Be Our Guest or Welcome Foolish Mortals? Disney's Invitation to Play and the Delusion/Illusion of Hyperreal, Immersive Documents

L.P. Coladangelo
Kent State University, lcoladan@kent.edu

As part of an effort to conceptualize and study theme park attractions as documents, this paper playfully takes up the Document Academy conference theme of disease and disturbance through "documents of deceit" by proffering examples found at Disney theme parks and resorts. Such documents include the lands, or themed areas, of the parks themselves (e.g., Fantasyland); attractions or rides, like *it's a small world* or *The Haunted Mansion*; guest experiences like parades or character meet-and-greets; and the themed hotels on Disney resort property (e.g., Wilderness Lodge or Polynesian Village). In an effort to make this case, this paper loosely appropriates the metaphor of delusion and a surrounding cluster of related concepts and ideas, like self-deception and imagination, as well as ludic aspects of culture (Anchor, 1978; Huizinga, 1949; Rapti & Gordon, 2021; Sicart, 2014) to suggest that the study of document experience is enriched through examination of hyperreal places like Disneyland and Walt Disney World. Such an examination involves situating Disney theme parks within a framework of document theory (Buckland, 1997; Buckland, 2014; Day, 2016; Latham, 2012), copy theory (de Fremery & Buckland, 2022), document phenomenology (Gorichanaz & Latham, 2016), and immersive documents (Robinson, 2015a; Robinson, 2015b). As a purveyor of document experiences somewhere between cultural heritage and entertainment, Disney theme parks offer "imagineered" simulacra and hyperreal spaces which invite guests to play (Allen, 2012): to imagine themselves elsewhere, inhabiting an alternate, idealized version of reality. As places filled with spaces and objects that intentionally straddle the boundaries between the fantastical and the authentic, the distinctions between document observer, document participant, and document creator become blurred. Theme park visitors are enticed to accept Disney's versions as truer and more authentic than their real-life counterparts and to heighten the tourist experience by casting themselves as actors (Kokai & Robson, 2019). As a result, Disney's whimsical invitation toward self-deception to construct a positive illusion has implications for document interpretation and experience, as well as the role theme parks and attractions play in informing cultural and collective views of history (Bemis, 2020).

The Metaphor of Delusion

In his work on play, Sicart (2014) stated that "to be playful is to appropriate a context that is not created or intended for play" (p. 27). Conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003) posits that metaphors serve cognitive and communicative functions in knowledge construction by using figurative language from one source domain to conceptualize another target domain. To discuss the potential complications and disorder inherent in the hyperreal theme park document, this paper briefly introduces the uncertainty of a delusion state as an

ontological metaphor for theme park attractions as documents, doing so playfully, by (mis)appropriating it for a context for which it was not created or intended.

While it is agreed that delusions are pathological, there is not a consensus about their cause (Currie & Jureidini, 2001). From a classificatory perspective, the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) defines delusions as "fixed beliefs that are not amenable to change in light of conflicting evidence" (Parnas, 2015, p. 174). This language was softened from earlier iterations (DSM-III, DSM-IV), which described them as "false beliefs due to incorrect inference about external reality" (p. 174). The subject shift in agency, and thus epistemology, places the disorder from a fixity in falsehood based on incorrect inference about reality (that is, a cognitive concern) toward the beliefs themselves as problematic in light of contradictory evidence. This leaves the person with the delusion as the passively inferred location where inaccurate beliefs somehow take hold as it softens the causal relationship between belief, delusion, and the nature of falsehood. While some scholars, for instance, accept that delusions are, or arise from, disordered beliefs (Bayne, 2010; Bayne & Fernández, 2009; Bayne & Pacherie, 2005), others have advanced that delusions are rooted in the imagination (Currie, 2000; Currie & Jureidini, 2001) as cognitive hallucinations (imaginative states misidentified as perceptions and beliefs), or are an intermediate state somewhere on a continuum between belief and imagination (Egan, 2009). Those arguing for a doxastic, or belief-oriented, view concede that there is little difference between the origin theories from a functional sense (i.e., delusions are disordered regardless of their source), yet the disagreement is significant from a normative perspective, given the moral implications if delusions are in fact beliefs (Bayne, 2010). Still others (Mujica-Parodi & Sackeim, 2001) suggest the source of delusions as a disorder of information processing. This manifests as a failure to distinguish conceptual relevance: irrelevant information and disconnected experiences are deemed relevant, and counterexamples are ignored. In any event, the extent to which delusions are affective and/or cognitive, or experiential and/or interpretive (Parnas, 2015), as well as factors regarding reality, the validity or vividness of evidence, the conviction of the sense of self, and the degree of agency one may feel or have are all salient considerations in this debate.

