted in Marc Graser, "From 'Harry Potter' to 'Hunger Games,' How Theme Parks Have Caught Franchise Fever".



Disney's California Adventure theme park map showcasing Cars Land (before the addition of 'Luigi's Rollicking Roadsters)'.

Disneyland Resort.

Illustrated through the example of Cars Land is a distinguishing feature of modern cinematic involvement with the theme-park industry: the creation of a "land" dedicated to transporting and immersing guests right into the film as a pre-show experience, perhaps even a "pre-pre-show" experience. While, of course, some of the earlier examples I have discussed are located in such lands it is important to note that in announcing the addition of a new ride it is very rare that said ride is a standalone project. The examples discussed in this section are evidence of this. It is now commonplace to create an atmosphere surrounding a ride, immersing guests in environments that they recognize from the original film text, familiarizing themselves with the terrain and structures that they have, until this point, only seen on the big screen. These newer rides also appear in lands that are more specifically focused on the original material. For example, 'Snow White's Scary Adventures' can be found in Disneyland's 'Fantasyland' area which is themed to accommodate a variety of fairytales. On the other hand, 'Radiator Springs Racers' is located in an area dedicated entirely to its own film. A growing trend in the theme-park's landscape, the physical devotion to a single film or franchise in its own "land" is a distinguishing feature of modern attractions.

Furthermore, the area is an attraction in itself, enabling audiences to immerse themselves completely in a single film's environment. Catering to this totality of immersion, "lands" generally include more than one ride based on the source material and in addition offer an abundance of themed shopping and food locations. Cars Land separates its three attractions with three eating locations and three merchandising outlets, all themed to match recognizable locations from the film, implying that guests could remain immersed in Radiator Springs all day if they wished as all of their needs could be fulfilled in that one specific area. In creating a functional mini-town offering food, drink, shopping and entertainment, "lands" represent another way in which theme

parks blur the line between representation and reality, making the representation 'real.' The intensified self-contained quality of Cars Land exemplifies the modern insistence on a fully immersive experience, in contrast to a generically themed land that holds a variety of rides. Take, for instance, Disneyland upon its opening: five themed areas, one of which is Fantasyland. The fairytales that inspire this land's theming acts as a general theme by which all of the rides in this area must adhere to. This one land is the location of multiple film adaptations, such as 'Snow White's Scary Adventures', 'Peter Pan's Flight' and 'Mr. Toad's Wild Ride', which distracts the attention from one intellectual property and requires a greater leap in imagination to connect each film's relationship to the surrounding area and acts as a barrier to full-blown "immersion". By contrast, Cars Land is an intensification of the themed 'land' concept by dedicating it solely and completely to *Cars* (2006). It allows audiences to wander through the town of Radiator Springs, offering rides, shops and eating establishments, all intricately and precisely themed. The level of "immersion" has deepened through the environment that surrounds the attractions and behaves as a "pre-pre-show" that intensifies the immersion described in the previous chapter.

Even longstanding rides can evolve into more immersive environments. Notably, the *Star Wars* franchise, encompassing a saga of films spanning decades of production, has a strong theme-park presence which increasingly adopts the strategies of immersion and inclusion deriving from post-classical film aesthetics. This is appropriate given that *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977) has often been hailed as the beginning of a post-classical Hollywood that relied upon spectacle and the extension of tie-in merchandising. Giving rise to films such as *Back to the Future* and *Jurassic Park*, *Star Wars* established the idea of the 'movie franchise' as a motivating factor in Hollywood film production during a conglomerate era. As *Total Film* magazine reports: "In Hollywood, one thing's for certain - you can't keep a good franchise down."[10] Opened in 1986, 'Star Tours' was a licensed motion simulated attraction at Disneyland, transporting tourists to the Forest Moon of Endor, courtesy of an inexperienced droid pilot. After an exhilarating jump to lightspeed and an unfortunate collision with a comet, the Star Tours vehicle (also known as the Starspeeder 3000) is trapped in the tractor beam of an Imperial Star Destroyer, catching the attention of a friendly X-wing fighter who assists in our escape. The Starspeeder then becomes a fighter for the Republic, capturing the motions of Luke Skywalker's attack on the Death Star, physically including guests in the film by re-enacting it with their involvement. The ride ends as the speeder lands, somewhat jerkily, on Endor with the pilot promising to "do better next time!" Perhaps somewhat passive, in comparison to later reincarnations, the original 'Star Tours' included audiences through the physical experience of life in space, and a daring escape from the dark side.

[10] Richard Jordan, 'Spell Bound: *Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them*', *Total Film*, February 2016, p.55.

In 2011 'Star Tours' reopened after a lengthy refurbishment and multiple changes, renamed 'Star Tours — The Adventure Continues.' Guests now join the recognisable C-3PO on a recreational visit to one of the locations presented in the *Star Wars* films (Episodes I to VI), which is then interrupted by Darth Vader who believes a person from the Rebellion is on board the ship. In attempting to flee capture, the Starspeeder 1000 in which guests are riding runs into trouble, creating an interactive and immersive involvement in the *Star Wars* universe, with new multiple narrative arcs offered to audiences. Most importantly, perhaps, the ride was now in 3D, mirroring technological advancements in cinema in an attempt to intensify the immersive and inclusive experience of the ride. This newer version intensified the audience "inclusion" of the original 'Star Tours' through the insistence that a Rebellion spy is on board the ride. After Vader declares the existence of the spy, a person from the ride vehicle is chosen at random and their photograph is displayed for the other riders to identify. The person chosen to be the spy is visually inserted into the attraction's narrative through this photograph, becoming a crucial player in the fight against the dark side. Other riders are also included in the narrative by assisting in the escape of this spy, not to mention the physical manifestation of affective scenes from the franchise's films.

The success of the first *Star Wars* allowed Lucasfilm to continue the saga in two sequels and three prequels to complete the narrative arc, all distributed by Twentieth Century Fox.[11] In 2012 the Disney corporation acquired Lucasfilm for $4.06 million, subsequently announcing three more episodes to be created in continuation of the original plot alongside multiple

[11] David Kamp, 'The Force is Back', *Vanity Fair*, 31 January 1999, http://www.vanityfair.com/news/1999/02/star-wars (18 December 2015).

spin-off films.[12] Furthermore, as was expected by many industry experts, observers and theme-park fans, at a presentation dedicated to upcoming attractions at the Disney D23 Expo in California (2015), it was announced that both American Disney parks would dedicate a themed area to *Star Wars* - a *'Star Wars* Land' as it has been called - in addition to refurbishing the existing 'Star Tours' attraction to feature scenes, characters and locations from the new films. Disney CEO Bob Iger announced:

> We are creating a jaw-dropping new world that represents our largest single themed land expansion ever. These new lands at Disneyland and Walt Disney World will transport guests to a whole new *Star Wars* planet, including an epic *Star Wars* adventure that puts you in the middle of a climactic battle between the First Order and the Resistance.[13]

While the 'Star Tours' attraction remains, an immersive land is to be developed in the surrounding area, promising new attractions alongside a variety of themed merchandising and food outlets. Reminiscent of the self-contained nature of Cars Land, this new Star Wars area emphasizes the evolution of singular rides into a fully immersive experience by showcasing the existing 'Star Tours' attraction in the midst of a new themed landscape. Indeed, it suggests that there is an attempt to intensify the "immersive" nature of existing rides before developing new attractions, to coincide with the increasingly affective capabilities of film spectacle (through the forms of IMAX and 3D) and theme-park rides.

It is perhaps fair to say, therefore, that Disney's investment in the *Star*

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[12] Devin Leonard, 'How Disney Bought Lucasfilm – and Its Plans for 'Star Wars'', *Bloomberg Business*, 7 March 2013, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-03-07/how-disney-bought-lucasfilm-and-its-plans-for-star-wars (18 December 2015).
[13] Bob Iger quoted by Erin Glover, 'Star Wars-Themed Lands Coming to Walt Disney World and Disneyland Resorts', *Disney Parks Blog*, 15 August 2015, http://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2015/08/star-wars-themed-lands-coming-to-walt-disney-world-and-disneyland-resorts/ (18 December 2015).

Wars franchise is extensively engaged in furthering alternative platforms for the films through the theme parks, rather than centering all efforts on the moving image. In other words, Disney appears to be as concerned with the integration of the franchise into their theme parks as they are with continuing its cinematic legacy. The dedication of land to create new, immersive environments, rather than simply updating the current attraction, confirms this. Indeed, scenes from *The Force Awakens* (2015), the first Disney-produced Star Wars film, lend themselves extremely well to the simulated Star Tours attraction. The episode in which The First order chases the Millennium Falcon through the sandy terrain of Jakku is a spectacular example of the shared aesthetic basis of post-classical cinema and the modern theme-park ride and does, in fact, appear as one of the adventurous journeys in the 'Star Tours' attraction. Demonstrating an intimate co-dependency between the films and the ride, 'Star Tours' relies on the franchise's spectacular sequences and audience familiarity with these scenes in order to visually replicate the affective action. Take, for instance, the pod racing sequence in *The Phantom Menace* (1999). To fans of the franchise, it is instantly recognizable and invited translation into theme-park attractions through the camera movement and pace. In transplanting this sequence into the 'Star Tours' attraction audiences are "included" in the affective scene, physically experiencing the race through the motion-simulator format.

Harry Potter

> There are so many movie franchises that have had four or more films but very few have lent themselves to the theme park application the way Harry

> Potter has. It goes back to the stories, the characters and the environments. It's evergreen in nature. The popularity will not wane.[14]

Considered to be Universal's "game changer", 'The Wizarding World of Harry Potter' began its journey into the realm of theme parks with the 2010 opening of a Hogsmeade-themed area in Orlando's Islands of Adventure park, in collaboration with Warner Brothers Entertainment, which "[i]n its first year… estimated to have cost $265 million, drove park attendance up 30 percent."[15] Since then, Orlando has opened a Diagon Alley section in the neighbouring park, connected to the Hogsmeade "land" by a replica of the Hogwarts Express train, which is an attraction in itself, encouraging park guests to purchase a two-park ticket in order to experience both areas. As a result of the resounding success in Orlando, Universal Studios Japan welcomed a Hogsmeade area in 2014, followed by Hollywood's park two years later.

