Animating Hierarchy: Disney and the Globalization of Capitalism

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Introduction

Much has been written about the power and influence of the Disney corporation (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1975; Shickel, 1968; Smoodin, 1993; Wasko, 2000; Maltin, 1980; Mosley, 1985). With enterprises in film, video, theme parks, cable and network television, cruise ships, toys, clothing, and other consumer products, Disney leads in the construction and promotion of U. S. popular culture. Yet, despite its position as global media giant—second only to Time-Warner-AOL, its sordid past as cold war propagandist and union-buster, and its current exploitation of sweatshop workers (e.g., $1/day for Haitian Disney employees), Disney maintains the Mickeyesque-aura of Uncle Walt and wholesome family entertainment. Indeed, Disney now serves as America's moral educator (Real, 1977; Ward 1996). Dominating market power in entertainment mitigated by avuncular representation adheres to Disney in large part due to its primary production art form: the animated feature.

Animation is central to Disney's economic strength and cultural influence. In the last ten years, Disney has sold more than $2 billion in toys—toys based on characters from animated films and cartoons. Pegged to animated characters from Mickey to Pocahontas, Disney theme parks have more visitors yearly than 54 national parks combined. Using profits from its animated feature films, Disney acquired ABC, AM radio stations, and cable holdings such as ESPN and A&E. Disney cable cartoon channels air animated spin-offs such as "Aladdin," "Timon and Pumba," and the "Jungle Cubs." And although Disney has moved beyond animation with Miramax and Touchstone–studios devoted to finding the 18-35 demographic–those efforts pale in comparison to the economic success of cartoon features: seven of the top ten selling videos in the world are Disney animations, including Aladdin (1992), Tarzan (1999), Beauty and the Beast (1991), and Pocahontas (1995). The Lion King (1994) alone has grossed over $1 billion, including merchandising and video sales. Beyond its mass popularity (Wasko, 2000) and market dominance in animated features, Disney's leading position is verified by the efforts at animation by recent competitors: Fox studios and Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks now emulate the artistic and promotional model. In terms of total revenues and in terms of international recognition of its brand, animation is why Disney has been and remains a leader in creating and marketing entertainment in both the U.S. domestic and export market

The startling success of Disney animation prompts the perspective for this essay that accepts both a political economy and cultural studies approach. Understanding Disney animation helps clarify the intimate relationship between ideology and socio-economic practice. Investigating the construction, content, and persuasive efficacy of animated Disney films reveals that Disney consistently and intentionally selects themes in its commodities-as-animated features that promote an ideology useful to Disney and capitalist society, but at odds with democratic, creative communities. Disney's animated features simultaneously soften and distribute messages of class hierarchy and anti-social hyper-individualism.

Communicating through Animation

Animation provides the material, technical basis for creating the "Magic Kingdom" of Disney content.

Animation exhibits and employs the features of all visual communication, including the cinematic, that are "designed to replicate some parts of human interaction" blurring the "imminent margin between fiction and reality" (Chesebro and Bertleson 143). The frame, the shot, the scene, and the sequence that articulate cinematic images by virtue of their composition–characters and actions are highlighted and thus valued by their on screen prominence and positioning. Animation has considerably more representational latitude than non-animated film: image, size, movement, color, lighting, and continuity are easily altered with the stroke of a pen or key. All "film claims to show the truth, but constantly deceives" (Whittock 35), but animation excels at both due to its technical and artistic openness. Documentary film, for instance, could not possibly re-construct the humanized characters and stories of Disney's Little Mermaid (1989), Lion King (1994) or Tarzan (1999) because the natural world disallows the fictional representations necessary. In contrast, animated characters, settings, and representations can be graphically adjusted to empower desired meanings. In fact, Disney's idealized worlds rest largely on the artifice of animation: good characters (e. g., Simban, the Sultan, Ariel, Pocahontas) exhibit juvenile traits such as big eyes and round cheeks (Lawrence 67) and are drawn in curves, smooth, round, soft, bright, and with European features; villains (e.g., Scar, Jafar, the Hun, Ratcliffe, Ursula) are drawn with sharp angles, oversized, and often darkly. Animation has available the same artistic capacity as illustration, where color, shape, and size evoke certain psychological responses and attitudes towards an object. Mickey's head, for instance, is composed of three symmetrically attached circles. As former Disney artist and executive John Hench explains, "Circles never cause anybody any trouble. We have had bad experiences with sharp points, with angles, but circles are things we have fun with. . . circles are very reassuring" (Brockway 31-32). While film may give rise to what Walter Benjamin termed "a new region of consciousness," (in Hansen 31), animation is further "freed from the limitations of physical laws and formulae" (Moellenhoff 116) and more easily disarms resistance to fiction and fantasy. Further, animation thrives on the symbolic personification of values and ideals through its use of visual metaphor in which "disparate elements are visually incorporated into one, spatially bounded, homogenous entity" (Carrol 811). Again, although screen writers and cinematographers regularly and effectively express ideas through visual metaphor, animation has more technical opportunities and less creative obstacles.

Animation "real"-izes visual metaphors by enlivening illustrated representations of fictional characters and settings through motion and sound. When illustrations are consistent with animal and human physiology–"drawn from life" according to Disney promos (in Addison 23)–and move accordingly, they come alive. Animated motion attracts our attention, mitigating its graphic fiction. Children, in particular, are attuned to animation because it visually stimulates their emotions (Moellenhoff 105) and Disney has shown itself "capable of understanding the way that children think and feel better than any other filmmaker" of our time (Rosenbaum 69). Observe any pre-schooler or grade schooler watch Disney–their eyes are wide and their bodies quake; laughter is spontaneous and fright discernible (Takahashi, 1991). As Bjoerkqvist and Lagerspetz (1985) found, children respond cognitively and physiologically to the meaning of the animation.

For children, animation pierces the consciousness and physical existence with experiential meaning, creating a realm of understanding unavailable via literacy or non-cinematic physical activity. Adults likely interact with cinema in a similar, though less transparent manner, given their socialization to self-control and public self-consciousness. Of course, viewers, young and old, recognize animation as fictive, not real: it's just a cartoon! However, reality and fantasy do not compete in Disney, but "unite in a droll way" (Moellenhoff 114) exempting the stories from fidelity to extant or historical conditions.

