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ABSTRACT

The mass media industry as a hegemonic entity has played a vital role in displaying fallacious accounts of black life. Grounded in ideas from scholars like Richard Schechner, Patricia Ticineto, Joseph Roach and Sara Ahmed, this research is a critique of the ways in which memory, and its possible manifestations, plays in non-blacks’ (specifically whites) interpretation, motivation, and perception of stereotypical visual portrayals of blackness. The focus will be on how the continuing phenomenon of stereotyping blackness in the 20th and 21st centuries is perpetuated in child-targeted feature-length animations with animal characters. I argue that the possible furtive and/or involuntary visual manifestations of “black identity” in animation have their sources in a white historical memory that clings to the desire to maintain whiteness. This work demonstrates how ideas of blackness in white memory were not solely constructed from the imaginations of producers of mainstream culture. Rather black stereotypes are the result of a combination of black protest against negative portrayals, blacks as accomplices in perpetuating their negative stereotypes, and whites’ imagined ways of blackness.

Following the work of Anna Everett and Robin Kelly and commentary from Bert Williams and George Walker, the perpetuation of whiteness through imagined black
identities in media outlets does not take into account the ways in which blacks think of and present themselves within black communities, the ways blacks display their identity outside the constraints of white imagination, or how blacks openly or discreetly oppose stereotypical caricatures. However, the change in the portrayal of black people after the Civil Rights Movement (1945-1964) is the result of the powerful black collective voice influencing change in nefarious deceptions of African-Americans in media outlets. This change, according to Donald Bogle, Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki, however, simply gave new faces to old caricatures. Therefore, the continued practice of stereotyping blacks by way of dated Enlightenment thinking regardless of black protest speaks to the pervasiveness of “blackness” via the malignant ideology of whiteness. The desire to sustain ideologies and practices of mainstream media has prevented the erasure of black caricatures. The compromise between portrayals of whiteness and holistic portrayals of black life is more sophisticated making black caricatures more elusive, but still evident. Through a critical evaluation of Scrub Me Mama, Shark Tale and Madagascar, this research will demonstrate how ideas of Enlightenment theories of race from the 17th and 18th centuries has a prolonged history that leads to anthropomorphic animation of the 21st century.

Movies have the ability to be used as a critical space for the interpretation and evaluation of stereotypes. When typecasts are confronted, they can be used to make more complex black characters and the information acquired during critical evaluation can be used to interrogate the trends seen in housing, employment, and judicial discrimination
against people of color. The ultimate goal of this project is for audience members to be conscious consumers of media products and recognize that movie characters have the ability to influence real-life interactions with the people those characters supposedly represent.
DEDICATION

The research is for all of those who know, and hopefully one day will know, that that which is designated as harmless “entertainment” is affecting our society. Where will be your place in the struggle for responsible conscious consumerism?
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First giving honor to God who assisted me on this very long academic journey. He gave me the initiative to keep going. I would like to thank my mother for always believing in me and being the most and sometimes only support system especially when times don’t seem so easy. My son Langston for being a constant reminder that I must always question the intent of media and help shape him into always wondering, questioning, and never being comfortable with what is placed in front of him, whether virtually or physically.

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VITA

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FIELD OF STUDY

Major Field of Study
African American and African Studies
Cultural Studies
Cinema and Media Studies
Critical Race Theory
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INTRODUCTION

The mass media industry as a hegemonic entity has played a vital role in displaying and perpetuating fallacious accounts of black life. This research is a critique of the ways in which memory, and its possible manifestations, plays in non-blacks’ (specifically whites) interpretation, motivation, and perception of stereotypical visual portrayals of blackness. However, this investigation will focus on how stereotyping blackness in the 20th and 21st centuries is created within child-targeted feature-length animations with anthropomorphic or animal characters. I argue that the furtive and/or involuntary visual manifestations of black identity in animation have their sources in a white historical memory that clings to the desire of a monolithic dominate collective ethos called whiteness. This paper will demonstrate how the perpetuation of whiteness through imagined blackness does not take into account the ways in which blacks think of and present themselves within black communities, the ways blacks display blackness outside of the constraints of the white imagination, or how blacks openly or discreetly oppose stereotypical caricatures. Some blacks have assisted in the maintenance of stereotyped blackness, however, I argue that their actions do not justify the commodification of homogenized blackness that has played an integral role in how blacks have been treated in the social, judicial, political, and employment sectors in the United States. In addition, blacks participating in the commodification of blackness pales
in comparison to the work of non-blacks creating blackness in the white dominated media industry. Black actors from Bert Williams to Stepin Fetchit to Eddie Murphy are viewed performers of blackness that are sold as authentic since the actors are black and blackness is considered essential to their ways of being. Although, over time, each actor arguably has increasing agency within the entertainment industry, their careers are examples of the mainstream entertainment industry utilizing blackness to perpetuate whiteness as salient normalcy and black life as humorous and Othered.

Chapter one will discuss how blackness and whiteness works in tandem to create invented histories of people from European decent and of African descent. The discussion will begin with the ways in which European ethnicities, such as Irish, Jewish, German, and Scottish immigrants to the America after the Revolutionary War were tactically homogenized for political, economic, and social gain in the United States. The homogenization among European ethnicities to create whiteness is reliant upon the diluting of African American identities. The appropriation and commodification of diluted African American identities is what I will refer to as blackness. Both blacks and whites used blackness. The differences between blacks participating in the perpetuation of whiteness and those actively working to disarm it will be discussed and analyzed while taking into account the racial dynamics of the time period and the agency offered to or taken from performers of European or African descent. Blacks active in print media, theater productions, and filmmaking are examples of blacks presenting varying ideas of black life to the public. The discussion will highlight key time periods: From the Post-
American Revolutionary War era through the antebellum period and from the Jim Crow era to the Civil Rights Movement. Within these times periods, the discussion will focus on how Enlightenment ideas influence the portrayal of African Americans and black protest against such portrayals.

Chapter two develops the assertion that it is the connection between history, memory, and affect that assist in the formulation and continuance of performed blackness. This performance is manifested in black stereotypical identities. History residing in memory, creating an affect and expressed through performance, moves in a constant cyclical manner. Animation is the product of a history of whiteness and blackness in the minds of producers of blackness. Contemporary anthropomorphic characters are drawing from a pool of memories that date back to the formation of race in the United States in the 16th through the 18th centuries.

Blackness produced in white-controlled media outlets have shown to have negative effects on black people. Caricatures of blacks have been permanent fixtures of literature and popular culture. Their influences can be seen in U.S. policies and scholarship. The mammy/matriarch stereotype being used to create urban welfare reform in the Moynihan Report and the pseudo-science of biological determinism being advocated in documents like national bestseller *The Bell Curve*¹ demonstrate that stereotypes can have severe effects. Animation is another facet to the multi-media trend of literature and film regarding new ways of displaying blackness. Production companies who cater to the majority culture ascribing political, environmental, and social power to
white people via performative methods, like animation, is what I call invested affect performance (IAP). IAP can be seen in mainstream-oriented animation companies that produce “black culture” and create typecast productions (consciously or subconsciously) by accessing cultural memories containing stereotypical imagery and invented histories. The IAP theoretical framework is grounded in a thorough reading of texts devoted to the definitions of affect, performance and the role of “whiteness” in U.S. society.


Chapter four offers close analyses of DreamWorks’ *Shark Tale* (2004) and chapter five of *Madagascar* (2005) juxtaposed to Walter Lantz Studio’s *Scrub Me Mama* (1941). By comparing the DreamWorks’ productions with that of the Walter Lantz Studio, I explain how black caricatures have changed only slightly over time. Therefore, since these caricatures still contain the basic ingredients of Enlightenment philosophy, I call these caricatures, black character formulas.

In contemporary anthropomorphic animation, archaic caricatures have been resurrected, combined and reformed. After the Civil Rights Movement (1945-1964) the
use of stereotypical black human images, as in *Scrub Me Mama*, notably lessened in light of stricter television censorship regulations regarding people of color. In these chapters, Pre-Civil Rights minstrel human characters and post-Civil Rights anthropomorphic characters are compared to support the assertion that the 3-D animation industry has found a new and “safer” way to depict black human characters via animal personification. The discussions will focus on the reformulated coon and the new mammy respectively.

DreamWorks’ *Madagascar* and *Shark Tale* were released with anthropomorphic characters voiced by black actors as leading or supporting characters. Because anthropomorphism is the personification of animals (i.e. human-like animals), the animated characters were given the race of the actor. The Internet Movie Database (http://www.imdb.com/) was used to identify the race of the actors and characters they voiced. If a picture of the actor was unavailable, an internet search of their name, pictures and credentials occurred. The animations were critiqued using five categories and sub-categories based on the black characters formulas: 1) appearance similar to black character formulas (e.g. exaggerated facial features, big lips, wide nose), 2) actions similar to the black character formulas (e.g. high-stepping Bojangles), 3) stereotypical black cultural allusions (e.g. references to hip-hop culture) 4) visual and/or auditory references to Enlightenment ideology, and 5) racialized speech [black English or colloquialisms such as using the word “be” as a verb, using the word “ain’t”, replacing “th” consonants with “d” (e.g. “dis” instead of “this”), merging words (e.g. “y’all” instead of “you all”), removal of letter(s) from suffixes (e.g. runnin’)].
*Scrub Me Mama* is a key factor in identifying the mammy, mulatto, jezebel and coon caricature progressions from minstrelsy to the present. I argue that the perpetuation of black character formulas in modern animation are the result of a turbulent black-white racial history wrought with visual campaigns of belittlement within white memory, orchestrated and performed by some white animators in an effort to create their definition of whiteness and maintain social and political power. The evolution of black character formulas is the result of blacks’ resistance to it, however, the desire to maintain these character traits is because of the yearning for coveted whiteness.

Chapter six discusses ways of using manufactured black identity as a teaching tool and how media outlets can be used as a critical and pedagogical space. Mainstream media outlets uses the strategic deployment of identity politics to carry out the whiteness agenda, however, movies can be used to avoid the perpetuation of whiteness and portray the idiosyncrasies and intersectionalities within blackness and/or use stereotypes in a critical space for interpretation and evaluation. When stereotypes are confronted, they can be used to not only make more complex characters, but also the information acquired after critical evaluation can be used to interrogate the social politics seen in housing, employment, and judicial discrimination against blacks and other people of color.

This research aims to give readers a close analysis of contemporary media in hopes that a more savvy and conscious consumer audience will be formed. By acknowledging the source of problematic blackness and mapping its trajectory, its path
can be predicted and arrested. Putting an end to the ruinous ideology of whiteness lays the groundwork for the end of stereotyped blackness used to maintain white hegemony.

Although concepts of race and race relations in America are at the foundation of this research, offering a solution to race categories is not the aim of the work. What this work does offer is a way for individual entertainment consumers to rethink where their money is being spent, how the entertainment they engage in can influence their perceptions of people, and how those perceptions can influence racial politics. Although whiteness is a driving factor in perpetuating deleterious blackness, money acquired by actors, producers and directors of manufactured blackness also plays a significant role. As more consumers become less passive, media outlets and media consumers can then give more value to creativity seen in contemporary filmmakers like Kasi Lemmons, Charles Burnett, and Camille Billops. By becoming conscious consumers, individuals have the ability to change how blacks and other identities are portrayed.


The dates 1945-1964 are being used to mark the Civil Rights Movement because of watershed moments in America’s history in battling racism. According to Martha Biondi’s To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City, New York City was the home to the largest urban black population in the world (1).“World War II was a watershed for the northern civil rights movement. The migration of African Americans to the North and West in the 1940’s far surpassed the Great Migration of the World War I era (3).” African Americans began the double V campaign, which signified a duel fight against fascism overseas and racism in the United States. “Black New Yorkers fought for better jobs, an end to police brutality, access to new housing, representation in government, and college education for their children. Their battles against unexpected overt and lawful racial barriers pushed New York City and state to pass landmark antidiscrimination laws in employment, housing, public accommodations, and education”
(1) The work of Blacks in New York as well as other throughout the United States culminated in the Congress passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (2).

CHAPTER 1

THE MAKING OF RACE: SOCIAL POLITICS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Media outlets have served as conduits for the creation of racial distinctions in the United States. White and black identities are the result of European and African ethnicities separated and merged into two irreducible racial categories that were pitted against one another. These racial constructs helped implement racial stratification for the benefit of former Anglo-Saxon colonizers and other European immigrants in the United States. The homogenization among European ethnicities to create whiteness is reliant upon diluting African American identities. The appropriation and commodification of diluted identities is what I will refer to as blackness.

Creating black personalities was not solely for entertainment purposes. Rather literature, theater, animation, black collectibles, cinema, and print media were used as creative tools to construct a race-based society that ascribed social, political, and economic power to those of European descent who constructed their identity on the foundation of white racial superiority. Whiteness and blackness vacillated in-between the creation of fictitious characters in entertainment and they are being used to determine the actions of real individuals. On the surface, the formation of the racial hierarchy looks to be a result of a Eurocentric hegemonic presence placed on passive people of color who tried little (if at all) to combat negative depictions of their communities. But the imposed
label of blackness on people of African descent garnered a variety of reactions depending on the geographic region, class, and individuals’ participation in the media industry.

African Americans resisted blackness, actively assisted its longevity, and/or argued that only certain blacks should suffer the indignities of being labeled by such typecasts. Although many blacks were not passive during the creation of blackness, I argue that whites were the creators and arbiters of the fabricated identity because the concept is fictive. Blackness is a manufactured idea lacking the complexities of culture, ethnicity, class, and gender with origins that are as formulaic and synthetic as whiteness.

Many African Americans did not identify with blackness because it was a misguided concept. It was imprudent because its origins lie outside of the black community and because it was used to create the definitive antithesis to whiteness. Therefore, a multitude of compromises and contestations occurred from the end of the American Revolutionary War to minstrelsy’s short on-screen life span. Freed and escaped bonded blacks, native-born whites and European immigrants were simultaneously forming and rejecting identities based on culture, agency, and their dedication to America’s forming identity. Identities imposed by whites often contradicted identities embraced in black intra-group relations. This conflict is clearly noticed when African Americans worked to oppose blackness and when European immigrants rejected elements of blackness imposed on them by native-born whites.

This chapter aims to discuss the socio-political origins of blackness and whiteness in the United States and how entertainment helped facilitate the racial stratification of
people of European and African descent. Ultimately, the investigation will illustrate the tensions between caricature and self-perception and how they are linked to inter- and intra-racial dynamics. In conclusion, this study proposes that the legacy of whiteness has not ended. Blackness continues to facilitate the interest of those who propagate the whiteness agenda in the contemporary media industry.

RACE MAKING IN EARLY U.S. HISTORY

Blackface minstrelsy in the United States served as a tool to assist in the homogenization of multiple European ethnicities in order for these groups to gain access to and power within the social, political, and economic realms of society after the American Revolution (1775-1783) and the subsequent abolition of slavery (1863). Ultimately the manipulation of popular culture in order to create black and white identities conflated the imagined and the real. By fusing the two worlds, fictitious blackness and whiteness affected the social, political and economic progress of those who identified with either group. Theodore W. Allen’s *The Invention of the White Race: Racial Oppression and Social Control Volume One*, investigates the socio-political roots of European immigrants. Allen’s work allows for an understanding of the cultural and governmental politics European immigrants left in their native country and how they entered the United States’ socio-political climate. Using Irish immigrants as an example, European immigrants occupied the small, ambiguous and relatively powerless racial space between native-born whites and blacks making them “not-quite-white.” Dispossessed not-quite-whites used a series of “black culture” elements to consistently
re-draw the racial line of demarcation in their favor so that they would socially and politically meld together with native-born whites.

David Roediger’s *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* gives a U.S. labor history account of the formation of whiteness. Roediger explains that through affiliations with political parties in the Jacksonian era, European immigrants helped solidify a once ambiguous racial divide on the foundation of plebian empowerment and Manifest Destiny, held together by the ideology of Herrenvolk republicanism. The contradictions of Herrenvolk “master race” ideology coupled with the republican idea of freedom and sovereignty manifested itself in newly independent whites’ repulsion of blacks. Free and bonded blacks became conflated with the idea of slavery thus symbolizing the opposite of a desired free republic.

Both Roedieger’s work and Eric Lott’s *Love & Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* discuss how the presence of blacks had an ironic effect on working class European immigrants. On one hand, blacks were victimized by whites in race riots. On the other, many whites were infatuated with blackness and rendered blacks the exemplary figures of their former pre-industrial selves’ of working class immigrants who were perceived as people free to imbibe alcohol, be promiscuous, and create their own work schedules. Although these assumptions lacked substantial support, more so because slavery was still legal, many European immigrants continued to cast blacks in this light. Roediger and Lott explain how whites, specifically Irish Catholics, were stripped of social norms and willingly released them for an industrialized Protestant work
Many whites found it difficult to reconcile their identities as laborers and their identities “off the clock.” Robin D.G. Kelly’s *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class* demonstrates how blacks had to also resolve the Protestant work ethic, Christian mores and leisure activities. He also gives insight into Southern black laboring communities in order to explain how blacks did not define themselves by the racist propaganda disseminated by the entertainment, governmental, and science communities. The black population was presented as degenerate through Enlightenment pseudo-science theories as explained in George M. Fredrickson’s *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* and was also mocked in print media and entertainment according to Karen Sotiropolulos’ *Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America*. Yet regardless of attempts at public defamation, blacks’ presence was needed. European immigrants defined themselves in opposition to the subjugated black population; therefore without their presence, European immigrants had little ground on which to merge into the native white population who questioned the immigrants’ heritage and whiteness.

Eventually, this bifurcation of races created racial alliances on either side. Outside of smaller cross-racial coalitions based on a shared experience of poverty, the race-based unions made class a nominal factor in coalition building especially for those of European descent. However, because mostly working-class European immigrants utilized blackface masking during violent acts against black bodies and when portraying black bodies on stage, a certain class of whites was invested in the creation of blackness for their political,
social, and economic benefit. Michael Rogin in *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* focuses his argument on Jews’ assimilation into whiteness via minstrelsy and motion pictures in the 20th century. It was working-class Irish and Jewish European immigrants who created whiteness while simultaneously creating blackness in order to avoid being re-subjugated in the New World.

**WHITENESS AND ITS POLITICS ABROAD AND DOMESTIC**

The continued infatuation with blackness is a permanent fixture in popular culture. Blackness became an incomplete identity construction for African Americans, while remaining a symbol of a pre-industrial past many whites longed for yet repressed. Blacks came to represent African descendants who were believed to have a more deeply rooted sense of culture than immigrants and native-born whites residing in amalgamated whiteness. Yet blacks were deemed unfit for complete political, social, and economic freedom. Ultimately, U.S. society’s racial split became black versus white and anyone who may lay in-between or outside of those designations must place themselves or be placed in one category or the other to their detriment or gain. Division by race was not a new concept for European immigrants, especially the Irish. It was the history of racial amalgamation and forming cross-class bonds in Ireland in the 1300s that prepared Irish immigrants for successful whiteness formation in the United States.

In the 1300s, Anglo-Irish identity became popular. Considered the “middle nation,” descendants of English settlers were attracted to Gaelic society’s language and general customs.¹ The English government assembled an Anglo-Irish Parliament at
Kilkenny to suppress the “degenerate English” phenomenon. The miscegenation of English and Irish races garnered similar fears in Ireland as in the United States between blacks and whites centuries later. This same amalgamation can be seen after the American Revolution between native-born whites and European immigrants.

The second strategy of coalition building in Ireland was the condemned practice of “fostering” or “gosspred.” The practice of one family giving over the care of their child to another was a way of strengthening class ties. European immigrants in the United States may not have practiced “fostering” but instead utilized political bonds and the idea of white supremacy to satiate class tensions. The Irish understood all too well the results of race-based policies. The Statue of Kilkenny enacted by the Anglo-Irish Parliament established harsh penalties, such as accusing violators of treason, in hopes of stopping “fostering” practices. Furthermore, “any Englishman to assume an Irish name, use the Irish language or adopt the Irish mode of dress or riding, under penalty of forfeiture of all his lands and tenements.” Due to the “hibernization” or the growth of Anglo-Irish ethnicity, England’s racist mode of rule was extinguished. And because the English refused to allow free Irish people political power, the English lost the authority to rule Ireland.

In Ireland, under the eighteenth-century Penal Laws, the ban on the Catholic acquisition of land was very similar to the United States’ methods of limiting land ownership to not-quite-whites and blacks. In addition to this, in Ireland the criminalization of literacy among laboring classes prevented upward mobility just as it
was a barrier for many blacks in the U.S. Already deemed an “inferior race” by the English, Irish immigrants came to the New World running from famine with hopes that may appear ironic. How could their aspiration for upward mobility rest in a place colonized by the English who labeled them inferior for hundreds of years? Possibly, since the goal of the American Revolution’s supporters was to separate themselves from the English crown (just as Ireland did), maybe many Irish immigrants believed that they could enter in the U.S. with the belief that they shared a common indignation towards the English empire. However, the alliances were not made as quickly as one might have presumed.

Prior to the American Revolution (1775-1783), separation between whites and blacks was not so clear, however, politics and grants of freedom became tools for division. In the 17th and 18th centuries, lower-class whites were not race conscious. Indentured servants escaped with bonded blacks and “often accepted each other on terms of equality much more readily than did their social betters.” Impressments, apprenticeship, convict labor, farm tenancy, wage labor and free farming were areas of labor oppression for whites but were not as severe as chattel slavery among bonded blacks. Indentured servitude of the 1750s continued during the Revolutionary War because freedom was offered to Germans, Irish, and northern blacks in exchange for military service, but this came at the price of extended periods of servitude.

Running from the grips of servile labor, European indentured servants and apprentices were searching for the new status of “freeman” in hopes of gaining political
and economic independence. But the freeman status was offered to indentured servants more often than to blacks. In New York City, upper-class native whites offered economic security to immigrants in exchange for freeman status as a strategy to widen their political base. Offering freedom to immigrants through politics assisted in the divide among blacks and those of European descent.

After 1695, New York City carters monopolized their trade because they were licensed by the city government as “freemen” and therefore received protection from labor competition, were enfranchised for city elections and were protected from being seized by press gangs for impressments sailors. The “freeman” system later included twenty-eight trades and was used to neutralize class and Anglo-Dutch tensions. By offering political and economic amenities to immigrants and not blacks, a divide based on race was created. This began to absolve class as an issue among immigrants who were attempting to move into the middle class via the patronage of upper-class native whites. As a result, being a freeman, for formerly unfree people of European descent, carried a substantial prideful ideology distinct from non-Europeans.

By the 1760s, blackface masking became a form of disguise for whites conducting malicious activities under the guise of heroism. Some Irish immigrants who identified themselves as the “Whiteboys” of Ireland dressed in long white frocks and blackened their faces while working as self-proclaimed avengers of oppressed whites and punishers of voracious landowners. Therefore, acts of lower class immigrants assisting other subjugated immigrants, who were able to gain the opportunity to attain middle class
freeman status like the New York carters, demonstrated class coalition building among immigrants and native whites at the exclusion of non-whites. As a result, native whites and European immigrants could base their solidarity on their desire for independence.

Because blacks were seen as representations of former indentured servants’ unfreedom and a stark division among the whites and blacks was forming, European immigrants did not build a class-based coalition with unfree and subjugated blacks. A race-based coalition with elite whites proved to be more beneficial. The benefit was not only to acquire upward mobility, but also to prevent reentrance into dependant and coercive labor and downward mobilization. In 1770, Benjamin Franklin proposed an alliance between economically dependent white artisans, indentured servitude, and chattel slavery as he argued that the artisan population was dependant on and suffered from those who doled-out similar treatment to slaves.\textsuperscript{18} With white indentured servants sold on auction blocks and transported in coffles,\textsuperscript{19} it was relatively easy for indentured servitude and other forms of oppressed white labor to be compared to chattel slavery.\textsuperscript{20}

Immigrants did not want to revert to the lower class status they maintained in their former country and did not want to lose the benefits of patronage offered in many cities in the United States. As a result, immigrants became active participants in politics. An example of immigrant Europeans’ eagerness for activism can be found in the economic and political disenfranchisement experienced in Ireland. Whether affiliations were with Republicans or Democrats, immigrants still pushed to forge an all-encompassing whiteness. By participating in the Revolutionary War and fighting for independence,
many immigrants built a basis for solitary among other fighting native-born whites, and many were abolitionists. Their fight for abolition was not because they sympathized with bonded blacks, rather they wanted to prevent “white slavery” and have the ability to move upward through the economic and social ladder. During the Revolutionary movement, many followed Franklin in connecting the plight of oppressed whites and enslaved people of color. However, this practice was challenging because whiteness was not a synonym for independence nor was blackness completely conflated with servitude. By 1788, white urban workers connected freedom to their work and believed that as producers of useful commodities, they deserved respect, full citizenship, value for their work and a measure of social power.

As oppressed whites commanded respect from their new nation, chattel slavery continued to increase through the 1790s and artisans and blacks alike attacked the United States’ contradictory stance as a slave-holding republic. Blacks, such as Richard Allen, used protest pamphlets to express their grievances regarding injustices, the immorality of slavery and the defamation of black people’s character in media. In “A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People, During the Late Awful Calamity of Philadelphia, in the Year 1793,” writer Richard Allen and Absalom Jones criticized Philadelphia publicist Matthew Carey for negatively characterizing blacks during the yellow fever crisis. The protest pamphlet was also accompanied by the essay “Address to Those Who Keep Slaves and Approve the Practice,” which was heavily based on biblical reasoning in hopes of appealing to the conscious of his readers. Allen and other blacks
consistently addressed United States’ contradictory stance of fighting for freedom, yet maintaining an institution of slavery.

The ideology of universal sovereignty used to shape the independent U.S. nation was only intended for those of European decent. As a result, Republicanism became an essentialist term.\textsuperscript{26} Because republicans were proponents of the abolition of slavery and against dependence on imposing government, republicanism ideology, they overtly rejected implications of powerless. There was a fear among the white working-class that the white industrial elites at the top and the subjugated blacks at the bottom would unite against them.\textsuperscript{27} Since capitalism in antebellum America was supported by chattel slavery, producing classes could theoretically be read out of the economy. Therefore, artisan immigrants had yet another reason to align themselves with the affluent whites.

Furthermore, those associated with the Republican Party touted that people who believed and were invested in a free republic were capable of participating within it because the ability to be sovereign was naturally within them. Thus by associating with republicanism via integration into a political-racialized space, oppressed whites could also be deemed the bearers of strength, virtue and deserved freedom. The idea that whites were the only race that had the innate ability to effectively participate in a free republic had its roots in Enlightenment philosophy.

Fredrickson and Milton Cantor explain how white American colonial society in the 1800’s “viewed Negroes as a permanently alien and unassimilable element of the population”\textsuperscript{28} who “existed outside of grace, in a state of religious ignorance as well as
backwardness.” This thought process was supported by “scientific” articles, political rhetoric, and fiction writers. In the 1780s, Thomas Jefferson was a supporter of American Enlightenment thinking, which advocated blacks’ inferiority to whites even though he admitted the facts that supported his prejudice belief system had yet to be produced. Jefferson wrote, “I advance it therefore as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to whites both in mind and body.” Enlightenment ideology viewed racism as a “rationalized ideology grounded in what was thought to be facts of nature.”

Environmentalism supported the belief that human characteristics and values are shaped or predetermined by social and cultural conditions, which reflected the willingness to attribute Negro depravity to slavery. Negroes’ pre-determined inferiority was also believed to be evident by their physical characteristics. Richard Colfax, author of Evidence Against the Views of the Abolitionists, Consisting of Physical and Moral Proofs of the Natural Inferiority of the Negroes published in New York in 1833, along with physiognomists and phrenologists, concluded that Negroes’ facial angle and cranial thickness in comparison to whites proved their sub-human status. Colfax stated that the “meanness of the Negro’s intellect only coincides with the shape of the head.” Colfax noted the implied lack of intellect and animal-like characteristics when he blamed Africans for not being motivated for over three thousand years to take advantage of the benefits of white interaction due to their close proximity to Europe. This rhetoric was used to make blackness a fact of African American existence. As a result, many
abolitionists believed that whites could assist blacks in raising their believed lower intellectual position.

Under the guise of altruism and tutelage, some white institutions worked to fix what was believed to be the Negro problem. The Prison Discipline Society readily believed that creating black education equal to the cost of maintaining black convicts “would very soon raise their character to a level of whites and diminish the number of convicts from among them, about ten fold.”37 This principle was also believed in sacred sects. Episcopal Bishop Thomas U. Dudley of Kentucky wrote in Century that the separation of the Negro race from Caucasians would lead to the Negro embarking on a life of “degradation and decay” with his only life line being within the guidance and association of whites.38 By privileging whiteness and believing a paternalistic association with the black masses was necessary, European immigrants knew that by building coalitions with black people, they stood the chance of experiencing the negative repercussions of blackness. Therefore, many immigrants adamantly worked to support whiteness in the United States through class bonds.

In addition, by coalescing with upper-class whites, many artisan abolitionists believed they were preventing oppressive white labor and the possibility of chattel slavery seeping into the “not-quite-white” demographic. If immigrants successfully identified with whiteness, then hopefully native-born elites would not enslave their fellow man. Ironically, this politically racialized space of whiteness was built on an ironic mixture of negation and inclusion: European immigrants positioned themselves as anti-
black (negation) but wished to assimilate in a capitalist, industrial, Anglo-Saxon environment that did not mimic the culture of their former country (inclusion). The ideological glue that made whiteness stringent (supporting only “whiteness”), yet malleable (allowing applicability to those who were not yet “white”) was what Roediger called Herrenvolk republicanism. Herrenvolk republicans believed in forming an independent free nation for those deemed capable of operating within a sovereign society. The society was to grant freedom to the “master race” or those of European descent while others remained marginalized. This political project was not much different than their Democratic counterparts.

Many Irish immigrants choose to affiliate with the anti-abolition Democrats,\(^3^9\) which assured them leverage against pro-abolition blacks and a guaranteed political alliance with whites. This coalition worked in two ways: it eased the adversity between the Irish immigrants and native-born whites\(^4^0\) and helped in “deflecting debate from nativity,” which lessened the necessity to acknowledge European heritage.\(^4^1\) To further insure their distance from blackness and support of whiteness, Irish immigrants became adamant supporters of anti-Chinese and anti-black movements, often ending in public displays of violence against non-whites.\(^4^2\) Many working class white democrats were ambivalent towards abolition because the pro-abolition Whig Party consisted of elites who “were held responsible for the erosion of working conditions.” Also, the Whig party held a Christian facet to their party that called for the repression of certain pre-industrial
norms – such as drinking, sexual license, and self-structured work days –which many working class whites yearned to revisit.43

By the early 1800s, black-white relations were tenuous and indistinct in employment and social realms. In 1818, while wage labor gradually increased, “boss” as a substitute for “master” gained popularity among working class whites as a way to distance themselves from slavery.44 As the Industrial Revolution gained ground in America in 1820, those forced into wage labor equated their work to “slave-like labor” thus cultivating terms such as white slavery.45 In 1805, blacks were driven from Independence Day celebrations in Philadelphia by white workers,46 yet in 1814, blacks and whites often participated in the Election Day festival.47 Public white and black interactions also continued to be muddled in enclosed cultural venues.

PERFORMING BLACKNESS

In 1821, New York City saw the opening of the African Grove Theater catering to a bi-racial, but segregated audience.48 The African Grove Theater has features from black actors Ira Aldridge and James Hewlett, who performed Shakespearean plays such as Othello and Richard III. British actor Charles Mathews, one of the first popular blackface acts, allegedly got the idea of a caricatured Ira Aldridge after patronizing the African Grove Theater.49 Mathews’ audiences assumed his rendition of a black Hamlet, complete with racialized speech was an authentic replica of Aldridge’s performance. But Aldridge stated, “The truth…is that I never attempted the character of Hamlet in my life, and I
need not say that the whole of the ludicrous scene so well and so humorously described by Mr. Mathews never occurred at all.”

Ironically, Aldridge was inundated with requests for minstrelsy songs such as “Opossum Up a Gum Tree” popularized Mathews. Therefore, a mimicking of the mimicker occurred. The minstrelsy songs that were supposed to represent Aldridge became lucrative performances for both actors but did not represent the personality of either of the songs’ executors. By the early 1830s, minstrelsy began to gain popularity, thus there was less interest in black theatrical institutions such as New York’s African Grove Theatre. But performances like Mathews’ had not come to symbolize blackness. His performances, until his death in 1835, were specific to Ira Aldridge. Coincidentally, it would not be until Mathews’ death and heightened terrorism inflicted upon blacks that minstrelsy, blackness, and popular culture would collide.

From 1829 to 1841, white working class immigrants victimized the black population using blackface disguises, demonstrating whites’ attraction and repulsion of blacks. Many new capitalist whites continued to cast blacks as their former pre-industrial selves. Many abolitionists were evangelical Christians who “claimed control over their own moral and economic destiny.” Working towards white integration, many white artisans joined the temperance movement viewing blacks as what they “had given up, but still longed for.” “The racist, like the reformed sinner, creates “a pornography of his former life” as reference point and reminder where he has progressed from and where he should not return. As a result, repetitive portrayals of blackness in popular culture
allowed the racist stage performer or an entertainment spectator that “pornographic” image.

In 1829, during a large Christmas time procession in Philadelphia, blackfaced whites disguised themselves as “Aunt Sally” drawn to the opportunity to “act black” then proceed to physically assault free blacks.\textsuperscript{56} The operative action and internal struggles occurring in these events was whites wanting to “act black:” “a whole social world of irony, violence, negotiation, and learning is contained in that phrase.”\textsuperscript{57} By 1831, many black festivals were shut down, and black theaters were closed, thus blackface entertainment made an explosion into popular culture.\textsuperscript{58} White crowds would continue their celebrations, but with blackened skin.\textsuperscript{59} Here begins a clear intertwining of reality and the imagined.

Although Edwin Forrest was the first actor to impersonate a slave on the American stage in 1820,\textsuperscript{60} Thomas Dartmouth (Daddy) Rice, a former woodworker apprentice, was the first to jump Jim Crow in the 1820s and 1830s.\textsuperscript{61} Claimed to have gotten the dance from a black porter named Cuff,\textsuperscript{62} Rice used blackface to “play with the collective fears of a degraded and threatening – and male –Other while at the same time maintained some symbolic control over them.”\textsuperscript{63} Minstrel entertainment was the portrayal of white men’s fascination with black male sexuality. It was a fantastical portrayal that incited a fear of emasculation and a love of power to control the dissemination of constructed black masculinity.
In an 1834 race riot, young working class Irish boys called ‘b’hoys justified their violence on blacks as protecting “their” women from amalgamation from what they assumed to be overly sexual black men and broke into a black church and sang a chorus of Jim Crow in ‘mock negro style’. Their fear of amalgamation with blacks harkens to the similar fears the English had regarding Anglo-Irish relations. However, since Irish immigrants could not exercise the same control over citizens as the Statue of Kilkenny enacted by Parliament, a method of social control was resorting to violence. Eric Lott argues that, “The very form of blackface acts –an investiture in black bodies – seems a manifestation of the particular desire to try on the accents of ‘blackness’ and demonstrates the permeability of the color line.” Emotional extremes towards blackness and black men and class tension among the respectable and rebellious whites were believed to be mediated on the minstrel stage. Blackness was an attraction for performers and audiences that combined fear of black men’s sexuality and fascination with black men’s supposed sexual vigor. These perverse emotions covertly made miscegenation an ever-present anxiety on the minstrel stage, but it did not prevent the perpetuation of blackness in popular culture.

