

A Difference of Kind

Species and Social Difference in Children's Films

Reuben Dylan Fong

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Abstract

Children's films are often considered as having the 'social responsibility' of educating their audience, infusing ideology with pedagogy to interpellate social norms to children. One of the effects of this responsibility is that children's films supposedly interpolate for their audience's learning the different social roles that individuals play, and how such roles relate to others as a means of preparing these young viewers for socialization. There is currently a growing body of academic interest in recognizing children's films as more than pieces of ephemeral entertainment, but as culturally significant texts which have the capacity to propagate, reinforce, and revolutionize stereotypes of social identities and social difference.

This project intends to focus on the representation of social difference through one specific subsection of the children's films, the films which include anthropomorphized animals. Anthropomorphism is the projection of human qualities, traits, languages, and personalities onto nonhuman subjects in order to differentiate certain nonhuman subjects into a human framework; these projections of human aspects re-contextualize nonhuman animals away from their species' traditional stereotypes and into symbolic human identities. Anthropomorphized animals are commonly associated with both the children's film and cartoons, being seen as trivial forms of media, but this reputation for triviality masks the potential for embedded subversive ideological content. The use of nonhuman animals in fiction can be both influential and of important ideological value by having these nonhuman characters take up a diverse range of representational positions while remaining superficially distanced from any concrete societal or political agenda.

The predominant original contribution of this research is to consider how the representational positions of anthropomorphized animals is informed by their phenomenological proximity to humans. In this thesis, I divide the varying phenomenological proximities of anthropomorphism into five categories (Lost in Translation, First Contact, the Tourist, Postcolonial, and the Sentinel) and argue that each of these five categories are more attuned to a specific symbolic form of social difference, each of which carries the social responsibility of infusing ideology with pedagogy in a unique fashion.

'When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child.
But when I grew up, I put away childish things' - Corinthians 13:11.

'Not exactly' - Deadmau5, *Random Album Title*.

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I get it now.

Chapter 1: Introduction

My intention with this project is to explore the ways in which children's films in Western media use the symbolic identities of anthropomorphized animals to convey notions of social difference. Anthropomorphism is the projection of human languages, personalities, and physical traits onto nonhuman subjects in order to fashion specific nonhuman characters into a recognizably human framework of understanding. These projections of human characteristics re-contextualize nonhuman animal characters from their species' traditional stereotypes and into symbolic (yet recognizable) human identities. Anthropomorphized animals are often associated with both the children's film genre and children's cartoons (both forms of content being commonly viewed as trivial forms of media). However, this reputation for triviality masks the potential for embedded ideological content. The use of nonhuman animals in fiction can be both influential and of important ideological value by having these nonhuman characters take up a diverse range of representational positions while remaining superficially distanced from any concrete societal or political agenda. One point to be raised early in this project is my preferred use of the term 'anthropomorphized' rather than 'anthropomorphic' when referring to nonhuman animals who have been portrayed with human-like qualities. 'Anthropomorphized' is more active while 'anthropomorphic' sounds more passive. This preference for the active rather than passive underlines one of the crucial principles of my discussion: these depictions of nonhuman animals in human-like form are never random nor merely the product of inherent qualities of the animals in question, but have been deliberately crafted by filmmakers and film producers with intention.

Similar to the anthropomorphized animal, children's films are often seen as trivial and unimportant topics for academic focus. However, this is an undeserved reputation and such triviality is one of the reasons that an increase of focus should be made on children's films. While seen as trivial, children's films are often still considered as having the 'social responsibility' of educating their audience, infusing ideology with pedagogy in order to interpellate social norms to children (Zornado, 3). One of the effects of this supposed responsibility is that children's films interpellate the different social roles that individuals play for child audiences, and how such roles relate to others as a means of preparing these young viewers for socialization. There is currently a growing body of academic interest in recognizing children's films as more than pieces of ephemeral entertainment, but as culturally significant texts which have the capacity to propagate, reinforce, and revolutionize stereotypes of social identities and social difference (N. Brown, 2) (Zornado, 4).

When defining the scope of this thesis, it seems best to first clarify what this thesis is (and is not) attempting to do. This project seeks to analyze how children's films intend to educate their audience on social difference through representations of nonhuman animals. I wish to critically consider the ways in which children's films conceptualize their function as media texts ostensibly tasked with educating (either explicitly or implicitly) their young and supposedly impressionable audience. The aim of this project is *not* to either qualitatively assess or quantify the impact by which child audiences are influenced or informed by children's films (although that would be a compelling research project in itself). It is not credible to assume that films are hypodermic tools¹ with which to influence their viewers (even child audiences, who are often seen as more passive in this media consumption), or that viewers have homogeneous sets of beliefs which can be consistently influenced. The ideal

¹ The hypodermic needle theory can be found in Harold Lasswell's 1927 book, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. The theory proposes that media consumers are passively and uniformly influenced by the media they consume, and has since been challenged by theories of media consumption which propound the media consumer as an active participant in the interaction between consumer and media.

viewer of any film may not be the same as the actual viewer, and viewers are rarely completely passive in the viewing process of a film. Often, viewers (even child viewers) may have negotiated or oppositional readings to media texts that alter or otherwise transform the intended meanings with which a children's film may have had encoded.

The methodology for this project will be textual analysis of a selection of children's films. Each chapter will focus on a different category of anthropomorphism within the human-nonhuman framework of this project, establishing how that specific type of anthropomorphism emphasizes a certain type of social difference. Each chapter will look in-depth at several films which display one specific category of anthropomorphism in order to have a more qualitative and complex appreciation for these films, rather than quantitatively surveying surface commonalities across dozens of films. There were three main points of consideration in deciding which films to focus in each chapter's discussion. The first point of consideration was to select films which would best showcase the categories of anthropomorphism. This framework of categorization is unprecedented and while the framework itself can be applied to a great number of children's films, the confines of this thesis has meant selecting children's films which most clearly articulate the points being posited through the categories of anthropomorphism. The second point of consideration for selection was the year of the film's release. As will be discussed further in the literature review, the Walt Disney company largely dominated the children's films from the genre's inception in film until the mid-1980s, after which other film production companies started to have a significantly stronger presence in the genre. I would posit that the children's film genre is unique among film genres due to the fact that for half of its lifespan, one company (Disney) has had an overwhelming influence and stranglehold. Focusing on films released after the mid-1980s is a means of exploring the children's film genre rather than simply exploring the

canon of Disney films². The third point of consideration for film selection was the nature of film distribution. The films chosen were all funded and distributed by large American entertainment companies. Although this is not a project which aims to gauge audience impact, the films selected have all had prominent theatrical releases so have a degree of prominence within the mainstream children's film genre. This also has the advantage of some cultural standardization between the films discussed in order to more fairly posit cultural connections between texts.

The predominant original contribution to the discourse that this project offers is to consider the stratification of human-nonhuman animal relations of children's films and how portrayals of different levels of kindness³ between human and nonhuman animals codify and emphasize certain aspects of social difference (something largely untapped by the existing literature). My proposed representational human-nonhuman framework categorizes the degrees to which nonhuman animals perform as human. These categories of human-nonhuman relations are effective in elucidating the patterns of codification of identities in anthropomorphized animals, as well as explicating the different forms of social difference codified within the relationship between anthropomorphized animals and humans. The categories of anthropomorphism for this framework are largely based on Tzvetan Todorov's theoretical framework of the fantastic, with different human-nonhuman categories having distinct symbolic social differences encoded within the text that reflect the state of human-nonhuman dynamics. Todorov defines fantasy in this manner:

² That is not to say that the categories of anthropomorphism (discussed below) cannot be applied prior to children's films of the 1980s; indeed, many of the core ideas of these categories would still remain applicable. However, due to the prescribed word counts of this thesis, films prior to the 1980s have largely been avoided in order to focus on the children's film genre beyond the Walt Disney company.

