

RUNNING HEAD: A NATION IN ITS PRIME

A Nation in its Prime:  
A Pentadic Study of Walt Disney World's Main Street, U.S.A.

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By  
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This Project is Dedicated to My Dad—

Gary Wayne Guise

Who always showed me he was proud of me

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to consider the entrance to Walt Disney World, Main Street, U.S.A., as a rhetorical text and apply Kenneth Burke's dramatisic pentad.

Background is provided on rhetorical theory and The Disney Company. Meanings are derived from messages interpreted using semiotics and symbolic interaction within the location. The significance of Main Street, U.S.A., as a replica of historic architecture and an illustration of revival architecture in creating emotive messages is discussed. Further discussion includes the implications of this study on corporations and the field of rhetorical studies in addition to suggestions for further research.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Between 1963 and 1965, in an obscure area of the United States where the ground was soggy and the air was thick with humidity, men in flannel suits purchased several plots of land in anticipation of one of the most important architectural endeavors in Florida (*The Magic Kingdom*, 1997, p. 262). In the following years, the accumulated land was transformed into Walt Disney World, a larger and more complex manifestation of its namesake's vision of a theme park for families and children. More important than providing a location for vacationing Americans, the park provided inspiration for the development of neighboring theme parks, and a detailed headquarters for much of what is now intrinsic in American culture ("Walt Disney's Frontierland," 1999, p. 161).

As an entrance to Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom, Imagineers designed and built Main Street, U.S.A. The nostalgic setting is a welcoming mode of transportation through both space and time. It is a record of what may be considered a hyper-realistic interpretation of American hometowns during a golden time in the nation's history ("Main Street U.S.A.: A Comparison/Contrast", 1981, p. 142). Turn of the century storefronts welcome visitors to the park in classic Disney detail (and potential profligacy) while barbershop quartets serenade visitors in period dress. All of this evokes a lively yet anticipatory feeling that prepares the visitor for the magical adventures that await beyond the castle.

This time and location in the American cultural history were no new subject matter for media depiction. Since the early years of feature film production (a period that quickly

followed the turn of the twentieth century) American main streets of the 1890s and early 1900s set the scene for many films produced in Hollywood - a location conspicuously far from the actual streets the films depict (Neuman, 2008, p. 84).

Richard Francaviglia has published some of the most significant studies on Walt Disney World and Main Street, U.S.A. His writings also include studies of both conventional and divergent main streets (a distinctly American entity) that are found across the country. Francaviglia's studies of Main Street, U.S.A., specifically identify the design aspects that make the setting a significant location for architectural history and American cultural history. By discussing Disney's influence on American culture, Francaviglia records the process by which theme park design influences entire generations' ideas of what comprises classic Americana. Not deleterious, this influence, however, is decidedly positive and idealistic in tone ("History After Disney", 1995, p. 74). Further, the main street created by the Disney Company in Walt Disney World follows a characteristic pattern of depictions found throughout the history of motion pictures (Neuman, 2008, p. 96).

#### Justification of Study

What can be added to these studies—and to other significant studies of architectural forms by such rhetorical critics as Sonja Foss—is an analysis of the narrative created by Main Street, U.S.A., and the park employees who populate it. This dimension of the park's entrance is clearly lacking in the literature available on the subject. The rhetoric of the location belies what Walt Disney had modestly said of his main street in California's Disneyland: "A cute movie set is what it really is" (Gabler, 2006, p. 533). The idea of Main Street, U.S.A., as a movie set may be an appropriate moniker for a casual observer. However, a closer analysis would prove to be revealing about Disney's motivations for any

consumer of Disney rhetoric. With such an identification of what may be considered Disney rhetoric, any consumer or connoisseur of Disney films, memorabilia, and overall corporate image may be affected by a pentadic analysis. Furthermore, this subject assigns itself significance as it is the entrance to the largest Disney property in the country.

The purpose of this pentadic investigation is to analyze the ways in which Disney attempts to create for visitors an illustration of Hometown America, and the extent to which Disney's attempts have shaped and reflected the image of Hometown America in American culture. In order to properly conduct this study, the main thrust will be a qualitative analysis of the location, applying the dimensions of Kenneth Burke's pentad upon the location's usage of symbols in architecture. The meaning behind an architectural "symbol" must be understood before it may be used. Thus, architects use architectural symbols to create meaning in the mind of the viewer of the architectural form, thereby mandating the viewer's behavior. Further, as Hattenhauer (1998) writes, "architecture that represents values and beliefs is rhetorical because it induces ritual behavior" (p. 74). This principle is essential to the creation and maintenance of Main Street, U.S.A., particularly as a rhetorical text. The purpose of this pentadic analysis is to examine the ways in which Disney attempts to create for visitors a portrayal of Hometown America, and the extent to which Disney's attempts have shaped and reflected the image of Hometown America in American culture by employing semiotics and symbolic interactionism. The study will follow the lead of those studies already published on Main Street, U.S.A., extant main streets in America, and the pentadic analyses of nontraditional rhetorical texts. Through my qualitative analysis, I aim to produce a study that reveals the messages created by "one of

the most successfully designed streetscapes in human history” (“Main Street USA: A Comparison/Contrast”, 1981, p. 148).

### Literature Review

#### **Kenneth Burke’s Pentad**

In 1945, Kenneth Burke first published on his dramatisitic pentad in “Container and the Thing Contained,” in *The Sewanee Review*. In this article, Burke outlines his dramatisitic pentad. Here, he discusses agent, act, agency, scene, and purpose in the pursuit of assessing individuals’ motives for action. He proposes the question, “What is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?” Burke then proceeds to offer his answer through dramatism. According to Burke, life is a drama. He describes his pentad as a “grammar,” illustrating its use as a set of elements of a pursuit such as art or science, and also as the “generating principles” for investigation. Examples of the usage of the pentad are also provided, such as Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People*. Burke makes an interesting point by discussing the differences between such terms as “scene” and “agent.” In employing the pentad, he notes it is very important to understand that the different *dramatis personae* could be part of the purposefully created scene.

Although initially met with criticism from the public, there have been many studies conducted using the pentad as a methodology. Since its initial publication, the pentad has generally grown more popular. Its framework has been applied to an ever-expanding range of topics and rhetorical texts. Further, the nature and quality of the pentad itself have become the focus of several studies.

Mary Collins published one such study in “An Approach to the Study of Kenneth Burke: Meaning and Readability” (1984). This mixed methods study provides a

commentary on the writings of Kenneth Burke, focusing on his dramatistic pentad. The author provides ways that Burke's work can be applied to rhetorical texts. Works by John F. Kennedy and Sojourner Truth are offered as vehicles for explication. The author notes the ambiguity in the pentad stems from the purpose element. Here, the author notes, Burke allowed himself to create a variety of "theses and responses" (Collins, 1984, p. 15). The author also notes that because many scholars cite Burke as being difficult to understand, continual study of (and in conjunction with) Burke's work is justified. The empirical aspect of this study includes the use of the Gunning Fog Index to test unclear writing in Kenneth Burke's work. Also, the author utilized the Flesch Readability Formula to test the level of readability of his work. The author found that the difficulty in reading Burke is due to some illogically arranged arguments in addition to "selection of words, their length, and the length of sentences" (Collins, 1984, p. 145). Certain texts by Burke are easier to consume than others, such as the introduction to *A Grammar of Motives*. Otherwise, the author discovered the readability of *Permanence and Change* scored better than that of *A Grammar of Motives*. Regardless of the texts' readability, Collins' study provided reasoning for Kenneth Burke detractors (like Max Black) who reacted poorly to the nature and purpose of Burke's work on the basis of its readability.

Another study that utilizes the pentad is Ekaterina Pesheva's "Disease as Drama: Dramatistic Constructs and Modes of Redemption in Covering Illness in *Glamour*" (2005). This is a study of note because it once again holds a nontraditional text under analysis. The author provides discussion and justification for using Kenneth Burke's pentad to analyze unusual texts. The study is focused on the depiction of disease in *Glamour Magazine*. Based on the application of the different elements of the pentad, "different redemptive modes"

such as scapegoatism and transcendence are recognized as prevailing trends in the magazine articles (Pesheva, 2005, p. 31). An interesting aspect of the study is the identification of a counter-agent. The disease that held the focus of the study was drug addiction. As such, the author identifies the drug as the counter-agent, working against the agent (the individual suffering from drug addiction).

Another study utilizing the pentad for unusual rhetorical analysis is Elizabeth Dickinson's article, "The Montana Meth Project: Applying Burke's Dramatistic Pentad to a Persuasive Anti-drug Media Campaign" (2009). This article provides a framework for analyzing an anti-drug advertising campaign using Burke's dramatistic pentad as a theoretical lens. The pentad is discussed in brief according to its history, its development, and previous applications. The article also describes some advice for educators who may be guiding students on the application of the pentad to rhetorical study. Specific instructions are provided for the implementation of the pentad for analysis of certain media artifacts.

Robyn Walker and Nanette Monin (2001) published a study in the *Journal of Organizational Change Management* that utilized the pentad for another unique study. "The Purpose of the Picnic: Using Burke's Dramatistic Pentad to Analyze a Company Event" analyzes discourse in an office setting as a rhetorical text. The discourse, specifically, is the activities that the employees in an office partake in. This study analyzes the role and purpose of company events with the framework of the pentad. The analysis of the company event with the pentad provides differences between company events and other office activities. The findings of the study allow for suggestions to professionals on the utilization of company picnics and other events to increase productivity and engagement in the

workplace. Interviews with participants reveal the individual goals of employees in company events, and their reflections afterward. An interesting point made by the authors at the end of their study is that “there is no ‘right’ way to use the framework” of Burke’s pentad (Walker and Monin, 2001, p. 277). As such, more rhetorical critics can be justified in their appropriation of Burke’s pentad when analyzing atypical artifacts.

**Act.** Within the dramatic pentad, Burke considers the Act to be “any verb, no matter how specific or how general that has connotations of consciousness or purpose” (“Container and the Thing Contained”, 1945, p. 70). Simple motion of an agent—or some other verb type—would not fall under the category of an Act unless there is purpose or motive. For my study, the Act element involves the actual construction of the drama played out at Main Street, U.S.A. Drawing, cutting, sewing, hammering, welding, painting, The Disney Company’s designers and Imagineers created (and currently maintain) an entrance to the park that welcomes visitors in a way that is characterized by specific architectural forms, music, and costumes. To enter the park, guests walk under an old-fashioned train station, come out the other side, and find they are in a town square. The buildings have been constructed with the purpose of reflecting a bygone era in American architecture. Additionally, the behavior of the character actors who play townspeople contribute to the narrative of the location. These performances range from Mayor to barbershop quartet singers who all dress in period costume and interact with park guests as though they were all citizens of an American town at the turn of the twentieth century. There are many sources available on the construction and maintenance of the location. Disney’s multiple publishing houses provide several texts about the men and women “behind the magic.” The Walt Disney World website and Disney Parks Blog are other locations with continually updated

information on park maintenance. Further, my observation of the site will provide insight into the continuous maintenance of the physical area as well of the performances of the characters.

**Agent.** For Burke, the Agent is the person, or “kind of person,” who performs the act (“Container and the Thing Contained”, 1945, p. 56). The agent carries out the act within the scene utilizing an agency for a specified purpose. The agent is very definitely a part of the scene, as Burke points out, in a way not unlike a figure in a pointillist work by Seurat—wherein the figure blends consistently with his surroundings (“Container and the Thing Contained”, 1945, p. 65).

Imagineers, architects, interior designers, and landscape designers all began the act from before the opening of the Magic Kingdom (Sklar, 2009, p. 4). These talented individuals are often awarded recognition in the shop windows on Main Street as make-believe shop owners and entrepreneurs. The retired artisans and engineers who contributed exceptional work while employed by Disney are granted a window dedication each year. Now, people in the same professions continue to maintain the facades (both tangible and metaphorical), and occasionally design new storefronts, new window displays, and new interiors. These men and women include artists, architects, designers, drafters, machinists, modelmakers, painters, project managers, and writers. According to Robert Iger, President and CEO of The Walt Disney Company, Imagineers “imagine, design, and create three-dimensional, living stories” (*Walt Disney Imagineering*, 2010, p. 8). They are not to be seen directly by park guests, but their presence and impact are undeniable.

Interacting with guests daily, the street performers on Main Street, U.S.A., sing period songs and patriotic anthems in groups, including barbershop quartets. Other



performers simply walk up and down the street mingling with guests and taking photographs with them, while wearing period costume.

Many books are available on the subject of the Imagineers, and I will utilize these in studying the role Imagineers play in the drama of Main Street, U.S.A. Additionally, biographies of Walt Disney, perhaps the most significant agent in this study are extremely useful in deciphering the nature of this figure. Finally, participant observation of the actors on Main Street, U.S.A., will prove essential to my study.

**Agency.** The Agency for a pentadic study may include whatever means or devices used by the agent (“Container and the Thing Contained”, 1945, p. 65). The agency is the medium and method within the narrative. The agency may be a set of tools, or a system of working parts, that, in the “hands” of the agent, create the artifact under analysis.

In order to enact the narrative of Main Street, U.S.A., the agents utilize a variety of agencies. Clearly the most prominent are the architectural forms that dictate the layout, style, tone and era of the location. These buildings include various shops, an ice cream parlor, a city hall, an exhibition hall, a fire station, and an old theatre. The majority of these are located along the length of the main avenue, each storefront sharing its walls with the shops on either side, to create an uninterrupted flow of architecture along the street. Throughout, there can be found details that continue the illusion of standing on a main street in a turn-of-the-century American town. The lamps on the buildings are modeled on electric light fixtures of the period while the street lamps appear to be gas. Instrumental versions of songs that represent the period between the 1880s and late 1910s play throughout Main Street, U.S.A. Such tunes include many songs from Broadway musicals like

*Oklahoma!*, *The Music Man*, and *Hello Dolly!*; along with some genuine Ragtime-era tunes like “The Band Played On.”

Texts on Queen Anne style architecture are useful for this element of the pentad. Also, studies on the tradition of extant main streets would be invaluable resources. Much of the writing and studies by Richard Francaviglia are particularly helpful for analyzing the agents of Main Street, U.S.A., in Walt Disney World. Again, biographies of Walt Disney, with specific emphasis on his childhood, create a foundation for what visitors see as they walk through this location—as his hometown in Missouri was the initial inspiration for Main Street, U.S.A.,

**Scene.** For Burke, the Scene is the “container” in which a drama occurs (“Container and the Thing Contained”, 1945, p. 59). The scene is the setting for the drama to take place. However, in a study that relies so heavily on architectural study, the buildings at the location should not be considered the scene.

Instead, the scene of Main Street, U.S.A., is the entrance to Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World. The main entrance under the Walt Disney Railroad station, the town square, the main avenue, and the final roundabout in front of Cinderella Castle comprise Main Street, U.S.A. It marks the extension of what is conspicuously the only entrance (and exit) to the park for guests. Main Street, U.S.A., has existed since the park’s opening in 1971, and visitors walk through the space 365 days a year. It is the first of the various themed “lands” at Magic Kingdom. It is a location built in a Floridian theme park before the area of central Florida was heavily populated, and it continues to entertain guests every day of the year.

To analyze the scene of Main Street, U.S.A., the concept art and plans for the layout of Main Street, U.S.A., will become necessary sources of research. These are available in

texts about the creation of Walt Disney World in addition to other Disney theme parks. Sources on extant main streets will once again be referenced for their insight on the practicality, functionality, and design.