Further complicating matters are shared delusions (sometimes known as folie à deux) and self-deception. In the case of folie à deux, a delusion held by a "primary" becomes shared by a "secondary" (or secondaries) (Suresh Kumar et al., 2005). Though rare, when it occurs, it is traditionally within members of a family or close-knit group; the secondary is often in a submissive, vulnerable role, and may even suffer from mental illness themselves (Arnone et al., 2006; Sacks, 1988). Separation of the primary and secondary is a potential treatment, although difficulties may arise in determining who is primary and who is secondary. Defining self-deception is also a complex endeavor when considering dimensions

of agency and intentionality. Views of self-deception range from an adaptive function for protection or sustaining of the self (McKay & Dennett, 2009; McKay et al., 2005; Skocz, 2010) to motivationally biased beliefs (Mele, 1997; Mele, 2006) arising from biased gathering of, attention to, and interpretation of evidence or external information (Davies, 2009) that may be driven by personal interests (Bortolotti & Mameli, 2012).

Even erroneous ideas which are not pathological but are still false have conceptual overlap with delusions. Misbeliefs (McKay & Dennett, 2009) are one type, which can include breakdowns in the functioning of belief formation (i.e., delusions) or beliefs based on inaccurate or incomplete information. A subset, known as positive illusions, are those false beliefs or misrepresentations of reality from which people may benefit, such as optimistic appraisals of competence leading to greater confidence. A social construction of positive illusions—a benign folie à deux, as it were—in which the fictions of others are mutually reinforced, may be beneficial to the cultivation of social ties (Krebs & Denton, 2009). Another category, known as over-valued ideas (McKenna, 1984; Veale, 2001), preoccupy or dominate a sufferer's life. Such beliefs are unreasonable, sustained, and even extreme (Rahman et al., 2019), yet are maintained with less intensity and may be abandoned or acknowledged as untrue (Fusick et al., 2021). The degree to which such ideas or beliefs drift into the territory of the delusional could depend on various clinical evaluations about the individual, the severity of effects on the life of the individual, and the persistence of the idea in relation to contradictory evidence, as well as whether a pattern of thought is discordant with an individual's culture or sub-culture (Fusick et al., 2021; Mujica-Parodi & Sackeim, 2001).

This last criterion, in which the discussion shifts to the exception to a delusional diagnosis granted by cultural concordance is perhaps most salient to further discussion of shared beliefs. The cultural dimension and its impact or conditionality on the diagnosis of delusional states (which has further medical, legal, and moral ramifications) offers an opening to focus on concepts which help illuminate how beliefs and imagination are enacted in a normative, collective, and beneficial fashion. Although religious beliefs have been suggested as one such avenue to explore the overlap of culture and shared delusion (McKay & Dennett, 2009), this paper takes a more mischievous route by introducing the concept of play as a mechanism for cultural expression through its association with the fun to be had in deceiving appearances (Rapti & Gordon, 2021) that toy with reality.