³ Kindness in this context refers to Ashley E. Pryor's concept of 'kindness'. As will be explored in greater detail in the literature review of this thesis, Pryor describes kindness as the ability to understand and/or transcend the twin abstractions between 'human' and 'nonhuman' by recognizing that both categories are of one kind (Pryor, 290).

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know . . . there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination—and the laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality—but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us (Todorov, 25).

Building on Todorov's theory of the fantastic, David Butler argues in his 2009 book *Fantasy Cinema: Impossible Worlds on Screen* that fantasy elucidates reality by portraying what reality is not. Butler posits that the border between fantasy and reality is what defines reality, reality being what one is escaping by moving into fantasy (Butler, 3). It is these borders between fantasy and reality that stratify this project's theoretical framework. The borders of the human-nonhuman dyad are, in many ways, mutually constructive. The two parts of the dyad not only complement, but complete each other, and different levels of anthropomorphism portray varying kinds of reality and fantasy.

Anthropomorphism is an interplay between representing recognizable nonhuman animals in an objective reality with the fantasy of them possessing human qualities, and different forms of this interplay can be stratified and categorized in distinct ways. These categories of anthropomorphism are sorted through the kind of human-nonhuman dynamic which the anthropomorphism portrays. I would posit that each category's human-nonhuman dynamic emphasizes a particular form of social difference⁴. The categories of anthropomorphism in this thesis are sequenced in a way which parallels the categories of the

⁴ This is not to say that these categories exclusively showcase only one type of social difference, but that certain kinds of anthropomorphism emphasize certain types of social difference.

colonial narrative (which is expanded upon in Chapter 4): Lost in Translation, First Contact, the Tourist, the Postcolonial, and the Sentinel. Each of these categories of anthropomorphism will be explored more fully in later chapters of this thesis.

Framework

Category 1: Lost in Translation

In this category of human-nonhuman animal relations, nonhuman animals display the lowest phenomenological proximity to their human counterparts. The nonhuman animals often closely adhere to the physical traits of their species and while they can speak with each other, these nonhuman animals cannot be verbally understood by humans (although the nonhuman animals may understand snippets of human speech). Lost in Translation films are often set in anthropogenic spaces (farms, cities, suburbs) but may occasionally take place in largely non-anthropogenicised environments (parks, jungles, and forests). Examples of this category include: *Babe* (Noonan, 1995), *Charlotte's Web* (Winick, 2006), *Chicken Run* (Lord, Park, 2000), *Madagascar* (Darnell, McGrath, 2005), and *The Secret Life of Pets* (Renaud, 2016).

Although most anthropomorphized animals in children's film constitute some form of Todorov's definition of fantasy (diegetic hallucinations such as imaginary nonhuman friends being one of the rare exceptions), Lost in Translation films are the closest to the 'realist mode' of fantasy. The fantasy presented in Lost in Translation films acts so close to reality that the separation between these two forms may be difficult to delineate. More than any other form of anthropomorphism, there will be overlap between elements of fantasy and reality. Unlike the other forms of anthropomorphism which require some component of fantasy embedded within the human-nonhuman animal relationship, these films do not demand suspension of belief in the autonomy and sentience of nonhuman animals. Instead, Lost in Translation films

merely raise the possibility of a phenomenological shift in nonhuman animals outside of human purview when not under human supervision (many of these films are premised on what nonhuman animals 'are really like' when humans are not around to observe them).

Because the human/nonhuman relations in *Lost in Translation* films exemplify intractable binaries, other social differences are similarly restrained and mainly present social differences easily seen through dyads (e.g. masculine/feminine, human/nonhuman, adult/child). Anthropomorphism inherently genders an animal with an immediacy not present in other facets of human identity (age, race, class, or sexuality). Gender is the foremost human element to be projected onto a nonhuman animal as well as the most clearly consistent element of anthropomorphizing an animal. In contrast to gender, anthropomorphized animals can often be vague and ill-defined in other aspects of their social identities. For example, the relationship between an anthropomorphized animal's temporal age and developmental maturity can be unclear, and an anthropomorphized animal's species may not have an immediately recognizable symbolic race or ethnicity. Anthropomorphized animals superficially appear to be fully-realized gendered beings when they are introduced in children's films. However, their personal arcs still reflect their films' expectations of idealized gender roles and these arcs form the basis for exploring the social differences of gender. There are two theoretical avenues in *Lost in Translation* films that this project will explore: the first avenue considers the interrelated notions around cultural conceptualizations of dog ownership, dog fighting imagery, and the actualization of traditionally masculine gender identities. The second theoretical avenue is the literal visualization of Carol J. Adams' carnist violence as symbolic sexual violence and the ways in which anthropomorphized animals present symbolic feminine gender identities (Adams, 10).

Category 2: First Contact

In this category, human and nonhuman animals discover that they have a roughly-equal sentience. Nonhuman animals will often develop human-like characteristics like bipedalism, culture, and an increased emotional aptitude through their interactions with humans. Humans sometimes learn lessons about how to improve themselves from their nonhuman friends or vice versa (these lessons will often be about humans learning to embrace some 'natural' inner strength or power or animals learning to embrace the identity of their species). Texts in this category should have an Earth-bound setting, where the relationships between human and nonhuman animals take place in an otherwise realistic time and place, foregrounding these environments as recognizable social spaces. Examples include: *Ratatouille* (Bird, 2007), *Bee Movie* (Hickner, Smith, 2007), *Dr. Dolittle* (Thomas, 1998), and *George of the Jungle* (Weisman, 1997).

While *Lost in Translation* films are akin to Tzvetan Todorov's realist mode of fantasy, First Contact films are more strongly characterized by Todorov's Uncanny mode of fantasy. For Todorov, the Uncanny mode of fantasy is characterized by the experience of the narrative being both strange and familiar, and the reactions of characters towards seemingly impossible or otherwise inexplicable phenomena; 'in the uncanny, events are related which may be readily accounted for by the laws of reason, but which are, in one way or another, incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected, and which thereby provoke in the character and in the reader a reaction similar to that which works of the fantastic have made familiar' (Todorov, 46). In *Lost in Translation* films, the settings and characters (both human and nonhuman) are familiar; these stories take place in recognizable locations (often anthropogenic environments), with human and nonhuman animals who visibly match those a child audience would see in their own lives. Like *Lost in Translation* films, nonhuman animals are anthropomorphized to have human identities, but the inexplicable phenomena of

First Contact films is the discovery by humans and nonhuman animals that the phenomenological Others do in fact have complex identities and intelligence, and that furthermore, they can communicate in a way that appreciates and respects the cognitive equality of the other participants of these interactions.

First Contact films demonstrate characters learning to transcend the human/nonhuman binary by imagining the instigation of permanent change to the human-nonhuman status quo; unlocking the divide of the human/nonhuman binary is clear evidence in First Contact films that binaries are not intractable frameworks and are able to explore non-dualistic social structures. First Contact films move beyond dualistic structures and engage with representations of social difference in another class of complexity. As First Contact films are about the graphic renegotiations of human-nonhuman boundaries, the species dyad is often characterized as an allegory for social class, as social class is an element of an individual's identity that is something one is born into and yet can be renegotiated via the efforts, good fortune, or education in an individual's interactions with others. This chapter will utilize child developmental research, particularly from child psychologist Frances Aboud, on how children perceive class difference, and racial and ethnic difference (Aboud, 2). Aboud observes children's displays of prejudice as a distinct form to adults' experience of prejudice, and I posit that this might explain why social class coding is often coupled to racial and/or ethnic coding in First Contact films in order to negatively stereotype ethnic and racial minorities as lower-class, unproductive, and undesirable.