By 1850, the working class was largely born outside of the United States. T.D. Rice’s career had ended and America was in the middle of its industrial revolution. Soon, ragtime music became a trendy form of “black music” and “black dance.” In 1896, “Negro music” made its way from vaudeville to Broadway with the help of white singers like Mary Irwin performing popular songs such as “All Coon’s Look Alike to Me.”
Black music coupled with black dance, were such Broadway hits among white audiences that in 1898, “one of the largest white shows, Yankee Doodle Dandy, even included a cakewalk finale.” 71 Whites immersed themselves in “blackness” without the presence of black people. Virtually absent from the Broadway stage, African Americans’ presumed culture had eager patrons even when what they paid to see was false. 72 As ragtime swept the U.S., blackface was still prevalent.

“Minstrelsy accepted ethnic difference by insisting on racial division.” 73 Meaning, the ethnic difference among those of European descent was negated as the focus was increasingly placed on the supposed extreme difference between whites and blacks. Therefore, as immigration to the United States more than tripled to 1.7 million, in the 1840s, the influx of immigrants was drawn to America’s art form, blackface performance. Merging into whiteness through blackness began with the Irish and then the Jews, who dominated and revitalized minstrelsy well into the early-twentieth-century. 74

BLACKS CRITICISM AND SELF PERCEPTION

As European immigration and blackface performance popularity steadily rose, black actors were enticed by the lucrative possibilities yet had feelings of dejection when asked to make a mockery of the black presence in the United States. In 1906, George Walker, of the world-renowned Williams and Walker black minstrel duo, expressed his irritation with blackface minstrelsy in his essay “The Negro on the American Stage” in Colored American Magazine.
Black faced white comedians used to make themselves look as ridiculous as they could when portraying a “darny” character. In their “make-up” they always had tremendous big red lips, and their costumes were frightfully exaggerated. The one fatal result of this to the colored performers was that they imitated the white performers in their [own] make-up as “darkies.” Nothing seemed more absurd than to see a colored man making himself ridiculous in order to portray himself.75

Black actors mimicking the white mimicker reveal how many African American blackface performers made a spectacle of their victimization. Blacks working in blackface were participating in their own victimization through humiliating performances that garnered actual consequences than manifested in socio-political polices. I argue that the significance of these acts is in the subconscious legacy of blacks performing blackness.

In Anna Everett’s Returning the Gaze: A Genealogy of Black Film Criticism, 1909-1949, she states that Walker reveals how he publicly aided in his own victimization.76 Walker is an example of black performers wanting to remove themselves from the blackface minstrelsy’s entrapping cyclical nature of performing a false identity labeled authentic. African Americans realized that black caricatures were not accurate representations of themselves. Therefore, performing fictitious characters may not have affected their view of themselves or black culture. However, if blacks in the United States are being mistreated based on the caricatures they perform, I argue that there is a mental legacy of black victimization performances that has the ability to cause internal conflict.
within black performers. What is it about the psyche of African American performers of blackness that allow them to reconcile the issues of performing an authentic self and a caricatured self? I argue that the answer lies within W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of “double consciousness.”

In *Souls of Black Folk* (1903) Du Bois’ writes,

…the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.77

According to DuBois’ concept, African Americans are able to see society out of two lenses, one black and one white. This “gift,” however, comes with the price of always changing lens in order to maneuver through society. The black lens is how African Americans see themselves and provides an array of emotions and cultural idiosyncrasies. In contrast, the white lens views blacks with “contempt and pity.” It is this lens that blackface African American performers perform for. So, if the white lens is detrimental to a healthy and stable self-perception – “two unreconciled strivings; two
warring ideals in one dark body” – then how does consistently performing with them and viewing those performances effect how blacks view themselves?

Bert Williams, the other half of the Williams and Walker duo, showed attempts at countering racism and separating himself from the caricatures he played. After joining the Ziegfield Follies in 1910, Williams was on tour with the majority white minstrel group and entered a segregated hotel bar. Williams ordered a martini from the bartender who, in hopes that Williams would leave, charged an exorbitant fee of $50. In an act of rebellion, Williams placed $300 on the bar and said, "I will have six." Knowing that Williams did not see himself in the caricatures he played and understanding the bartender’s racist intentions, Williams used his economic leverage to refute the bartender’s image of him. Since Williams did not initially order six martinis, it can be assumed that he only placed the expensive order to assert a resilience that contradicts the indolent caricatures that made him famous.

When discussing his work in portraying coon characters, Williams describes his approach as investigative and research-based like Charles Matthews and T.D. Rice. He separated himself from his caricatures:

I try to portray the shiftless darky to the fullest extent; his fun, his philosophy. Show this shiftless darky a book and he don't know what it is about. He can't read or write, but ask him a question and he'll answer it with a philosophy that has something in it. I have studied him, his joys and sorrows. Contrast is vital. If I take up a stevedore, I must study
his movements. I have to. He is not in me. The way he walks; the way he crosses his legs; the way he leans up against a wall, one foot forward.  

In T.D. Rice’s legendary story he learned to “Jump Jim Crow” from a porter. Williams says that if he plays a porter then he must learn from the porter as well. However, what differentiates the two stories is that Rice’s goal was to demonstrate his supposed understanding of black people due to his intimate interactions. Because he was white the distance between a working class black man and himself is assumed. Rice could prove closeness with blackness without having to make any efforts to separate himself from it. The racial politics of the time period did that for him. However, because Bert Williams is black, his knowledge of what was believed to be black culture and black mannerisms were assumed to be an elemental part of him. But Williams, who did not identify with the “shiftless darky,” attempted to debunk the essentialist framework by stating that his strategies for relating to blackness were the same as Rice’s. More explicitly he says, “I must study his movements. I have to. He is not in me” (emphasis mine). Just as his interactions with the bartender, Williams is keenly aware of the dual consciousness he has regarding what his white audiences think of him and how he perceives himself.

Therefore, I pose the question, if Bert Williams recognized that the same white supremacist ideology that created the caricatures he performed were the very same notions that allowed the interaction he had within the discriminatory bar, how does that translate into the lives and careers of black actors such as Will Smith and Eddie Murphy
voicing coon caricatures in the 21st century? I argue that in 21st century U.S., race-based character formation in entertainment, policies, and racist judicial practices are still evident even as the line of racial demarcation is less visible. Because the United States continues to promote whiteness via blackness, many African Americans are still conscious of racial politics and their roles in those politics. Therefore, W.E.B. Du Bois’ “double-consciousness” theory is still applicable.

Black performers, such as Williams and Walker, realized the impact and the absurdity of blackface. And it can be argued that in a mostly white-controlled entertainment industry in the segregated U.S., black actors who wanted to be successful needed to perform what mainstream culture yearned for: performance of blackness that reaffirmed mainstream audiences’ white status. Therefore, if black actors were simply continuing the blackface trend for monetary reasons and did not internalize these racist depictions, then is the legacy of blacks performing blackness in the 21st century because white-controlled industries put more monetary resources in projects that continue to reassure whites of an assumed secure elevated status in the U.S.? I assert in later chapters that many mainstream-oriented studios are working to continue to reaffirm whiteness. The problem I address is that blacks may not be internalizing blackness, but many non-blacks are and treat African Americans according to the caricatures in their memory. But that does not explain why blacks still act as accomplices to their own societal disadvantage. Is this the effect of double consciousness?
White comedian W.C. Fields, a fellow member of the Follies cast stated that Williams was "the funniest man I ever saw and the saddest man I ever knew."\textsuperscript{80} By portraying a fun-loving yet detrimental character as a career and knowing that his audience believed that caricature was supposed to represent him, emboldened him in the bar to contradict the stereotypes he perpetuated. These dual actions appear to have created a sorrowful life for Williams. Everett explains that in Walker’s essay he is ‘discussing the difficulties of ‘double consciousness’ inherent in black minstrel’s valiant attempt to reconcile the conflicting natures of his Eurocentric and Afrocentric cultural legacies.’\textsuperscript{81} Walker and Williams established their minstrel show by rejecting blackface. But with mainstream’s demand for blackface, their rebellious position could not compete with popular requests. Walker performed conflicted about his participation in minstrelsy and negating more authentic black cultural expressions.\textsuperscript{82} As more black actors entered the stage, blacks in minstrelsy flourished, but only as the national fixation with white minstrel shows declined.\textsuperscript{83}

The advent of cinema entered the U.S. in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century and just as minstrel performers lured in their patrons by proclaiming their portrayals of black people were authentic, workers in cinema also declared their productions to be the closest to reality. Cinema equipment was placed in the same category as scientific inventions such as the microscope, thermometer, and telegraph.\textsuperscript{84} As a result, producers of cinema claimed their productions represented “truth”, “reality” and “empirical verifiability” just as science put forth. Unfortunately, these claims of truth making in early cinematic narratives were
derived from minstrels, thus blackness gained mass distribution and reified white supremacist ideology. In the early 1900s, many mainstream writers were concerned with where minstrelsy fit along the spectrum of “high” or “low” art. However, African American critics turned their attention of the potentiality of cinema inciting more socio-political damage than its live performance predecessor. One of the most vocal critics of blackness was Lester A. Walton, editor of the New York Age’s popular entertainment page. Possibly African Americans’ first major mass-culture griot, Walton’s critiques became increasingly fixated on cinematic objectification of the black body and the commodification of black pain and suffering. For example, in his 1909 essay “The Degeneracy of the Moving Picture Theatre,” Walton criticizes the P.T. Barnum company for charging theater patrons one cent to hear the “moans and groans” or John Smith of Paris, Texas being burned at the stake. Walton’s issue with such spectacles not only rests in companies profiting from making a spectacle of racist acts of violence, but also possible repercussions of their consumption. Walton argued that “the planting of the seed of savagery in the breast of those whites who even in this enlightened day and time are not any too far from barbarism.” Here, Walton makes a direct link between cinema and its effect on the real people it portrays.

Walton repeatedly implored black communities to protest and boycott cinema theaters and for whites to recognize the harm of such depictions of blacks. Directed to his black readers, Walton wrote, “If, we do not start now to put an end to this insult to the race, expect to see more shocking pictures with the Negro as subject in the near future.”
This same essay was reprinted in the white motion picture journal *Moving Picture News* and is evidence that black protest was recognized outside of black communities. *Moving Picture News* asking their subscribers to read Walton’s essay and let it “burn into their conscience and cease giving offense to vast numbers of our population” during the Jim Crow era, speaks to whites in the motion picture industry knowing the magnitude of possible real-life repercussions of their productions. In addition, by referring to blacks as members of “our population” draws attention to the possibility that either the black-white line of separation in the entertainment industry may not have been so distinct or it was simply a superficial statement. Regardless, it is evidence that under the surface, blacks and whites understood and acknowledged the power of cinema.

In 1949, Nicholas Vardac wrote *Stage to Screen: The Theatrical Origins of Early Film: David Garrick to D.W. Griffith*. In this work, Vardac traces how early cinema production borrowed prestige from the legitimate stage by crafting early film dramas as filmed theater. Later, in order to combat the popularity of film, theater then borrowed from film. Therefore, if film borrows from reality, then animation is swooped up in the cyclical borrowing of fiction and non-fiction within entertainment. With cinema being seen as a technological innovation capable of putting reality on film, then animation is merely its derivative. A prime example of Walton’s critique of erroneous animated reality is the nationally released animation of the sinking of the Titanic.

Displayed across the nation as a newsreel, thus proclaiming to be a factual rendering, Walton labeled animation “fake pictures.” In his May 2, 1912 article “Ban on
Titanic Moving Pictures,” he chastised its producers for cheapening the great loss of life so that the audience can vicariously live the sea tragedy as conceived in the imagination of its producers.\textsuperscript{94}

Comparing Walton’s critique of the Titanic animation and the John Smith recording can be seen as the entertainment industry engaging in equal opportunity commodification of misery across racial lines. However, there is something to be said about a reenactment of a tragedy and a live recording of death. If theater is mimicking life and animation is mimicking theater, then animation in a sense is twice removed from reality. The John Smith recording is the closest to a production of reality one can get. Furthermore, arguably watching a reenactment of the Titanic sinking does not ignite feelings of brutality or encourage passive feelings towards violent behavior towards blacks. If anything, the Titanic animation ignites sympathy and poses a warning to those who desire to sail the open seas. The social repercussions of the John Smith recording are much stronger for black people.

Walton also drew attention to the repercussions of not acknowledging blacks’ “Americaness” and privileging foreign-born whites. He was disturbed by the differing treatment of European immigrants and blacks. Walton found the United States’ negation of blacks’ native-born status and the naturalization of foreign whites problematic: “What is particularly galling to us is the thought that we who are native-born American citizens are discriminated against solely on account of color, and that an organized effort is being made to deprive us of rights and privileges to which we are justly entitled by law.”\textsuperscript{95}
Walton made light of the former distinction made between native-born whites and foreign-born whites that was becoming negligible. In order to solidify whiteness, the higher status of being native-born had to be rendered insignificant. If it was not, blacks born in the U.S. would have their heritage linked to America and would be placed above European immigrants. With fears of downward mobility and white slavery, immigrants had a stake in minimizing the importance of native-born ancestry.

In his June 5, 1913 column, Walton criticizes the portrayals of African Americans and European immigrants in theaters. Walton compares the Pathé Weekly newsreel of blacks from Memphis, Tennessee migrating to Washington D.C and German peasants going to Sunday services. In discussing the footage of the black migrants, Walton writes: All the refugees in line were colored. Then the operator who took the pictures must have made up his mind to inject a bit of comedy. The spectacle of this long line of hungry, homeless men, women, and children did not touch his sympathetic chord, nor did it awaken a feeling of sadness…So he arranged three little black, half-starved pickaninnies in a row, sat a bowl of mush and a piece of bread before each and then waited to see the fun.96

Walton then describes the screening of the German family,

…The peasants going to church on Sunday in one of the German towns was next shown, and as I gazed at the reproduction showing the German boys and girls making their way to church in large numbers, I wondered why it was that the Pathé people had seen fit to depict to the world the lowest type of the Negro--the
Walton is disturbed by the global construction of racial difference that such juxtapositions of images advance. The worldwide implications are evident since Pathé was a French company that most likely distributed its news productions in Europe as well as the United States.

Walton’s goal was to inform his readers of the social implication evident in cinema. But his concern may be based in a classist perspective and not for the hopes of an accurate portrayal of all blacks from various socio-economic backgrounds. When criticizing Pathé, Walton argues, “If the motion picture concerns are sincere in their desire to educate the masses, they ought to make pictures showing the better elements of the race, not the lowest.” As if to show the side of black life that he prefers, Walton printed a photo next to his article of “an obviously refined, fair-skinned, middle-class black vaudeville performer named Ada Guiguesse.” In Walton’s critique, his apparent elitism is evident when he implied that the migrant blacks were “the lowest” and should not have been in the newsreels. Just as the white sectors of society, black communities were not exempt from classism.

Walton does not appear to request further analysis of the effects of the stratification in the U.S. that created the poverty and hunger in the starved children or why blacks desired to move from the south to the north. It appears, instead, that he wishes for upper-class blacks to stand-in for all African Americans. The issue with his
desire is that the expression of the black experience would still be truncated. Calling for people to not condone selling tickets to the recording of John Smith being burned alive was necessary and brave. But why not use that film to elucidate the social atmosphere of southern states in order to explain possible reasons why blacks were migrating from Tennessee. As evident in the reprinting of his 1909 essay, Walton does have white readers within the entertainment industry. And Walton desired for cinema to be a way to display various forms of black life. As a significant voice for many African Americans, what was missing in Walton’s critique of the motion picture industry were suggestions for multiple portrayals and explanations for certain conditions within black life. I argue that this same absence of holistic and explanatory depictions of black life as social commentary is still evident in contemporary film and animation. This lack of explanation coupled with cinema being viewed as filmed reality continually resuscitates the notion that people of color are, and may forever be, in a denigrated place in U.S. society and the world. As the black character formulas continue to resurface, blackness continues to be circulated among the public. Throughout the 1900s, blacks continued to express their concern with the popular media.

In *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class*, Robin D.G. Kelly writes, “In 1914, W.E.B. Du Bois and Augustus Dill surveyed several hundred leading African Americans about the state of ‘manners and moral’ among young people, and many pointed to popular culture as the root cause of moral degeneracy.”¹⁰⁰ Kelly explains that both middle class and low-income blacks were concerned with respectability and the
influence cinema had on their children. One respondent stated the “Movies...have an unwholesome effect upon young people...” Another respondent feared that young people “assemble in dives and hang around the corners in great numbers, especially the boys. Many of them becoming gamblers and idlers.” Walton writes, “the motion picture industry can wield an influence for good and serve as an educational medium in helping to solve the so-called Negro question if it will; but setting up to the world from time to time the very lowest types of the race, whether intentionally or unconsciously done is harmful.” In addition to continuing the class separation among black people, Walton acknowledges the power of the unconsciousness in producers of blackness’ and how unconscious manifestations can result in harm towards African Americans. In a later chapter, a discussion regarding memory, history and performance will dive deeper in the manifestations of producers’ unconsciousness.

MINSTRELSY’S LEGACY

As Walton, Du Bois and other blacks criticized blackness in film, European immigration and minstrelsy in film was on a steady incline. From the 1920s through the 1940s, Jews were the major powers in the largest Hollywood studios. One of the major acts was Al Jolson. Al Jolson, a Jewish descendant, was a popular performer who took minstrelsy to the big screen. His feature films The Jazz Singer (1927) and The Jolson Story (1946) are on the list of classic Hollywood’s most watched movies. In The Jazz Singer, the protagonist adopts a black mask and identifies with imagined black
sexual desire. Not surprisingly, the film doesn’t aim to mediate black-white racial issues. Rather it focuses on religion and aims to bridge the gap between Jews and gentiles.\(^\text{105}\)

In the 1930s, Jolson incorporated African American performers in his acts. Thus we have a paradoxical image similar to Ira Aldridge and Charles Mathew in 1821. It is a disturbing image of Jolson performing blackness in blackface next to cheerful black entertainers. It is the mimicker (Jolson) requesting the presence of the mimicked (African American performers) to mimic themselves alongside the mimicker. Although Al Jolson’s feature film career in blackface in came to an end by the 1950s, blackness was requested of African Americans. The desire for blacks to perform blackness for the pleasure of a white audience is what Donald Bogle calls the blackface fixation. Bogle writes, “Directed by whites in scripts authored by whites and then photographed, dressed and made up by whites, the Negro actor like the slaves he portrayed aimed (and still does aim) always to please the master figure. To do so, he gives not a performance of his own, not one in which he interprets black life, but one in which he presents for mass consumption black life as seen through the eyes of white artists. The black actor becomes a black man in blackface.”\(^\text{106}\)

Blackface fixation assists in the mainstream media’s packaging of entertainment for the dominant consumer market. This packaging of blackness rejects “aesthetic, cultural, and political masterworks aimed at liberating the human potential.”\(^\text{107}\) An entertainment industry driven by fictitious accounts of black life marginalizes innovative presentations thus maintaining the vicious cycle of black imagined communities. Fixating
on those imagined communities reduces the complexities within the real lives of African Americans. Ed Guerrero argues that visual media often presents a “multifaceted illusion” of black life writ with a “subordinated, marginalized and devalued” perspective created to “glorify and relentlessly hold in place the white-dominated symbolic order and racial hierarchy of American society.”

In the twenty-first century, commodified blackness is still present in feature-length films with human and animated characters. Within Jewish-run entertainment company DreamWorks, the animation studio has released blockbuster films targeting youth audiences with race-latent anthropomorphic films. Whether it is Scottish ogre Shrek who cannot enter into the land of Happily Ever After without assimilating in Anglo-Saxon culture or Oscar the fish as the lazy, gambling coon in Shark Tale, descendants of European immigrants appear to still desire to narrate stories of whiteness formation and have a stake in the maintenance of blackness. Michael Rogin argues that blackface is… yet another permutation of American exceptionalism, our national culture rooted itself –by way of the captivity narrative and the frontier myth on the one hand, of blackface minstrelsy on the other –in the nationally dispossessed. American national culture created national identity from the subjugation of its folks.

Just as white artisans and indentured servants needed blackness to establish their identity after the American Revolution, those invested in whiteness are still in need of the imagined black bodies, that they are both repulsed and enamored by.
Free labor and equal citizenship could not co-exist among European/European-Americans and African descendants in a capitalist context where the bourgeoisie were vying for resources and working to maintain social, political, and economic advantages. According to the capitalist system, every man in their respective society had “equal standing before the law, was capable of accumulating goods and resources in unlimited quantity, and was free therefore to maximize his gains so as to satisfy innate materialist appetites” (Cooper, et al, 39). As a result of unregulated market exchanges of goods and services, social relations are vulnerable to manipulation by avaricious individuals’ whose goal was to hinder others from competing in the market place (Cooper, et al, 39). In the spirit of increasing productivity via ascendancy, the elite class sought to replicate slavery under the guises of free labor, sharecropping, apprenticeships and colonization in the Caribbean. “The eventual solution to the labor problem...[was] sharecropping, which evolved out of an economic struggle in which planters were able to prevent most Blacks from gaining access to land, while the freedmen utilized the labor shortage...to oppose efforts to put them back to work in conditions, especially gang labor, reminiscent of slavery” (Foner, 45). “Apprenticeship was, precisely, a metaphor. It applied to adults as much as to young people, to a collectivity as much as to individuals, and it taught former slaves no skill –they knew perfectly well how to cut cane” (Cooper, et al, 20). These tactics ultimately created a class of mostly landless, low-income, disenfranchised Blacks. Integrating freed people failed because European and U.S. global powers built their societies based on a capitalist system where a marginalized class with limited or no power is necessary to sustain said system.

“There are but two sorts of men in the world, freemen and slaves,” John Adams wrote just before the Revolution. He added that the ‘very definition of a freeman is one who is bound by no law to which he has not consented’ and that capitulation to Parliament could make Americans ‘not only...slaves. But the most abject sort of slave to the worst of masters!”
Many republicans emphasized that “the strength, virtue and resolve of a people guarded them from enslavement, and that weakness and servility made those most dependant a threat to the Republic, apt to be pawns of powerful and designing men. From such a stance it was not difficult to move toward considering the proposition that Black oppression was the result of ‘slavishness’ rather than slavery.”


Fredrickson, George M. *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny 1817-1914*.
59 Ibid
63 Ibid, 25.
65 Ibid
71 Ibid
72 Ibid
74 Ibid, 53.
76 Ibid, 15.
82 Ibid
83 Ibid
85 Ibid
86 Ibid, 14.
87 Ibid, 18.
88 Ibid, 19.
89 Ibid, 21.
90 Ibid, 19.
91 Ibid, 20.
92 Ibid, 21.
93 Ibid, 26
94 Ibid, 28


CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY, AFFECT AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

Since the early stages of mass communications and entertainment, minorities, in general, have been subjected to negative depictions. But no minority group’s image has been as severely tarnished by cultural typecasts as African-Americans.\(^1\) Robert Entman and Andrew Rojecki state four reasons why black portrayals in media should be considered as a topic in and of itself:

Blacks are the most consistently visible subjects of political discourse about non-whites in the United States. Second, no other group except Native Americans, possesses a long history of discrimination that includes slavery and genocidal oppression. Third, available methodologies allow for more reliable study of African-Americans. Lastly, the subject of African-Americans is complicated and multifaceted enough. Trying to explore scholarly discourse on every oppressed minority is beyond the scope of one study.\(^2\)

All avenues of mass communications have played a fundamental role in displaying apocryphal images of black life, but this research focuses on short and feature-length animations and how methods of portraying African-Americans in early cinema correspond to this contemporary art form. bell hooks writes, “…giving audiences what is real is precisely what movies do not do. They give the reimagined, reinvented version of the real. It may look like something familiar, but in actuality it is a different universe
from the world of the real. That’s what makes movies so compelling.” This research scrutinizes the “reimagined, reinvented version” of black life in animation, how imagined “blackness” or black people’s ways of being are constructed, and how the reimagined version of black life affects real African American bodies.

In this research subjects (whites) and Others (blacks) are physical bodies. The subject represents white mainstream oriented animation companies that have the ability to visually and audibly replicate and mass produce blacks as the subjugated Other. I use the term bodies, instead of “person” or “individual,” because the term focuses more of the physicality of being a human. It is does not completely remove the emotions and thoughts that come with being a person, but it targets the physical body as being a receptacle or a canvas that assumptions are forced into and projected onto by others. And the body can also be covered and revealed by its owner. The body is our most common and often first representation of us to others. Whether it is upon first meeting someone or a stranger encountering a picture of us, these initial interactions are absent of the emotional and intellectual things that make people who they are. The word “body” is important because it is the representation, misrepresentations, and misuse of African American bodies that were created to determine the emotions and intellect of those who owned the bodies.

This chapter will explore the connections between history, memory, and the affect that assists in the formulation of black caricatured identities. The research specifically questions the history of blacks in the U.S. and how blacks’ presences created certain memories and ideas of black culture in the minds of whites. In later chapters, I discuss
how those memories ultimately affect how black bodies are treated in economical, political, and social arenas.

Heidi J. Nast discusses how memories of history affect the actions on certain bodies. Nast argues that the unconscious psyche of colonizing Europeans around the world “was shaped through colonial sociospatial violence, desire, and repression.” Hast continues and states that,

The psyche was, in this sense, an interiorized repository within which the violent acts and desires of colonization were secreted or made legitimately secret and unspeakable. The "truth" of colonial devastations was spatially displaced or repressed in two ways. First, the memories and actions associated with colonial violences were incorporated into the body-space of the "psyche," an "unconscious" domain outside language. Accordingly, the sequestering and torture of colonized bodies and the burning down of cities and towns was simply asserted, with the particularities of the violence as violence in various sociospatial ways being ignored, suppressed, or elided. Second, certain "unconscious" colonial violences were sexualized, the colonized used "unconsciously" and collectively as a libidinous foil against which the white Oedipal family anxiously defended itself. In this way, the psyche was a doubly secretive place —of colonial conquests asserted to be outside certain lines of questioning and of conquests unconsciously sexualized.⁴
Physical acts against black bodies, whether it was during colonization or slavery, were legitimated, “ignored, suppressed, or elided” in the minds of the colonizers. This suppression became the unconsciousness of the European colonizers. Whether it is through the specific actors of the violence or those who received accounts secondhand, I argue that the legitimated violence against black bodies became a part of a collective white memory.

Ron Eyerman focuses on collective memory in a frame of cultural trauma theory in regards to slavery and the formation of an African American identity. (Eyerman 159) But I am interested in applying the idea of trauma and identity formation in relation of white Americans. Eyerman writes,

As opposed to psychological or physical trauma which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people who have achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a group or have been directly experienced by any or all. While it may be necessary to establish some event or occurrence as the significant 'cause', its traumatic meaning must be established and accepted, a process, which requires time, as well as mediation and representation. A cultural trauma must be understood, explained and made coherent through public reflection and discourse. Here, in modern societies, mass-mediated representations play a decisive role. Alexander (in Alexander et al.,
2004) calls this process 'a meaning struggle' and 'a trauma process', and we sometimes called it a 'trauma drama', when, with the help of mass mediation, collective representation, the collective experience of massive disruption and social crisis becomes a crisis of meaning and identity.\textsuperscript{5}

European immigrants, who wanted to create the whiteness construct in the United States, experienced various levels of dramatic loss of their European ethnic identity and meaning when they chose to mess with Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and industrial norms in America. Although Eyerman does not focus on physical trauma in this excerpt, white Americans identity formation is directly connected to the psychological and physical trauma of African Americans in order to “achieve a degree of cohesion.” Many European immigrants did experience less than ideal working conditions, which many referred to as white slavery. But all whites did not experience this. Those who did and did not experience harsh working conditions still can connect to the whiteness identity and participate in perpetuating blackness. The “cause” for the whiteness construct is the discrimination experiences by European immigrants. But its maintenance it through the blackness construct. Public media outlets create “mass-mediated representations” of varied whiteness and narrowly defined blackness. The “meaning struggle” happens when whiteness must define itself in the absence of blackness (something that arguably has not happened). The struggle is to maintain blackness by recreating it and perpetuating it in different media outlets and altering its presentation. The discrimination and physical and psychological trauma against black bodies was a “collective experience of massive
disruption and social crisis,” which became “a crisis of meaning and identity” for black Americans. But European immigrants, who were experiencing their own identity formation struggles and used black bodies as identity scapegoats, initiated those actions. Within white collective memory are acts of violence against black bodies that still reside in their unconscious. These events reside in their minds even if they did not directly perpetuate the violent behavior toward black bodies or experience the identity struggles that many European immigrants did.

For this research, history is the accumulation of information – events, stories, visual and audible accounts - and the compilation of that information is stored as memories and retrieved when necessary. Memories can be composed of personal encounters or information given by another party. Memories can be positive but can also consist of traumatic occurrences that evoke feelings that can manifest as performance. Anything one does – everyday tasks, behavior, displays of emotions, and traditionally staged events – are forms of performance. The unconscious stage after an event but before it is produced as an emotion is called affect. Often affect is mentioned in relation to a traumatic event and is performed as a way to give the unconscious state a voice. Memory and affect, working in concert with each other, aids in the formation black and white identities in the United States. This paper argues that for some white-owned and operated production companies within entertainment media, the traumatic accounts in mainstream producers’ memories are not the results of trauma inflicted upon them, rather it is a memory of the trauma they (and those before them) have inflicted upon marginalized
groups. The contemporary trauma against black bodies is the result of both visual and audible campaigns waged by motion picture, print, and radio media outlets. These media outlets enabled exaggerated phenotypic features and non-Standard English seen and heard by audiences to be transposed onto the bodies of African Americans. The steady stream of derogatory images of blacks supported de facto race segregation in America and paved the way for a de jure race separation via negative caricatures. Because the trauma inflicted upon blacks formed white identity, maintaining a white supremacist power structure, the resulting affect produced works to protect that structure. The performance of some whites asserting the de facto social hierarchy, preserving their place at the apex, is executed through performative methods such as producing, reinventing and flooding media outlets with egregious depictions of black life. These depictions ultimately protect the status of supposed ideal whiteness. The ways in which production companies who cater to the majority culture ascribing political, environmental, and social power to white people via a performative method demonstrates what I call invested affective performance (IAP). IAP can be seen in mainstream-oriented animation companies that produce “black culture” and create typecast productions (consciously or unconsciously) by accessing cultural memories containing stereotypical imagery and invented histories. The IAP theoretical framework is grounded in a thorough review of the literature devoted to the definitions of affect, performance and the role of whiteness in U.S. society.
Along with blackface-minstrelsy, advertisements, and films, animation has provided an avenue for the distortion of black life. Pre-Civil Rights Movement, African-Americans were presented in the most overtly stereotypical fashion via their personality and appearance. The blueprint for these images consisted of several character categories, which I refer to as the black character formulas. The black character formulas have allowed the entertainment industry to “deliver commodified visual entertainment to the broadest possible consumer market” and reject “aesthetic, cultural, and political masterworks aimed at liberating the human potential” in an effort to transform the limited presentations of blacks to audiences. In order to understand why media images that reject black character formulas rarely get mass distribution, the history of U.S. black-white race relations, must be examined.

THE HISTORY OF BLACK IDENTITY IN ENLIGHTENMENT THEORY AND ITS ROLE IN THE OTHERING PROCESS

As discussed in chapter 1, the black image began with a simple binary black-white comparison that led to widespread generalizations that blacks were a degenerate part of American society. These misconceptions ultimately shaped public opinion and were perpetuated through “scientific” articles and political rhetoric. In order for the idea that blacks were morally and intellectually weaker than whites to manifest into a widespread belief, religious and scientific communities grounded their rhetoric in “what was thought to be facts of nature” and cultural ideologies. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, biological determinism constructed the pseudo-scientific argument
asserting that blacks will always maintain a life of servitude to whites based on their alleged arrested biological development or repetitive immature growth cycles.\textsuperscript{8}

In 18\textsuperscript{th} century science, two arguments under the term biological determinism defined the reasoning for blacks’ supposed lower status: polygenesis and monogenesi\textsuperscript{s}. Polygenesis purported that blacks and whites were two different species where whites believed their supposedly higher intellectual status was a “gift of nature” and blacks were instead the “caricatures of kindness” due to their believed naturally inferior condition.\textsuperscript{9} Monogenesis stated that all races were of the same species with common ancestry, but factors such as color, morality, intelligence, and temperament were due to blacks’ “denigration” from the “original” and “gifted” white male.\textsuperscript{10} The theory postulated that tropical climates (specifically the tropical climates on the continent of Africa) maintained denigration and promoted savagery. Many whites thought this “savagery” needed to be tamed by white domination. In the late 1800s, many Southern whites believed that blacks “found happiness and fulfillment only when dominated by a white master” making them “unfit for freedom.”\textsuperscript{11} These social conventions established an atmosphere conducive to the creation of entertainment images of black servants cheerfully performing their “natural duties” assigned to blacks.

At the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, the once highly revered Egyptians were portrayed as “gay, pleasure-loving, childishly boastful and essentially materialistic” among “sound” scholars.\textsuperscript{12} This new model of Egypt fed the stereotypical elements of the lazy, immature, hedonistic coon in United States’ mass media. In America, many whites feared that the
new free Negro would bring chaos and instability to the status quo created by the previous oppressor-oppressed social structure during slavery. The most infamous depiction of this imagined chaos is in D.W. Griffith’s silent film *Birth of a Nation* (1915) during Reconstruction.

Adapted from Thomas Dixon’s novel *The Clansman*, *The Birth of a Nation* informs the audience that emancipation was a disastrous concept. Free black men were presented as Brute Negroes free to hunt white virgins. This movie did not come without real consequences. As stated in *Ethnic Notions*, a documentary on blacks in the media, “These images were guaranteed to incite racial violence. But more: they justified it.” As the only film that held the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) as heroes and not American terrorists, the release of *The Birth of a Nation* did not accurately predict the actions of blacks. Consequently KKK’s membership and violence towards blacks increased.¹³ NAACP, other civil rights and religious organizations protested the film in New York, Chicago and Boston.¹⁴ Race riots ensued and the movie was banned in five states and nineteen cities.¹⁵ Donald Bogle writes, “…after *The Birth of a Nation*: never again could the Negro be depicted in the guise of an out-and-out villain…Consequently, black males in Hollywood films were cast almost always in comic roles.”¹⁶ Therefore the result of people’s reaction to propaganda movies such as *The Birth of a Nation*, influential pundits questioning blacks’ ability to be productive citizens,¹⁷ and Hollywood’s choice to present black men as comedians explains why the coon caricature is most the consistently used depiction of black men. Because of his humor, the coon also appears most appropriate for a youth
audience. However, before the advent of animation, the coon caricatures, and other black character formulas, were formed and promoted in various production, educational, and science communities.

THE ROLE OF HISTORY MEMORY, AND AFFECT IN BLACK AND WHITE IDENTITY FORMATION

“Scientific” rhetoric was vital to the separation of races and the distribution of economic and social resources. Shaping of a predominately white public opinion is a process of Othering a group of people who are not viewed as members of the dominant culture. This research defines Othering as a process in which a group of people, usually with the most social, political and economic influence, uses their resources to present people outside of their group as not just different from them, but inept. This research focuses on whites’ Othering blacks in the United States through media resources. Others (blacks) are believed to pose a threat to white identity, access to economic resources, and political and social influence supposedly designated for the Subjects (whites) of the dominant culture.18 The partition between the Other and the Subject is facilitated and maintained through memory. It is through a history replete with racism that distinctions are made between the two groups regarding who can attain the status of worthy members (Subjects) of the U.S. nation and who cannot (Others). It is the process of Othering that white identity relies upon in order to define itself. The memory of past acts of Othering and the need to maintain the Subject group’s definition in the present creates a racially
divisive national sentiment. The ways in which the formulation of difference is maintained is through affect.

This paper defines affect as an ethereal visitant in individuals’ subconscious that is activated by visual and auditory content which, in turn, triggers emotions and actions experienced by the participant whose feelings and reactions are informed by a history attached to the visual and auditory content. Affect circulates among bodies similar to currency, and how those bodies emotionally and socially invest in methods to increase the negative identity capital of Othering black people. Negative identity capital is defined as the negative mental images and concepts attached to a group’s identity that accumulates in one’s memory. As more ideas enter the psyche, these memories build like currency. As the capital grows, the value of those negative ideas grows as well as their connection to the group they are supposed to represent.