Play Culture and Illusory Spaces

In his work tracing the source of cultural expression, Dutch historian and anthropologist Johan Huizinga argued the centrality and significance of the play-element, which he saw having a special function in the social construction of shared

meaning (Huizinga, 1949). From its role in language and metaphor to mythology, ritual practice, and conceptions of the sacred, Huizinga used the lens of play (and contest) to examine various aspects of civilization, positing that play had a civilizing force evidenced in the development of such areas as law, commerce, science, and art. His definition of play in this sense was not confined to merely being the opposite of seriousness, but rather included the following salient dimensions, namely that play is: taken up voluntarily, considered outside of ordinary or real life, intensely absorbing, based not in material interest or profit, limited in locality and duration, conducted by its own sense of order and its own rules, and socially associative by encouraging groupings of people based on insider knowledge ("secrets") and markers of differentiation (like costume or dress) distinguishing community members from "outsiders." This last dimension carries the implication that to be a spoilsport or to break the rules of the game, then, is to rupture the illusion (being "in or at play"). One who "breaks the magic world" (p. 11) must be cast out, such that even outlaws and apostates come to form their own oppositional community directed against the play-community.

Play in its highest forms, Huizinga advances, is both a contest for something and a representation of something; that is, a game can be viewed as a representation of a larger contest and play itself is a contest for making the best representation (of something). Huizinga uses the example of ritual to elucidate this second form of play, as sacred rites are (dramatically, symbolically) performed or enacted to represent (i.e., stand in for, identify, indicate, re-present) an event of cosmic importance. Through ritual action, the event is not just presented figuratively, Huizinga argues, but actively reproduced; the ritual activity is not merely imitative but performative and participatory, in the sense that a sacred ritual "plays" at representing a cosmic event which "compels the gods to effect that event in reality" (p. 15).

The sacred ritual, then, is a socially constructed representation and enactment of events from the "magic world" taking place outside of ordinary life and bound by special rules of time and space. It is no wonder then that in the cultural imagination, writers and scholars have explicitly drawn on this conceptualization of the sacred when discussing visits to Disney theme parks. Planning a Disney trip has been likened to a rite of passage (Laskow, 2016), a ritual (Rosenbloom, 2003), and a pilgrimage (Garfield, 1991; Koehler, 2017; Moore, 1980), where guests encounter ritual spaces (Moore, 1980) and temples (Koehler, 2017). Childhood wonder and play are undertaken as serious endeavors (Arnold, 1978) in the secular analog to the religious pilgrimage (Moore, 1980). The sacred space is filled with architectural landmarks, such as fantasy castles, which draw visual attention as (imaginary) cultural objects while simultaneously acting as axis mundi (Koehler, 2017). Like mythic temples built on summits, they serve as "point[s] of

convergence" and as "physical manifestation[s] of the psychological or symbolic space[s] they [seek] to create" (p. 59).

The salience of these physical manifestations as representative of the mythic, however, must return to a discussion of Huizinga's dimension of play: its voluntary nature. Such an investigation should elucidate what allows people to experience Disney parks and attractions meaningfully, and to what extent people deceive themselves with positive illusions. In order to do that, an examination of theme parks as bounded ritual spaces filled with sacred cultural objects requires a framework which explains how, or through what factors, people come to experience objects meaningfully. It must also address the intentionality or willingness to play, such that park guests are willing to deceive themselves, to use their imagination and their capacity to emotionally and cognitively construct, believe in, and (temporarily) inhabit a world of illusions. Document theory and document phenomenology offer a novel and intriguing way to study the interplay of these dimensions.

Playing with Documents: Intentionality and Indexicality

Situating objects in theme parks within a social constructionist definition of documents (Buckland, 1997) places park destinations and attractions amid an interpretive context marked by a materiality which signifies evidence of some phenomenon. In this case, theme park documents have been designed by Imagineers (professionals employed in creative development combining imagination and engineering) to physically and symbolically represent or reconstruct for park guests both fiction (e.g., content from various Disney films, fairy tale settings and characters in Fantasyland) and reality (e.g., the history of the American colonial era in Liberty Square, the non-Western jungle-themed destinations of Adventureland, the museum-style exhibits in country pavilions at EPCOT's World Showcase). In this way, attractions manifest the instrumental view of documentality (Buckland, 2014) as objects "made into" documents for a purpose, as evidence of or reference to something.