To emphasize the story's "innocence," Uncle Walt instructed his artists to "keep it cute" (Bailey 75). Yet, precisely because animation seems to be innocent, youthful entertainment and "socially-harmless" (Kunzle 11), we "are much more inclined to view the cartoon film as an uncomplicated representation of human ideas" (Moellenhoff 116). Perhaps because we know it is fiction, animation lowers the threshold for our suspension of disbelief, prepping us for a more tolerant acceptance of plot, scene, character action, and ultimately, ideas. U. S. Air Force studies of technical and orientation films during World War II found Disney animation to be not only exceptionally popular among soldiers, but informationally superior to documentary film and oral and written instruction (Hubley and Schwartz 361). Citing supporting research, O'Brien (1998) suggests that animated realism remains unchallenged because the popular audience believes it should be accepted, not analyzed (177).

The Disney Model

The appropriation of cultural codes from traditional tales through visual metaphor, anthropomorphism, naturalized scenes and settings, and music are defining characteristics of Disney animation. Disney animation entertains and instructs because it offers a cinematic escape from reality by presenting recognizable narrative and imagistic fictions as if they were or could be reality. In part, the fantasies and their narratives are shielded from external critiques because they are based on widely-accepted cultural myths and morals. Snow White, Lion King, Pocahontas, Mulan, Tarzan, and most other Disney animations are not original, but simplistically revised appropriations of fairy tales, legends, and others' stories. Early works such as Sleeping Beauty, Pinnochio, and Cinderella were adaptations of European folk tales. The Lion King was adapted from an African story about Sundiata, a Mali King (Paterno, 1994) retold by Japanese filmmaker Osamu Tezuka (Kuwahara, 1997); Mulan was based on a 6th century Chinese poem (Yi, 1999); Tarzan is the creation of Edgar Rice Burroughs. In re-writing and animating these and other stories, Disney reaffirms "basic, commonly experienced social psychological needs which are connected with the socialization process and through it with the larger social structure" (Fluck 39). Disney innovates, enhances, and modifies traditional tales, crafting highly-stylized, naturalized graphics within realistic narratives that are entertaining and persuasive precisely because they are so familiar and comforting.

Comfort comes in part from friendly animals that appear as lead characters, editorial commentators, or companions–adding appeal for young viewers and comic relief for older viewers (Sleeping Beauty, the only Disney feature without an animal sidekick, failed miserably at the box office.). Indicative of Disney's naturalistic style, animal stars are always thoroughly anthropomorphized to instantiate the fiction of some human characteristic in animal behavior: motherly owl, devious hyena, playful bear. In the Lion King, Mufasa not only talks, he talks with the diction and accent of British nobility, while the hyenas act and sound like stereotypically black and Latino urban youth. Cultural familiarity with such stereotypes enables reception of Disney's values. Conversely, those uninitiated to certain stereotypes can acquire a Disney-based social template to judge future social interactions: upon hearing a group of black teens talking in a shopping mall, a white toddler was heard to exclaim, "Look, mom, hyenas!" In either case, it's clear that anthropomorphism–a prevalent form of visual metaphor in animation—functions ideologically, "deeply rooted in the culture" (Whittock 13).

Visual metaphor, anthropomorphism, naturalized scenes and settings, and the appropriation of cultural codes from traditional tales are defining characteristics of Disney animation. Disney uses these techniques and forms to tell stories with popular, yet enduring themes (e. g., the coming of age, personal responsibility, and the search for happiness and acceptance) always presented in narrative form. In any genre, narrative realism does not depend on historical accuracy or on conditions of the natural world, but on the story's internal consistency and the resonance of fictions incorporated within the story (Budd, Clay, & Steinman, 1999). Disney animations are unsurpassed in their narrative fidelity to dominant ideology and cultural values, consistently leading audiences to "realistically" believable fantasy lands. In the Lion King, for instance, Disney relies on our continuing cultural fondness for royalty and presumed noble beasts to present a fictional world of nature where animals of prey bow to–rather than flee from–the predator. Likewise, Disney can dismiss the social inequality and brutality of feudalism by creating representational characters with familiar and believable connotations controlled not "by the properties the [subject] actually has but by those it is widely believed to have" (Beardsly 107): a cuddly Sultan (Aladdin), a benign emperor (Mulan), or a doting father (Little Mermaid). Meanwhile, Disney easily denigrates democracy in its narrative by casting secondary characters as bumbling or threatening as in Pocahontas, Mulan, and Tarzan or by scripting anti-monarchy dialogue as the rant of scavenging hyenas in the Lion King. In short, Disney can use such recognizable renderings from history and nature in very anti-historical and "un-natural" ways (e.g., a sultan who ignores social class, a baboon that cooperates with lions), because the techniques of animation are used to fashion realistic narratives drawn from fables and stories past. Indeed, because Disney excels at wrapping the fantastic in the natural, its animated narratives assume much of the verisimilitude of "real" movies.

Given the communicative power of animation in narrative realism and the dominance of Disney as the

most popular purveyor of the art form, there is an emerging consensus that Disney's animations supply a stable diegesis for socialization (Hansen, 1993). In his appraisal of mass-mediated culture, for instance, Michael Real (1977) determined Disney has replaced schools, churches, and families in teaching society right and wrong. Kathy Jackson (1993) argues that Disney and its vision "permeates our culture" (109). Annalee Ward (1996) further believes that for children the social values of Disney stories "form the standards for testing the truth of other stories later in life (177), while Michael Medved (1998) even portends an historic cultural shift to family values led by Disney. Unfortunately, the pro-social values that Ward and Medved perceive in the Lion King and the feminist virtues that Henke, Umble & Smith (1996) read into Little Mermaid and Pocahontas are surface readings of Disney's adjustment to its market needs. Close attention to the narratives and character traits suggests that although Disney animations remain "naive, childlike, even childish" (Moellenhoff 114), they are not the fairy tales of imagination that children need (Bettleheim, 1977), nor are they socially progressive. Rather, Disney animations are self-contained confections mass-produced by adults writing, selling, and promoting themes for product licensing and private profits (Herman & McChesney 54)–with consumerist values and ideologies supportive of capitalist globalization.

Significantly, Disney's animated visions not only thrive in the U. S., they predominate in international entertainment, in part, because more than any other global communication form, animation crosses borders. Unlike non-animated television and film, animation does not need to be dubbed or fitted with subtitles: cartoon characters are multi-lingual. Consequently, the costs for international distribution of animation are low, while the possibilities for cross-cultural reception are high. Raised by the apes, Tarzan speaks German. The Powhantan Pocahontas may not know her own language, but she speaks fluent French and Italian. Aladdin converses in Malay and Spanish, but not his native Arabic, as that film market is too small. In its commitment to market diversity, Disney also willingly edits any culturally unfavorable textual content as in Pocahontas (Edgerton & Jackson 94) and Aladdin (White & Winn, 1998) because it is "determined to release non-controversial" animated films to maximize profits (Ostman 86-87).

