Elsewhere is always paradise. To escape from our everyday surroundings is to experience the feeling of entering another world. The desire to encounter the duality of existence, ever present in the history of humanity, sends us in search of a world different from our own, rich with possibilities.\(^1\)

The new landscape, seen at a rapid, sometimes even terrifying pace, is composed of rushing air, shifting lights, clouds, waves, a constantly moving, changing horizon, a constantly changing surface beneath the ski, the wheel, the rudder, the wing. The view is no longer static.\(^2\)

The fundamental requirement of *elsewhere* is that it be an *other*. Elsewhere may be heaven, but it may also be hell, or hell disguised as heaven, or heaven disguised as hell. Elsewhere can take many forms, especially if one includes the elsewhere of the human psychophysiology and imagination—triggered by, manifested as, or independent from physically tangible spaces and their representations. As with theme parks and many of their antecedents, the power of landscapes of theme park rides is the power of their elsewhere.\(^3\)

Landscapes of theme park rides are dynamic landscapes, landscapes of motion. In these...

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3. Theme parks have been described as “giant *limen* thresholds,” and sites of “playful pilgrimage.” See A. Moore, “Walt Disney World: Bounded Ritual Space and Playful Pilgrimage Center,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (1980), 207, and as “territorial complexes given over to the introverted system of the game . . . a game with its essential parts . . . uncertainty and the risk of failure [removed].” See Auricoste, “Leisure Parks in Europe,” 494.
landscapes out-of-the-ordinary movement is integral and essential, even when in sometimes complex and highly sophisticated choreographies, it works in concert with sound, story, and a fabricated or preexisting visual landscape. Landscapes of theme park rides are designed landscapes, spatially and temporally circumscribed, highly controlled, and very popular. They thus can serve as models—or foils—for other landscapes of movement, especially those designed ones in which movement works with sound, story, or visual landscape. Their analysis shows ways in which dynamic landscapes can be composed for varied effects and purposes.

The elsewheres with which this essay is primarily concerned are born of ride landscapes’ occupation of real space and time. These elsewheres are augmented, reinforced, and characterized by what these dynamic landscapes present and how they physiologically and psychologically affect riders’ perceptions.

Yet contemporary theme park landscapes work within larger contexts—historical, spatial, and cultural—and for all their otherness, so do their elsewheres. Landscapes of rides have long been popular, and this suggests that they fulfill some basic human propensities: among others, pleasure in spectacles, alternative perspectives, novel kinesthetic experiences (perhaps leading to altered states of consciousness), sensational thrills, and immersion in three-dimensional plotted stories. They merit our attention for this reason alone. Like their predecessors, landscapes of theme park rides charm and captivate; they are spatiotemporal elsewheres, humanly constructed and humanly inhabited. However, while many contemporary rides maintain the same compositional categories as their predecessors, often their elements and composition have changed, making for different messages as well as different media and modes.

The elsewhere of the theme park and the elsewheres of its rides are symbiotic. As in earlier amusement parks, world’s fairs, pleasure gardens, and carnivals, the theme park’s macrocosmic Elsewhere is created in part by the many microcosmic elsewheres one may experience within park boundaries—and, in many cases, elsewhere is found in the landscape of a ride. Conversely, the elsewhere of a ride is often strengthened by its location within such an other-worldly precinct. This symbiotic relationship is as old as rides and the most ancient theme park antecedents. However, since the period at the turn of the century—the heyday of world expositions and amusement parks and the advent of rides with extensive fabricated landscapes and plots—the manipulation of this relationship has become increasingly conscious and deliberate. In today’s most prominent theme parks, it is highly tuned. Park identity and theme support and are supported by ride landscapes’ media, modes, and messages.

In a still broader context, rides have historically involved playful and entertaining applications of technologies originally developed for work; they have expressed an other...
side of technological cultures—and they continue to do so today. Some theme park rides differ little from their predecessors. They continue to charm and captivate; they are seemingly perennially popular, tried and true exemplars of the genre. However, their presence within a theme park is also emblematic. They represent earlier, preindustrial, industrial, and mechanical eras (in particular, their kindlier and gentler aspects), as well as ride landscapes of visitors’ memories. Other ride landscapes, although composed of the same basic elements and devices as their predecessors, use more highly developed technologies to create new expressions and experiences of transcendental elsewheres. Still others, again employing similar compositional elements and devices, are emblematic of, and endemic to, a postindustrial world, a world of electronic production and mass communication. While these latter landscapes are certainly elsewheres, they also ground ubiquitous multimedia everywheres to very specific spaces and times. In their range and variety, the elsewheres of contemporary theme park ride landscapes both reflect traditions and show ways our culture’s relationship to technology as well as some of our elsewheres are uniquely ours.

Here, ride landscapes at The Magic Kingdom and Epcot, both part of the Walt Disney World Resort, and at Universal Studios Florida, all in the Orlando area, serve as illustrative, contemporary exemplars. These rides and the parks in which they are situated are not in all ways typical, and, as will be seen, they differ from one another. Yet these theme parks and their diverse rides are among the most famous, the most popular, the most polished, the most compositionally complex, and the most technologically sophisticated in existence. These theme parks are typical in that rides are essential to them and in that what their rides adopt, adapt, develop, and reject from predecessors helps make them what they are.6

**Landscapes of Rides: Definitions**

A ride is a designed structure, including vehicle and course, in which—and sometimes through which—persons are conveyed, primarily for entertainment: riveted excitement, relaxed pleasure, sublime awe, or some combination of these. Rides’ forms include swings, seesaws, horizontal and vertical wheels, and car-traversed linear courses, usually over varied topographies and configurations. They range from carrousels to roller coasters, from Ferris wheels to computer-based flight simulators, from interior scenic voyages to monorails. Rides necessarily involve technology, an application of science and knowledge regarding how things work.

**Landscapes of rides, or ride landscapes**, can be considered from two perspectives: interior...
and exterior. From the interior—from the rider’s perspective—the landscape experienced in the course of a ride is the landscape of that ride. The ride is a largely self-contained, multisensorial kinetic composition, a landscape intended for and only really known by those who ride it. This landscape is composed of four elements: movement, sound, visual landscape, and story.

Movement is the most basic and distinctive element. Movement, encompassing tempo, vibration, rhythm, sequence, course, duration, and phrasing (the compositional variations, nuances, and relationships of such things as rises and falls, straightaways and curves, different tempos, and different rhythms) necessarily makes ride landscapes spatial and temporal. Movement influences a rider’s mood, psychophysiology, and what she or he visually or otherwise perceives. Powerful or gentle, smooth or erratic, movement can connote efficient technology or technology gone haywire.

Sound in ride landscapes may be background or foreground, incidental or programmed. It may be a byproduct of conveyance systems; it may emanate from unrelated surroundings; it may be designed as integral to the ride. It may be voice-over narration, music, or cacophony. It may be rhythmic, atmospheric, and part of dramatic development.