As with Cars Land, immersion into the ride's narrative is intensified by the surrounding self-contained environment. Hogsmeade transports guests from the warm climates of Florida and Los Angeles to a snowy Wizarding village in Scotland through the presentation of the area. Grey stone structures, recognisable from the films, topped with snow, line the street leading to the very impressive reconstruction of Hogwarts Castle which contains 'Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey', an intensified dark ride. After queueing through the castle and its grounds, filled with entertaining and interactive elements, visitors board a KUKA RoboCoaster vehicle which is a four-seat bench attached to a robotic arm which moves them through the ride. Just as with earlier Universal attractions, the original film's actors strongly impact the audience's immersion and inclusion within the ride. Daniel Radcliffe, Rupert Grint and Emma Watson reprise their roles as Harry, Ron and Hermione

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[14] Tom Williams quoted in Marc Graser, "From 'Harry Potter' to 'Hunger Games,' How Theme Parks Have Caught Franchise Fever".
[15] Alex Ben Block, "Why Theme Parks Need Movie Tentpoles Too".

alongside a cast of other recognisable characters that directly address guests in the queue and on the ride itself. This is achieved through film projection on well-placed screens in the queueing area and wrap-around projection screens in certain sections of the ride, acting as a motion-simulator type attraction.



The Wizarding World of Harry Potter- Hogsmeade, at Universal's Islands of Adventure[16]

When boarding the ride, a projection of Hermione "covers" the vehicle with 'Floo Powder' known from the books and films as a means of transportation. Subsequently, the narrative of the ride follows Harry and Ron rushing to their Quidditch match, only for them (and us) to be chased by Hagrid's Hungarian Horntail dragon. As the ride vehicles turn the corner we are faced with an animatronic dragon that forces us into the Forbidden Forest and many large, but realistic, animatronic spiders. On a projection screen, Dementors attack the Quidditch pitch causing the vehicles to turn away and meet animatronic Dementors. As soon as Harry rescues guests from these villains, they fly back to Hogwarts, greeted by an array of characters cheering a safe return. In describing the ride, it becomes clear that this is an original narrative or one that has not been featured in any of the franchise's films.

[16] N.A., "The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Hogsmeade", *Universal Orlando Meetings and Events*, https://www.uomeetingsandevents.com/In-Park-Events/Event-Options-And-Locations/Universal-Islands-Of-Adventure/The-Wizarding-World-Of-Harry-Potter.html (6 June 2016).

Therefore, The Wizarding World also embodies the notion of theme-park attractions as sequels, or what Craig Hanna, a former director of Attraction Development at Universal Studios, calls the 'one-point-five' version:

> If you go back to those very first attractions, what Walt Disney put into Fantasyland, those are what we like to call 'book report rides.' They were just a retelling of the film. These days, audiences are much more sophisticated and want to be surprised. So we talk about the 'one-point-five' version of the attraction: It's got bits of the old and bits of something new. For Harry Potter in Orlando, Universal developed whole new unexpected situations based around the characters and settings we loved from the films. Same with Transformers; we're met with the characters we know and battles similar to ones in the films – but in a new story context.[17]

Comparing these new attractions with early Disney examples (such as 'Snow White's Scary Adventures') emphasises the distinction between the 'book report rides' that simply reiterate the original film's narrative and the immersive, inclusive attractions that draw upon and exploit post-classical film aesthetics. The supplementary nature of these modern rides offers a different narrative experience than the original film, incentivising audiences to pay entry into the theme park in order to experience it. By extending the narrative of the film's characters in this way these "one-point-five" attractions introduce more commercial opportunities for cinematic and theme-park industries. It is an intensification of conglomerate synergy, even more so than that of the previous chapter, by promising supplementary narratives to fans of the franchise and thereby demanding that audiences can only experience these extended storylines by purchasing a theme-park ticket. In addition to the promotional benefits to the specific theme park, these narratives can then be supported through the merchandising efforts associated with a conglomerate

[17] Craig Hanna quoted in Alex Ben Block, "Why Theme Parks Need Movie Tentpoles Too".

Hollywood, especially products that bear reference to the attraction's narrative. Significantly, it also "keeps (the Potter franchise) out there in a very relevant three-dimensional way," adhering to the notion of perpetual branding discussed earlier, by physically allowing guests to interact and feel like a part of the franchise.[18]

Avatar

Announced in 2011, Disney Parks began a "long-term creative partnership with James Cameron's Lightstorm Entertainment and Fox Filmed Entertainment" to create an *Avatar*-themed "land" in Disney's Animal Kingdom park in Florida.[19] In what is essentially a licensing agreement, Disney is able to utilize landscapes and characters from the highest-grossing film of all time guaranteed to attract visitors from around the globe. In addition, Cameron has announced that there will be four sequels to the 2009 hit, giving Disney the "branding in perpetuity" that such a franchise can offer. In consideration of post-classical Hollywood and concepts of the blockbuster aesthetic, "*Avatar* is the ultimate expanded blockbuster, updated with the latest cinematic imaging tools to become the synthesis of technology, visual cinema, and narrative developments, not to mention self-consciousness, over the last thirty years or so."[20] In consideration of Elsaeesser and Buckland's levels of interpretation or Geoff King's "underlying" and "surface" narrative structures within post-classical film, *Avatar* certainly adheres to the

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[18] Brad Globe quoted in Marc Graser, "From 'Harry Potter' to 'Hunger Games,' How Theme Parks Have Caught Franchise Fever".
[19] Thomas Smith, "AVATAR Coming To Disney Parks", *Disney Parks Blog*, 20 September 2011, https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2011/09/avatar-coming-to-disney-parks/ (3 June 2016).
[20] Julie A. Turnock, *Plastic Reality: Special Effects, Technology, and the Emergence of 1970s Blockbuster Aesthetics* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2015), p.273.

conventions of its cinematic predecessors.[21] Offering what is, on one hand, a spectacular science-fiction adventure to a new planet alongside a 'good versus evil' plot could be a surface reading of the text. Reading deeper into the film, however, characters face moral challenges, testing their strength against dominant forces that seek to invade and destroy in order to reap financial reward. Evoking sentiments of a historical past in which native peoples are displaced and disrupted, *Avatar*'s narrative seems an unlikely fit with the Disney theme parks.

When questioned how a PG-13 film would fit into the family-friendly environment of a Disney theme park, Chief Operating Officer Tom Staggs replies:

> At its core, AVATAR is a film that embraces strong, positive themes of family, loyalty, living in harmony with nature and belief in oneself – all values that we share at The Walt Disney Company. You can be sure that these are the same themes that we will explore throughout our AVATAR lands. They will be places where friends and families can spend time together getting lost in a fantasy world, one of the true hallmarks of any Disney theme park experience.[22]

Steering clear of the film's more mature themes and instead focusing on the values that form its foundations, the "land" interprets particular aspects of the film while ignoring others much in the same way as audiences may choose how deeply to engage with the text. Controversial issues associated with the film are abandoned, in this case, while the moral values are emphasised. Perhaps the commercial success and popularity of *Avatar* is blinding enough

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[21] Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland, *Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis* (London: Arnold, 2002), pp.66-77. Also explored in King, *Spectacular Narratives,* pp.17-18.
[22] Tom Staggs, "Answering Your Questions about AVATAR at Disney Parks", *Disney Parks Blog*, 20 September 2011, https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2011/09/answering-your-questions-about-avatar-at-disney-parks/ (1 June 2016).

to conceal the PG-13 narrative. Yet, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the announcement of a licensing agreement with Cameron comes after the success and inclusion of Disney's first PG-13 film, *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, illustrating a conscious effort to appeal to a wider, older audience. With this in mind, it seems prudent to suggest that *Avatar*'s inclusion within a Disney theme park is an extension of this strategy.

Since Disney remains secretive regarding the land's details, little is known of the attractions or the themed land at this moment and thus not much can be said of the area's immersive and inclusive qualities. However, perhaps examining the *Avatar* film can offer a glimpse into this aspect of the film's actualisation in a theme park. The film's technologically enabled landscape and narrative are reminiscent of a theme-park attraction's attempt to blur distinctions between representation and reality. Pandora (the planet inhabited by native tribes of the Na'vi) was created entirely through the use of computer generated imagery with actors relying on performance capture to detect their movement, yet the realistic nature of the film touched the hearts of a global audience. As Nick Heffernan and David Wragg note: "[s]oon after the film's opening, thousands of fans flooded internet forums having experienced depression and suicidal thoughts . . . because they longed to enjoy the beauty of the alien world" and were tormented by "feelings of disgust with the human race", illustrating the real-world impact caused by a virtually-created film.[23] In the same way that theme-park attractions blur distinctions of representation and reality, the reactions provoked by *Avatar* move beyond its virtual sphere and into the realm of the real.

Julie Turnock, in analysing special effects, argues that "[t]he diegesis [in *Avatar*] provides both the viewer and the onscreen protagonist virtual

[23] Nick Heffernan and David A. Wragg, 'Culture, Environment and Ecopolitics' in Nick Heffernan and David A. Wragg (eds.), *Culture, Environment and Ecopolitics* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), p. 9.

bodies through which to explore a synthetic fantasy world full of exhilarating activities in order to push that body to its (safely observed) limits."[24] If one explores this for a moment, *Avatar* again mirrors the function of theme-park rides by enabling audiences to experience a fictional world from a distance. As Bob Rogers suggests, rides are a means of completing the stress cycle whilst remaining in relative control of the situation, thereby enabling the emotions they elicit to be experienced without risk.[25] However, according to Heffernan and Wragg, the distinctive feature of *Avatar* is that audiences were unable to 'manage' or 'deal with' the emotions that the film stirred up. They were seriously affected by the immoral actions of certain characters and suffered depression upon realising that they could not personally experience the stunning world of Pandora. Perhaps, in the case of *Avatar*, the distinction between representation and reality is so eroded that the safe management of emotions is itself under threat; meaning that, in its culmination of blockbuster film aesthetics and theme-park attraction strategies, the film has evolved the conventional post-classical film into a more affective and immersive experience. More than any other film, it is an intensification of the "ride-like" status promised by the blockbuster format, using virtual reality to further erode the distance between the film and the audience. *Avatar*'s dependence on technology to create the spectacle that is Pandora, and the "virtual body" that it gives to the audience, brings the film closer to the status of a theme-park attraction and, by extension, makes its narrative a physical experience by altering its grasp on reality. These technological strategies bring the film closer to the audience, altering perceptions of reality and intensifying the emotional experience by heightening the film's "ride-like" nature.

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[24] Julie A. Turnock, *Plastic Reality*.
[25] Bob Rogers, "Thrill Therapy".