Years of perpetuating fabricated black history has gained capital in the minds of its white creators and speculates ways in which blackness formed through white memory. Anthropomorphic animation is used as an example of how identity politics and affect perpetuate themselves through a lucrative entertainment industry and how the presentation of racial identity can change. I argue that the construct of affect has a significant influence on the images portrayed in media.

OBJECTS AND OTHERS

History, affect, and performance can work together to produce caricatures that can erroneously inform Subjects about Othered individuals and vice versa. The emotions and
ultimately the actions that occur in reaction to affect-latent images are called an affective response. The role of affect is crucial to invested affective performance because it is the affect in animators, company executives, and their viewing audiences that is formed by the visual and audible content within the black character formulas that rely upon a racist Enlightenment history. Therefore black character formulas become a symbol of xenophobia and a tool for animation companies to remind their audience of the stereotypical attributes assigned to blacks in the 17th and 18th centuries. It is these attributes that inform the actions of non-blacks toward black bodies, black bodies towards the dominant culture, and how black bodies interact with other black bodies. It is Enlightenment ideology (specifically ideas of social Darwinism, biological determinism, and environmentalism) that resides in the consciousness and/or unconsciousness of animation producers that conducts how animation companies attempt to replicate blackness in their productions.

According to Sara Ahmed’s The Cultural Politics of Emotion, affect moves from body to body producing emotions on the surface of physical bodies and creates definitions for those who represent those bodies. Ahmed claims that bodies are marked with emotions that are read by another body. The history associated with those beings creates their objects or caricatures. Black character formulas, or caricatures of blacks, are the objects in media outlets used to falsely inform viewers of the history, purpose, and everyday lives of real black bodies. The false history informs the emotions and the
performance of the whites (Subject) towards blacks (Other). Because caricatures (objects) are circulated most frequently and are often incorrect representations of bodies, the emotions and actions of white Subject bodies towards black Othered bodies are often based on false pretenses. Because black character formulas do not accurately display the complexities of black people, these formulas give fallacious accounts of black life.

These problematic caricatures have been misinforming the public for hundreds of years. Their influence has made such an impact that many have internalized caricatures of blacks as truth. As affect moves among bodies, it also assists in inciting emotions. Therefore, affect circulates and produces emotions that accumulate over time. According to Ahmed, the assigned traits to the caricature become reinforced. Because of the repetitive circulation of affect, the attributes the white subject places on blacks in order to form blackness becomes what Ahmed calls “sticky.” The contrived and ahistorical characteristics become “stuck” on the caricature and simultaneously stuck on the real body. Although these characteristics can be “unstuck” and different traits can replace them, the caricature still represents a group of Othered bodies. Hate can be used to demonstrate the fixative nature of affect and emotions.

“Sticking” attributes onto black caricatures allows for whites to direct their activities of hate towards the real black physical bodies. This action was apparent in the race riots during Independence Day celebrations in New York before emancipation and in the increased lynching of blacks after the release of The Birth of a Nation. According to Ahmed, the reason black caricatures are targets of hate is because the white subject sees
the black Other as being or embodying hate; an emotion that travels to the white subject who is then filled with hate. This phenomenon is similar to immigrant’s infatuation with blackness in the 1800s coupled with the violence against blacks because immigrants saw blacks as their preindustrial selves. Because hate ignites negative feelings in the white subject, the subject, as a result, believes their “reading” of the black as hateful is a true presumption.²³ As a result, the white subject sees the black other as full of hate. The hate the white person feels is not because the black person is full of hate; rather it is because of the negative identity capital that resides in the mind of the white victimizer allowing ideas of infatuation and contempt to stick to the black body.²⁴ The black victims in the race riots before emancipation do not control the emotion or the manifestation of that emotion in the mind of the white victimizer. Affect circulates among bodies but the reaction those bodies have to each other is completely dependent on the history and concepts that reside in the individuals’ minds.

Because black caricatures are not assigned to one person and represent an indistinct group of people, the targets of hate could be anyone who appears to embody the caricature.²⁵ By having the ability to label anyone as the threatening Other, the hate affect and the cycle of violence against Othered bodies is perpetuated. The white subject has been inculcated with prejudices and biases of the black other. Therefore when the white subject sees the black other, they feel the negative feelings that an erroneous history created and stuck on the black body by way of the caricature.
Although in this example I use the emotion of hate, I do not propose that hate necessarily plays a conscious role in continuing black character formulas today. Rather, it is the preservation of the white identity that takes precedence over the harm inflicted on African Americans. However, it is the affect created by hateful activities, including bodily trauma and identity smear campaigns inflicted upon blacks by whites in the past that informs present-day media depictions of blackness produced by whites; the result of an internalized racism affect. Although Ahmed rejects the notion that affect resides interiorly, believing that affect only moves externally, I argue that affect circulates outside of the body, but it also activates bodies internally in order for emotions to be exhibited externally or performed. Richard Schechner, in What is Performance, writes that traditionally performance is reflexive “twice-behaved behaviors” or “restored behaviors” of people who train, practice and rehearse “marked identities” which “bend time, reshape and adorn the [physical] body and tell stories.” The behaviors are acts of emotions that are seen on the physical body. Twice behaved behaviors or restored behaviors means that performance is always repeated and is never new. It is merely actions and language that are reconfigured, giving an illusion of an innovative act. Performing is the last stage in creating and maintaining identities.

Affect from the past can also leave an ethereal residue, which affects present actions and emotions. This maintains the idea that an action or performance is twice behaved. Actions are repetitive because the same affect is circulating causing similar reactions. It is the internalization of affect that creates what Patricia Ticinto Clough calls
autoaffection. In *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Patricia Ticineto Clough defines *affect* as “bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body’s capacity to act, to engage and to connect, such that autoaffection is linked to the self-feeling by being alive…There is a reflux back from conscious experience at affect…such that ‘past action and contexts are conserved and repeated, autonomically reactivated but not accomplished; begun but not completed.’” In other words, affect is the mental state that is automatically in constant reflux between an unconscious state and conscious feelings. It is the intangible nature of affect that makes it ethereal. Affect’s reflux between the unconscious and the conscious is in constant motion while an individual is watching or listening to affect-latent material such as black character formulas. Autoaffection is an automatic affective response to a caricature image and/or to its corresponding human body.

The affect and autoaffection surrounding the trauma inflicted upon Africans and black Americans was established prior to the Enlightenment years, but the manifestation of that history reached its peak when whites insisted on the demarcation between Europeans and blacks in the name of colonization and white supremacy. I offer that the act of drawing or the act of generating 3D computerized bodies by trained and practiced individuals are restored behaviors used to mark identities. The black character formulas are the marked identities. The caricatures are marked with stereotypical physical, audible, and personality characteristics that are placed by producers and character artists in the media industry. The ways in which mainstream-oriented media have transformed from
the Pre-Civil Rights era to the present are not original. Animated anthropomorphism only
gives the illusion that the marked identities of black bodies in the minstrelsy circuit of the
1800s are not present in modern cartoon characters. The connection made between the
caricature and the body is through the signifying process.

THE SIGNIFIER AND THE SIGNIFIED

There is a method in which individuals form caricatures, which make some bodies
appear competent and other’s incompetent. Through memory, society assigns attributes to
caricatures and caricatures to people. In *Representations: Cultural Representations and
Signifying Practices*, Stuart Hall suggests that elements of representation – sound,
clothing, gestures, expressions – do not have meaning within themselves. The attributes
or symbols can be tardiness, an unkempt appearance, and/or colloquial language. These
symbols signify to the interpreter a meaning informed by friends, family, and media
outlets: tardiness equates to irresponsibility and laziness, colloquial language represents
ignorance, and people who have lower income occupations tend to have a disheveled
appearance. If the interpreter’s informational sources (friends, family, and media outlets)
state that black people are tardy, use colloquialisms, and are a large percentage of the
working poor, then the value judgments that are associated with the symbols are then
assigned to or stuck onto black people. As a result, because some black people are tardy
they, and all black people, are lazy; because some black people use slang, all blacks are
ignorant; because some black people are impoverished they, and most blacks, are not
clean. These associations lead to generalizations and can have social, political, and economic repercussions: A black person may not be hired for a job because the non-black employer believes that all blacks are tardy and ignorant.

The importance of the symbols does not lie in its literal function or physical look; rather the significance lies within the definition of the attributes that are utilized for communication or language. Hall writes that representation is the creation of definitions given to these symbols or concepts that are formed in our minds and are expressed through language. Individuals have a mental system of representation or a conceptual map consisting of categorized complex concepts of mental associations related to all caricatures, people and events that are dependent on the individuals’ interpretation of the world.

The translation of the conceptual maps into signs – indexical (written words and spoken sounds) and iconic (visual images) – is what Hall calls language. The compilation of visual markers (disheveled appearance) and auditory elements (non-standard English and use of slang) are within an interpreter’s conceptual map and function as mnemonic devises that define the image (a black person). These symbols and definitions create conceptual maps that are formed into indexical and iconic signs. Any black person can be a sign for the interpreter with the mentioned conceptual map. If a black person displays the elements in the conceptual map, that black person (or any black person) represents laziness, poverty, and irresponsibility.
Visual images such as race or sex can be types of signs that must be interpreted via the conceptual maps and communicated into language. Representation is the process which links concepts and signs or images together to make what Hall calls codes. The codes are the black character formulas. The image of a black man in tattered clothing eating a watermelon is an image filled with signs that, when combined, is connected to the coon caricature. Those caricatures are given meaning through conceptual maps. The coon is a commodified stereotypical code used to make a quick association with black men. The “coon code” used by some producers of black male images are crucial in that it is the codes that govern the relationships of translation, attach the relationship between conceptual maps and shared language, and stabilize meaning\textsuperscript{32} for the viewers. Therefore, other stereotypes such as the mammy, matriarch, and jezebel, are the result of mental concepts and meanings that have been shaped by restricted exposure, through contrived sources of history, or a deficient memory.

In order to understand how affect works upon various individuals, let’s consider a hypothetical situation that exposes the emotional and physical reactions of movie patrons to Disney’s Dumbo. The stereotypically African American crows produce anger in a black male moviegoer because he believes this depiction is exemplary of the racist and derogatory coon caricature. The black man decides to complain to Disney studios or local movies theaters in an effort to have the movie removed from the marquee. Another movie patron, a white male viewer, sees the crows as an affirmation that blacks are the source of entertainment, humor and mockery. The white viewer’s emotion of amusement may
produce laughter and a joke between the viewer and friends. The movie informs each viewer via two sensory functions: visual and audible.

In *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Brian Massumi describes the connections and disconnections between visual and audible content, language, and affect via what he calls the primacy of affect in image reception.\(^{33}\) Massumi asserts that there is a distance between content (the caricature) and effect (or affect) but they are paradoxically connected and disconnected at the same time.\(^{34}\) He writes,

> [I]t would appear that the strength or duration of an image’s effect is not logically connected to the content in any straightforward way. This is not to say that there is no connection and no logic. What is meant here by the content of the image is its indexing to conventional meanings in an intersubjective context, its sociolinguistic qualification. This indexing fixes the determinate qualities of the image; the strength or duration of the image’s effect could be called intensity. If there is a relation, it is of another nature.\(^{35}\)

Using the *Dumbo* theater experience example, Massumi might suggest that the affect (which Massumi calls “effect”), which influenced the black moviegoer’s actions (his anger and then his complaints), is “not logically connected” to the content or the movie itself. Meaning it simply is not the movie that created the moviegoers reactions. It was the history and knowledge the moviegoers had about the portrayals of black men in media that fueled his response.
The crows as representations of African Americans have indexing qualities, meaning the crows act as a referent to the egregious images of blacks of the past but also the political, social, and economical constraints placed on blacks that were a result of many whites’ affective responses to people of color. Although the visible and audible content serve as indexing qualities that guide the moviegoer toward racist ideologies, its contemporary conventional meaning does not blatantly expose the racist history. Rather Hollywood’s animation executives attempt to place a festive net of bright colors, animal characters, and a catchy soundtrack over past racist imagery in an effort to conceal and divert attention away from the misconceived notions of the Enlightenment era that informs racial caricatures and obscures the old visual and audible traits from minstrelsy found in present-day animated characters. The problematic elements of history are hidden in anthropomorphic representations and within the safe environment of child-targeted cartoons. However, the racist history, which is attached to blackness within the intersubjective text of the animation, peeks through the veneer of bright colors and animated characters if one is attuned and recognizes it. The semi-transparent nature of the veneer allows for viewers to react to the presences of the history underneath whether they realize what they are reacting to or not.

The caricatured black images, the crows, are placed within the intersubjective context of a movie. The animation is intersubjective because it relates to and has the ability to conjure a variety of ideas from the memory of the viewer. The movie, whose purpose is to provide entertainment, is also stabilizing blackness within the crows via the
added layer of “sociolinguistic qualification.” In other words, stereotypical definitions of African Americans are affixed to their actual identities via caricatures that use language that is influenced by social and cultural factors labeled “black.” These linguistic factors, such as black English or the more pejorative term “ebonics,” are directly associated with African Americans with subpar education and a lower social economic status. By utilizing racialized speech, the crows’ linguistic expression secures a stronger connection to the coon caricature.

Language has the capability to alter the level of intensity experienced by an individual. Massumi writes, “The relationship between the levels of intensity and qualification is not one of conformity or correspondence but rather of resonation or interference, amplification or dampening.” I argue the intensity that qualifies the stereotypical elements of the caricature is not because media outlets are consciously choosing to conform to Enlightenment ideology but rather the caricatures and ideas from the Enlightenment era are linked because intensity (the visual and auditory repetition of an image or character) causes these stereotypical qualities to resonate in our psyches. Massumi’s definition of intensity can be viewed as the increasingly stronger glue that assists in the sticking of attributes on the objects described by Ahmed. Our constant interaction with caricatures interferes with reality, amplifies fictitious accounts of black life, and dampens the voices that yearn to exchange indolent coons, emasculating matriarchs, tragic mulattoes, and accommodating mammies for multidimensional representations of African Americans. The crows’ language serves as a tangent that
connects them to the coon character formula, which is directly connected to an idea of blackness used to define African Americans for centuries. The crows’ ultimately remind the black viewer of de facto and de jure segregation. The frequency of which viewers see the crows or other caricatures increases the strength of the crows’ connections to blackness. The connection intensifies. Therefore when we see the crows, we automatically see blackness. When we see blackness performed we automatically see African Americans. The movie did not tell either the white or black patron how to feel or act; therefore, Masssumi may conclude that there is not a “straightforward” connection between the movie and the individuals’ actions. However, each response appears logical given the individuals’ association to blacks and the coon caricature.

Although some black moviegoers may readily identify the discriminatory implications of the Dumbo’s imagery, others viewers (white, black, or other groups) may leave the theater without making the connection. Regardless of the race of the viewer, one can observe racist imagery and either subsequently internalize the negative attributes and assign them to a personal identity (e.g. blacks who participate in creating stereotypical blackness) or accept the derogatory fictitious characters as denotations of blackness (e.g. people who accept caricatures as true representation of black life). Within this research, invested affective performance will be attributed to white producers of blackness who create animated characters whose attributes are informed by a distorted memory of erroneously monolithic blackness which is replicated to maintain America’s white supremacist power structure. But it is important to note that blacks can also
participate in invested affective performance, consciously or subconsciously, similar to their white counterparts.

bell hooks writes, “Despite progressive interventions (there are certainly more black filmmakers making films, both Hollywood and independent films, than ever before), there have not been sustained major visual leaps in the nature of black representation.” In order for blacks to participate in invested affect performance (IAP), they must internalize and accept the prejudicial information fed to viewers about blacks. Subsequently, this internalization comes with the belief that the rightful place of whites is within American hegemony: the place of social, economic and political power. The socialization and the mental processes associated with blacks internalizing self-degradation is arguably separate and different from the process occurring in white producers of blackness. White producers of blackness are not degrading themselves but are consciously or unconsciously belittling another race, which, in turn, uplifts themselves. Although the ways in which people process black caricatures are different, the circulation of, exposure to, and purpose of black caricatures are the same. However, the history the caricature conjures in the minds of each viewer may be different and the emotions and performance that occurs in reaction to the caricature may also vary. Therefore, for each viewer, the coon caricature’s qualities that are placed on the crows produce different levels of reactions.

For the black patron, because the crows are ostracized and represent a lower socio-economic status; they are a manifestation of racist rhetoric from the 1700s and
1800s directed towards blacks. For example, in 1826 The Boston Prison Discipline Society stated that blacks allegedly contributed to the idleness, disorderliness, and criminality of the urban poor. Seeing the crows residing in which they call “their place,” away from other beings, ignites an emotion in the black viewer that is a reaction towards racism in media outlets.

In the movie scenario, for the white viewer, the crows represent black male depictions he has passively watched, reacted to, listened to, read and consciously or unconsciously embraced throughout his life. Nefarious strategies within popular media were well entrenched in literature prior to the advent of the motion picture. It is through works of fiction that many black character formulas were birthed. For example, Roark Bradford, the writer of *Ol’ Man Adam an’ His Chillun* (1928), demonstrates how social conventions permeated books,

The Negro is a race leader not too militant, concerned more with economic independence than with civil equality. The colored person, frequently of mixed blood loathes the blacks and despises the whites…Generally inherits the weakness of both races. They are traditionally grouped with white trash and incite race riots and lynchings. The nigger is indolent, entirely irresponsible…a poor fighter, and a poor hater, primitively emotional and uproariously funny. Bradford determined categories for African Americans based on their interactions with white people and a predetermined level of humanity. “The Negro” is uplifted because he or she is not concerned with “civil equality.” Therefore it is “the Negro” who
aids in maintaining segregation, thus providing more resources for non-blacks. “The colored person” is deemed emotionally and mentally inept and is presented as useless to either race. The idle “nigger,” is immature and irresponsible, which presents him or her as an inadequate parent or breadwinner for the black family. But “the nigger” is a source of humor for a white audience.

Affective response determines the past de facto categorization methods of African Americans and attempts to give validation to emotional reasoning for dehumanizing a group of people. The black audience member, consciously or unconsciously, recognizes that for centuries black filmmakers have been determined to accurately portray their humanity on the cinematic screen. The language and imagery within the movie, works in tandem to produce a stronger physical and emotional reaction in and on the surface of the moviegoer’s black body. On the other hand, for the white viewer, the crows reinforce depictions of supposed black inhumanity that resonates in many Hollywood executives. For the white moviegoer, the crows are a reminder that black men are irresponsible, childish and entertaining. It is through the interaction of imagery, language, and bodies that we can understand affect.

Although affective reflux is a continuous process in our minds it does not create a permanent mental residence. Affect can repeatedly affect the emotions of individuals as a result of interacting with affect-latent sensory material. As affect circulates around and in-between bodies and within black character formulas, physical bodies have the capacity to give “affect” and “be affected” while objects like the black character formulas cause
bodies to be affected. Being affected by the circulation of affect creates an emotional response that can vary from individual to individual. The affect received by the moviegoers via the coon caricature in *Dumbo* remained the same, but the emotions produced in each of them were different. Therefore, it is affect’s ability to modify the “body’s capacity to act, to engage and to connect” that give affect its transformative power and emotional malleability. The crows in *Dumbo* are the visual and auditory content that helped to circulate stereotypical attributes that are saturated with affect and produces various emotions.

Emotions permit us to distinguish between invisible affect and the visible emotion.\(^{42}\) Because emotions are external they “mark” the surfaces of bodies. These “markings” are the result of elements (subjects, others, and objects) responding to one another.\(^{43}\) During the process of the subject attempting to define the Other, the subject simultaneously creates objects or caricatures informed by stereotypes. Objects are fictitious idealized identity definitions that form a façade that works as a reductive representation of a group of bodies that ultimately forms a barrier that prevents an untainted interaction between bodies. The object for the Other is often negative audible and visual depictions of the Other. The object for the subject is often positive (whiteness as normative) and is in direct opposition to the Other (blackness as ethnic or residing outside of whiteness).

The black moviegoer recognizes that the crows visually (creating a trump with their beaks to play the jazz number) and audibly (non-standard English usage) are
animated objects that are performing blackness, which in turn are suppose to represent him. Knowing that the crows’ depiction of blackness is fictitious, incited an emotion of anger in the black moviegoer, in response to the affect released by the movie character. The white viewer who does not see a representation of himself but believes that the coon caricature is accurate, laughs “safely” because he believes the portrayal is factual. By “safely,” I mean the white viewer does not recognize himself or his ethnicity in the crows because whiteness is not given a category. His identity is not harmed. Also, because the depictions are placed on screen for public viewing he can argue that he did not make the characters and it is not his fault that they are humorous to him. Blame is removed. His laughter and relationship with characters has a safe distance that does not taint him.

White movie critic, Leonard Maltin writes, “The crows are undeniably black, but they are black characters, not black stereotypes. There is no denigrating dialogue, or Uncle Tomism in the scene, and if offence is to be taken in hearing blacks call each other ‘brother,’ then the viewer is merely being sensitive to accuracy.” By stating that the crows’ interactions with each other are accurate, that they are “undeniably black” and show no criticism for the way the crows represent African Americans, illustrates how viewers can be oblivious to implications of black character formulas.

George Lipsitz defines whiteness as “the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations.”

Whiteness is simply denoted by what it is not. As long as the discussion of race continues
to focus on marginalized groups deemed deviant, then whiteness will always imply the
universal human norm. White-owned media outlets that perpetuate black character
formulas and maintain whiteness as the universal norm are executing what Lipsitz calls
*possessive investment in whiteness*. The white power structure relies on white hegemony
over marginalized groups through a “disciplined, systemic, and collective *group* activity
that has structured whiteness in U.S. history” and concurrently constructs blackness. In
*Giving an Account of Oneself*, Judith Butler argues that “the problem is not the
universality as such but with an operation of universality that fails to be responsive to
cultural particularity and fails to undergo a reformulation of itself in response to the
social and cultural conditions it includes within its scope of applicability…the universal
precept itself becomes a site of contest.” The term universal or normalcy becomes a site
of contention because “normal” becomes exchanged for “white” and “non-whites” are
then lumped in the default category of “abnormal” and outside of the hegemony.
Therefore the issue is not with the term “humanity” or “universality” but with its
exclusion of non-whites.

The crows therefore become a representative of those being excluded from the
category of normal and humane. Not only because they reminds us of the dehumanizing
coon but also because they are not human. The crows’ anthropomorphism adds a layer of
sub-human subtext that reinforces the animal depictions of blacks during the 17th and 18th
centuries. The erroneous representation makes the crows somewhat of an anomaly. The
crows are not a holistic representation of either the black or white moviegoer or their
respective ethnic groups. The crows are suppose to represent authentic African American culture, but the black viewer renders the crows unrecognizable or as a misrepresentation of himself or other black men. The African American audience member refuses or cannot see himself in the crows. The crows are so far from the “normalcy” of whiteness that the white movie patron easily disregards the caricature as anything other than himself. Here lies an interesting conundrum: Both the black and white viewers feel a disconnect from the coon caricature, yet the fictitious object is still connected to the “Othered” black male regardless of his many attempts to distance himself (e.g. his outrage and concerns expressed to the movie theater administration and Disney studios).

For example, most likely, black actors such as Eddie Murphy the voice of Mushu in *Mulan*, would not say that Mushu, or other such characters used to depict African Americans, is an accurate imitation of black men or a true and complete example of himself. Yet, Mushu exemplifies all that is stereotypically black. As an actor, Murphy thought of (or was told by Disney executives) how to portray an incompetent and obnoxious, devalued peon which does not represent Eddie Murphy the multimillion dollar actor and movie producer. The determined characteristics of Mushu seem to extend outside of Murphy’s identity; however, the repercussions of portraying a coon do not remain outside of Murphy. Instead, by playing a coon the bond between the immature coon and the African American male population is intensified.

In *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Brian Massumi’s writes,
The problem with acting...is that it doesn’t take the actor far enough outside of himself. The movie actor’s success hinges on his ability to see himself as others see him, but is circumvented by...“mental pictures.” These are private images the actor forms of the character he is portraying, developed from the script. The actor makes words into images, visualizes text, then renders that visualization public by embodying it before the camera.\textsuperscript{50}

If Murphy is given a coon caricature to portray that he knows (consciously or unconsciously) does not represent him or other black men, then what “mental pictures” and audible information could he draw from in order to inhabit Mushu? The only reductive traits that can encompass Mushu are two-hundred year-old coon character behaviors. Murphy performs what Massumi calls an “assigned social role” for “the benefit of others occupying the contrasting but complementary character roles.”\textsuperscript{51} Blacks, such as Eddie Murphy, may see their real lives as so far removed from black caricatures, that playing them in a movie is irrelevant since they believe black character formulas do not represent anyone. However, this stance is more harmful than not.

As a result, Murphy participates in invested affective performance by maintaining a white definition of blackness whether knowingly or not. Murphy either knowingly has a possessive investment in whiteness or feels he is so far removed from stereotypical black identity that voicing a coon caricature seems inconsequential. Not everyone who has a possessive investment in whiteness does so consciously; it can be an unconscious
socialization. However this unconscious social role-playing can occur in the privileged subject as well as the disadvantaged Other.

Massumi writes, “For each role there is a privileged [counterpart] in whose recognition of you, you recognize yourself.” As black character formulas continue to circulate referencing blackness, both white and black viewers can begin to view the stereotype as true. If majority-culture media outlets continue to disseminate fallacious accounts of black life, then not only will non-blacks believe that the false accounts are authentic, but blacks can also internalize those character traits as guidelines for performing blackness in their own lives.

It is Murphy, the white moviegoer and the Disney executives that participate in invested affective performance. Each individual saw Mushu via blackness formulated out of an invented identity of black men. Each participated in promoting the circulation of the coon character: Murphy voiced the character, the white moviegoer patronized the theater, and Disney created and produced the movie in addition to having it distributed around the world ultimately gaining high profits.

The restructuring of affect that occurred in the minds of the two movie patrons, Murphy, and the Disney’ executives was based on how each involved party has been socialized in reference to black people. Each party has been a part of a white-dominated film industry that consistently places white identity in opposition to blackness. Therefore, Disney executives and the white movie patron may believe that the images and stereotypes given to them by various mainstream-targeted media outlets are true.
representations of black culture and are not representative of their white identity. It is the affective nature of invested affective performance that allows Disney executives to create a character based on black stereotypes and allows the movie patron to find humor in a character that he does not believe is representative of him. The Disney executives utilize invested affective performance by employing animation to maintain white identity by reinforcing a negative black identity. By maintaining the stereotype that black men are irresponsible and untrustworthy (whether purposefully or unintentionally) producers of black culture representations simultaneously degrade blackness and uplift whiteness.

The movie patron assisted in reinforcing black stereotypes by not only justifying the caricatures with racist jokes, but also assisted in the monetary success of the movie. The monetary success of a film informs other entertainment executives about the lucrative benefits of a movie like *Mulan*. Its success initiates movies of the same genre and with similar characters that ultimately produce more stereotypical visual and audible content for the public. Although both the black and white moviegoers made a monetary investment in the circulation of a black character formula, because the white movie patron saw the movie as harmless humor, there is a likely chance white movie patrons will continue to patronize similar movies. In addition, the white moviegoer’s monetary investment signifies a psychological investment in his white identity and the promotion of that identity through racist banter. The racist banter between bodies about other bodies assists in the circulation of affect.
AFFECTIVE ECONOMIES

The emotions towards bodies are caused by affect, which is informed by history. The emotions towards bodies can become stronger and create meanings that are stabilized within caricatures, which become representative bodies. According to Ahmed’s theory of “affective economies,” the circulation of affect among bodies is equated to the movement of commodities in free-market economy. Emotions are “fetishized,” in a Marxian view, and are perceived as commodities that can gain and lose value as they circulate among bodies and caricatures.

In Marx’s Capital, he asserts, “a commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood.” Using Michael Billig’s analogy, We all know what a table is. We recognize that it is made out of wood and it has been fashioned into something useful. However, when the table is considered as a commodity with value, Marx suggests, then matters are not so simple. The table now has a price or value, which is understood as a relation with other commodities. This is experienced as something trivial and as if completely understood. Yet this understanding involves a distortion of forgetting. According to Marx, consumers forget the labor used to create the commodity.

Emotions can be seen as relatively trivial and mostly understood. One can know that emotions are feelings that allow humans to navigate actions towards other humans; however, Ahmed believes when emotions become “fetishes” that move about in affective economies containing subjects, others, and caricatures, the fetishes act as currency that
can raise the value of caricatures. The emotions become “sticky” and are “stuck” to various caricatures. For this research, the forces that perpetuate the affective economy are media outlets and animation is one example. As the entertainment industry continues to use caricatures or black character formulas in their productions, it forms a stronger adhesive for various emotions towards certain black character formulas to stick to caricatures.

The emotion glued onto black character formulas distorts the history of the caricature’s formation and the history of the supposed representative bodies. In affective economies, the history of those bodies is erased and the bodies’ history is reduced to its caricature.\(^5^6\) This reduction is articulated in Marx’s idea on commodity fetishism and used in Ahmed’s theory of affective economies. For Marx, the labor used to create commodities has been detached from the roots of the social relations that produced it resulting in consumers defining the commodity in relation to the value of other commodities.\(^5^7\) Therefore consumers forget, or are not aware of, the laborious tasks executed prior to the commodity’s consumption.\(^5^8\) For Ahmed, emotions are the commodity. Media outlets and many in the general public assigned certain emotions to caricatures without knowing the history of why certain emotions are given to certain caricatures. Collective forgetfulness is what separates labor history and its artifacts.

The reduction of certain bodies’ histories is based upon the society’s ethos or Marx and Engel’s theory of ideology in capitalist societies. The theory of ideology is “based upon a distinction between the nature of social reality and the widely experienced
distortion of that reality.” Marx argues that the ideology of a given capitalist society is guided by its ruling class. I argue that the Eurocentric socially constructed ideology in the United States forms caricatures of “untruths” that hide not only authentic black histories but also the history of the process that constructed the caricatures (as far back as the Enlightenment period). Marx and Engles, in *The German Ideology*, argue, “beliefs and philosophies are socially constructed and that they reflect the condition of life from which they emerge.” As “ideology” permeates the society and preserves certain beliefs and philosophies, they can become “distorted” and are “insufficient for understanding the social conditions which have produced such beliefs.”

For example, because black women have been historically viewed as licentious within the U.S. ideology, the black women’s caricature, the jezebel, is an insufficient way of understanding black women. In addition, the jezebel-caricature only stands for black women’s supposed sexuality and not the history of fabricated rhetoric used to demean black women. When bodies come in contact with the jezebel-caricature, the person is not privy to the Enlightenment history that offered the distorted view; the person only sees black women’s sexuality. As the jezebel-caricature is broadcasted in media outlets it carries with it and reinforces the affect and emotions from long ago that circulate in contemporary society. Affect, emotions, and black character formulas have been “fetishized” or have become commodities. Enlightenment history informs affect, which produces emotions that towards blacks that, in turn, create caricatures for black bodies. Those caricatures are black character formulas used to not only form black and white
identity but also to drive an entertainment industry that sells commodities containing “fetishized” blackness. Intangible black identity (caricatures) has been made into a commodity in order to be sold in tangible commodities (e.g. movies on DVDs). Therefore the caricatures that are seen in media outlets have a fantastical history, albeit an absent one. The truth behind the caricature is “a secret” which “conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour.”64 This concealment operates through a process of social forgetting.65

THE ROLE OF MEMORY

Sara Ahmed writes, “…emotions accumulate over time, as a form of affective value. Caricatures only seem to have such value, by an erasure of these histories, as histories of production and labor.”66 Blackness has gained value of what appears to be an indelible negative identity through a removal of history via media productions. Obliterating history or that which informs identity is the result of restricted conceptual maps. The restricted maps occur because of a change in the social fabric that facilitates new strategies to uphold the ethos through activities of hate towards blacks. The characteristics assigned to the caricature only appear to embody that identity because of “an erasure of history of their production and circulation.”67 It is a faulty memory that forgets denotations and connotations associated with the translation and stabilization of the caricature’s identity and its meaning.

The importance of forgetting the history of how blackness was established must be acknowledged because forgetting prevents the creators of blackness to realize the
racist history that is informing their production; forgetting also makes room for reconstruction of the Other. Walter Lantz, producer of Scrub Me Mama who has a history of negatively depicting people of color, is an example of dominant white culture’s memory of minority groups reinforcing minorities’ subjugation, possibly without realizing their detrimental efforts. Lantz insisted after the censoring of his 1940s Swing Symphonies – a series of short cartoons using popular “boogie-woogie” songs starring black stereotypical characters – that his works were never offensive of blacks. Lantz’s belief that his animated minstrels were not aiding and abetting harmful beliefs regarding blacks speaks to the prominent role of forgetting among members of the dominant culture (whites) and its function in maintaining social distinctions among races in addition to the visual ways race distinction materialized in American society. The process of forgetting is what Joseph Roach calls an “opportunistic tactic of whiteness.”

The issue with white creators of black culture “forgetting” (willful or accidental) their role in asserting their social superiority is that marginalized groups continue to remember and challenge erroneous constructions of their identity. In some instances, there is a willful erasing of the variety of identities among black people and purposeful ignoring of discriminatory reality that affect blacks in America. In the former instance, there is involuntary forgetting because the conceptual map of the person is primarily composed of limited and inaccurate concepts. In the latter case, the person is aware of the diversity among black people and the oppressive consequences of black people’s subjugated status. Whether willful or involuntary, the outcome of forgetting in relation to
black caricature formulas is harmful; they both create caricatures that continue to be inaccurately reformulated. Forgetting allows for lost traits of the caricature to be substituted by new ones. The promotion of dated caricatures or their modern reformulations through media outlets assist American hegemonic forces and work as weapons in the fight for the maintenance of white collective ethos. The stereotypical caricature offers the viewing public a flawed and tainted source of knowledge. Its flaws are stereotypical physical, audible, and personality characteristics placed in the old or new caricature making it a marked identity. The marked identity is a reductive form of reality, a constantly changing identity facilitated by forgetting. This process of caricature evolution is surrogation.

The product of erroneous identity construction is their substitute or surrogate. Forgetting allows for the original representation to be re-created through surrogation. Joseph Roach states that, “the process of surrogation does not begin or end but continues as actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric.”71 If the “social fabric” or social norms of America deems the once popular blackface minstrel-esque features offensive, then there is a vacancy in the “network of relations” or the transmission of elements into “coon codes” that makes the former code or surrogate fall apart. The vacancy opens up a space for a new element of representation to replace it. The vacancy is there because Americans who make up the social fabric first embraced the elements of blackface minstrelsy and then denounced those elements. But the intent to subjugate African American life was not denounced by many mainstream
oriented media outlets. Therefore, blackface elements had to be replaced with other elements in order to continue the actions of displaying blackness. The absence of the former elements allows for a “new” way to connect the original definitions placed on the old elements to be placed on a new element. Meaning, connotations placed on blackness during blackface minstrelsy, remains even when the element of blackface performance disappears. So, if old overtly racist typecasting in animation that adhered to pre-Civil Rights blackface minstrel ideas of black sub-humanness is now seen as taboo then anthropomorphic animation is the “new” way to maintain a connection to the old racist concepts to modern images.72

The vacancies left by animators who were present when the social fabric changed practice willful forgetting. They practiced the taboo way of depicted blacks, but the social tide changed and moved away from those methods. Involuntary forgetting was practiced by animators and producers that were years or generations removed from offensive practice yet they still felt that blacks should be portrayed via stereotypical forms. The younger animator or producer may have the duty of depicting a young, black, immature, male via the “new” way of anthropomorphic animation. The creator’s job is to make an animal appear “black” without utilizing out-dated distasteful methods. Once the black voice actor is in place, the producer may push for the actor to make the animal sound more “black.” Believing that there are certain elements that make an animal “black” brings to the surface ideas of blackness that may not be at the forefront of the creator’s
mind. Their fragmented memory perpetuates surrogation, but the surrogate only benefits the white creator.