The visual landscape—the material landscape that riders see—may be preexisting, designed, symbolic, literally representational, miniaturized, or combinations of these. It encompasses what can be seen of the ride’s structure and conveyance system (including vehicles), what has been fabricated as an environment, and scenes designed to unfold sequentially. It also includes what riders see exterior to the ride’s construction: the park, or part of the park (which may or may not be related thematically to the ride), or other surrounding landscape.

Story is less tangible. Stories are told through temporal and spatial events, sequentially related over a ride’s course. They are embedded by the ride’s designer and conveyed through the first three elements. They are sequential, and they have plot. Indeed, as will be seen, ride landscapes are typically expressive of plot’s interlocked meanings: “a small piece of ground, used for a specific purpose,” and “a series of events consisting of an outline of the action of a narrative or drama.”8 Although visitors’ progressions and a story’s sequential events also coincide in other designed landscapes, in ride landscapes, progress and therefore the plot’s unfolding are usually mechanized and thus uniformly and relatively consistently controlled. They are little subject to a visitor’s energy or whims, an official guide’s interpretation, or written proscriptions.

From this interior perspective the ride landscape is necessarily dynamic. It is a landscape

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8 I quite deliberately use story rather than narrative in analyzing ride landscapes. Writers today use narrative in varying ways. In regard to landscape and design, it has been used to refer to the mega-message of a designed landscape; to a sequence of nonreferential events within a landscape; and to a design’s multileveled, variously expressed, nonlinearly experienced symbolic system; as well as to a landscape’s sequential symbolic or referential events. Simon Pugh, referring to Roland Barthes, notes that narrative is contemporarily used to denote a way of telling stories and should not be confused with story (the events of the narrative given chronologically) or plot (the order of narrated events). See Simon Pugh, Garden-Nature-Language (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1988). See also Peter Brooks, Reading for the Plot (New York: Knopf, 1984), who defines plot as “a structuring operation elicited by, and made necessary by, those meanings that develop through succession and time. He also draws attention to plot’s multiple meanings.
based on space and time, where movement combines with sound and story as well as with relatively stationary visual components more commonly identified as a landscape. Elsewhere may be based on the psychophysical effects of movement and its attendant sounds; it may be based on unusual views of the larger environs; it may be based on representations of a real or imagined landscape and incidents within it; it may be based on how views, representations, movement, sound, and sequential incidents interact and combine with one another.

From the exterior, that is the observer’s perspective, rides are vital components of a larger landscape. As distinctive attractions, landmarks, and spectacles, rides strongly influence park visitors’ circulation and behavior. An entire park, or some portion of it, might be conceived as a landscape of rides. Traditionally that landscape looked dynamic; its elsewhere was built on diverse machines and riding people on kinetic display. Now, however, many rides and their landscapes are hidden in architecture ranging from the fantastically evocative, to the thematically tasteful, to the bland and innocuous.

In fact, exterior and interior perspectives interact and combine in our experiences of ride landscapes and in our notions of their elsewhere, as they interacted and combined in those of theme park antecedents. This discussion, then, necessarily encompasses both points of view. However, because I am most interested in these landscapes as designed landscapes and because I believe it more basic, here I will pay most attention to the interior view—the rider’s perspective—on the varied orchestrations and effects of visual landscape, movement, sound, and story. This formal analysis structures my comparison of contemporary theme park rides to their antecedents and is also potentially applicable to other designed landscapes.

**Historical Context**

Rides, Technology, and Larger Landscapes

The history of rides entwines with histories of technology and landscapes, both everyday landscapes of work and landscapes of elsewhere, in particular the human-constructed elsewhere of theme park antecedents. Timber slides, ice slides, and river cotton chutes, all credited as precedents to America’s roller coaster, were labor-saving machines that doubled as devices to propel people at play. The first (so named) carrousel was a seventeenth-century device used by young men training for the Paris Carrousel’s ring-spearing tournament.8 Pennsylvania’s Mauch Chunk Switchback Railway, often considered America’s first railroad and its first roller coaster, began as a means to transport coal.9 Modern technology not only made possible the rides at America’s early amusement parks; it made it possible

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8 “The first of these French carrousels (great displays of raiment and horsemanship) took place during the reign of Henry Navarre (1553–1610) and the most famous one occurred on June 5 and 6, 1662. It was a great spectacle given by Henry’s grandson, Louis XIV, to impress his teenage mistress, Louise de la Valerie. It was staged in the area between the Tuileries and the Louvre [the area now known as the Carrousel].” See Frederick Fried, *A Pictorial History of the Carrousel* (New York: Barnes, 1964), 13–14.

for large numbers of visitors to reach them. Turn-of-the-century amusement parks were often at the end of trolley lines; indeed, they were typically owned by trolley companies. Many rides proudly displayed their working machinery, others, such as The Tickler (Fig. 1), whose spinning cars rolled jerkily down a winding alleyway caroming into one another, showed technology in an irreverent light, subverting images of productive mechanical efficiency with one’s of loss of control and restraint.10 (Later, technology developed for flight training led to simulator rides.)

Rides, especially many rides in close proximity, each with its own distinctive form and kinetics, were often key ingredients of early festivals, fairs, and pleasure gardens. Certainly they were vital to amusement parks. For observers, rides were varied, integral, and dynamic elements of the landscape they surveyed. For riders, rides’ courses and motions provided diverse, out-of-the-ordinary psychophysical experiences and unusual visual perspectives. These theme park antecedents offered the possibility of many such experiences within a short span of time, just as they displayed many rides in one defined space.

An early seventeenth-century watercolor depicts a Turkish fair with several rides and many riders (Fig. 2). Slides and ramps were part of Byzantine fairs, Greek marathons, and

Wishram Indian games; man- or animal-powered swings and merry-go-rounds were part of fourteenth-century England’s St. Bartholomew fairs; and hand-driven carrousels, swings with decorated chairs, and ups-and-downs were part of Prater, the two-thousand acre wooded entertainment area that Joseph II built in Vienna in 1766. Rides in Paris’s early nineteenth-century pleasure gardens could be seen in relation to one another, as well as in their relation to the rest of the garden’s sylvan environs (Fig. 3). They offered elevated views of the landscape and human and mechanical spectacles (Fig. 4). Some, such as Beaujon Gardens’ Aerial Walks (Promenades Aeriennes) with its specially planted areas within and adjacent (Fig. 5) and Ruggieri Gardens’ Niagara Falls with its rocks and flume (Fig. 6) had landscapes created for them. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American amusement parks typically brought together a greater number of rides, many of which had large skeletal structures. Ferris wheels, roller coasters, aerial swings, and other rides, often in concert with fanciful architecture and existing landforms, made amusement park skylines unique. They were particularly impressive at night, when lights selectively illumined and abstracted their forms and, working with darkness, subsumed them into a glittering kinetic whole (Fig. 7).