When discussing the film's transition into a theme park, Staggs reports: "We expect this land to be anchored by multiple attractions, entertainment, merchandise locations, restaurants and other immersive elements. Our AVATAR lands will give guests the chance to see, hear and touch the world of Pandora."[26] The themed land blurs the distinction between representation and reality even further, as earlier examples have shown, physically immersing guests in the world of Pandora. Indeed, promotional material from the *Avatar* exhibit at Disney's D23 Expo indicates that access to Cameron's world will be granted courtesy of 'A.C.E.' or 'Alpha Centauri Expeditions' which appears to be a way of experiencing Pandora through a holiday tourist package. This treatment is similar to 'Star Tours' in that guests are also treated as tourists, or space tourists as the case may be, eagerly awaiting their next adventure. The images also hint at the kind of rides to expect in the new land. For instance, a scenic boat ride through the "bioluminescent world" of Pandora presents itself in the image and has since been confirmed to be a family-friendly attraction called 'Na'vi River Journey'. The other images portray the visual representation of Pandora translated from the film text into a real environment, emphasising the immersive qualities that a themed land can possess. Perhaps a themed land is most important in this case, more so than any other franchise, as the narrative of the film is so dependent on this engaging environment, thereby making any theme-park attractions based on the film also reliant on the representation of Pandora. Moreover, emotional response to the film suggests that the barriers of representation and reality are so eroded in this case that the world offered to audiences in the film became a tangible experience. By adapting the material into a theme-park "land" with attractions that supplement the film's narrative, *Avatar* becomes even more real.

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[26] Tom Staggs, "Answering Your Questions about AVATAR at Disney Parks".



Posters on display at the *Avatar* Exhibit at the D23 Expo.[27]

In comparing these more recent examples with earlier attractions it becomes clear that a ride's surrounding environment has become even more important to its immersive qualities. By situating rides in themed "lands" the pre-ride experience is extended beyond the queue area into carefully contained pockets of cinematic space, creating deeper levels of immersion into the film's atmosphere, setting and iconography. An intensification of earlier examples, these areas are self-contained landscapes that offer full-blown immersion into the storytelling universe of the source film that can go beyond the limitations of plot, narrative and affect imposed by cinema's temporal and spatial constraints.

[27] Jennifer Fickley-Baker, "A Peek Inside the AVATAR Exhibit at D23 Expo", *Disney Parks Blog*, 19 August 2015, https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2015/08/a-peek-inside-the-avatar-exhibit-at-d23-expo/ (6 June 2016).

Although the current examples of *Star Wars* and *Avatar* are conceptual and under construction at this moment in time, they have been included in this analysis to provide a comparison with *Harry Potter* at Universal Studios. All three of these cases have enjoyed blockbuster success as franchises and showcased post-classical aesthetics of spectacle, gaining them attention for theme-park adaptation. Consequently, they are prime examples of the industry's conscious decision to choose franchises with a strong fan base, prominent spectacle, a distinctive iconography and narrative arcs that can be transferred easily into a ride format in the hopes that the ride and original text perpetuate one another's longevity. Furthermore, *Avatar*'s technological spectacle takes the post-classical ride-like aesthetic to a new level, blending more seamlessly than ever blockbuster spectacle with the physically embodied affect provided by the theme-park attraction. Its deployment of virtual reality and the emotions that it evokes in the audience have succeeded in blurring distinctions between representation and reality more effectively than any previous blockbuster. It is no surprise, then, its translation into the theme-park environment will represent the latest stage in the relationship between movies and rides.

Chapter Three

Rides into Movies

> Pirates of the Caribbean represents a milestone in immersive Disney storytelling . . . an adventure of unparalleled scope and artistry that would become (and remain) the "crown jewel" of Disney theme park experiences. Now . . . a new generation around the world is being introduced to the adventures of the Pirates of the Caribbean, and the legacy lives on! In turn, these films are inspiring a new generation of Imagineers to explore how the new characters and adventures might come to life within our Pirates of the Caribbean attractions. And why not? It turns out that dead men do tell tales, and those tales are as entertaining and enduring as the attraction that inspired them almost forty years ago. "And that be the real treasure!"[1]

I. A World of Immersion

Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl (2003) follows young blacksmith Will Turner on a quest to save Elizabeth Swann from a cursed pirate crew led by Captain Barbossa. Will, influenced by his love for Elizabeth, joins forces with Captain Jack Sparrow who seeks revenge on Barbossa for his mutinous actions many years before that saw Sparrow marooned on an island watching Barbossa flee with his ship 'The Black Pearl'. In his time as Captain, however, Barbossa and his crew found the Aztec Chest of Cortés filled with cursed gold that sentenced the pirates to join the legions of the undead, forcing them to become skeletal in the moonlight. *Dead Man's Chest* (2006), *At World's End* (2007) and *On Stranger Tides* (2011) are the franchise's second, third and fourth films respectively. The adventures of Jack Sparrow continue in these films, each presenting new challenges for him to face. Notable new characters from these sequels are its villains: Davy Jones in the

[1] Tom Fitzgerald (Executive Vice President and Senior Creative Executive at Walt Disney Imagineering) in Jason Surrell, *Pirates of the Caribbean: From the Magic Kingdom to the Movies* (New York: Disney Editions, 2005), p.7.

second and third film and Blackbeard in the fourth. They replace Barbossa as Jack's adversaries, providing forceful opposition to his special brand of heroism. Davy Jones is a well-known part of nautical mythology, with those that die at sea from drowning or shipwreck falling to 'Davy Jones' Locker'. Similarly, the character Blackbeard has a historic place in pirate mythology. Also known as Edward Teach, he was Captain of the 'Queen Anne's Revenge' and relied on his villainous reputation to ensure the compliance of others. In using culturally renowned figures, *Pirates of the Caribbean* draws on the established cultural imagery of piracy, enhancing the film's realism and appeal by referencing historical fact and popular mythology.

The Curse of the Black Pearl soared to number three in the 2003 box office chart and revived the pirate genre, grossing $654,264,015 worldwide.[2] Unbeknownst to some, this swashbuckling adventure derived from Disney theme parks and is based on the attraction 'Pirates of the Caribbean', a ride which Walt Disney oversaw though he died before its completion in 1967. This phenomenon is the reverse of what has been explored in the previous chapter. Rather than creating a themed environment or ride based on a film, an existing attraction (such as 'Pirates of the Caribbean') is adapted into a series of film narratives. The success of the first film sparked the creation of three sequels, each attaining success at the box office and performing especially well in foreign markets.[3] *Dead Man's Chest*, for instance, ranked first in the 2006 box office chart with sixty percent of its worldwide gross attributed to international ticket sales. This trend continued for the third and fourth films of the franchise: sixty-seven percent of *At World's End*'s gross came from foreign sales, and seventy-six percent for *On Stranger Tides*. This is in

[2] N.A., "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl", *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=piratesofthecaribbean.htm (22 August 2016).
[3] For individual box office figures see *Box Office Mojo*, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/search/?q=pirates%20of%20the%20caribbean (22 August 2016).

keeping with the post-classical Hollywood's reliance on the international market, as discussed in the first chapter.

A fan favourite amongst theme-park visitors, the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' attraction has spawned a commercially successful film franchise alongside an array of related products including video games, books, board games and a virtual reality attraction at Disney-owned arcade 'Disney Quest' at the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. Captaining your own ship, 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for Buccaneer Gold' allows guests to shoot down enemy ships to capture their treasure, including the audience in a narrative and again blurring distinctions of representation and reality. More so than any of the other examples in this chapter I argue that *Pirates*, through its many incarnations, develops a "world" aiming to immerse audiences through a saturation of multimedia forms, rather than provide the physical immersion described in the previous chapter. Understood as an intensification of the theme-park "lands" discussed in the previous chapter, which are designed to immerse guests in a specific environment through detailed theming of every inch within that land, the "worlds" created through the release of attraction-to-movie adaptations seek to exploit feelings of familiarity associated with the experience of the ride to create an immersive environment that transcends physical or geographical locations. In watching these films, audiences are reminded of the personal experiences associated with the attraction, mentally transporting and immersing them in the original ride from the comfort of a local cinema or a viewing in their own home. There is an all-encompassing "world" that consumers are immersed in through the interaction of film franchise, attraction, merchandise, internet forums and social media. These are carefully designed to bring about the type of inclusion discussed in chapter two, enabling consumers to inhabit a unified storytelling world that extends across all these media forms and interact with like-minded audiences.

Furthermore, in using theme-park attractions as the basis for film, the franchise concept has evolved from being based exclusively on cinematic texts into a multi-form paradigm consisting of theme-park attractions and film.

Although *Pirates* is the most commercially successful instance of this phenomenon, being a four-film franchise with at least one more sequel to be released in 2017, it is not the only film to be adapted from a Disney theme-park attraction, the others being *Mission to Mars* (2000), *The Country Bears* (2002), *The Haunted Mansion* (2003) and *Tomorrowland* (2015).[4] Each based on longstanding components of Disney theme parks around the world, these films often reference their source material through the inclusion of scenes or characters from the attractions. The overarching themes, narratives and characters of these examples blend together to create an immersive "world" that transcends any single text.

This phenomenon illustrates an interesting development in Hollywood's use of pre-sold properties away from conventional forms, such as books, comic books and video games, and towards non-narrative sources such as theme-park attractions. Stylistically, however, these films adhere to the aesthetics of post-classical Hollywood, foregrounding the conventions of the 'blockbuster', particularly special effects, to create spectacular visual sequences. But the recent turn towards non-narrative source material might cause us to consider whether this development intensifies the subordination of narrative to spectacle that so many critics of contemporary Hollywood complain of. Thus these films add a further dimension to the ongoing debate concerning quality and value in contemporary popular film production. Yet, as a preliminary conclusion, I would argue that the value of attraction-to-movie adaptations lies, for the producers at least, in the influence they exert in

[4] *The Tower of Terror* (1997) is also inspired by its theme-park counterpart but is excluded from this study as the ride itself was initially based on *The Twilight Zone* franchise comprised of multiple television series and a movie.

surrounding markets. *Pirates*, especially, with its enormous financial success, has been a market leader in this respect. Meanwhile, quality, on one level, can be judged in terms of critical acclaim and industry recognition, particularly Academy Award nominations or triumphs. The first three films of the franchise, for instance, were each nominated for multiple Academy Awards in the year of their release. However, the *cultural* and *aesthetic* quality and value of these texts might best be estimated by exploring the ways in which they have altered traditional perceptions of the franchise concept. The all-encompassing "world" that offers deeper levels of immersion than the examples of the previous chapter, is created through the combined saturation that the films and attractions present, alongside a variety of merchandising products. By this I mean that the narratives of the attraction and its films are of equal value, comprising a multi-form franchise that consists of circular narratives to be experienced again and again, and often in relation to each other. The circular and interrelated nature of these narratives illustrates a particular development in post-classical aesthetics and industry strategy through the evolution of a new, or modern, "cinema of attractions."[5]

As previously mentioned, the emphasis on sensation and spectacle in post-classical films indicates a turn toward an alternative conception of cinema, based on the "cinema of attractions" as opposed to the classical narrative cinema that Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson describe.[6] That is not to say, however, that these films abandon narrative; rather, they have been developed in the context of a "cinema of attractions" in cooperation with spectacular elements. Yet, unique to the examples of this chapter is the way in which attractions are narrativised through adaptation into a cinematic text.