For example, the process of altering the social fabric that creates black females’ surrogate is the construction of a narrative that rewrites history, which makes the black female’s identity a fantastical surrogate; it is an identity that is to be made applicable to all black female bodies. The mammy is a surrogate for black females. The mammy caricature evolves as the conceptual maps of promoters of the caricature are forgotten and the maps are replaced by different traits.

Also, as modes of caricature reproduction change, so do the surrogates. From “scientific” sketches, to film, to two-dimensional cartoons, to 3D feature-length animations, as technology and artistry evolve, so do the caricatures. Ultimately, the substitute is replaced by another slightly altered substitute and the original is lost, if there ever was an original. Computer-generated anthropomorphic animation is the new mode of surrogating minstrel-esque black identity. The big-lipped, wide-eyed images replaced the Enlightenment era’s “scientific” illustrations of blackness. Those features replaced perceptions Europeans had of Africans before the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (this would be the closest one could get to original forms of black identity through an European ethnocentric framing).

The purpose of caricatures is to bring discordance among populations, remind viewers of prejudices, and to establish difference between racialized bodies. As these caricatures have continued throughout history, dominant-culture producers have a
memory of the first black surrogate – whose perverse attributes are traditionally taboo (blackface minstrelsy) – only to have the image quickly escape them. This is the process of forgetting. The disappearance of black surrogates does not diminish its contributions to visible cultural reconstructions or the preservation of their definitions; rather, it enables them. Failures of memory create incomplete conceptual maps. The symbols that create these mental maps are displaced as a result of forgetting thus making room for new symbols to replace the forgotten ones. The conceptual maps of white producers of black culture get reformed with multiple and vague blends that are key to the production of new caricatures.\textsuperscript{76}

Anthropomorphic animation is the reshaping of the marked human identities into more animalistic beings. Stereotypical anthropomorphic animated characters are manufactured substitutes of black beings that embody the origins of manufactured black identity.\textsuperscript{77} The process of developing identities is \textit{the performance}. In addition, the mainstream producers of manufactured identities are creating yet another \textit{performance} within the stereotypical anthropomorphic animated characters performance of perceived blackness. Minstrel-esque humans and anthropomorphic characters were used pre-Civil Rights era as a means of encapsulating the contrived sub-humanness of black people. Whites’ continuation of encapsulating the contrived sub-humanness of black people aided in defining what it meant to be a white American; an idea that was portrayed as completely human thus maintaining the racial dichotomy in American society. Animation, but more so animated blackness, serves as the conduit for a racist history
living in the memory of white producers of black culture. If a significant strategy of performance research “is to juxtapose living memory as restored behavior against a historical archive of scripted records” then the advent of stereotypical black culture productions are linked to those of identity with the mainstream majority. The mainstream majority has absorbed a manufactured “historical archive” that is still present in their “living memory.”

FORMING THE “I” AND THE ETHOS

Identities were established in order to support and define the “positive” white image. But the formation of white subjects is not as monolithic or one-sided as it appears. As interactions between the white “I” subject and the black Others unfolded, whites’ perception of themselves and the Other changed. It is the separate statuses given to the “I” and the Other that help to promote black character formulas and black female identities.

The white subjects are privy to the power used to give definition to the “I” subject and the Other’s social status. It is the emotions in the subject that create the white and black female identities. Both identities are shaped through their interactions over time. The identities of both the black and white females are reactions to their interactions, which leaves an impression on both bodies. The “I,” the Other and their caricature work together to sustain this social fantasy.

In Judith Butler’s *Giving an Account of Oneself*, she does not genderize or racialize the “I” subject or the “other,” rather she proposes that the “I” or the “Other” can
be anyone. Nor does she place a value judgment on the “I” or the “Other.” She writes that they are constantly interacting and assisting one another in defining themselves as they give an account of themselves to one another.\textsuperscript{84} On the other hand, Frantz Fanon and Sara Ahmed applies races to the “I” and the Other. Frantz Fanon in \textit{black Skins White Masks} writes that whites are the “I” subjects with social superiority\textsuperscript{85} and blacks are the Others who have been devalued through objectification.\textsuperscript{86} According to Fanon, the interaction between the white subject and the black Other during colonization produced a negative identity (or a negative caricature) for blacks because the white subject equaled power while the black Other equaled to powerlessness. Ahmed writes that the signifiers are whites that have given the Other its “markings” or caricature attributes and that the signified, or the marked bodies, are people of color.\textsuperscript{87}

In conclusion, a combination of Clough’s definition of affect and Butler’s theory of the formation of the “I” and Other is what Sara Ahmed calls “affective economies.”\textsuperscript{88} According to Ahmed, affect moves from body to body producing emotions on the surface of physical bodies and creates definitions for those who represent those bodies.\textsuperscript{89} As affect circulates and produces emotions for both the subject and the Other, the subject defines the Other by marking the Other’s body with traits (Over-weight, tightly-curled hair, dark skin, middle-aged woman who speaks non-standard English) that form an identity which is opposed to the subject’s attributes (moderately thin, straight hair, pale skin, young woman who speaks standard English) so that the subject’s positive definition of itself can continue. Because of the repetitive circulation of affect, the attributes the
subject places on the Other in order to form the Other’s definition becomes “sticky.” Ahmed writes, “Emotions can move through the movement or circulation of caricatures. Such caricatures become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension.” The contrived attributes become “stuck” on the caricature, which makes marked identities. The Other is inundated with manufactured attributes that have been stuck to their bodies as a result of the subject’s and Other’s physical bodies interacting with each other or when a white subject body is exposed to a black caricature. The affect of the white subject body can change and therefore the white body’s emotions and behaviors towards that Other’s body can change.

The “I” subject and the Other caricature was defined by omnipresent societal norms that the subjects are said to have and the Others are kept from. The desired unity among the “I” subjects against the Others exemplifies Butler’s idea of collective ethical ethos. Butler writes that, people believe in this ethos, but it offers a false sense of unity among those who claim it because it is a fabricated and conservative “idealization” that simultaneously promotes unity among the dominant group but ostracizes those deemed outside of the collective ethos. This ethos held together by white middle class norms, determines the rules of engagement between the white “I” and the black Other. Depending on the ebb and flow of the society, the collective ethos can lose its strength. According to George Fredrickson’s *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny 1817-1914*, Enlightenment ideology, which openly promoted Negrophobia, gave way in the early 1900’s as many white liberals
began to work against interracial discord. The collective ethos changed after those who claimed to be within the ethos decided to alter their injurious actions inflicted upon those who were ostracized from the ethos.

This resulted in altered rules of engagement between those who claimed the collective ethos and those who were placed outside of it. The ways in which blacks and whites interacted with one another did change slightly but not to much avail regarding better treatment of blacks. Fredrickson writes that white paternalists and racists saw themselves as opposed to one another regarding the rules of engagement with the black population, but in fact both the paternalist and racists still managed to promote oppression since the former considered blacks a helpless “child race” in need of protection and the latter believed supposed helpless blacks were a disposable race deserving of violent lynchings. Whether they realized it or not, the rhetoric from both camps continued to struggle to maintain a white collective ethos. This rhetoric also promoted sentiments that helped produced the black character formulas.

The perceived need to maintain this “unity” among whites during the Enlightenment period of the 18th and 19th centuries pushed for stronger methods of demarcation between the white subject and the black Other: whites were the standard by which all Others were judged while blacks were seen as consistently lacking such standards. The negative traits assigned to the black female’s caricature, which is eventually forced onto the black female body, is a passionate strategy by the white benefactors of the creation and maintenance of the negative black female identity. The
passionate emotion was hate. Sara Ahmed writes, “The passion of these negative attachments to others is redefined simultaneously as a positive attachment to the imagined subjects brought together through the capitalization of the signifier, ‘White’. It is the love of White, or those that are recognizable as White, which supposedly explains this shared ‘communal’ visceral response of hate. Because we love, we hate, and this hate is what brings us together.”

Hate allowed for the survival of white identity and can often be hidden as an inconspicuous source for current white identity survival. As long as a strongly enforced racialized and gendered hierarchal dichotomy continues and places white females at the top, the collective ethos of whiteness will remain an imagined positive caricature that symbolizes white unity gathered together, consciously or subconsciously, in an effort to contain what is felt as rightfully theirs: the white collective ethos, “the norm” or the ordinary.

This collective ethos is not “real.” There isn’t any group of people that completely embodies the ideals of the ethos. It is just as imagined as the black identity caricature. The collective white ethos can be interpreted as the white subject’s caricature. The reproduction of black caricatures or illusory black identity also produces the ordinary. Ahmed writes, “The ordinary is here fantastic. The ordinary white subject is a fantasy that comes into being through the mobilization of hate as a passionate attachment closely tied to love. The emotion of hate works to animate the ordinary subject …by constituting the ordinary as in crisis and the ordinary person as the real victim. The ordinary becomes
that which is already under threat by the imagined others …” 96 If the white collective ethos is presented as the correct values that should be inhabited by all, then those who do not embrace such values are seen as threats. Although the ethos is imagined and the threatening black caricatures are also fictional the physical repercussions are real.

The importance of recognizing these artificial caricatures are the possible real-life consequences they pose to black people. For example, the actions against black women from those who believe in placing them in a subjugated status are methods for some who claim the societal norms and defend the white collective ethos. When the white collective ethos appears to be breaking, it is then defended in an attempt to reestablish unity. Fighting for unity is “violent in the form of an exclusionary foreclosure” resulting in social, political and economic harm suffered by blacks (and others who do not claim the ethos) and imposed by white collective ethos defenders who are indifferent to the needs of those excluded. 97 It is Ahmed’s idea of hate that perpetuates the desire to secure the permanency of the white collective ethos. It is because of the rewards of social and political power and white identity formation that whites had to (and still must) maintain an oppositional binary relationship between blacks and themselves. It is through this dichotomy that subjugated definition of blackness occurred and the definition of whiteness. Whites maintain this dichotomy by “unifying” under the banner of white collective ethos. The act of unifying under this ethos is possessive investment in whiteness.
The black character formulas are not simply caricatures presented to the public for their enjoyment; these caricatures are not rooted in simplistic comic relief, rather they are grounded in prejudice. Animation is a virtual world that experiments with exploring forgotten ephemeral experiences of the Other that cannot always be known for sure. I argue that oftentimes, these ephemeral experiences reside in individuals’ subconscious memories. The traumatic histories of physical and verbal attacks towards black bodies not only resonate in black bodies but can also remain in the conscious or subconscious of the whites producing the trauma. Some white-dominated companies employ animators to utilize “performative practices that maintain (and invent) human continuities” in order to protect their investment in whiteness that has produced incalculable social and political revenue for them within American society. This act of using a method of performance that is informed by a distorted memory in order to maintain a socio-political-economic status is *invested affective performance (IAP)*. It is important to recognize the affects and effects produced by media outlets that are apart of many of our lives. Let us be aware of our social, political and economic investments.

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2. Ibid, xxi.
The theory of recapitulation helped define the coon category by postulating "that higher creatures repeat the adult stages of lower animals during their own growth" but "adult Blacks...remain perpetually like white children and announce their inferiority thereby" (72). Blacks were seen as "indolent playful, sensuous, imitative, subservient, good natured, versatile, unsteady in their purpose, devoted, affectionate, in everything unlike other races, they may be compared to children, grow in stature of adults while retaining a childlike mind...therefore...they are incapable of living on a footing of social equality with the whites" (80).

Fredrickson, George M. *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny 1817-1914*. New Hampshire: Wesleyan Press, 1987. 72. In addition, Blacks were believed to have a common instinctive attachment to their masters similar to canines (57).


It is important to note that blacks participating in blackface minstrelsy did aid in attaching negative elements of blackness to black bodies.


34 Ibid
36 Ibid, 25.
37 Ibid.
41 Green, J. Ronald. *Straight Lick: The Cinema of Oscar Micheaux*. Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2000; Guerrero, Ed. *Framing Blackness: The African American Image in Film*. Black directors such as Oscar Micheaux in the first half of the 18th century (Green,xi), Gordon Parks (Guerrero,81) and Melvin van Peebles (Guerrero, '87) in the 1960’s and 1970s (Guerrero, 81), and Julie Dash (Guerrero,176), Spike Lee (Guerrero,136-137) and John Singleton (Guerrero,184-185)in of the 1990s are just a few Black directors whose goals were to portray Black life in a substantive and multi-dimensional manner.
43 Ibid
49 Lipsitz, George. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. The white power structure relies on white hegemony over marginalized groups through a "disciplined, systemic, and collective group activity that has structured white identities in U.S. history"(3). Animators and executive producers in the entertainment industry who produce Black Character Formulas serve as a collective group that has the power to structure identities.
50 Massumi, Brian. *Parables For The Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. 47.
51 Ibid, 48.
52 Ibid
53 Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. “The sticking characteristics to objects transforms the bodies that are suppose to exemplify them into a common identity” 15.
55 Ibid
58 Ibid
59 Ibid, 314.
60 Ibid
Walter Lantz had a few encounters with censorship when the 1934 Production Code was established. He created a showing barefoot Mexicans implying an uncouth lower class stereotype. The Production office insisted that shoes be drawn on the individuals. The staff colored all of their feet Black instead (182). There was also the creation of Li’ L Eightball who was a stereotypical Black child who began on screen but finished on Lantz’s comic books in the 1940s (167).

In 1957 Walter Lantz was interviewed for an article in the Hollywood Reporter: “The first thing that happened was the elimination on one swoop of all my films that contained Negro characters; there were eight such pictures. But we never offended or degraded the colored race and they were all top musical cartoons, too” (182).

Roach believes “that disappearance does not diminish its contributions to cultural definitions or preservation; rather, it enables them. Without failures of memory to obscure the mixtures, blends, and provisional antitypes necessary to its production, for example, ‘whiteness’, one of the major scenic elements of several circum-Atlantic performances traditions, could not exist even as perjury, nor could there flourish more narrowly defined, subordinate designs …” (6).
77 Roach, Joseph. Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance. 3.
78 Ibid 11.
81 Ibid
82 Ibid
83 Ibid 6. As Sara Ahmed writes, “So not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave an impression on me.”
85 Fanon, Frantz. Black Skin White Masks. Fanon writes that, “For the Black man there is only one destiny. And it is white (10).
87 Ahmed, Sara. The Cultural Politics of Emotion. 43-44.
88 Ibid, 15.
89 Ibid, 10.
90 Ibid, 11.
91 Ibid
93 Bulte, Judith. Giving an Account of Oneself. 10 & 12.
96 Ibid
97 Bulte, Judith. Giving an Account of Oneself. 6-7.
CHAPTER 3

ISSUES OF GENDER AND RACE IN ANIMATION

Animation has been present since the late 1800s, however the development of African-American characters has received limited attention. Although there is a substantial amount of feminist criticism, observation of symbolic whiteness preservation in animation, and concerns about Disney consumer culture and imperialism, there is little discourse on black anthropomorphic racialized characters in animation outside of merely mentioning their discriminatory nature. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate how whiteness has been a consistent theme in feature-length animation even when the presence of blackness is not overt. There are themes such as norms of femininity, transgender performance, classism and ageism that are discussed in previous scholarship, but critiques regarding animated blackness are sporadic and rarely thoroughly critiqued.

Using Disney productions, this chapter assesses examples of literature and movie reviews addressing feature-length animations since its early inception with Snow White in 1937 to The Lion King in 1994. This chapter demonstrates that whiteness is deemed normative and blackness is its opposite, whether symbolically or literally. The notion that whiteness is symbolically good and blackness is symbolically bad, a common theme in animation, can easily make a seamless transition into the politics of race relations. This chapter will illustrate how ideas of whiteness transform throughout Disney animations.

First, the chapter presents an overview of the beginnings of animation and how elements of blackness, both direct and indirect, began in early Disney productions in the
first half of the 1900s. Second, I will discuss issues of feminine and whiteness normativity expressed in heroines in the Disney films: *Snow White, Aladdin, Pocahontas,* and *The Little Mermaid.* Lastly, I will present a reading of the race-based social themes in animal characters in Disney’s *Dumbo, The Jungle Book,* and *The Lion King.* These examinations demonstrate how whiteness began as a significant part in animated movies and will serve as adequate preparation for close critiques of contemporary feature-length anthropomorphic animations and the continued use of archaic ideas of both white and black racial constructs.

**CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF WHITENESS THROUGH FEMINIST RHETORIC AND ANTHROPOMORPHIC DISNEY CHARACTERS**

Cartoons began as leisure entertainment for adults and children. In 1919, Otto Messmer created Felix the Cat. In the 1920s, Felix “had become a ubiquitous fixture of the jazz age” “loved by children as a cuddly cat and by adults as a being who shared their own feelings, frustrations, and fantasies, perhaps in his role as a henpecked husband, a doting father, or a philandering speakeasy reveler.” On the other hand, Max Fleischer, responsible for Betty Boop, created films in the early 1930s that “abounded with ethnic jokes, sexual humor, visual and verbal gags that were aimed at adults in the audience, and not at children.” In between features, theaters displayed the latest animated production for its audiences. From benign themes such as *Gertie The Dinosaur* (1914) eating vegetation, to the see-through clothing of the overtly sexual Betty Boop, animation was simply another form of entertainment for adults. Sexual references were coupled with
racists themes often targeting blacks. Animation studios such as Warner Brothers created some of the most explicitly racist cartoons that consistently employed a marginalized view of African-Americans and Africans. The most atrocious of the lot, were deemed “The Censored 11”. The “Censored 11th” is a compilation of Warner Bros. cartoons banned from syndication and broadcast by United Artists in the late 1960’s due to their offensive content and racist depictions of blacks. Not censored but equally discriminatory is Disney’s *Alice and the Cannibals* (1925). Depicting blacks as savages, *Alice and the Cannibals* is an early example of Disney negatively representing blacks in animation.9

In 1928, Disney debuted *Steamboat Willie* starring Mickey Mouse. It was Disney’s first animation to feature sound10 and arguably displays minstrel characteristics with Mickey’s over-sized shoes, white gloves, and whistling of a famous minstrel song “Turkey in the Straw.”11 One could identify Mickey as African American because “Turkey in the Straw” was a popular song among blacks in the mid-1800s,12 however, according to Robert B. Winans’, songs like “Turkey in the Straw” were also minstrel songs said to have originated from black tradition.13 Winans states that bonded blacks listened to white music and whites listened to black music resulting in cross-cultural exchanges. He goes on to say, “…southern plantations had built-in minstrel shows, in terms of the attitude of the white owners toward the music and dance of their black slaves. Quite a few ex-slaves stated that their masters and mistresses, and sometimes their white guests as well, would come down to the slave quarters to witness and be entertained by a slave dance, and that the slaves played up to this.”14 But what is not clear
is if bonded blacks on southern plantations were simply mimicking the mimicker? Blacks were known to mock the dances of the whites, so were songs like “Turkey in the Straw” simply another form of doing so? Were these songs elements of authentic black music traditions? Whether Mickey Mouse whistling “Turkey in the Straw” is a reference to blackface minstrels or black music traditions is ancillary to the fact that Disney is referencing African Americans in his landmark animation. “Steamboat Willie” is the beginning of Disney constructing animated black representations in the United States.

Disney began to steer away from literal connections to blackness and created the trend of innocent fantasy that captured the attention of adults and children with the studio’s first feature-length movie *Snow White* in 1937. Although *Snow White* does not have any black characters, its criticism focuses on white femininity as the epitome of beauty and the movie’s color symbolism with a race-based subtext. Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz’s largely quantitative study, determines that fairy tales, such as *Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty,* and *Snow White* teach a white, upper class “normative feminine beauty ideal.” This femininity is seen as normative because these three stories have been the most reproduced in literature and other media outlets, thus reinforcing gender norms. They argue that beauty is often associated with being young, “white, economically privileged, and virtuous.” Stories like *Snow White* tell their audiences that beauty is important for social welfare (e.g. ‘getting the prince’ as in *Cinderella*) and that it is desirable to be the envy of all women (e.g. jealous step mother and step sisters also in *Cinderella*). In a feminist vein, there is a problem with valorizing stereotypical
standards of beauty over heroines’ ingenuity, independence and intelligence. Casting women as merely beautiful objects lessens the possibility of conveying to audiences the capabilities of women. Moreover, linking beauty and goodness with economic privilege and whiteness devalues and stigmatizes non-whiteness.

Dorothy L. Hurley’s work suggests that Disney film versions of 18th century fairy tales “reveal indisputable evidence of White privileging and a binary color symbolism that associates white with goodness and black with evil”.\textsuperscript{20} Hurley argues that Disney’s princesses and princes are often white, with the exception of olive-skinned Jasmine from \textit{Aladdin}.\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Snow White} features a “wicked queen dressed in black who lives in a black castle that has black rats, a dangerous black forest containing black bats, and black owls.”\textsuperscript{22} The Queen has a “black crow-like bird perched on a human skull” and appears to be “devoured (off screen) by black vultures.”\textsuperscript{23} On the other hand, Snow White is “surrounded by white birds; the Prince appears on a white horse; Snow White is laid to rest (when presumed dead) on white flowers holding a bouquet of white flowers before the Prince returns to rescue her and they ride off on his white horse toward the his white castle.”\textsuperscript{24} Just as in Baker-Sperry and Grauerholz’s investigation, whiteness reads not just as a color. Since “white” and “black” are both racial designations, then it is easy for the connotations placed on the colors to be used to denote the groups of people that are identified with those colors. The color symbolism transfers over into race symbolism thus “subtly promot[ing] an ideology of White supremacy.”\textsuperscript{25} Whiteness becomes a racial
category marked by goodness while blackness becomes the opposite; a theme that has
negatively impacted people (more specifically youth audiences) of color.\textsuperscript{26}

Celeste Lacroix continues her work on Disney heroines Esmeralda in \textit{The}
\textit{Hunchback of Notre Dame}, Ariel in \textit{The Little Mermaid}, Jasmine in \textit{Aladdin}, Belle from
\textit{Beauty and the Beast} and Pocahontas. Lacroix suggests “an increasing emphasis on
sexuality and the exotic is evident in the construction of the female heroines in these
films, particularly in the female characters of color.”\textsuperscript{27} Moreover, she concludes that
these animations “operate within the larger socio-historical framework regarding women
of color and the notion of \textit{Whiteness}.”\textsuperscript{28} Following Kray, who reinterprets Said, Lacroix
suggests American society creates a white identity of objectivity, rationality, and civility
through a juxtaposition to "orientalized” women of color.\textsuperscript{29} “Through this definition of
the \textit{other}, then, Whiteness is also revealed and defined as the invisible but all-too-
powerful center in relation to which the margin is positioned.”\textsuperscript{30} Lacroix shows how
whiteness needs otherness to define itself. Whiteness becomes the standard by which all
others are judged. To separate white femininity from the femininity of “others,” the
heroines of color are deemed less delicate and more agile with sexual overtones.

Ariel, of \textit{The Little Mermaid} and Belle from \textit{Beauty and the Beast} have “the
classic porcelain skin tone” and are slender with small waists, breasts, and wrists, with
fluid ballet-like movements similar to their predecessors Snow White and Princess
Aurora of \textit{Sleeping Beauty}.\textsuperscript{31} Although Ariel is a mermaid with a seashell brassiere
revealing more of her body than any of the other heroines, as a human woman, she is
fully clothed in western dresses of the late 1700s. Ariel’s attire is similar to Belle’s in *Beauty and the Beast*. Lacroix mentions that their costumes, along with the characters’ Eurocentric physical features, reflect the “traditional iconography of the Disney heroine, in keeping with their fairytale predecessors noted previously, and bespeak more conservative and romantic images of the feminine heroine.”

By removing the physical features and types of dress that signify the classic white heroine, Disney could either be showing diverse, yet equally valid, forms of femininity or portraying womanhood in a perverted and less desirable form.

Jasmine of *Aladdin*, the first non-white Disney princess, transforms the trend. She has a darker complexion, which is consistent with her Arab heritage, but retains small decidedly white facial features except for her large eyes. She also has a small waist and is seen in more active scenes (flying on carpets and jumping out of a window) than her “classic” white counter-parts. Jasmine's costuming has a “harem-esque” off-the-shoulder look that exposes her midriff, which is reminiscent of symbols of Middle Eastern women’s orientalization and is contrary to the common appearance of women in Islamic societies.

Pocahontas is the second, and most problematic, non-white Disney heroine. Instead of portraying her as the twelve-year-old girl she was at the time, Pocahontas is a tall and womanly character with an athletic body and a developed bust. The trend of heroines with small-waists continues with Pocahontas, but of all of the women portrayed thus far in Disney films, she is the least dressed and the most agile. The historical
accuracy of Pocahontas’ costuming is dubious at best and purposefully sexual at worst. Pocohantas’ shoulders are nearly bear and she has a slit in her skirt revealing her thigh.\(^35\)

Lacroix suggests that the fashion choices made by the character designers may be intentional because other female characters in the \textit{Pocahontas} film are not as scantily clad. Seen running through the forest, diving from a cliff and having numerous intimate, relationships with animals and the environment, makes Pocahontas appear more rustic and in-touch with nature. These bucolic tendencies remove her from the previously established white feminine norms of her Disney predecessors. Moving away from Eurocentric standards of womanhood has the potential to be revolutionary, but is problematic when non-white female characters are purposefully eroticized and sexualized. Because Disney character designers decisively made Pocahontas, a twelve year-old girl, into a woman speaks to the desire to create a female whiteness opposition. That desire may or may not be a conscious attempt at promoting white femininity through non-white womanhood, but the decision was made. Since Disney targets youth audiences, it would have been more appropriate to make Pocahontas the historically accurate young heroine that teaches her audience about courage at a young age. If creating a movie about a female historical figure to inform young viewers, then why alter the factual story? The answer resides in maintaining an opposition to white femininity, whether the reasons are purposeful or lay latent in the creators’ minds.

In conclusion, Lacroix states that “media images of White characters, including those of animated characters, contribute to the centering of White experience as normal
and natural. To de-center Whiteness, critics must interrogate those commonplaces, taken
-for-granted constructions of Whiteness in media texts, especially those as ubiquitous as
the Disney animated films."36 Once these spaces are interrogated, then whiteness can be
removed from the center of normativity and will be recognized as a problematic standard
upon which to create characters. In addition to the troublesome depiction of white and
non-white characters, ethnically defined animal characters have been a crucial part of
Disney films for many years. These characters include the black-American crows of
_Dumbo_ (1941) singing "I be done seen 'bout everything"; the alley cats of _Aristocats_
(1970) singing a jazz rendition of "Ev'rybody Wants to Be a Cat," led by the voice of
Scatman Crothers; Sebastian the crab’s calypso inspired “Under the Sea” in _The Little
Mermaid_ (1989), sung by Samuel E. Wright; and King Louie’s "I wan'na be like you"
from _The Jungle Book_ (1967) performed by Louis Prima.37 Rothstein argues that, in
addition to Pocahontas and Aladdin, Disney has been preoccupied with creating
questionable portraits of Othered minorities: “_The Three Caballeros_ (1945) is a veritable
tour of Latin American stereotypes. _Peter Pan_ (1953) has an "Injun" powwow... In _Mary
Poppins_ (1964), the middle-class Banks family comes up against the Cockney chimney
sweep Bert. _The Hunchback of Notre Dame_ (1996) has the magically beguiling Gypsy
Esmeralda."38 Since the stereotyped cast is often disconnected from mainstream white
society in some form, it could be that the Disney designers and directors are consciously
or subconsciously using ethnicity, not as a way to insert diversity, but are instead utilizing
ethnicity’s original pejorative term. The word ethnic has its roots in the Greek word
ethnos, meaning heathen or pagan. Those deemed ethnic were seen as outsiders who should be greeted with contempt because they have not assimilated into “civilized” society and therefore should be rejected by that society. While it is unclear whether this take on ethnicity is done intentionally or is a product of the subconscious, Rothstein argues that “the Disney ethnic character has tended to be interpreted as evidence of racism and insularity shared by Walt Disney and generations of Disney animators, writers and directors.” Rothstein may be too quick to assign purposeful ill intent on Disney animators, writers, and directors. Moreover, his claim only addresses people’s conscious mind. If the actions produced by subconscious feelings and latent memories, that may contain nefarious depictions of people of color, are not taken into account, then an important level understanding is ignored. (An extended discussion of the manifestation of artists’ conscious and subconscious in relation to character formation can be found in Chapter four).

It is the information that lies within the subconscious of creators that can explain how they can create black caricatures that they believe are positive. Characters such as the crows in Dumbo, the alley cats in Aristocats, and Esmeralda in The Hunchback of Notre Dame, are “othered” but presented as crucial elements in the lives of the main characters. But while American racial attitudes have changed dramatically over the course of Disney’s history, the nature of Disney’s view of ethnicity has been remarkably consistent. Rothstein writes that, “despite whiffs of condescension (and rare mean-spiritedness, as in the portrait of the Siamese cats in Lady and the Tramp in 1955), the
ethnic character is treated with unusual affection. The Disney ethnic characters are loaded down by cliché -- in accent, character and mannerism -- but are also admired, even envied (they also get the best songs).” The audience is expected to love and appreciate these characters. The love may ensue because of the character(s)’s ‘otherness’ as their perspective is different and thus necessary to the mainstream, or by virtue of the fact that the audience should love them in spite of their “outsider” status.

One of the first Disney movies to conduct a narrative of insider and outsider interactions is *Dumbo*. Dumbo is a baby elephant that travels in a circus with his mother and other pachyderms. His over-sized ears make him the mockery of other elephants and human spectators. After an effort to protect her child from cruel circus patrons, Dumbo’s mother is perceived as dangerous and is confined. Already ostracized by other elephants, the mute Dumbo is left to fend for himself. Similar to Mickey Mouse, Dumbo’s blackness is merely hinted towards. His story mirrors experiences of slavery and racism for African Americans. Like portrayals of slavery deemed to be a productive and positive institution for blacks, Dumbo works for a circus that is not shown as a fantastical place through the eyes of a mesmerized child. Rather, it is exposed through the eyes of the clowns and the other animals and is likened to forced labor. The slave narrative is further implied when Dumbo is separated from his mother. Similar to methods of separating black people into racial categories via facial features deemed oversized, because of Dumbo’s over-sized phenotypic feature (his large ears), he is "socially washed up," and "worst of all, turned into a clown."41 According to movie reviewer, Steven D.
Greydanus, Dumbo is an African elephant because of his large ears and the older elephants that chastise him are Indian elephants.\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Loxodonta africana}, the African elephant, is known for its “larger body size, triangular-shaped ears rather than smaller round ears, gray skin rather than brown” colored skin.\textsuperscript{43} These elements however, seem relatively minor and appear more coincidental, which makes for a fragile case for anthropomorphomorphic blackness. The characters that make a much stronger case are the crows.

In his solitude, Dumbo befriends Timothy Mouse. After the young elephant and his rodent friend unknowingly partake of some diluted alcohol, they awaken on a tree branch and are greeted by five rowdy crows. One crow named Jim thinks it outrageous to find an elephant up in their “place.” The crows grow hysterical with laughter and ridicule Dumbo as they sing, "I be done seen ‘bout everything, 'When I Seen an Elephant Fly.” The crows use colloquial dialect similar to the cartoons in “the Censored 11”: “Uh, what's all the rookus? C'mon, step aside brothuhs, uh, what's cookin' around heah? What new? What fryin', boys?”\textsuperscript{44} John Russell Rickford concludes that the crows “speak a marked variety of AAVE (African American Vernacular English) which includes done, be done, ain't for ‘isn't,’ don't for ‘doesn't,’ multiple negation, and non-agreement in present tense verbs, as well as phonological features like monophthongization (‘Well, hush mah feet’) and “a” before vowels (‘a elephant”).”\textsuperscript{45}

The crows are transparent minstrel show images that use their knowledge of flight to enable Dumbo to flee from desolation. Dumbo and the crows’ interaction are similar to
Entman and Rojeki’s contemporary Uncle Tom black character formula. In this cliché, the black character is used to assist a main character (usually white) in progressing through the story. The problem with this character formula is that the white character advances, but the black character does not. According to Entman and Rojeki, the contemporary Uncle Tom is still dedicated to the plight of white characters but assisting via divine intervention. The black character supplies assistance to a white male while the white character’s problems are the centerpiece of the film. The black man’s duty is to assist the white character in tapping into a realm of emotion, spirituality or simply give aid to a conclusion most beneficial to the white character. Often these black male characters symbolize the white character’s conscience or a spirit only visible to the white character. Film examples are Will Smith in Legend of Bagger Vance, Michael Clarke Duncan in The Green Mile, Samuel L. Jackson in Unbreakable and Don Cheadle in The Family Man. This new type of Tom actively healing prejudicial wounds by helping physically ailed whites could speak to racial unity. Conversely, it implies that this helpful and wise Negro does not exist in the natural world. In addition, it demonstrates that blacks’ knowledge is not meant for blacks’ success in the natural world but rather for the benefit for their white counterpart. The conclusion of the black character’s duty is often signified with him or her mysteriously disappearing. In Dumbo, the crows are not invisible, however, personified animals like the crows are equally, (if not more so) as fictitious as the spirits in the films examples. Therefore the idea that a wise and helpful black character does not exist in reality holds true in the animated sense. And just like
Bagger Vance’s or John Coffey’s spirit, the black crows are there for the assistance of the main character.

Dumbo learns to fly with the help of the crows, which elevates him to the star of the circus. He is reunited with his mother and the audience watches them on the train ride off into the sunset. The crows fly along with the train, but the audience does not get a sense that the crows are any better off than they were before they met Dumbo. The implications of Entman and Rojecki’s neo-Tom are prevalent in other Disney movies. Rothstein writes the crows “…are more knowledgeable and witty than any of the flying elephant's circus colleagues. The alley cats in Aristocats turn out to be the heroes, possessing far more important skills than the upper-crust ‘white’ kittens. Esmeralda, the Gypsy of Hunchback, comprehends the trials of Quasimodo because of her own beleaguered ethnic status.”

Rothstein alters Entman and Rojecki’s neo-Tom image by arguing that the main character does not have to be explicitly ethnic. Dumbo is an outcast whose blue eyes and unclear elements of blackness make his race ambiguous. Pinocchio, the wooden toy who longs to be a real boy, presents identity troubles.

Ariel the mermaid wants to be “where the people are.” Belle in Beauty and the Beast is labeled “different.” Rothstein argues that in each of these films the outsider such as …the hunchback, the child, the disenfranchised princess, the beast -- struggles to join the center or change it. Meanwhile, the identifiably ethnic characters aid in those struggles: Geppetto tries to help Pinocchio become a boy; Sebastian helps the little mermaid
become human; the dwarfs help Snow White; the inner-city cats help the Aristocats. The typical Disney film presents a joint triumph: the ethnic character ends up becoming mainstream, and the mainstream ends up learning from and accepting the ethnic character.49

But accepting the ethnic characters appears to be more so tolerance and possibly genuine gratitude to the outsider, but the outsider remains outside. The ethnic character is still othered. The crows, who Alex Wainer says are social outcasts like Dumbo, appear to be merely accompanying the circus train. Dumbo becomes a star and the crows will go back to “their place.” Though the crows initially seem a little disreputable, especially to Timothy, it turns out they are the only other individuals who understand Dumbo’s predicament. Both Timothy and the crows share the experience of not quite fitting into the larger society (Timothy had earlier frightened the grown elephants and seems to have no other friends.) The crows as caricatures of lower class blacks immediately imply a marginality to mainstream society.50 The crows’ implied blackness is further emphasized by the lead crow being named “Jim,” a reference to Jim Crow laws in the segregated South, and the crows perform a jazz composition using their beaks as a trumpet.