Disney animations are not only linguistically adaptable, they have long lives. In addition to the toys, clothes, and other products which outlive the theater runs, Disney animations are re-released on video and characters reappear in various video and television spin-offs. Actors age and die; cartoon characters are eternal. Based on fairy tales and historic myths rather than current events, Disney features do not become dated as quickly as other genre. Snow White, Bambi, Pinocchio, Peter Pan, and now Simba, Mulan, and Tarzan will likely thrill future audiences as their contemporaries.

Disney animation has already become popular with international audiences, which eagerly anticipate and are willing to pay for each new release. Disney develops its films according to a strict artistic and corporate protocol (Kunzle, 1975), displaying an identifiably consistent naturalistic style, with richness of color and shading, depth of detail in background, full musical scores, and, of course, consistent themes, narrative, and ideologies. When Disney used an outside artist for Hercules (1997) audiences rejected the departure from traditional Disney fare and the film stumbled at the box office. Meanwhile, Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks studio has had some success in mimicking Disney with Prince of Egypt.

Like all televised entertainment, animation carries no sanctions, only gratifications to deliver meaning (Hodge & Tripp, 1986). The popularity of Disney suggests that audiences receive considerable pleasure, while the pervasive redundancy of Disney animations assures that Disney's vision will be seen, understood, and remembered–three requirements of effective propoganda. Given evidence (Jose and Brewer, 1984; Jose, 1990) that children causally equate narrative outcomes with behavior (bad actions are punished, good are rewarded), it is also likely that Disney's morals and hierarchies will be acted on as valid and preferred. The magic of Disney–its ability to communicate ideas to millions–comes from offering children and adults alike a visual sweet, desired and satisfying. Of course, for all of its pleasure, a high-sugar diet is not the most nutritious. Likewise, the messages in Disney's vision do not encourage healthy communities or democratic societies.

Narrating Animation

Along with its longstanding prominence in American culture, Disney has stirred up significant criticism (Shickel, 1968; Dorfman and Mattelart, 1975; Ostman, 1996). After Uncle Walt declined to run for mayor of Los Angeles because, as he said, "I'm already king," Joseph Morgenstern (1971) charged that Disney was "a royalist plot . . . to take over the United States and turn it into a continental Magic Kingdom"(Rosenbaum 64). More recent critical appraisals have followed one of two tracks: exposes of the Disney corporation and its practices (e.g., Wilson, 1993; Smoodin, 1994; Bell and Sells, 1995; The Disney Project, 1995; Hiaasen; 1998) or critiques of patriarchy, racism, and historical inaccuracies in Disney films (e.g., Benton, 1995; Buescher and Ono, 1996; Hoerner, 1996; Pewewardy, 1996; Strong, 1996; Kuwahara, 1997; Renjie, 1999; Gravett, 2000). These analyses are collectively thoughtful, insightful, and valid, but nonetheless limited in scope. Feminist critiques of individual self-hood (e.g., Addison, 1993; Henke, Umble and Smith, 1996; Hoerner, 1996; Matti and Lisosky, 1997; Henke, 2000) and cultural critiques of racist depictions (Schickel, 1968; Wainer, 1993; Bogle, 1994) miss the way out and the way in by subsuming their challenges within individual choice. Disney can live with, and even profit from, a non-European female protagonist (witness Pocahontas and Mulan), but such adjustments do little to reduce Disney's promotion of social inequality. For Disney, race and gender are primarily dramatic and stylistic devices, "but the more profound consequences of institutional racism (and sexism–author added) are never allowed to even momentarily invade the audience's comfort zone" (Ostman 95).

The rest of this essay addresses the more global concern raised by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart (1975) nearly three decades ago: the danger of seduction to Disney's representations and explanations that are so necessary to capitalist hegemony and our own political quiescence. A textual analysis of themes in recent Disney animated features reveals that Disney's dream world of individual heroes and princesses rests on cultural privilege, social inequality, and human alienation–the same ingredients obtained and produced by the socio-economic practices of Disney and other capitalist enterprises. In short, Disney's symbolic production parallels the social production of global capitalism..

Aladdin (1992), Lion King (1994), Pocahontas (1995), Mulan (1998) and Tarzan (1999) were chosen for investigation because not only are they collectively among the most popular and financially-successful Disney animations over the last ten years, they are also the most widely critiqued. This essay assumes and applauds previous analyses that have demonstrated various historical inaccuracies or marked apparent race and gender biases in these films. My own textual analysis based on the audio dialogue, the published scripts, and the visual graphic representations verified most of the findings of the works cited here, but, more importantly, it also unearthed some larger themes that clarify how "dominant culture constructs its subordinates" (Smoodin 36). As discussed above, Disney creates its ideal world through an animated narrative realism. Each narrative tells a story of the way things are, or are supposed to be. Each story (and every Disney product!) must represent the myth of "how things are done, not then or now, but always in the life of the living being, group, or culture" (McWhinney and Batista 47). All details must fit Disney's mythic vision. Characters, in particular, must adhere to Disney's world view.

Each Disney narrative features some characters, events, and perspectives, instead of others, in order to entertain and to communicate a particular meaning. Presenting some characters and events as more entertaining, dramatic, humorous, or enlightening, and "real"-izing them through animation, the Disney narrative "suppresses" other characters or events as less important, less entertaining, indeed, uninteresting, even boring (Edgerton and Jackson 94). Importantly, in all narratives, the story develops through the action and discourse of the characters (Fisher, 1989). Characters can be evaluated by when, how, and how often they speak and act, by what they say and do, how they interact among themselves, how they are rewarded in the story, and, importantly in any audio-visual medium, how they look and sound. Thus, Hoerner (1996) (adapting Beckson [1960]) defines the story's hero, or heroine, as the central character determined by time on screen, lines of script, and focus of story, while the villain is defined as anyone who acts in opposition to the hero (227). In Disney characters, the distinction between good and evil, proper and improper behavior, is always clear in the character's actions (Berland 101). Characters narrate the values and myths dear to the producer, representing the producer's preferred values and themes to the audience.