11 Regarding slides and ramps, see Cartmell, Incredible Scream Machine, 19; on St. Bartholomew fairs, see Frederick Fried, Built to Amuse: Views from America’s Past (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 1990); on the Prater pleasure grounds, see Adams, American Amusement Park Industry, 7.
3–6. Views of rides in early 19th-century Paris pleasure gardens
(courtesy of the Musée Carnavalet, Paris © Phototèque des Musées de la Ville de Paris)
3. (top left) The Tower of Aeolus, Tivoli Gardens (Tour d’Eole promenade aérienne à Tivoli), lithograph by C. Motte, after 1800
4. (bottom left) “Le Supreme Bon Ton, no. 29,” The Russian Mountains of Belleville (Les Montagnes russes de Belleville), anonymous engraving, 1817
5. (above) Aerial Walks (Promenade Aériennes), Beaujon Gardens, Paris, engraving by Lerouge, 1817
6. (below) Niagara Falls (Saut du Niagara), Ruggieri Gardens, Paris, early 19th century, anonymous print
Developments in Ride Landscape Compositions

In today’s theme parks the relative importance of any ride landscape element—movement, sound, visual landscape, or story—varies, often widely, from ride to ride; so does the character of these elements and the ways in which they combine with one another. Movement remains the defining element, but any one of the elements can be carefully manipulated or made to dominate in riders’ experiences. There has not, however, always been such range and variety, or such control. Although rides have long been subject to evolution, many changes significant for contemporary theme park rides date from the turn of the twentieth century. Great numbers of rides were built at that time, and, with technological developments and increased sophistication within the genre, new rides began to be designed that had carefully nuanced motion, elaborate fabricated landscapes, stories with increasingly complicated plots, and new uses and sorts of sound.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, designers explored not only how to make rides faster but also how to incorporate the psychological effects of phrased
movement. These investigations coincided with an enlarged awareness of the visual landscape. New rides provided pleasant and unusual views, but they were also often carefully situated in scenic and dramatic preexisting landscapes. Land forms that suggested far-off places and provided topography for a ride’s course had been constructed previously (Figs. 5, 6), but now visual landscapes began to be built indoors. In these interior landscapes, greater variety, detail, and exoticism became possible. Stories, once merely suggested by a ride’s name, vehicles, or motion, began to have more intricate plots. Sound, once limited to incidental noise or background music, began to be used to dramatize plot and heighten the excitement that ensues from phrased motion.

**Movement**

*Movement* appears paramount in the rides at the Turkish fair (Fig. 2). Oscillating and revolving, rhythmic and repetitive, these are variations on swings, seesaws, and wheels (carrousels)—rides still popular today. Such rides are often thought gentle and soothing, appropriate for young children and the elderly, however one cannot tell from this illustration whether these riders’ experiences were so tranquil. Certainly, later larger and faster variations on these forms were far from gentle. The Human Whirlpool at Steeplechase Park—a spinning disc that flung men and women out from its center to tumble together on the floor (Fig. 8)—was an unmerciful variation on the wheel. So was the Round-Up of my childhood; its swift rotations took it from horizontal to vertical, so that standing facing inward, isolated in one of the shallow stalls on its expanded-steel-lined perimeter, one knew firsthand the power of centrifugal force. Individual kinesthetic experience—and perhaps nausea—were highlighted.

In the landscapes of roller coasters and their antecedents, movement is linear and phrased rather than repetitive and rhythmic. Sensations of speed, exhilaration, and delicious terror have long been central. Contemporary descriptions of Paris’s early Russian Mountains (Fig. 4), with one steep downhill followed by a smaller uphill, claimed invigorating, healthful, frightening, and ennobling effects. Advocates championed the ride’s efficacy in “combating the diseases of the nerves and dissipating all low spirits” and remarked on how riding became “a mark of honor in displaying . . . courage and self-control.” While Russian Mountains depended primarily on slope and speed, as its descendents developed, courses grew longer, circular, and topographically more complicated, and phrasing became increasingly important. Famed roller coaster designer John Allen once remarked, “You don’t need a degree in engineering to design roller coasters . . . you need a degree in psychology—plus courage.”

Robert Cartmell observes how between 1900 and 1920 designers began to manipulate illusion and deception to make roller coasters seem faster, scarier, and higher by planning the climb uphill to be intentionally slow.

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Brenda J. Brown

car was allowed to dangle at the top to let passengers realize the height and think of
the supposed dangers ahead. Then the cars bulleted through the forest of trestles to
provide the illusion of traveling one hundred miles per hour. When the momentum
decreased, passengers were thrown into a curve to hide the loss of speed.13

Visual landscapes

Although such carefully composed landscapes of movement were thrilling enough to
be self-sufficient, designers of this period often incorporated existing landscapes to heighten
drama. Third railers careened along palisades, aerial swings circled over the sea, roller coast-
ers plunged into and rose out of ravines. Movement and kinesthetic excitement remained
paramount, but observant riders might glimpse unique natural and cultural surroundings.
Kennywood Park’s Pippin (now the Thunderbolt) dipped into ravines adjacent to the Al-
legheny River, across which could be seen U.S. Steel-Edgar Thompson Works (Fig. 9). From
the top of Shoot the Chutes, riders could see all of Coney Island’s Luna Park and the
Atlantic Ocean beyond—before they plummeted down its watery incline and splashed
into a lake (Fig. 10).

Rides offering unusual visual perspectives (Fig. 3) and rides combining kinesthetic
thrills and scenic vistas predate amusement parks’ century-spanning heyday. The Mauch
Chunk Switchback Railway became a tourist attraction in 1872. Earlier pleasure railways
had provided views of the sylvan areas they traversed at less than ten miles per hour, but the
Mauch Chunk offered more sublime delights.14 It had a thrilling ascent, even more thrill-
ing descents with suspenseful curves, and seventeen of its eighteen miles were downhill.
Riders enjoyed spectacular views of what, largely because of the railway, became known as
the Switzerland of America—the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Lehigh River, and the Lehigh
Water Gap.15

LaMarcus Adna Thompson surely was aware of the Mauch Chunk when he designed
his first scenic railway in 1887. Previous rides had been “landscaped” and had represented
and evoked other landscapes (Figs. 5, 6), but Thompson created and fabricated three-di-
imensional representational landscapes to be viewed sequentially. Movement facilitated
and enhanced appreciation of these landscapes; it made their unfoldment possible and
emphasized the overall mood. Still, as these rides often retained slow climbs, precipitous
drops, and splashing plunges, kinesthetic experience at times still predominated; it could
also alternate with predominately visual passages.