**Purpose.** The Purpose in Burke's pentad answers the *Why* question. Purpose is motive and drive. Many may disagree about another's motives and purposes, but such is the nature of rhetorical criticism ("Container and the Thing Contained", 1945, p. 56). In Main Street, U.S.A., the purpose involved comes from the nature of the location. Strictly speaking, the location is an entrance to a theme park. It allows guests to the park to enter in large groups and walk toward the rest of the parks themed "lands." In a more creative sense, the purpose of Main Street U.S.A., is to act as a sort of "reality bridge," extending from reality to fantasy. Guests leave the real, outside world and pass through Main Street, U.S.A., an idealized and hyper-detailed expression of turn-of-the-century Americana. Because aspects of this location (including the fact that its name refers to the extant country in which Walt Disney World exists) are familiar to guests, the more fanciful aspects allow a transition into the other lands whose fanciful natures are even more farfetched. Sources on theme park design and entrances will be important in this aspect of the analysis. Additionally, sources on the creation of Disneyland will be more important here than in any other element of the pentad because the purpose of Main Street, U.S.A., in both parks is essentially the same. Understanding the Disney culture and worldview is important to purpose, so texts on Disney and The Disney Company will be necessary tools.

The literature behind a rhetorical analysis of Main Street, U.S.A., must include some variety of subject matter. A working knowledge of the Disney Company, its founder and Imagineers, and the main streets of America must be developed in order to make a fair and

knowledgeable analysis. The reader is not expected to have great prior knowledge of the artifact or its authors. By conducting research on these topics, a stronger case can be made for a final analysis.

Further, the theories of symbolic interactionism and semiotics require understanding. The importance of the studies and publications that contribute to their success as theoretical guides cannot be overstated. Fortunately, the literature available leads the rhetorical critic to see strong connection and cohesion with the implementation of Kenneth Burke's pentad.

### **Semiotics**

In *The Collected Papers of Charles S. Peirce*, a sign is discussed as an icon, an index, or a symbol (Hartshorne and Weiss, 1960, p. 227). Further—and more significantly—a sign is dependent upon an object that it represents. A sign is not a sign without some Object, regardless of the interpretation of the sign, or the intended significance of the sign. A sign is limited, however, in that it can only provide information about the object and cannot determine or guarantee recognition. It is the interpreter who must take a sign and place it within his scope of the universe in which the sign exists. Ultimately, a sign relies upon a presupposition that its object is to be recognized in order for the communication of the sign to function.

In his book, *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1970), Charles Morris writes, "Human civilization is dependent upon signs and the system of signs, and the human mind is inseparable from the functioning of signs" (Morris, 1970, p. 1). It is with this understanding of the importance of signs to human mentality that the study of semiotics gains credence.

In *Signification and Significance*, Morris considers signs as embodying three main attributes that are useful for analysis: designative, appraisive, and prescriptive. In a sign's designative nature, the sign has attributes that are observable to the viewer. As a sign is appraisive, it symbolizes the "consummatory properties of some object or situation." A sign is prescriptive inasmuch as it indicates the way in which "the object or situation is to be reacted to so as to satisfy the governing impulse" (Morris, 1964, p. 4).

Umberto Eco writes in *A Theory of Semiotics* that semiotics can discuss and define any thing as a sign. His extension that the universe is therefore worthy of signification expands the scope of what can be studied through semiotics (Eco, 1976, p. 7). Further, his writing justifies the evaluation of a culture based on sign use and the analysis of sign use. Signs, and their representation of an object or expression, are dependent upon referents (as discussed by Ogden and Richards, Peirce, and others) but also upon abstract meanings created by culture (Eco, 1976, p. 66). Eco describes the matter of ideas as signs in the following way:

Suppose I am crossing a dark street and glimpse an imprecise shape on the sidewalk. Until I recognize it, I will wonder "what is it?" But this "what is it?" may be (and indeed sometimes is) translated as "what does it mean?" (Eco, 1976, p. 165)

His other significant discussion is of aesthetic text as a communicational act. When analyzing such rhetorical artifacts, one has the responsibility to induce, abduce, and deduce the meaning intended by the sign's creator or author. "The addressee does not know what the sender's rule was; he tries to extrapolate it from the ... data of his aesthetic experience" (Eco, 1976, p. 275).

In *Semiotics and Interpretation* (1982), Robert Scholes writes of narratives in terms of semiotics. "A narrative ... may be recounted orally, ... acted out by a group of actors or a

single actor, ... or represented as a sequence of visual images” (Scholes, 1982, p. 57). With this understanding of semiotics, the importance of the act is underlined. A narrative is a process that can be—and often is—created and retold and represented by signs alone. Narratives rest upon the presence of a narrative medium (and/or a narrator), and semiotics can be used to interpret the medium. In interpreting narratives and narrative media through semiotics, Scholes offers the term “narrativity” to refer to such analysis. Just as a reader reads, the interpreter partakes in narrativity to extrapolate meaning from a given set of elements or signs (Scholes, 1982, p. 61).

### **Symbolic Interactionism**

Herbert Blumer developed symbolic interactionism, taking cues from George Mead and influence from John Dewey. Blumer discusses symbolic interactionism as based on human group life and conduct. In his book, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (1969), Blumer discusses the fact that symbolic interaction relies on humans attributing meaning. He provides three premises to base his notions on human symbolic interaction:

The first premise is that human beings act toward other things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. ... The second premise is that meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (Blumer, 1969, p. 2)

His essential discussion of methodology in the study of symbolic interaction is dependent upon interpretation. The process of interpretation, as Blumer states, requires one to first indicate the things toward which he is acting, and second to indicate which things have meaning. The person who interacts with things does so on the basis of the meaning the things have for him, not on the meaning a scholar attributes (Blumer, 1969, p. 51). Further,

rather than simply reacting to the communicative acts of others, we as humans attach meaning to others' usage of symbols, not on what meaning the symbols hold for rhetorical critics or scientists (Blumer, 1969, p. 79).

The use of symbols by humans and their conduct within constructed environments is discussed by George Herbert Mead in his work, "A Behavioristic Account of the Significant Symbol" (1922), which was published as a substantial addition to the field of social psychology. In this essay, Mead first asserts that things exist objectively. This is an important premise in the study of symbolic interaction so that a following premise can be understood: the attributes and characteristics (or meanings) of objects and things do not exist without human thought. For example, food is not food without a human present identifying the object as an edible object. From here, Mead can further his argument that certain things possess meanings for some people and not to others. At this point things become images, and humans can interact with them, through them, and *because* of them. Mead continues his paper with a discussion of "conduct," describing it as "the sum of the reactions of living things to their environments" (Mead, 1922, p. 159).

Through observation, the meanings of things as well as conduct of actors can be understood. In their study "Nurses and the Dying: Symbolic Interaction as a Precipitator of Dying Stages" (1981), Tillman and Carolyn Rodabough conducted participant observation in order to determine the nature of the communication and thus the attitudes of the nurses in their interaction with patients within hospice care environments. The nurses' self-image(s) and the patients' self-image(s) were dependent upon their interaction, which was dependent upon the meaning they attached to every aspect of their interaction. Much of their meanings were actually a result of years of attitudinal conditioning in reference to

hospitals, doctors, and treatment (as well as their natural attitudes on survival and facing imminent death). Nurses' behavior changed according to the meaning they attached to each interaction with patients, engaging themselves in an economy of costs and rewards (Rodabough and Rodabough, 1981, p. 263).

Kenneth Burke's pentad and its several published implementations offer examples and framework for conducting the analysis. Having these studies and publications assist in creating a fuller understanding of Burke's work. The study will take shape by creating a rhetorical analysis that identifies the elements of the pentad within the text of *Main Street, U.S.A.*, utilizing the tradition of semiotics and symbolic interaction. The pentad will frame the aspects of the interaction, drama, and meaning of these elements by identifying the aspects that unite to tell the story.

Throughout my project, my research will be guided by my biblical theist worldview. Based on my beliefs, I find myself to be more aligned with the artistic nature of God's creation, and not in the—however beautiful—rigorous limitations of numerical patterns. My qualitative research will focus on the creativity and free will with which God has blessed man in order to create such a strong rhetorical text as *Main Street, U.S.A.* After conducting such a study, I am confident the role of *Main Street, U.S.A.*, (and to a lesser extent, the role of the Disney Company) in shaping American values and iconography will become clearer. The results of this study may prove The Disney Company supports and promotes ideals contrary to the biblical worldview used to conduct this study. However, such contradiction should only provide further depth to the analysis. Overall, I hope to produce a study the subject of which is internationally significant and the uniqueness of which lends greater depth to the field of visual rhetoric. By identifying the messages



created by such a strong media presence, the scope and depth of the company's cultural impact may be further understood for "all who come to this happy place" (Gottdiener , 1982, p. 129).

### Structure of the Paper

In this chapter, I have provided an introduction to the study, including background for the rhetorical artifact of Main Street, U.S.A., and a justification for the chosen study. I have also included a literature review of published studies relating to the specific theories of Burke's pentad and of semiotics and symbolic interactionism.

Chapter two provides the reader with a cultural and historical background and literature survey for the chosen rhetorical artifact, including focus on The Disney Company, the Disney theme parks, existing American main streets, and media history, including film and art. Chapter three will provide description of the specific location of Main Street. U.S.A., the physical details of which are the manifestations under study. Chapter four provides the analysis of the rhetorical text using semiotics and symbolic interactionism to apply Burke's pentad. Chapter five will conclude the study, including limitations as well as suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER II

## MAIN STREET, U.S.A., IN CONTEXT

Introduction

Walt Disney World's Main Street is a product of the Disney Company. Much has been published on Disney. By this, we mean the media conglomerate, the man from Missouri, the brand, the parks, and the films—all are incorporated into the essence of Disney. The size and sheer number of these various entities are self-evidential justification for their study in many disciplines. Specifically, Richard Francaviglia has spent a considerable amount of effort on his analysis of Disney parks. His work will appear here as inspiration and reference for its invaluable research on the parks. However, his studies are not published with rhetoric as a sole focus.

Because this work will focus on the region of Magic Kingdom known as Main Street, U.S.A., studies of similar locations are valuable assets. Main streets from extant cities and towns in the United States have been studied and reported on often. Studies like this are also discussed here. Of these, the publications of particular interest include those discussing America's Main Streets as compared to Disney's version, or containing a focus on identifying influences upon (and from) Main Street, U.S.A.

**Walt Disney**

Before any analysis of a major invention of the Disney Company can begin, common understanding of its founder must be established. This is even more paramount when a study is conducted on an artifact directly inspired by Walt Disney's childhood home.

Michael Barrier's book, *The Animated Man: A Life of Walt Disney* (2007), provides some excellent insights into Disney's life and leadership of his company. The book also recounts elements of the planning of the Disneyland park, where the first Main Street, U.S.A., was constructed. Providing an account of Disney's life, Barrier's work emphasizes Walt's career in the film and cartoon industries. The author uses many interviews as the main method of research. The book is divided into separate periods of time in Disney's life, when significant events took place. A notable quote by one of the art directors hired by Disney to help design Disneyland revealed Walt's perspective for the park. The art director said he was hired because scenic designers could help Walt envision how people would behave and move about the park: "[Disney] could see ... how we could plan the action" (Barrier, 2007, p. 303). The visitors to the park are part of the narrative in this sense. Neal Gabler presents a lengthier biography of Walt Disney in his book, *Walt Disney: The Triumph of the American Imagination* (2006). The work begins with Disney's great-great grandfather, and the successive generations that eventually led to Walter Elias Disney's birth. Understandably, emphasis is placed on the Disney who created his own empire. However, there is much coverage of Disney's temperament as well. Of particular importance for an analysis of Main Street, U.S.A., is the detailing of Disney's childhood. The boyhood influences on the man (who often invoked his Missouri roots) are important as they are reflected in the rhetorical artifact. Steven Watts' article, "Walt Disney: Art and Politics in the American Century" (1995), provides lengthy analysis of Walt Disney's personal philosophy, artistic inclinations, and professional and artistic goals. The author reasons that Disney's combination of appeals to "the real and the unreal" is what make his work resonate so well with audiences (Gabler, 2006, p. 95). These appeals are apparent in his film work as well as

in his theme parks. Influences on Disney's life are also discussed in relation to his creation and design of Main Street, U.S.A.

### **The Disney Company and Brand**

Annalee Ward's book, *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film* (2002), provides rhetorical analysis of five major animated motion pictures produced by the Disney Company. The author utilizes several different rhetorical frameworks to examine the mixed messages within these films, including that of the aforementioned Kenneth Burke. His writings on "equipment for living" and the "terministic screen" are mentioned several times (Ward, 2002, p. 7). An important point that the author quotes of Burke is that "images can have the force of attitudes" (Ward, 2002, p. 84).

Pandey's study, "Disney's Designs: The Semiotics of Animal Icons in Animated Movies" (2004), provides an analysis of the way children (and all audiences) are influenced by the animal icons in the animated films made by Disney. The paper relies heavily on semiotic analysis in order to make claims about the visual icons and symbols that influence beliefs and encourage signification for film viewers. The author notes that "all iconographic images function in a dual role in that they socialize the viewer by drawing upon existing values and ... further authenticate associations between ... symbols and value systems" (Pandey, 2004, p. 50). Disney as a company – in addition to Disney as the creator of the company – is noted for its repeated pattern of creating social realities using semiotic icons: "realit[ies] presented in and through visual metaphors" (Pandey, 2004, p. 52). A primary example used in the study is the film, *The Lion King*, wherein the issue of race is neutralized by the use of African animals.

Steven Watts' book, *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American way of Life* (2007), is an extended account of Disney's life with discussion of his influence on American culture through his work – including Disney theme parks. Watts' work provides insights into Walt Disney's motivation for his endeavors in film and amusement parks. The deep connection and fascination Walt had with the idea of the small town (in addition to the actual Missouri town he claimed as home) is explicated from the very first chapter. The book describes this fascination as a foundation for the essence of the small town that Walt Disney aimed at recreating in film and in Disneyland. The staid virtues of Victorian culture, the author notes, gave way to more self-fulfilling desires and occupations by the turn of the century. Thus, according to Watts, the small town recreated on Main Street, U.S.A., represents a time of a cultural shift from strong work ethic of the nineteenth century, to the gaiety and pleasurable pursuits of the early twentieth. In addition, the book recognizes the affection that American audiences had for the idealistic small town. However, the question is raised as to whether America was falling into line based on Walt's desires, or if Walt acted as representative for those longing for an era past.

### **The Disney Theme Parks**

A discussion of the theme parks is a natural progression for the literature. Costa's study, "Le Parc Disney: Creating an 'Authentic' American Experience" (2001), provides a highly effective analysis of what pains Disney took to create an American atmosphere for the European market at Disneyland Paris (then named "Le Parc Disney"). The authors provide the definition of "authentic" that they used for the study, acknowledging the difficulty in delineating such a term. They assert that both the consumer and the market engage in "suspension of disbelief" in order to agree upon a level of authenticity in any

product offer. The factors required in weighing the authenticity of a product like the American Village at Le Parc Disney include “place, time, intended use of the product, basis for knowledge, product type, and the person assessing the characteristic” (Costa, 2001, p. 399). However, no final measure of the effectiveness of the design for the park’s Main Street, U.S.A., is given.