Based on this perspective, the intertextual analysis offered here considered each film's narrative in terms of character action (including dialogue) and character visual depiction (including shape, size, color, and other descriptive graphic features). The discovered markers of character trait, social position, and dramatic value within the narratives were bundled together in four identifiable themes that seemed to crystallize Disney's ideological project. The distinguishing themes in these five films, and most likely other Disney features, include: 1) the naturalization of hierarchy; 2) the defense of elite coercion and power; 3) the promotion of hyper-individualism; and 4) the denigration of democratic solidarity. Analytically distinct, the four themes are necessarily intertwined, serving as complementary supports for each and all, and are dramatically apparent in each film (e.g., see APPENDIX for character attributes). The following discussion relies on the findings of this study, providing selected examples from the study and occasional references to other Disney films and previous critiques.

Hierarchy in Form and Content

Hierarchy in a social order indicates a ranking according to worth, ability, authority, or some other attribute. In Disney, these values are combined with goodness and physical appearance such that in each animated narrative, heroes and heroines are invariably good, attractive, capable, worthy, and ultimately powerful while in service to the narrative's social order.

From the opening "circle of life" scene in the Lion King, for instance, we cannot mistake the social order and its validity. All species bow before the rightful king. The heavens open and a (divine?) light shines on the new lion cub. This future king is held before a multitude of reverent and bowing beasts whose happiness and very existence depends on the maintenance of the established and rightful heirarchy. The visual metaphors of good and evil are simple and transparent: a regal king and his heir; an evil uncle who covets the kingdom; and lesser, passive animal-citizens overrun by social undesirables in need of leadership. The meanings are animationally inescapable–the King, and his son, Simba, are brightly drawn, muscular, and smoothly curved; the villainous uncle, "Scar," is dark, angular, thin, and disfigured; the hyenas, likewise, are angular and unmistakably black and Latino (in the voice, diction, and verbal styles of Whoopi Goldberg and Cheech Marin); while the socially irresponsible mircat and boar, more cartoonish, less naturalistically drawn, live beyond the pride lands. The dialogue and action indicate importance, as well. Mufasa speaks in the King's English, usually from on high. Scar, the villain, lurks in shape and movement, languid, lazy, and foppish, narratively manipulating other characters through deceit. The hyenas have secondary roles with fewer lines, delivered comically, with slapstick interactions that are nonetheless understood as threatening to the smaller, younger, and naive lion cubs. In short, from theme song and graphic representations to storyline, Disney establishes a series of relationships of power that are maintained throughout.

Similarly, Aladdin has a favorably drawn picture of hierarchy. The hero Aladdin lives above Agrabah and its smarmy merchants, murderous palace guards, and suffering street urchins, at eye-level to the sultan's palace–a clear visual metaphor of Aladdin's social equality with the princess Jasmine. Significantly, Aladdin has little interaction with any human character other than Jasmine. He has a monkey companion and, of course, his friendly Genie. Jasmine, one of Disney's recent "feminist" heroines, is spunky, adventurous, and independent–although ultimately she needs male guidance, rescue, and approval. This fantasy of youthful rebellion and romance occurs completely within the Disney world of hierarchy. The hero never questions or challenges the feudal order: Aladdin does not use the magic lamp to feed the children, aid the poor, or disarm the Sultan's army. No, this "diamond in the rough" only strives to win the princess and defeat Jafar, the arch-villain. Jafar, described narratively as "a dark man . . . with a dark purpose" is drawn darkly, highly-angular, threateningly tall, with a long mustache and large nose. The Sultan of Agrabah, in contrast, is round, with a white, fuzzy beard, jovial features, a bumbling gait, and short–the representational personification of benevolence–Santa Claus without the red suit. Jafar speaks with a thick Arab accent, plotting overthrow and subterfuge throughout the story. The Sultan has a cheerful British accent and plays with toys, largely oblivious to the political intrigue: "benign . . . soft and senile" (Addison 10). Jasmine has big eyes, an oval face, flowing hair, and a youthful, yet curvaceous body. Not coincidentally, Aladdin and Jasmine are the only human characters with "American accents and without conspicuously aquiline noses" (Addison 9). Light-skinned Aladdin, the only male without facial hair in the movie, saves the Sultan and Jasmine, so Agrabah can "return to normal" in keeping with Disney's

elite order (Singer 42).

The narratives of Pocahontas, Mulan, Tarzan, and other Disney animations are formed from the same redundant template of elite hierarchy, albeit with hegemonic variation. In Pocahontas, the standard Disney coming of age romance has been updated with a fiesty, independent heroine in a narrative advocating cultural tolerance. From the rousing anthem, "Colors of the Wind," to the dialogue modifying John Smith's colonial justification, Disney claims that Pocahontas is "an important message to a generation to stop fighting, stop killing each other because of the color of your skin" (Edgerton and Jackson 91). Yet, in terms of Disney's essential hierarchy (and marketing goals!), it is little more than the fairy tale refrain, "all the better to eat you with."

Appearing as "an amiable, accepting, nurturing"cartoon, Pocahontas delivers another hierarchical message, this time in a neocolonialist text (Buescher & Ono 129). Indeed, Pocahontas does not seek its own path, but follows the trail of all Western captivity narratives with its "noble" Powhatan, "savage" warrior Kocoum, and "Indian princess" Pocahontas (Marsden and Nachbar, 1988). John Smith, blond, smoothly-muscular and athletically animated, fulfills the heroic ideal in vision and plot, while chief Powhatan appears more sedate in bold, symmetrical strokes, with slower, more dignified screen movements and dialogue. These two elites survive the actions of the reactionary Kocuum and villainous Ratcliffe. The stoic, irrational Kocoum has few lines and dies at the hands of a naive colonialist. The Ratcliffe character reveals in dialogue that he is indulgent, pompous, greedy, incompetent, and not respected by the British nobility. He appears as the largest figure in the film, obese, with a huge nose, big lips, and pencil-thin triangular mustache. The narrative's social relations are hierarchical: lower class Anglos work for Ratcliffe or Smith; native soldiers and villagers follow Powhatan's directives. In the end, the "good" colonialist, John Smith intervenes to save Powhatan and order the arrest of Ratcliffe; Pocahontas presumably finds her "true path" to be "alongside her father as a peacemaker" (Edgerton and Jackson 94); and the rest of the natives and English adventurers assume their prescribed subordinate positions, awaiting further orders from their superiors. In Pocahontas, two hierarchical orders are defended and left in tact: although the extended visual metaphor of John Smith saving Powhatan and wanting to civilize Pocahontas indicates that the colonialist is dominant over the indigenous.