However, what these objects are intended to "serve as" evidence *of* is complex—contradictory, contested, and highly contextual. In contrast to traditional cultural and memory institutions, Disney theme parks espouse a different approach to authenticity (Houston & Meamber, 2011; Kelleher, 2004; Kratz & Karp, 1993; Milman, 2013; Salamone, 1997). Disney Imagineers conceptualize this process through theming and storytelling, a process which includes playing to emotional attachments rather than adhering to historical accuracy. This is accomplished by taking things people know from the real world and using them to tell an entirely new story which feels familiar (Imagineers, 2005). In Disney park and attraction design, the theme is the guiding principle, the story Imagineers want to tell, which

does not use elements from the real world for the sake of historical or cultural accuracy, but rather to create a "heightened reality" (p. 23) advancing an emotionally centered narrative (Imagineers, 2007).

Cultural critics describe this approach as hyperreal (Eco, 1983/1986), in which "the public is meant to admire the perfection of the fake" (p. 44). Attractions are designed to include references or "quotations" to original context (such as cultural motifs) or even real cultural objects (Kratz & Karp, 1993), but combine those authentic details with stylized designs and elaborate set pieces in a carefully crafted, overdetermined way. The imagined versions—the "ontological mélange" (p. 32) of truth, falsehood, reproduction, fantasy, and quotation—are intended to be idealized versions (Francaviglia, 1981) "more real than reality" (Eco, 1983/1986, p. 45), and thus more "authentic" than that which they are meant to reference (Francaviglia, 1995). To extend the ludic metaphor from above, the Disney illusion is then responsible for both alluding to the real world while eluding accusations of outright fakery.

Disney's hyperreality is built upon simulacra (Baudrillard, 1981/1994), mediated versions directed toward the purpose of making the real imaginary and the imaginary real. They reproduce, or copy (from), existing documents (stories, films, architectures, symbols, etc.) to create an original document intended to conjure the affective and cognitive value of that from which it borrows to immerse park guests in a new experience. To walk through Cinderella Castle is not just to observe a three-dimensional reproduction of something from the animated film, but to accept an invitation to reproduce, for oneself, the lived reality of Cinderella by experiencing—inhabiting—the cinematic world.

The Wilderness Lodge resort hotel at Walt Disney World provides a particularly incisive example of the Disney simulacrum (Allen, 2012; Cypher & Higgs, 1997). Designed to appear as a national park lodge, and based on the Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone, critics charge that it is a false copy. They view the themed hotel, with elements cobbled together from various sources, as commodifying nature, and thereby colonizing the imagination and supplanting reality, by selling visitors the hyperreal version of the wilderness (Cypher & Higgs, 1997). The argument against these critics (Allen, 2012) counters the notion that nature and the wilderness are pure and non-commodified in opposition to Disney's "fake image" of reality by positing that the idea of the American Wilderness has always been a social and cultural construct. These critics present a false dichotomy, as ideas about the purity of the natural world or the authenticity of living the "simple life" out in the wilderness do not recognize that these ideas have their source from myths about the American West and are themselves also fantastical and artificial concepts. The resort, instead, repudiates the validity of these myth and the National Parks as a genuine and unmediated experience by challenging guests, through its simulation, to think about those concepts and experiences as cultural constructs.

In fact, guests do not mistake the double as real, believing the resort to be a faithful reproduction; rather, "[they] *recognize* it as a copy or simulation" (p. 134, emphasis in original). The resort does not convince guests to accept its image of the wilderness as true, but consciously presents to them a game of reality. Guests are invited to play along, if they wish, and immerse themselves in the surroundings, imagining themselves idyllically living close to nature, as if in a National Park lodge. The hyperreal double is only a substitute if the viewer believes it is by accepting the invitation to play. Once the belief or the imagining ceases and the viewer acknowledges the lodge as fantasy, the game, and thus the illusion, ends.

Authentic copies, therefore, are contingent, relative constructs. Copy theory advances that the degree to which a document is a copy is a social construction or personal perception of its being similar enough for some purpose, in which context, and thus perspective, are integral to the determination of similarity (de Fremery & Buckland, 2022). If the document user (viewer, experiencer) is willing to pretend, the hyperreal simulacrum, in effect, is similar enough, or even better than, the real thing from which the reproduction was made. The copy, then, becomes both (and beyond) representational and reproductive. Much like Huizinga's explanation of sacred rites, the copy simultaneously imitates reality and enacts it. The hyperreal version further complicates this enactment by temporarily *standing in for* reality, for as long as the guest is willing to play.