Wainer argues that the closest black character formula the crows identify with is the coon. Citing Donald Bogle, he describes the coon as "no-account niggers, those unreliable, crazy, lazy, subhuman creatures good for nothing more than eating watermelons, stealing chickens, shooting crap, or butchering the English language."51 But Wainer concludes that the crows are not coons. Instead “[b]ecause [the crows] can fly,
they are able to help Dumbo to take flight; he now shares in one of their abilities. This is
an interesting and compelling picture of members of a traditionally downtrodden race
helping another oppressed individual find a form of heretofore undreamt of freedom.”52
Following Entman and Rojecki, the problem is not with the crows helping Dumbo. The
problem is with black characters giving their services and sharing “their abilities” to
assist another character and the exchange is to the black character’s detriment or the
black characters are forgotten. A prime example can be found in the film The Green Mile
where John Coffey, played by Michael Clark Duncan, heals Tom Hanks’ character as
well as the warden’s wife, but he ultimately dies in the end. In The Family Man, Nicholas
Cage’s character, after getting a glimpse of what his life could have been, learns that a
life of riches and solitude does not amount to having a loving home in the suburbs. After
Don Cheadle’s character guides Cage’s character through the time travel, Cheadle
disappears; a situation very similar interaction between Will Smith, spiritual caddy, and
Matt Damon’s in The Legend of Bagger Vance.

bell hooks would argue that these elements of blackness within commodity
culture “become spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white
culture.”53 Russell Merritt notices that “Like the crows in Dumbo and the alley cats in
The Aristocats, they are more knowledgeable and wittier than any of the insiders, and
infinitely cooler than their insider lily- white counterparts, sprites and fairies with
wands.”54 But this caricatured seasoning comes at a price. Wainer acknowledges the
racialization of the crows but chooses to emphasize the humor and music of the scene,
implying an essentialist connection between the crows’ actions and African Americans. Wainer writes that the crows’ scene is “the bounciest, most rollicking sequence in the story. This joking, joyous demeanor is as much a part of the crows’ collective character as their ability to fly.” If the crows represent black people, then is Wainer suggesting that the crows’ language, musicality and willingness to give to others are innate characteristics in African Americans. Wainer is treading on dangerous ground by making an undetachable connection between blackness and black people. The innate altruism Wainer suggests is similar to Bogle’s Uncle Tom characterization. According to Bogle, the Uncle Tom, in films focused on Southern slavery, was willing to relinquish his freedom in order to help his “massa.” Dumbo is not, however, an overseer to the crows, but the similarities between Bogle’s and Entman and Rojecki’s caricatures are that black characters are willing to sacrifice while never reaping benefits from their work. The positive lesson of not being self-serving can be taken from these caricatures however, the negative message remains that blacks are continuously placed in servile positions, always stagnant on their economic, political, social, or spiritual ladder.

*The Jungle Book*’s social commentary of blacks in the United States is more blatant. Disney’s version of Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* is a significant departure from the original book. The framework that remains is an Indian boy named Mowgli who is raised in the jungle by a panther named Bagheera. When Mowgli turns ten, Bagheera believes it is time for Mowgli to leave the jungle and live with the humans. In Disney’s version, during their journey Mowgli and Bagheera meet carefree Baloo the
bear, who wants Mowgli to stay with the animals and attempts to be a big brother of sorts to Mowgli. On their journey, the boy is abducted by monkeys and taken to their kingdom of ruins ruled by King Louie. King Louie demands that Mowgli give him the fire that men own and control. When Mowgli informs the King that he cannot provide the fire, King Louie becomes playfully irate and continues to demand the secret to obtaining fire. Upon finding Mowgli, the monkeys and King Louie continue their tirade, which ends in the destruction of their kingdom as Mowgli escapes with Baloo and Bagheera.

In Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*, “the monkeys are silly and frivolous creatures who ask Mowgli to tell them how to weave the grass that forms the houses of men. When Mowgli demonstrates the foolish monkeys, easily distracted, quickly forget Mowgli’s instructions. Moreover the monkeys have no leader and no order, a contrast to the rest of the animals in the jungle. None of Kipling’s characterizations of the monkeys suggest they represent any ethnic group.”\(^{56}\) Wainer, following Greg Metcalf\(^{57}\), argues that man’s great fire is an emblem of civilization, which he and the monkeys do not have. Interestingly, the case is not that the monkeys want to be human, but rather the scenario is a metaphor for sub-human slum dwelling blacks wanting to integrate into white society. According to Metcalf, King Louie symbolizes middle class blacks wanting to assimilate in white America,\(^{58}\) so the monkeys must symbolize the detrimental black “underclass.” Disney’s *The Jungle Book* was released after the implementation of the 1965 US Civil Rights Act, which desegregated public facilities and was suppose to give blacks equal opportunities for better housing, education, voting and employment. King Louie and the
monkey’s kingdom is in shambles, representing the condemned, subpar black urban residences. King Louie and the monkeys want to elevate themselves from their circumstances and believe that they need the help of Mowgli to do so. This scenario has a direct connection to Entman and Rokecki’s helpless black man stereotype.

The helpless black man caricature features an African-American male who receives help from Caucasians due to the black character’s lack of intellect, power, or resources. As a mixture of the need for white paternalism, like the Tom, and the social inability of the coon, this typecast references the belief that blacks are unable to succeed without the guidance of whites or are mentally incompetent. Entman and Rojecki offer Cuba Gooding Jr. in Jerry Maguire, Men of Honor, Rules of Engagement, and Finding Forrester as examples of the helpless black man character. These films can be considered instances of emotional bonds fashioned across racial lines, but more images of much needed black camaraderie can be achieved with careful consideration of the character that offers the aid. The negative constraints placed on the black image are heightened with studios’ failure to cast a black paternal figure to assist the black ghetto child in Finding Forrester or a black male actor to serve as Samuel L. Jackson’s savior attorney in Rules of Engagement. Similarly, in Mississippi Burning (1988), blacks are portrayed as weak and scared, inspiring pity rather than respect, while white FBI agents serve as saviors. A similar formula is found in To Kill a Mockingbird (1962), Ghosts of Mississippi (1996), and Amistad (1997).
King Louie claims he needs Mowgli’s help and emphasizes his desire for civilization with his signature song “I Wanna Be Like You.” The jazz music and scat vocal composition further emphasizes King Louie’s blackness. Language and jazz music as common signifiers of blackness are also seen in the crows and the alley cat. Mowgli, an Indian boy, has an American accent and is raised by a panther with a British accent. The carefree Baloo, King Louie, and Mowgli are the only characters with American accents. Their speak to issues of ethnicity and nationality. It is not clear why Disney choose to distinguish the characters in such a way, but one might argue that the substantial number of characters with British accents (Bagheera, Sheer Khan, Kaa, and the marching elephants) serve as an allusion to Britain’s colonization of India. Mowgli, the boy with an American-accent, who is raised by guardians with British accents, could be a metaphor for Britain’s influence on America’s development or America as its former colony. Nevertheless, Disney made decisions in the way each character sounds, whether those choices were conscious or subconscious made racialized or ethnicized characters.

These decisions regarding displays of blackness do not have to be performed by a minority voice actor. If anthropomorphic characters are ascribed the race of the voice actors who portray them, then King Louie would be a white character. But because he is voiced by swing artist Louis Prima, the racialization of King Louise changes. Prima, a descendant of Italian immigrants from Louisiana speaks to the cultural syncreticism occurring in metropoles like New Orleans and New York. Prima, as a singer of black music and because Italians are often used as examples of ethnic whites, his performance
can easily be read as African American. King Louie is a prime example of how blackness can be performed by anyone; but Prima’s real-life story of being a product of merged immigrant and black communities is not the message conveyed in *Dumbo* and *The Jungle Book*. Rather both stories reinforce social division and innate blackness.

Both Dumbo and Mowgli arrive at a location apart from their own "place" or "family," Dumbo via his alcohol-induced flight and Mowgli through beings unwillingly abducted by the monkeys. Therefore, these scenarios imply that Mowgli or Dumbo would have never visited such places by their own volition. The narratives imply that anyone not from these marginalized groups would either have to be kidnapped or intoxicated in order to visit such places. Upon arrival, they are both privy to jazz songs where the black characters in both movies add to the music by making trumpets out of their mouths. Using their bodies as instruments, instead of using actual instruments, along with them being a part of a musical sequence, reinforces the idea that blacks have an innate sense of musicality, a stereotype seen in entertainment from minstrelsy to the present. It is a theme that implies that the characters’ blackness (the monkeys and crows) is what maintains their separation from the mainstream.

The difference between the crows and the monkeys is that the crows appear to be content in their place. They are self-assured and willing to share their knowledge with others. The monkeys are discontent and do not wish to assist others, rather they demand assistance. Since *Dumbo* was created before the Civil Rights movement in the midst of Jim Crow segregation, it seems that Disney studios wanted to portray blacks as happy
with their “separate but equal status,” a group who can be used at will for their abilities. Dumbo’s and the crows’ interaction is similar to T.D. Rice and Charles Mathew’s minstrelsy stories. Although Rice and Mathew willingly ventured into black spaces, they and other minstrel performers perverted elements of African American culture, assisted in the promulgation of blackness, and used it for their monetary gain and fame. Their story is directly connected to the process of Dumbo learning to fly via instruction the crows and him eventually becoming the star of the circus. It can be assumed that Dumbo did not receive any monetary gain, but he did receive fame, was reunited with his mother, and arguably was given better treatment do to his higher status in the circus. (It should also be noted that minstrelsy and the circus are not far departures. Many minstrel performers in the 1800s began as circus acts. The white clown make-up was easily transformed into a burned-cork façade.)

The monkeys on the other hand, are not jovial creatures. They are violent and are no longer capable of being productive in “their place.” If the monkeys represent blacks after the Civil Rights Act, then Disney was either eluding to the reality that not all blacks were content in 1940s Jim Crow and their frustration from segregation and disenfranchisement was bound to boil over at some point. Or the studio was implying that violence and destruction is what happens when blacks attempt to assimilate and leave their designated space. Wainer writes that if the latter argument “was not the conscious message, [then] one can argue that bad judgment was used in the choice of images, dialogue, and lyrics.”
Lester Walton mentions in his review that the conscious and the subconscious play a vital role in the construction of caricatures. Since Disney’s version of *The Jungle Book* is a clear departure from the original, given Walt Disney’s seemingly obvious racist presumptions and the social context of the period, it appears the motives behind the character portrayals are either a subconscious decision or an overt conscious effort. Whether it is a subconscious history manifesting on a cartoonist’s celluloid or a conscious effort to add some “spice” to an animated feature, these same trends continue in movies like *The Fox and the Hound, The Little Mermaid, Mulan* and most evidently in *The Lion King, The Fox and the Hound* (1981) *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and *Mulan* (1998) are examples of stories that contain majority white characters with one anthropomorphic “black” character to “spice up” the cast. These movies are also the result of changes in the entertainment industry and Disney’s administrative staff. Wanting to break the Disney mold, cartoon studios and animators such as MGM, Warner Bros., Tex Avery, Chuck Jones, and others sought to animate stories with more humor and comedic violence. Leonard Maltin, “the leading authority on American commercial film,” writes that director Friz Freleng garnered “delightful results” with cartoons such as *Clean Pastures* (1937) staring caricatured black performers and Al Jolson in blackface. Maltin also recognizes Bob Clampett’s “impressive” work in *Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarfs* (1943), a spoof of Snow White with large lipped black men and an overly sexualized leading woman. What Maltin fails to recognize, even remotely, are the stereotypical depictions of blacks in these animation. Needless to say, each of these are
on the “Censored 11” list. What followed was a revision of the production code resulting in adjustments to content in order to appeal to young audiences. The late 20th century introduced a new stance employed regarding the portrayal of blacks in animation. Big Mama in The Fox and the Hound (1981) is an example.

The Fox and the Hound is a story about a friendship between a fox named Tod and a hunting dog named Cooper who are supposed to be enemies. Tod, an orphan raised by a woman, Widow Tweed, is best friends with Copper. When they grow up, Copper learns to hunt and discovers that it is his duty to pursue his friend. Regardless of adversity their friendship ultimately prevails. Big Mama, the owl, is the black caricature in the animation. As an animated Aunt Jemima, by Bogle’s definition, she is the protector of the woods, caring for Tod and other woodland creatures with kind words and loving gestures. Big Mama provides assistance to non-black characters, and protects young white characters (Tod is voiced by white actors Keith Coogan and Mickey Rooney, Cooper is voiced by white actors Corey Feldman and Kurt Russell). It is because of Big Mama that orphaned Tod was able to find a home with Widow Tweed.

According to Donald Bogle, the mammy is a large, middle aged, sexless black woman who usually is the caretaker of a white female character and her children, while mistreating her own children. The mammy’s variant, Aunt Jemima, is “sweet, jolly, and good-tempered.” Therefore Big Mama is a mammy and Aunt Jemima caricature for four reasons: 1) throughout the movie Big Mama continues to make special efforts to ensure Tod’s safety. 2) Big Mama is presented as sexless since she is not given a male
companion, a condition not shared by Widow Tweed whose name implies that she once had a husband. 3) Big Mama does not have children outside of Tod who is her surrogate son. Lastly, accompanying her sweet and good-tempered spirit, Big Mama is depicted as over-weight as she acknowledges her large size and the need to lose weight. Black caricatures working as agents of progress for main characters continued in Disney films. With the release of *The Little Mermaid* (1989), black caricatures became sidekicks to main characters. This theme ultimately evolved into increasingly problematic depictions of people of color. Two problematic black sidekick caricatures are Sebastian from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and Mushu from *Mulan* (1998).

Sebastian is a Caribbean crab who works for King Triton as the kingdom’s musical composer. He is later assigned the duty to supervise King Triton’s mischievous daughter, Ariel. Sebastian attempts to convince Ariel to avoid the lure of life on land through the song “Under the Sea” sung to a calypso beat. Sebastian’s song implies a lack of desire to work making him similar to the coon caricature: “Up on the shore they work all day/Out in the sun they slave away/While we devotin'/Full time to floatin'/Under the sea.” But outside of this statement, Sebastian does not display characteristics of laziness. He appears to work diligently for King Triton and his family. Therefore, he may be closer to Bogle’s Uncle Tom caricature. Reluctantly, Sebastian assists mermaid Ariel in the forbidden task of creating a romance with a human, Prince Eric, putting Sebastian’s position with King Triton in jeopardy. Sebastian does not benefit from his relationship
with Ariel, yet he is the only one who sacrifices. Bogle terms this one-sided association as the Huckfinn fixation.

The Huckfinn fixation is an easygoing camaraderie between a white character, usually an outcast, who teams up with a Black character and creates a union that is free of racial barriers. The Black character never competes with the white character and the white character benefits in some form from the association with the Black character.  

Entman and Rojecki believe that when this teaming of races occurs, the white character’s problem is at the center of the movie and the black character is there to supply assistance to the white character. Ariel’s desire to be human is the center of the movie and she gets her wish with the help of Sebastian and her friend Scuttle. Sebastian’s Caribbean accent, voiced by black actor Samuel Wright, is a clear indicator of his implied race. Outside of his voice, there is very little that perpetuates any black character formulas. But Mushu the dragon in Mulan has clearer coon characteristics.

In Mulan (1998), Mushu is voiced by actor Eddie Murphy. Mushu is a pint-sized dragon who is a liaison between the ancestors and the human world who wishes he could be used more effectively than as a demoted gong ringer. Although Mulan is Chinese and not white, the Huckfin Fixation is applicable. It is because of Mushu’s continued self-sacrifice that Mulan succeeds in helping her father and winning honor for her family. Mushu’s character is boisterous and juvenile; his antics make him the object of amusement, the subject of ridicule, and his unreliability makes Mushu a classic fit for the
coon caricature. The coon, known for his humor, has the most reoccurring characteristic in animated blackness; the hyenas in *The Lion King* are another prime example.

*The Lion King* is another installment of Disney’s multi-cultural animations. By 1994, the studio focused on Early America in *Pocahontas*, Arabia in *Aladdin*, and China in *Mulan*. Interestingly, once Disney settled in Africa, there were no humans present. The absence of black human bodies has two possible implications. First, the Disney creators may have had a problem with depicting black human heroes and heroines. If a similar fear of black masculinity within white producers of blackness was the same as in minstrel performers, then showing three powerful black male figures (Mufasa, Simba, Scar and Rafiki) would be a challenge. The second implication is Disney using animals to cover an array of racial themes: Enlightenment theories of Africa, colonization, and the corruption of mainstream society by minority urban dwellers and immigrants.

Robert Gooding-Williams argues that *The Lion King* replicates Hegelian enlightenment theory of Africa “naturally existing and organically integrated 'circle of life,' a place of perfect harmony in which each and every species of life performs a function useful to the others.”74 King Mufasa explains to his son, Simba, the relationship between the lions who feed on the antelope, who eat the grass, which is nourished by their decomposed predators. This cyclical development is evident in the movie’s theme song “The Circle of Life.” Gooding-Williams paraphrases Hegel by saying, “this endless round -- especially as we see it in the vivid visual sequence which opens the film -- is as it has always been.”75 Disney's replication of Hegel’s theory does not allow for
contemporary images of African. Nor does it offer narratives of progress that is not in relation to European influences. However, Gooding-Williams argues that Disney’s image contradicts Hegel’s by displaying an African paradise instead of a primitive place absent of Europe’s supposedly superior contributions. But Disney does not remove all evidence of Europe. The voices of Zazu and Scar suggest European influence. By giving Scar a British accent highlights a colonial subtext. The animals shown in the film and language used by these characters offers clues to where in Africa the story takes place. The Pride Lands bare a close resemblance to the Serengeti in east Africa. Names such as Simba, which means “lion” in Swahili, and Rafiki, the Swahili term for “friend,” narrows the area to Kenya and Tanzania. Both places were geographically divided and colonized by the British. Therefore, Scar, scheming to depose of his brother, potentially references two types of events during colonization. Scar could represent British officials removing African kings through various tactics and replacing them with officials from Europe, or, since he is Mufasa’s brother, Scar could represent European-educated and assimilated Africans seeking to either erupt the pre-colonial society or remove themselves from the supposed “circle of life’s” redundancy and towards a Eurocentric idea of progress. In either case Scar’s British accent is a fairly obvious allusion to colonization and cultural imperialism. But Gooding-Williams argues that these assertions are anachronistic. He understands “Disney's African paradise” to be a “geographical space” that “knows nothing of historical time. It is obvious, moreover, that this paradise, this Euro-centric and neo-
Hegelian fantasy of the black African 'other,' corresponds to nothing in Africa's present or past."

Instead, some believe *The Lion King* is a narrative about racial matters in the United States seen in the movie’s color symbolism, similar to the subtext in Disney’s version of *The Jungle Book*. Some scholars assert that lightness and darkness (as opposed to white and black in *Snow White*) symbolizes the division among prosperity, the sunny Pride Land, and devastation, the elephant graveyard where the light does not touch. Dundes and Dundes cite Gutierrez and Martin-Rodriguez’s argument that, “the royal lion’s fiefdom which lies in the sun is distinct from the outer ‘border’ areas in the dark, inhabited by hungry hyenas who have designs to take over the sunlit kingdom. To underscore the symbolism of color, the lions are light colored (except for the lion villain, Scar) while the hyenas are animated as darker colored characters.” Gooding-Williams also mentions the importance of color, commenting on the social hierarchy within the light and dark divisions; “Beyond the space the light touches is a dark and dreary elephant graveyard, the home, Simba discovers, of countless hyenas. Scavengers who live on the periphery of Mufasa’s kingdom, reproducing themselves at the bottom of the food chain (or so they tell us), Disney's hyenas have no place in the harmoniously ordered and idealized African ‘circle of life.’”

The circle of life does not incorporate all lives, just those that involve the lions. The lions live privileged over those outside of the circle. This bifurcation corresponds to classism issues within the United States. The hyenas represent disenfranchised black and
Latino urban dwellers ostracized by the elite. “Relegated to the periphery of the polity, the space of the inner city appears here, not as something 'inner,' but as existing outside the boundaries which encompass the lives of America's 'legitimate' citizenry.” The dark decaying graveyard is similar to the witch’s dark castle in *Snow White* and King Louie’s kingdom ruins in *The Jungle Book*. Just as the prince’s white castle in *Snow White* was the visual antithesis to the witch’s domain, the lush landscape of Serengeti plains is juxtaposed to the hyena’s arid ghetto. Gooding-Williams list two ways in which the elephant graveyard symbolizes the inner city. First, two of the three prominent hyenas are racialized. The third appears mentally challenged. The hyenas are voiced by black actress Whoopi Goldberg (Shenzi) and Latino actor Cheech Marin (Banzai) who each uses racialized speech. John Russell Rickford says the hyenas speak a variety of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) “but one marked more by lexical and phonological features than grammatical features.” The second is the scene when Scar is rallying his hyena troops, which “depicts the building in which the hyenas live as a bleak-looking and overcrowded hi-rise, the unambiguous image of a housing development in the projects.” Perri Klass has likened the scene to the Leni Riefenstahl Nuremberg rally of Nazis marching. Coupling these analyses Scar can be seen as a power-hungry, mutinous rebel or as a revolutionary who left the upper echelons of the Pride Land in order to enfranchise the disposed “others.” Gooding-Williams argues that Scar is a “political revolutionary” eager “to end the otherwise endless reproduction of a natural course of life” and “radically transform it.” The revolutionary characteristics are in Scar’s
desire to create a utopia among the upper and under classes. Ideally, the inter-mammalian coalition would be beneficial for all involved, but Scar’s movement fails. And it does not appear that he is leading this movement for the altruistic reasons often applied to social and political activists.

Linking the hyenas to the black underclass is evident when they liken Scars’ treatment of them to government social policies. Dundes and Dundes argue that Scar offering meat to win the loyalty of the hyenas is similar to ideas of U.S. welfare, which leads to the spread of inner city decay, including an environment in which lionesses are harassed by lazy, parasitic hyenas. Scar and the hyenas’ lack of control over their new territory is said to be “the presumed inability of non-Whites to run their own states” and “justification for White resentment of minority encroachment into ‘their’ domain.”

When Simba returns to Pride Rock to regain the kingdom, “the unassimilable hyenas are once again relegated to their barren Wasteland.” The crows from Dumbo were shocked to see an elephant in “their place,” but the unexpected intrusion garnered positive results. It is one outsider benefiting from other outsiders in order to gain success in mainstream society. The Lion King is the first time a Disney movie allows the outsiders to be let in (or force themselves in) to mainstream society as opposed to being accepted by the mainstream. Unlike the crows or the alley cats, the hyenas do not offer any insight or any benefit to the mainstream community. The Lion King reinforces the concern that “separate but equal” is necessary; if such strategies are not implemented, then death and destruction will soon follow.
Citing Gutierrez and Martin-Rodriguez, Dundes and Dundes argues that the hyenas’ intrusion into the Pride Lands parallels feelings about Latino immigration into the United States.

At the time the film was produced, there was a sustained attempt on the part of the state of California and the federal border patrol to keep immigrants from Mexico and Central America from illegally crossing the border into the United States in an effort to share the bounty of the “good life” available there (e.g., Propositions 187, 209 and 227 in California: Elahi, 2001; Gutierrez, 2000). This zeitgeist offers a different perspective of Mufasa’s explicit identification of the hyenas’ shadowy territory as beyond the borders of the Pride Land and his swift reaction to and concern about a border patroller’s military salute and a news report that the hyenas have illegally crossed the border (in their search for better living conditions).

Just as in The Jungle Book where it is not clear why Mowgli, Baloo, or King Louie have American accents, it is not clear why a Latino would be in east Africa. The choice made to racialize Banzai, the Latino hyena, makes Martin-Rodriguez’s and Gutierrez point all the more salient. Why insert race or ethnicity into a story or environment that would not otherwise be there except for the purposes of asserting a racial subtext.

The Lion King continues the trajectory that began with Alice and the Cannibals of blacks “savage” origins put on display. The commodification of black’s presumed culture via minstrelsy was also animated in Steamboat Willie. Blackness was then erased and
rendered symbolic in *Snow White*. In *Dumbo* and *The Aristocats*, anthropomorphic blackness identity straddles the fence in being more obvious than symbolic, but still less overt than in *Alice and the Cannibals*. The crows and the alley cats demonstrate how blacks are needed but excluded. Because of exclusion, blacks became irate and demanded change in *The Jungle Book*. And when the change does not come, alliances are made and invasive action takes place with the hyenas in *The Lion King*. I argue that the black caricatures follow a social, political, and economic trajectory that is formed from a mainstream perspective. The African cannibals are a myth derived from European writers. The crows and alley cats represent Jim Crow. King Louie and the monkey symbolize rioting blacks during the early half of the Civil Rights movement, demanding change but ultimately only destroying their own communities. And finally, the hyenas represent black students’ demand for equality through lunch-counter sit-ins in the latter half of the Civil Rights movement. The problem with this reoccurring theme driven by social and political reality is that none of animated characters’ actions end positively. At the end of each movie, mainstream whiteness is restored and blacks return to their proper place and the reiteration of separate but equal mantra remains in effect. Just as minstrelsy and other entertainment manifestations of blackness did not take into account how African Americans saw themselves or how specific government policies like the Moynihan Report was built on assumptions of the black communities, intra-black community dynamics are not surveyed for these films. The closest the audience comes to
viewing the life of the outsider is in *The Lion King*, but unfortunately the audience is only greeted with death and devastation.\(^{92}\)

Rothstein argues that

The outsider is not someone to be admired or learned from, like the Tramp or Uncle Remus or Sebastian. He is a villain who threatens the ethnic future. Scar is literally a heathen, a pagan who rejects the Circle of Life and African animal society; he is portrayed as an ethnic caricature that is really anti-ethnic. The ethnic world is being threatened by Scar; it is the world that Simba must preserve by accepting his identity and celebrating its centrality.\(^{93}\)

Scar, however, does not threaten ethnicity but rather class-based hierarchy; he threatens whiteness. Scar’s actions inform the views that whiteness is pure and good, and any disruption of it will destroy society.

The Eurocentric composed trajectory of the black experience in relation to mainstream society will continue into the 21\(^{st}\) century. The common denominator in this trajectory is DreamWorks’ founder and executive Jeffery Katzenberg. In 1984, Katzenberg became head of Disney’s motion picture productions, which included the animation division. During his tenure in the Disney empire, Katzenberg oversaw animated projects such as *The Little Mermaid, Mulan, Aladdin, Pocahontas*, and *The Lion King* creating the problematic multi-cultural series themes. After professional conflict with Disney executives, Katzenberg left Disney and helped found DreamWorks studios with director Steven Spielberg and David Geffen. Responsible for blockbusters
like the *Shrek* series, Katzenberg has allowed elements of blackness, or negative
depictions of non-whites, in nearly all of his productions. In the following chapters, I will
closely analyze two DreamWorks films, *Shark Tale* and *Madagascar*. In each of these
films, the presumed contemporary black experience in the white world will unfortunately
be glaringly obvious.

1 Crafton, Donald. *Before Mickey the Animated Film 1898-1928*. Chicago: The University of Chicago
Press, 1993. 6. “…the earliest date at which animation was first commercially exploited was 1898.” Crafton
argues that “the animated film is a subspecies of film in general. Its history coincides with film history at
large, running parallel, weaving in and out” (6).
2 Chaney, Michael A. "Coloring Whiteness and Blackvoice Minstrelsy: Representations of Race and Place
167-75.
3 See Haas, Bell, and Sells’ work for critiques of gender in animation. Haas, Lynda, Elizabeth Bell, and
Laura Sells. *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Bloomington, Indiana:
4 See the following works: Willis, Susan. "The World according to Disney." Edited by Susan Willis. *South
5 Crafton, Donald. *Before Mickey: The Animated Film 1898-1928*. Chicago: The University of Chicago
Press, 1982. xv.
6 Ibid, 4.
1987. 98.
8 The “Censored 11” list is as follows: *Hittin' the Trail, to Hallelujah Land* (1931), *Sunday Go to Meetin'
Pingo Pongo* (1938), *All This and Rabbit Stew* (1941), *Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarfs* (1943), *Tin Pan
Alley Cats* (1943), *Angel Puss* (1944), and *Goldilocks and the Jivin' Bears* (1944).
9 Wainer, Alex. *Reversal of Roles: Subversion and Reaffirmation of Racial Stereotypes in Dumbo and The
writes, “In the 1930s, Walt Disney's studio had produced a number of cartoons with racial stereotypes. One
study has noted the use of native cannibals in *Alice Cans the Cannibals* (1933), "three sassy black girl cats”
in *Pluto’s Judgement Day*, and a blackbird based on Stepin Fetchit in *Who Killed Cock Robin?* (1935). In
* Fantasia's "Pastoral" sequence, there appeared in the original release version a black "maid" centaurette
with hair in pickaninny style braiding a white centaurette’s tail. By the 1950s, the character had been
snipped out of subsequent release prints. The 1946 release, *Song of the South*, was Disney's adaptation of
Joel Chandler Harris' Uncle Remus stories combining live portions of Uncle Remus and other characters
with the animated stories of Brer Rabbit's adventures. Bogle criticizes the film for its dated view of
contented, servile Negroes on Old South plantations, but does note that Uncle Remus' moral insight was
preserved.”
11 Walker, Jesse. "Mickey Mouse clubbed: Disney’s cartoon rodent speaks out on the Eldred decision." 
13 Ibid, 52.
14 Ibid, 52-53.
15 Desmond, Jane C. "Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies." *Cultural Critique* (University of Minnesota Press), Winter 1993-1994: 33-63. Jane C. Desmond discusses cultural appropriation among whites and blacks in the U.S. “[White performers]” toned down,” "tamed," and "whitened" such popular social dances as the Turkey Trot and the Charleston. Such revisions tended to make the dances more upright, taking the bend out of the legs and bringing the buttocks and chest into vertical alignment. Such “brokering” of black cultural products increased the circulation of money in the white community which paid white teachers to learn white versions of black dances. … And, of course, appropriation does not always take the form of the hegemonic groups’ "borrowing" from subordinated groups. The borrowing and consequent refashioning goes both ways. To take just one example, the "Cakewalk," a strutting couples dance performed by African Americans during the slavery era, is thought to have been based on a mimicry of European social dance forms, where (heterosexual) coupled dancing was prevalent, as opposed to the separate-sex dance traditions of West Africa.”
16 In 1940 Disney released Fantasia (1940) were Mickey Mouse starred in his first feature film. Although signature Mickey’s over-sized clothing remained other references to blackness and minstrelsy were absent. However, in the original Fantasia there is a scene featuring a pickaninny centaurette which was removed from the film years later. Disney continued to with leading anthropomorphic characters with the release of *Dumbo* (1941) one year later.
17 Maltin writes that Disney used his “Silly Symphonies” in the mid-1930s to create new ideas. These new ideas included personable characters and sentimental story lines. “One of Walt’s most important pursuits was the development of personality in cartoons. He wanted audiences to respond with a variety of emotions, and he knew that character credibility was a major ingredient for this kind of success.” Movies with mantras like “Do your best...be yourself...and life will smile on you” were the types of movies that Disney thought had “heart” and could “inspire his staff” (Maltin, 40-41).
18 Baker-Sperry, Lori, and Liz Grauerholz. "The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Feminine Beauty Ideal in Children's Fairy Tales," *Gender and Society* (Sage Publications), Oct 2003: 711-726. “Several of the tales have been reproduced in books and movies since their original publication. Our findings suggest that those that have been reproduced the most (Cinderella and Snow White) are precisely the ones that promote a feminine beauty ideal. Tales that make frequent reference to physical appearance and beauty for women are likely to have been reproduced” (722). “We suggest that this emphasis on a feminine beauty ideal may operate as a normative social control for girls and women. The fact that women's beauty is particularly salient in tales in the latter part of the twentieth century suggests that normative social controls (such as internalization of a feminine beauty ideal) may have become increasingly important over the course of the twentieth century as external constraints on women's lives diminished. We do not propose that there is a direct relationship between cultural values concerning feminine beauty and women's behavior and identities, but the feminine beauty ideal may operate indirectly as a means of social control insofar as women's concern with physical appearance (beauty) absorbs resources (money, energy, time) that could otherwise be spent enhancing their social status” (723).
19 Ibid, 719.
21 Ibid, 224-225.
Hurely warns readers of how children associate “'white" skin color with positive self-images and dark skin color with negative self-images (the darker the more negative) crosses ethnic and cultural divides. Segura-Mora (2003), for example, reported his experiences teaching Latino children in a kindergarten class as follows: "...The darkest child in my class [reports] [M]y mom is giving me pills to turn me white. . becau..." (p. 139). Segura-Mora decided to use this incident in his classroom as a teachable moment and in doing so uncovered the fact that kindergarten children demonstrated feelings of 'social worthlessness" associated with being dark-skinned in this society. It is unlikely that the children would have openly confronted or expressed these feelings had the teacher not used the classroom and the discussion of books as a mechanism to approach this challenging and difficult subject. Segura-Mora also points to the responsibility of teachers as "cultural workers" to be proactive in addressing this issue: As teachers, we are cultural workers, whether we are aware of it or not. If teachers don't question the culture and values being promoted in the classroom, they socialize their students to accept the uneven power relation of our society along lines of race, gender, and ability. Teachers can and should challenge white supremacist values and instead promote values of self-love.” (p. 139) (Hurely, 227)


Dumbo. Directed by Ben Sharpsteen. 1941.


Dumbo. Directed by Ben Sharpsteen. 1941.


Rothstein, Edward. "Cultural View; Ethnicity and Disney: It's a Whole New Myth."
Wainer, Alex. *Reversal of Roles: Subversion and Reaffirmation of Racial Stereotypes in Dumbo and The Jungle Book.*


Wainer, Alex. *Reversal of Roles: Subversion and Reaffirmation of Racial Stereotypes in Dumbo and The Jungle Book*


Merritt, Russell. "Lost on Pleasure Islands: Storytelling in Disney’s "Silly Symphonies"." *Film Quarterly* (University of California Press) 59, no. 1 (Autumn 2005): 4-17, 12.

Wainer, Alex. *Reversal of Roles: Subversion and Reaffirmation of Racial Stereotypes in Dumbo and The Jungle Book.*

Ibid.


Wainer, Alex. *Reversal of Roles: Subversion and Reaffirmation of Racial Stereotypes in Dumbo and The Jungle Book.*


Maltin writes, “The Warner Brothers studio started out by imitating Disney and in fact was peopled with ex-Disney staffers, but in the mid-1930s that group left and a new breed initiated a distinctive style and format that had little in common with Disney’s work. The films were bold, brash, and innovative. Most important, they were funny in a way Disney cartoons had ever been.” (Maltin 223). For more on Warner Brothers and MGM studios, see Maltin pages (223-280) and 281-310 respectively.