Riders on Thompson’s first scenic railway viewed indoor tableaux, panoramas, and
biblical scenes illumined by car-tripped switches and flood lamps, as well as the outdoor
lackluster environs of Atlantic City, N.J.16 In later versions the visual landscape was often

13 Ibid., 79.
14 Variations on such “pleasure railways” were found in Hoboken in 1835, see Cartmell, Incredible Scream
Machine, 76; and at Philadelphia’s 1876 Centennial Exposition, see Edo McCullough, World’s Fair Midways
16 Ibid., 49.
9. Kennywood Park, Pittsburgh, Pa.: Tracks of the Thunderbolt, originally the Pippin (designed by John A. Miller and built in 1924), and those of the Steel Phantom built in 1991. (left) Leaving Thunderbolt station; (center) the coaster's course dipping and rising through the ravine; (right) looking across the Thunderbolt tracks down into the ravine and across the Allegheny River to U.S. Steel-Edgar Thompson Works, 1996

10. Looking down Shoot the Chutes at night, Luna Park, Coney Island, N.Y., 1920 (courtesy of the Lake County [Ill.] Museum, Curt Teich Postcard Archives)
more consistent and controlled. Rides such as Pike’s Peak and The Alps had landforms that served as both exterior surfaces and interior environments. Wax-figure vignettes and landscapes’ “natural events” were part of one varied but continuous geography.\textsuperscript{17} The visual landscape of rides such as Dragon’s Gorge (Fig. 11) and later scenic railways were, like their prototype, amalgamations of landscape fragments—scenic, often exotic, and conducive to kinesthetic excitement. Dragon’s Gorge included Arctic regions and the bottom of the sea; the Venice Scenic Railway featured the mirage of a complete Egyptian temple, as well as huge tunnelled mountains made of wire, burlap, and plaster that extended over an ocean pier (Figs. 12, 13). These rides were in a sense contemplations on popular notions of scenic; the created and represented landscape was both background and subject. They also represented the microcosmic aspect of early world’s fair midways with their diverse, populated, foreign villages, and of Luna Park with its plaster architecture that merged the Oriental, Moorish, Italian Renaissance, and fantastic (Fig. 10).\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} Richard Snow, \textit{Coney Island} (New York: Brightwaters Press, 1984), 40.

\textsuperscript{18} In its juxtaposition of landscape fragments, the Midway at Chicago’s 1893 Columbia Exposition set the standard for later World’s Fair midways. Among its attractions were German, Australian, Chinese, Irish, Samoan, and African villages (the last complete with 60 native warriors), the streets of Cairo, Indian jugglers, and reproductions of the USS Oregon and Ireland’s Donegal Castle. See McCullough, \textit{World’s Fair Midways}, 36–50.
By joining three-dimensional landscapes and phrased sequential movement with a beginning and end, scenic railways suggested plotted stories. They were miniature excursions, analogues to real or imagined journeys in real space, but also spatiotemporal analogues to stories’ time-based worlds. They went beyond suggesting other landscapes and offering cues to their dramas (as in the first carousel or Niagara Falls at Ruggieri Gardens) to present stories with set, explicit, sequential plot lines. And the stories need not only be about passage through the landscape; other dramas, played out by all sorts of characters, could be superimposed or embedded and could unfold with the visual landscape. In enclosing part or all of the ride’s course, constructing elaborate and extensive visual landscapes, incorporating special effects made possible by electricity, and beginning to develop plotted adventures, Thompson and his scenic railways were innovative and influential. Scenic railways by others followed; some were even built for traveling fairs and carnivals.
Sound and story

However, Frederic Thompson and George Dundy’s A Trip to the Moon, originally created for the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, N.Y., built on other aspects of L.A. Thompson’s work. Unlike a scenic railway, it deemphasized phrased movement; in fact, its motions were repetitive. But that movement worked with special effects, music, narration, representations and miniaturizations of fantastic and exotic landscapes, theater, and illusion, so that riders were immersed in wonderful and novel environs and traversed a story spatially and temporally. The exposition’s official catalogue and guidebook describes how visitors were “enabled to make a tour of the stars and planets, to really dart through space” (Fig. 14). The flapping winged spaceship occupied the center of a large round building and had portholes from which thirty passengers could peer out at lights and images projected on surrounding walls and floors. These worked with the ship’s swaying to give the impression of flight. The tourist could “recline upon his steamer chair and listen to sweet strains of music while soaring off.”

Riders were flown up over the fairgrounds, over Niagara Falls, away from the shrinking Earth, into space. After passing through an electrical storm, the ship entered the Moon’s atmosphere and dropped slowly through “a sea of sunlit clouds” to land. Passengers were then escorted through the Moon’s underground caverns, past its curious inhabitants, to be greeted by the Man in the Moon and dancing Moon Maidens, who offered bits of the Moon’s green cheese (Fig. 15).

A Trip to the Moon broke from precedents with its extraterrestrial landscape subject and setting, its two- and three-dimensional landscape representations, its illusions of movement, and its plotted story in which riders were participants (however passive) rather than observers, and whose unfoldment was tied to the vehicle’s seeming, rather than actual, course. It used sound in new ways—as narration, music, and part of a theatrical production. Sound was no longer limited to the incidental—to the ambient din of the park, the whoosh of rushing air, a roller coaster’s safety ratchet, riders’ screams—or to accompanying rhythmic music such as that of the military band organs that became standard on carousels.

A Trip to the Moon, like L.A. Thompson’s Scenic Railways, influenced many rides that followed. L. A. Thompson and Frederic Thompson and George Dundy went on to design more landscape adventures for world expositions and world’s fairs as well as for amusement parks—and so did others. At the 1939 New York World’s Fair, rides clearly descendent from theirs were part of the fair proper rather than being relegated to the less prestigious and less dignified midway as they had previously. However, these were not independent, fanciful, or whimsical landscape adventures. Democracity’s and General Motors’ Highways and Horizons stories supported that fair’s theme: “Building the World of Tomorrow … A promise for the Future, built with the tools of Today, upon the experience of Yesterday.”

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types for “educational excursion” rides at later world’s fairs and brought a new twist to the age-old relationship of rides and technology. Not only could rides incorporate, display, and parody technology; they could also soft-sell its products. Amusement parks’ images and successes had previously been tied to rides, but now ride landscapes, in particular their stories, bolstered more defined and focused park elsewhere. A park’s landscapes of rides could reinforce, elaborate on, and vary specific, unified, and unifying themes. While this development reflected increased technological sophistication, it also involved compositional emphases.

22 Steeplechase Park on Coney Island, for instance, featured the Steeplechase, an undulating, curving racetrack featuring metal horses on gravity-spied wheels; it was one of several park rides that encouraged riders’ bodily contact.
Like their antecedents, many theme park ride landscapes incorporate and reflect technologies of their time. New technological developments make possible more spectacular effects, more specificity and detail in visual landscape and sound, and more proprietary consistency and control. But landscapes of theme park rides, like theme parks, entwine with technology in new ways.

Rides at Disney's Epcot, like the park itself, carry on the world's fair tradition that began in 1939. Precursors to infomercials, they celebrate technology, big business, a bright future, and an overarching fair theme. The Magic Kingdom and Universal Studios Florida, through their iterations and variations on mass media images and mass media experiences, and indeed in their very concepts and structures, enmesh with technology in a way unrealized before the creation of Disneyland Park in California—and so do their rides. Disneyland, after all, was created as a home for three-dimensional incarnations of Disney's celluloid creations, but with *The Mickey Mouse Club* television show, it was also a continuing, feeding-back mass media event. Mechanical and electronic production and reproduction are implicit in the theming of the Magic Kingdom and Universal Studios Florida and are implicated in their landscapes of rides.