Category 3: The Tourist

In Tourist films, human and nonhuman animals can communicate using some fantasy/science-fiction device or the film takes place in a fantasy setting or one that is removed from what the audience accepts as their own. This category is distinct from 'First

Contact' or 'Postcolonial' stories due to an explicitly artificial form of kindness between human and nonhuman animals. For instance, in *The Wild Thornberrys Movie* (Malkasian, McGrath, 2002), human protagonist Eliza Thornberry is only able to converse with nonhuman animals after being given a magical gift by a mystic shaman. In *Up* (Docter, Peterson, 2009), Golden Retriever Dug can only speak when wearing a collar holding a device which vocalizes his thoughts to humans. Other examples include *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* (Lord, Miller, 2009), *Brother Bear* (Blaise, Walker, 2003) and *The Emperor's New Groove* (Dindal, 2000).

Like First Contact films, Tourist films share aspects of Todorov's Uncanny mode of fantasy. However, unlike First Contact films, Tourist films do not posit the human-nonhuman animal kindness through some innovative socio-biological phenomenon or miraculous 'natural' transcendence that imagines the possibility of permanent change to the human-nonhuman status quo. Instead, Tourist films present the transcendence of the human/nonhuman animal dyad as an intentional, abnormal, and reversible act of rupturing the species divide. The rational explanation of this supernatural rupture leading to humans and nonhuman animals communicating grounds this fantasy as Todorov's 'fantastic-marvelous', where the viewer must presume from the outset that the fantastical element is really occurring (Todorov, 45). The qualities of this transcendence work to make the exploration of the divide a non-threatening and more controllable transgression. Rather than being about renegotiation, the temporary nature of kindness in Tourist films only implies a fleeting shift for the human-nonhuman animal dyad which does not need extensive phenomenological accommodation (hence the classification label 'Tourist').

The Tourist dynamic emphasizes the social difference of national foreigners, usually characterizing the nonhuman animals as foreign Others in 'native' human spaces. Tourist films set in pre-colonized cultures use their tourist characters to posit an inherent

interconnectedness between indigeneity, nonhuman animals, and nature. Conversely, tourists of European descent (e.g. Eliza Thornberry in *The Wild Thornberrys Movie*) take the role of the white saviour. This chapter follows many of the criticisms made by sociologist Matthew W. Hughey who postulates that whiteness and white saviour narrative in cinema works to romanticize, obfuscate, and exculpate how imposed hegemonies severely disadvantage those living in predominantly non-white cultures (Hughey, *White Saviour*, 19). Tourist films naturalize the hegemony of these symbolic identities in ways that reinforce rather than refute this difference.

Category 4: The Postcolonial

The anthropomorphized animals in Postcolonial films 'lead lives' heavily modeled on human lives and are integrated into human societies as equals. In these stories, verbal communication between human and nonhuman animals is unremarkable and ordinary as they share some common language. The anthropomorphized animals also live recognizably 'normal' lifestyles set on Earth (they are not overtly fantasy or science-fiction stories other than the presence of anthropomorphized animals). The use of anthropomorphized animals in this category of human-nonhuman relations is more strongly suited in the denial of human-nonhuman difference (that is not to say that there are no important elements of social difference in the human-nonhuman dyad). Examples include: *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (Zemeckis, 1988), *Stuart Little* (Minkoff, Paden, 1999), and *Sesame Street Presents: Follow That Bird* (Kwapis, 1985).

In Postcolonial films, the human-nonhuman difference (or lack thereof) implies an erasure of difference; similar to ideas of post-racism or post-sexism, Postcolonial films are nominally portraying post-speciesism. The supposed erasure of human-nonhuman difference amplifies any instances of social difference by strongly contrasting with the collapsed species

difference. As they are amplified and made more striking, the instances of social difference in Postcolonial films are often characterized as discordant and abhorrent. Due to this negative characterization of social difference as an obsolete phenomenon, Postcolonial films often deconstruct the presumptive keystones and necessary principles that imbue meaning to the concept of social difference. The ways in which social differences inform the anthropomorphism of characters in this category are at their most malleable in terms of narrative context, and symbolic and literal social differences such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity are often explored in ways which negate these differences. For example, *Follow That Bird* supports the idea that Big Bird, a symbolic child character who is also the only bird on Sesame Street, has a more authentic family with non-bird residents on Sesame Street than with other birds because the interspecies kindness of his neighbours has more validity than familial ties based on race or ethnicity, class, and/or traditional family structures.

Using concepts from Postcolonial studies to analyze portrayals of anthropomorphism, Postcolonial films can be read as deconstructing the presence of social difference portrayed in the human-nonhuman dynamic. Postcolonial studies often focuses on the ways in which peoples and cultures are affected, impacted, and otherwise (re)defined through the close proximity of colonialism and imperialism. Postcolonial concepts like hybridity, interstitial sites (or 'Third Spaces'), cultural diversity and cultural difference, ambivalence, and mimicry can be found in Postcolonial films, and such concepts are key in discerning the ways in which such films destabilize and deconstruct social difference.

Category 5: The Sentinel

The final category of anthropomorphism in this framework focuses on films populated entirely with anthropomorphized animals with humans completely absent. The name of this category is derived from the North Sentinel Island tribe (also called the Sentinelese or

Sentinel), a group of humans who have been left largely uncontacted by the rest of the world (Nuwer, *BBC*). Sentinel films often feature nonhuman animals in non-anthropogenic environments and little evidence for the existence of humans is depicted. Sentinel films occupy a peculiar position in Todorov's theory of the fantastic. In one sense, Sentinel films are recognizable as viewers are acquainted with the notion of nonhuman animals outside of human purviews. However, Sentinel films also take place in a world without humans existing, and as humans themselves, the viewer definitionally leads an anthropocentric existence. The portrayal of the absence of humans signals a fantasy where literal humanity (an intrinsic and integral part of all humans' reality) does not appear at all. Examples of Sentinel films include *The Lion King* (Allers, Minkoff, 1994), *Ice Age: The Meltdown* (Saldanha, 2006), and *The Land Before Time* (Bluth, 1988).

Sentinel films remove the human-nonhuman binary by removing any trace of humans; this removal shifts the dynamics of identification in a way that is unique from the other categories of anthropomorphism. Nonhuman characters only interact with each other, never with humans. In John Berger's theory of the physical and phenomenological marginalization of nonhuman animals, Berger posits that nonhuman animals' own lives are largely reduced to extensions of the humans who look upon them (Berger, 12). I would argue that because nonhuman animals are never looked upon by humans in Sentinel films, nonhuman animals are not portrayed as having stable family structures (for there are no human families for these nonhuman animals to be a part of). For this reason, Sentinel films often emphasize social attachments and non-normative family structures. Sentinel films use the symbolic interactions of the anthropomorphized characters to interpellate the ideal (as well as non-ideal) relationships between the social units of families, wherein members of social units who are not genetically related (or species-related) to work and live together. While these ersatz family units or 'chosen families' are common within LGBTQIA+ communities (Weston, 10),

I would postulate that genre constraints on children's films reaffirm heteronormative family structures and strip any serious queer undertones from such chosen families.