Smith, Jessie Carney. *Images of Blacks in American Culture: A Reference Guide to Information Sources.* Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1988. An alternate to the mammy is the Aunt Jemima. She has Uncle Tom characteristics with a sweet and jovial disposition (Smith 56), religious and more polite than the mammy (Bogle, 9). Both tend to be a significant part of white culture (Bogle, 9) usually as the children’s caretaker or the domestic who keeps the house in order and the confidant of the female household members. Mae West’s maids of the 1930’s were signature Aunt Jemimas (Bogle, 9). Interestingly the mammy and the Aunt Jemima were often seen with a coon husband or without a mate. One would assume that the Aunt Jemima would be given a like-minded Tom husband both focused on their religious beliefs and content in their status in society. But if one of her major tasks of her character is keeping track of her husband then there would not be a need for stability, thus no adversity for her to overcome.
71 Ibid
72 Ibid, 140.
75 Ibid
76 Ibid
77 Ibid
80 Ibid
81 Dundes, Lauren, and Alan Dundes. "Young Hero Simba Defeats Old Villain Scar: Oedipus wrecks the Lyin’ King." Dundes and Dundes cites Martin-Rodriguez regarding the racialization of the Latino hyena, “minority status of the hyenas was supposedly signaled by the fact that one of the voices of these creatures was that of Cheech, a Latino actor whose accent in English betrayed his ethnic origins (corroborated by a scene in which he utters a Spanish phrase, “Que pasa?” to emphasize the hyenas’ status as foreigners who have illegally crossed the border’ (Martin-Rodriguez, 2000) (Dundes, 480).
84 Dundes, Lauren, and Alan Dundes. "Young Hero Simba Defeats Old Villain Scar: Oedipus wrecks the Lyin’ King." 480.
Gooding-Williams discusses the problem with not allowing the utopia to transpire in the Pride Lands and how that relates to feelings of interracial dynamics in the United States. “By envisioning this fall as a result of the hyenas' transgression of spatial boundaries, The Lion King suggests that the impoverished life of America's inner cities is itself the product of a communicable malaise embodied by inner-city residents. Enfranchise poor blacks and Latinos, Disney's movie intimates, and this malaise -- a sort of biological and perhaps racist version of the Moynihan Report's 'tangle of pathology' -- will spread inwards from the polity's periphery, entirely consuming its vital resources.” He continues, “What would happen were America fully to enfranchise the black and Latino denizens of the inner city; were it to empower them, that is, with the political power they lack in a capitalist democracy wherein access to political power is constrained by race and class. The Lion King's answer to this question is that the entire polity would be polluted and rendered uninhabitable by the hyenas' presence” (see Goldberg, 1993).

Ibid. Gooding-Williams continues the discussion of the landscape of within the animation and how it relates to the inner-city, “In the wake of Scar's success in enfranchising the hyenas (in inaugurating 'a new age'), the movie forcefully asserts this answer by picturing an originally bright and colourful African landscape in the dark and gray tones otherwise reserved for depicting the scavengers' inner city. As if they were the physically sick agents of a death-dealing plague that they had borne from one physical space to infect another, the hyenas' participation in the life of a once paradisal polity spells that polity's fall and demise.” Also, The only character that has an African accent is Rafiki. He is has a unique standing of being an outsider who is allowed inside. But he is only allowed inside because he is seen as an active facilitator in maintaining the lions elite status. It is because of Rafiki that Simba is convinced to return to his kingdom. “In The Lion King, Africa's entry into history is its fall from paradise and its decline from a state of spiritual integrity that Rafiki will work to restore. In The Lion King, the split is apparent in the contrasting portraits of, on one hand, the inner city hyenas and, on the other hand, Rafiki. Led by Scar, the hyenas endeavor to become legitimate and enfranchised citizens who are no longer relegated to the periphery of the polity. As for Rafiki he is a 'good soul' who, in the wake of Scar's hyena-supported political revolution, helps to defeat the hyenas and to restore the integrity of a polity that the film allegorically imagines as, again, a visually vivid, naturally ordered and historyless circle of life.”

Rothstein, Edward. “Cultural View; Ethnicity and Disney: It's a Whole New Myth.”
CHAPTER 4

SHARK TALE

The mass media as a hegemonic entity has played a vital role in displaying and perpetuating fallacious accounts of black life. But what is lacking is a critical look at how memory, and its possible materializations, plays in non-blacks’ (specifically whites) interpretation, motivation, and perception of stereotypical visual portrayals of blackness. This research will look at the possible furtive and/or involuntary visual manifestations of black identity in animation that find its sources in white historical memory. I argue that animators’ methods of portraying African-Americans in early cinema parallel those employed in contemporary animation practices.

Pre-Civil Rights Movement African-Americans were presented in the most overtly stereotypical fashion that consistently employed a stigmatized view of blacks. Limited animated portrayals of black life perpetuated the stereotypical cinematic blueprint of African-Americans and Africans. The blueprint consisted of several character categories called the black character formulas in which black identities were placed: black native, coon, Uncle Tom, brutal buck, tragic mulatto, jezebel and mammy. After the Civil Rights era, overtly racist typecasting in the forms of traditional exaggerated minstrel big-lipped, big-eyed features were minimal, but these basic formulas are still in existence in feature-length animation via anthropomorphic characters
today. The coon will be the focus of this chapter as this immature unproductive caricature can be classified as the most detrimental to the black male image. The purpose of these typecasts are not only to maintain black men’s subjugated status in the U.S. but also to reinforce and support the Anglo-Saxon male definition of black men presented as diametrically opposed to white men.

I examine the coon caricature in two different historical moments. Through an analysis of *Scrub Me Mama with a Boogie Beat* (1941)\(^1\) (during the pre-civil rights era) and DreamWork’s *Shark Tale* (2004)\(^2\) (during the post-Civil Rights era), I will identify the connection between history, memory, and affect that assists in the formulation of black caricatured identities. History is the aggregate of past events, acts, or ideas, that shape the course of the future. The compilation of that information is stored as memories and retrieved when necessary. Memories can be composed of personal encounters or information relayed by another party. Those memories can be composed of positive events but can also consist of traumatic occurrences that evoke feelings, which can manifest into a performance. Anything one does, from everyday menial tasks to traditionally staged events, concerts, and presentations, is a form of performance. The unconscious stage after a significant event but before it is produced as an emotion, is a stage called affect. Often, affect is mentioned in relation to a traumatic event and is performed as a way to give that unconscious state a voice.

These elements are significant for the formation of black and white identities in the United States. For some white Americans within entertainment media the traumatic
accounts in their memory are the results of a memory of the trauma they (and/or their ancestors) have inflicted upon marginalized groups that created negative caricatures. These caricatures create and protect the white supremacist power structure. The performance to protect the status of whiteness is through producing, reinventing and flooding media outlets with negative depictions of black life that is supposed to contrast “ideal” whiteness. This method of whites ascribing political, environmental, and social power to themselves via a performative method demonstrates what I call invested affect performance, in which white producers of black culture create typecast productions (consciously or unconsciously) by accessing cultural memories containing stereotypical imagery and invented histories.

*Scrub Me Mama with a Boogie Beat* is an animated short produced by Walter Lantz Studios in 1940. The story is set in what appears to be the rural sharecropping South with cotton pickers “working” lethargically in a place appropriately named Lazytown. Among its citizens are typical minstrel depictions: little unkempt pickaninny children, coons who refuse to be removed from their languid positions and dark-skinned overweight mammies who are the only people working regardless of their men’s slothfulness. A young, light-skinned nameless woman from Harlem arrives. Although her attire suggests that she does not do any manual labor, she tells the mammy laundry washers how to better wash their clothes to a catchy rhythm. She injects energy into the town with her infectious song "Scrub Me Mama with a Boogie Beat" engaging the town in song and dance.
Although this cartoon was meant to highlight the swing music of the era, the methods of portraying the characters were less light-hearted. Refusing to economically participate in society, the monkey-like male characters embodied the fear many whites’ had after the emancipation of slaves. Many whites were concerned that newly free Negroes could become a burden on white Americans’ way of life. With the ability to conjure up their “innate” sense of musicality with slices of watermelon in hand, they presented the Negro as an object of amusement.\(^3\) Actions of the black buffoon translated into their work and domestic lives.

Absent from the animation is an interaction between the mammy characters and the coon men, defining the men’s role in the black household as inattentive and inadequate. The men’s lack of interaction with the Lazytown mammys and enthusiastic attraction to the urban mulatto perpetuates the mammy caricature and implies a phenotypic dichotomy within the feminine black community maintained by the black men. However, the men’s participation in this divisive separation is the only control they have in their community.

Laziness, monkey-like features, and “innate” musicality are the elements of representation used to create the “coon code” in the creator’s memory. The actions of Lazytown’s coons is a performance that transmits perceived social knowledge of the time, created from the memory of its white creators in order to produce an identity through reiterated or “twice-behaved” behaviors.\(^4\) Depicting an all black, low-income town whose inability to thrive socially and economically speaks to Enlightenment
theories of blacks being incapable of producing anything of worth without the help of white paternalism.\textsuperscript{5} Creating stereotypical characters is a response to a memory of stereotyping; in this case, the memory of Enlightenment theories. There is a fluctuation from unconsciously tapping into the memory of segregated black-white social conventions and consciously recreating those social conventions; the former is constantly informing the latter so that history is preserved and repeated.

In contemporary anthropomorphic animation, archaic caricatures have been resurrected, combined and reformed. After the Civil Rights Movement, the use of stereotypical black human images, as in \textit{Scrub Me Mama}, notably lessened in light of stricter television censorship regulations regarding people of color.\textsuperscript{6} This new attention to gauging the appropriateness of visual portrayals of blacks poses questions regarding ways in which the renderings should change. Pre-Civil Rights minstrel human characters and post-Civil Rights anthropomorphic characters need to be comparatively critiqued due to the animation industry finding a new and “safer” way to depict black human characters via animal personification. Post-Civil Rights movement, anthropomorphic blackness continued into a new wave of technological advancements in animation: 3D computer animation or CGI.\textsuperscript{7} Along with the technological innovations came ways of attracting a wider audience. These tactics were very similar to those of MGM’s mature themes of the 1940s and 1950s. The issue with attempting to lure adults to “G” and “PG” rated animations is that the tactics often reference complex social and racial subject matters.
In 1995, the world saw its first 3D feature-length film *Toy Story* by John Lasseter of Pixar Studios. Its huge success helped pave the way for DreamWorks studios who released its first CGI film *Antz* in 1998, the *Shrek* trilogy (2001, 2004, and 2007) and *Shark Tale* (2004). DreamWorks’ relationship to Pixar is very similar to MGM and Disney in 1940s and 50s. Andrew Osmond argues that,

In *Shark Tale*, something goes wrong with the skilful meta-narrative that DreamWorks cultivates in its CGI animated films. They’re sold as hip counter-programming to the Disney-Pixar hegemony, with improbable star casts, Simpsons-lite comedy and a crowd-pleasing willingness to kick rivals. In the first *Shrek*, the ogre wipes his bum with Disneyesque fairytales. In the sequel, sharks leap on the same studio’s Little Mermaid. DreamWorks will insist that any perceived riposte in *Shark Tale* to Pixar’s sea adventure *Finding Nemo* is coincidence (as it did when *Antz* opened weeks before Pixar’s *A Bug's Life*) but it's academic.8

Just as Tex Avery of MGM’s animation department was most likely to push the envelope with racial stereotypes, sexual references and outlandish gags,9 DreamWorks appears to also be doing the same. Offering narratives outside of the classic fairytale model proves to be profitable. *Shrek* (2001), with a domestic total gross of $267,665,01110. *Shrek 2* (2004), topping 2004’s movie charts at $441,226,247,11 as well as *Madagascar* (2005) and *Shark Tale* contained sophisticated humor for the adults and silly
antics for the children. *Shrek 2*, being 2004’s top movie moneymaker\(^{12}\) implies that adult themes in child-targeted animation are popular.

One method of securing an adult audience is utilizing the voices of successful actors and actresses. There are benefits for studios using famous actors in animation in addition to attracting adults. Stars like Will Smith and Cameron Diaz can bring in double the profits for a fraction of the cost.\(^{13}\) Movies with “funny, sassy scripts and contemporary references” attract teenagers and adults who attend the movie on their own\(^{14}\) but eager adults also bring their children. Broad audiences are watching superstar personalities who command considerably lower salaries for the use of their voice as opposed to starring in person.\(^{15}\) Their presence increases theater ticket sales, DVD sales, and other merchandise purchases as well as exposing them to a younger demographic that may continue to patronize their movies. From the use of Pearl Bailey’s and Mickey Rooney’s voices in *The Fox and the Hound* to Mike Myers and Eddie Murphy in *Shrek*, animation studios are advertising their productions with entertainers from the film industry. It appears that this tactic is used to lure adults more so than children because most of these entertainers do not normally play to a young audience. With the exception of young actor Jonathan Taylor Thomas as the voice of Simba in Disney’s *The Lion King*, actors like, Chris Rock, Eddie Murphy, Bruce Willis, Antonio Banderas, Robert De Niro, Ben Stiller and Martin Scorsese have largely adult fan bases. Making films that consider both young and adult audience members is not always a negative method. However, as seen with Warner Bros. studio, when more complex adult themes enter the narrative,
issues of negative race depictions are most obvious. The adult humor is not limited to
mentioning a movie or celebrity that children may not be familiar with. The laughs
become based on complex social issues that are inappropriate for young minds that are
still attempting to understand the ways in which society views its members and their
place in it.

DreamWork’s film *Shark Tale* is an example post-Civil Rights anthropomorphic
animation. The film opens underwater where the audience is privy to a world under the
surface. The film stars Oscar voiced by black actor Will Smith. Oscar is a fast-talking
hustler fish who has aspirations of being famous and wealthy. Oscar introduces himself to
the audience wearing a sideways baseball cap, sunglasses, and a thick double-strand gold
chain with a large dangling “O” (a look reminiscent of the 1990s hip-hop wear). Oscar
says, “Welcome to my crib. The good life the way the other half lives” as fast paced hip-
hop music plays in the background. He tells the audience about his elaborate
entertainment system, because a “mack daddy fish” like him must have the “basic
necessities.” Soon the audience discovers Oscar was pretending in front of a billboard
when he should have been working at his job in the local Whale Wash.

Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo and Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo describe this as “an
excellent example of racialized anthropomorphism.”16 They argue that Oscar “speaks in a
clearly ‘black’ American accent and lives in the ghetto part (South side) of the reef. His
blackness is found not only in his accent and place of residence but also in his
mannerisms, behavior, and jewelry (i.e., ‘bling’), which are highly racialized
The mention of “Southside” can reference Southside Chicago where a significant sized black population lives but could also refer to a socio-economic position of living beneath society similar to being a part of the “underclass” (e.g. south of or under the upper class). Oscar makes reference to this position when he says he wants to live “up there” where the “somebodys live.”

In the midst of his fantasy next to the billboard, three young fish approach Oscar. They say colloquial phrases to him such as, “Oscar you da fish” and “Yo dude.” The young fish proceed to spray paint the same billboard Oscar was acting in front of. The adolescent fish Oscar encounters are the contemporary pickaninnies, who use racialized speech and roam the city without supervision defacing property. Oscar attempts to be a parent figure to them asking why they are not in school and telling them to not spray paint the city. But he does not succeed because he is just as irresponsible as the children and the youth recognize his irresponsibility when they tell Oscar he was supposed to be working.

Oscar leaves the youths and enters his job late asking if its “time for lunch.” After some time at work, Oscar is greeted by Ernie and Bernie, voiced by black musician Ziggy Marley and black actor Doug E. Doug. Ernie and Bernie are two Rastafarian Jellyfish who are henchmen for Sykes, Oscar’s boss. Oscar’s blackness is specified to African American “blackness” through hip-hop references and through his interactions with the Rastafarian jellyfish. Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo argue that Oscar’s interaction with Bernie and Ernie incites an intra-racial dichotomy created by the Jamaican jellyfish.
…not only can we see Oscar being racialized as Black but also can we see an
ethnicization of race whereby Oscar is constructed as a black *American*. This
ethnicization is accomplished through his juxtaposition to Ernie and Bernie with whom
he interacts. In one scene, for example, Oscar attempts to sing reggae, to which Ernie
retorts, “Don’t like the way you sing that song, man.” In this way, Oscar is reinscribed as
Black, but this reinscription is promoted through contrasting Oscar, as Black American,
with Ernie and Bernie, as Black *Jamaican* (where to be Jamaican means to be accepted
by Rastafarian jellyfish). The intra-racial division is further amplified when Bernie and
Ernie are given the duty to kill Oscar for not paying his debt to Sykes.

Ernie and Bernie inform Oscar that Sykes needs to see him. Oscar greets his boss
by saying “What’s the deezy” and “It’s all gravy” then attempts an elaborate handshake
with him. When his boss Sykes, voiced by white actor Martin Scorsese, is disinterested in
Oscar’s informal greeting and doesn’t participate in the handshake, Oscar jokingly
consoles him by saying “A lot of white fish can’t do it.” Sykes, who is in debt to the
shark mob, confronts Oscar about the $5,000 in unpaid cash advance loans he owes the
business. Oscar is happily surprised at his boss’ accurateness and says, “see this is why
you’re in management and I’m not.” After Sykes tells Oscar about his connection to the
shark mafia and how Oscar must repay the funds, Sykes shows Oscar a food chain chart
the places sharks at the top, then Sykes, “normal fish”, later down the list is Oscar
underneath plankton and “whale poo.” After borrowing the $5,000 from his friend and
eventual love interest Angie to repay the loans, he gambles it and loses everything.
These few opening scenes reiterate not only the coon caricature but also Enlightenment ideology that said blacks were immature, childish, and irresponsible. Whether or not the audience knew Will Smith was an African-American actor, they knew at the moment of introduction that Oscar was supposed to embody blackness. Movie reviewer Walter Chaw argues that Oscar and Sykes’ handshake greeting “…before the dreaded and requisite scene when the Scorsese fish, decked out in gangsta wear, offers up the Pesci version of ghetto-rap. There's really not much separating the picture from, say, Bringing Down the House: lots of super-charged racial politics are scrubbed, rounded, and regurgitated for the approval of the ruling class.” Chaw makes a connection between the performance of blackness by whites in film and the same performance in animation. This connection also highlights the racial politics evident in Shark Tale and Bringing Down the House (Bringing Down the House rated PG-13 for a slightly older audience than PG rated Shark Tale). By saying that the racial politics are “scrubbed, rounded, and regurgitated for the approval of the ruling class” implies that animation is simply a reformulation of cinematic themes of blackness. And these themes are not meant to humor the black people they claim to accurately portray. Rather, these themes are perpetuated for the benefit of the white mainstream.

Sykes’ role is multifaceted: 1) He assists in black racial division by ordering the Jamaican jellyfish henchmen to kill Oscar. Although whiteness is depicted as American and foreign-white, with white-voiced characters like Angie, Lola, and the Italian sharks (similar to blackness displayed as black American and Jamaican), the separation among
whiteness is not presented as intra-racially divisive. All the fish (regardless of how they are racialized) are afraid of the sharks. As opposed to the Jamaican henchmen who only incite fear in Oscar. 2) Sykes makes the overt connection between blacks and Enlightenment theories via the racial hierarchy. 3) Sykes exemplifies whites’ appropriation of blackness for mainstream’s gain.

Syke’s food chain chart informing (or reminding) Oscar of his subordinate status represents the idea of biological determinism of the 17th and 18th centuries that placed Anglo-Saxons at the top, Asians and Native Americans fluctuating in the center, and blacks always at the bottom. Thomas Jefferson, and many other Enlightenment thinkers, believed that blacks were naturally at the bottom of the chain of social, economic, and intellectual power. In religious circles during Enlightenment, many Southern Christians desired to place the Negro as low as possible on the scale of creation, not only because this was one way to justify slavery but also because it was done in a manner that allowed many whites to retain their belief that all “men” – or all members of the Caucasian “species” – were created equal.

Once Oscar becomes famous, Sykes becomes Oscar’s manager, clearing Oscar of his debt to Sykes. Because of Oscar’s endorsement deals, magazine covers, and appearances, Oscar makes money for Sykes. So much so that Sykes can sell (or give) part of the Whale Wash business to Oscar and assumingly retire. So Sykes profits from Oscar’s popularity and from selling the business to Oscar. What is not discussed in the film is how Oscar so easily joined forces with the person who ordered his murder. It was
only by a fluke that Oscar did not die at the hands of Bernie and Ernie. It is not until Sykes realizes that he can make a profit from Oscar, that Sykes become invested in him. Sykes investment comes in the form of appropriating blackness.

Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo write,

With Oscar’s celebrity and Sykes’ newfound investment, we see Sykes now able to do the finshake and to speak “Black lingo.” We could argue that Sykes’ “Black performance” parallels that of White rap producers and others who “learn the lingo” to have better rapport with their “investments.”

At the end of the movie, Sykes is fitted with an oversized purple felt hat similar to hats worn by black pimps in blaxploitation films like The Mack. Sykes, who could not complete the finshake with Oscar (and was disinterested in learning how) is seen attempting to teach Lino, one of the sharks how to perform it. Sykes becomes not just an appropriator and exploiter of blackness, but a teacher and transmitter of blackness.

In Playing in the Dark, Toni Morrison describes her early thoughts of blacks’ role in literature, “My early assumptions as a reader were that black people signified little or nothing in the imagination of white American writers. Other than to the provide local color or to lend some touch of verisimilitude or to supply a needed moral gesture, humor, or bit of pathos, blacks made no appearance at all.” Although Morrison is focusing on black characters in literature, her analysis is appropriate for animation and film.

Oscar’s blackness provides a “touch of verisimilitude” of African American life. Hip-hop and rap culture is prevalent in many African Americans lives. But it is only a
“touch” of resemblance to African American life because it is not an accurate reflection of all African Americans. Oscar’s hip-hop attire and use of slang used in the predominately black world of hip-hop and rap music were the elements of representation that made Oscar the new sign for the “coon code.” Hip-hop is a highly racialized signifier like jazz in Dumbo and The Jungle Book. The use of hip-hop in contemporary animation is now the replacement for jazz as a signifier for blackness after jazz became mainstream and less of an identifier of black culture.

Because the immature and irresponsible coon character formula is consistently providing humorous entertainment, Oscar embodies the pathos in the film. Oscar’s choices to avoid work, accumulate unpaid loans, and have unprofessional interactions with staff reinforces the coon caricature that represents the juvenile, unreliable, indolent, illiterate subhuman beings who spend their time eating watermelons, stealing chickens, or gambling.25

The racial division between Oscar and Sykes is most pronounced when Oscar labels Sykes a “white fish.” Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo discuss the negative implications for viewers.

For children who are learning the intricacies of race (as a social signifier) and race relations, labeling Sykes as a “White fish” (and therefore, Oscar as a “Black fish”) validates other societal messages. Children learn that our culture is strictly raced and racialized, since even fish can be Black or White.26
Lugo- Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo point out two concerns. First, the societal messages reinforce a dichotomous black and white society. This idea negates the idiosyncrasies of race and people who identify with other races and ethnicities. But what I argue is most important is that racializing Sykes and Oscar “validates other societal messages.” If viewers believe that low income black men are lazy, liars, and are irresponsible, then societal messages that support not hiring black men in low-income jobs is validated.

Devah Pager, Associate Professor of Sociology and Faculty Associate of the Office of Population Research at Princeton University, conducted a study investigating employment discrimination. College students posing as white felons or blacks with untarnished criminal records applied for entry level positions:

The results of these studies were startling. Among those with no criminal record, white applicants were more than twice as likely to receive a callback relative to equally qualified black applicants. Even more troubling, whites with a felony conviction fared just as well, if not better, than a black applicant with a clean background. Racial disparities have been documented in many contexts, but here, comparing the two job applicants side by side, we are confronted with a troubling reality: Being black in America today is just about the same as having a felony conviction in terms of one’s chances of finding a job. The young black men posing as job applicants in this study were bright college kids, models of discipline and hard work; and yet, even in this best-case scenario, these applicants were routinely overlooked simply on the basis of the color of their skin. The
results of this study suggest that black men must work at least twice as hard as equally qualified whites simply to overcome the stigma of their skin color.27

Pager’s research demonstrates how racial stereotypes can seep into contemporary interactions among people of color and have a direct effect on black people’s lives. Although he demonstrates how lack of employment affects black men directly, we must also take into account the wives, girlfriends, children and possible other dependants that can also be effected by black men’s lack of employment. Pager ultimately draws a connection between discrimination and stereotypes:

…very little enforcement exists for acts of discrimination at the point of hire. The adequate enforcement of antidiscrimination laws represents [a] vital priority. At the same time, it is important to remember that the problems of discrimination cannot be eliminated through enforcement alone. Racial stereotypes, though often exaggerated distortions of reality, are fueled in part by real associations between race, crime, and incarceration. Tackling these social problems at their root—including inadequate schools, neighborhood instability, and a lack of employment opportunities—are likely to represent among the most far-reaching interventions. Discrimination is not the only cause of contemporary racial discrimination, nor even the most important factor. But because it is usually so difficult to observe, it is easy to forget about altogether. It is important that we remain mindful of the realities of direct discrimination, so that those who are working hard to get ahead are given a fair break.28
Pager recognizes that there is little done politically regarding black men’s lack of fair chance to obtain entry-level positions. What can be done, however, is an acknowledgement of stereotypes and a deliberate campaign to combat such stereotypes as individual consumers. We should become knowledgeable about black character formulas, recognize how they can manifest in our lives, and then work to avoid implementing them in our interactions and decisions regarding people of color. But it is not just about white-black male relations. Oscar’s love interests should be examined as well as Oscar’s portrayal of black masculinity through Lenny’s gender ambiguity. The accusations of ethnic white stereotyping, seen in the Italians sharks should also be acknowledged, because the outcry against Italian stereotyping overshadowed or replaced concerns of portrayals of blackness.29

Instead of a nameless light-skinned urban temptress as in Scrub Me Mama, Oscar is aroused by Lola, the risqué shallow fish voiced by white actress Angelina Jolie. He also falls in love with Angie, voiced by white actress Renee Zellweger. The question of why a black female actress was not cast for the voice of Angie is also posed for adult Nala in The Lion King. This issue is also present in casting black male love interests in non-animated films.

In Hitch, another film starring Will Smith, Newsweek writer Allison Samuels, discusses Hollywood’s apprehension towards casting a black love interest for the leading black male.
…these days African-American leading men tend to be cast opposite Latinas instead of black actresses. (In Smith's case, it's Eva Mendes; in Drumline and Honey, it was Zoe Saldana and Jessica Alba.) Apparently Hollywood doesn't think America is ready for, say, Mos Def and Kate Hudson heating up the screen—though out in the real America, more black men are married to white women than to Latinas—and the conventional wisdom is, as actress Nia Long puts it, ‘two black characters equals a black film and not just a movie about two people.”

The predicament appears to be more complex than the supposed difficulty of a black couple used to appeal to mainstream audiences. Skin tone poses a problem as well. Mendes is considered “too dark to be paired with a white lead, but just right for an African-American.” In Samuels’ interview with Mendes, the actress replies, "I don't even know what to say about it anymore," she told Newsweek in an interview shortly before the movie opened. "Certainly I've benefited, because I've got to work with Ice Cube, Denzel and Will. But it's lame. I wish the mentality wasn't so closed.” We don't know what to say either, except that in Hollywood progress is a work in progress.

Even when the characters are animals, a black couple has been avoided. In The Lion King black actress Niketa Calame voices young Nala. But when Simba and Nala’s relationship becomes a romantic one, white actress Moira Kelly voices older Nala. Oscar and Angie’s interracial relationships could be seen as progress from the miscegenation fear from Enlightenment years and the lack of black man/white female relationships on screen.
However, black women lack representation in animation and black couples are virtually absent in large-budget films targeting mainstream. Arguably, since Oscar’s coon character is a rather deplorable one, one might not want another black stereotype in *Shark Tale* in the form of a typecast black woman. However, acknowledgment of too few black women in animations and relatively no black female animated (and filmed) love interests should be further investigated.

A continued connection between adult themes in film and animation is *Shark Tale*’s references to sexuality. Anita Gates, writer for *The New York Times* states that *Shark Tale* has “plenty of jokes for the grown-ups.”

Making this distinction between humor for children and humor for adults draws attention to the comedic choices of the writers and producers in regards to their audience. *Shark Tale* has been identified by critics as containing inappropriate themes, gender identification, Italian stereotyping, and negative portrayals of black life. Of the three, it appears that issues with Italian typecasting received the most media coverage, followed by the sexual orientation of Lenny, with Oscar as a caricature of blackness being less recognized. Although Italian stereotyping and Lenny’s sexual orientation appear to be separate from issues of depicting blackness, each has a stake in constructing Oscar’s black male sexuality, changing the focus of black-white race issues to intra-white ethnic concerns. Oscar’s aspirations of being famous and wealthy seem to have come true after he takes credit for being the Sharks-slayer hero. Lenny is a vegetarian great white shark whose sensitivity makes him an outcast among his carnivorous mob family. When both of their secrets are
revealed, the two become an unexpected duo in attempting to achieve their goals and the
two find comfort in their identities.

Godfather Don Lino wants his son Lenny to take over the business after Lino
dies. Lenny feels out of place with his shark family because he is a vegetarian. His family
appears to not understand him, thinks he is odd and tries to force him to eat meat. Lino,
his father says, “I'm hearing things... When you look weak, it makes me look weak.
What's wrong with that kid? Why does he have to be so different.”? Some argue that
Lenny’s eating habits and family disconnect is a narrative for Lenny’s sexual orientation.
It is implied that the naturally carnivorous sharks is a metaphor for traditional
heteronormativity. Lenny decides he does not want to be a shark and creates a new
identity as a dolphin. Amsterdam News writer Natasha Grant writes that Lenny being a
vegetarian is a “code word for ‘homosexual.”32 Walter Chaw writes, that the “suggestion
that shark Lenny is gay because he's a vegetarian and goes into hiding as a dolphin” is
humor that is “predicated on other peoples' stupidity and possible sexual orientation.”33
Some do not see Lenny’s story as taboo, rather reviewer Ramon Johnson argues that
Shark Tale “sends a message of hope to closeted gay men who live their lives feeling
different and out of touch- constantly afraid of their sexual preference disappointing the
ones they love.”34

Lenny’s implied homosexuality has also been coupled with a transgender
narrative. By changing his identify from a murdering-mafia shark to “Sebastian, the
Whale-Washing Dolphin,” complete with make-up and a cowboy uniform, Lugo-Lugo
and Bloodsworth-Lugo liken Lenny to “uniformed men within gay male culture (the most famous example being the array of figures represented by The Village People) as well as the more general relationship between gay men and drag.”

Lenny’s “coming out narrative” is most obvious when he confesses to Oscar: “In case you haven't noticed, I'm different from other sharks. You're the first fish I've ever told. I'm sick and tired of keeping it to myself.” Although Oscar requests Lino to love Lenny “as he is,” Oscar makes a clear distinction between him and Lenny. When hiding-out together Oscar sets rules for their interactions. Oscar says rule one is “none of that snuggly buggly stuff. Whatever that was.” Thus distancing himself from any “icky” male intimacy that Oscar assumes comes with being a “vegetarian.” In rule two Oscar states, “If you ever have a change of heart [about being a vegetarian], please don’t gobble me down.” Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo argue that Oscar’s rules for friendship “reconstitutes himself as the heterosexual man—the man who may have other men as friends, but whose sexual desires are firmly positioned where they should be.”

Oscar’s sexuality is overt, thus an allusion to brute black masculinity. Bogle writes that, “the black brute character was a barbaric physically violent black male large in stature whose animalistic high sex-drive is borderline psychotic in relentless pursuit of white women.” Oscar’s comedic coon tendencies repress the barbaric and violent characteristic of the brute. However, his love interest options are characters voiced by white actresses (Angelina Jolie as Lola and Renne Zellweger as Angie). Oscar has two women who work to gain his attention, guaranteeing a firm stake in heterosexuality.
Oscar’s attraction to Lola is most obvious, with his love for Angie growing gradually. Also, the brute stereotype was the quintessential formula used to exert black man masculinity on screen during the blaxploitation era. This same blaxploitation maleness is seen when Oscar presents himself as the “shark slayer.” Nothing short of Shaft’s “bad motha shut ya mouth” persona or the sexual urban hero Sweet Back getting retribution from “the man…coming back to get some dues.” Oscar is the city’s hero asserting his black masculinity, however falsely constructed it is. Because in reality, Oscar has not killed any sharks, just as neither Shaft nor Sweet Back has “saved” the black community. Yet viewers of Shaft or Sweet Back and the city dwellers in Shark Tale’s underwater metropolis, are expected or asked to embrace concepts of black maleness that is presented as altruistic violence. Viewers are told Oscar’s black masculinity cannot be compromised. If it were, not only will there be a possibility for Oscar to be excommunicated from his community or feel uncomfortable about his identity just like Lenny, but viewers may not be able to read Oscar as a black masculine man. The alternative could be a more effeminate Oscar. Of the black character formulas, the most effeminate was the Uncle Tom, but he is not read as homosexual. Therefore, because Oscar has a gay friend in Lenny, his masculinity and sexuality is overtly exerted in order to maintain his supposed black maleness. The problem with this overcompensation is the lack of multiple depictions of black masculinity. At the end of the movie, Lino accepts Lenny. Therefore the audience is given multiple versions of white maleness. I do not argue that Oscar needs to be depicted as homosexual. I do propose that Oscar’s and
Lenny’s friendship did not need to be constructed on a foundation of black heteronormativity, with a hint of homophobia and an unnecessary exertion of brute-esque black manhood.

Lenny, Oscar, and other characters assist in creating stark racial categories and implying their social positions in American society. Similar to the race-class narrative in *The Lion King* (see chapter three), *Shark Tale* demonstrates that one’s social position is in direct relation to their race. The little socio-economic progress made by Oscar comes with the dissemination of caricatured black life by those considered higher on the food chain. Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo suggest that *Shark Tale* teaches an unfortunate depiction of race:

…there is an ethnicization of race in more recent animated films for children, suggesting that children are being taught not only “crude” racial categories but also more intricate ways of conceiving “race” in relation to ethnic markers. While it might be argued that there are positive aspects to such portrayals (for instance, they complicate race by not homogenizing racial categories such as “Black” or “White”), we would argue that the real purpose of the ethnicization of race—in a film like *Shark Tale*—is to differentiate characters in not-so-positive ways.40

The inter- and intra-racial categories and how those placed in the categories are “supposed” to interact with each other are apparent. Lenny and his shark *Godfather*-esque family are Italian-American whites. Sykes, Oscar’s boss, is a non-ethnic white. Oscar’s young fish associates are African-American. And the Rastafarian jellyfish are
Jamaican men. Sykes wishes to exploit Oscar and his newfound celebrity status as the shark slayer. But Sykes is a victim to shark mafia’s threats. Therefore, Sykes, as a nondescript white, is rendered less evil than Italian whites. Oscar is irresponsible and uncouth but does not seek to hurt anyone. Therefore, Oscar as an African American man does not pose a physical threat to others like the Italian sharks. But the Jamaican jellyfish are henchmen for Sykes and work to strong-arm Oscar who owes Sykes money. As a result, according to *Shark Tale*, working-class African-American men do not or are not supposed to pose any real physical threat to whites or other ethnic blacks. Instead they are always victims of people in society who work to take advantage of them and only rise as high as non-blacks in the echelons society allows. The worst types of black men are seen as those from the Caribbean who are a lower-class less powerful version of the mafia Italians.

This racial interplay becomes a pro-American sub-narrative. All those deemed foreign to the U.S. (Italians-Americans and Jamaican-Americans) are depicted as violent and out to harm the “real” Americans. The Italian sharks are out the hurt Sykes and the jellyfish set out to kill Oscar. But within this pro-American narrative is also a pro-white-American storyline. The jellyfish henchmen only attack Oscar because they are ordered to by Sykes. In that respect, Oscar is challenged by ethnic blacks, whites, and ethnic whites. At the bottom of the food chain, Oscar has no relief and no advocators. Therefore, African-Americans are depicted as strangers in their own land. A form of double-consciousness that leaves one attached yet detached from the land that is enthralled by
them and needs them for profit yet rejects their presences at the same time. Sykes needs Oscar for monetary gain as an employer at the Whale Wash, as the target for exploitation, and later as a co-owner of the Whale Wash, which is sure to prosper due to Oscar’s celebrity (seen when the entire community is congregating at the business for the film’s finale).

How children receive their race-class narratives and apply them to their lives is important, but the messages that are being sent to adult viewers are equally important. Movies have the ability to work as a pedagogical tool that informs its viewers of the society or societies portrayed. The deep-sea metropolis in *Shark Tale* is a microcosm of the United States’ issues with race and class, teaching dangerous ways of viewing and interacting with people labeled a particular race. The issues with many movies are that they are tools that teach a fabricated life that is ultimately used as information for real-life interactions. Since movies are teaching tools full of derogatory narratives, they are problematic. bell hooks writes, “[f]ilm must be free from all imitations, of which the most dangerous is the imitation of life.” Movies work as “the perfect vehicle” that allows its viewers to travel in a world unbeknownst to them and become voyeurs of the other.