Like their antecedents, these three theme parks' ride landscapes use, glorify, parody, display, and sell technology. However, even as they reveal and reinforce a technology of entertainment mass media that was not operative in theme park antecedents, by their very existence and continuing success they testify to the power of unique, site-specific landscapes. It may be in this dichotomous relationship that their elsewhere differ most from earlier ones.

Whatever their relationship to contemporary technologies, the elsewhere, like the theme, of each theme park vary. Compositions of ride landscapes and relation to park theme and precedents vary too. While Epcot is a permanent, domesticated world's fair (filtered, tamed, and homogenized by The Disney Company), the Magic Kingdom resembles earlier amusement parks and carnivals. In this it is like Disneyland Park, built as an alternative, cleaned-up, family-oriented version of sullied prototypes. Universal Studios Florida, though influenced by world's fairs and amusement parks, also has origins in filmmaking Hollywood, in tours of studios and movie sets. Many of its rides have a "backstage" aspect. Despite the Magic Kingdom's and Universal Studios Florida's common ties to the film industry, ride landscapes at Universal Studios often resemble those at Epcot more than those at the Magic Kingdom. This is partly because of differences in lineage and composition, but it is also because the Magic Kingdom, like Disneyland Park, reflects Walt Disney's idiosyncratic vision, persistent drive, endless ministrations, obsessive attention, and evolving ideal of perfection. Its elsewhere are more quirky and surprising, more multidimensional, more elsewhere. Epcot and Universal Studios present less individuated, corporate faces; they are not so expressive of one man's imagination.

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For the observer, the obvious difference is exposure. At Epcot and Universal Studios, the rides’ structures and visual landscapes are rarely visible from the outside, and there are few opportunities for observers and riders to interact. The rides’ elaborate multimedia compositions and technological complexity coincide with their containment within buildings, buildings whose forms usually reveal little of the rides’ configurations. Enclosure makes things easier technically and helps keep parks’ real world facades unbroken (Fig. 16). It lessens the complications of creating unified elsewhere in which transitions from New York to San Francisco (as at Universal Studios Florida) or from Mexico to China (as at Epcot) are nearly seamless. At the Magic Kingdom, in contrast, rides range from completely concealed to completely exposed. Rides are visible as bared kinetic structures and as elaborate fanciful fabricated visual landscapes. Buildings often indicate the rides they contain through overall structure or facade. Some ride landscapes are spectacles, and riders and observers interact (Fig. 17).

The differences and similarities from the rider’s perspective are more complex. At Epcot, educational landscape excursions and bright and optimistic stories work with other compositional elements to portray the past, present, and future of technologies—communication, transportation, agriculture, energy—and in this context also promote a large corporation. In the ride landscapes of the Magic Kingdom and Universal Studios Florida, stories, visual landscapes, and sound are usually variations on elsewhere previously created in film or other mass media (linked to The Disney Company and Universal Studios, respectively). However, differences between the theme parks’ ride landscapes go beyond story subjects and visual landscape representation. These elsewhere are constructed not only of the what, or even the how, of story and visual landscape; they are also constructed of the what and how of movement and sound. They are based on the entire composition, on which elements are emphasized and how elements work together.

The stories of Epcot’s rides are usually didactic, self-righteously validating, narrated from
on high, and portentous; the stories of Universal Studios’ rides are theatrical, engulfing, and self-parodying, poking fun at their illusions even as they glory in them. Nevertheless, both parks’ best ride landscapes favor story and visual landscape over movement. Sound—whether music or narration—reinforces story or visual landscape more than movement. In contrast, the best ride landscapes at the Magic Kingdom are complex orchestrated compositions in which articulated and modulated movement is almost always key; sound’s role is more varied.
Simulator Rides

Still, all three theme parks have simulator rides, and these landscape compositions resemble one another. The visual landscapes—a human body’s interior in Body Wars, a populated outer space in Star Tours, and future and past California locales in Back to the Future (Fig. 18)—are all filmed and refer to earlier movies. In all three rides, riders pitch, grind, bump, and lurch; film conveys virtual motion; a simply plotted story centers on a chase; and sound emphasizes the journey.

Simulator rides relate contemporary landscape experience and contemporary technology directly. Like The Tickler (Fig. 1) and like the movies from which they derive, they parody contemporary and future technology at the same time that they embrace them. As trips of the future, imagined with irony and humor, they are part of a tradition extending back to A Trip to the Moon, even, like that antecedent using images of the parks to help convey their illusory journeys (compare the last image of Fig. 18 with Fig. 14). However, here technology is computerized rather than mechanical, and this motion is far from that of a swinging ship. In fact, the out-of-kilter coordination of kinesthetic and visual effects fits with the erratic piloting of Star Tour’s droids and Back to the Future’s eccentric scientist Doc Brown’s funky, futuristic GMC Dolorean.

While advertisements for A Trip to the Moon made it sound like a luxurious voyage, and those for earlier Russian Mountains promoted health benefits, these rides have posted health warnings. People often get sick on simulator rides, and this underlines the peculiar ways that the rides’ images of moving through unusual landscapes conjoin with actual kinesthetic motion. Motion sickness typically arises from perceptual disjunctions between visual experience and physical motion. Here correlation remains rough, partly because technology for synchronizing real and imaged movement remains crude. Although the popularity of simulator rides attests to the continuing attraction of unusual kinesthetic
experiences, it also raises questions about past and contemporary expectations and experiences of movement. Nausea-producing rides predate simulators, but contemporary technology and experience have likely upped the stimulation ante.

**Rhythmic Motion**

Only the Magic Kingdom has rides based on rhythmic and circumrotational motion like those at the Turkish fair (Fig. 2). Cinderella’s Golden Carrousel, Dumbo the Flying Elephant, Mad Tea Party, even AstroOrbiter have formal correlates at most carnivals and amusement parks, but Epcot and Universal Studios have nothing like them. While each offers a distinctive kinesthetic experience, the first three are also important because they trigger nostalgia. They are thematically costumed variations on classic forms, opposites of simulator rides. Although popular with young children, their structures, motions, and sounds can gently stir adults’ sensations of the past, whether derived from childhood or historical accounts. The technology they display is not today’s. Like Disney’s Main Street USA, they evoke earlier, gentler, more innocent, perhaps mythical eras.

Rhythmic motion is also essential to Peter Pan’s Flight and Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride at the Magic Kingdom.24 Yet these rides offer linear scenic excursions rather than repetitive revolutions. Their ancestors include L.A. Thompson’s Scenic Railways as well as carrousels, swings, and The Tickler. Motion synchronizes with music and the unfoldment of fabricated visual landscapes viewed from unusual perspectives. The vehicles—flying sailing ships reminiscent of those of The Tower of Aeolus (Fig. 3) in Peter Pan’s Flight (Fig. 19), shining, fast-turning roadsters in Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride (Fig. 20)—are fitting passports into these three-dimensional recreations of the Disney animated films *Peter Pan* and *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*. However, here stories lie beneath the surface, to be inferred from.