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The following six chapters represent the main thrust of my research. In the second chapter of this thesis, I will be covering the relevant existing academic literature in order to build a theoretical foundation with which to contextualize and discuss the ways in which anthropomorphized animals in children's films can be understood as important forms of media in regards to the representation of social difference. The third chapter focuses on the ways in which Lost in Translation films convey (and reinforce) notions of gender. The human-nonhuman dynamic of Lost in Translation films exemplifies an intractable binary, and the example which such a dynamic sets emphasizes the ways in which the anthropomorphized animals' relationship with humans is emblematic of gender issues. This chapter has two main branches: the first branch will analyze two films featuring anthropomorphized dogs (*The Secret Life of Pets* and *Isle of Dogs*) and posit the ways in which those dogs act as self-definitional symbols of masculinity. The second branch considers the ways in which *Chicken Run* uses institutions such as cannibalism as a means of symbolically portraying sexual violence against women. The fourth chapter focuses on First Contact films and considers how the social renegotiation of the human-nonhuman dynamic forces characters to question what they perceived as ingrained social barriers. Humans discovering the sentience and human-like intelligence of nonhuman animals requires a mental renegotiation of what is meant by an animal's species, this renegotiation being symbolic of social class and social mobility (although for reasons to be explained further, this symbolism is often re-skinned as a difference of race and ethnicity). The fifth chapter focuses on Tourist

films, where the recognition and equality of humans and nonhuman animals is based on some artificial and controlled phenomenon. These films use concepts such as indigeneity, conceptualizations of nature, and Western imperialism to convey notions of nationhood and racial hegemony. The sixth chapter focuses on Postcolonial films, where human and nonhuman animals seemingly live as equals in shared space. Using several concepts from postcolonial literature, I posit the ways in which these films slyly deconstruct notions of social difference, either through stories which demonstrate that differences are not inherently disabilities or through portraying social differences between human and nonhuman animals so excessively that those differences lose any meaning. The seventh chapter focuses on Sentinel films, films where nonhuman animals are portrayed without any connection to human society. The anthropomorphized animal characters' lack of human connections in Sentinel films creates a paradox of common human conceptions of nonhuman animals only existing as extensions of human societies. As a means of solving this paradox, Sentinel films often focus on nonhuman characters having 'chosen families' (as opposed to biological families or 'families of origin') in order to suggest that the bonds between these nonhuman animals is not existentially inherent. These chosen families are often portrayed as moderately admirable, although still less preferable to families of origin.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

While previous studies have analyzed anthropomorphism in children's films, I have found that there are only a select few which have sought to understand identities in nonhuman animals in film outside of race and/or ethnicity. There have been studies of human identity through anthropomorphism, although almost all of them have interpreted anthropomorphism through an ethnographic and racial (rather than a gender, national, or LGBTQIA+) reading. The impetus of this project stems from a desire to approach children's films and representations of social difference from an angle not previously covered by the film studies literature, aiming to widen the lenses with which symbolic identities through anthropomorphism of nonhuman animals are understood. While there has been an emerging interest in analyzing gender representation in children's films, almost all of it focuses on easily identifiable human child characters or symbolic child protagonists, their relationship dynamics with others, and their own struggles of personal development. By ignoring possible cross-species identification and onscreen human-nonhuman animal relations, this has left nonhuman animal identification amongst child audiences largely unexplored. These analyses have also been generally couched firmly in childhood studies, which is advantageous for understanding actual child audiences. However, the research lens of this project is not primarily focused on how children are affected by children's films, but instead how children's films conceptualize their audience and how these films account for their 'social responsibility' to 'teach' societal norms in their construction and presentation as texts.

Although there is also pre-existing academic writing on the topic of media primarily intended for children, there are several reasons that this project will focus largely on

children's films from the lens of film studies. In his 2010 book *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages in Children's Films*, M. Keith Booker notes that children's films are distinct in important ways from children's television and children's advertising in terms of their relationship with their anticipated audience. As the medium of film demands children's films have a more flexible mass demographic appeal in terms of audience's ages, children's films often aim to engage viewers in various different stages of childhood, as well as aiming to double-code their content for both children and adults (Booker, xxi). Booker also asserts that the combination of codes and conventions for the children's film genre was first codified with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (Hand *et al*, 1937) and that the Walt Disney Company (or simply 'Disney') was the overwhelmingly dominant studio producing children's films until the 1980s. I would argue that the relatively recent nature of children's films compared to more traditional forms of children's media (e.g. children's literature) and the lack of diversity in their creative output for several decades makes children's films distinct from older forms of children's media on a paradigmatic level.

This chapter will cover some of the existing literature relevant to the intended research topic as a means of finding intellectual footholds with which to properly engage with the topic, as well as laying down a theoretical foundation with which to explore the ways in which children's films use anthropomorphized animals as a means of representing social difference. The first section of this chapter will consider the history of the genre, the different ways in which academics have come to define and understand the children's film genre, and the ways in which children's films have historically been produced and characterized as films portraying things adults believe children *should* see rather than what children *want* to see. This exploration of the literature of children's films as a film genre will then move on to the ways in which children's films, the animation medium, and anthropomorphism are historically and conceptually linked. Children's films, animation, and anthropomorphized

animals have all been historically seen as trivial but writers such as Joseph Zornado, Paul Wells, and Jack Halberstam postulate that these three forms of media can explore an incredibly diverse range of representations of identity. The second section of this chapter will focus on critical understandings of the ways in which nonhuman animals may be read in culture and society. Two important concepts—speciesism and nature—are laid out in order to couch the common ways in which nonhuman animals are understood in relation to humans. From there, the chapter will consider how the figure of the nonhuman animal is paralleled with the figure of the human child through associations of the 'wild'. This parallel underpins why anthropomorphized animals have an ontological connection to the child. This underpinning of the 'wild' may be one of the main reasons that the anthropomorphized animal is such a key figure in representations within the children's film genre.

Children's Film as Genre

One of the main cornerstones of this project involves understanding children's films, not merely as a form of recreation and placating entertainment for children but as a media genre. Since Aristotle's *Poetics*, the difficulties in establishing what constitutes a genre classification have been made apparent. *Poetics* has two main criteria for separating texts into genres: the resemblance a text has on previous literary texts (what Aristotle calls 'imitation'), and difference from other literary texts (Aristotle trans. Butcher, 7). Critics of Aristotle have noted that these criteria have various flaws as they do not dictate any objective conventions, clearly delineate between genres, or account for hybrid or subgenres. Certainly, genres do function on a textual as well as intertextual level and later treatises on genre studies have defined genres as systems of classification of texts but there still remains the ontological paradox: a collection of texts that comes to define a genre then becomes the shared textual codes and conventions with which the genre is defined. These collection of texts are not

comprehensively homogenous in their own codes and conventions and so the boundaries of this collection are fluid and inconsistent so rejecting or accepting texts based on the imitation of other genre texts becomes a subjective and uncertain task.

Rick Altman's framework for genre classifications proposes that rather than being flaws, the uncertainty and lack of essentialism in genre criticism is a constructive way of interrogating genre categories. To avoid the trappings of these complexities, Altman uses the semantic and syntactic conventions of a text to define genres, while noting that genres are, by nature, fluid, and evolving classifications (Altman, 10). Semantic conventions are elements of the text which communicate to the audience (e.g. characters, soundtrack, settings, shooting locations) while syntactic conventions are the relationships between textual elements (e.g. characters coming into conflict, storylines from characters). Media genres that are primarily defined through their audience (the women's film or its successor the chick flick, the teen film, the adult or pornographic film) may be more difficult to distinguish with Altman's approach than others (westerns, horror, science-fiction) as there are less visual semantic and syntactic conventions. The children's film genre has a great deal of flexibility of semantic conventions so it may be difficult to immediately identify a children's film solely based on things like characters, settings, or shooting locations. Although they may be set in a typical suburb and schoolyard (*Matilda* (DeVito, 1996)), a pre-historic dinosaur realm (*Dinosaur* (Zondag, Leighton, 2000)), or a dystopian spaceship (*WALL-E* (Stanton, 2008)), there is a definite similarities of syntactic conventions between these children's films (discussed below) which belies the genre. I would propose that Altman's idea of genres as uncertain and unstable bodies is useful to remember in order to better engage with the complexities of stories contained within the children's film genre.