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[5] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde" in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), p.57.
[6] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

The generic storylines of these attractions are enhanced to create narratives worthy of a feature-length adaptation. As a consequence, perception of the attraction is informed by these new narratives, often overriding the original source material. Nevertheless, the films of this chapter perpetuate the source attraction's cultural relevance and popularity, and vice versa, again emphasizing a co-dependency between the two forms in that each informs the other.

A Post-classical film?

'Pirates of the Caribbean' in each theme-park manifestation is a water-based dark ride, navigating guests in the same way as 'Snow White's Scary Adventures' and other Disney favourites do. These "book report rides,"[7] as they have been described, present scenes of audio-animatronic characters to visitors in a particular order, as though telling (or re-telling as the case may be) a story rather than engaging or incorporating guests in the narrative of the ride as in the case of 'Back to the Future: The Ride' or 'Star Tours'.[8] 'Pirates'

[7] Alex Ben Block, "Why Theme Parks Need Movie Tentpoles Too", *The Hollywood Reporter*, 14 June 2012, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/theme parks-tentpoles-disney-cars-land-337086 (1 June 2016).

[8] Audio-Animatronics are robotic characters created by Walt Disney Imagineering, a subsidiary responsible for creating entertainment for the company's many theme parks, and are able to realistically move. Recorded audio is then added to bring the characters to life. Audio-Animatronics first appeared in the 1963 Disneyland attraction 'The Enchanted Tiki Room' which presents robotic birds, flowers, totem poles and a magical fountain synchronised in their expressions to a pre-recorded soundtrack. It was also used at the 1964 World's Fair by Disney in the 'Great Moments with Mr Lincoln' exhibit, producing a lifelike Abraham Lincoln which stands to address the assembled audience. Many at the fair were astounded by the life-like figure, "alarming in its realism", and insisted that Mr Lincoln was not a robot but a well-trained actor. The technology was also used in Disney's other contributions to the fair: The Pepsi and UNICEF sponsored 'It's a Small World', the 'Carousel of Progress' featuring General Electric and Ford Motor Company's 'Magic Skyway'. Having been exhibited at the fair, audio-animatronics soon infiltrated Disneyland and can be seen in many of its current attractions, including 'Pirates of the Caribbean'.
(Realistic nature of audio-animatronic Abraham Lincoln noted by National Geographic quoted in "The Disneyland Story presenting Great Moments with Mr Lincoln", *Disneyland Resort*, https://disneyland.disney.go.com/attractions/disneyland/disneyland-story/ (29 July 2016).)

rides can be found in Disneyland in California, Tokyo and Paris and in Florida's Magic Kingdom and each presents a slight variation of the 1967 California original while maintaining the same pivotal scenes. Despite being considered as a prime example of Disney theme-park storytelling and technical artistry, the commercial and critical success of the first film came as somewhat of a surprise to the company. Although it was suggested that the attraction had a loyal fan base that would remain loyal to an adaptation, Disney seemed hesitant to create the film after the disappointing performance of earlier ride-into-film adaptations, *The Country Bears* and *Tower of Terror*. According to Jason Surrell, screenwriters Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio began work on a 'Pirates of the Caribbean' adaptation ten years before Disney approved the picture:

> [W]e were thinking about what Terry refers to a 'mental real estate.' What's already out there in the audience's mind that they'll associate with this? If you're trying to get a studio to make a $150 million Western, it's better to say 'Oh, we have the rights to *The Lone Ranger*,' . . . So for a pirate movie, you have *Blackbeard*, you have *Treasure Island*, but we said 'Pirates of the Caribbean'—people really know what that is. And then we realized that Pirates of the Caribbean actually had the supernatural elements in it that we were talking about . . . We don't have to make up a whole bunch. There's the cursed treasure and the movie skeletons, and we thought, 'Oh my God, it's *Jason and the Argonauts*, it's pirates, it's everything you could possibly want.' So we said, 'That's it, Pirates of the Caribbean,' and we pitched it to Disney. But they weren't interested.[9]

By the time that the film's concept arose once again, Walt Disney Studios had new leadership that became excited at the prospect of a 'Pirates of the Caribbean' film. Changing corporate structure and personnel in this instance indicates a reorganisation of financial and aesthetic priorities. As I suggested

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[9] Ted Elliott quoted in Surrell, *Pirates of the Caribbean: From the Magic Kingdom to the Movies*, p.113.

in the previous chapter when discussing Disney's use of *Avatar* (2009), there has been a conscious effort in Disney theme parks to appeal to a wider, more diverse audience through their attractions utilizing recognizable intellectual properties suited to post-classical blockbuster aesthetics. The company had come to understand that modern exposure to violence through video games and spectacle in cinema has altered the rating of movies, especially those of the action genre. Thus it is significant that *The Curse of the Black Pearl* is the first film released under the Disney name to be rated a PG-13, using scenes of action, adventure and violence to compete for viewers in the contemporary climate.[10] As former Columbia Pictures marketing chief Peter Sealey remarks: "[w]hat Walt Disney had -- a Norman Rockwell America -- no longer exists in the 21st century, and Disney is simply acknowledging that reality."[11] Drawing a comparison between evolving norms for film classification and theme-park attractions, then chairman of Walt Disney Studios Dick Cook suggested that the PG-13 rating given to the film was reminiscent of the height and health restrictions of Disney's scarier or 'older' rides, implying that the 2003 film intensifies the experience of a "book report ride" into that of the company's more inclusive attractions.[12] Signalling the rating of the film in this way, audiences become aware of an intensification of the original ride into a more thrilling experience, much in the same way as the examples explored in chapter two intensify film experience through the creation of immersive theme-park attractions.

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[10] Until the release of *The Curse of the Black Pearl* in 2003, any film rated PG-13 or R was launched under the Touchstone Pictures label. This was to distance the innocence associated with the Disney brand from more mature themes that would affect film classification. The Disney company also owned distributing subsidiary Miramax from 1993-2003.

[11] Peter Sealey quoted by Claudia Eller, "Disney Comes of Age With PG-13 Rating for 'Pirates'", *Los Angeles Times*, 20 June 2003, http://articles.latimes.com/2003/jun/20/business/fi-pirates20 (26 August 2016).

[12] Eller, "Disney Comes of Age With PG-13 Rating for 'Pirates'".

It was especially significant that Disney selected Jerry Bruckheimer as producer of the film; as Cook declared, with Bruckheimer at the helm "we knew we would be making a thrill ride."[13] Bruckheimer's role in this production suggests that the attraction-to-film adaptation strategy is the next stage in the blockbuster era. As a key architect of the blockbuster era, Bruckheimer's decision to engage with this material highlights a connection between post-classical aesthetics, *Pirates of the Caribbean* and, by extension, films derived from this type of source material. Rather than simply emulating a theme-park ride through camera movement, special effects and film editing, these films seek to intensify the original attraction through narrative extension within the framework of blockbuster aesthetics.

In terms of Warren Buckland's definition, *Pirates* can be read as a distinctly post-classical blockbuster:

> [B]lockbusters are formulaic because they adopt the same types of self-insurance: a reliance on presold elements (such as a successful novel); well-known performers who play characters embodying simple, clear-cut moral values; elements of spectacle and special effects; and narrative motivation.[14]

The pre-sold element in this case is the Disney attraction, serving as a source of inspiration for the franchise and not demanding an exact retelling that would be expected if the pre-sold text was a novel. *The Curse of the Black Pearl*, as a flagship voyage for the franchise, also offers a host of recognizable actors that brought the franchise to public attention. Johnny Depp, known for eccentric character portrayals, introduces audiences to another of his quirky

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[13] Dick Cook quoted in Eller, "Disney Comes of Age With PG-13 Rating for 'Pirates'".
[14] Warren Buckland, 'The Role of the Auteur in the Age of the Blockbuster: Spielberg and Dreamworks' in Julian Stringer (ed.), *Movie Blockbusters* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.88.

alter-egos in the form of Captain Jack Sparrow. The cast of well-known actors, such as Geoffrey Rush, Jonathan Pryce and Orlando Bloom (having featured in the first two *Lord of the Rings* films) depicted characters that were clearly either good or bad, with little ambiguity.[15] Bruckheimer's penchant for spectacle dominates the film, which embodies the post-classical tendency to organise the narrative around regular instances of spectacular action. Special and visual effects in the series have garnered particular attention, with *Dead Man's Chest* winning an Academy Award for its visual effects team.

With these characteristics in mind, Kristin Thompson's declaration that the recycling of existing texts into new ones accelerates the decline of Hollywood into "crass commercialism" can also be applied in this case with regard to the quality and value of these films, as it has been to many other blockbuster texts.[16] However, as the decision to use theme-park attractions as source material is relatively new to the cinematic sphere, I would suggest that the commercial imperatives behind the production of these films do not necessarily determine their cultural value or significance. Certainly, in terms of the entertainment industry, these films have altered the synergistic relationship between movies and the theme-park environment, even the cross-promotional campaigns of other multimedia texts (video games, for instance) and merchandise, by offering an enhanced franchise model. By this I mean that they have brought about a revision of the conventional concept of a film franchise. This idea was traditionally based almost solely on the cinematic

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[15] Barbossa's representation as the villain in *The Curse of the Black Pearl* is unambiguous; however, his reappearance in the other films of the franchise is not as clearly signalled. After being brought back to life in the second film, Barbossa joins the cast on a mission to save Jack Sparrow from Davy Jones' Locker in *At Worlds End*. His actions in this film and the fourth are motivated by personal gain and not selfless morality. Therefore, while the first *Pirates* film could be considered a blockbuster in its presentation of clear-cut characters, the rest of the franchise tries to blur these distinctions. Perhaps this is a means of distancing the films from criticisms associated with the blockbuster form and is an attempt to develop characters into layered, complex portrayals.