24 In the time between completion of this essay and its publication, Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride had, amidst protests, been removed from The Magic Kingdom. However, the ride remains at Disneyland Park in Anaheim, Calif.
incidents. There is no narration and little dialogue. Each ride has one rhythmic, continuously repeating song that fills even the waiting area, and, for the ride’s course, the vehicles’ motions are similarly rhythmic and continuous.

As if in time to the lilting, sprightly beat of the music box’s tinkling “You Can Fly,” Peter Pan’s brightly colored sailing ships gently rise and dip, sway, glide, and tack over a series of cast, carved, and constructed landscapes whose varied sizes suggest varied flight heights. In contrast, the bright and shiny cars of Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride, seemingly erratically, but incorrigibly wend and wind through brightly painted panels, ranging from cartoon bucolism (complete with thatch-roofed cottages and hollyhocks) to surrealistic warning signs. While Peter Pan’s flying ships glide smoothly from one scene to the next—Bloomsbury nursery, nighttime London, Never Land at dawn—Mr. Toad’s roadsters abruptly enter and exit through doors, cabinets, fireplaces, barns, and haystacks. In both rides sounds are incidental, but in Peter Pan’s Flight they are observed—traffic, Big Ben, sirens, syncopated tom-toms, the crocodile’s ticking clock—and punctuate the music box’s melodic evenness. In Mr. Toad they are of a piece with the musical whirlwind and result from one’s progress: clanking and falling armor, clattering and breaking dishes, cackling and flying chickens . . . an engine’s rumble, a whistle’s squeal, a headlight . . . silence . . . darkness, indiscernible rumbling, and, noisily, hell.

Scenic Railways, Excursions, and Adventures

Splash Mountain is a more straightforward adaptation of the scenic railway, though its cars are hollow “floating logs,” and it includes five flumes. Like Peter Pan’s Flight and Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride, it is a tour through a landscape recreated from a book-inspired film, in this case Disney’s Song of the South. However, here movement is phrased and topographic, and music supports landscape unfoldment and story development rather than vehicles’ rhythmic motion.

Riders tour the mountain’s “natural” and cultural landscape. The three songs that play in different sections reinforce the sense of being a tourist on holiday—or a tourist on holiday in a movie. The fanciful mountain, reminiscent of L. A. Thompson’s Scenic Railway (Fig. 13) and The Alps, is threaded with caverns, and the ride’s course incorporates interior and exterior spaces (Figs. 21, 22) with unique glimpses of the park environs. The mountain contains distinctive, smaller landscapes—a domestic mountaintop community, a populated forest, an oversized frog pond, a river bayou, a cavern lair, and not least, a briar patch surrounded by water—all scaled to small-child, enlarged-animal scale. Natural and human-formed elements sit side by side—real and plastic plants, real water where plastic frogs and fish leap and beside which living lizards sun (Fig. 22).

Sequential vignettes of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, Brer Bear, and other animals in the community, sometimes heard conversing, are the primary conveyers of the story. Songs and the intervals between them contribute to the sequential drama of story, visual landscape, and movement. When the log shoots down the first hill and cruises around the briar patch, it is an introduction to the landscape and a foreshadowing of the events ahead. The buoyant, animal-full, splashing cavern where “Laughin’ Place” is heard is a break in dramatic developments as
well as a different sublandscape and subculture. The songs stop when the log boats make the long, long climb uphill to Brer Fox’s den, the ride’s kinesthetic and dramatic climax, before the steepest and most thrilling descent, when riders are transformed from engaged viewers to reacting, if not acting, characters. Each becomes Brer Rabbit, shooting down, through and under the briar patch to freedom and the landscape beyond. In that passage, the story viewers have been watching and their own kinesthetic journeys merge.

The visual landscapes, sounds, and stories of Kongfrontation and Spaceship Earth (at Universal Studios and Epcot, respectively) differ from one another, but, in contrast to The Magic Kingdom landscapes discussed above, movement is subservient in both rides. Movement serves to regulate progress through the story and views of the visual landscape, little more. Indeed, the sluggish, obviously mechanical motions of Spaceship Earth’s blue molded-plastic cars are often at odds with the tantalizing, shorthand landscape scenes intended to convey the richness of entire civilizations, and that which is viewed in the circular course of Kongfrontation’s trolley is only part of its visual landscape. Indeed, reminiscent of A Trip to the Moon, both ride landscapes extend beyond their vehicles’ courses. Kongfrontation’s encompasses the waiting area; Spaceship Earth’s the penultimate interactive demonstration and play area.

Spaceship Earth is the most successful and compositionally complex of Future World’s didactic rides.²⁵ Like Nestlé’s Living with the Land, whose subject is agriculture, and United

²⁵ Michael Harrington effectively portrayed the insidiousness of Epcot’s corporate educational benevolence in “To the Disney Station,” Harpers (January 1979).
22. Sequential vignettes and landscape scenes from Splash Mountain: (top left) Domestic settlement and (top right) introduction to the coming drama; (left center) capture of Brer Rabbit; (below) approaching dramatic and kinesthetic climax at Brer Fox’s lair where Brer Rabbit is tied over a fire at top of hill; (lower left) chute down through and under the briar patch; (lower right) Brer Rabbit with Mr. Blue Bird on his shoulder — “There’s no place like home!”
Technology’s Horizons, with its historical and contemporary images of the future, Spaceship Earth’s visual landscapes and narrated story culminate in visions of a bright, future, corporately assisted, high-technological world. Spaceship Earth links landscape images to developments in communications. Its history and future vision of human communication are conveyed primarily through visual landscapes and sound. Sequential, detailed, lifesized, audio-animatronically populated period dioramas are furnished with period noises—spoken Egyptian and Greek, Renaissance strings, early jazz pianos, ringing telephones (Fig. 23). The present-future section ends with landscape dioramas of geographically separated places now linked by technology; they portray a world, in particular a world of people, brought together. However, high-tech communication is the real hero: universal, pure, transcendental, site independent, and symbolized by light—the same light that synchronizes with music to create encompassing environments, and that massages and dramatizes the most important parts of the narration.26 The final scene is a sparkling city of tomorrow from which light spirals to create an independent visual environment, joining upbeat electronically enhanced music for the ride’s concluding passage. Riders disembark into AT&T’s green-neon–lit Global Neighborhood, a high-tech, geography-independent, communications–interactive playground.