Richard Francaviglia’s study, “Walt Disney’s Frontierland as an Allegorical Map of the American West” (1999), provides a different perspective on Disney’s design rhetoric by examining another part of the Disney park. The study focuses on the layout of this area, an important aspect of Main Street, relying on his expertise as an historical cartographer. Significantly, the name “Frontierland ... evokes images of ‘the West’ to most people ... derived from television and novels rather than serious historical research” (“Walt Disney’s Frontierland”, 1999, p. 157). The article also states that the films Disney (and others) produced that claim to represent the frontier perpetuate the idea (ingenuine as it may be) of what the West is and was. In the same vein, the films and literature produced by the Disney Company (and others) shape what the American public considers its idea of its own hometown (or the hometown its collective unconscious claims to deserve and to which it yearns to belong). The author also addresses the way in which visitors interact with the space. Disney creates Frontierland as a place for people to discover. Those who have never seen the actual Western United States are discovering the effect of the location for the first time. This is directly reflective of the original pioneers who discovered the actual West. The author cites Steven Watts by asserting that Disney is “perhaps the most important ... representative and shaper of twentieth century American culture” (“Walt Disney’s Frontierland”, 1999, p. 161).

Francaviglia also provides his study, "Main Street U.S.A.: A Comparison/Contrast of Streetscapes in Disneyland and Walt Disney World" (1981), as yet another perspective on the rhetorical artifact. This study examines Main Street, U.S.A., in its two separate forms. Francaviglia's analysis focuses on the architectural forms of the two locations. He assesses the significance of building materials in particular. His analysis finds that the wider range of materials in Orlando has led to an overwhelming and hyper-realistic creation that reflects no Main Street that ever existed at the turn of the century. The use of space to create a more genuine idea of the small town is supremely more effective in Disneyland. On the other hand, the buildings on Main Street in Walt Disney World all compete for attention with their overly ornate designs. Walt Disney World has a "burlesque" interpretation of Victorian architecture, created with larger buildings and a richer color palette ("Main Street U.S.A.: A Comparison/Contrast", 1981, p. 142). This article also provides a brief discussion of the terminal point of Main Street, U.S.A., (in either park): The Castle. Disneyland's castle is smaller, shorter, and more modest. Cinderella Castle in Walt Disney World is taller, larger at the base, and includes many more turrets. According to Francaviglia (1981), these design features embody a "more surreal, outlandish atmosphere" (p. 148).

Stemming from Francaviglia's work on the reality and fantasy of the idea of a Main Street, U.S.A., Virginia and Frank Salamone published "Images of Main Street: Disney World and the American Adventure" (1999). This article discusses the different views of main streets in reality and in the Disney parks. The Salamones analyze what the significance of having a main street is for Americans, as well as Walt Disney World's influence on this significance. Further, the article compares the role and meaning of Main Street (by Americans) to the role that the British expect of Americans. The authors conduct such a

comparison by analyzing American theme parks and the British theme park, “American Adventure,” located in England. The authors cite Francaviglia as stating, “Main Street ‘is tied to sacred icons which simplify and symbolize behavior and institutional structure’” (Salamone and Salamone, 1999, p. 86). The article also references the Mechlings writing on the subject, particularly when they write that Main Street, U.S.A., is “a district that leads from reality to fantasy” (Salamone and Salamone, 1999, p. 91).

*Walt Disney Imagineering* (2010) offers discourse on the bridging of reality and fantasy that the Salamones (1999) discussed. However, the book comes from the unique perspectives of those Imagineers who work to keep up the façade of Disney parks. This book, though published by the Disney Company, provides descriptions of the process of creating the Disney theme parks. Much focus is placed on the design and architectural constructions of buildings and attractions. The book is heavily illustrated to provide a visual explanation of how certain rides and structures came into being and underwent changes. An interesting aspect of the book is the comparison provided for many of the parks’ features, including Main Street, U.S.A., at the various Disney Parks throughout the world. For example, the Main Street equivalent in the Tokyo park is a covered area called World Bazaar. The book credits authorship to “the Imagineers,” which allows the book to include behind-the-scenes photographs and histories unavailable to most authors on Disney.

Based on the knowledge and awareness of these Imagineers, Francaviglia once again offers a work on the spaces created by these individuals in his study, “History After Disney: The Significance of ‘Imagineered’ Historical Places” (1995). The author discusses several areas of Disney-created landscapes, and the motivations and meanings behind them. In his



discussion of Main Street, U.S.A., the author cites correspondence from Walt Disney to his designers in which he indicates the street must act as a “‘mood setting’ exposure to the familiar” for guests (“History After Disney”, 1995, p. 70). The author states a vital aspect for understanding the location: “In designing a turn-of-the-century Main Street as the main point of the park’s entry, Disney utilized the power of historic association to create a mindset about life at a treasured time (circa 1900) in a treasured place (the generic American small town). By so doing, Disney reaffirmed the town as the nucleus of American values” (“History After Disney”, 1995, p. 71). It has become an “archetype” for the small town. Additionally, the linear layout of the space “convey(s) a sense of travel;” but the castle at one end and train station at the other provides clear delineation and “enclosure and a reaffirmation of destination” (“History After Disney”, 1995, p. 71). This article also notes the effect Main Street, U.S.A., has had on the preservation of actual historic locations in the rest of the country (in conjunction with the British preservation efforts).

The role of the original designers and Imagineers of Main Street, U.S.A., in both California and Orlando cannot be overstated. Jeff Kurtti’s book, *Walt Disney’s Imagineering Legends and the Genesis of the Disney Theme Park* (2008), contains discussion of these individuals. This book provides discussion of the different areas of Imagineering expertise, and chronicles the lives of several important engineers, artists, and designers who have worked on Disney parks. Also included is the early evolution of Disney Imagineering. When relating the story of Walt Disney’s dream for Disneyland, the author reveals an important motivation. “Every element—the architecture, landscaping, attractions, entertainment, colors, sounds, employees’ costumes, and even the food and merchandise—were carefully orchestrated to tell a three-dimensional story” (Kurtti, 2008, p. 34). The goal, the author

writes, was to create “a place of warmth and nostalgia...an essence of genuineness and authenticity that is more utopian, more romanticized than the actual environments ever could be” (Kurtti, 2008, p. vii) The author makes the point that any study of the theme parks must begin with a study of the man, Walt Disney. John Hench is quoted as saying of Marvin Davis (a theatrical architect for Walt Disney Imagineering), “His structures on Main Street, U.S.A., are irrepressibly optimistic” (Kurtti, 2008, p. 34). This sense of optimism is similar to conclusions drawn in much of Francaviglia’s work as well.

### **Extant Main Streets**

The idea for Main Street, U.S.A., was clearly born of several influences upon Walt Disney and his staff of Imagineers. There is, of course, Disney’s brief childhood home of Marceline, Missouri, that has already been discussed. However, other small towns in America have been sought after as the inspiration for much of the architecture and atmosphere that were the goals of Disney when the plan first came to mind

Julie V. Iovine writes about such towns in her article, “A Tale of Two Main Streets: The Towns that Inspired Disney are Searching for a Little Magic of Their Own” (1998). This article describes the two main streets in California and Missouri that inspired the Main Street, U.S.A., in Disneyland. The two streets are presented as current locales, and realistic places that do not retain the static and refined nostalgia of the location in the Disney parks. Unfortunately for these citizens who inhabit Disney’s “hometown”, the place is not what Disney claims it once was since a key railroad stop was relocated. On the other hand, the town was never what Disney claimed it was. This leaves the main street of Marceline, MO, struggling to be better than reality – to compete with its supposed progeny in the Disney Parks. A senior vice president of Imagineering at Disneyland is interviewed. He laments

that nostalgia is losing its edge, and Disneyland (and Walt Disney World) are going to need to think of ways to keep attendance high, as Victorian lore becomes just a passing curiosity to the American public. The article briefly describes this affinity for Victorian and post-Victorian culture as well, while leaving room for further speculation as to the reasons behind traditional American interests in the time period.

### **American Art and Architecture**

Because the visual elements of Main Street, U.S.A., are directly inspired by Walt Disney's hometown in Marceline, a discussion of architecture of the turn of the twentieth century becomes necessary as well as a discussion of art movements at that time.

Architecture from the 1880s to the 1910s is a familiar period to most (if not, all) visitors to the Disney parks. It is essentially American, first developed at a time when construction industry (and mass production in many industries, in fact, including automobile assembly) was strong for the upper middle classes and *nouveau riche* in both Western Europe and the United States (Foster 2006, p. 9).

A pedestrian view of what constitutes "Victorian" architecture overgeneralizes many differing styles during (and before and after) the reign of Queen Victoria (1837 – 1901), a monarch who never set foot on American soil. The architecture most commonly represented on Main Street, U.S.A., is Second Empire style or Queen Anne style (a title once again asynchronous from the reign of Queen Victoria). Foster writes in her 2006 book, *The Queen Anne House: America's Victorian Vernacular* about the essential nature of the style:

The Queen Anne style's very insistence on ornament, on plasticity of form, on integral color, and on a multiplicity of design sources for details made it an easy target for those who preferred classicism, symmetry, and rationality in architecture. The Queen Anne style-house marks both the high point and the end of the Victorian era of elaborately decorative architecture, and also the real beginning of domestic comfort and the "modern" house. It embodies a

catch-all of architectural features from around the world, and yet it evolved to become a distinctive and recognizable part of American architecture ... Contradictory, undisciplined, exuberant, and expressive, the Queen Anne style may just be the best example of a national vernacular architectural style produced in the United States (p. 10).

At the turn of the twentieth century, American Craftsman and Prairie School architects were gaining popularity. The earlier designs of Frank Lloyd Wright (1867 – 1959) are significant for interpreting previous periods of architecture, like Jeffersonian, and for including reliance upon geometric forms. Wright and his contemporaries received commissions for commercial and residential designs, refreshing the “Victorian” styles that had prevailed for decades.

This time in American architectural history also marks the introduction and rise (literally) of skyscrapers. Though relegated to larger cities, early skyscrapers like the Woolworth building (built in 1914, and still one of the 50 tallest buildings in the United States) illustrated the engineering prowess of architects like no other period had since perhaps the Gothic period (“Tower,” 2011, p. 1).

Meanwhile, Richard Morris Hunt was designing impressive stone mansions and state buildings in the Beaux-Arts style, and Charles Dana Gibson was designing the women who inhabited them. Gibson’s drawings of “ideal” women reinforced women’s S-shape figures while gently satirizing the trappings and functions of polite society. In addition to Gibson, most visitors to the great art museums of the world will recognize the impressionist works of Monet, Cassatt, or Degas. Beginning in the 1870s, French Impressionism was a curious new painting style that American artists seemed to enjoy; and they duly responded with American Impressionism. Modernizing their French counterparts’ work, American impressionists turned out poetic paintings of American

landscapes during the turn of the twentieth century (Johnson, 1987, p. 25). John Singer Sargent, a popular portrait artist for the wealthy (and a bi-continental artist, spending time in America and Europe variously throughout his life), extended his talents to the American Impressionist movement. His landscapes and figure studies in America represent his more expressive works. As a reaction to American Impressionism at the turn of the century, however, was the Ashcan School, a segment of the Realist movement in America, which focused on the grit of city dwelling rather than the sun-dappled landscapes of impressionism (“Turn-of-the-century American impressionism and realism,” 1994, p. 52).

### **Film/Media History**

Because The Disney Company is such a significant media conglomerate, a brief discussion of the media context for Main Street, U.S.A., is appropriate. As discussed previously, the setting for Main Street, U.S.A., is America at the turn of the century. This same setting is revealed in many of the films produced by Disney and every major studio in the classic age of American cinema (as well as in many contemporary films). Judy Garland alone starred in at least four films set at this time during the 1930s and 1940s (*Easter Parade, For Me and My Gal, In the Good Old Summertime, Meet Me in St. Louis*). Such is the fascination with this time period that it flooded the American subconscious via film for several decades.

The Western, one of the most popular film genres in cinematic history, and perhaps the most essentially American, is a vital example of the popularity of the turn of the twentieth century as a popular film setting. The films of Randolph Scott and Gary Cooper epitomized the masculine ideal for moviegoers in the twentieth century. The role models for half the country came from characters living in the west in the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup>

centuries. Paul Cohen writes that Western films of the 1930s and 1940s are the places from which contemporary action (and Western) filmmakers take their cues for treating masculinity and plot development (Cohen, 2011, p. 73). The imagery of western towns with main streets, women in corsets, and men with cravats (and gun holsters) became iconic and widely pervasive in American pop culture from the earliest Westerns in literature and film. The visual imagery came from the films beginning in the 1920s, and the literary imagery came from the novels and stories that emerged in the genre during the turn of the century in America (Tompkins, 1987, p. 357).

## CHAPTER III

## MAIN STREET, U.S.A.: SITE AND DESCRIPTION

The chosen location of Main Street, U.S.A., for this study is that of Walt Disney World in Kissimmee, Florida. The Walt Disney World complex is a vast, secluded area in the center of the state, near the large city of Orlando. My description of the locale and the actual physical setting will include a discussion of Florida as a location for Disney's theme park, and as a discussion of the specific exterior architectural features of Main Street, U.S.A. (as a primary research artifact), and the atmospheric details of the site (including signage, music, and costumes as secondary research artifacts).

Location

Entering the grounds of Walt Disney World, visitors experience a heavily forested area with miles of well-maintained roads connecting the various parks, resorts, and administrative buildings. Road signs throughout the 40 square miles of Disney property are consistent in their color and design. Magic Kingdom, the original (and largest) park is the home to Main Street, U.S.A. In order to access Magic Kingdom, visitors must park at the Transportation and Ticket Center, across the Seven Seas Lagoon (a man-made lake essential for construction on the former swampland on which the parks are built). From here, a trip by bus, ferryboat, or monorail is required to reach the front gates to Magic Kingdom. No other park or location on the Disney property stands on such ceremony; the other parks are easily accessed by walking from the respective parking lot. When crossing the lagoon by ferry or monorail, Cinderella Castle is the most prominent sight, soaring above the trees and other buildings.

Approaching the front gates of Magic Kingdom, visitors walk along expertly trimmed hedges and manicured lawns that accent the shore of the Seven Seas Lagoon in front of the turn-styles. These turn-styles are covered by green metal canopies, beyond which visitors get the first glimpse of the Main Street, U.S.A., experience (and Walt Disney's prize attraction), the Walt Disney World Railroad station. Beyond the gates lie the several lands of Magic Kingdom: Main Street, U.S.A., Tomorrowland, Fantasyland, Frontierland, Liberty Square, and Adventureland.

### Physical Description of Architecture

Main Street, U.S.A. is foremost the entrance to Magic Kingdom. It is shaped in an elongated dumbbell layout, with Town Square at the primary (South) end and a roundabout Plaza at the furthest (North) end (upon the latter, Cinderella Castle stands). The first major building visitors experience is actually one story above their heads (see Figure 1). The Walt Disney World Railroad station is the introduction to the faux Victorian architecture of the entrance to the park. Built in Second Empire style, indicated by its mansard roof, the building is complete with a clock tower and flagpole bearing the United States flag. The building, like the remaining structures of Main Street, U.S.A., is made predominantly of fiberglass.