As serious research on the children's film genre has begun to emerge from the perspective of media studies, the question then shifts from what constitutes a genre to what

constitutes the children's film genre as a means of demarcating research boundaries. In his 2010 book *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages in Children's Films*, M. Keith Booker briefly recaps the children's film genre and performs a cursory survey of the children's films released by major film studios in the past century. Booker opens his book with two important premises to provide the foundation for his study. The first premise is (as mentioned above) that children's films are unique in children's media and structurally different in form and function to children's television and children's advertising. Booker's second premise is that the Walt Disney company (or simply, Disney) has had a nearly-monolithic stronghold on the children's film genre since the genre's inception until the 1980s, and that this stronghold has meant that Disney has largely defined how the concept of a children's film is understood (Booker, xviii). Booker critiques the 1937 Walt Disney Productions film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the first feature-length children's film, and identifies how *Snow White* codifies the combination of several key textual conventions into the children's film genre:

- i) Animated animals who may also act as audience surrogates for children.
- ii) Strategically placed musical numbers.
- iii) Magic as a motif.
- iv) Slapstick violence as entertainment, of which characters will emerge unscathed.

v) A certain amount of violence and danger in service of the plot, the threats of which are totally extirpated by the film's conclusion in order to lead to a joyful, happy ending.

vi) The removal of any hint of sexuality, sometimes going so far as to remove parents from the lives of the characters.

vii) When physical labour is depicted, it is shown to be pleasant, enjoyable, and highly rewarding as an activity in its own right (Booker, 2).

Booker posits that Disney's film canon (and by extension, most of the children's film genre) has largely been based on what Disney wanted children to see rather than what children themselves might want to see. This distinction is important as there is a notable separation between the intended audience and story content. Unlike the 'teen film' which almost ubiquitously depicts teenagers and teenage-related issues, or the 'woman's film' (most popular in the 1930s and 1940s) which were focused on women's issues, children's films are films *for* children and not necessarily *about* children. Booker notes that Disney's curation of what children should see demonstrates that children are seen as innocent viewers who embody the nostalgic conceptualizations of the past of adults, observing that

Disney's animated films seem predicated upon an assumption of childhood as a time of innocence, with maturation into adulthood involving a loss of this innocence. I would go further, to suggest that Disney's animated films also seem to assume a model of history in

which the message through time of an American civilization mirrors the growth of an individual child, making the past a focus of innocence (and the further back in the past, the more innocent the time), with the progression into modernity involving a loss of that innocence. This dual narrative of individual and social maturation as loss of innocence tends to give Disney's animated films a strongly nostalgic air, because the past is always a better time than the present (Booker, 5-6).

Booker's main discussion of children's films asserts that the genre strongly connects ideas of the 'natural', the 'authentic', and the 'real' (Booker, 7). Characters in children's films often learn their 'natural' place in the world by coming to understand their 'real' identity as an individual, and that by finding their 'natural' place they (and those they care about) will be happy. However, this form of essentialism is paradoxical to ingrained American myths of complete social upward mobility enabled through an individual's hard work and personal merit. Although he does not seem particularly pre-occupied with solving this contradiction between generic convention and social myth, Booker's observation of this paradox is intriguing as it is one of the conspicuous ways in which children's films are not wholly shaped to perfectly match the interests and understandings of the viewing public but actively exist as texts with the potentiality for subversive, non-normative or irregular ideas.

In Ian Wojick-Andrews' 2000 book, *Children's Films: History, Ideology, Pedagogy, Theory*, the author takes a notably broader approach than Booker in defining and delineating what constitutes the children's film genre by arguing that children's films cannot be determined through textual elements alone. Wojick-Andrews identifies three major qualities of a film in order to determine whether it is a children's film and thus these qualities can also

be considered as the framework of the genre:

- i. Children's films often include representations of children (Wojick-Andrews, 19). Wojick-Andrews refers to *Stand By Me* (Reiner, 1989) as a significant example of a film which qualifies as a children's film through the representation of children rather than a childlike tone.
- ii. Children's films are films that are produced with the intention of a child audience. Wojick-Andrews notes the difficulty of clarifying the exact parameters of intention in most cases, but does consider film adaptations of children's literature (which he considers slightly more canonical in their consensus) to be one concrete qualification for determining whether or not a film is a children's film.
- iii. Children's films can be thought of as films which are seen by children.

Wojick-Andrews also makes a number of compelling assertions around the nature of children's films and one early point he raises is the preference for alternate worlds in children's films (as well as children's literature) (Wojick-Andrews, 10). Children's films like *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Adamson, 2005), *The Secret Garden* (Holland, 1993), *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939), and *Jumanji* (Johnston, 1995) all feature some external world that is defined in its opposition to 'objective' reality (often a reality where children are ignored or sidelined by adults). Wojick-Andrews posits that this preference for alternate worlds in children's films is indicative of how childhood

itself is often seen as another world, and that the experience of being a child is akin to existing in a reality divorced from an adult's. Another point that Wojick-Andrew raises is that although children's films are produced in various countries, the genre is still largely dominated by American cinema (concurring with M. Keith Booker, although Wojick-Andrews does not explicitly name Disney in his assertion); Wojick-Andrews considers the American stronghold to be a form of 'cinematic cultural imperialism' (Wojick-Andrews, 18).

One third noteworthy point that Wojick-Andrew raises is the parodic or metatextual quality that children's films employ (Wojick-Andrews, 184). Films like *Stand By Me*, *Shrek* (Adamson, Jenson, 2001), and *The Princess Bride* (Reiner, 1987) are examples of children's films which have the framing device of a storyteller reading a story which narrates the film (the inclusion of books is often a motif in this framing). In *Stand By Me*, the protagonist Gordie as an adult (who we later learn is an author) reminisces about his childhood, creating the frame story by which the child Gordie takes the reins of the narrative. In *The Princess Bride*, the story of a fictional medieval adventure is framed as the story of a grandfather reading a book to his young grandson in the grandson's contemporary Chicago home. In a subversion of this trope, *Shrek* opens with a narrator (the eponymous Shrek) flipping through the pages of a fairy tale book of a traditional knight-and-princess tale before Shrek announces his contempt for such a story and reveals that the book was restroom literature. Children's films like *Shrek*, *Aladdin* (Clements, Musker, 1992), and *The Muppet Movie* (Frawley, 1979) also employ metatextual humour and use pop culture references as jokes. *Shrek* contains several characters who parody the Disney incarnations of several fairy tales (including Snow White, Pinocchio, Cinderella, Peter Pan and Tinkerbell, Robin Hood, and the Three Little Pigs), makes use of the 'bullet time' effect as popularized in *The Matrix* (Wachowskis, 1999) in a fight sequence between Princess Fiona and Robin Hood and his Merry Men, and features the characters anachronistically singing a rendition of the song 'I'm a Believer' by pop rock

band Smash Mouth⁵. *Aladdin* is set in a time and place which vaguely evokes 1500s India (although it is canonically set in the fictional country of Agrabah), and features a magical character known as the Genie who frequently imitates pop culture icons (such as Arnold Schwarzenegger, Ed Sullivan, Groucho Marx, Robert De Niro, Carol Channing, Arsenio Hall, Jack Nicholson, and Alec Guinness) throughout the film. These imitations are performed both through the Genie's vocal performance and also through his magical shape-shifting to embody a caricature of those he is imitating.