While Spaceship Earth is a sincere variation on an old theme, Kongfrontation—like Universal Studios Florida’s Jaws and ET Adventure—is self-consciously and simultaneously of the here and now and movies’ created worlds. King Kong is on the prowl again and

26. Fjellman points to the ironies of AT&T’s co-option of Buckminster Fuller’s geodesic dome and the term *spaceship earth*. He notes that despite the vocabulary, nothing on the ride refers to that spaceship’s fragility or its dependence on human care. Stephen Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992), 87–91. That fragility might be inferred by the small size of the Earth’s image in the ride’s climax; however, its diminution more clearly supports the notion that it has become smaller in the face of human achievements.
wreaking havoc; part of New York must be evacuated, so a tram adventure over Manhattan ensues. Each car has a driver who, explaining and commenting, is a narrative bridge into the drama, and who, by peering, ducking, shielding and cowering, is a bodily bridge into the pyrotechnic action. During the tram’s course, riders twice encounter Kong—huge, close, open-mouthed, gesticulating, hunted by helicopter, blinded by searchlights—who hits and jostles the car and causes heat-producing fires in the city streets (Fig. 24) before the tram recovers and arrives safely back at the station.

Yet Kongfrontation’s landscape goes beyond that of the ride’s plot—spatially, temporally, and experientially. Its lifelike cityscape set of neighborhood stores, TV- and lamp-lit apartments, fire escapes, and billboards, over and through which the tram travels (Fig. 24) continues into areas through which riders pass before boarding and merges seamlessly with the New York transit station—complete with graffiti and posters advertising Universal Studio films and TV shows—where riders wait (Fig. 25). Interspersed with advertisements for current TV shows, station monitors broadcast news bulletins about Kong’s escape and conjectured whereabouts. The evacuation time periodically announced is the current real time. Beneath and above the din, strains from the King Kong movie theme periodically resound. Cleverly and ironically, Kongfrontation is most effective when most crowded; the longer one waits, the more the story’s suspense and agitation build. Kongfrontation wittily
and winking combines theater and life. Presaged by the incorporation of theatrical passages in *A Trip to the Moon*, this combination fosters psychological immersion, even if twinged with self-conscious parody and blatant cooperate self-reinforcement. *Kongfrontation* is at once of the here and now, of a created fictive situation and story, and of cinema’s illusions. These multiple layers are epitomized at the ride’s end, when a news flash appears on the tram’s monitor showing tram and passengers—including you—assaulted by Kong.

**Roller Coaster**

Rides that emphasize visual fabricated landscapes and theatrical effects may seem contrived and labored if compared to the Magic Kingdom’s *Space Mountain*. Here, the fabricated visual landscape is minimal and suggested, and it merges with fast and thrilling phrased movement in a way that approaches poetry. The ride’s course and motion are in the tradition of the great roller coasters; it begins with just such a slow suspenseful climb that Cartmell describes as typical of the early twentieth century. But *Space Mountain*’s aerodynamic cars inch up a narrow tunnel isolated from the boarding area, to space, then plunge into oceanic darkness. Here darkness is not the absence of light; it is a palpable presence in which experiences of sound, touch, and motion are heightened.

Although perhaps reminiscent of nighttime amusement park roller coasters, *Space Mountain*’s insulation, quiet—only occasionally broken by screams, shrieks, and car-and-track friction—and darkness in all its nonspecificity, make the ride unique, imaginatively
evocative, and psychologically reverberant. The spaceship’s accelerations and decelerations, its gravity-powered plunges and rises, its banks and straightaways, and its rhythmic clickety-clacks take place in a blackness broken only by small bright stars, shooting comets, and occasionally other ships’ passing glows. Here, carnival-like thrills and cosmological, if naïve, wonder may fuse.

Conclusions

The symbiotic Elsewheres and elsewheres of theme parks and theme park rides are variations on an old theme; Elsewheres of theme park antecedents and earlier landscapes of rides were similarly interdependent. Coney Island’s Steeplechase Park, Luna Park, and Dreamland, for instance, had distinctive identities that were purveyed by rides as well as by architecture, park layout, lighting, and park policy. Because they were successful, Ingersoll’s

Space Mountain’s landscape has also attracted Simon Schama’s attention. In Landscape and Memory (New York: Knopf, 1995, 489), he likens its landscape and landscape experience to what 18th-century mountaineer Ramond de Carbonniers encountered on Mont Perdu in the Pyrenees: “The essential faculty of Enlightenment man, reason, seemed to fail the mountaineer. . . . For when the climber is surrounded both above and below by cloud, mist and granular snow, his power of measurement, of relative scale, is alarmingly disrupted. . . . Lost in exterior space, he is disconcerted to see a whole prospect open up: the endless space of our interior self. Petrarch had thought this the landscape of his soul. Ramond envisaged it as the frighteningly roomy contours of the mind. The designer of “Space Mountain” for [Walt] Disney World must have understood this perfectly, even without benefit of reading the forgotten Pyrenean. For inside the concrete Matterhorn, there is total darkness save for the shrieks of victims thrown up and down the pitch-black precipices of its indeterminate space.”
Brenda J. Brown

Luna Parks (and other amusement parks)—complete with rides—were duplicated with little modification all over the United States and in South America, Europe, Asia, and Australia. However, in contemporary variations at Epcot, Universal Studios Florida, and the Magic Kingdom, the interrelationship of Elsewhere and elsewhere is more studied and consciously manipulated—it is based on a theme. *Theming* implies a specific unifying subject and premise. In these theme parks, themes are made manifest through visual images and stories enmeshed with mass media and its technologies. These Elsewheres and elsewhere differ from antecedents partly because technology and its place in our lives have changed.

Like their ancestors, riders of theme park rides enjoy novel kinesthetic and visual sensations, delight in unusual perspectives and imagined places (Fig. 26), are transported in evocative vehicles, are enchanted by miniaturized and compressed, simultaneously fictive and real journeys and excursions, and take pleasure in displays of technology and technology run amok.

Compositions of theme park ride landscapes continue to be built on movement, visual landscape, sound, and story. However, many of these rides are distinguished from antecedents by their greater reliance on fabricated visual landscapes, stories, and engineered sound; in fact, none relies on a preexisting landscape. It is also in the use of visual landscape and story that various contemporary park rides most obviously differ from one another. However, movement, though less obvious, is also important. It further defines and underlines differences and similarities among Elsewheres and elsewhere.

The visual landscapes of Epcot's rides are lush, exotic, nostalgic, futuristic, visionary, and pyrotechnic. Still, without edifying narrated stories and stirring music, the landscape representations at which Spaceship Earth riders peer as they move solemnly, if sometimes jerkily, past, would likely seem naïve. We are too sophisticated now for L. A. Thompson's simple variations on the scenic. As it is, these carefully crafted visual landscapes provide charming, emotionally charged touchstones for stories—variations on the theme of a proud past, an exciting present, and a promising future through big business technology—that might otherwise seem abstract, cool, and technical. Stories, visual landscapes, and characters in Universal Studios Florida ride landscapes are based on Universal Studios films, as is the landscape of the park itself.  