Passing underneath the railroad station, visitors enter Main Street, U.S.A.'s Town Square on either the left side or right side of the railroad station. On the left stands the Chamber of Commerce, a two-story building built in a vaguely Queen Anne style with cream colored cornicing, pediments, and urns. City Hall stands just beyond the Chamber of Commerce and serves as a customer service center for park guests. City Hall is symmetrical, and includes a mansard roof with dormers; topping its three floors is a clock-



sporting cupola. The structure is reminiscent of the Second Empire Eisenhower Executive Office Building in Washington, D.C. (built between 1871 and 1888). An inaccessible balcony covers its front porch, and cream-colored molding, pediments and columns are found throughout its exterior (like every building on Main Street, U.S.A.). Connected to City Hall via a covered breezeway is a narrow fire station (a gift shop) with brick façade and fire hose tower.

Beginning again from the front entrance at the elevated railroad station, visitors may enter Main Street, U.S.A., by walking under the right side of the station. Exiting this tunnel on the other side of the station is Town Square Theater on the right, standing directly across the Town Square from City Hall. Town Square Theater is the largest stand-alone building on Main Street, U.S.A. It houses a meet-and-greet attraction where visitors may meet Mickey Mouse and/or the Disney princesses. The building is three stories of brick façade and white trim, with a two-story porch spanning the entire front elevation (see Figure 6). The roof, though difficult to see when standing in front of the building, is shingled and accented with wrought iron. Past the Theater is Tony's Town Hall Restaurant, a large, relatively simple single-story space, seemingly constructed entirely of windows, white trim and columns, with wraparound outdoor seating (and a roof to match the Theater).

Following the roundabout of Town Square, past Tony's, is the beginning of Main Street, U.S.A.'s main line of shops on the East side of the street. The first shop is The Chapeau, which sells various headwear. The shop appears to comprise three connected buildings with differing roof heights and exterior paint colors. Hats are displayed in the shop windows. Adjoining The Chapeau, on the corner of Town Square and Main Street,

stands The Confectionery. Here, the corner location provides opportunity for a dynamic storefront of a broad, single-story covered porch, and awnings on the upper floor windows in saturated colors. The white faux stone (made of fiberglass) contrasts from the brick and siding of most of the other buildings on Main Street and therefore reflects Second Empire architecture conventions. Intricate ironwork accents the roofline.

Across Main Street from the Confectionery is The Emporium on the west side, the largest single store on Main Street, U.S.A. The front covered porch of cream-colored molding is two stories tall. The adjoining “buildings” along the west side of Main Street are part of the Emporium for the first half of the length of the street. The next adjoining building is Disney Clothiers. This store’s façade has seen changes in recent years and currently commands attention with a bright yellow turret interrupting the long line of storefronts. Yellow awnings shade the upper two floors’ decorative windows.

Across the street from the Emporium (toward the east) is The Art of Disney Store. It is housed in what appears to be a theatre. In fact, the theatre’s architectural details reflect a transition from staged drama to a moving picture house. From the Art of Disney theatre, adjoining buildings follow one after another in faux Queen Anne style, down the east side of the street. These shops include a bakery, a Christmas shop, and an ice cream parlor at the corner. A short side street that juts off the main thoroughfare interrupts the line of shops. Here, storefronts continue with the same aesthetic as the rest of the stores on Main Street, with various wall colors and uniform cream-colored trim.

Back on the west side of the street, the Disney Clothiers shop adjoins the similarly themed Casey’s Corner restaurant. This last is unique from the rest of the storefronts for its more commercial quality. It remains cohesive with the rest of Main Street, however, and its

high mansard roof and bright yellow siding greet customers coming from the north end of the street. This building (along with the ice cream parlor on the west side) marks the conclusion of the structures on Main Street. The road continues toward the castle, however, terminating in a roundabout in front of Cinderella Castle, the iconic landmark of Magic Kingdom.

Every building of Main Street, U.S.A., comprises three floors, the first of which is the only functional one. As any Imagineering text states, the architecture relies upon forced perspective. As Beth Dunlop writes in *Building a Dream: The Art of Disney Architecture*, the buildings of Main Street, U.S.A., “were built at a scale that reinforces the pedestrian experience” (Dunlop, 2011 p. 11).

#### Physical Description of Signage, Music, and Costumes

Though the most significant aspects of Main Street, U.S.A., appear to be the architectural structures that line the street from Town Square to Plaza for their sheer size, the visual elements of signs, music, and costuming are also necessary for analysis. The signage will refer to the various shop signs, medallions on trash cans, and logos for park attractions within Main Street, U.S.A. The music will refer to the soundtrack played from hidden speakers throughout the location as well as the songs sung by the street performers. The costumes of street performers will also be described, in addition to brief explanation of the uniforms of cast members who work in the various shops. What follows is a basic description of these elements for which this study finds importance.

Walking beneath the railroad station to enter Main Street, U.S.A., guests can glimpse posters for several attractions within Magic Kingdom, each designed with a vintage aesthetic in their lettering, layout, and illustration technique. The posters are clearly

representational of travel advertisements from the turn of the twentieth century. The style of these posters is consistent with the remaining signs throughout the location. The most notable of these are the individual shop and civic building signs. The Chamber of Commerce is labeled as such in capital letters on a dignified sign hanging from its front porch. Under these words is the year of its supposed construction, 1871. Next door, City Hall is labeled with gilt letters across the main pediment of the building. As a “civic” structure, the typeface is capitalized and reserved. Similarly styled is the typeface for “Engine Co. 71,” the fire station next door. (The number 71 is a reference to the year Magic Kingdom opened, 1971.) Across Town Square is the Town Square Theater, whose sign is bedecked in electric lights. The typography is more expressive and includes Victorian-style script fonts with capitalized serif fonts in red and white. Smaller signs beneath the theater’s sign advertise the attractions within (meeting the Disney princesses and Mickey Mouse, respectively). The style of these signs is repeated outside the movie house on Main Street (in which the Art of Disney store resides) understandably because they are both entertainment venues. The Art of Disney movie theatre boasts a large marquee announcing the various merchandise available for purchase. Across the street, to the west, Disney Clothiers advertise with silhouettes and vintage images of sportsmen and women, including trophies and posters advertising sporting clothing from the turn of the century.

Throughout Main Street, U.S.A., signs vary from civic, sedate design for official buildings, and more boisterous designs for commercial storefronts. Casey’s Corner at the north end of Main Street, U.S.A., is announced with a large sign recalling the style of turn-of-the-century baseball fields. Fortunately for this location, the sponsor for Casey’s Corner is Coca-Cola, a company whose logo has maintained its original 1880s aesthetic. Additionally,

the sign states “1888,” implying the setting for this location (a later year than the City Hall and Emporium dates of establishment earlier on the street).

Probably the most significant signs on Main Street, U.S.A., are those etched and painted onto the windows of the upper floors of the storefronts. These advertisements and signs for businesses are actually tributes to retired upper management and Imagineers who have contributed significantly to The Disney Company. Some windows include musical masters who added effects to Disney rides and attractions. Other windows display the names of Imagineers who created important artistic and engineering feats for the same. Above the railroad station, on the outer side of the building, Walter Elias Disney’s window advertises the WDW Railroad as “keeping dreams on track” in gilt and bright colors. Because he is the founder of the conglomerate and namesake of the park, his name is repeated at the opposite end of Main Street, U.S.A., above the ice cream parlor. The same red and gold lettering is used in the window to advertise the Walter E. Disney Graduate School of Design and Master Planning.

More than just store advertisements, the signage on Main Street, U.S.A., extends to the branding of elements vital to main streets outside of Walt Disney World. For example, trash cans and manhole covers display a logo of Main Street, U.S.A., in an oval surrounding the silhouette of a horse-drawn trolley (like those that travel up and down the street, from City Hall to Cinderella Castle). Additional details that add authenticity to the space include a green United States Postal Service mailbox on a pole midway along Main Street, U.S.A. Also visible to guests of Main Street is a statue of Roy Disney seated on a bench next to Minnie Mouse in Town Square. (During the winter holidays, this statue is moved to the side of Town Square, in front of City Hall, to make room for a large Christmas tree.) Additional

details pertinent to the study include the hitching posts found throughout Main Street, U.S.A. The green metal posts, designed for supposed equestrian use, are decorated with a carved horse head.

Music on Main Street, U.S.A., appears in generally two forms: background recorded music and live music. The background music on Main Street, U.S.A., is played through hidden speakers throughout the area. The songs are instrumental versions of popular music of the turn of the century as well as show tunes from Broadway musicals set at this same time period. Guests who visit City Hall can ask for a track listing of the songs being played. The songs include medleys from *Oklahoma!* and *Hello Dolly!* as well as “In the Good Old Summer Time” and “And the Band Played On.” Ragtime tunes such as Scott Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag” can also be heard. The songs play in a loop, and occasionally new songs are added to the soundtrack of Main Street. During the winter holidays, instrumental Christmas standards are also added.

Other music heard on Main Street, U.S.A., although live, is regulated and specially chosen to fit the turn-of-the-century period theme. Several times a day these performances occur in generally two forms. The Dapper Dans perform a barbershop quartet routine at various times in the day, and a piano player at Casey’s Corner provides upbeat instrumental music to diners and passers-by. The Dapper Dans sing a capella songs from the early twentieth century. The Dapper Dans learn about 100 songs by heart in order to perform various requests throughout the day. They carry organ (or “shaker”) chimes made in 1901 by J.C. Deagan & Co., of Chicago, Illinois. The Dapper Dans’ most popular tune to sing is “Goodbye, My Coney Island Baby,” written in 1924 (and, therefore, later than the turn of the century). Occasionally the Dapper Dans are joined by the mayor and his wife as

they stroll down Main Street, and may join in singing. The piano player at Casey's Corner plays upbeat ragtime music in the late afternoon. The pianist has been playing here since the 1970s. The piano is white to match the décor of Casey's Corner and includes a mirror so the pianist can see the guests behind him.

The costumes of the performers on Main Street, U.S.A., resemble the clothing worn at the turn of century in America. The Dapper Dans wear pin striped waistcoats that match their brightly-colored trousers; each Dapper Dan wears a different color from his troupe members. Their pork pie hats also have a ribbon in the same color. White spats complete the period look. The costumes of the parade dancers who are "citizens" of Main Street include calf-length sporting skirts for women, along with ankle boots and large Gibson Girl style wigs. Male dancers wear matching waistcoats, pork pie hats, and white spats. The other citizens of Main Street, U.S.A., include the Mayor and his wife. (In recent repeated observations, as well as in published research, the Mayor is played by one gentleman and his wife is played by alternating actresses.)

## CHAPTER 4

## MAIN STREET, U.S.A.: A PENTADIC ANALYSIS

Introduction

“Of all the arts it seems most unlikely that architecture could have a plot.

Architecture is proportions and aesthetics, craft and construction—not heroes and villains lurking behind a curtain wall. Yet, for the buildings of The Walt Disney Company, every architect must turn storyteller” (Dunlop, 2009, p. 11).

The preceding chapters outlined various aspects of the background for this study. The Walt Disney Company and its emotive brand have been discussed. Various studies concerning semiotics, symbolic interaction, and Burke’s pentad were reviewed. The physical location has been objectively described in order to provide the tangible details that are available for analysis in Main Street, U.S.A.

This chapter recognizes Walt Disney World’s Main Street, U.S.A., in two forms. First, it is a rhetorical artifact to be examined using a strong rhetorical method. Second, it is a drama complete with actors, props, costumes, action, sets, audience, and motivation. These two facets of the location blend harmoniously within the structure of Kenneth Burke’s dramatisitic pentad. The assorted relevant features of the location will be discussed in semiological and symbolic interactionist terms in order to identify the elements of the pentad within Main Street, U.S.A. Meaning behind messages will thereby be derived from the symbol usage evident.

The chapter is divided into five sections according to the elements of Burke’s pentad: Agent, Act, Agency, Scene, and Purpose. Within each, the various communicative media of the drama are examined in order to explain the drama of Main Street, U.S.A.



Burkeian Elements in Main Street, U.S.A.*Agent*

Drama begins with the creation of characters; of agents, in the case of Burke's pentad. After all, the proverbial debate of origin between the chicken and the egg questions the original progenitor, not the act of production. The basis for every communicative story is the person whose story it is. Therefore, the element of Agent deserves foremost analysis. In the case of Main Street, U.S.A., this element is plural, and will often be referred to as such.

The agents of Main Street, U.S.A., involve an inherent classification of past and present, both of which are essential to the drama of the rhetorical artifact. The past agents are the Imagineers. These are the artists and engineers, designers and planners; the storytellers whose stories unfold within the eleven Disney parks throughout the world. Obviously, the most important of these is the man whose name represents the largest contribution to storytelling of the last century. Walter Elias Disney was born in Marceline, Missouri in 1901. His rearing in a small town at the beginning of the twentieth century had a lasting effect on his work and his devotion to the American spirit, as numerous biographers testify, including Neal Gabler in his 2006 biography. He was dedicated to the idea that America's history must always be remembered and honored, that family was a cornerstone of society, and that entertainment could be educational. He believed in building fantasies, and perhaps above all, Walt Disney believed in imagination. He once said, "Imagination is the model from which reality is created" (Dunlop, 2011, p. 13). His team of creative designers and builders are collectively referred to as Imagineers (combining "imagination" with "engineer").

Imagineers are “found at the intersection of storytelling, innovation and Guest expectations,” as they write in *Walt Disney Imagineering: A Behind the Dreams Look at Making More Magic Real* (2009, p. 21). They are creative and intuitive. They are multinational and multigenerational because they know their audience is as well. Don Goodman, Executive Vice President of Walt Disney Imagineering Resort Development says, “We are in the business of creating memories.” These memories are inspired by the stories Imagineers have to tell, in whatever way they can that best suits the guests and park. They find the sources of their stories in a variety of places including recent films, historical events, or popular fairy tales. Their mission is to create the story so that it can be experienced three dimensionally.

Because the Imagineers are the original symbol creators for the location of Main Street, U.S.A., their usage of signs and symbols is particularly profound. Imagineers are the message creators. As such, they are decisive in their role. Bonta writes in *Architecture and its Interpretation* (1979) that message builders use signals as indicators of meaning (p. 26). The individual message creator uses a particular sign in order to indicate a meaning to the audience. However, accidental indicators are not signals; they are termed indexes, and are a by-product of signal use. Additionally, the repeated use of a sign will make it obsolete. Imagineers keep these principles at hand in order to shape Main Street, U.S.A., with both consistency and variety.

The individuals who collectively form the Burkeian agent of Main Street, U.S.A., are an integral part of the semiotic processes that occur there. In order to successfully create systems of language—in a semiotic sense—that communicate messages clearly, Imagineers and performers are necessary components.

Philippe Hamon, in his 1992 book, *Expositions*, describes character (the agent) as “the reader’s medium of expression” (p. 158). This notion of mediated expression is inherent in an agent and provides an added feature of interaction between audience and drama beyond the more basic functions of the agent. However, in order to be fully realized, the character (and his environment) requires depth. The flatness of agents leads to a flat and short-lived reading by the audience. In the case of *Main Street, U.S.A.*, the guests read the present agents in the location in the same way they read signs and architecture created by the Imagineers. Dramas fail when characters fail. Flat agents can lead the reader only a short distance in the dramatic journey. This can be frustrating to a reader who wishes to use the agent as a medium of expression.