The theme park, as a simulacrum of sacred play, is filled with inhabitable representations, with ostensible copies that bear content and thus potential meaning. Yet, it is also unto itself an original context which borrows evidence from its real-world referents and seeks to evade their reality. It then becomes an imaginary context, in which references have been decontextualized, and then recontextualized as more than real, that is, ideal. It is a copy whose authenticity relies upon the value (the borrowed aura, as it were (Latour & Lowe, 2010)) of evidence gathered from existing objects, derived design elements, and existing fragments of texts. Yet, its status as copy is contingent upon an understanding of and a willingness to perceive and to accept what has been idealized far beyond mere faithful representation and reproduction.

Because human perception and interpretation is key (Gorichanaz, 2015) to document status (as well as copy status), the design intentions of the document creator are, therefore, only half of the equation. Under a semiotic view of documentality (Buckland, 2014), the user or perceiver's consideration, specific understanding, or individual need may also establish an object as a document. The human or social dimension in determining document status, and thus meaning, involves perception and interpretation of semiotic content. In this view, the document is a sign of something, an invitation to interpret. This act of interpretation follows the notion of indexicality (Day, 2016) in which documents have no fixed, inherent meaning. Documents act as signs or indices rather than direct

representations of reality. It is possible then to interpret information that was not intended or explicitly expressed. By extension, the perception and interpretation of a document, the process by which the individual experiences a document, must be examined from the standpoint of the perceiver, and their willingness to interpret—to play with—that potential for meaning.

Playing with Meaning: Document Interpretation and Experience

Emerging from Latham's (2012) work applying reader response theory to document transactions and the interpretation of museum objects as documents and Gorichanaz's (2016) work on the necessity of human activity and transactional experience in the establishment of document status, document phenomenology (Gorichanaz & Latham, 2016) offers a framework for examining documents as both intentional and indexical phenomena. Under this framework, documents become documents through human perception in a particular context, which can be examined through material, mental, and social aspects. The framework recontextualizes these aspects of documents by situating the document experience as a co-created, dynamic transaction between an object and a human being.

Physical or material information resides both with the object and the person; an object's intrinsic information includes materiality which is observable and measurable (i.e., color, light, shape, position, arrangement) and the abtrinsic information about a person includes physiological properties (i.e., body temperature, heart rate) or states (i.e., hunger, pain) which gives rise to particular emotions (i.e., preoccupation, sadness). In the case of Disney documents, intrinsic information would come from design elements and basic appearance such as color choice, perspective and sightlines, light displays, sounds, and landscaping. For instance, Disney theme parks use a color colloquially known as "Go Away Green" (Soto-Vásquez, 2021) to cover views of buildings that cannot be obstructed by landscaping or hidden by other design elements. The banal color is intended to be so unremarkable that structures blend into background, effectively camouflaging areas Disney wishes guests to ignore. Abtrinsic physical, and thereby emotional, information is also easy to imagine in relation to park guests: tired feet and sunburns from long distances walking in the sun, exhaustion from the heat, hunger from a delayed lunch break, and irritability and anger as affective expressions of physical discomfort.

The mental aspect of the document experience is represented by adtrinsic information, or the association of memories brought forth or called upon during a document transaction. This information can be from individual sources (memory of private, personal experience) and/or social in nature (memory of another's words, a group interaction, a communal experience). Because the personal and social are intertwined, it can be expected that adtrinsic information will be an

interplay and mixture of the individual and the collective. In terms of Disney theme parks, the implications for studying personal and cultural memory cannot be understated, as memories of Disney creative content as well as past experiences (like family vacations) may have a priming or mediating effect on how individuals and groups perceive attractions as documents.