In his 2017 book *The Children's Film: Genre, Nation, and Narrative*, Noel Brown opens by describing what he views as other critics' flawed misconceptions on what they view as the children's film, explicitly challenging several of the theoretical premises in Ian Wojcik-Andrews' book *Children's Films: History, Ideology, Pedagogy, Theory*. Brown challenges two of the three components of Wojcik-Andrews' definition of the children's film genre. The first challenge Brown makes is that there is 'a distinction between films made *for children*, and films *about children*', and posits that films which revolve around children are not automatically children's films (using *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973) as an example of a non-children's film about a child). The second challenge Brown makes is to defy the academic premise that a children's film is simply one that is watched by children '[as] this cannot hold water: Children consume entertainment media of all different kinds' (N. Brown, 3). Brown also questions the notion that children's films can be easily identified as such simply through their marketing for child audiences. Brown notes that the majority of live-action Hollywood blockbusters may be marketed towards children, but are more inclusively 'family films' in practise, with family films a sub-section of children's films with a broader appeal to older audiences. Family films often fall under the PG-13 rating, so that children may see these films with parental supervision, while also appealing to the lucrative adolescent and teenage

⁵ While *Shrek* features the Smash Mouth cover of 'I'm a Believer', the song itself was originally recorded in 1966 by the Monkees.

markets (N. Brown, 4). To compensate for such inclusivity, family films have a differentiated address to meet the overlapping educational and entertainment requirements of adults and children (N. Brown, 23). For example, a film like *Aladdin* might be a family film as it engages the child audience with the fairy tale-esque narrative while also using the Genie's slew of imitations of various pop culture icons to address the more media-literate teenagers and adults.

To circumvent the trappings of both what constitutes a genre, and what constitutes the children's film genre, Brown considers the label 'children's film' not to refer to a genre, but a 'master-genre', viewed through thematic syntactic conventions; 'it is useful to think of the children's film and the family film in terms of the semantic/syntactic approach to genre proposed by Tzvetan Todorov, and advocated by Fredric Jameson, Rick Altman and others' (N. Brown, 17). Brown's conceit of the children's film as a master-genre proposes that the phrase 'children's film' be used more as an umbrella term to consider a range of films that superficially belong to various genres but which have common semantic and syntactic conventions (such commonalities determining their position as a 'children's film'). For Brown, any film could be grouped with a recognized genre such as science-fiction, fantasy, musical, adventure, spy, mystery, Western, et cetera, but this does not preclude that film from falling under the umbrella of the master-genre of the children's film. Furthering M. Keith Booker's aforementioned list, Brown establishes five core syntactic conventions as the key specifications to appraising whether or not a film may be considered part of the children's film genre:

- i) The reaffirmation of family, kinship and community.

- ii) The foregrounding of child, adolescent and teenage figures and their experiences. The category of symbolic child is highly mutable. In children's cinema, childhood is not just a biologically-determined development stage; it is a social construct.

- iii) The exclusion and/or eventual defeat of disruptive social elements.

- iv) The minimisation of 'adult' representational elements. In films for children, aspects such as sex, nudity, violence, criminality, sustained pessimism, extreme profanity, drug abuse, human or animal suffering, and gore are permissible only in very limited quantities.

- v) Finally, while stories may acknowledge the possibility of an unpleasant or undesirable outcome, endings are predominantly upbeat, emotionally uplifting, morally unambiguous and supportive of the social status quo (N. Brown, 14, 15).

The strength of Brown's five generic criteria of children's films lies within the visual, diegetic, and character-based flexibility of the genre's form while still making children's films identifiable through conventions targeted for child audiences.

Children's Films, Animation, and Anthropomorphism

Although not synonymous, several academic analyses of children's films have either conflated or observed the film medium of animation being intrinsically connected with children's films. For example, the essay anthology *Animating Difference: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children* considers the symbolic and literal representations of race, gender, and sexuality but often uses the term 'animated film' when referring to a film targeted towards a child audience. Rather than easily conflating the medium and the genre, Joseph Zornado's article 'Children's Film as Social Practice' posits that the prolific use of animation in children's films can be attributed to their 'social responsibility' as cultural-pedagogical texts. As children's films are seen as having the social function of 'educating' their young audience, the use of animation is a highly effective means of iconologizing cultural ideologies through the technical and psychodynamic aspects of the medium. Zornado likens the iconology of animation within children's films to the iconology of religious art in the Renaissance, writing that

iconology understands the animated feature as a perfect merging of ideology and pedagogy both in the way the animated feature represents pedagogy in terms of narrative while enacting pedagogy in terms of the positioning of the spectator as one in a community of passive recipients of the film screen's action. The animated feature exhibits pivotal 'truths' that are 'obvious and true' because [they are] common and familiar, yet moving, and still beautiful (Zornado, 3).

For Zornado, the animation of children's films is part of what makes the interpellation of ideology so influential and resonant with its audiences. Like religious art, there is a visual

quality to children's films that viewers experience as a unique and visceral truth.

Animation has also been intertwined with the presence of nonhuman animals (often anthropomorphized); children's films have strong ties to animation and so by extension they also have strong ties with anthropomorphized animals. In his 2008 book *The Animated Bestiary: Animals, Cartoons, and Culture* Paul Wells notes the predominant use of anthropomorphism in film animation since the early days of the medium—the first animated personality being a dinosaur named Gertie. The ability to animate nonhuman animals was an impressive moving visual spectacle and, by responding to societal conditions such as the Great Depression, led 'funny animals' to becoming popular respites for the patrons of those animated films. Wells, an academic who specializes in animated animals and anthropomorphism, remonstrates the reputation that children's films anthropomorphized animals, and cartoons have for triviality. Indeed, Wells posits that this reputation can empower and embolden symbolic explorations of human identity and difference. Wells asserts that anthropomorphized animals can operate under the nonhuman guise distanced from social commentary, yet still remain strongly evocative of issues of identity. He notes that

animal personae within literary contexts have been used to sidestep the overt engagement with political, religious, and social taboos more usually explicit in any human-centered, realist mode of storytelling . . . animated characters [can be seen] in the first instance as phenomena and, consequently, able to carry a diversity of representational positions. At one and the same time, such characters can be beasts and humans, or neither; can prompt issues about gender, race and ethnicity, generation, and identity, or not; and can operate

innocently or subversively, or as something else entirely (Wells, *Animated Bestiary*, 7, 15).

In the 2015 book *Animal Life & The Moving Image*, Laura McMahon and Michael Lawrence extend Wells' assertion of animated nonhuman animals being effective vehicles for exploring human identity by considering the mediality of nonhuman animals to not only prompt issues about gender, race, and ethnicity, but that the act of humans looking upon nonhuman animals is in itself 'a collusion of ethnographic, zoological, and pornographic gazes' (Lawrence, McMahon, 3). Similar to Wells, and McMahon and Lawrence, in the introduction of the 2005 anthology *Animals in Person: Cultural Perspectives on Human-Animal Intimacies* John Knight notes the tendency for cultures to view certain species as totemic of different human qualities (dolphins as symbols of love and peace, monkeys as symbols of playfulness, et cetera), labelling such qualities as the 'rhetorical particularity' of the species (Knight, 9). Far from being simply individual anthropomorphic illusions or 'mere beliefs', Knight argues that there is a broad conceptual framework of rhetorical particularities for the animal kingdom that encompasses the taxonomy of all prominent animals.