Elam (1980) references Hamon to discuss the agent in semiotic terms. To approach an agent one must begin by considering it as an “empty sign” (p. 132). The agents of a drama are signs in themselves. A variety of factors influence how an agent becomes the sign it must be in order to function properly within an act. From these factors, a role is created. Imagineers are protagonists and narrators. Their roles are formed by their goals and the actions they take to achieve those goals. Costumed citizens also have goals, and they perform acts to achieve them. The Imagineers look toward entertainment and creative expression to fill their role. They produce. In *Main Street, U.S.A.*, the production is an intricate variety show of signs, the foremost sign being the creative individuals who bring it to life. Today, when the Mayor of *Main Street, U.S.A.*, visits with guests and takes photographs with them, he fulfills his role of recreating a bygone era. He signifies political office, an aspect of every small town, yet he aims not to make political appointments or decisions. Rather, his entertainment and hospitality goals are the reality of the drama.

Guests want to be entertained. They also seek to fulfill a need for expression and interaction with their nostalgia. When guests fulfill their need to express nostalgia by interacting with the Mayor, as they invariably do when visiting Main Street, U.S.A., the drama achieves an important goal.

The roles of each character within Main Street, U.S.A., vary slightly in order to create a more detailed drama. The agents signify a range of different characters while still remaining faithful to the overall theme of the show. This range is described in Etienne Souriau's 1950 work, *The 200,000 Dramatic Situations*. Souriau identifies six roles that may be represented within any given drama. He assigns each an astrological symbol for clarity and illustration.

Similarly, Greimas created a concise list of "actantial" roles for agents that apparently derive from the semantics of language – the essential nature for systems of semiology. The Lion is the protagonist, for example; the Sun is the good that is sought by the Lion; the Earth is the receiver of the Sun from the Lion; Mars is the opponent; the Scale is the arbitrator; the Moon is the helper, whose function is to reinforce any of the other five. As these are understood to be universal signs, the agents are easily identified, each character falls into an understood role. Several of these roles are identified in the agents of Main Street, U.S.A. However, there is no distinct opponent. Here, the analysis would suggest a weak gear in the semiotic system of the location. In fact, when parades travel through Main Street, U.S.A., villains from the classic Disney fairy tales wave to guests as though they were any other character. These are agents who function as signs whose signifiers are malevolent persons. In Main Street, U.S.A., their wickedness is mitigated by the profusion of safe signs, so that the drama does not place the spectator in a position of being in fear or

distrust of the agents. They are designated as signs without the original context of their story. As signs that interact with other signs such as the Sun (the good), they take on a non-threatening meaning.

Because Souriau's six functions of the agent are clearly a limited list of roles, the tendency is for some roles to be filled by several characters. This is clear in the example of the four Dapper Dans singing and entertaining the Mayor and his wife. The Dapper Dans are thus the Sun, the good. On the other hand, one agent may perform more than one actantial function. For example, the Imagineers as agents perform a narrative function in creating Main Street, U.S.A. They are collectively the arbitrator, the Scale, by whom the audience as well as the citizens of Main Street, U.S.A., may achieve what they need. Classically speaking, the arbitrator is traditionally a god or a multitude of gods. In Greek mythology, as Elam (1980) notes, the most important of these is Zeus, with many other gods working beneath him. In the construct of The Disney Company during the designing of Main Street, U.S.A., Walt Disney was in charge of the Imagineers. He purposefully led the design staff as arbitrator over his Imagineers. (The comparison is not meant to deify Walt Disney, but to symbolize his leadership role and the structure of hierarchy among these agents.) At the same time, Disney and the Imagineers also act as the Moon, or helper, to reinforce the good. By designing Main Street, U.S.A., in such a way as to allow for the freest flow of crowds, many people can enjoy the space at once. Thousands in one day may explore and discover and experience the drama.

Imagineers and the citizens of Main Street, U.S.A., together comprise the agent of Main Street, U.S.A. Though the two parties may never meet, their role is essential in creating the drama that guests experience every day.

*Act*

Imagineers tell stories. In Main Street, U.S.A., the tradition of storytelling by The Disney Company is as evident as ever. Imagineers created Main Street to tell a story that would welcome guests and familiarize them with recognizable and yet fantastical visual literacy. The planning, building, and constructing of the space contribute to the Act in Main Street, U.S.A. “From the master plan to the tiniest detail,” Imagineers created a location to immerse guests (*Walt Disney Imagineering* 2009, p. 30). Every aspect was designed to bring in the guests to experience the story, and no details can be overlooked that would “break the mood.” As *Walt Disney Imagineering* (2009) explains, “Large vistas are controlled and visual intrusions are camouflaged, ideal sight lines are created, and scale is manipulated ... Seemingly mundane details—hardware, trash containers, tile—are carefully considered in both design and function, and visual perfection is enhanced with music and dialogue, touchable surfaces, and aromas” (p. 32). On Main Street, U.S.A., these decisions were made to perpetuate the story of the location. As various sources indicate, the smell of freshly baked cookies is made to waft through the air for guests to feel at home (Veness, 2009, p. 9).

Imagineers are decision makers. Particular decisions were (and are) made for communicative effect in Main Street, U.S.A. For example, Imagineers designed a street that welcomes visitors in a turn-of-the-century style that is both indicative of historical roots and yet entirely Disney—and therefore fictional. The tradition of architecture that produces structures inspired by fantasy is not new. To construct buildings that tell a story is the aim of many architectural waves. Every “revival” architecture style is in part an attempt to recreate a past time period. Gothic revival during the nineteenth century, (and

again in the early half of the twentieth century) aimed to suggest particular castles and churches and the time associated with them (Eastlake, 2012, p. 2 and p. 110).

George Herbert Mead, the individual to whom the field of symbolic interaction owes a great debt, is responsible for great study of social interaction. He identifies symbolic interaction (as opposed to non-symbolic interaction) as involving interpretation of actions; humans perform signified acts and respond to signified acts via reflection as they pursue meaning. A single signified act must reflect the larger act of which it is a part. Consistency between acts is essential. Without consistency of the symbolic acts the message will become cloudy and unreliable. In Main Street, U.S.A., Imagineers practice consistency within each aspect of the storytelling details they create.

The acts of the Disney performers are also essential to the entire Act of the drama of Main Street, U.S.A. Their roles are of entertainment value, and they add to the charming atmosphere of Main Street, U.S.A. Because the performers, or “citizens,” of Main Street interact with guests face-to-face, their communicative aspect is much more direct, and less mediated. Further, the citizens assigned roles, such as the Mayor, differ from the acts of the other citizens like the dancers, singers, and musicians.

At the turn of the twentieth century, music was a primary and necessary aspect of entertainment, perhaps to a greater degree than it is today. Because of the advent of new media and technologies of successive generations since the 1900s, audience’s interests have become more varied. Performed music in society, especially within an 1890s home, was requisite for entertainment without the presence of television or other contemporary visual media. The piano, a feature of most prosperous homes, was as needed for artistic expression as it was for entertainment of the family and guests. Soon after, with the

invention of the phonograph, the untalented had the opportunity to enjoy music in their home.

The singing of the street performers, The Dapper Dans, is a popular incarnation of what many believe was a common occurrence at the end of the nineteenth century. The centennial edition of *American Century* mentions barbershop quartets as a custom in small towns, as does Sears, Belsky, and Tunstell's 1975 book *Hometown U.S.A.* Indeed, even the Broadway show and film *The Music Man* includes barbershop music as part of its plot. The Dapper Dans sing many songs, from the late nineteenth century and into the 1920s and even the 1930s.

The connotative and denotative properties of all signs are intrinsic to their performance. The symbols of singing, piano playing, and other music performance is denotatively a succession of sounds in rhythm, possibly with words. Connotative definitions of music are harder to ascertain. Indeed, music as an art form is perhaps the most abstract of art forms, according to James Monaco (2009, p. 31). Music is not photographable without its being transcribed into symbols on paper, as in the case of sheet music. Music inspires internal response by the listener. One can, after all, close one's eyes and shut out the visual signs that overwhelm Main Street, U.S.A. In singing and piano playing, the street performers take part in a music performance tradition older than any main street in America. The connotative meaning of this sign of music is then necessarily dependent on the very fact that it is performed. The connotations of music played through speakers are not the same as those meanings created by the performers (and the audience) via live singing and piano playing. Disney is clearly intentional in hiring professional



singers to entertain guests and ingratiate them more fully in the experience of turn-of-the-century Main Street.

Herbert Blumer notes in his 1969 book, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*, that the observable acts of a performer are easily assigned denotative explanations based in space and time, and are therefore easily capable of validation. The connotations of acts are again based on observation, but also on inference of symbols within social context (p. 179). The singing on Main Street, U.S.A., is necessarily dependent on inference. In order to discover connotations, inference of the quality of the symbolic act relies on the context of the act. The singing of the Dapper Dans occurs within a historical context, as it extends the tradition of barbershop quartets (a distinctly American pastime). Additionally, the performances are understood as being rehearsed and are therefore purposeful and somewhat calculated. The effect of these performances is clearly positive as audiences gather to watch and laugh with the Dapper Dans occasional humor. The act is generally welcoming and entertaining. Because the common experience of audience members is overall positive, the inference of the social act of the Dapper Dans—and the Mayor and his wife in similar manner—the inference of this act is validated.

The social interaction with the symbols created by the Imagineers is observable with a slightly different approach. Though both performers and Imagineers communicate symbolically with guests in Main Street, U.S.A., the Imagineers message is mediated through the surroundings they have built. Their message is delayed. Nevertheless, their act of communication is observable and prime for analysis.

Christopher Alexander's 1979 book, *The Timeless Way*, provides a unique theory of architecture that proposes a deep connection of the human experience to architectural

structures. He asserts that successfully designed buildings and spaces are “alive” (p. 29). Architects, like the Imagineers who designed and built Main Street, U.S.A., have a desire to “complete a world” (p. 9). He claims that all people have a desire to create a beautiful building that is alive, a building in which people will want to walk and enjoy life for hundreds of years. This desire to create living structures is as innate as the desire to reproduce, Alexander says. Most importantly, all humans have this desire. The desire can then be extended to creating an entire beautiful, living town. Further, “there is a way that a building or a town can actually be brought to life like this” (Alexander, 1979, p. 10). The process of building these idyllic towns has always been understood by the various cultures on the face of the earth. It is dependent upon patterns, upon which all towns are built. These patterns “are essentially like languages” (Alexander, 1979, p. 12). The process of creating a building or town that lives is inherent in our psyche as humans. “And this power we have is so firmly rooted and coherent in every one of us that once it is liberated, it will allow us, by our individual, unconnected acts, to make a town, without the slightest need for plans, because, like every living process, it is a process which builds order out of nothing” (Alexander, 1979, p. 14). The quality of these living buildings and towns is impossible to specifically define, Alexander writes. Instead, he discusses words that may be used to describe this quality: whole, comfortable, free, exact, egoless, and eternal. Humans can make a town that can be described by these words—to be alive—and a place where people will always want to exist; man can achieve what is extraordinary. “But it is so ordinary as well, that it somehow reminds us of the passing of our life. It is a slightly bitter quality” (Alexander, 1979, p. 40). Here, Alexander returns to reality. Main Street U.S.A., was constructed in such a way that the Imagineers sought to evoke this quality, even if they did

so unintentionally. The Imagineers' designs attributed to the location the qualities Alexander discusses: whole (self-sustaining, and with a sense of achievement), comfortable (familiar and welcoming), free (heterogeneous in façade), exact (consistent with its theme), egoless (dependent on the presence of others and not self-conscious), and eternal (capturing a timeless quality that is appropriate for every successive generation of visitor).

The act of creating this place is bitter in that Main Street, U.S.A., will outlive its creators, and possibly its guests. Regardless, the creators used the processes in the language of living buildings in order to symbolize this quality within us. The broad-brimmed hat of a friendly suffragette, the barbershop pole on the corner, the delicate gingerbread molding on the emporium all work together to signify what we most want: this quality. "In our lives, this quality without a name is the most precious thing we have" (Alexander, 1979, p. 47).

### *Agency*

The Agency of Burke's pentad is the means by which the agent performs the act within the scene. Thus the agency is most effective when it is tangible, but not necessarily recognizable. The subversive aspect of the agency is what can create a seamless drama without the audience being distracted by the machinations behind the drama.

One particular symbol in the agency of Main Street, U.S.A., deserves special recognition. The use of food as a sign, such as the freshly baked cookie aroma wafting through Main Street, U.S.A., is a significant and unique social code (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 83). In communicating with other humans, we require the use of language for psychological reasons. However, food is a survival need and is lower on Maslow's Hierarchy. Therefore, this basic sign is recognizable to the variety of guests that are expected on Main Street. For

example, food as a symbol is intrinsic to its location. Food in the mess hall of an army base will be particular to this location and to its patrons; it will differ from the food found at a state fair, or in a bakery on an American main street. By using cookies, the Imagineers (partnered with Nestle) utilized a familiar and comforting symbol to communicate warmth and hospitality.

Understandably, the largest of the symbols that comprise the agency of Main Street, U.S.A., are the detailed architectural structures. The structures are consistent in design, as every aspect of an imagineered space is. The buildings themselves are important signs that indicate the time and place guests are meant to find themselves: an American small town roughly between the years 1880 and 1919.

In creating an atmosphere of the turn of the twentieth century, the Disney Imagineers used buildings typical to a main street at this time. However, the small town in America would have included several buildings not found in Main Street, U.S.A. The general store, for example, was a staple location to any town. The Imagineers chose instead to concentrate on an emporium and confectionery. This may indicate a symptom of the focus on souvenir purchases and frivolous calorie consumption rampant in any theme park. Fun and fantasy outweigh reality. Additionally, what are the citizens of Main Street, U.S.A., to do without a grocer? With an undeniable emphasis on capitalism in Main Street, U.S.A., a bank is also a missing structure. If one were to visit Toon Town (a location with similar small-town-America atmosphere, which has recently closed in Walt Disney World but still extant in Disneyland), one would find a bank that serves as additional seating for a restaurant.

Also striking to a cunning eye is the absence of telegraph and electric wires, which are apparent in most photographs of small towns from the turn of the century. The

Imagineers hide electric and water lines below ground as a rule in any Disney park for aesthetics and for keeping maintenance of such utilities “backstage.” However, this is at the expense of full reflection of the time period.

The 1890s and 1900s were a time of considerable change in the makeup of society. The Imagineers used both gas and electric lights to adorn the street, which is a clever indication of the shifting technologies at the time. Another important aspect of the agency of Main Street, U.S.A., is Cinderella Castle, despite its fanciful nature and anachronistic design. Often overlooked (and often misnamed “Cinderella’s Castle”) it acts as a capitol building for all of Magic Kingdom. Its location at the end of Main Street, U.S.A., on the terminal roundabout announces itself proudly with no surrounding buildings that would impede view. In terms of its construction, the castle acts as further reflection of the turn-of-the-century theme of Main Street. The castle, apparently built of stone, was in fact constructed using various plaster and fiberglass materials over a large steel skeleton. The steel constructions of skyscrapers became more and more popular at the end of the nineteenth century, and the new century would only encourage the “growth” of more buildings like these. Emerging in the 1880s in larger towns and cities, the skyscraper was a technological innovation that interrupted the usual silhouettes of populated areas whose buildings previously didn’t rise more than seven stories. Cinderella Castle required over 600 tons of steelwork to gain the building’s 189 feet and ensure its longevity. Photographs of the construction of its interior structure resemble those of an incomplete Statue of Liberty—itsself a symbol of late 19<sup>th</sup> century America (see Figure 9). Thus, though perhaps incidentally, the landmark of the park serves the integrity of Main Street, U.S.A., in addition to providing a central focal point of the park.