[16] Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), p.6.

recycling of already established characters and narratives; now it has evolved into a multi-form phenomenon that encompasses films and theme-park attractions as equally important factors. Culturally, this impacts the avenues in which the franchise can be advertised: the film or the attraction can be promoted as singular forms or as one combined entity.

After securing Jerry Bruckheimer as producer to the project, Elliott and Rossio were approached by Disney to write the film. It was not entirely smooth sailing, though, as then Disney CEO Michael Eisner tried to cancel the production, concerned that the expensive budget and adult themes would rate the movie as PG-13, moving it beyond the company's usual target PG audience.[17] In response, director Gore Verbinski instructed storyboard artists to continue their work in the hopes that Eisner could be persuaded to keep the film alive. As James B. Stewart tells it, when Eisner visited Bruckheimer's offices on a mission to end production:

> Bruckheimer had assembled storyboards, and drawings of the major scenes: the island of the dead, the Caribbean port under siege, the skeletons under water and on the moonlit pirate ship. After getting a tour and running commentary from Verbinski, Eisner sat down. "I love it," he said. "Why does it have to cost so much?"
> "Your competition is spending $150 million," Bruckheimer countered, ticking off projects like "The Matrix" and "The Lord of the Rings," franchise films that were allowing Warner Bros. to dominate at the box office. Disney desperately needed a franchise of its own.
> Eisner shook his head in exasperation. "The theme park is a drawback, he said, 'Country Bears' still in mind. "Let's move this away from the park."[18]

[17] Jim Hill, "Why For did Michael Eisner try and shut down production of "The Curse of the Black Pearl" back in 2002?", *JimHillMedia.com*, 17 May 2007, http://jimhillmedia.com/editor_in_chief1/b/jim_hill/archive/2007/05/18/why-for-did-michael-eisner-try-and-shut-down-production-of-the-curse-of-the-black-pearl-back-in-2002.aspx (29 September 2015).
[18] James B. Stewart, *Disney War* (London: Pocket Books, 2006).

Surrell notes that "[t]he executive team knew from the beginning that they couldn't just transcribe the attraction's script and shoot it. Much like adapting a novel, comic book or TV show, they had to treat it as source material and find a way to make it work on film."[19] Therefore, the first film of the series distanced itself from the attraction narratively, but still referenced particular scenes of the ride to ensure that the two texts were irrevocably connected.

In referencing their source material, these films add a new twist to the post-classical aesthetic which invites the interpretation of texts on multiple levels. Earlier in this discussion, Pixar was used to illustrate how post-classical cinema offers different layers of engagement and interpretation for different segments of a film's audience. For instance, the narratives of Pixar films are suitable for a younger audience while certain narrative devices entertain a more mature audience. This new kind of theme-park movie continues to utilize this notion while also adding a new audience dimension: the distinction between audiences who are familiar with the source material and those who are not. Audiences that are unaware of the attraction can still enjoy the film and remain unconcerned that the film is a sequel to the ride. For these viewers the influence of the original attraction in the "world" created by the film is diminished. For audiences that have not visited a Disney theme park or know nothing of the 'Pirates of the Caribbean' ride, the films can only be judged on their own merit and not as part of a multi-form franchise. However, viewers familiar with the ride bring certain expectations and knowledge with them which influence their interpretation and evaluation of the films. Carolyn Jess-Cook implies that evocations of the attraction add to the immersive "world" promised by this new franchise concept:

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[19] Surrell, *Pirates of the Caribbean: From the Magic Kingdom to the Movies*, p.115.

> Disney's status as a cultural heritage brings our engagement with the Pirates franchise a connection not only with the vast number of intertexts and paratexts generated by its synergistic textualizations, but also a connection to the family experience and, beyond that, to the particular culture to which Disney has subscribed as a souvenir and signifier.[20]

The immersion can span, not only a variety of media texts or forms, but also time and memory by demanding that the audience reminisce about their memories of Disney as a brand and a holiday destination. Limitations of one particular form, namely cinema, are abandoned in favour of the psychological immersion that transports audiences to the attraction and their memories of it. Thus the producers must be careful not to alienate this fraction of the audience by straying too far from the narrative themes of the source attraction. Of course, one function of this new type of franchise is that it attracts new visitors to the rides on the back of the films, thereby increasing profits in the theme-park industry alongside box office figures.

Regardless of whether or not the audience is aware that a theme-park attraction is the source of inspiration for them, these films intensify and extend the attraction's narrative, using the original as a point of departure for a new narrative adventure while still utilizing the same characters or themes to create a "world" of circular narratives. Carolyn Jess-Cooke argues that the *Pirates* franchise "reworks the traditional original-sequel trajectory into a horizontal pattern of participation" and therefore "it is the spectator that generates the sequelization of a conceptual 'original.'"[21] Jess-Cooke signals a network of "interrelated narratives" as a symbol of the interpenetration of the franchise into different media forms, providing a "world" that audiences can

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[20] Carolyn Jess-Cooke, "Sequelizing Spectatorship and Building Up the Kingdom: The Case of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, Or, How a Theme park Attraction Spawned a Multibillion-Dollar Film Franchise" in Carolyn Jess-Cooke and Constantine Verevis (eds.), *Second Takes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), p.220.
[21] Jess-Cooke, "Sequelizing Spectatorship and Building Up the Kingdom", p.221.

be immersed into, rather than a singular text or solitary attraction. The first film in the *Pirates* franchise, for example, references the ride multiple times by replicating recognizable scenes. Jason Surrell, author, screenwriter and Show Writer at Walt Disney Imagineering, when discussing the making of the film notes:

> Ted [Elliott] and Terry [Rossio] both felt it was important to remain true to the spirit of the Disneyland original, even if their script could never be a beat-by-beat adaptation of the ride. They knew the film's strength lay in the Pirates of the Caribbean name and the childhood memories people associated with it.[22]

Rather than completely transferring the ride into a film, then, specific scenes were chosen to appear in the franchise, with the most prominent examples occurring in *The Curse of the Black Pearl*. The film opens with a young Elizabeth Swann, the female protagonist, singing a few lines of the now famous song 'Yo Ho (A Pirate's Life for Me)' written for the attraction by George Bruns and Xavier Atencio. Perhaps one of the most distinguishing features of the ride, it is no surprise that the song can be heard twice more in this film and is quoted throughout the franchise. Written to emulate a sea shanty, the song was an attempt to soften the adult themes associated with piracy and eventually "helped the Imagineers turn their band of bloodthirsty brigands into more family friendly rapscallions just out to have a little fun."[23] Insisting that the song functions as a bridge between the questionable acts attributed to piracy and the family-friendly image that the Disney company repeatedly projects, this musical portrayal becomes irrevocably linked to the representation of pirates in the cultural imagination. Its presence in the film only strengthens this by increasing the song's audience beyond that of theme-

[22] Surrell, *Pirates of the Caribbean: From the Magic Kingdom to the Movies,* p.118.
[23] Ibid., p.33.

park guests and towards the multi-faceted cinema audience. Most notably in the films, Elizabeth teaches the song to Captain Jack Sparrow as they sing and drink rum around a bonfire, to which he replies "I love this song!" After learning the shanty, it is Jack who repeatedly quotes it, especially the line "Drink Up Me Hearties, Yo Ho", often closing each film with one of the song's lines. *On Stranger Tides*, the franchise's fourth film actually ends with Jack pronouncing "It's a Pirate's life for me!"

In referencing the original attraction through recognisable scenes, dialogue and music, the films blend with the attraction to create the "world" of immersion I have described, irrevocably linking the two forms regardless of whether audiences are aware of it. Each reference to the original attraction reinforces the attraction's status as source material and works to remind Disneyland-aware audiences of their memories of the 'Pirates' ride. Significantly, each attraction-to-film adaptation references its source material in some way, emphasising that each of these new franchise models can offer "worlds" of immersion. *The Haunted Mansion*, for instance, references its source attraction by using familiar characters throughout the narrative. Audiences become aware of the characters, either initially from the attraction or the film, and can then recognise them in the other text. Subsequently, the narratives of the two forms become circular, each offering supplementary narratives on well-known characters. The "one-point-five"[24] attractions of the previous chapter are abandoned in this new franchise in favour of the circular, cross-referencing narrative "world" offered by the interplay of films and attraction. Madame Leota, a gypsy woman whose head glows in a crystal ball, has appeared in the attraction since its opening in 1969, holding a séance to communicate with the mansion's ghostly inhabitants. In fact, many of her rhyming riddles are taken directly from the attraction and replicated in the

[24] Craig Hanna quoted in Block, "Why Theme Parks Need Movie Tentpoles Too".

film's script. Even the 'hitchhiking ghost' characters mentioned and shown as guests leave the attraction are presented in the film's graveyard sequence, appearing to have hitched a ride with the Evers family in a hearse that looks remarkably like the one parked outside of the attraction at Disneyland.



Hitchhiking ghosts in *The Haunted Mansion*.



Hitchhiking ghosts in the attraction.[25]

In constructing this cross-referencing "world," audience immersion is not encouraged by geographical location or a themed area but by the interconnecting nature of the narratives themselves. When watching the franchise's film, regardless of the location, audiences are reminded of the attraction and any personal memories associated with it thereby psychologically transporting them to the ride. Even more so than the examples of the previous chapter, these attraction-to-film adaptations can be considered an intensification of early cinema's attempt to transform the viewing of film into a sensory, immersive experience. Just as *Arrival of a Train* (1895) utilized spectacle to 'affect' audiences and post-classical blockbusters built upon those concepts, the franchises of this chapter are evidence of the next stage in this process. The "cinema of attractions," Gunning notes, is an "exhibitionist cinema . . . willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world."[26]

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[25] Dave DeCaro, "Freaky Fridays @ The Haunted Mansion: Hitchhiking Ghosts", *Davelandblog.com*, 19 March 2010, http://davelandblog.blogspot.co.uk/2010/03/freaky-fridays-haunted-mansion.html (5 August 2016).
[26] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction", p.57.