Given the prevalence of elite narratives in Disney animations, it appears that hierarchy is a structural prerequisite. Graphic representations verify such a conclusion. In Mulan, the treacherous, invading Hun towers over all other characters, hulking, hooded, and with sharp, foreboding facial features: angled-eyes, triangular eye-brows, long angular mustache, and tight lips. His giant steed snorts, his falcon pierces the air with hooked beak and sharp wings, and his dark minions hack, maim, and kill with vigor. In contrast, the Emperor of China is slight, thin, almost wispy and moves gracefully across the screen. Barely defined graphically, a mass of bowing, passive, and helpless citizens provide background filler for the antagonism between the huns and the heroine. Mulan has fewer Barbie-esque features than other Disney females and generally is less on display, although she is drawn with the requisite oval face, large eyes, and graceful body lines.

In the story, Mulan disguises herself as a man to replace her father in the military draft–temporarily violating the law against female fighting. She performs courageously and through wit, physical skill, and the assistance of some barely competent assistants, Mulan overcomes the invading huns and saves China. Of course, she returns to her proper "place" at her father's side in the family garden to be courted by a handsome nobleman she met during her adventure. Romance and Chinese feudalism lives!

Edgar Rice Burrough's myth of Tarzan is well-known (Fury, 1994) and in little need of Disney's creative license. Raised by apes, Tarzan, king of the jungle, rescues Jane and retires to an idyllic life of swinging vines and fresh fruit. Disney lushly animates the narrative with visual metaphors of good and evil within a clear social hierarchy. Once again sharp, angular depictors carry the villain on screen. Clayton has a big head, protruding nose, cavernous mouth with huge teeth, jutting chin, and the sinister little mustache of melodramatic villainy. Clayton has a fondness for weapons, easy wealth, and large ascots. When he speaks his face contorts and his mouth twists ungraciously. Like other Disney villains, Clayton is the largest human character in the film–graphically representing dangerous power. Tarzan is angular, muscular, Aryan. His demeanor on screen is athletic and coordinated, yet in dialogue he is innocent and

naive, evidence of the backwardness of his jungle family. Jane teaches him, as the Western world civilizes Africa, but his prowess saves Jane, as men protect women. Jane's colonizing father is a graphic tracing of the Sultan: short, round, furry, and non-threatening. Apes, baboons, an elephant and Clayton's men furnish the requisite comic filler or stereotypical representation of the mass: alternately witless, awestruck, and obedient to elite leaders or witless, hungry, and easily roused to treachery by the villain.

These five films demonstrate that although Disney provides multiple variations on the hierarchy theme, each narrative occurs within a setting of clearly differentiated power. As Wilson observed about theme parks, "the organizing principle of the Disney universe is control" (Wilson 166). In animation, race, gender, and particularly, class register as recurring indicators of hierarchy. A charting of authority suggests that elite parental authority communicates social legitimation within the narrative. Mufasa instructs Simba in his duty. Porter approves Jane's decision to stay with Tarzan. In Lion King, Pocahontas, Tarzan, and Aladdin, the patriarchs hold the ultimate say, but not all fathers or all men have such power. Males other than the lion kings speak little and act with minimal authority. Mulan's father accepts the Emperor's decree, Powhatan defers to John Smith, and Jane's father to Tarzan. In short, in each animated narrative, a princely elite (animal or human) conveys and protects the ideals, values, and traditions of the social order.

While the hero and heroine are always noble and attractive by birth, villains are privileged and titled due only to the misplaced magnanimity or whim of a legitimate superior. Villains are unattractive, semi-elite social misfits. Jafar is Grand Vizier, advisor to Sultan; Scar is King Mufasa's disgruntled brother, ineligible for legitimate succession; and Ratcliffe's governorship is a reluctant sop from more worthy elites. In each of these narratives and others (e. g., Little Mermaid, Beauty and the Beast, Fox and Hound), the dominant social class has no villainy, producing only good souls who never abuse their authority. We understand this viscerally by the soft, cuddly caricatures that Disney creates. Abuse comes solely from those elevated beyond their goodness, villains who would reach beyond their status and disrupt the social order. But, alas, such villainy is always undone, because as Disney's Comic Book Art Specifications dictate, only elites can triumph, there is "no upward mobility" in Disney lands (Kunzle 16). In the fairy tale world of the dominant, class rules apply: a frog becomes a prince, only if he was a prince before. Rulers may change among the elite (from Mufasa to Simba, from Sultan to Aladdin), but the rules and ruled remain. And, in Disney's world, the only just rule is class hierarchy.

In addition to providing heroes and villains with clearly drawn markings of social status and value, Disney illustrates social position and worth of secondary characters with variations appropriate to their relationship to hero or villain. Thus, aides to the hero/heroine are invariably animals, friendly and "cute," as Uncle Walt dictated decades ago: Meeko the raccoon; Mu-Shu the scrawny dragon; Timon and Pumba, the Laurel and Hardy of the pride lands; Terk, the ape sibling and Tantor the jovial elephant; lively crabs; comic birds; and the like. Only Jasmine's companion tiger bodyguard and Aladdin's Genie possess any visual strength, but narratively they both live to serve their owners. Villains occasionally have animal assistants, some of whom are cast as reluctant participants who find pleasure in other character's misfortune, i. e., not so cute. Each villain's animal companion has some graphically- or narratively-suggestive objectionable feature: grating voice (Jafar's bird), mean-spiritedness (hyenas and Ratcliffe's pampered dog), or violent nature (the Hun's falcon). Humans loyal to the heroic characters and awaiting more powerful leaders have less character development (like the colonial workers in Pocahontas), while the collective population frequently appears as largely motionless, two-dimensional spectators (as in Aladdin and Mulan), illustrating their passive role in both the narrative and Disney's social vision. Evil henchmen, such as Clayton's sailors or the huns, are consistently shabbily-dressed or disheveled, dark, often-bearded, usually armed, speak harshly in short sentences, and mete out their brutality only as long as the villain commands. In Disney, lower class characters do not act on their own. Large groups are often cast as mob-like in action and graphic: jeering primates terrorize Jane; wildebeest stampede without regard for others in the Lion King; native warriors huddle around the fire waiting for orders to attack; the huns shout and howl above the thunder of their horse's hooves. Whether Africa, Arabia, North America or China, few from the good citizenry or evil troops are individualized, even fewer have articulate voices, appearing but as replicates from two or three stencils, graphically reflective of their necessarily subordinate position in Disney's hierarchy. In sum, the five Disney films considered here play the same refrain: a stylized, naturalized, and Westernized elite hero combats a privileged anti-social

over-sized villain, while cute animal sidekicks and thuggish rebels knock about in front of a shapeless, faceless humanity. Animating hierarchy centers Disney's vision, whatever the era, geography, or species.