“If we denied Christ, we should reject his Cross ... but in the name of common sense, whilst we still profess the creed of Christians, whilst we glory in being Englishmen, let us have an architecture, the arrangement and details of which will alike remind us of our faith and our country,—an architecture whose beauties we may claim as our own, whose symbols have originated in our religion and our customs. Such an architecture is to be found in the works of our great ancestors, whose noble conceptions and mighty works were originated and perfected under a faith and system, for the most part common with our own” (Pugin, 1853, p. 6). In his *Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture*, August Welby Pugin makes a provocative case for Neo-Gothic architecture, particularly in the context of it being a national and patriotic architectural style: a symbol of England. In the same way, Walt Disney devised an assortment of Victorian styles in Main Street, U.S.A., whose system of gables and cornices, mansard roofs and dormer windows, creates an inarguably American prototype: a symbol of America. Disney was in the business of making prototypes for contemporary American society, another example of which is his design for the Environmental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT). Neo-Gothic style, as Pugin discusses, is dependent upon its system of details. The system of an architectural body of work is what allows it to become like language, with its particular grammar and forms of composition. As words in a language act as symbols for their signifiers, so do the symbolic mechanisms of architecture. The two kinds of symbolic systems of language and architecture are utilized by message senders to create meanings for an audience. Through repeated usage, and repeated interaction with the audience, these symbols take on deeper meanings than their original usage. When this happens, the denotative meaning behind

symbols (such as words or architectural components, as is the case with Main Street, U.S.A.) are joined by connotative meanings.

In *The Language of Architecture* (1968), Niels Luning Prak discusses symbolic usage of language in poetry to become art, to express emotion. Specifically, his discussion includes an analysis of location, the description of which expresses great meaning. He cites Homer's account of the island of the Cyclops in *The Odyssey*. Homer uses words that negate to symbolize the ominous nature of the island where many of Odysseus's men will be killed. Rather than simply providing a blank description of the island, the negative words inspire similar emotions in the reader (or listener). "The world of fiction is distinguished from the world of fact by its emotive qualities. The meaning of art is primarily one of feeling: *the works of art are symbols of emotions*" (Prak, 1968, p. 17, emphasis in original). The architecture of Main Street, U.S.A., symbolizes nostalgia and affinity for a supposedly golden age in history. A candy-striped awning is denotatively a shade for a window. Connotatively, it represents a confectionery enticing pedestrians on Main Street to sample a sweet. The connotative messages of such symbols are underlined by the fact that the actual function of the awnings is pure decoration: they are mounted to false upper floors. Instead, the awnings, like the moldings, columns, siding, doorknobs, etched glass windows, balustrades, and mansard roofs work together to instill a feeling of bygone America. It is a feeling of familiarity. The awnings here may remind a family from Ohio of those shops on Main Street in their hometown. The stately but modest City Hall may symbolize the American small town ideal for a young man from a large Florida city, who never saw a main street before seeing Disney's version. Regardless of background, the guests of the location are able to identify with the agency of architecture, and share in its meaning.

The costumes of the performers on Main Street, U.S.A., provide what may be the clearest message of the time period of the rhetorical artifact. The costumes can be found on the Mayor and other non-singing citizens, the Dapper Dans, the Casey's Corner pianist, and the employees within the shops. Of all the costume details the most specific and visceral clue to the time period in which these natives live, appears in the form of a sash worn by the Mayor's wife. "WOMEN UNITE," the sash proclaims. The detail is, of course, a reference to the suffragette movement. In observing Main Street, U.S.A., the forward thinking first lady of Main Street, U.S.A., only appears at random intervals. Guests who spend hours in Main Street, U.S.A., are not guaranteed to spot her. However, despite her rare appearances she provides at least an end date to the time period. The Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920. Thus, Main Street may exist at any point from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1910s.

Otherwise, the costumes for the women are in keeping with the turn of the century in America. Long shirts are obviously *de rigueur*. A Disney version of the pouter pigeon blouse popular in the 1900s is worn in a practical interpretation by emporium and confectionery employees. Sleeves are elbow length, and their plaid skirts are cut plainly and modestly. The costumes reflect the growing industry of ready-to-wear garments in the 1900s, with a rise in demand for shirtwaist tops and skirts. The more elaborate costumes (of the Mayor's wife and her various friends) reflect what women in small towns in America would have seen in magazines and ordered from New York or had sewn by hand from patterns. Invariably their silhouettes would have reflected a great delay from what would have been considered stylish in large international cities by the time their garments were available to them.



In terms of symbolic representation of women, an entire study could be conducted on how costumes perform this function on Main Street, U.S.A., but would be inappropriate for inclusion here. One point to address is the lack of historically accurate undergarments. Practically, there is obvious reasoning behind the lack of such period detail. Thematically, the argument could be made that this represents the liberation of women. Weighing the two against each other, practicality (and common sense) tips the scale.

Wearing spats and a pork pie hat would not fit a twenty-first century social context outside of an historical homage such as Main Street, U.S.A. Spats for guests at the park function as a sign just as any article of clothing would, with the added aspect of fantasy. The code of American men's clothing is expected to be understood by guests of Main Street, U.S.A., regardless of their age or ethnic background. Though spats are not seen in the real world outside of costumed dramas, they are generally anticipated. The cause of such anticipation can be found in various sources. For example, the films of American popular culture that are set at the turn of the century are numerous. Films like these, as discussed in previous chapters, both utilize visual symbolism and are easily accessible by the highest number of people. The signifier of spats is the felt cloth covering of shoes to protect men's footwear. However, the sign of spats indicates even more in a Burkeian drama. They are the past exemplified in real life. Thus, the agency of costume relies on a code that park guests are expected to understand, and the meaning for which is instantaneously accepted. Dani Cavallaro and Alexandra Warwick (1998) state that sartorial codes are "designed to guarantee the socialization and institutionalization of personal identity and thus secure the cultural grooming of vision" (p. xvi). Dress naturally becomes semiotic code as it drapes the body and signals to its viewer the meanings of the wearer. This was very true, particularly

at the turn of the century, as seen in literary works written and set at this time. For example, Edith Wharton's novels of New York Society during this changing time in American history are heavily laden with fashion. The detailing of clothes for character and plot is as meaningful in her work as it is in society and in *Main Street, U.S.A.* For Wharton and her wealthy characters, clothing was exuberant and lavish. For the citizens of *Main Street, U.S.A.*, clothing is an indicator of prosperity, but in a unpretentious sense. Clothes must be recognizable to the layman guest as representing turn of the century and success, but must not intimidate the guest with ostentation. America, according to *Main Street, U.S.A.*, is prosperous but modest.

Signage in *Main Street, U.S.A.*, particularly the signs for shops like the confectionery and *Main Street Theater*, are elements of the later years of the location's time period. The electric light within these signs is one indication. Further, the elaborate typography and bright colors reflect that of the 1900s. This was a time of technological advancement in the graphic arts, moving toward a graphic design tradition that would be officially named in the 1920s (Eskilson, 2007, p. 29). Very literally, the signs indicate verbal clues of the time period. For example, the sign for the emporium states it was established in 1901. Certainly this reflects the theme of *Main Street, U.S.A.*, but it is also the year of Walt Disney's birth. Similarly, *Casey's Corner's* sign includes the image of an early baseball player along with the year 1888. The date places the restaurant in the correct period, but it is also the year that the poem "Casey at the Bat" was first published (anonymously) by Ernest Thayer.

In semiological terms, each sign on *Main Street* has both aspects of the signified and the signifier. The sign over the sweets shop displays the word "CONFECTIONERY" emblazoned in electric lights. Surely this refers guests to its signified, a candy shop in a past

time, as confectionery is a less common term in modern parlance. Another sign in Main Street, U.S.A., of particular significance is the logo found on trashcans and manhole covers. The oval shape embossed with "MAIN STREET USA" and a horse-drawn trolley refers guests to the location in which they are standing. The sign also signifies early public transportation in an American small town, and may even bring to mind the references the public already has in their subconscious. For instance, an obvious example is "The Trolley Song" from the 1944 film *Meet Me in St. Louis*. The sign reminds viewers where they are walking, as though the rest of the signals surrounding them weren't enough evidence. The actual trolley drawn by a horse (the referent) may pass behind the viewer while he or she examines this sign – an instance of the referent existing directly next to its sign. The messages the Disney Company is sending almost overload the guests in this way. Surely the architecture would be enough. However, Imagineers create consistency with their designs, connecting signs to other signs within the same location, crossing paths of signifiers so that, while there may not be confusion as to what specific referent a signifier has, there is coherence between signs.

### *Scene*

There is a tendency of some researchers to point to the Burkeian Scene as a way to discuss physical location. While this may be true in part, the scene element requires analysis of more than location, but of place and time. Further, for this study, scene does not refer to the buildings or road or signs, as they are already discussed as integral aspects of the agency by which the drama of Main Street, U.S.A., is performed. The scene for this rhetorical artifact is broader and yet essential for a complete understanding of messages (and later, of purpose). Kenneth Burke discusses scene as the "background of the act, the

situation in which it occurred” (Burke, 1945, p. 56). The context necessary to understand Main Street, U.S.A., involves the background behind the construction of the site, and its continued maintenance and performance today.

As this study examines the specific Main Street, U.S.A., of Magic Kingdom, its status as the second of its kind is important. The original Main Street, U.S.A., as imagined by Walt Disney and designed by his Imagineers, was built in Disneyland in Anaheim, California, 16 years earlier. Walt was able to live to see this representation of his hometown rise from the dirt of the West Coast. When he envisioned expanding his empire in the 1960s, he ventured to the tourism-friendly, but quiet area of central Florida. Here, Main Street, U.S.A., was constructed under the direction of Roy Disney. The homage to Walt’s hometown and the goal of recreating his prototype, late Victorian main street would remain intact. However, with one park under their belt, the Imagineers were able to expand slightly on the California model, building a larger, somewhat more garish expression of fantastical hyper-realism. The same dedication and care would be taken in creating the same messages as Disneyland’s Main Street, U.S.A.; however, the advancement in technology since the 1950s (along with logistical lessons learned in park design since then) equipped the Imagineers to create the space in Florida.

Another aspect of the background indelible to the Burkeian scene of Main Street, U.S.A., is the history of main streets in the United States. As Francaviglia writes in his 1996 book, “‘Main Street’ has come to symbolize a place close to the people, people who have few pretenses and honest aspirations; and because it fuses images of place and time, it also symbolizes their past” (p. xviii). Here we see Francaviglia discussing many aspects of extant main streets that can also be found in Disney’s Main Street, U.S.A. The emphasis on images

in actual main streets is noteworthy as it identifies the schema of the visitors to Main Street, U.S.A. Guests want to be visually stimulated. It is anticipated that they will crave visual messages before entering the park. Upon entering the area of Main Street, U.S.A., guests are greeted with signs that signify a “place and time” as Francaviglia writes.

The symbols of a real main street abound in Main Street, U.S.A. The road and shops are there, yes, but the real post boxes are also there. Town Square revolves around an American flag, the only real flag of the United States in the park. Other flags hang from poles on cupolas and roof eaves, but these are not genuine flags and do not, therefore, require daily raising and lowering (though it does reflect turn-of-the-century main streets during festive times of the year). This ceremony is treated with respect in the morning and evening in Magic Kingdom, and special VIP guests are occasionally asked to perform the honor of lowering the flag. It is a sight many visitors to Main Street, U.S.A., miss, but it encourages the patriotism that underlines the entire message of the location, and contributes to the scene of hyper-realistic main street.

Main Street, U.S.A., is an entrance to a theme park, built to resemble the hometown of the namesake of the park, Walt Disney. The scene of Main Street, U.S.A., involves a very straightforward facet – Main Street is just that: a street. The location is a channel by which guests may move from the turnstiles of Magic Kingdom’s front gates and then bottleneck into the avenue by which they may access the central hub of the park (the Plaza at the end of Main Street). Main Street is accessible. This is a necessary feature of being the first “scene” in the cinematic journey of the entire park. Prak (1968) discusses how architectural symbols recognize and reflect the psychological state of their human inhabitants. He uses the Dark Ages as an example of a time of fear and frustration for the

people of Europe. “The circumstances produced in society the emotions of fear, despair and frustration. And the monster images are the symbolic representations in art (and architecture) of these emotions; they are the collective dream of society” (Prak, 1968, p. 21). The bad dream of the Dark Ages is expressed in the architectural symbols during this time. Similarly, Main Street, U.S.A., as a necessary entrance into the dreams of the rest of Magic Kingdom, allows guests to slip into the series of dreams that comprise the park. Rather than the nightmare of the Dark Ages, Main Street, U.S.A., symbolically represents the dream of the turn-of-the-century golden age that Shrock (2004); Sears, Belsky, Tunstell (1975); Francaviglia (1996); and others identify. It is a dream felt by an entire society, a dream from which we have collectively woken. By entering the Magic Kingdom via Main Street, U.S.A., guests can revisit the dream.

Mentioning the architecture of the Dark Ages is particularly relevant in analyzing the location of Main Street, U.S.A. The physical layout, or “footprint,” of the location is a significant point of discussion. The long avenue of Main Street that terminates in a rounded hub in front of Cinderella Castle reflects important conventions within neo-gothic architecture: the “nave” of the long causeway, the “apse” of the round Plaza, and the “altar” of Cinderella Castle. This layout represents further escape from reality within this location. It attests that the messages communicated even more about Western culture than American nostalgia. This clear plan for the location (and its repetition in the other Disney parks’ Main Street, U.S.A.) contributes to The Disney Company’s messages concerning that which is spiritual.

Discussion of the connection to spirituality is not confined to the layout of the location. During the observation of data for this analysis, elements of Main Street, U.S.A.,

were collected for their semiotic value. However, such observation also made clear what elements are apparently absent from Main Street, U.S.A. The elements that are conspicuously missing from the location provide additional meaning for the rhetorical artifact. Examples of elements missing from Main Street, U.S.A., that American main streets traditionally include are a bank, a schoolhouse, a grocer (or general store), and a church. Imagineers are known for being thorough in the planning and detailing of locations within Disney parks, as many of the sources utilized in this study attest, including Francaviglia (1999), Dunlop (2011), and Malmberg (2010). These sources include the progression of designs for Main Street, U.S.A., that show the elimination or addition of buildings from one phase to another. In no progression of designs are Walt Disney, Roy Disney, or Michael Eisner (nor any Imagineers such as John Hench) cited as wanting planning to include a church or bank. The exclusion of such a building as a church would certainly have been purposeful. Could it be that the narrative of Main Street, U.S.A., would be disrupted by the presence of explicitly economic or religious institutions? Literature on the relationship between Disney and religion, such as Annalee Ward's *Mouse Morality*, will remain a relevant area of research as long as Disney creates messages that discuss (or eschew) spirituality.

The scene of Main Street, U.S.A., is also a host-guest relationship between park employees (known as "cast members") and visitors (known as "Guests" in Disney literature). Therefore, the nature of the communication between these two parties must follow this design. Cast members, the agents, who are costumed and technically "in character," must combine the host quality with their set role as citizens of Main Street, U.S.A. The architecture of the agency must also fit this role of welcoming host in order to

remain consistent with the scene. In singing and entertaining (the act) characters must perform with deference to the guests who are audience members. The combination of all of these aspects is directed by the demands of the scene: to welcome and be hospitable.