The "exhibitionist" aspect is delivered through affective spectacle, while the text breaks free of the limitations of cinema by behaving in a ride-like manner. *Pirates of the Caribbean* and other attraction-based adaptations are not "rupturing" in Gunning's sense: they are located within a system based on a saturation of media texts. Rather, they blend harmoniously with these other texts to create an immersive, inclusive "world" through an alliance of narrative and spectacle. In this sense they differ from the examples discussed in earlier chapters.

The modern "cinema of attractions," I have argued, has incorporated the narrational conventions of a 'classical' Hollywood style into films based increasingly on technologically enabled spectacle. Post-classical Hollywood, therefore, has not completely returned to early cinema's emphasis on spectacle at the expense of the classical prioritization of narrative, but rather it has evolved the early form through narrative elements and innovative technologies. It is interesting, therefore, that those who disparage post-classical cinema as being an inferior form that relies on spectacle fail to register the way in which this style uses spectacular elements to emulate a theme-park ride and then *narrativizes* them.

The process by which the sensory impact of the cinema of attractions is combined with narrativization can be seen especially clearly in *Tomorrowland*. Significantly different about this adaptation is its source material. In the Disney theme parks 'Tomorrowland' is not a single ride, but one of the themed lands that comprise the park, showcasing a general theme but a lack of narrative. The 2015 film starring George Clooney is based on the ideals of Disney's theme park Tomorrow-land, which celebrates technology's potential to innovate and explore new possibilities, narrativizing the themed

land into a feature-length spectacle.[27] As with other examples, the film references the source material to emphasise the cross-referenced and interrelated nature of these new franchises. Tomorrowland in Walt Disney World now holds 'Walt Disney's: The Carousel of Progress', one of the four attractions presented at the 1964 World's Fair in New York. The attraction's song "There's a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow", written by song-writing duo Richard and Robert Sherman, describes how a dream becomes reality and plays in *Tomorrowland* during the opening sequence set at the 1964 World's Fair as a young Frank Walker (George Clooney) explores what the fair has to offer. Perhaps the most recognisable musical piece from the themed area, the origins of 'The Carousel of Progress' is given a narrational function in *Tomorrowland* which strengthens the connection between the franchise's forms, thereby deepening the immersion that the franchise's world can offer.

This sequence also references another of Disney's contributions to the World's Fair and a famous, longstanding attraction at Disney theme parks: 'It's a Small World". Entering the attraction, Frank regards the animatronic figures and listens to the song that made the ride memorable before triggering a hidden sensor that transports him to the film's Tomorrowland. This sequence of the film immerses viewers in the attraction, rather than simply referencing it. It also reminds us that World's Fairs emerged in the 1850s as predecessors to modern amusement and theme parks and were a forum for the demonstration and popularisation of early cinema technology.[28] Including the 1964 World's Fair in the diegesis cements the film's connection to a theme-

[27] Characters within the film include audio-animatronics, the robotic characters created and perfected by Walt Disney Imagineering to be lifelike in their actions. As a longstanding convention of the science fiction genre, the use of robotic characters in a futuristic setting is not that farfetched, implying that only audiences aware of the history of 'audio-animatronics' specifically understand its connections to the Disney brand. This is yet another example of a multi-layered interpretation offered by theme-park-to-film adaptations and a post-classical style.

[28] Judith A. Adams, *The American Amusement Park Industry: A History of Technology and Thrills* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991).

park environment; by reproducing such an event on screen the atmospheric conditions of a more generic theme park are replicated and can be enjoyed regardless of viewers' awareness of the Disney theme parks. Incorporating these aspects makes the theme park serve narrative and ideological functions, becoming a motivating factor in the film's plot and the character of Frank.

Narrativization also enhances the affective nature of the modern "cinema of attractions" by encouraging a sensory audience response. At an earlier point I described this notion in relation to *Jurassic Park*'s Tyrannosaurus-Rex chase and the psychological ramifications of certain filming techniques in amplifying personal experience. Yet what must be made clear is how narrative has altered the concept of affect in post-classical films, and by extension, the attraction-to-film adaptations of this chapter. In this case, the narrative function of spectacular scenes, in relation to the rest of the film, validates their existence. For example, a dinosaur chasing a car as an isolated scene would not have as much impact as it does in the surrounding contextual narrative of *Jurassic Park*. It is precisely the narrative that explains why a dinosaur is chasing three characters: because it has escaped from its enclosure. The prolonged tension and suspense that has built up until this point intensifies emotional response to the scene and emphasises the importance of narrative elements in the modern "cinema of attractions."

These alternative adaptations, in their roles within a multi-form franchise, attempt to replicate the experience of the ride while also ensuring that the ride evokes the corresponding scene. Consider for a moment *At World's End,* where the audience follows our heroic characters searching for Davy Jones' Locker in a quest to free Jack Sparrow. As the pirate ship questing for Sparrow dives towards the locker the movie screen fades to black; the scene is meant to reproduce the feeling of falling down the attraction's waterfall. In the attraction, this waterfall drop transports riders from the New

Orleans Bayou and into a cavernous area that leads to another portion of the ride. The darkness of the screen could also represent the closing of one's eyes as you take this plunge, alongside the fact that the attraction's waterfall drop occurs in complete darkness. Simultaneously, in the film, audio from the attraction is played in this sequence as a means of immersing audiences into the film's source of inspiration, and insinuating that the waterfall drop has transported guests into the scenes from which this audio is taken. Lines such as "Dead Men Tell No Tales" and shouts from the bride auction play over the top of the ride's 'Yo Ho' musical accompaniment. In doing this, the sequence attempts to replicate the waterfall plunge at the beginning of the attraction through the affective techniques of post-classical films. Significant about these adaptations, however, is that while the film attempts to replicate or emulate the attraction, the waterfall in the ride should also remind audiences of this particular scene in the film. Displaying a 'vice-versa' situation, these films and rides (as a franchise) attempt to perpetuate the immersive "world" that they offer by encouraging familiarity with the other text.

The films of this chapter, deriving from long-standing Disney attractions, take this notion further by adding a whole storytelling dimension to source material that has, at best, flimsy and rudimentary narratives. This can be seen through the way that reference to the original attraction is elaborated in the films, giving such reference a narrative purpose. In *The Haunted Mansion,* for instance, the opening and welcoming lines of each product are the same. Delivered in the same ominous tone, the phrase "Welcome, Foolish Mortals" is the first line that both theme-park guests and audiences hear upon entering the attraction or starting the film. It immediately evokes the atmosphere of the ride, transporting audiences into the physical haunted mansion, not just the one they are watching. Taking cues from the attraction's musical score, the music in this opening montage hints at the atmosphere of the ride, while

remaining believable as the musical accompaniment to the opening sequence's ballroom soirée. The sequence also references the ride through the inclusion of certain objects and scenes. Setting the tone for the rest of the film, the opening sequence acts as a flashback to the mansion's glory days through a society ball held by Master Edward Gracey. It depicts Gracey's love-interest Elizabeth appear to write a suicide note (which later turns out to be a false as Elizabeth was murdered) and then dying before Edward can reach her. Unhinged by his depression at her death Edward hangs himself from the ceiling, an exact replication of the scene from the attraction's Stretching Room, after which the camera zooms out to reveal an external shot of the mansion. In the midst of this flashback, objects from the attraction are brought to the forefront of shots, such as the floating candelabra from an endless hallway and the grandfather clock striking thirteen. Couples dance in the background of the sequence, often alternating between human figures in the flashbacks and ghostly, ethereal dancers in shots with a black screen reminiscent of the attraction's Ballroom scene where ghostly couples dance. By contextualising recognisable features of the attraction through the film's narrative, the specific features are given new meaning which can inform its interpretation within the attraction itself.

Taking the specific attraction as basis for a film, not just the physical experience of an attraction to replicate, and developing a standalone narrative that can motivate a feature film informs audience perception about the attraction. *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides* uses 'The Captain's Quarters' sketch from the attraction as the location of two chalices needed to perform a ritual at mythical monument 'The Fountain of Youth'. Comically interacting with the space, Captains Jack and Barbossa attempt to retrieve the goblets without disturbing the skeletal Captain or his decaying environment. In placing the film's main characters in the scene, it becomes a believable part

of the narrative rather than a disconnected reference to the ride, and gives the attraction's scene a new meaning. After watching the film and visiting the attraction, audiences can automatically recollect their knowledge of the scene and its function in the franchise, connecting the two portrayals of the vignette almost involuntarily. As such the original narrative of the attraction is overshadowed by the narrative of the film, after audiences experience the film. The value of these films, therefore, lies in their ability to create a cinematic experience in which the narrative can alter and inform the somewhat generic, foundational source material.



Captain's Quarters in *On Stranger Tides*.



Captain's Quarters at Disneyland.[29]

[29] Dave DeCaro, "Tell-No-Tales Thursdays: Captain's Quarters", *Daveland* Blog, 9 July 2009, http://davelandblog.blogspot.co.uk/2009_06_17_archive.html (5 August 2016).

II. The New Franchise

Full Circle

While the films discussed in this chapter all had corresponding merchandise within the Disney theme parks, 'Pirates' is the only example to include aspects of its film in the ride, furthering the concept of circular narratives in an immersive *Pirates* "world". As discussed earlier, the inclusion of movies in theme parks is not a new notion and continues to thrive under commercial objectives. It is no surprise, then, that a movie that was such a box office success should be exploited to enhance the theme-park ride from which it originated. Describing the adaptation process, Jason Surrell quotes Kathy Rogers who was charged with creating a new experience:

> "When we started, we knew the movie mythology only through the first film," Senior Show Producer Kathy Rogers recalls. "So we were assessing how to bring the 'undead' transforming pirates into the attraction. When the next films were written, our options expanded. Now we could create a story not based on any one movie."
> Although they were charged with incorporating some of the film's characters and story elements, they "were never trying to make this the Pirates of the Caribbean Movie Ride," Kathy says. "We always intended to keep the strength of what Marc [Davis] and X [Atencio] did."[30]

In the 2006 refurbishment of the classic 'Pirates' attraction, characters from *Pirates of the Caribbean* were transferred into the ride and given a narrative separate to those of the films. In this refurbishment, the Treasure Room gained the Chest of Cortés from *The Curse of the Black Pearl*. Turning the corner, Davy Jones is projected onto a curtain of mist, warning "If ye be brave

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[30] Kathy Rogers quoted in Surrell, *Pirates of the Caribbean: From the Magic Kingdom to the Movies,* p.145.

or fool enough to face a pirates' curse, proceed,"[31] referencing the Aztec curse that motivates the narrative of the first film and its characters. Emerging into the Wicked Wench's siege of a Spanish colonial town, an audio-animatronic of Captain Barbossa shouts commands from the deck of the ship: "Put up your white flag, ye scurvy scum. Bring me Cap'n Jack Sparrow, or I'll be sendin' ye to Davy Jones!" while a musical track from the film's soundtrack plays in the background, further immersing guests into the film's tonal landscape. The remainder of the ride sees Jack Sparrow in various stages of his quest to find the town's treasure, hiding behind mannequins or inside a wooden barrel to sneakily peek at a treasure map, ending with Jack's discovery of the gold where he expresses his happiness through the ride's original song, 'Yo Ho'. Before exiting the ride, a disembodied voice of Davy Jones echoes a warning that our next sailing through the town may not end so happily.