Viewers participate in what I call *virtual cinematic ethnographic anthropology*, where moviesgoers can investigate groups of people deemed deviant from mainstream society without actually engaging them. Movies work as the median of fiction that maintains the distance between communities, thus not promoting personal exploration of those outside of the viewers’ communities.
This distance gives a space for conjured delineations of black life to flourish. Focusing on evidence in literature, Toni Morrison calls the creations American Africanisms:

I use it as a term for the decorative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreading that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people. As a trope, little restraint has been attached to its uses. As a disabling virus within literary discourse, Africanism has become, in the Eurocentric tradition that American education favors, both a way of talking about and a way of policing matters of class, sexual license, and representation, formations, and exercises of power and meditations of ethics and accountability. Through the simple expedient of demonizing and reifying the range of color on a palette, American Africanism makes it possible to say and not say, to inscribe and erase, to escape and engage, to act out and act on to historicize and render timeless. It provides a way of contemplating chaos and civilization, desire and fear, and a mechanism for testing the problems and blessings of freedom.44

American Africanisms are the result of surrogation and the possessive investment in whiteness. Blackness is the compilation of assumptions of African Americans from a Eurocentric ethnographic mindset. These assumptions come from a combination of wanting to maintain whiteness through a degradation of black life and a conscious or unconscious re-remembering of manufactured concepts of blackness from the past.
Whiteness is maintained by using blackness as a way of articulating what is means to be free, civilized, human, white and American. Through American Africanisms, voyeurs can learn what not to be, thus learning what they ought to be. Morrison described blackness as a concept that allows for elements of African American identity to be inscribed, erased, ignored and manufactured in ways similar to Stuart Hall’s conceptual maps (see chapter two). Hall explains that individuals have a mental system of representation or a conceptual map consisting of categorized complex concepts of mental associations related to caricatures, people and events that are dependent on the individuals’ interpretation of the world.45 American Africanisms are the result of conceptual maps consisting of stereotypes of blacks.

Blackness has obtained certain value judgments from what appears to be indelible negative identity traits through inscribing, erasing, and ignoring African American history via media productions. Films are creative spaces for American Africanisms to continue to flourish and to be surrogated. bell hooks writes that, “Movies do not merely offer us the opportunity to re-imagine the culture we most intimately know on the screen, they make culture.”46 Blackness continues to be created. American Africanisms used to create entertainment productions are what Morrison calls an “invented Africa.”47 If African Americans are an extension of Africa, then American Africanisms easily translates into ideas of African American life. In a report of the Connecticut Colonization Society, reprinted in African Repository in 1828, the conclusion that every person with “one drop of African blood in his veins” will forever be relegated to the “lowest station in
society” of which he can never rise. According to its manufacturers, this permanent status could not be altered regardless of refinement, argument, religion, education, personal virtues, talents or enterprise.48

Movies, like literature, are teaching tools that tell their viewers what it means to be black and white in America. bell hooks writes, “Whether we like it or not, cinema assumes a pedagogical role in the lives of many people. It may not be the intent of a filmmaker to teach audiences anything, but that does not mean that lessons are not learned.”49 Viewers must focus on how to be conscious consumers of entertainment media of which information is being funneled through. But hooks argues that film’s persuasive tactics can distract and persuade even the most knowledgeable consumers. “A distinction must be between the power of viewers to interpret a film in ways that make it palatable for the everyday world they live in and the particular persuasive strategies films deploy to impress a particular vision on our psyches.”50 But that distinction does not occur when the “persuasive strategies” are successful in teaching the viewer that blackness is applicable in reality.

Productions like Shark Tale inform viewers that associations with blackness should only be for entertainment purposes (such as the appropriation of mannerism, dance, and jargon association with blackness as seen in the end of the film) and interaction with blacks is only for monetary gain (as in Sykes as the employer and exploiter of Oscar). Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo argue that Shark Tale “provides children with important signifiers that chart racialized, and racist, dynamics. On a more
profound level, these films serve as tools that help to teach children to maintain the racial (and racist) ideologies that maintain the status quo.”

According to Shark Tale, some blacks may dislike their station in life as we see Oscar work to become a “somebody” through less than virtuous means, but in reality, Shark Tale informs the audience that most blacks are content with being working-class, thuggish jelly-fish, or defiant “nobodys.” Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo believe that the audience is taught that Oscar should be “happy to be a fish (a black fish), to live in the ghetto, and to enjoy the lot assigned to him in life.”

Although Oscar moves from continuing his father’s legacy as the Whale Wash’s tongue scrubber to co-owner of the Whale Wash with Sykes, “he has not risen so far as to make a White audience uncomfortable with the success of a black man/fish. After all, Oscar shares his bourgeois success with a White man, Sykes.”

Walter Chaw writes that Shark Tale “seems to offer African-Americans two possible life paths--graffiti punk and criminal, or gangster thug and criminal--before settling on a third, default option: a blue-collar career of servicing the middle and upper classes.” The graffiti punks are the New York-accented juvenile fish defacing the city. The criminal gangsters are the Rastafarian jellyfish henchmen. And the blue-collar career is Oscar and his father’s employment at the Whale Wash. The black characters do not compete with white characters thus continuing Bogle’s Huckfinn fixation. Sykes benefits from his relationship with Oscar who has deemed himself an outcast (a
“nobody”) and their interactions are free from racial barriers even when Sykes lays out those categories in the Enlightenment “food chain” chart.

hooks gives little agency to the conscious moviegoer, rendering them helpless to the imaginings of producers. hooks asserts that even critical conscious consumers “are usually seduced, at least for a time, by the images … on the screen. They have power over us and we have no power over them…[A]udiences choose to give themselves over, if only for a time, to the images depicted and the imaginations that have created those images.”

Therefore, according to hooks, mainstream producers whose work is created through invested affect performance have a direct impact on lax and gullible audience members. Arguably, less conscious consumers are more gullible to the problematic cinematic seduction hooks’ mentions. Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo argue that films like Shark Tale are presented to the public as “mindless state-of-the-art entertainment and not as agents of socialization. This may be the most powerful aspect of animated films for children.” Audience members continuing to believe that movies are simply “mindless state-of-the-art entertainment” are especially critical when those imaginings are American Africanisms. If all moviegoers succumb to colorful beguiling characters, then film criticism scholarship would be scant. Since film criticism is an established field of study, it is possible to create and support a larger more conscious audience. Chaw informs readers that,

…the biggest problem with Shark Tale is that it's cowardly--afraid, maybe unwilling, to take any stand, kowtowing to broad, socially sanctioned race and
class (and gender) caricatures for cheap laughs and to accommodate a cast swelled past bloat while failing to really address the issues that it raises (an unsupervised pack of kid vandals among them) beyond making a joke of them and moving on. There's no requirement for any film to be more than a vacuous, deadening light show, of course, but some things, if you bring them up, must then get resolved, lest you run the risk of exploitation.  

Bringing to light the detrimental pedagogical aspects of films helps to form conscious consumers. Conscious consumers can then demand films that address social issues and require those issues to be resolved. However, that would require those who are have a possessive investment in whiteness to disinvest.  

Those invested in whiteness would have to cease in privileging mainstream U.S. culture deemed “normal.” Even if white film producers do not disinvest, consumers should demand that creators have “aesthetic accountability” for the products they disseminate. This accountability forces creators to at least acknowledge and then hopefully to understand how race and ethnicity representation informs their work.  

Ultimately, conscious producers of entertainment will be required to “imagine and create images of blackness that are liberatory,” not images of African Americans as socially stagnant.  

Media outlets offer an avenue to assist in the continuation of invested affect performance since images of blacks are an integral part for acknowledging and categorizing difference in contemporary society. It would be to the benefit of those
protecting the whiteness construct to utilize animation because of its ability to create extreme visual typecasting or reductionism. Animation, as a “public enactment of forgetting” has the ability to obscure the blatant discontinuities and misalliances of past surrogates or exaggerate them in order to mystify and romanticize a previous “Golden Age” that was diminished.\textsuperscript{61} The Golden Age many whites wanted to mystify in pre-Civil Rights animation was slavery and the desired social constructs that maintained the value of whiteness. Bogle’s “the blackface fixation.”\textsuperscript{62} As a result, the black actor does not give a performance of authentic black lives rather it is “mass consumption black life as seen through the eyes of white artists.”\textsuperscript{63} Whites who practice “blackface fixation” are attempting to maintain damaging racialized value judgments.

Many white animators who consciously or unconsciously embrace invested affect performance use anthropomorphic animation as a “vehicle of cultural transmission” of manufactured blackness as a means of continuing the process of surrogation that is determined to replace its autochthons of African American culture.\textsuperscript{64} Within these animated anthropomorphic surrogates are coded and encrypted messages that perpetuate black subjugation so that whites can continue to invest in the damaging ideology of whiteness.\textsuperscript{65} Through contemporary forms of anthropomorphic animation, invested affect performance allows for the retention of detrimental ideas in American society that attempts to erase the lives and identities of beings whose erasure is unwarranted.\textsuperscript{66} Stereotypical anthropomorphic animations are “ontological affirmations” that fallaciously serve as an epistemology for deciphering blackness.\textsuperscript{67} It provides a text used to “study”
the Other’s way of being. Animations that utilize black character formulas serve as mnemonic devices that remind viewers of traumatic pasts (experienced by the viewer or told to the viewer) and surrogated identities. Animation is the performance informed by the memory of history. In order to address people’s invested affect performance, whites and invested non-whites must release their investment in whiteness, recognize how the trauma and the misrepresentation of black bodies, people of European decent and their predecessors impose on people of color, have seeped into their artistic performance.

While all audiences are not passive and are able to pick and choose, it is also true that there are certain “received” messages that are rarely mediated by the will of the audiences. By recognizing the legacy and gravity of invested affect performance whites and non-whites can address their conscious or unconscious commitment to heteronormative whiteness.

We could hope that white reproducers of black culture recognize the influence that racist history has on their creations, but we cannot stop with mere recognition. Black animators should not only focus on deconstructing negative black identities but also the black public must resist supporting movies that perpetuates the misrepresentation of black life. Once we have all realized that American racist history continues to inform our perceptions of other groups we can better understand the implications and origins of such caricatures like the black character formulas.


Immanuel Kant “On National Characteristics” (55) “The Negro of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above trifling. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who …have been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praiseworthy quality, even though among whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world.”


PCMAG. http://www.pcmag.com/encyclopedia_term/0,2542,t=3D+animation&i=37067,00.asp (accessed May 19, 2009). 3D animation is “Animating objects that appear in a three-dimensional space. They can be rotated and moved like real objects. 3D animation is at the heart of games and virtual reality, but it may also be used in presentation graphics to add flair to the visuals.” CGI or Computer-Generated Image is a picture created in the computer.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Lugo-Lugo, Carmen R., and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo. ""Look Out New World, Here We Come"? Race, Racialization, and Sexuality in Four Children’s Animated Films by Disney, Pixar,and DreamWorks." Lugo-Lugo and Bloodsworth-Lugo, write that In Shark Tale, furthermore, we witness ethnicization in “White,” for Lino is not only racialized as White but also ethnicized as Italian by way of very specific signifiers. For instance, Lenny (his son) tells Oscar that Lino is the Godfather, Lino speaks with an accent
usually associated with New York Italians, and Frankie (Lino’s other son) receives a Catholic burial, performed in Latin, after he dies. While almost silly, these stereotypes serve as important signifiers of a particular kind of whiteness within the United States—the whiteness of a group that, until recently, was not actually seen as White (171).

21 Shuffleton, Frank. Notes on the State of Virginia. Boston, New York: Penguin Classics, 1999. Thomas Jefferson wrote in Notes on the State of Virginia regarding the black race, “It is not their condition then, but nature, which has produced the distinction -Whether further observation will or will not verify the conjecture, that nature has been less bountiful to them in the endowments of the head, I believe that in those of the hear she will be found to have done them justice” (269).


25 Bogle, Donald. Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of blacks in American Films. Fourth. 2001. 8. In addition, Thomas Jefferson wrote in Notes on the State of Virginia that blacks had a “disposition to theft with which they have been branded [which] must be ascribed to their situation, and not to any depravity of the moral sense” (269).

26 Lugo-Lugo, Carmen R., and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo. ”'Look Out New World, Here We Come’”? Race, Racialization, and Sexuality in Four Children’s Animated Films by Disney, Pixar, and DreamWorks.”171.


29 Piana, Libero Della. “The Black Commentator.” Shark Tale Controversy: Are Italians the New Anti-Racist Front? October 14, 2004. http://www.blackcommentator.com/109/109_italians_pf.html (accessed April 28, 2009). RaceWire editor Libero Della Piana discusses how The National Coalition Against Racial, Religious and Ethnic Stereotyping (CARRES) composed a national boycott of Shark Tale because they determined the movie to be racist. However, Piana questions if the focus on Italian stereotyping ignores the concerns of African American stereotyping. “The National Coalition Against Racial, Religious and Ethnic Stereotyping (CARRES) was founded in January 2004 and made Shark Tale its first target for reform. But this group is not spearheaded by the NAACP or the National Council of La Raza. This group was started by Italians…”

“The movie's target audience is what particularly angers its opponents. ‘It is the first children's mafia movie,’ said Dona De Sanctis, a CARRES spokesperson and the Deputy Executive Director of the Order Sons of Italy, the largest and longest-running Italian American organizations in the U.S. ‘They are passing this stereotyping on to the next generation.’…The group also decries Shark Tale's negative images of Black characters. '[We believe] the character played by Will Smith is offensive to African Americans, said De Sanctis. ‘Oscar,’ the lazy, shifty-but-adorable, gambling, jive-talking hustler voiced by Smith, is the main character of the film...’

“As a son of Italian American and Black American parents I wondered whether CARRES represented a new anti-racist consciousness in the Italian community? Or are Italian American organizations just irked by being stuck with the mafia label? Are Italian American organizations just against stereotypes, or are they against racism at all levels of society?... I do hope that the major Italian
American organizations will move from opposing stereotypes to standing up against racism. A handful of Italian Americans marched with Blacks in Harlem against Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. Italian and Black sharecroppers in Louisiana united against the common enemies: plantation owners and lynching law. U.S. Congressman Vito Marcantonio (1935-1950) of East Harlem defended the rights not only of Italian Americans but of Blacks and Puerto Ricans as well. Italian American writer and hip hop enthusiast Joe Sciorra and others joined with Rev. Al Sharpton to condemn the racist Bensonhurst killing. There is a rich tradition to draw from."

37 Ibid
38 Ibid
40 Lugo-Lugo, Carmen R., and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo. "Look Out New World, Here We Come"? Race, Racialization, and Sexuality in Four Children’s Animated Films by Disney, Pixar, and DreamWorks. 176.
41 Ibid
43 Ibid, 2.
46 hooks, bell. Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class as the Movies. 9.
49 hooks, bell. Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class as the Movies. 2.
50 Lugo-Lugo, Carmen R., and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo. "Look Out New World, Here We Come"? Race, Racialization, and Sexuality in Four Children’s Animated Films by Disney, Pixar, and DreamWorks. 175.
51 Ibid
52 Ibid
54 hooks, bell. Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class as the Movies. 3.
55 Lugo-Lugo, Carmen R., and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo. "Look Out New World, Here We Come"? Race, Racialization, and Sexuality in Four Children’s Animated Films by Disney, Pixar, and DreamWorks. 177.
57 hooks, bell. *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class as the Movies*. 6.
58 Ibid
59 Ibid
63 Ibid
64 Ibid 6 & 13.
68 hooks, bell. *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class as the Movies*. 3.
CHAPTER 5

MADAGASCAR

Mass media is the nexus of an over two hundred year derogatory operation geared toward constructing fictitious black personalities. In relation to this exploitative enterprise, there is a deficient area of scholarship dedicated to critically evaluating the ways in which manifestations of memory influence whites’ interpretation, motivation, and perception of stereotypical visual portrayals of blackness, gender and pathos. The animated film Madagascar is an excellent example of clear links between Enlightenment ideologies and visualizations of black identity in animation whose underpinnings are found in white historical memory. The focus of this chapter is mental illness and miscegenation, pseudo-science, stereotypical ideas of Africa, and black women in anthropomorphic animation in relation to memory and history. First, this is an exploration of how DreamWork’s Madagascar exemplifies the Enlightenment diagnosis of “mulattoes” as being negatively affected biologically because of their bi-racial racial status. Second, is an investigation of the animal’s change of behavior from the zoo atmosphere to “the wild” environment as a metaphor for Enlightenment ideas of social environmentalism. Third, is a focus on how a character can represent black women being objectified through the mammy, matriarch, and jezebel caricatures and the ways in which these separate and obvious typecasts have been conflated into one. The relationship between people of Jewish and African ancestry and their relationship (or assumed relationship) to Africa’s “savagery” and America’s “civilization” is combined with a fear of freedom for the uncivilized and the supposed comfort and predictability of a minstrel-esque zoo plantation. Marty is the first to question the limitations of the zoo.
RACE, ETHNICITY, and PATHOLOGY BRIDGED UNDER ENLIGHTENMENT

IDEOLOGY

*Madagascar* is a story of four friends – Alex the Lion, voiced by white actor Ben Stiller, Marty the Zebra as black comedian Chris Rock, Melman the Giraffe, played by white actor David Schwimmer, and Gloria the Hippo voiced by black actress Jada Pinkett-Smith – who live comfortably in New York’s Central Park Zoo. Marty becomes curious about the world beyond his fenced area and decides to escape. After his other friends break-out in search of him, they are all discovered by officials, drugged, captured and put into crates with the intention of sailing them to their natural habitat of Kenya, Africa. But they find themselves stranded on the island of Madagascar. They soon discover that their pampered lifestyle at the zoo did not prepare them for life in “the wild.”

Marty’s identity struggle begins the animals’ adventure. Marty being labeled black is not just because he is voiced by black actor Chris Rock. While performing for zoo patrons, Marty does a high-stepping dance movement reminiscent of minstrel performances and Bill “Bojangles” Robinson who danced for Shirley Temple’s character when called upon. Other stereotypically black phrases like “We are going to be o kizzay” and “This place is crakalackin” are similar to the colloquial saying of Oscar in *Shark Tale*. But for Marty, he believes his race is not so apparent. Marty says to his peers, “Doesn’t it bother you guys that you don’t know anything about life outside this zoo?” “Look at me I’m ten years old and my life is half over and I don’t even know if I’m black with white stripes or white with black stripes.” In a defeated and confused composure and tone, Marty decides to make a break for the world outside of the zoo. Marty wants to “go back to nature… back to [his] roots” although he demonstrates that he is not sure where those roots lie. He is caught preparing to take the train to the open fields of
Connecticut, not zebras’ natural habitat in east African grasslands. His identity does not reside in his species, being a zebra (with no sight of other zebras in the zoo); rather it resides in a phenotypic difference from his other mammalian friends. Although, Marty is perceived as bi-racial, historically, the racial category of “black” or “negro” also encompassed those with one parent (grandparent or great grandparent) that is black. The black and white racial separation among people is based on ancestral links and differences in physical characteristics such as variation of skin color. Marty’s bi-racial status is exteriorly implied by the color of his hide. Marty’s mental anguish regarding his identity reflects ideas of perceived deficiencies in bi-racial people during Enlightenment.

Discussion regarding biological repercussions for children from interracial relationships, gained a substantial amount of attention before the emancipation of slaves in the United States. George Fredrickson in *Black Image in the White Mind* explains that in 1863 famous New England physician, philanthropist, and reformer, Samuel Gridley Howe was “appointed by the President to the three-man American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission, a body which was instructed to examine the condition of the newly freed blacks and recommend policy in regard to their future treatment.” Unfortunately, Howe examined the conditions of blacks with a “hardheaded acceptance of scientific conclusions on racial difference.”2 As a radical antislavery advocate, Howe’s position was that the “mixture of blood” occurring in miscegenist interactions on plantations was “clearly one of the principal evils of the slave system.”3 To perpetuate the fear that white Americans’ “pure” blood would be tainted through generations of sexual encounters with supposed feeble-minded Negros, some argued that the impurity resulted in mental illness, an unclear sexuality and limited procreative abilities.
Great Swiss biologist, Louis Agassiz, along with Dr. Samuel George Morton, Egyptologists George R. Gliddon and Dr. Josiah C. Nott were presented as the scientific authorities on the biology of race. Their “research” helped to convince educated Americans of the possible racial issues soon to ensue after emancipation in the United States.  

Agassiz, a Harvard professor in 1848, formed the hypothesis that “specific differences within the plant and animal kingdom were the result of separate creations dictated by environmental demands of differing regions of the earth” thus promoting the theory of polygenesis or plural origins of mankind.  

Agassiz asserts that the mulatto is a “degenerate, sterile, and short-lived breed, which would quickly disappear from the population if amalgamation with whites arrested.”

In Blackness/Mixedness: Contestations Over Crossing Signs, Naomi Pabst writes that “For mixed race subjects, transhistorically, have, like women, been cast as effete, as effeminate, as weak, as impotent, and as especially prone to mental illness.” Pabst quotes Joel Williamson, …scientific and popular thought as recently as the early 1900s held officially that mulattoes were “a highly confused people. Their signals were hopelessly mixed, and the slightest mixture—even one drop—was enough to upset the system and jangle the nerves. . . . Mulattoes were . . . a shallow, flighty, and fluttering people.”

The assumption that bi-racial people were sterile, followed the theory of Southern “muleology” believing that the mixing of two human species (blacks and whites) had the same sterile results as breeding a donkey and a horse (the resulting offspring being a mule thus the term mulatto). Some believed that by mixing the assumed intelligent white person with the believed docile and ignorant black individual would create a more intelligent but less physically capable Negro that would either live as a hybrid species or soon perish. Regardless of the
“mulatto’s” supposed longevity, the biological compromise of the physical ability of bi-racial people allowed for black “innate” heterosexual prowess to come into question.

Howe studied black refuges in Canada and concluded that they were “a little effeminate, as though a portion of the grit,” believed to reside in their African blood “had been left out of their composition.” He argued that “they may have inherited more womanly than of manful dispositions; for Africans have more of womanly virtues than fiercer people have.”

Although Marty does not appear to have stereotypical characteristics that label him homosexual, outside of Melman the hypochondriac, Marty has the least amount of “grit” in comparison to Alex and especially Gloria. Marty differs from Oscar in that he does not have a love interest and he is the least assertive in the group, thus countering Oscar’s black masculine over compensation. Marty exemplifies that lack of “grit” that all black men are stereotypically supposed to have and perpetuates the idea that bi-racial men are more effeminate. Pabst maintains that, Mixed-race black men are generally portrayed and perceived of as a far cry from stereotypes of the muscled, hypersexualized heterosexual black buck, just as the oft-encountered refined, withering mulattress is hardly the mythical strong black superwoman…Racial hybridity is also often associated with homosexuality, their perceived common deviance, degeneracy, and perversion within popular imaginaries translated from similarity into simultaneity.

Pabst refers to Maurice Stevens’ *Troubling Beginnings* to discuss how Enlightenment ideas of race, sexuality and pathology are present in film. Stevens “engages in an illuminating discussion on the ways in which the mixed-race characters in black film are often demonized and serve as an antidote to a redemptive, authentic blackness. This is the case, he argues, Rudy, who describes himself as “half wop and half nigger,” implying that he is bisexual as well as biracial; in Spike Lee’s *Malcolm X*, Agent Pruitt, an FBI infiltrator who betrays the Black Panther Party in Mario
Van Peebles’s *Panther*; and Joe, the “femalized,” asexualized” mulatto son in Haile Gerima’s *Sankofa*.  

In *Madagascar*, Marty’s desire to find his roots is also perceived as pathological since his desire leads him into “the wild,” a place depicted as unsafe and unpredictable. Marty’s implied mental illness and lack of assertiveness, associated with stereotypical black masculinity, is evident when Alex, calls Marty “crazy” and asks the officers to excuse his “little friend.” Alex connects the pathologies when he mocks Marty, “I don’t know who I am, I don’t know who I am. I have to find myself in the wild.” Marty’s confusion about his place in the world, the emphasis on the meaning of his phenotypic difference links him to the tragic mulatto black character formula.

Marty and his friends ultimately decide that “the wild” is a nice place to visit but “civilization” suits them best. But Marty is still left unfulfilled. His story aligns with the lead character in the “problem” film *Pinky* (1949). In the late 1940s Hollywood created motion pictures that “investigated the race problem in America.” Pinky is a bi-racial nurse that has successfully passed as white in the North. Depression pushes her to leave for “the squalor” of her southern home to reclaim her black identity. In order to maintain her self-respect she decides to no longer pass, stay, and open a black nursing clinic. Bogle writes that “She is content because she has pride in her race in the South. Yet Pinky is aware that she has sacrificed personal happiness. And so, as is true of all tragic mulattoes.”

Marty, like Pinky, suffered from depression and anxiety that was directly related to his identity (Marty’s black and white stripes and Pinky black and white heritage). They both seek to reconnect to aspects of their heredity that are presented as less luxurious than the lives they led prior to their excursions. Neither escapade brings complete fulfillment, but the audiences are left
to believe that either being something that you are not is not respectable, as in the case with Pinky passing as white or people of mixed race heritage should be content with seeing where they came from and knowing that “civilization” (the zoo and the urban North), is much better. Pinky accepts her black identity, somewhat begrudgingly, while the audience is not clear if Marty has solved his dilemma. Alex tells Marty that he has 30 black stripes and only 29 white stripes so he is more black than white, (or black with white stripes) believing that he has solved Marty’s “problem.” But Marty does not accept or reject Alex’s assertion. Therefore implying that Marty is susceptible to more identity crises or Marty searching for placement into an identity category is no longer relevant. With either conclusion, the journey is unproductive for Marty. However, the journey does help to create a stronger friendship between Alex and Marty.

White Jewish actor Ben Stiller voices Alex. Although in this research, the voiced characters are already given the race of the actor, Alex is clearly read as Jewish after he tells Marty he has a little “shmutz” on his face (a Yiddish term mostly spoken by Jewish people). Alex and Marty’s relationship symbolizes the conflation of black and Jewish experiences and racist beliefs regarding each race. Alex’s experience on the island brings to light Enlightenment notions of social environmentalism and solidifies Alex’s ethnicity. In reality, Alex would have been Marty’s predator. In the zoo where Alex is served his food and does not need to hunt, the environment allows for the two to become friends. But after some time on the island and having trouble finding food, Alex begins to, unwillingly, revert to his natural inclinations to eat Marty. Alex is awakened from a dream about steaks and finds himself biting Marty. After Alex realizes that the desire to eat his friend is consuming him, he banishes himself to the forbidden side of Madagascar. The audience sees Alex living in a gray jungle with sharp sticks and little sunlight. Alex has a disheveled appearance as he tries to figure out how to hunt. Since Alex has never
experienced life outside of the zoo, it is assumed that his desire to eat Marty is natural. Being in “the wild” brought those repressed inclinations to the surface. Alex’s natural inclinations are directly connected to the beliefs that “lesser races” were genetically predisposed to savage and uncivilized behavior.

Although the belief that savage dispositions often targeted African Americans, a similar racial hierarchy was created in Europe. The connection between blacks, Jews and Madagascar is evident in the Nazi’s 1940 Madagascar Plan to create a settlement of European Jews on Madagascar. Susan Guber writes that the Nazi’s had a “propensity to conflate Europe’s Jews with people of African descent.”16 The Madagascar Plan gained popularity during the same time period a leading German racial hygiene journal reported on “legislation introduced by Mississippi Senator Bilbo to send 2.5 million American Negroes back to Africa.”17 Jim Crow segregation policies in the U.S. served as a model for Adolf Hitler to construct “racial purity policies” in Germany.18 If Enlightenment theories regarding pathologies believed to be in African Americans are also associated with non-Anglo-Saxon whites, then similar diagnoses can be given to those of Semitic ancestry.

Marty and Alex’s friendship and the placement of the story in Madagascar has a substantial amount of racial subtext that points to a history that conflates the Jewish and African American experience. George Fredrickson writes that whites believed that the Negro was naturally a savage brute and became domesticated under slavery.19 The belief that blacks’ behavior and values could be shaped or predetermined by social and cultural conditions is called social environmentalism.20 Therefore blacks’ supposed submissiveness was not genetically inherent but artificial. As long as the white master was in control, blacks’ docility and contentment remained; but when forced servitude was removed innate savagery overcame the
Negro. Therefore, once Alex left “civilization” he could no longer repress his natural instincts. Although in reality those instincts are considered normal in animals, they are presented as savage in *Madagascar* because Alex had an overwhelming urge to eat his *friend* not *his natural prey*. The human element of friendship changes the dynamic of Alex and Marty’s predator-prey relationship. It is inhumane to eat your friend, a being that you care about. But it is natural for a lion to want to eat a zebra. Because the animals are personified, their humane characteristics trump their animalistic instincts. Therefore, Alex wanting to eat his friend Marty appears as sadistic and savage behavior.

Interestingly, Alex and Marty’s relationship hints towards two ideas: Their friendship between two species (lion and zebra) provides a solution to the separation of racial species in Enlightenment polygenesis theory. For example, similar to the United States’ issues with mulattoes, in 1923 Germany, “Die Schwarze Schmach” (The Black Curse) was protested. As a result, authorities “sterilized, experimented on, or killed children whose mixed blood would presumably pollute pure Aryan bloodlines.” Therefore, although social environmentalism was originally a theory that was supposed to pertain to blacks, since Jews were not seen as white (or Aryan) and European governmental entities looked to remove Jews just as President Abraham Lincoln and Senator Bilbo looked to return blacks to Africa in their respective time periods. The history of authoritative entities dealing with issues of ethnicity in similar ways and merging Jewish and African American history makes the association of social environmentalism with Jewish Alex valid.

The problem with *Madagascar*’s storyline is that it brings back to surface ideas of “savage” Africa and how one’s presence on the continent elicits an unsuspecting negative change the can overcome one at any moment. Marty, Alex, Melman and Gloria’s “deportation” to
Madagascar serves as a metaphor for the removal of blacks and Jews from their respective countries. Alex’s “deportation” from the zoo to the “dark continent” resulted in negative effects assumed to occur in “inferior” beings who are removed from “civilization” or the tutelage of whites. The zoo can be aligned with the American southern plantations where Africans were placed after removal from their ingenious societies, because Alex, Marty, Gloria, and Melman are all indigenous east African animals removed from their habitat and placed in the confines of a zoo for the pleasure of human patrons. Marty’s escape can then be likened to the narrative of slave escapes to freedom. Although, the animals do not appear to feel oppressed by their zoo environment, Marty is not content with his artificial home.

Interestingly, no other animals reverted back to “savagery” accept Alex. Although Alex is the only carnivore in the group of friends, therefore the only one who would be tempted to eat one of the friends, Marty, Melman and Gloria, could have restored to savagery in other ways. For example, through erratic and violent behavior the other characters could have responded to social environmentalism as Alex did. Possibly, for the sake of moving the movie forward, all of the friends were not affected like Alex.

In the end, Alex’s faithful friend Marty saves him and convinces him to be a vegetarian, which minimizes his ferocity. But being a vegetarian is not given the same sexual undertones as Lenny in Shark Tale (see chapter four). The character with an unchanged strong personality is Gloria the Hippo, voiced by black actress Jada Pinkett-Smith. Just as Alex and Marty reflect stereotypical ideas of race, Gloria is no exception.
Dehumanizing images have proven to be problematic for the lives of African American women because these images have validated black women’s mistreatment in America.\textsuperscript{23} The purpose of these typecasts are not only to maintain black women’s subjugated status in America but also to reinforce and support the image of the Anglo-Saxon female that is presented as diametrically opposed to the black woman. Before examining the character Gloria, it is important to review the history of black female character representation in animation.

*Scrub Me Mama with a Boogie Beat* (1941)\textsuperscript{24} will be used to demonstrate the evolution of black female character formulas from pre-civil rights to post-civil rights era. *Scrub Me Mama* is a key factor in identifying the mammy, matriarch and jezebel caricature progression. The perpetuation of black character formulas in modern animation is the result of a turbulent black-white racial history wrought with visual campaigns of belittlement within white memory, orchestrated and performed by some white animators in an effort to create their definition of whiteness and maintain social and political power over non-whites.

The first marked identity of black women presented to the United States was the mammy or the Aunt Jemima as the faithful, obedient domestic servant, who is consistently dedicated to the white family for which she is responsible. The mammy justified “the economic exploitation of house slaves,” explained “black women’s long-standing restriction to domestic service,” represented “the normative yardstick used to evaluate all black women’s behavior” and symbolized “the dominant group’s perceptions of the ideal black female relationship to elite White male power.”\textsuperscript{25} Usually depicted as obese, middle-aged, and asexual, the mammy
character is instinctively maternal showing a stronger devotion to the white family she is employed by and showing less care for her black husband and children.\textsuperscript{26}

The mammy’s variant is the matriarch caricature.\textsuperscript{27} Her argumentative ways and individualism tends to emasculate the men in her environment\textsuperscript{28} thus posing an attack on the black man’s masculinity. Her antagonistic behavior implies that a black matriarchy – instead on the “ideal” white patriarchy – was the form of leadership in the black household resulting in the mammy being deserted by her male companion.\textsuperscript{29} The hard-working mammy and matriarch were depicted in black-faced minstrels, feature-length films and animation.

In the cartoon short, \textit{Scrub Me Mama to the Boogie Beat}, the dark-skinned overweight mammies are the only people working regardless of their men’s slothfulness and they are juxtaposed to the young light-skinned nameless Harlem woman who tells the mammy laundry washers how to better wash their clothes to a catching rhythm. The mammy figure in \textit{Scrub Me Mama} supports the labels that black women’s main purpose is to work; black women have a poor relationship with her male-counterparts, and remain the negative component of a binary opposition to white femininity. The focus of the animated short was to show the mammies a new and fun way to complete their “natural duties” therefore propagates the Enlightenment idea that blacks “could not be overworked and were comparatively insensitive to sufferings that would be unbearable to whites;”\textsuperscript{30} more specifically, white females.

Representing the opposite of beauty, the mammy’s connection with the opposite sex is divisive or non-existent. The mammy figures’ relationships with the men in Lazytown prior to the arrival of the mulatto (who, regardless of their implied mental illness were always depicted as more beautiful than black women) and the effects the mulatto has on the men, maintains the mammies relegated status as the unattractive “mules uh de world.”\textsuperscript{31} Absent from the animation
is an interaction between the mammy characters and the coon men, implying that mammies are sexually undesirable to their male counterparts and defines the men’s role in the black household as inattentive and inadequate. The men are so disinterested in the women of Lazytown that they would rather sluggishly work and sleep elsewhere than interact or help the working mammies. The men’s lack of interaction with the Lazytown mammies and enthusiastic attraction to the urban mulatto perpetuated the mammy caricature and implied a phenotypic dichotomy within the feminine black community maintained by the black men. However, the men’s participation in this divisive dichotomy is the only control they have in their community. The mammies, whose responsibility is to run the household by scrubbing clothes to a “boogie beat,” appears to be the only workforce in the town, which not only perpetuates the indolent coon stereotype but also makes the mammies the financial backbone of the home, challenging the traditional white patriarchal system.

As leader of her home, the mammy caricature is also defined by the ways in which she interacts with her children. The pickaninny caricature is a coon variant used for comic relief. The children in Scrub Me Mama maintain the pickaninny caricature by showing black children with unkempt hair or sparsely dressed with occasional nudity. The pitiable appearance of the children implies black parents’ lack of concern for their offspring, which is reinforced by consistently showing them alone to fend for themselves as animals with little help from their mothers and no guidance from their fathers.