Paul Wells' 2015 essay "'You Can See What Species I Belong to, but Don't Treat Me Lightly": Rhetorics of Representation in Animated Animal Narratives' considers anthropomorphism in cinema, with a strong emphasis on the role of animation as a medium. Wells considers animals to be the *lingua franca* of animation, and that anthropomorphized animals clearly signify the way in which animation is an inherently subversive form of referential and analogous representation of nonhuman animals. Wells lists the ways in which animated representation can be problematic as 'the manipulation of time and space, the rejection of the physics of the material world, the narrative symbolic signification of sound, and the dislocation between the animate and inanimate, the static and the animatic, are all

aspects of the distinctive vocabulary of expression available in animation' (Wells, *Species*, 96). In analyzing the role of animation in portrayals of animals, Wells asks 'how far can they be understood as animals, and how much as humans in disguise, and further, what does depicting a character as an animal enable an animator to say or do that using a human character cannot?' (Wells, *Species*, 95). The way that anthropomorphized animals alternate between 'humanity' and 'animality' is what Wells terms 'the bestial ambivalence', a theoretical model which focuses on the responsive dynamics of the human/animal binary and forms of animation to represent the animal. In the cases of the higher forms of anthropomorphism these nonhuman animals struggle more overtly with the 'oscillation' between being a human in parallel as being a nonhuman animal. Paul Wells crystallizes this oscillation by answering the question 'Donald Duck never wore pants, but when he comes out of the shower, he puts a towel around his waist. I mean, what's that about?':

One might immediately answer that it is concerned with the simultaneity of remembering the 'nakedness' implied in taking a shower as a human, but forgetting both Donald's status as a duck and as an animated character. These oscillations between animal/human discourses are fundamental in the construction of animated animals and suggest a range of perspectives about both the standing of 'the animal' in the real world, and the tension between the promotion and evacuation of its meaning in the representational order . . . the animal and the human seem to find their most effective representation in the liminal states that are often the staple of animated forms and figures (Wells, *Species*, 106).

For Wells, the bestial ambivalence of an animal is always partly an affect of animation. While I do not wish to summarize every example of bestial ambivalence in Wells' essay, I do wish to emphasize Wells' notion of the intersections of anthropomorphized animals between being informed as nonhuman animals as well as symbolic humans. That intersection, often oscillating between the two facets of the anthropomorphized animal's representation, can strongly impact how they are codified for audience identification.

Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* focuses on the interlocking of children's films, anthropomorphized animals, and animation in a chapter provocatively titled 'Animating Revolt and Revolting Animation'. Halberstam's consideration of this particular intersection of concepts is similar to that of Laura McMahon and Michael Lawrence, opining that animated anthropomorphized animals in children's films are particularly conducive to exploring symbolic themes of (human) identity and social dynamics; 'Building new worlds by accessing new forms of sociality through animals turns around the usual equation in literature that makes the animal an allegorical stand-in in a moral fable about human folly', Halberstam writes. 'Most often we project human worlds onto the supposedly blank slate of animality, and then we create the animals we need in order to locate our own human behaviors in "nature" or "the wild" or "civilization"' (Halberstam, 32). While Laura McMahon and Michael Lawrence might consider the combination of children's films, anthropomorphized animals, and animation well-suited for exploring issues of identity, Halberstam furthers this by asserting that this combination has a great deal of potential to explore through the lens of 'queerness' (by this, Halberstam means through non-normative perspectives).

One of Halberstam's foundational principles in 'Animating Revolt and Revolting Animation' is that childhood itself can be considered a 'queer' experience as children themselves are the non-normative, powerless faction in an adult-driven society. Utilizing this mode of childhood as 'queer', children's films have the potential to explore how different

kinds of queerness can be represented. Halberstam identifies a subsection of children's films which they term 'Pixarvolt', CGI-animated children's films featuring anthropomorphized characters which tell stories about how characters might be 'queer' in ways which revolt or revolutionize systems of governance. In their definition of Pixarvolt films, Halberstam states that

in the new animation films certain topics that would never appear in adult-themed films are central to the success and emotional impact of these narratives. Furthermore, and perhaps even more surprisingly, the Pixarvolt films make subtle as well as overt connections between communitarian revolt and queer embodiment and thereby articulate, in ways that theory and popular narrative have not, the sometimes counterintuitive links between queerness and socialist struggle . . . the queer is not represented as a singularity but as part of an assemblage of resistant technologies that include collectivity, imagination, and a kind of situationist commitment to surprise and shock . . . the Pixarvolt films show how important it is to recognize the weirdness of bodies, sexualities, and genders in other animal life worlds, not to mention other animated universes (Halberstam, 29, 48).

Pixarvolt films emphasize the critique and questioning of normality in social constructions. Although Halberstam's chapter is mainly focused on linking animation to animals and queer notions of the Self, I would also connect Pixarvolt films to stories of revolution and struggle against the social order via the medium of CGI animation. In Sage Hyden's 2017 video essay 'How CGI Transformed Animated Storytelling', the author argues that there has been a recent

trend in animated children's films to focus less on tales of conservatism (defined as 'a commitment to traditional ways of living and looking to the past for wisdom on how to live') and towards 'liberal allegories' (defined as 'the take-home message that society can change [on the level of civilization] and that an individual can be the instigator of that change') (Hyden, *Just Write*). Hyden identifies the two main causes of this cinematic shift in animated children's films to be the societal rise in prominent social movements which challenge traditional values, and the technological shift from 2D cel-animation to 3D CGI filmmaking. The advantages of CGI storytelling include a greater ease and control of modeling of an animated film's mise-en-scene, computerized duplication of moving animated objects (for example, hordes and armies), and greater flexibility of camera movements in CGI-animated environments. Hyden postulates the storytelling ramifications of CGI filmmaking, positing that

3D animation incentivises certain storytelling decisions and one thing they all have in common over their 2D predecessors is [more] movement . . . with a greater ability for movement, many studios started setting their stories in places that could take advantage of that movement. We move from the mostly rural environments of Disney movies to bustling cities . . . but it is important to note that movement is easier to animate when it has some order to it (as opposed to being totally chaotic) so we end up with worlds that move like clockwork. From that, it's logical that these settings produce characters and conflicts centered around conformity versus individuality—the medium often influenced the setting, and within the setting, the characters, themes, and conflicts are implied (Hyden, *Just Write*).

Hyden's postulation seems to support the notion of Halberstam's 'Pixarvolt' genre by considering the ethos of revolt and queer embodiment of these films embedded on a technical level. Although of course there are children's films featuring anthropomorphized characters which are not rendered using CGI, and CGI films which are not necessarily children's films, the presence of Pixarvolt films in the discourse of the children's film genre does keenly demonstrate a body of children's films which feature narratives centred around shifts in traditional power dynamics.

Animals on Film

Jonathan Burt's *Animals in Film* has a strong historical focus on the role animals have had in the production of films, contrasting with other works in animal studies which tend towards a more philosophical perspective. *Animals in Film* is broken into three main chapters: film and the history of the visual animal, vision and ethics, and animal life and death. One of Burt's key discussions focuses on the abstraction or recognition between human and nonhuman animals. 'The degree to which humans and animals are alienated from each other is sometimes gauged by the extent to which some form of mutual communication is or is not possible,' Burt states, explaining that there are indeed various forms of communication that have a more sublime frequency than verbal or written language (Burt, 41). Burt's main thesis is that the power of the look (considered by Burt as the act of facing another organism and using body language) has a primal radiance far more powerful and universal than most people realize. The look acts as a means of bridging communication between humans and nonhuman animals, seemingly telepathic as it is so instantaneous and palpable that it is much more powerful than verbal language alone (Burt, 40). Burt considers the look a distinct (but related) phenomenon to the gaze—while the gaze is largely about subjugating its subject, the

look is focused on revelation through recognition of the existence of the nonhuman animal. The variety of models of gaze within the act of looking exoticize, fetishize, and sexualize nonhuman animals, alienating and fragmenting the nonhuman animal from subject to object. These models of gaze create this human/nonhuman binary as these methods of describing visual constructions were created to understand human subjects so using them to understand nonhuman animals creates flawed readings of these subjects. These gazes thus create 'coherent' readings of the human and 'incoherent' of the nonhuman (Burt, 44). The mechanism of Burt's look applies to children's films not just between human and nonhuman characters, but also a key part of the mediality between the nonhuman animal and the film's audience.