Justifying Power and Coercion

To underscore this essential Disney law, narrative resolution in each film defends and reinforces the status quo. Nothing is resolved until the preferred social order is in place. No one lives happily ever after until the chosen one rules. All is chaos and disorder in the pride lands until Simba returns as monarch. Even nature withholds its bounty, pending the proper social hierarchy. Ariel must first be married to human royalty with Triton's blessing, before aquatic peace returns. Saving China is only a youthful adventure: Mulan's "place in life" is in the family garden. Even the wisest of apes knows Tarzan is superior. And so it goes, in all Disney animation. We all need true rulers who are wise, benevolent, and powerful. Any other arrangement is unworkable. Villains may attain power, but as non-elite, false leaders, they are ill-equipped to rule. Their reign is disastrous and temporary. Soon the hero will save the day and the hierarchy. "As evil is expelled, the world is left nice and clean" and well-ordered (Dorfman and Mattelart 89). Thus, zebras bow, faceless Chinese cheer, and in general, the masses rejoice (and happily resume their subservience) upon the triumphant defense of the hierarchy. The pleasant narrative outcome verifies the virtue of hierarchy. Perhaps, we too should find our place in the circle of life and be so happy and lucky!

Preference and justification for elite control can be observed in the attributes of each narrative's leading authority: they are morally good and invariably benevolent. The Sultan may be disoriented, but he is a gentle soul, impervious to evil. A compassionate John Smith–"the perfect masculine companion"–is willing to sacrifice his own life to avoid further bloodshed (Buescher and Ono 140). In contrast to the malevolent huns, Mulan's emperor exudes warmth for his docile subjects. Tarzan demonstrates his human compassion and superiority in saving his ape family (and Jane). For Disney, all elite authority figures are good, caring, and protective of their wards. In a telling statistical analysis of 11 Disney animations, Hoerner (1986) found that heroic protagonists exhibit 98% of all pro-social behavior in the films (222). Disney's subsequent animated films maintain the same class-based morality.

Rulers are also responsive to the individual needs of their duly anointed successors, frequently revising rules that do not overturn the status quo. The Sultan changes the laws of royal matrimony. John Smith orders the arrest of a Governor. Mulan's father, emperor, and royal suitor all forgive her individual indiscretion, but the discriminatory laws against women are not revoked or even questioned. After witnessing Tarzan's rescue of his ape family, Kerchak puts aside his species-bias and declares Tarzan king of the jungle. Significantly, once their individual needs are met, all heroes and heroines come to accept the wisdom of established authority and norms.

The consistent haloing of hierarchal power as preferable for all organizes the film's moral conflict and elite response to challenge. In all cases, elite heroes and heroines use coercion with impunity, continuing a Disney tradition that dates back to Snow White (Hoerner 226). Elite coercion varies from the Beast's abuse of Belle to the colonialist's murder of Kocoum. Mulan slaughters dozens of huns, Tarzan wrestles with Clayton who accidentally falls to his own death. In addition to coercion, elites frequently employ deceit: Aladdin assumes a false identity; Mulan disguises herself; Tarzan conspires to violate a jungle law. Everywhere and always Disney's heroic elites are stronger, smarter, and victorious in the final conflict (even when performing anti-social acts). In each case, the protagonist earns riches, power, and happiness.

In contrast, villains–who almost exclusively exhibit antisocial behavior and violence–suffer calamity or death: Jafar is imprisoned for thousands of years; Scar dies; Kocoum dies; Ratcliffe is arrested; the Hun dies; Clayton dies. One need not consult a literary critic to understand the moral of these stories. In all fairy tales, good triumphs over evil, but for Disney good is the exclusive genetic and social right of the elite. Elites are attractive, benevolent, good, and successful; villains are misshapen, treacherous, evil, and cannot win. The rest of the Disney world is undifferentiated, passive, dependent on elite gratuity, and largely irrelevant except as narrative fodder.

Self-fulfillment through Self-Gratification

Moral decisions regarding individual responsibility and self-fulfillment concern many coming of age stories, but Disney's tales push ego to the extreme. According to Disney, the most important, romantic, and meaningful events in life belong to elite individuals seeking self-gratification–no other stories are worth telling. The Disney experience is clearly that of social privilege. Along with luck, riches, romance, and happiness, elites have a lock on individual choice. All others carry out their social role without much complaint or deviance–or else face severe reprisals.

Life choice exists only for the central characters. Soon-to-be prince Aladdin frolics in the palace with Jasmine, the Sultan, and Jafar, the rest of Agrabah must toil and trade outside. Simba chooses to party with his "akunamatata" buddies or not, but Disney leaves others subject to Scar's rule. Nakoma, Kocoum, and others work or war, but Pocahontas is free to flit about the forest. John Smith prances off into the woods, too, while Disney's hard-working sailors dig the dirt. In Disney's world, self-realization exists exclusively for the privileged individual.

Henke, Umble and Smith (1996) applaud the freedoms Disney gives the The Little Mermaid and Belle in Beauty and the Beast, blaming Disney's town people for "marginalizing" Belle as "peculiar" (237) and sympathizing with Ariel's "frustration and resistance" to life in the sea. Wishing a feminist intent to Disney, they note that "like Ariel, Belle has freedom to make choices and to act on her own behalf" and "Pocahontas exercises power over her future" (238-39). So (although Disney still scripts romance as the right "choice" for Ariel, Belle, Pocahontas, and Mulan), compared to Snow White and Aurora in Sleeping Beauty, elite females have come a long way, baby! Yet, honing in on the individual attributes of Disney's lead females ignores the ignoble, reductive characterizations of Ariel's sisters, Belle's neighbors, and the Powhatan women as passive, uninteresting, perhaps ignorant and certainly less worthy. In other words, seen in the context of Disney's hierarchical themes, gender-friendly individual freedom is simply another attribute reserved for the royals.

Heroes and heroines search for their self-fulfillment through individual self-gratification based on social privilege. To be true to yourself depends on your social position. Orphans, merchants, zebras, baboons, sailors, warriors, and workers face no dilemma. Their true selves are patently, graphically obvious. They in the background unless needed in the elite narrative. Their inferior quality of life in the narratives seems natural and uninteresting, and certainly of no concern to aristocrats pursuing their own self-fulfillment. To be true to yourself as an elite protagonist is to be true to the social hierarchy. Disney emphasizes this graphically by placing the most important individual characters above the rest of its animated society. Jasmine and Aladdin court above the city, Simba is held aloft above a jutting rock, Pocahontas sings on a mountain peak, Mulan triumphs on the palace roof, and Tarzan swings in the tree tops. By design, no other characters are displayed as high.