Inclusion of the film's characters is an attempt to combine the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise and the attraction into one entity, not just implementation of the synergistic techniques of a post-classical Hollywood. Rather, this practice aims at intensifying the cultural frame of reference that this intellectual property holds or, as I have argued, it creates a "world" of immersion through visual texts and participatory experiences and invites audiences to continue that participation through virtual reality games, video games and other merchandise that allows them to become a pirate. Moreover, as Surrell remarks:

> From that point on, it would no longer matter if audiences experienced the attraction before the film series or vice versa, for the Imagineers had created a common frame of reference that fused the two into a narrative

[31] N.A., "Pirates of the Caribbean (Disneyland)", *Disney Parks Script Central*, 4 December 2015, http://www.disneyparkscripts.com/pirates-of-the-caribbean-disneyland/ (3 August 2016).

> whole, another episode in the ongoing adventures of the Pirates of the Caribbean.[32]

Surrell here refers to the notion of "interrelated narratives," so called by Carolyn Jess-Cooke, or the circular narrative sphere that I argue informs all aspects of the franchise's presence.[33] Jess-Cooke argues, "participation and interaction within immersive environments is predicated on and contributes to the continuation of a narrative beyond its cinematic encounter."[34] Through the continuation of narratives revolving around Captain Jack Sparrow beyond the film and into the attraction, immersion into the narrative "world" that the *Pirates* franchise offers is significantly deeper than it would have been if the attraction had not been reworked to include the film's characters. It would still offer the "world" of immersion that I have described previously, albeit not as intense.

Later refurbishments of the attraction saw the addition of characters from *On Stranger Tides*: Blackbeard and the mythical mermaids. The former joined Jones' projection on the mist curtain and helped utter his final words of warning. The latter appeared in Dead Man's Cove, "where you can spy a mermaid skeleton and possibly even catch them swimming alongside your boat. You can also hear a mermaid beckon you with her siren song just before your drop into the pirate battle."[35] Guests also have the opportunity to interact with Captain Jack Sparrow and Angelica (Penelope Cruz's character from *On*

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[32] Surrell, *Pirates of the Caribbean: From the Magic Kingdom to the Movies,* p.7.
[33] Jess-Cooke, "Sequelizing Spectatorship and Building Up the Kingdom", p.210.
[34] Ibid., p.218.
[35] Jennifer Fickley-Baker, "Mermaids Make a Splashing Debut at Pirates of the Caribbean at Walt Disney World Resort", *Disney Parks Blog*, 1 November 2012, https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2012/11/mermaids-make-a-splashing-debut-at-pirates-of-the-caribbean-at-walt-disney-world-resort/ (28 July 2016).

Stranger Tides) in character 'meet and greets' where an actor impersonates the character to allow audience interaction.[36]

The adult themes of original attractions 'Pirates of the Caribbean' and 'The Haunted Mansion', even though they are watered down to comical representations, seem at odds with the family friendly park. I would argue that this is a measure of each attraction's intention to immerse guests into the worlds of pirates and ghosts, making them forget that they are at Disneyland by being fully dedicated to reaching beyond the expected realm of inspiration. By this I mean that 'Pirates' and 'Haunted Mansion's' ability to transport guests from the environment of a Disney theme park and into the environments that these rides project was a signifier of how immersive the ride was, as it had no intellectual property from a film tied to it and was able to be an original concept. After adding characters from the films into the 'Pirates' attraction, I would argue that this immersion changes slightly. In the same way that 'Men in Black' and 'Harry Potter' transport guests and immerse them in the realm of that film or franchise, the newly updated 'Pirates' immerses them in a different way than the original attraction did. Rather than being immersed in an original narrative with previously unseen characters, the inclusion of film characters ensures that most guests now approach the attraction with a pre-conceived knowledge which informs the way they perceive the ride. In this scenario, they are not immersed in the original pirate world that was new to them, but the combined pirate world portrayed through the franchise's texts. Of course, guests are still immersed in the environment through the same avenues that I have previously discussed, but the immersion

[36] Jennifer Fickley-Baker, "Captain Jack Meets His Match: Angelica Lands in Adventureland at Disney Parks", *Disney Parks Blog*, 15 April 2011, https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2011/04/captain-jack-meets-his-match-angelica-lands-in-adventureland-at-disney-parks/ (3 August 2016).

extends beyond the physical realms of the attraction or 'land' and can be experienced in a different form regardless of geographical location.

Far from these innovations being universally welcomed, however, some critics were dismayed by the addition of the film's characters into the ride. In describing the global evolution of Disney theme parks, Shelton Waldrep argues that:

> Pirates of the Caribbean's original narrative was replaced with the narrative plot of the film franchise that was created from it and which now hangs like an exoskeleton on the original narrative of the ride . . . Generic storytelling —pirates as a theme —is replaced with the specific plot of the film. A technologically impressive waterfall projection at the beginning of the ride in which guests penetrate Davy Jones's face would have been enough. The revamped ride is now a muddle of product placement and the original plot —neither really working.[37]

While Waldrep is somewhat incorrect in saying that the updated narrative of the ride is the "specific plot of the film," he interprets the inclusion of the films as a rushed attempt to promote the films rather than offer a coherent narrative that blends the original attraction with the franchise. Ride reviews from the general public, however, react positively to this blending of the original narrative and the film's characters, again suggesting that the narrative of the film has overshadowed the original attraction, and that is what fans want to experience. It has, as I argue, 'narrativised' the existing attraction which offered a rudimentary or generic storyline by weaving cinematic aesthetics into the scenes of the ride, through addition of the film's characters and dialogue informed by the film franchise. The multifaceted responses provoked by this process are further evidence of Elsaesser's segmented audience, albeit in a slightly different context. Although Elsaesser is mainly concerned with the

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[37] Shelton Waldrep, *The Dissolution of Place: Architecture, Identity and the Body* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013) pp.57-58.

varying levels of audience interpretation of New Hollywood products, I suggest that, in this instance, the differing responses to the film's inclusion in the attraction highlight another kind of audience distinction: the intellectual response and the public response. Waldrep's position represents the response of a cultural critic attuned to the debates about quality and value debates in post-classical Hollywood; just as Kristin Thompson suggests that certain critics view the recycling of existing texts into new texts to be the "decline of Hollywood into crass commercialism," so Waldrep sees the interdependence of films and rides as a symptom of cultural decline.[38] However, the immersive structure of the "world" created by the original attraction and its films are bound even tighter by the inclusion of the film's characters in the ride; the inclusion of familiar characters enhances the relationship between the two forms and ensures that they are experienced as one entity. This, I argue, illustrates that the value of these attraction-to-movie adaptations lies in their ability to alter the traditional franchise model.

The franchise's most recent appearance in Disney theme parks however, occurs at Shanghai's incarnation of Disneyland and cannot be accused of being "a muddle of product placement". The resort began construction in 2011, opening on the 16th of June 2016, and encompasses two hotels, an entertainment district and the Disneyland Park. One of the six themed "lands" of the park is Treasure Cove, an eighteenth century Spanish town besieged by Captain Jack Sparrow and home to 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Sunken Treasure'. The ride is billed as "a one-of-a-kind experience that would appeal to our Chinese guests while remaining true to its Disney heritage."[39] Indeed, the attraction pays homage to the original water-

[38] Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise,* p.6.
[39] Bob Iger quoted by Marc Graser, "First 'Pirates of the Caribbean' Themed Land Coming to Shanghai Disneyland", *Variety*, 18 March 2014, http://variety.com/2014/biz/news/first-pirates-of-the-caribbean-themed-land-coming-to-shanghai-disneyland-1201137869/ (29 July 2016).

based dark ride by remaining in the same ride format, yet it is a new experience whose narrative is based solely on the film franchise and not the original attraction. The ride does, however, include the original attraction's most recognizable scene—the prison cells, albeit in a modified version.



Concept art of themed area 'Treasure Cove' based on *Pirates of the Caribbean*.[40]

In the original ride vehicles sail past the town's prison, whose inhabitants are pirates trying to bribe the prison dog to hand them the keys that he holds in his jaws. Unyielding to their pleas and enticements, the dog never moves from its spot. To transplant the scene seamlessly from ride to film, Jack Sparrow's character is incarcerated in one of the cells, alongside the pirates trying to bribe the dog. In placing one of the film's main characters in the scene, it becomes a believable part of the narrative rather than a disconnected reference to the ride. The prison dog also makes an appearance in *Dead Man's Chest* and *At World's End* in reference to this scene of the source attraction.

[40] N.A.., "See Concept Art from Shanghai Disneyland's Treasure Cove", *D23.com*, https://d23.com/see-concept-art-shanghai-disneylands-treasure-cove/ (5 August 2016).