Investigation of mental aspects should also consider the influence of imagination and beliefs on document experience, and thereby how park guests conceptualize and negotiate their participation. This will also involve examining to what extent guests are willing to play (and be playful). It should also examine how that play is encouraged (or hindered) by intrinsic information from the objects they perceive and interact with as well as abtrinsic information from their physiological and emotional states. Alterations in perception, experience, mood, memory, and temporality will mean different experiences and diverse levels of engagement. The extent to which guests will allow themselves to be "tricked" or are deceived by the "heightened reality" of the theme park experience will add an interesting layer to document phenomenology.

Finally, the social aspect of documents conveyed by extrinsic information includes the attributed properties of the object within the document experience, all the contextual and cultural information that is known, or said to be known, about the object. This information may be documented information about the object itself or information known from other sources. In the case of Disney attractions, extrinsic information is best exemplified by accounts from Disney Imagineers about their creative process and the body of interpretive work by scholars and fans. Such extrinsic information would include the embedded references and quotations, the (re)appropriated contexts, the real-world objects that served as inspiration for their imaginary counterparts, the perceived status of hyperreal reproductions and copies, and the influence of cultural similarities and differences in theme park design (Van Maanen, 1992). A social epistemology of Disney documents centered in document phenomenology could then examine how the knowledge constructed by fan communities (in effect, play-communities) encourages and reinforces experiences of positive illusion among their members.

Through the application of the document phenomenology framework for hyperreal documents, document experience includes an interplay between intentionality and indexicality. The design intentions of the Imagineers and the play intention of the document participant mutually reinforce one another while encouraging conditions in which the document indexes to the participant its hyperreal nature, and the participant in turn authenticates it as an idealized copy for their purpose. This hyperreal document experience is supported by the various types of information entering the system of the document transaction, looped through the interpretive process of intention and indexing. Furthermore, the bounded, sacred, and carefree space of the Disney parks—referred to by fans as the

"Disney Bubble" (Green, 2014)—acting as a document system, further reinforces this process of mutual fiction by immersing the participant in the hyperreal environment.

Consider as well that the ability or propensity to accept illusion as reality must also have implications for personal and social conceptualizations of document authenticity. Under the doxastic view of delusions, to believe in the reality of that which is false is a failure of belief, which, despite conflicting evidence, persists in false belief, or delusion. The same sense of agency is called upon for the imagination: to temporarily ignore reality (and the evidence of falsehood) to permit oneself to play. Yet the seriousness of the investment in fakery is still very much significant to the player. It could be asked then, considering Huizinga's notion of sacred rituals, why the theme park experience feels so genuine to some visitors when it is obviously not? Do scenarios of play, of inhabiting imaginary places—like a visit to the Disney parks—*feel* authentic because of the positive feelings they engender? Or does the significance of what is being represented feel authentic when guests experience a mix of the familiar, the ideal, and the new? Are the objects (attractions) convincing enough to construct the theme, the narrative, and thus the illusion for the person? Or does the person construct their own illusion out of the surrounding objects, convincing themselves that they are true enough (i.e., faithful copies) for their purpose? It could very well be that the hyperreal document transaction signals its own falsehood, self-consciously acknowledging its existence as an impossible pastiche of recontextualized references without a direct original *while it simultaneously* invites the participant to suspend disbelief to have an authentically imaginary (or imagined authentic) experience.

Because authenticity is a complex subject—for art, for museums, for tourism, for history, and for documents—it is not possible to fully address its implications here. That project will have to be left for another paper. However, it is valuable to end this section with the notion that contested reality and authenticity in documents is a question of their fluidity, both in terms of what is known about them and how they are perceived and contextualized by the viewer/user. Latham (2016) delved into this notion as floating fixity, in which a change in one or more types of information within a document experience lead to a subsequent change in other information, such as when an alteration in extrinsic information influences abtrinsic and adtrinsic information. The fixed point of authenticity changes under consideration of new evidence or from a new perception, which should include our conscious (and unconscious) beliefs about reality. This would begin to offer an approach to understanding the influence of play as part of document experience and implications for interpretation that follow when a person indulges in a playful delusion that they are *actually* entering Cinderella Castle, *actually* flying high over London with Peter Pan, *actually* dining at the San Angel Inn in Mexico (Salamone, 1997), *actually* sitting at the fireplace in the best, truest version of a national park

lodge. The role of our own agency in our own narratives, and the affective and cognitive resources called upon and responses elicited in constructing such illusions, will be important to discern and study as the objects which compose the narratives (e.g., virtual reality and immersive experiences) become increasingly realistic.