These visual landscapes generally represent real American places: a residential neighborhood in Manhattan, a New England fishing village, a suburban neighborhood and its more rustic environs in the West. Unlike at Epcot, the visual landscapes of a Universal Studios ride are not scenes to be viewed in a detached manner; they are engulfing environments that riders temporarily inhabit, even while waiting, and they are revealed further over the ride’s course. Often these encompassing settings are also populated by actors, simultaneously characters in the story, essential to the story’s telling, and expressions of Universal Studios’ postmodernistic self-consciousness. Here, the tricks and illusions at the heart of cinematic technology are exposed and parodied even as they are venerated. Stories

28 However, parts of Universal Studios Florida are also used as sets for new films.
27. Sacro Monte (dedicated to St. Francis), Orta, Italy, 1993: (top left) Approach to the highest point; (top right) climactic chapel; (center left) diorama of St. Francis receiving the stigmata; (center right) turn in path directing visitor's gaze toward Lake Orta; (lower left) continuing descent on the avenue of the stars
and visual landscapes at the Magic Kingdom are also linked to film. However, as these Disney films are often animated and fanciful, their landscapes are less tied to real places and more tied to specific, uniquely cinematic creations. Unlike Universal Studios Florida, the Magic Kingdom works hard to keep its illusions of other worlds unbroken—in landscapes of rides and in the larger park. There is no mistaking its rides’ visual landscapes, characters, and stories for the everyday, and these elsewheres are further defined by distinctive motion.

Visual landscapes’ prominence in so many ride landscapes bears witness to landscape representation’s power to charm, thrill, inspire, scare, and sell, as well as to tell stories. But movement defines this landscape genre, and it is in movement’s varieties and uses that designers of other landscapes may find the most practical lessons. Mechanized movement (as often employed at Epcot and Universal Studios Florida) can simply facilitate orderly progression but, as in even the earliest examples discussed, it can also flavor—even determine—the landscape experienced. At the Magic Kingdom, motion is most elegant and developed. Together with music, the wends and winds of Mr. Toad’s roadsters set that madcap adventure’s tenor. In Peter Pan’s Flight, continual rhythmic, lilting movement reinforces the fabled perpetuity of Never Land and the suggested perpetuity of “You Can Fly.” When designers and critics debate landscape narratives’ legibility, Splash Mountain is a reminder and exemplar of the pleasures of movement, visual landscape, and story meshing in a plot’s unfoldment. Movement in the “here and now” artfully synchronizes with the story’s ups and downs, turns, conflicts, and resolutions. Such a wedding of movement, popular story, and topography re-

28. ET Adventure: The healer ET and his green planet (courtesy of Don Ceppi, East/West™ Productions U.S.A.)
calls, ironically and profanely, the Christian Sacro Monte (Fig. 27). Though the context and end effects are different, the formal structure—a hero’s tale, sequential story-carrying vignettes by which visitors pass, the synchronization of turns in the landscape with turns in the story, and of story climax with a landscape high point—is similar. In fact, the similarities in structure and differences in effects suggest extremes in a range of possibilities for other rides and landscapes that meld popular plotted story, topography, and movement (Fig. 28). If we do not like Splash Mountain’s messages, we might consider different messages to create and convey through its media and modes.

Landscapes of rides comprise an engaging design genre, and the ones discussed here are some of the most artful. They are worth designers’ attention in and of themselves, as is any artful design. But to design landscapes based on movement, sound, and story (as well as a visual landscape) can be a tough corrective to the typical designer’s bias toward the sense of sight and reliance on plan and section drawings. The control and controlling inherent to landscapes of rides limits application of their lessons in other landscapes. Still, like poetry to prose, the genre’s limitations and constraints make it useful for exploring multisensorial, time-based aspects of landscape design. Real and hypothetical ride landscapes can help when investigating how sound and visual landscape reinforce and play off of one another, examining techniques of visual landscape representation, identifying ingredients necessary to a fanciful landscape, coordinating movement, topography, visual landscape, and story unfoldment, or honing movement as a defining landscape element. The design of ride landscapes may also be useful because it forces designers to confront technology. So working playfully in a landscape genre that embraces technology can be an engaging and nonthreatening way to consider relationships of technology, culture, nature, and landscape. Indeed it may also be in these relationships that theme park rides most differ from their antecedents and are most contemporary.

Elaborate multimedia simulator rides are, of course, new in the era of theme parks. New technology facilitates their arrhythmic motions and the incorporation of filmed visual landscapes. Epcot rides are updated periodically so that their stories of technology will be current; Universal Studios seeks to display the latest special effects; new technological developments make possible the slight variations that repeat riders note in the Magic Kingdom’s audio-animatronic characters’ conversations. However, a more significant difference results from mass media technology’s effect on elsewhere’s fundamental requirement to be an other.

Walter Benjamin and John Berger have observed how mechanical reproduction removed the images of sacred objects and art from any preserve. Images became “ephemeral, valueless and free,” surrounding us “in the same way as language surrounds us.” The Magic

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29 I so used landscapes of rides in a landscape architecture design studio at the University of Illinois in 1996. Students designed rides for Techno-Terra, a theme park that set out to reveal nature through technology. Among the rides they designed: The Dragonfly; Hook, Line and Sinker, or Life of a Bass; The Prey and the Predator; and Elemental Rides: Wind, Water, Earth, and Fire.

Kingdom and Universal Studios do not deal in art, but they do deal in images. They deal also in cinema’s spatiotemporal worlds of moving images and stories, products of electronic as well as mechanical production and reproduction, that, especially with TV and videos, are for some as ephemeral, ubiquitous, free-floating, and surrounding as the reproduced, seemingly omnipresent, static images. Yet in a curious turn, landscapes of theme park rides can bind mass-produced images of visual landscapes, sounds, and stories to one defined multisensorial space–time. Elsewheres of earlier landscapes of rides also drew on popular and popularized images; the Bible, mythology, travel literature and publicity, and works by Jules Verne were among the sources. Many theme park antecedents were big and profitable businesses, and surely rides have long entwined with technology and in various ways sold it. But the workings of today’s mass media technology are less visible, even though its manifestations are more pervasive. Floating, ubiquitous, cinematic landscapes are grounded in rides’ dynamic circumscriptions. Ride landscapes gain stature because in their site-specificity, they seem like preserves, sources, or originals in relation to other manifestations of the images on which they are based. The elsewheres of these theme park ride landscapes are simultaneously another and an other, simultaneously iterations of multimedia worlds and those worlds made real site, real time, real landscape specific.

Still, though the elsewheres of most theme park rides fuse with multimedia worlds, not all do. And some landscapes of rides are so powerful they render such relationships insignificant. Space Mountain exemplifies both points. It also does what only a ride can; it is an epitome of rides’ unique and age-old possibilities. Its elsewhere attains the sublime, transcending animated films, songs, fictive places, even its own symbiotic relationship to the Magic Kingdom. No static visual image, its world is of plunges and rises, of darkness and of fleeting light, of silence and elusive sound. It is archetypal—archetypal in the sense of primal, psychologically reverberant—because it is, or becomes, something inside as well as outside us.

31 This phenomenon recalls Moore’s (as above, note 3) characterization of The Magic Kingdom as a site of playful pilgrimage. However, my primary concern is with the role of images and their interactions with a site and the technology of mass media; Moore focuses on visitor behaviors.