The actions of the mammies somberly and quietly laundering clothes indicate their supposed innate sense of stoicism and inner strength. This mental toughness, said to be in black women, can be said to have sustained them through the past atrocities of slavery (rape, death of loved ones, separation of sold children, physical and mental abuse), the demands of domestic life
(in and outside of their home during and after slavery), all while still battling omnipresent racism and sexism. Black women’s implied resilience also was supposed to allow them to handle the pressures of being the financial support of the family. It is the absence of black patriarchy that defined black cultural inferiority in relation to white American family standards.  

The juxtaposition of whiteness and blackness influenced the portrayal of black women and the definition of whiteness and beauty. The Victorian white symbol of beauty was moderately thin, straight hair, pale skin, young woman who spoke standard English. Ugliness was the contrasting over-weight, tightly curled hair, very dark skin, middle-aged woman who spoke broken English. The unfeminine mammy character is supposed to demonstrate black women’s failure to conform to “the cult of true womanhood can then be identified as one fundamental source of black cultural deficiency.”

On screen, the mammy presented a harsh difference between “attractive and valuable white woman subjecthood” and “ugly worthless black woman caricaturehood.” But because of her asexuality she did not pose a threat to the white women’s supposed sexual conservative behavior. As a result, another black female character formula that also lacked the standards asserted by white America is the jezebel.

As the mammy justified black women’s economic exploitation and helped define white beauty, the jezebel justified black women’s sexual abuse and worked to circumscribe white sexual purity. In 15th century Europe, dark skin color equated to a malevolent subjugated status and dark skinned women were hated for their dark complexion and their “alleged sexual prowess.” During U.S. slavery, black women’s physical and sexual abuse by white men was justified because black slave women were portrayed as “sexually aggressive.” By the early 1900’s, black women’s assumed overt sexual nature was believed to have begun in Africa where
“alleged sexual promiscuity” was seen in the practice of polygamy ultimately shaping the black woman’s identity as having a lack of sexual purity.⁴⁰ Some argued that miscegenation often occurred between white men and sexually promiscuous black women who did not have white “middle-class standards of sexual purity.”⁴¹ Patricia Hill Collins writes, The jezebel, whore, or hoochie is central in the nexus of controlling images of black womanhood. Because efforts to control black women’s sexuality lie at the heart of black women’s oppression, historical jezbels and contemporary ‘hoochies’ represent a deviant black female sexuality…⁴² By forcing black women to work in the field, “wet nurse” White children, and emotionally nurture their white owners effectively tied the controlling images of jezebel and mammy to the economic exploitation inherent in the institution of slavery.⁴³

The creation of subordinate designs of blackness serves a purpose. In order to justify the atrocities of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and create an identity that represented progress, piety, and superiority the Anglo-Saxon needed a subordinate, a caricature, an Other. For white women, their antitheses were the black female character formulas utilized by media outlets. These identities were established in order to support and define the “positive” white image. But the formation of white subjects is not as monolithic or one-sided as it appears. As interactions between the white “I” subject and the black Others occurred, whites’ perception of themselves and the Other changed.⁴⁴ It is the separate statuses given to the “I” and the Other that help promote black character formulas and black female identity.

In DreamWork’s Madagascar (2004), Gloria, represents a new mammy, matriarch, and jezebel reformulation in anthropomorphic animation. Gloria’s role is rather small in comparison to Alex and Marty, but her role demonstrates a significant change in the depiction of black women in animation. Gloria is the only female in the group and the only one who does not
suddenly change behavior in reaction to being deserted on Madagascar. She offers emotional support and security to each of the male characters but she does not ask, and appears to not require, emotional support from her male counterparts. Her ability to maneuver seamlessly from one situation to another without any emotional assistance is reminiscent of the loyal and maternal mammy caricature that is the backbone of the family keeping everyone emotionally and financially stable. When discussing Gloria, Jade Pinkett-Smith says, “She’s very maternal. She’s definitely a take control I-got-it-I-can-handle-it type of woman…type of hippo.” By composing distressed Alex, reassuring Marty, and comforting the nervous and anxious Melman, Gloria is everyone’s mother figure and proverbial rock, but between her affectionate scenes, Gloria has matriarch and jezebel tendencies.

Once the four friends discover they are in separate crates stacked upon each other and Alex begins to blame Marty for their predicament inciting an argument, Gloria yells through the crates, “Don’t make me get up before I get to whippin’ on bof a y’all” with her hands on her hips referencing the stereotypical confrontational black woman. Later in the movie, possibly as a way to retain or demand respect, Gloria tells Alex “Don’t you shhh me” after Alex attempts to quiet her. When referring to Pinkett-Smith in relation to her animated character, director and writer Eric Darnell states she is, “one of the strongest toughest women I think I’ve ever met. Not to be pushed around, knows what she wants outta life and… that’s exactly what Gloria is too.” Darnell ties characteristics of a black woman (Pinkett-Smith) to a caricature (Gloria) similar to what Pinkett-Smith does when describing Gloria. Both Pinkett-Smith and Darnell’s statements link Gloria, the caricature and object, to a black female body, Jada Pinkett-Smith. Therefore, when we see Gloria, we see simultaneously see Jada. When we see Jada we see African American women resulting in seeing Gloria as a black woman. Pinkett-Smith no longer plays a
fictitious character, she is the character and that link poses significant issues for African American women. This link is harmful because the caricature represents old notions of black women’s sexuality.

After the animals’ crates washed on Madagascar’s shore, Gloria emerges from the box with two star fish suctioned on what would be her breasts and a crab on what would be her vaginal area. She tells the sea creatures “all righty boys, funs over” and they remove themselves from her body. There is a combination of interactions that attaches the jezebel image to Gloria: the star fish symbolizing nipple pasties worn by exotic dancers, the crab suggesting an STD/STI, her giving the sea creatures a gender by calling them “boys” and her ambivalence regarding her sexual affiliation with nameless foreign creatures. It poses a commentary on Others invading Others. As a hippo in an urban zoo, Gloria would not have been exposed to the ocean or the crustaceans that reside in it. This scene suggests “nontraditional” or “impure” sexual habits that were discouraged within white middle-class norms. It speaks to the notion that black females are licentious because they allow foreign bodies to invade what is believed to be sacred on the white female body.

In Madagascar, the jezebel and mammy objects are tied to Gloria. Gloria’s jezebel-object reminds the viewer of a deep-seated belief that black women are overtly sexual and is deservedly more often sexually abused than their white counter-parts. The mammy-object informs the viewer the Gloria is “tough” and capable of withstanding abuse. Possible feelings produced in the viewer is that black women are less pure and less feminine than most women and their inherent strength both enforces their supposed less feminine behavior and prepares them for any social and physical consequences. However, the viewer may not be conscious of the long media
history that has assisted in the construction of that deep-seated belief. The history that produced the feelings in the viewer about black women has been fetishized.

Black character formulas were solidified in the 1800s when slavery was being abolished thus creating a society where blacks and whites would be seeking the same resources. Minstrel shows, advertisements, and newspaper comic strips with stereotypical images of blacks assisted whites in continuing a demeaning view of blacks. By exploring American history the beliefs and philosophies that began black character formulas are not so distorted. But, to the average consumer, Gloria the Hippo is “insufficient” in explaining the construction of her caricature. She does not clearly show the social and political history that has made her character.

Establishing the connections between history, media, and black and white womanhood Kimberle Williams Crenshaw writes,

Sexualized images of African-Americans go all the way back to Europeans’ first engagement with Africans. Blacks have long been portrayed as more sexual, more earthly, more gratification-oriented; these sexualized images of race intersect with norms of women’s sexuality, norms that are used to distinguish good women from bad, madaonnas from whores. Thus black women are essentially prepackaged as bad women in cultural narratives about good women who can be raped and bad women who cannot.49

Displaying Gloria, made to be a representative of black womanhood, as sexually deviant, is continuing a prepackaging of black women as bad women, sexually deviant women. Crenshaw’s study exposes the judicial disparity among perpetrators of black women and white women who are raped. It is the typecast historic notions of black sexuality that has fed into the U.S. judicial system. Crenshaw writes, “Ironically, while the fear of the Black rapist was exploited to legitimate the practice of lynching, rape was not even alleged in most cases. The
well-developed fear of Black sexuality served primarily to increase white tolerance for racial terrorism as a prophylactic measure to keep Blacks under control.”\textsuperscript{50} Unfortunately, “the direct assault on Black womanhood is less frequently seen as an assault on the Black community.”\textsuperscript{51} Black men accused of raping white women were treated most harshly while Black offenders accused of raping Black women were treated most leniently.\textsuperscript{52} There is a “harsh regulation of access by Black men to white women, but it is silent about the relative subordination of Black women to white women.”\textsuperscript{53} Black women who are raped are racially discriminated against because their rapists, whether Black or white, are less likely to be charged with rape; and when charged and convicted, their rapists are less likely to receive significant jail time than are the rapists of white women.\textsuperscript{54} Neither the anti-rape nor the antiracist political agenda had focused on the Black rape victim. Consequently, the plight of Black women in relegated to a secondary importance: the primary beneficiaries of policies supported by feminists and others concerned about rape tend to be white women and the primary beneficiaries of the Black community’s concern over racism and rape tend to be Black men.\textsuperscript{55}

As a result of these negative media portrayals, the issues associated with black women as victims of rape are viewed as less urgent and less important because their supposed non-normative sexual behavior allows, encourages, and is accustomed to such aggressive sexual acts. The lustful jezebel feeds into the racist definition of black women as acceptable rape victims that are “less valuable caricatures” while white women are given the most value.\textsuperscript{56} The norms believed to be performed by only or mostly white women are arguably challenging for any woman to follow, but it is even more so for the victimized black woman who is judged against “a narrow norm of acceptable sexual conduct for women.”\textsuperscript{57}
The historic rhetoric caused harm to black female’s social identity. However, it also created a complex system of white and black female identity formation. Polygenesis and monogenesis were only a few ways to create the racial dichotomy. Ahmed suggests that there were other forms of rhetoric that made gender distinction among the races. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed uses a quote from a British anti-immigration group that characterizes Britain’s national borders as having a “Soft Touch” capable of being violated by “bogus asylum seekers,…seeking easy comforts and free benefits.”\(^\text{58}\) The term ‘softness’ creates a metaphor for human skin (the first and only line of physical defense for the body).\(^\text{59}\) Ahmed believes that “the use of metaphors of ‘softness’ and ‘hardness’ shows us how emotions become attributes of collective ideas, which get constructed as ‘being’ through ‘feeling.’ Such attributes are gendered: the soft national body is a feminized body, which is ‘penetrated’ or ‘invaded’ by an Other.”\(^\text{60}\) The Other, among black and white women, is the black woman who simultaneously defines the white woman *and* threatens her existence. The mammy, matriarch, jezebel, and mulatto caricatures are identities based on and created on a foundation of emotions. To be emotional or to make decisions based on emotions is often viewed as having a lack of rational judgment or to be primitive.\(^\text{61}\) So simultaneously the nation must harden up to prevent the Other’s infiltration. The nation or the white female identity must “masculinize” itself. The white female body cannot harden its identity boarders because she could no longer be the symbol for true womanhood. Rather she must maintain a dichotomy to prevent infiltration of the black female Other who threatens to impose her primitive irrational emotional body within the white female’s borders. The black female threatens to make the white subject the inferior Other.\(^\text{62}\) As Ahmed writes, “If good emotions are cultivated, and are worked on and towards, then they remain defined against uncultivated or unruly emotions which frustrate the formation of the
competent self.”63 If the caricature of the white woman is soft, sacred, and behaves with “good emotions,” then she is pitted against the black woman’s caricature, which has uncivilized and unruly emotions. Because of the juxtaposition of the two caricatures, the white woman is then deemed a “competent self.”

To apply Ahmed’s idea of Britain’s “vulnerable” nation to that of America raises a paradox. By creating a rhetoric that established the nation as a white female vulnerable of being violated by an outside black female Other, who was brought into the nation by the white subject, makes the job of white identity formation more challenging. The U.S. nation penetrated itself. It is a penetration that was willingly facilitated by the very protectors of the vulnerable U.S. nation. The Other is inside. Now the black Other and the white subject must co-exist but the white subject must maintain its definition in opposition to the black Other in order for the white subject to exist. The United States attempts to create a nation within a nation. The majority of the U.S. consists of white subjects that cannot create physical distance (such as deportation of black citizens) but must formulate a rhetoric that amplifies and promotes social difference. The formulation of rhetoric through propaganda has a distinct mental progression consisting of detrimental conceptual maps that represent simplistic black identities (see chapter two).

The problem with the jezebel or other stereotypes is that they portray one-dimensional characters. The problem with Gloria is that she is an amalgamation of all the oppressive one-sided images of black womanhood created to symbolize the “new” multi-stereotyped black woman. When the cast and crew of *Madagascar* describe Gloria, they solidify the notion that Gloria is mixture of the three black female typecasts. Ben Stiller says Gloria is “sweet feminine, strong minded, sexy hippo” and Rex Grignon, head of Character Animation mentions the challenging task of making such a “big creature” like Gloria be “really sexy and powerful and
strong.” If Gloria has the stoic demeanor of the mammy enabling her to withstand the most traumatic circumstances (such as being removed from the only life she knows to a completely unfamiliar one, a narrative similar to the transatlantic slave trade), the sass and combativeness of the matriarch, and a character that exudes the licentiousness of the jezebel, then Gloria represents not only black women who oppose white feminine norms of purity but also those who have the emotional strength to withstand abuse when their perceived untamed sexual behavior promotes a violation of their bodies.

Although black women have been historically viewed as licentious within U.S. ideology, the black women’s object, the jezebel, is an insufficient way of understanding black women. The jezebel-object only stands for black women’s sexuality and not the history of fabricated rhetoric used to demean black women. When bodies come in contact with the jezebel-object, the person is not privy to the Enlightenment history that offered the distorted view; the person only sees black women’s sexuality. As the jezebel-object is broadcasted in media outlets, it carries with it and reinforces the affect and emotions from long ago that circulate in contemporary society.

The problem with invested affect performance is not the categories that it created, but the values associated with the categories and how the labels affect the people they are suppose to represent. One of the most harmful products of invested affect performance is the jezebel caricature. Displaying black women as sexually deviant helped to inform white norms of femininity, justified black women’s sexual abuse, which was used to critique black men’s value eventually disregarding the plight of abused black women. The rape of black women “is usually cast as an assault on black manhood demonstrating his inability to protect black women” referencing the lack of or unstable black patriarchy and the stability of the white patriarchy. As a result, even when black women’s rapists are convicted, the women’s trauma and their perception
by society are still not adequately addressed. Media outlets have a substantial amount of power to assist in changing, eliminating, or critiquing black character formulas in hopes of preventing their translations into black people’s real lives.

If the animation industry’s attempt to facilitate an arena of innocuous cinematic content for general audiences is through anthropomorphism, then their endeavor is ill conceived. Whether the reasoning lies within ingrained detrimental racial beliefs, a psychological incapability to accurately distinguish a member of another race, or sheer ignorance, generalized black representation continues after its inception over two hundred years ago.

3 Ibid, 162.
4 Ibid, 74-75.
5 Ibid.
11 Ibid, 193.
14 Ibid, 151.
Ibid
Ibid
Ibid, 16.
Ibid, 53-54.
Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd ed. Among scholars, there is some discrepancy in the definitions of Black female typcasts. Donald Bogle has defined the mammy as a “fat…cantankerous…bossy” woman with a “fierce independence” (9) and the Aunt Jemima as “sweet, jolly and good-tempered” woman that is “never as headstrong” as the mammy (9). Instead, Patricia Hill Collins defines the mammy as “loving nurturing and caring” and uses the term matriarch for the “aggressive”, “assertive” and “unfeminine” Black woman (72-77). I will define the mammy as a domestic worker in a white household that is instinctively maternal and loving, and the matriarch as a Black woman who still has domestic duties but is known for demonstrating aggressive behavior especially towards men.
Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2nd ed; Goings, Kenneth W. *Mammy and Uncle Mose: Black Collectibles and American Stereotyping*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994. Collins believes that, “labeling Black women unfeminine and too strong works to undercut U.S. Black women’s assertiveness. Black matriarch seek to regulate Black women’s behavior, it also seems designed influence White women’s gendered identities. Black women’s failure to conform to the cult of true womanhood can then be identified as one fundamental source of Black cultural deficiency” (Collins, 77). Kenneth Going writes, “The emasculation of African-American males was part of a process that masculinized African-American women… 1880s to the 1930s there were prominent images of ‘dominating’ African American women. Patricia Morton in Disfigured Images notes” matriarchy and domination of men are…her masculinized traits and aggressive behavior drive them away from her (Goings, xxi).
Ibid. Thomas Alva Edison introduced the pure coon in the *Wooing and Wedding of a Coon* (1905). This image developed into the most blatantly degrading of all black stereotypes (8). Edison proved to be a film pioneer in the exploitation of this typcast in *Ten Pickaninnies* (1904) (7). It was played by black child actors whose reaction to excitemnt was their hair standing on end and their wide eyes.
The nudity exposing genitalia and often exaggerated buttock sexualizes these children and justifies their sexual abuse (Pilgrim 2000).
Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammy, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films*. The movie *Imitation of Life* (1934) introduced the humanized female Negro servant “imbued with dignity and a character that were an integral part of the American way of life (57). This portrait of dignity was translated as Christian stoicism. Christian stoicism “elevated’ the Negro character in films by endowing him [or her] with Christian goodness for exceeding that of any character…the irony of this stoicism was that it made the Negro character more self-effacing than ever and even more resolutely resigned to accepting his or her fate of inferiority” (59).
Hall writes that, the simplest way of marking difference is by a binary opposition (31). By promoting the mammy caricature in various advertising and entertainment media outlets it reinforced and supported the standard white beauty, the model white patriarchy, and ideal white woman participant in feminist movements. If the face of the gender-equality-fighting feminist movement is white, then the Black women (and many other minority women) were not represented. Negative depictions of Black females serve as “punishment” and an assault on Black womanhood justifying Black women’s oppression (69).


Burton, Mark, Billy Frolick, Eric Darnell, and Tom McGrath. Madagascar. DVD. Directed by Eric Darnell and Tom McGrath. Produced by Jeffrey Katzenberg. DreamWorks Distribution, 2005. Jada Pinkett-Smith said, “Basically she is the only female of this entourage. She definitely looks at the rest of the crew as being her kids” (Special Features“Behind the Crates”).


Burton, Mark, Billy Frolick, Eric Darnell, and Tom McGrath. Madagascar. DVD.

Crenshaw, Kimberle Williams. The Intersection of Race and Gender. 369. 1271

Ibid, 1272.

Ibid

Ibid, 1273.

Ibid, 1274.

Ibid

Ibid, 1270.

Ibid. Crenshaw writes that there is, “The racist subordination of less valuable objects (Black women) to more valuable objects (white women) (1274-1275).

Ibid 1271.


Ibid, 2.

Ibid

Ibid, 3.

Ibid, 4.

Ibid, 3.

Burton, Mark, Billy Frolick, Eric Darnell, and Tom McGrath. Madagascar. DVD. (special features meet the wild cast)

Crenshaw, Kimberle Williams. The Intersection of Race and Gender. 1272
CHAPTER 6

STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT OF IDENTITY POLITICS: A USE FOR BLACK CHARACTER FORMULAS

Cinema scholar, Ed Guerrero, argues that Hollywood has tended to narrowly focus its “increasingly shallow product on escapism” on “spectacular orgies of violence and sexploitation, all in the service of feeding the dulled cravings and fantasies of the dominant social order.”1 Maurice Stevens informs readers that “examining filmed representations of reconstructed African-American history and other visual performances of black popular culture proves informative because of the increasingly influential role the visual plays as an arbiter of American identities.” Following Stevens, I argue that visual performances of black popular culture should be studied because as “an arbiter of American identities” the information is often flawed. Cinema is a realm “where selves are crafted, represented and produced,” but most portrayals of blacks supports white dominance and black ignorance with little positive evolution and more intricacy and sophistication in its execution.

As the blinding and deafening stereotypical visual and audible overtones are quieted, many could be misled into thinking that blackness has been positively transformed within mainstream outlets. Discrepancies can be found as both blacks and whites in control of the portrayal of black identity via media avenues find themselves forming fictitious characters from the same black character formula blueprint. They ultimately succumb to the pitfalls of the dominant culture’s ideas of black identity. As the multi-raced public is inundated with these same identities, whether with fictitious or real characters, a belief about actual people represented by problematic characterizations is formed because “popular cultural productions
obtain a social force and subsequently political relevance” that influences its consumers. As a result, these identities are no longer simply created for enjoyment. The generalizations begin to affect those the movie screen claims to portray and others watching the movie screen.

However, some black visual artists are using their mediums as spaces for the *strategic deployment of identity politics*. In this research, strategic deployment of identity politics is enacted when arbiters of identity in their respective medium use a calculated approach to underscore negative caricatures and use those typecasts to demonstrate the destructiveness and/or absurdity of such depictions. Spike Lee’s *Bamboozled* serves as an example of an artist drawing attention to black character formulas for public critique and understanding. The tactical way Lee uses strategic deployment of identity politics is through racial camp. In *Racial Camp in The Producers and Bamboozled*, author Susan Guber juxtaposes Jewish director Mel Brooks’ *The Producers* with African American director Spike Lee’s *Bamboozled* to demonstrate the different ways each director offers self-conscious artificial stylized and/or over-dramatized productions presented to their audiences for either amusement or sentimentality.

Guber combines the ideas of Susan Sontag and Andrew Ross to define racial camp. Guber writes that Sontag describes camp as “extravagant styles that produce pleasure in bad art or kitsch. Exaggeration, travesty, theatricality, impersonation, self-parody, and vulgarity characterize camp, which corrodes sentiment and good taste, high seriousness and righteous indignation.” Guber writes that Andrew Ross claims, “camp contains an explicit commentary on feats of *survival* in a world dominated by the taste, interests, and definitions of others.” Guber concludes that “racial camp hints that feats of survival occur through inauthentic mimicry that affronts the blatantly suspect arbiters of good taste.” In regards to *Bamboozled*, Lee uses racial
camp as a vulgar exaggerated parody of African Americans’ survival in a society that inaccurately defines them through homogenization.

Guber argues that Lee uses Jewish director Mel Brooks’ production *The Producers* (which simultaneously ridicules and pokes fun at racist Aryan Nazis) to “speculate about the survival of stigmatized minorities by means of an outlandish theatricalizing of race.” In doing so, Gubar argues that Lee confirms James Baldwin’s concern about conflating Jewish and African American experiences:

[I]t is not here, and not now, that the Jew is being slaughtered, and he is never despised here, as the Negro is, because he is an American. The Jewish travail occurred across the sea and America rescued him from the house of bondage. But America is the house of bondage for the Negro, and no country can rescue him. 

By using *The Producers* as a template for *Bamboozled*, Lee juxtaposes the Jewish and African American experience in order to bring to light the stark transnational and transhistorical differences between anti-Semitism and racial discrimination against African Americans in the United States and Europe.

Guber emphasizes the differences between blacks’ and Jews’ relationship to their respective hegemony:

Whereas Jews in Germany were condemned for their skeptical humor, blacks throughout Western history were extolled for their amiability, a fact that highlights the dissimilarity of the centuries-long Atlantic slave trade and the twelve-year blitzkrieg of the Shoah. For, as Seymour Drescher has shown, the “slaves’ status as property” turned their bodies into “*valuable* things,” while “every Jew destroyed was a gain in ‘racial’ security” within the Nazi system.
Black bodies as property can easily translate into \textit{blackness} as property or cultural capital for the disseminators. Minstrelsy and its legacy in contemporary film are pushed by those who claim to know black culture and have the resources to disseminate fabricated information. \textit{Blackness} as property, as opposed to \textit{black bodies} as property, still translates into financial capital for owners of media outlets and performers. The black presence has always been needed in America, for labor, white identity formation, and entertainment. “The nihilistic, subversive Jewish laugh should be stifled, but the black smile would be encouraged: historically the grin on a black face signals servility, a clownish desire to please whites.”\textsuperscript{7} The smile entertains and reassures its white viewers of their believed elevated social place. In \textit{Bamboozled}, Lee uses dramatized racial camp in order to strategically deploy commodified blackness. Lee restages “racialized stereotypes in such a way as to acknowledge that the line between racist hatred and racial self-hatred thins to a dangerous edge for Americans of color, one more wounding than what Jews confront in this country.”\textsuperscript{8}

In \textit{Bamboozled}, Harvard-educated television producer Pierre Delacroix (Damon Wayans), aims to convince his black-identified white boss, Mr. Dunwitty (Michael Rapaport), that positive portrayals of African Americans will raise the ratings of the failing station. Being unsuccessful, Delacroix convinces his conflicted assistant Sloan (Jada Pinkett-Smith) to help with his new idea. Delacroix pitches a television series wrought with disparaging depictions of blacks in hopes of infuriating viewers and resulting in being released from his contract. In \textit{The Producers}, lead character Max Bialystock and his assistant Leo Bloom create the pro-Nazi play, \textit{Springtime For Hitler: A Gay Romp with Adolph and Eva at Berchtesgaden}. Lee parallels \textit{The Producers} by having Delacroix and Sloan offer “Mantan—The New Millennium Minstrel Show.”\textsuperscript{9}
Dunwitty rejects Delacroix’s original idea believing the characters were “too clean . . . too white.” Because Dunwitty has financial control over Delacroix occupation, Delacroix has to negotiate between pleasing his boss’s stereotypical “adulation of black sports celebrities, rappers, gangsters, and his own revulsion against such stereotyping.”

Gubar argues that through Delacroix, the black man trying to act stereotypically white is controlled by the white man trying to act stereotypically black. Lee suggests “African American interests go unrepresented among entertainment executives.”

Lee is telling his audience that black character formulas are continuing in mainstream outlets in spite of many African Americans’ efforts to counter them. Dunwitty exemplifies white-dominated media companies who continue to push black character formulas that some believe to be authentic. From Dunwitty’s perspective and the media executives he represents, to be “too white” erases or dilutes “real” black culture. Therefore, it is of little surprise when he approves the televised contemporary minstrel show Delacroix suggests.

“Mantan—The New Millennial Minstrel Show,” has characters such as “Alabama Porch Monkeys” dressed in ragged clothing in the chicken coop and the watermelon patch popularized by white blackface minstrel performers in the 1800s.

Guber writes,

With Savion Glover impersonating Manray masquerading as Mantan, Tommy Davidson playing Womack performing Sleep-n-Eat, “two real coons” stage racial inauthenticity: contemporary black artists replay the rubberlipped, happy-go-lucky, dumb-as-dirt darkies on minstrelsy’s slave plantations. Spliced with footage of Amos ’n Andy as well as Mantan Moreland and B[e]rt Williams, Delacroix’s show gives us African American tap dancers and comics blacking up to impersonate white men who were masquerading as black caricatures.

Guber continues, “Lee seems to ask, if historically African American entertainers could only gain access to the stage by pandering to audiences as blacks in blackface skits, have times
changed?" But I argue a more assertive stance that Lee is not *asking* but *telling* his audience of the historic issues many black performers face, past and present, when working in film and television targeting a mainstream audience. Lee puts on display the same issues brought up by critic and newspaper columnist Lester A. Walton who consistently exclaimed his issues with cinema’s objectification of the black body and black minstrel performer George Walker, who took issue with colored performers imitating white performers emulating blacks (see chapter one). Manray and Womack tell Williams’, Walker’s, and Aldridge’s stories.

Showing the conflicted actors backstage, Lee offers the audience the complexity of the real entertainers behind the burnt cork mask. Actor Leni Sloan explains that many black actors saw “degradation as a doorway” into a flourishing entertainment business; the “perpetuation of stereotypes also created a new black workforce.” Willingly crossing the threshold had psychological effects on the black entertainers. Similar to Sloan’s depiction of Bert Williams in the documentary *Ethnic Notions*, DuBois’ theory of double consciousness is evident when the audience watches a tearful Womack’s say “I don’t know who I is.” Guber writes, Womack, finally determined to leave the show, dramatizes his sense of self-division to Manray by slowly passing his hand over his face, then assuming the “Yah Massa” look of dumb acquiescence. Putting on a face to meet the faces of their viewers, the inventive artists are reduced to puppets, with all the resulting rage and self-division such impotence must effect in the psyche of each performer, eventually causing the actors to become just as perplexed as Delacroix. For black performers, Lee hints, commercial success spells aesthetic and psychological distress, the demise of artistic and affective integrity.

Womack is able to see society out of two lenses, one black and one white. This “gift,” comes with the price of always changing lenses in order to maintain his occupation as a
performer and his sense of self. The white lens that views blacks with “contempt and pity” is put on so often, it clouds the black lens, which provides an array of emotions and cultural idiosyncrasies. Lee asserts that the white lens is detrimental to a black performer’s healthy and stable self-perception – “two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body.” Lee tells his audience that consistently performing contrived blackness is not beneficial to the black actor or the blacks they portray even when a substantial profit can be made. The cost is too high. Lee demonstrates through the physical deaths of Womack and Delacroix that the symbolic price is death for the ability to re-imagined black culture Mainstream entertainment prevents creators from presenting re-imagined black culture that does not fit the stereotypical mode. So because of Delacroix and Womack’s death (the two character who did not agree with the black caricatures), the entertainment industry will continue to fabricate black culture. It is death to “aesthetic accountability” for the disparaging pedagogical visual products that continue contrived notions of blackness.

“Mantan’s” star is murdered by the Mau Maus, (militant gangster rappers who condemn the oppressive stereotypes, but are ultimately contemporary America’s coons) and many of the Mau Maus are killed by the police. Delacroix is executed by a conflicted and enraged Sloan among his Sambos, “Jolly Nigger Bank” and other black collectibles. Manray’s murder, broadcast live on the internet and television, is an example of cinematic ethnographic anthropology. It is a virtual voyerism of non-fiction that allows viewers to see the Other without actual engagement. Any assumptions about the ethnic group portrayed can be read as true because it is non-fiction. For Brooks and Lee, the “voyeurism induced by popular visual forms blocks compassion, as it did more malevolently in Nazi Germany, for the arts as depicted in both movies foster national cohesion at the expense of comprehension and do so by creating a
laughing stock on and in the stage.” Viewers of blackness in fictional entertainment and non-fictional news broadcasts can assert a believed understanding of black people with little effort or deeper investigation. Displaying blacks as unproductive coons minimizes their value in society, thus minimizes the worth of their life. It is reduced to such a degree, that it is made into a spectacle for the consumption of the television audience.

“Every change Lee made to The Producers in Bamboozled contributes to a searing analysis of the double binds faced by African Americans. No matter how Lee’s characters repudiate, advocate, or recycle racial affiliations, they prove the fatality of a blackness still defined as base embodiment.” Those double binds and double consciousness are absent in Mel Brooks’ movie. Neither Max Bialystock nor Leo Bloom feels ethically or racially motivated to create their pro-Nazi production. In addition, by Brooks relying heavily on a comedic storyline and Lee focusing on serious drama, reflect their different approaches to addressing race in America. “Mel Brooks once explained, ‘if your enemy is laughing, how can he bludgeon you to death?’ to which Lee seems to rejoin, if you are laughing, how can you defend yourself against being bludgeoned to death by your enemy?” Comedy can serve as salve to the painful wounds of prejudice. But it can also distract one from actively creating solutions that prevent those wounds from being inflicted.

Cinema plays an important role in the definition of black people and their culture (as well as others) because cinema has the ability to visually and audibly construct blackness as a socially and politically powered product consumed by blacks and other groups. However, regardless of Hollywood’s unrelenting efforts to constrain blackness, blacks “have been determined since the inception of commercial cinema to militate against this limiting system of representation.” Lee
uses racial camp to tell his audience that there is more at stake when we perpetuate the consumption of blackness.

Redefinition is necessary since its effects are detrimental to the people being misinterpreted and those outside of the perceived ethnic group internalize the misinterpretations. Because cinema encompasses film and animation, it is of cardinal significance to regard both as the quintessential elements to the formation of the black image. In addition, cinema scholars and creators must also consider creative ways of using reductive black images as critical pedagogical tools. Animation is a medium that is not tapped enough by producers for critiques of identity.

Media outlets offer an avenue to assist in the maintenance of the white collective ethical ethos or invested affect performance since images of the Other is an integral component in acknowledging and categorizing difference in contemporary society. Movies written and directed by whites and black actors whose visual portrayal is in the hands of whites creates a black character that aims “always to please the master figure.” Lee uses Delacroix and Dunwitty’s relationship to exemplify Bogle’s “blackface fixation” concept not only because of the racial politics between the black producer and his white boss, but because blackface minstrelsy was at the center of the film. The black actor does not give a performance of multifaceted African American culture rather it is “mass consumption black life as seen through the eyes of white artists.” Whites who practice “blackface fixation” are attempting to maintain what they believe is a “common and collective ethnical ethos” in white America that is suppose to establish a unified front against all that challenge it. Lee reminds viewers of the birth of black character formulas in minstrelsy while DreamWorks’ revitalizes and reconstructs them. Because the perpetuation of blackness occurs in comedic animated features it uses humor to
distract the viewer from the issues it raises. More detrimental is that the issues of race that are emphasized are not offered a solution nor are they critiqued during the film.

For Lee, laughing incriminates everyone associated with the “genocidal forces producing travesties that continue to amuse and enslave us.”27 Although hooks asserts that audiences are often seduced by images on the screen that have power over the viewer, Lee implies that every viewer should be conscious of what they consume and their reaction to it. Black character formulas are images from the imaginations of white creators that have a cyclical life, continuing to reappear, in varying forms, facilitating the same story, and encouraging the same reactions. By using the comedic production *The Producers*, as a template Lee tells his viewers that the issues facing African Americans cannot be handled the same way Brooks handles Jewish ethnic concerns. Guber writes,

Since the Shoah occurred over there and back then, while racial discrimination perpetuates the consequences of the Middle Passage here and now, the Holocaust is memorialized (as an American source of pride), slavery is recycled (as an American source of shame), and racial inauthenticity—which can function as a liberating source of amusement for Jewish American men—operates for African American men as an ongoing denigration (as the etymology of that word demonstrates).28

Through contemporary forms of anthropomorphic animation, invested affect performance allows for the retention of detrimental ideas in American society that attempts to erase the lives and identities of black beings.29 Like the images in *Bamboozled*, stereotypical anthropomorphic animations are “ontological affirmations” that fallaciously serve as an epistemology for deciphering blackness.30 It provides a text used to “study” the other’s way of being. Film and animation that utilize black character formulas serve as mnemonic devices that remind viewers
of traumatic pasts (experienced by the viewer or not) and surrogated identities. It is the performance informed by the memory of history. As Lee asks his audience to do, we must all become informed consumers who can circumvent that history and allow for (and as consumers, demand) a critique of the images we consume. Racial camp “proves that history repeats itself, recycling the theatricalized past in the present and thus imbuing contemporary culture with anachronistic fantasies” and we continue to consume them. We continue to be seduced by the mockery. If the caricatures are to remain in film, then producers, directors, writers, and animators must use them to assert a strategic deployment of identity politics.

In order to implement strategic deployment of identity politics, invested affect performance must be remedied. In order for invested affect performance to be removed from the entertainment industry, possessive investment in whiteness must become unacceptable. “Spike Lee’s conversation with Mel Brooks leaves us with an admonition: the toxicity of the United States for African American men—manifest in unemployment, criminalization, poverty, drugs, drop-out, and mortality statistics—has everything to do with a cultural industry that is no laughing matter.” As consumers we must ask if laughing at these images perpetuates our desensitization towards African Americans’ real-life experiences. I argue that it does.

4 Ibid
7 Ibid, 28 -29.
8 Ibid, 29.
9 Ibid
10 Ibid, 32.
11 Ibid
12 Ibid
13 Ibid


33.
17 Ibid, 35.
19 Ibid, 32.
20 Ibid, 33.

3.
25 Ibid
27 Gubar, Susan. "Racial Camp in The Producers and Bamboozled. 35.
28 Ibid
31 Gubar, Susan. "Racial Camp in The Producers and Bamboozled. 36.
32 Ibid
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