Like privileged white youth today, Disney's animated elites search for something new atop the class structure. Of course, as the best and brightest Disney has to offer, these characters already have more freedom, more choice, and more opportunity than others in the script. Yet, Disney posits their ennui as a universal, progressive search for something more, while in the end each chooses their own social position (or one slightly higher), verifying that any individual given a free choice would "naturally" choose supremacy within a hierarchy.

Moreover, no matter what choice they make, they risk little. In or out of water, Ariel is princess. Pocahontas never has to pick corn. And, despite his disastrous deceit, Tarzan remains jungle king. All Disney heroes and heroines break free from any constraint at will: Ariel escapes the sea; Mulan, a matched marriage; Tarzan, the ship's hold. The narratives record the social inequity of all hierarchies: individual choice has few restrictions or risks for elites.

Individual happiness for elites never requires social change. Disney heroes and heroines may yearn for something just around the bend, but their search circles in on their own self-satisfaction. Disney's fetish for supreme individualism discounts any concern for others. In their quest for more, elite self-interest predominates. Even when selfishness jeopardizes others or causes death, redemption is inscribed at the

end. Jasmine puts children in danger, her selfish snits land Aladdin in prison. Pocahontas' flirtation with Smith gets Kocoum killed. Chinese die during Mulan's deceit. A love struck Tarzan endangers his family and Kerchak is killed. Of course, being good and just, individual elites face few negative consequences for their self-centered decisions.

None of the elites question unjust social relations or poor social conditions. The well-read Belle can imagine nothing more than her own romance. Once crowned, Aladdin is unperturbed by poverty and violence. Mulan's familial duty does not challenge discriminatory traditions. Simba, John Smith, Tarzan, and other heroes seek only self-gratification. The resulting social peace and harmony occur as necessary narrative corollaries to Disney's promotion of elite self-interest. If the Princess is happy, the kingdom rejoices.

Egalitarian social relations would disable Disney's hierarchy and its focus on individual aristocrats. Could Jasmine and Aladdin find happiness in the streets? Could Nila elope with Simba to akunamatata land leaving the others to form a society without predators? Could the handsome prince come a courtin' Mulan if she used her prowess to help overthrow feudalism and usher in women's rights? Or (following Disney's rewriting of history for entertainment purposes), could Ratcliffe get shot, John and the sailors sink the ship, and all live a happy pastoral life with the Powhatan? No, Disney dictates that self-fulfillment concerns only the elite and their individual satisfaction within the social order is sacrosanct. The last thing Disney needs is to have illustrators and animators creating their own art or garment workers and theme park employees organizing for better working conditions. Why would Disney want to popularize a narrative with cute characters advocating democracy and opportunity for all? Thus, all individual heroes and heroines act freely and with impunity within their social position, and, at the denouement, they all individually choose to fulfill their social responsibility in defense of the status quo, justifying, excusing, and/or rewarding previous actions.

In privileging individualism as a narrative theme, Disney does more than create heroes and heroines with both good and bad traits like characters in most television cartoons (Williams, 1991). Rather, Disney draws narrow self-interest as the path to self-fulfillment. As the only model present, elite individualism gets more than a nod of approval. The value of elite self-gratification without regard for others is justly confirmed by its rewards: gold, real estate, power, privilege, marriage and whatever other riches and social preferences appear apropos to each narrative. This "hyper-individualism" is permissible because it belongs to those at the pinnacle of Disney's social order. To be honest, the final refrain to Disney animation theme songs should be: "If I want it, I get it, then all's right with the world."

Solidarity for None

Disney's naturalization of hierarchy, its defense of elite coercion, and its promotion of unrestricted elite individualism coalesces in stories that undermine and denigrate social responsibility, democracy, and human solidarity. Thematically, Disney's opposition to democracy and solidarity is apparent in its graphic illustrations of non-elite characters, the lack of dialogue for non-elite characters, its consistent slights of group interests, and the narrative and visual naturalization of unfavorable social conditions.

In focusing exclusively on individual elites, Disney dismisses group solidarity and the public interest as unimportant to the story. Although each narrative includes dozens of non-elite characters, they appear primarily as background or as proxies for the protaganists. In fact, "every Disney character stands on either one side or the other of the power demarcation line. All below are bound to obedience, submission, discipline, humility. Those above are free to employ constant coercion, threats, moral and physical repression, and economic domination" (Dorfman and Mattelart 35).

Producers are non-existent in Disney (Dorfman and Mattelart, 1975; Wilson, 1993). In ridding the animated environment of work and its necessary social relations, "all the everyday functions of the city have been hidden or banished" (Wilson 64). Thus, the contributions and value of the majority of society disappear as well. Necessities of life in Disney's world appear magically, so feudal exploitation and other undemocratic conditions can be ignored, as can the individual and collective participation of farmers, workers, artisans, and other producing human beings, leaving Disney free to focus on the lives of the rich

and fantastic.

Individualism and competition–buzz-words for capitalism–are reserved for Disney's fantasy elites, who have no moral or social peer. Elite ideas and actions are right, good, and ultimately successful. Villains may have ideas and take action, but they are wrong, bad, and doomed to fail. In such a fantasy world, no other ideas or actions are needed and hence Disney's animated public seldom speaks, exhibits limited thought, and undertakes little independent action–and never, ever, does a non-elite character freely broach the question of equality, democracy, or social justice.

Non-elites have little self-interest. They have no personal ambition. Indeed, life below affords no individual distinction, at all. All non-elites are all traced from similarly static outlines. Yet, Disney cannot imagine they have any similarity of interest. At most, Disney's animated populations appear as "average" characters, either acting irresponsibly as inferiors squabbling over trifles or passively waiting for mobilization orders from a superior. Most secondary castings are not particularly bright in dialogue or graphic portrayal, except for aides who are often mischievous but harmless, comic animal sidekicks like the Lion King's Timon and Pumba, Mu-Shu, Mulan's dragon, or Terk, Tarzan's ape sibling. Less enlightened non-elites tend to anti-social behavior as thieving hyenas or tormenting monkeys. Having baser instincts, "bad" non-elites (unshaven, partially dressed, usually large) are also prone to violence and easily misled by nefarious Disney antagonists: Arab bandits work for Jafar; sailors join Clayton in kidnapping; and hordes follow the Hun.