In discussing scene, the other elements of the pentad are an intrinsic part of the conversation. Burke discusses scene almost exclusively in terms of ratios to other elements of his pentad in his 1945 work "Container and the Thing Contained." For Burke, both realism and symbolism blend in the scene. He uses theatre, specifically Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, as an example of realism in a staged play. As the scenes within the play succeed each other realistically, their very succession symbolizes the action within the drama. It is the structure of the scene that brings about harmony between reality and symbol.

Similarly, the scene of Main Street, U.S.A., is a realistic location. It is an entrance to an amusement park. The outdoor aspect of its design allows it to be vulnerable to the elements. Its location within a company-owned area twice the size of Manhattan also provides it protection. It welcomes millions of visitors annually. It is home to many beloved Disney characters (whom guests can meet inside Main Street Theatre). Yet, even with this realistic description, symbolism is necessary. Does a location "welcome" human visitors?

Keir Elam, in his 1980 book, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, discusses dramatic scene as "not always figured analogically through spatial, architectural, or pictorial means" (p. 13). The scene is a welcome mat to the entirety of the Magic Kingdom Park. This is clear to any visitor. It is the only way for the general public to access the park. However, this is only one perspective. In observing the area, hours were spent up and down Main Street, U.S.A. The crowds move through the space with ease. The street is narrow for a main street at the turn of the century, which ought to be wide enough for a team of horses to turn



round (Sears, Belsky, and Tunstell, 1975, p. 11). The street leads from the railroad station to the plaza roundabout in front of Cinderella Castle, the hub of Magic Kingdom, the crossroads of every fantastical land within the park. The most striking aspect of this scene occurred to me hours after I left Main Street, U.S.A., and after I had enjoyed the rest of the park's amusements: Main Street, U.S.A., is also an exit. After all, what can be said of a facility which serves as the only entrance to a place? It must also be the only exit. In viewing Main Street, U.S.A., in this context, the analysis must discuss the messages of farewell.

Main Street, U.S.A., is often written about in terms of its welcoming signs, but its means of escorting guests out of the park is a somewhat different drama. The setting and characters and agencies are the same, but the messages must be equally effective in setting the scene for a finale as well as an introduction. One particularly effective way to view this scene is briefly mentioned in Susan Veness's 2009 book, *The Hidden Magic of Walt Disney World*. The upper windows of the shops along Main Street symbolize movie credits (p. 6). The names and companies advertised are actually the individuals and companies responsible for helping create "the show," as it is used throughout Disney literature (Dunlop, 2011). The opening credits roll as guests pass the windows that cite important executives and Imagineers who helped make Walt Disney World possible. Conversely, as guests leave the park, these windows work just as well as closing credits. It is possible this is a continued symbol of the theme of transition from old to new. It reflects other signs, like the lighting in Main Street, U.S.A. The lighting in Main Street, U.S.A., begins with ostensibly gas lamps toward the front of the area and transitions to electric lighting at the end of Main Street, a nod to progress, technological advancement, and even time travel; a connection between past and future. In the same way, the classic films of old Hollywood are known for

their opening credits being as prominent as contemporary films' closing credits are today. When guests exit the park, the credits are now at the end of the show. The finale of the show is, of course, the nightly fireworks display. (Incidentally, the explosive finale is best viewed from Main Street, U.S.A.'s roundabout).

An additional aspect of the finality of Main Street, U.S.A., is that it forces people to leave the magic behind, transitioning them from Tomorrowland, Adventureland, Frontierland, and Fantasyland to the reality of a parking lot. In observing this location, one can find but little evidence of signs that signify farewell besides the credits in the upper floor windows. In the evening, when guests are cordially asked to leave the Magic Kingdom, the street is the same as it is all day, every day, with one exception. The entrance-turned-exit, is now brilliantly lit with thousands of light bulbs that line every gable, every eave, every fascia board. Lighting in drama, as it is in Main Street, U.S.A., is a sign and yet a means to support other signs. There is both dramatic-information available, and signal-information available. Dramatically speaking, the lights signify the continued celebration within Main Street, U.S.A., whether the celebration commemorates history, home, America, etc. The lights are a part of the spectacle of the exit. The signal-information is more straightforward, as the lights refer the guests to the actual signs and buildings of Main Street, U.S.A., but now, at the end of the show, in a different "light."

### *Purpose*

"It's all very obvious, careful communication, watching what you say, and being explicit — and having something to say in the first place," said John Hench, a master among the original Imagineers (Dunlop, 2011, p. 20). Hench is responsible for much of the aesthetic of Main Street, U.S.A., and the rest of the Disney parks. His quote reveals the

strategic nature of the work of the Imagineers. As discussed previously, Imagineers are decision makers. The reason for the purpose in Burke's pentad is to explore motivation for a drama. After all, what the Imagineers intended to say might differ from what continues to be said in the drama of Main Street, U.S.A., every day in the Magic Kingdom. It is a matter of careful interpretation.

An observer cannot identify the purpose of an act as easily as the perpetrator (or agent) can express it. Further, the agent's identification of the purpose is more solidly supported in source credibility. Of the pentadic elements, the purpose is often the most debated of Burke's, as he admits in "Container and the Thing Contained" (1945, p. 56). Nevertheless, the purpose must be attempted in order for a pentadic study to be complete. What is more, no act worthy of analysis exists without purpose. The preceding discussion of the other four elements provides the clues necessary for the best assessment of purpose. In addition, historical texts on the design of Main Street, U.S.A., on Walt Disney, on extant main streets, and on theme park design prove immeasurably useful.

In Main Street, U.S.A., the Burkeian purpose is generally divided into two parts: the physical and the psychological. Physically, the purpose of Main Street, U.S.A., is to allow guests to enter the Magic Kingdom and easily find their way to the end of the street where the Plaza acts as a hub for the entire park. Psychologically, the purpose was and is to allow guests to pass from the reality of their everyday lives to the fantasy of the various lands (via a representation of a bygone era in American history). One must recognize that the present and past tense of purpose is appropriate in reference to both the artifact's original creation and its ongoing performance.

Physically, an architecturally designed and constructed space (in this case, an entire theme park) necessitates an entrance. Main Street, U.S.A., provides the entrance to Magic Kingdom. In building this location, the Imagineers required a space that would efficiently move large crowds of people all day, every day of the year. The natural flow of crowds is essential to the purpose of the location, and this is evident in its design. The Town Square leads to the main avenue of Main Street distinctly to signal to people to follow this route. Terming it Main Street identifies the location as a route for the park guests, not only as a reference to actual main streets in America. For example, Alexander (1979) points out that the word “stream” signifies a physical space but also an event (or even series of events). When one thinks of the word “stream,” the stream bed, the course the stream travels, the banks are together signified with the water that rushes through the space; the fish swimming in the water and the algae and other plants growing beneath the surface might come to mind (p. 73).

The signs of this location that signify the intended purpose of entering a theme park are probably best found in its layout. Since the early design stages of Disneyland, Main Street, U.S.A., was a long avenue that began with a Town Square and ended in a Plaza that acted as a hub for the rest of the theme park (Dunlop, 2010, p. 21). This axel-and-hub design was so successful that it is repeated in the various Disney parks across the globe. It is not an original concept by the Imagineers, however. The main streets of America were very typically a central vein for a small town, often including direct access to a railroad station, and frequently running parallel to a river or other water source (Sears, Belsky and Tunstell, 1975, p. 15). In planning the footprint of this location, the main avenue signifies these main streets that Americans instinctively recognize. The sense of parading down

from one end to another is communicated necessarily because it acts as the only channel to the rest of the park. (Otherwise, guests must push through the various stores on either side of the street, which are connected with limited interruption. Of course, this path would naturally be desirable to park planners as it opens the opportunity for more guest purchases.)

Furthermore, Walt Disney's own specific purposes for Main Street, U.S.A., are perhaps best explained by Robert Jackson, former publicity manager for Disneyland, "The architecture was personally selected by Walt Disney, himself a Midwesterner by birth and during his early life. He felt that America's 'Innocent Years' at the turn of the century were best depicted by this structural style—and that this introduction into the special realm of Disneyland would be the perfect 'mindsetter'" (Francaviglia, 1996, p. 147). In this quotation, one can find the purpose for both physical and psychological needs. Main Street, U.S.A., is a physical location signifying the movement of Americans comfortably through their hometown into the rest of the imagined lands of Disney's theme parks. Psychologically, Main Street, U.S.A., acts as a "mindsetter," or reality bridge to connect the familiarity guests have with their reality-based home and the imagination-based world Disney offers.

Suspension of disbelief is an important element in any drama. In order for a drama to retain integrity and be successful, the audience must be engaged in accepting the information they are given. It is for this psychological purpose that the Imagineers created Main Street, U.S.A. The Imagineers were (and remain) responsible for telling a story that resonates with their audience and to keep the story consistent and entertaining. In

engaging the audience through the constructed space, Imagineers were able to glean emotional response from the audience.

According to the centennial edition of *American Century*, the 1910s are remembered by many who lived it as “the best of all eras in American history” (p. 145). Traditionally, Main Street is a place for people, according to Elizabeth Skidmore Sasser’s review of Francaviglia’s *Main Street Revisited: Time, Space, and Image-Building in Small Town America* (1997, p. 156). Some have bemoaned the sugar-coated visual language of Main Street, U.S.A., (and even the romanticized memory of the represented bygone era) such as the poet John Ciardi (Dunlop, 2011, p. 20). The discussion of the aesthetically pleasing quality of Main Street, U.S.A., is not without merit. However, the pursuit of aesthetic pleasure is not the sole purpose of designing Main Street, U.S.A., in its admittedly saccharine approach.

Because these remarkable and talented individuals are foremost creative artisans, a significant purpose in their work is artistic expression. Disney began his conglomerate as a studio for animation. His animators and painters and photographers produced works of art in their films. In the same way, Imagineers produce three-dimensional, experiential designs. Their work on Main Street, U.S.A., is a reflection not only of their goal to recreate Walt Disney’s hometown, or even as simply an entrance to a theme park. They are expressing their own artistic vision by the application of their talents. In the creation of art, there is an expectation for an audience. As such, the work of artists like the Imagineers is meant to be seen and is meant to inspire reaction from the audience. Further, art cannot exist without an intended message—one that hopefully has never been seen before. As such, it is appropriate that the Imagineers created Main Street, U.S.A., beyond historical,

realistic accuracy. A duplicate of Marceline, Missouri, would not have been nearly as effective as the fantasy created in Main Street, U.S.A., in the Magic Kingdom. That kind of reproduction would require symbols that were duplicates of extant artifacts and architectural structures. Were this the case, the audience would hardly be able to gain much from the interaction with such symbols. It would fall flat—just as flat characters are unsuccessful (as discussed in the Act segment). With the purposeful blend of reality and artistic expression of the happiness one naturally wishes to find in an architectural space, the Imagineers communicate their message successfully.

The Imagineers felt it necessary to provide a sense of place and identity for guests, as discussed by Ann Sloan Devlin in *What Americans Build and Why* (2010). In order to make guests comfortable in their park, Disney Imagineers decided upon an aesthetic that would be recognizable (and fantastical) and would represent a time and location their audience would naturally desire to visit and explore. The setting of a turn-of-the-century small town lent itself well to this purpose. As Canby writes in *American Memoir* (1975), referring to this time in United States history, “For the last time in living memory everyone knew exactly what it meant to be American” (p. 164). Canby refers to a collective emotion, a collective experience with which guests would identify. This sense of identity is what the Imagineers aimed to create in Main Street, U.S.A., exemplifying what people require in their pursuit of happiness, as Devlin (2010) suggests.

Another purpose of Main Street, U.S.A., worth noting is the homage to Walt Disney’s hometown. Main Street, U.S.A., is a feature of every Disney theme park (except Tokyo Disneyland). The location’s references to nostalgia, particularly of Walt’s childhood home are purposefully repeated for posterity. The usage of this theme is not without direct

intent. Specific architectural systems are utilized for the benefit of the structure and of those who will interact with it. As far back as the 1st century BC, designers kept this purpose in mind. Vitruvius advocated, for example, for Corinthian temples for goddesses like Venus, Flora, and Prosperina. On the other hand, Doric was deemed more appropriate for “virile figures like Mars,” and “Ionic for deities like Juno who were in between the two extremes” (Bonta, 1979, 91). The point is to discern what is appropriate for the space’s function. Main Street, U.S.A., while not literally a temple to Walt Disney, is one that represents this iconic American figure. The area is not a temple to Disney, of course, as he was essential to the aesthetic designs of the location. He desired for Main Street, U.S.A., to reflect his early childhood in Marceline, Missouri, when he was “relatively happy, far better than the years of near poverty in Kansas City and later Chicago” (Francaviglia, 1996, p. 145).

### Conclusion

In this chapter, Main Street, U.S.A., was analyzed using Kenneth Burke’s dramatisitic pentad. Though first discussed in 1945, Kenneth Burke’s dramatisitic pentad remains a strong tool in rhetorical criticism.

One may criticize a dramatisitic study of Main Street, U.S.A., arguing against the presence of drama due to a lack of conflict. I admit that drama relies on conflict. This is a necessary aspect of narrative and drama. However, even in the idyllic world of Main Street, U.S.A., there is conflict that will never dissipate as it is fundamental for the location’s existence. The conflict comes not from antagonism. The conflict is the inherent tension between fantasy and reality, between past and present. The conflict is not one born out of meanness, it is a necessary tension between two sides. As the reality of the elements, the



anachronistic clothing of the guests, etc., stand out as the accepted norm, the elements of Main Street's design, in fact work cohesively to communicate.

The messages created by Imagineers are generally consistent from one element to another, with few exceptions. Main Street, U.S.A., is therefore a well-designed location. In terms of realistic replication of historic truth, the location obviously fails. However, due to its true nature as a "reality-bridge" between the outside world and the more fantastical lands within Disney's Magic Kingdom, the location succeeds its dramatic intent. "The buildings themselves are recognizable as archetypes; they're not taken from real life but rather drawn the way buildings in a picture book or animated film might be depicted and then transformed into three dimensions," wrote Dunlop (2010, p. 24). It is therefore the purpose that affects how the remaining elements ought to be perceived.

The location would not exist without the formation of The Disney Company by Walt Disney almost a century ago. With his vision, the various media products created during his life (and since) contributed greatly to such fields as entertainment, art, architecture and tourism. Walt Disney's Imagineers' dedication to excellence is clearly present in Main Street, U.S.A. More than this, however, The Disney Company proves that it is dedicated to storytelling in any capacity—even in an architectural location. Main Street, U.S.A., embodies the principles the Disney park designers abide in their list of Mickey's Ten Commandments, developed by retired Imagineer, Marty Sklar. Among these, Imagineers must, "Communicate with visual literacy ... Tell one story at a time ... Avoid contradictions ... Keep it up!" (Malmberg, 2010, p. 11). The story of Main Street, U.S.A., though not a tale as old as time, is a remarkable drama encapsulating Disney's primary themes of home, family, history, entertainment, and the American spirit.

## CHAPTER 5

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study presented the messages created by Main Street, U.S.A., with appreciation for its role as a drama. The lens of Burke's pentad was applied using the traditions of semiotics and symbolic interactionism in examining what messages are communicated, who communicates them, how the messages are communicated, in what context, and with what motive. Chapter one discussed the purposes of this study, with justification, literature review, and investigation goals expressed along with a preview of the paper's structure. Chapter two provided context to the study. The Disney Company was considered with attention paid to its theme parks. Context was also provided in terms of art and architecture at the turn of the century as well as how this period has been portrayed in other media. Chapter three outlined the location itself by explaining the layout, prominent buildings, and other sensory data. Chapter four resulted from intense observation and media research wherein the analysis of the signs and symbols of Main Street, U.S.A., were discussed according to Burke's pentad.