Concluding Delusions: Imagining a Research Agenda for Disney's Immersive Documents

Disney theme parks are entering the metaverse business (Gilmo, 2021; Towey, 2022), with plans to include technologies supporting personalized storytelling, virtual reality, and digital elements blended into the physical world. Arguably, Disney's ability to deliver immersive experiences through technological and creative innovation has existed since the opening of Disneyland in 1955 (Kokai & Robson, 2019), including the ways they have both shaped the tourist experience (e.g., environmental design like landscaping, forced perspectives, and artificial smells) and invited guests to be part of the "show" (e.g., visiting magical places and meeting movie characters). These advances have culminated most recently in two *Star Wars* franchise-related experiences: *Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance*, "one of the most immersive, complex and technologically advanced attractions that Disney has ever created" (Thompson, 2020, para. 2) and a hotel, *Galactic Starcruiser*, "the most immersive Star Wars story ever created—one where you live a bespoke experience" (Disney, 2022, para. 1). *Rise of the Resistance* offers an elaborate pre-show and ride experience in which park guests, as newly inducted members of the Resistance, find themselves personally facing down, and escaping from, the villainous First Order. *Galactic Starcruiser* offers an even more personalized experience, in which hotel guests are cast as their own characters in the Star Wars universe, completely immersed in events that unfold during a routine cruise aboard a luxury spacecraft.

Studying the extent to which guests participate in Disney's brand of immersive experiences could be very fruitfully rooted in document theory. Though described as immersive in news articles and press releases, it will be important to situate these attractions and experiences within the existing literature on immersive documents to properly orient this research agenda. Robinson (2015a, 2015b) defined three dimensions of immersive documents: an information-pervasive environment without need for specific information spaces or devices; multisensory technology evolving from current augmented and virtual reality multimedia technologies to provide more "realistic" experiences; and the move beyond interactivity to participatory storytelling, in which the user/reader directs how and when narrative action unfolds, including the rise of transmedia participatory cultures to tell a single story across multiple platforms.

Although Disney's immersive experiences still require guests to travel on site (for the moment), the ongoing integration of technological advancements and increasingly personalized forms of participatory storytelling make Robinson's foundational definitions particularly germane. Immersive document behavior and document phenomenology will be useful in studying how Disney park guests, shifting from passive observers to document participants—and creators of their own facilitated experiences—will navigate and derive narrative meaning (Urban, 2020) from a new generation of documents. Given the centering of the guest experience as narrative participant (Kokai & Robson, 2019), this pivot to immersion will also have implications for how new generations of fans and fandoms engage with Disney intellectual properties, including how they will reappropriate them, express their fan identity relative to them, and further Disney storytelling across different types of media (Williams, 2020).

Ultimately, research guided by the framework of document phenomenology is best suited to examine how guests interpret and evaluate various dimensions of immersive theme park attractions as documents, from their personal and emotional impact to their ability to represent or reproduce historically and culturally relevant narratives. Document phenomenology would also provide a means for investigating the role of technology in immersive document experience, the nature of authenticity within virtual and multisensory environments, and how people use their agency, and their imagination, to explore increasing levels of immersion when invited to inhabit immersive participatory narratives. While this paper playfully appropriates the concept of delusion to suggest that Disney documents invite guests to step through looking class to both *believe* and *imagine* that their imaginary experiences are genuine, document phenomenology is singularly positioned to investigate the negotiation of authentic meaning amid manufactured things. In other words, to what extent do the physical characteristics and cultural context of the hyperreal object entice (allude to) certain meanings while denying (eluding) others? To what extent do document participants have (or want) control over their imagination to accept the illusion and to encourage the playful self-deception that makes the simulation real?

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