Of course, according to Disney, most non-elites tacitly or enthusiastically understand that hierarchy is good and support the social order no matter who rules. The citizens of Agrabah bow to the Sultan, Jafar, then Aladdin on each successive command; no animals rise up against Scar; the colonialists obey Ratcliffe, then Smith; and all apes obey Kerchak, then Tarzan. The King is dead, long live the monarchy! According to Disney, workers, sailors, farmers, and other producers are wretched, irrational, chaotic, and passive, unable to act on their own. Some may be roused to mob action under the wrong leader, but all will be happier if the proper order is fulfilled–the hierarchical natural order of the animal kingdom or the hierarchical social order of an Arab Sultanate, Chinese Empire, or British colony. Group action, in other words, only occurs at whim of the powerful.

Worthless individuals would likewise collectively amount to nothing, so Disney omits any independent, cooperative action by non-elite citizens or community members. Non-elite characters never even discuss their own democratic interest. Moreover, in these five Disney films, actions by leading characters thoroughly shred any semblance of collective interest. Aladdin deserts the orphans and his neighborhood; Pocahontas betrays her nation; Tarzan betrays his family; Mulan deceives her family and compatriots; and Simba deserts the pride lands, returning primarily out of revenge and duty to his social position. Disney never animates democracy or social responsibility. Disney heroes in all their wit and wisdom never seek happiness or fulfillment through commitment to improving the human condition. Instead, all Disney animated stars indicate that acting against the public interest in one's search for individual gratification is natural, legitimate, and preferred. Community or family interests or democratic concerns do not appear in Disney.

Herein lies Disney's message to the world: "Get whatever you can by force, deceit, or luck. The future of the world revolves around the individual, self-interested actions of naturally-superior elites." In 1975, Dorman and Mattelart described the world of Disney as "a 19th century orphanage" (35). Thirty years later, Disney is animating 21st century gated communities for a global consumerist culture where the only actions relevant are by those living on inside the circle of capitalist life. Solidarity among the majority populations on the outside is unthinkable for Disney's "imagineers."

Realistic Fantasies, Fantastic Realities

We need to understand and unpack Disney because it is a world leader in mass entertainment implicated in the globalization of capitalism and the concerted effort to deregulate and privatize world culture. A highly proficient producer and international distributor of capitalist cultural products, Disney advances an ideological content that parallels the social and political requirements of capitalist economic activity:

hierarchy, elite coercion, hyper-individualism, and social atomism (Therborn, 1983). In particular, Disney's animated features communicate a clear message to the world: the individual quest for self-gratification, adventure, and acquisition is good and just. This cultural edict suggests that the momentary pleasures of entertainment will free us from the throbbing anxiety of daily life. So, just as Disney's animated masses await their rescue by some benevolent noble, millions are encouraged to rely on successive Disney films for pleasure and distraction.

Of course, Disney's "fabrication of mass culture" as individual consumption is "built on the backs of masses" of farmers, garment workers, technicians, illustrators, retail clerks, and other working people (Dorfman and Mattelart 98), but from the pinnacle of power and in front of the movie screen, such details of production are irrelevant. Wealth appears and riches flow to all deserving elites. To be rich is to be good (and a little lucky!). To be poor is to be bad (too bad?) and unlucky. A world designed by Disney CEOs and other cartoon representatives would "naturally" have social problems and economic inequities, individual capitalists would deny responsibility, and the poor would have to accept their plight or be removed.

However, Disney does not "conspire" to build such a new world order. No, its pro-capitalist ideological premises are patently obvious, redundant, and pervasive. Furthermore, dominance in the production of commodified animation and its spin-offs indicates that Disney's narratives resonate with appreciative mass audiences, suggesting that Disney's hierarchical themes are also culturally acceptable, at least tacitly. Thus, the ability to market popular films and the public's delight in consuming their little pleasures can best be understood as a negotiated hegemonic activity (Gramsci, 1988). Like modern advertising, Disney worlds are fanciful, optimistic, and tidy (Croce 91). And like advertising, Disney has become part of everyday life, commercially and culturally institutionalized by design (O'Brien 173-75). But in Disney's case, the medium is also the advertisement. Disney products are themselves advertisements for Disney and for its ideological and cultural themes.

Disney's dominance is secured through its selective application of technology, technique, and culturally-palatable content. Naturalized animation of cultural truisms combined with a hierarchical narrative realism stimulates mass audiences to collective anticipation, surprise, and wonder. In appreciation, we consent to our own satisfaction and distraction. As audiences, we are busy enjoying the stylized graphics and familiar narratives, while Disney successfully reflects, clarifies, and popularizes existing dominant cultural values and meanings. In the process, we are held hostage to a highly individualistic, consumerist perspective that leads us to understand these films in terms of social privilege and individual escapism (Hansen 40).

The interpretation of the handful of Disney animations presented here is intended only as an entry to discussing Disney's vision for globalization. Understanding Disney clarifies the global intent of corporate capitalism. Without deviation Disney animates and narrates myths favorable to a corporate culture (McWhinney and Batista, 1988), including its own (Wilson, 1993; Hiassen, 1998). The emerging world capitalist culture revels in the ideology distributed by Disney, an ideology which aligns the morals of every animated film to class hierarchy, thereby denigrating and dismissing solidarity, democracy, and concern for community needs and interests.

Those interested in improving world social conditions and human solidarity should take note of the cultural power of animation, narration, and entertainment. Disney's application is one variant extremely useful to global capitalism. The practice of individual consumption of entertainment commodities (which further promote individual consumption) subverts collective reflections and discussions that could lead to solidarity.

Artists, illustrators, historians, animators, technicians, storytellers, and individual citizens must collectively take hold of technology and technique for democratic purposes. Disney's autocratic production model and generic content should be replaced with cooperative creations and democratic narratives. For American audiences, animated films featuring historic figures such as Simon Bolivar, Touissant L'Overture, Joe Hill, Mother Jones, Sojourner Truth, and Green Water Woman could foreground movements for liberation and equality. Historic struggles for freedom elsewhere supply an abundance of other possibilities. Rather than

viewing heroes who only want more stuff, children and adults could become acquainted with protagonists and behaviors that validate social interaction, social responsibility, and social justice. Such heroines and heroes would be worthy of emulation. Of course, the struggle over culture will not be decided by cartoon figures, but surely working classes around the world need a vibrant, "animated" democratic culture as a necessary forum for communicating and organizing a political power against real hierarchies. Creating our own entertainment would be one way to proactive democratic communication and promote international solidarity for human liberation.

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