Rather than presenting the prison scene in its traditional form, the Shanghai version humorously shows the same scene with aged skeletons rather than living prisoners trying to escape. Even the noble prison dog has decayed in the exact position he occupies in the original attraction. Presenting the scene in this way also references *The Curse of the Black Pearl* where Jack Sparrow admonishes the pirates trying to bribe the dog into releasing the keys: "You can keep doing that forever, the dog is never going to move." Jack, it seems, was right that the dog would never move as this scene implies that he refused to move or give in, even as he and the pirates have aged. Perhaps only meaningful to fans of the franchise and the original attraction, this scene's evolution is evidence of what Elsaesser identifies as some of the chief characteristics of post-classical Hollywood—self-referentiality and multiple interpretive levels. Audience response to and interpretation of the scene is dependent on viewers' knowledge of the attraction, while Shanghai's revisions of the scene emphasize a more self-aware sensibility, in that the scene's notoriety informs its treatment.[41]

Aside from this scenic homage to the original, Shanghai's 'Pirates' uses audio-animatronics and video projection throughout the ride to depict an ongoing battle for treasure between the heroic Captain Jack Sparrow and the villainous Davy Jones. In this instance 'Pirates of the Caribbean' reverts to the traditional form of theme-park and cinematic integration: a ride based on a film. Focusing the attraction on the film franchise rather than the original ride illustrates that the cycle of the two forms' interaction with one another has come full circle. The ride inspired a movie, and that movie has inspired a new ride. As did the films of the previous chapter, this exemplifies the synergistic

[41] Thomas Elsaesser and Warren Buckland, *Studying Contemporary American Film: A Guide to Movie Analysis* (London: Arnold, 2002), pp. 66-77.

strategies of the post-classical era and the cultural influence that these attraction-to-movie adaptations can exert.

Disney Parks, in describing this new attraction, inadvertently comments on its reliance on new technology — technology that transforms the original attraction for a modern audience:

> Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Sunken Treasure is the most advanced version of this classic Disney attraction to date. It employs a new ride system where the boats are controlled magnetically and can spin or turn and even go backward. The integration of the visual media, with show lighting, sets and audio, make it one of the most complex attractions ever designed by Walt Disney Imagineering, and the latest advances in Disney's *Audio-Animatronics* technology brings lifelike realism to the Captain Jack Sparrow and Davy Jones figures featured on the attraction.[42]

This notion of improved technology providing a new experience compares strikingly with cinema's own fascination with using cutting-edge technology to produce texts at the forefront of their fields. The blockbuster era is defined by the striving for ever more impressive special and visual effects. In utilizing the newest technology available, these films become increasingly dependent on the evolution of technology to surpass box office records. Similarly, theme-park attractions try to 'out-do' the competition by creating technologically new experiences using characters and storylines that are proven successes with audiences.

Conclusion

Pirates of the Caribbean illustrates that the phenomenon of theme-park-to-movie adaptations is precisely the reverse of what has been described in

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[42] Erin Glover, "Ten Amazing Innovations at Shanghai Disney Resort", *Disney Parks Blog*, 27 June 2016, https://disneyparks.disney.go.com/blog/2016/06/ten-amazing-innovations-at-shanghai-disney-resort/ (28 June 2016).

previous chapters. Through a producer with strong links to post-classical Hollywood and an abundance of blockbuster spectacle, *Pirates* expands the pre-sold narrative of a theme-park attraction into the cinematic realm. The cultural implications of this relate largely to the concept of 'immersion' that I argue defines the experience of modern theme parks yet, in this instance, the level of immersion is deeper. In blending the forms of cinema and attraction in this way, a host of interrelated or circular narratives develops a themed "world" that can be accessed or experienced regardless of geographical location. Levels of interaction, engagement and inclusion are then dependent on a variety of multimedia forms that further extend this "world", namely video games, virtual reality experiences or play-acting with *Pirates* merchandise.

Acting as an intensification of the post-classical aesthetics which themselves aim to reproduce on screen the kinetic and physical sensations produced by theme-park attractions, these ride-to-movie adaptations hark back to early cinema's use of spectacle to physically and sensually 'affect' audiences; but they do so whilst *narrativizing* this experience by drawing on the established conventions of classical Hollywood storytelling.[43] While these examples may *refer* to early film they do not *revert* back to it; narrative continues to inform the spectacle that has evolved enormously due to technological development. A train arriving at a station is no longer enough to shock, thrill or satisfy, and the spectacle of today relies heavily on special or visual effects to grab attention in a continually desensitised media culture.

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[43] Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell argue that a post-classical era can be understood as a distinct phase of filmmaking but that it retains many of the narrative structures and conventions of the classical era.
See Kristin Thompson, *Storytelling in the New Hollywood: Understanding Classical Narrative Technique* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1999) and David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It: Story and Style in Modern Movies* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2006).

‘Pirates of the Caribbean’ is the perfect illustration of this kind of adaptation, boasting four commercially successful films and another one currently in development. It operates on multiple levels, inviting audiences to interpret the films through varying degrees of engagement while also presenting award-winning spectacle. This new kind of franchise also demonstrates how the process of adaptation has come full circle through Shanghai’s version of the attraction which uses the films as inspiration for a new ride. Just as the examples of chapter two rely upon their successful intellectual properties to attract theme-park visitors, Shanghai’s ‘Pirates’ discards the narrative of the original attraction in favour of a ride entirely concerned with the film’s characters and their proven international appeal.

Conclusion

Demonstrating the progression of cinema's relationship with the theme park, Shanghai Disneyland's 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for Sunken Treasure' attraction encapsulates the notions of "immersion" and "inclusion" that this thesis has argued are the central features of this new trend within the entertainment industry. Guests are immersed in a themed "land" that is self-contained and intricately dedicated to the franchise. They are welcomed in by an animatronic Jack Sparrow while enjoying the physical motions of sailing through scenes that draw on and extend the films' narratives, experiencing a sense of inclusion through their ability to feel the affective promises of cinematic texts. The Shanghai attraction illustrates how the synergistic processes of post-classical Hollywood have come full circle in the interpenetration of theme-park and cinema aesthetics within new kinds of franchise that extend across a range of entertainment formats.

As chapter one has shown, the post-classical filmmaking style is a departure from the dominant 'classical' paradigm of the studio system which emphasised narrative above all else. Aesthetically speaking, the style moves away from traditional components of the classical era which were designed to convey a very particular sense of realism through camera angles and continuity editing. Often described as blockbusters, these films employ highly sophisticated visual effects in an attempt to create a text that utilizes spectacle to "affect" audiences, to demand intensified emotional, psychological, physiological and even physical responses to sequences on the screen. The emphasis on affect in post-classical cinema bridges the distance between the experience of film and that of a physical attraction; it is a means of emulating the motions and sensations of the latter by emphasising spectacle. Yet rather than abandoning narrative, as some critics have argued, these films

reinvigorated the sensationalism of early cinema in combination with the strong narrational components of classical Hollywood, integrating these into visually stunning spectacles. In this modern "cinema of attractions,"[1] the spectacle of an intensely physical early cinema is intensified by the capabilities of modern technology, offering texts that merge the movie-going experience and theme-park attractions more intensely than the earlier model, in a marketplace of conglomerates that seek to promote synergistically their entertainment properties across a multitude of platforms.

The affective experience of the post-classical blockbuster is then further intensified through theme-park attractions that seek to "immerse" and "include" audiences into the landscapes and narratives of the source text. Driven by conglomerate dominance in the contemporary entertainment industry, theme parks become a kind of promotional space for their film products. The cases of 'Back to the Future' and 'Revenge of the Mummy: The Ride', for instance, argue for the immersive nature of the queue and pre-show experience, physically and psychologically enhancing the realism and authenticity of the attraction as an extension of the movie experience. These defining concepts allude to the breakdown in the distinctions between representations and reality, which blur even further through new theme-park strategies and technological possibilities, such as those discussed in the second half of chapter two. The trend of creating film-based attractions within a themed "land" is one such strategy. By fully immersing guests and audiences in a specific self-contained landscape the level of immersion is deeper than that which an isolated attraction can offer.

Avatar acts as the next stage of this immersive concept. As a film that is so heavily dependent on technology to create a realistic portrayal of a

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[1] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde" in Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990), p.57.

fictional environment, *Avatar* exhibits a new stage in the cinematic challenge to distinctions between representation and reality which can only be intensified in the theme-park environment which it will soon inhabit. Its unique combination of blockbuster film aesthetics and theme-park attraction strategies enhances the film's "ride-like" quality, hallmark of the post-classical style, arguing for its distinctiveness as a modern blockbuster.

The attraction-to-film adaptations of chapter three signal a further development in the immersive experience that the thesis has explored. Introducing a new franchise paradigm, these texts offer a "world" of immersion through a saturation of media texts, specifically focusing on a circular narrative relationship between the films and attractions in which the narrative of each text is extended in the other. The *Pirates of the Caribbean* films, for example, show a certain set of narratives based on the characters of Jack Sparrow, Captain Barbossa and Will Turner, alongside consistent referencing of specific scenes from the source attraction. To present the circular narratives that I argue are crucial to the "world" of immersion the franchise offers, the attraction continues the theming that the films adhere to while offering additional narratives that relate to and extend the film. In the case of *Pirates*, this is intensified through the inclusion of the film's characters in updating the original attraction, thereby effectively blending the narratives of each form into an evolving storytelling universe.

Furthermore, the narrative elements of these attraction adaptations are evidence of the way in which the new, post-classical "cinema of attractions" narrativizes the rudimentary and generic storytelling of the original source material. This is especially the case with *Tomorrowland* with its inspiration being a generically themed "land" rather than a specific attraction. In creating a feature-length adaptation, the physical Tomorrowland

within Disney theme parks is narrativized, informing future audience perception about the land.

This examination of recent developments in the theme park-cinematic relationship has illustrated that the level of immersion that an attraction may offer is increasingly important. Whether they are the movie-based attractions of chapter two or the "worlds" of immersion promised by the new attraction/movie franchise analysed in chapter three, these entertainment forms allow audiences to engage physically with the cinematic texts they consume and really experience their affective sequences. This desire for immersion and interaction with the texts grows in relation to the development of technology and its capabilities. As post-classical Hollywood has evolved the sensationalism of early cinema into a spectacle that increasingly relies on stunning visual and special effects, computer generated or otherwise, the more possibilities such technology can offer to theme-park attractions. Consider the passive retelling of the 'Snow White's Scary Adventure's' attraction in comparison to the motion simulator format of 'Star Tours' that can replicate the affective scenes of the films; there is no question that the development of new technology has assisted in the creation of more immersive and inclusive attractions which intensify the cinematic experience into a physical one.

Yet technological advancement itself is not the main feature of the kinds of immersion that attraction-to-film adaptations offer. Rather, these films use narrative extension and narrativization to create a "world" of circular or interrelated stories that then utilize visual technology to emulate an existing attraction. However, whichever way the new synergies go—movies into rides or rides into movies—it is the modern evolution of early cinema and its foundational role for a post-classical "cinema of attractions" that is most important here. The blending of early cinema's emphasis on sensation,

spectacle and affect with narrative elements from classical Hollywood is the consistent theme in the film/theme park relationship.

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