These four chapters function to justify the dramatic messages present in Walt Disney World's Main Street, U.S.A., in its recreation of American history and preservation of American ideals. The messages of The Disney Company present in this location best illustrate Walt Disney's dedication to experiential, three-dimensions storytelling. Here, the implications of the study on future research are discussed. Then, limitations of the study are presented in addition to suggestions for further investigations.

### Implications of Research

The most significant contribution Disney has made in its dedication to storytelling is consistency of message. Disney has very particular meanings for its audience regardless of what product it is marketing. By building Main Street, U.S.A., in conjunction with the various fantastical lands of Disney theme parks, the Imagineers prioritized remaining true to the integrity of their messages. In researching Main Street, U.S.A., Imagineers' writings were invaluable resources in addition to the location under analysis. Marty Sklar, a retired Imagineer, worked for The Disney Company for 54 years. During his tenure, Sklar consolidated the critical lessons he learned into a list of principles, naming them "Mickey's Ten Commandments."

1. Know your audience
2. Wear your Guests' shoes
3. Organize the flow of people and ideas
4. Create a wienie (visual magnet)
5. Communicate with visual literacy
6. Avoid overload — create turn ons
7. Tell one story at a time
8. Avoid contradictions — maintain identity
9. For every ounce of treatment, provide a ton of treat
10. Keep it up!

Though Sklar's background is in design and engineering, his experience led him to leadership, and ultimately provided him great insight into how corporations should be run. These commandments are exemplified in Main Street, U.S.A. Even more, the

commandments are easily adapted to the corporate branding and maintenance. Any business that offers products or services will have an audience that must be understood in order to appropriately communicate with them. Then, in every aspect of production, message sending should be so consistent as to tell a story. The story of one product can then blend naturally with the story of another product. Efficiency of message is just as important as consistency. The messages should not overwhelm, and ought to be within the grasp of the audience. At times, stories should reach a climax with a focal point. For example, an advertising campaign may reach a climax with a large, publicized event—the story of which has been consistent in the message creation leading up to it. In providing audiences with unavoidable realities (like cost, for example) the product should meet or exceed the audience's expectations for fulfillment. Finally, the standard that is set by the stories of a company ought to be maintained; the show must go on. Through analyzing and learning from the model The Disney Company creates in its numerous storytelling products, companies have much to gain. Their successful corporate structure and overall consistent messages are due, in part, to Disney's position as a leader in media. As Sklar writes, these ten commandments are pinned in the offices of theme parks across the globe, signifying a debt that many companies owe to Disney (Malmberg, 2010, p.11).

The field of rhetorical studies naturally benefits from the production of analyses wherein new artifacts broaden the potential for rhetorical exploration. It is the aim of any contribution to provide newfound knowledge and fresh perspectives. In conducting this study, the goal was to examine a text unlike those texts commonly explored using Burkeian analysis.

This study has shown that Kenneth Burke's dramatic pentad is still a viable device to explore various rhetorical texts. The essential breakdown of the pentad illustrates the exact components of an act of communication. Fortunately the fact that the pentad is a "dramatic" sort of analysis allowed it to be conveniently applied to a text of Disney architecture. "At its core, Disney architecture *is* storytelling," wrote Tom Staggs and Bruce Vaughn, Chairman of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts and Chief Creative Executive of Walt Disney Imagineering (Dunlop, 2011, p. 7). Because the elements are distinct and separate, they each represent a significant aspect of the communicative event. Additionally, because they work in harmony, they illustrate the importance of several factors on the transmission of messages between people.

Main Street, U.S.A., as an architectural location, deserved analysis for its significance in American popular culture and as a text that reimagines historicity. It is itself an interpretation. By interpreting interpreted messages, more layers of the rhetorical process can be revealed. This is true of any text whose function is to interpret or rethink an already existing drama, story, or message. The history of rhetorical studies is long, but its future is uncertain. Studies of more creative rhetorical texts may be one way of insuring the viability of the field in a generation of constant stimulation and message sending/receiving. Additionally, although technological advancements may lead to a growing rate of communication, researchers would do well to not forget the messages of those who are no longer present. Main Street, U.S.A., represents a text whose messages are partly created by those who crafted messages decades before guests may receive them. Preservation is an essential theme of the location, and it is with hope that this study reinforces the need for conservation of the past.

It should also be mentioned that Main Street, U.S.A., has had a significant impact on conservation efforts of architectural structures in America. Additionally, the design of Main Street, U.S.A., aided by its high profile as a Disney property, has affected waves of architectural design. There is something significant in its glorification of late-Victorian architecture, allowing this time in American cultural history to be deemed “classic,” and therefore sacred in the collective subconscious. Attention given to this location (in terms of rhetoric or otherwise) is appropriate and allows the location to receive at least minor credit for the contribution it has made to many small towns in America who now understand the importance of historic preservation. As Beth Dunlop writes, “No single Disney element has had more impact than Main Street, U.S.A. True, the castles belonging to Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty (‘Belle au Bois’ in France) provide us with indelible, fanciful images, but their real-world applications were limited. Disney’s Main Street—a sugar-coated re-imagining of Walt Disney’s own hometown—inspired small towns across America to restore and renew their own main streets, many of which had all but been abandoned and certainly less well-loved than they should have been” (2011, p.12).

#### Limitations of Study

For this study, certain limitations and constraints were inherent in the process of investigation. Some limits were self-inflicted for clarity and focus of the research. For example, in writing this study, certain categorizations and designations were established for quality of the study. Obviously the Imagineers continue to work on Main Street, U.S.A., in order to maintain the facility and the storytelling that occurs every day for the park guests. Nevertheless, the Agent portion of the pentadic study is divided between past and

present, with Imagineers classified in the former. This is done for clarity of the analysis. Other limitations were set by various outside forces.

In observing a location, the primary limitation is the fact of accessibility. Examining Main Street, U.S.A., requires purchasing park tickets for each visit. Observation is limited by the theme park's hours of operation. Similarly, the location is exposed to the elements, which prevents investigation during inclement weather. At various times in the year, façades are renovated and covered in tarps that look like the façades beneath. During these times, accurate observation can be limited. More frequently, parades occur several times a day in the Magic Kingdom that pass through Main Street, U.S.A. At this point in the day, accurate observation of crowd interaction within the space may be skewed, and costumed citizens of Main Street, U.S.A., are not available. Further, seasonal decorations for Halloween and winter holidays will affect the interpretation of messages and may even obscure some important symbols within the location.

Personal bias aside, the investigation was both enhanced and limited by familiarity with the location. Emotive messages created by the Imagineers in the location are deadened after repetitive observation. Therefore, experiential description of the location is less expressive than an average guest with whom the Imagineers aim to communicate.

The interiors of the shops on Main Street, U.S.A., are impressively detailed as to create the atmosphere of turn-of-the-century America as the facades. However, including the interiors in addition to the exteriors would prove too enormous a rhetorical artifact for study. The only aspect of the interiors that was feasible for inclusion in this study is the costuming of the employees. This is logical, as the costumes are not fixed features on the walls of the shops as, say, sconces. Additionally, the literature on interiors of the shops on

Main Street is quite limited. Disney is not clear as to assigning credit for the designs of these interiors. The messages created in the emporium, the confectionery, Disney Clothiers, and Casey's Corner are not without merit for study, however.

Richard Francaviglia's writings on main streets and Disney's Main Street, U.S.A., are invaluable resources for information on the cultural heritage of main streets in the United States. However, other main street research is somewhat limited. Regardless, research on Main Street, U.S.A., in Disneyland (in California) is often attributed to Main Street, U.S.A., in Magic Kingdom (in Florida). The researcher must beware the differences between these spaces. This may even serve as a prompt for a comparative analysis of the two locations. It is important to recognize that Walt Disney was in charge of the planning for Disneyland, and his brother, Roy, was in charge of the planning of Walt Disney World.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

One important objective of this study is to inspire and influence further research on Main Street, U.S.A., The Disney Company, and related topics. After completing this dramatic analysis of Main Street, U.S.A., it became clear that various facets might serve as the foundation for future study. These facets will be identified and discussed here, including Disney corporate culture, future guest interaction with Main Street, U.S.A. (in addition to theme park entrances in general), and the experience of guests from international backgrounds.

The first topic for possible continued research depends on the sheer size of The Disney Company. Disney is a vast entity with branches in a multitude of fields. Because it is one of the largest conglomerates in the world, there are many opportunities for research.



To continue research on the artifact of Main Street, U.S.A., the study of the corporate culture of The Disney Company may prove effective in discerning more fully the messages created in this location (and others throughout the many Disney properties).

Another area of research involves investigation of the guests who visit the Disney parks. This current study identified the methods the Imagineers used to send messages in Main Street, U.S.A. The pursuit of American ideals is evident in the treatment of architecture, signs, costume, and music. What these ideals mean to successive generations of park guests—especially American guests—is not as clear. Further study on this topic would benefit from seeking out the effect Main Street, U.S.A., has on current visitors to the location in terms of their ideas about American history and culture, and the preservation of the nostalgia for this time in the nation's history. Such research would most likely involve participant surveys and/or interviews.

Furthermore, the location as a necessary feature of a significant amusement park is worthy of continued research. This study discussed expectations of guests of the location in terms of their entrance to a Disney park. Further investigation of participants would reveal how the reality of the sight reflects, matches, and affects the guests' expectations when visiting theme parks in general while on vacation. This sort of study would most likely involve participant surveys and would focus more on the audience than the drama of Main Street, U.S.A.

A final suggestion for further research involves the significance of Main Street, U.S.A., for an international audience. Francaviglia and others discuss the importance of Main Street, U.S.A., for the American definition of hometowns. Some authors, such as Dunlop, claim that guests who visit Disneyland and Walt Disney World from other cultures

recognize Main Street, U.S.A.'s messages of home and nostalgia. In order to properly ascertain the validity of these claims, researchers might need to conduct interview or survey studies of such guests. From questioning those participants with international perspectives the significance of Main Street, U.S.A., would be further substantiated. These studies would also provide a more detailed account of the impact Main Street, U.S.A., has on a global level—and would thereby reveal greater and more specified influence of The Disney Company worldwide.

### Conclusion

Michael Eisner, former Disney chairman, once said “Buildings, architecture stay with you in a way nothing else does. It’s subliminal. You don’t even know what you know about architecture. You get angry or you feel good, and you don’t understand why you feel good” (Dunlop, 2011, p. 12). Objectively, Main Street, U.S.A., stands in the presence of detractors who criticize the “prettification” and make-believe of the space. It is certainly a sanitized version of small town America (literally, as rampant horse droppings are merely a thing of the past), but it preserves and inspires a standard. Although no hometown could achieve the perfection and gloss of Main Street, U.S.A., if one town is inspired to initiate conservation efforts, or if one person is inspired to believe in a better America, then the efforts are not in vain. If drama is meant to extend and supersede reality, Main Street, U.S.A., succeeds. If drama is meant to communicate an emotive message, its audience must measure its success. Noting the millions of visitors—and thousands of return visitors—the audience must find something worthy in this location. It is a drama to behold—even as a humble opening act to the grand show of Walt Disney World.

APPENDIX



Figure 1. Map of Main Street, U.S.A. (Walt Disney World, 2013)



Figure 2. City Hall and Fire Station (Disbrow, 2012).



Figure 3. Confectionery and The Chapeau (Disbrow, 2012).



Figure 4. Walt Disney World Railroad office window (Lissak, 2011).



Figure 5. Logo of Main Street, U.S.A., on a trashcan (Author's Photograph, 2013).



Figure 6. Architectural details of Town Square Theater (Author's Photograph, 2013).



Figure 7. Architectural details of Disney Clothiers (Author's Photograph, 2013).



Figure 8. Citizens of Main Street, U.S.A. A member of the press and the mayor's wife interact with visitors while dressed in period costumes (Author's Photograph, 2013).



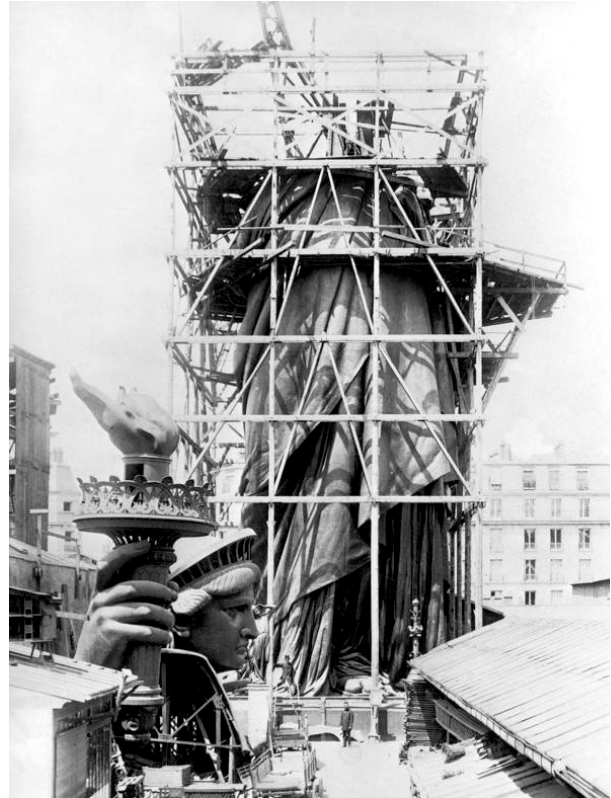
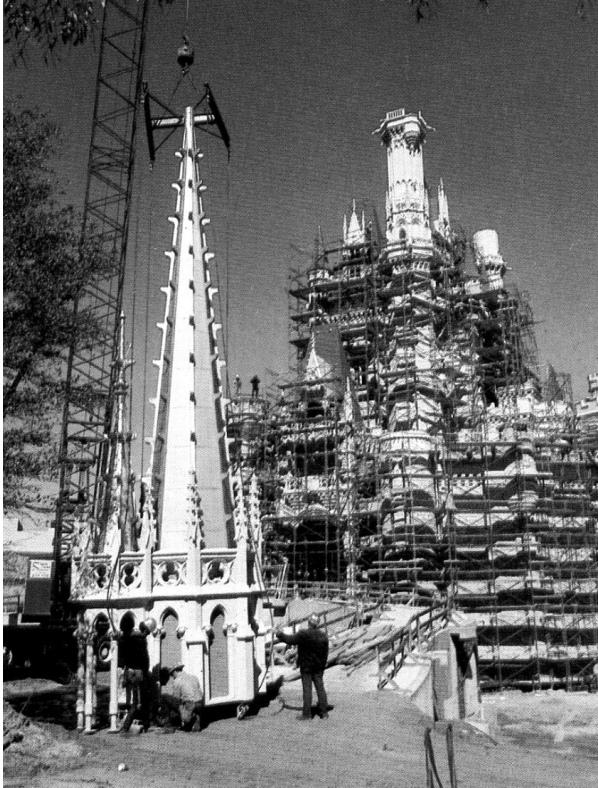


Figure 9. Cinderella Castle (Malmberg, 2010) and Statue of Liberty (The Statue of Liberty nearing completion, 1885). Photographs of the construction of these structures illustrate noticeable parallels.

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