In her book *Animals, Anthropomorphism and Mediated Encounters*, Claire Parkinson considers how depictions of anthropomorphism inform representations of human-nonhuman animal relations and argues that the ways in which anthropomorphized animals on film can be powerful tools to promote animal advocacy and evoke empathy from the audience. Parkinson proposes that the power dynamic of human-nonhuman animal relations is always intrinsically present in any depiction of anthropomorphism, and posits that these portrayals of nonhuman animals in the media become part of the cultural understanding of those animal species (Parkinson, 4). Parkinson posits that depictions of nonhuman animals often has an anthropocentric conceit. However, these anthropomorphized animals in film comes from a long history of reductionist thinking where anthropomorphism was viewed as a form of sentimentalism, while the emotional detachment and objectification of nonhuman animals was understood as scientific inquiry (Parkinson, 22). Animals on film (often as a function of eco-cinema) should supposedly be framed as scientifically accurate in order to be judged as 'legitimate' representations (Parkinson, 19). This binary of anthropomorphism of nonhuman animals as a function of 'art' and objectification of nonhuman animals as 'science' has been an epistemological trend which has become heavily ingrained within public consciousness

(Parkinson, 27).

This binary between anthropomorphism of nonhuman animals as between 'art' and 'science' is entrenched in a series of other binaries; 'art' is connected to qualities which are 'feminine', 'sentimental', and 'illegitimate' while 'science' is connected to qualities which are 'masculine', 'objective', and 'legitimate' (Parkinson, 22). However, Parkinson rejects the notion that portrayals of anthropomorphized animals which do not conform to scientifically accurate behaviours are intrinsically lacking legitimacy or cultural value. Instead, Parkinson notes how expectations around 'truthfulness' and representation of nonhuman animals can be both explored and exploited (Parkinson, 31). Parkinson references *True-Life Adventures*, Disney's documentary series on nonhuman animals, as a prominent example of how expectations of authenticity of animal behaviour chafe against the artifice of mediated representation which can convey these animals through film production (Parkinson, 31). Parkinson specifically observes how the documentary film *March of the Penguins* (Jacquet, 2005) and the children's film *Happy Feet* (Miller, 2006) both revolved around the heteronormative values superimposed on depictions of penguins. Although *March of the Penguins* and *Happy Feet* might have different genre expectations, Parkinson posits that the unrealism of penguins in both films does not prevent animal advocacy for the wellbeing of penguins to their audiences.

In her book *Animality and Children's Literature and Film*, Amy Ratelle considers the ways in which anthropomorphism in children's literature and children's films convey particular forms of animal advocacy. Ratelle opens by considering that the ways in which animals are depicted in fiction often reflects the predominant contemporary cultural conceptualizations of those animals, and that anthropomorphized animals as pedagogical tools to teach social norms to children has been a convention of children's fiction since the 18th century (Ratelle, 7). Ratelle muses that the understanding of human-animal relations of

the era directly informs the ways in which animals are anthropomorphized in children's fiction, arguing that 'literature geared toward a child audience reflects and contributes to the cultural tensions created by the oscillation between upholding and undermining the divisions between the human and the animal' (Ratelle, 4). One of Ratelle's main points of discussion is that most academic analyses of anthropomorphized animals in children's fiction considers the ways in which anthropomorphism can be read as communicating symbolic social identities to child audiences, but there is also the potential to read those symbolic social identities of anthropomorphized animals as constructing representations of nonhuman animal species and nonhuman identities. Ratelle identifies how discussions of the dog protagonists in two of Jack London's novels (*The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*) are primarily interested in how the novels use the animal bodies of dogs to symbolically explore issues around nature, the wild, and civilization, but these discussions are limited to focuses on human concerns. 'Scholars are not wrong in calling attention to London's use of the wolf-dog body as a metaphor for human issues and values' Ratelle writes, 'but this approach tells us more about the human than the animal. More importantly, it countermands London's own efforts to meet and represent the animals on their own terms' (Ratelle, 63). The depictions of dogs in these novels (and their subsequent film adaptations) both is informed by existing societal conceptualizations of dogs, and contributes to those societal conceptualizations.

Another significant point Ratelle makes in her book is the use of animal actors and audience empathy as a means of animal advocacy. Ratelle considers how the use of cetacean animal actors in *Free Willy* (Wincer, 1993) and *Dolphin Tale* (C. Smith, 2011) encourages audience identification with these nonhuman species and promotes the personhood of cetaceans (Ratelle, 118). One point of contention Ratelle has with films like *Free Willy* is the contradiction between these films advocating for the freedom of movement for cetaceans while simultaneously being dependent upon the captivity of these animal actors to produce

these films. Despite the problematic nature of film productions like these, Ratelle believes the affectionate imagery of these animal actors on films works to break down speciesism and helps to promote animal rights through a physical and emotional intimacy between human and nonhuman animals (Ratelle, 138).

Speciesism

Speciesism is the prejudice against an organism based on their species, vaguely akin to prejudices like racism or sexism. The core principle of speciesism is that different species should be given different rights, values, and respect (often *Homo Sapiens* as a species is considered the apex species and should be prioritized in any moral hierarchy). Renowned moral philosopher Peter Singer, who popularized the term, describes speciesism in this way:

Speciesism is an attitude of bias against a being because of the species to which it belongs. Typically, humans show speciesism when they give less weight to the interests of nonhuman animals than they give to the similar interests of human beings. Note the requirement that the interests in question be 'similar'. It's not speciesism to say that normal humans have an interest in continuing to live that is different from the interests that nonhuman animals have. One might, for instance, argue that a being with the ability to think of itself as existing over time, and therefore to plan its life, and to work for future achievements, has a greater interest in continuing to live than a being who lacks such capacities . . . although it is true, of course, that we have not overcome racism, sexism or discrimination against people with disabilities, there is at least widespread acceptance that

such discrimination is wrong, and there are laws that seek to prevent it. With speciesism, we are very far from reaching that point. If we were to compare attitudes about speciesism today with past racist attitudes, we would have to say that we are back in the days in which the slave trade was still legal, although under challenge by some enlightened voices (Yancy, Singer, *New York Times*).

Speciesism is often motivated by anthropocentrism as well as humans' ability to measure the sentience of an animal (Bruers, 489). Because of this anthropocentric framing, speciesism usually implicitly or explicitly signals an inherent oppression of the nonhuman and supremacy of the human. Even though some humans may consider another animal sentient, the degree of speciesism may be influenced by the similarities of nonhuman sentience to human sentience (Cottee, 7). For example, primates such as gorillas may be seen as animals of higher value than bats due to the far more significant phenomenological similarities which gorillas and humans share. In anthropomorphism, speciesism is the allegory for which other forms of discrimination and prejudice are explored.

Anthropocentrism

Keenly connected to the notion of speciesism is anthropocentrism. Anthropocentrism (also labeled as humanocentrism) is a subsection of both speciesism and environmental philosophy, dealing with the bio-political and ideological beliefs that humans as a species have a greater (if not the greatest) value above all other animals. Anthropocentrism posits that humans have an inherent, natural right to separate and/or elevate their being from other species. By aggrandizing humans to a higher plane of value (and to many philosophers, responsibility to others), a dualism is created which divides humans and culture with nonhuman animals and

nature, or as Tim Ingold puts it 'personhood as a state of being [which] is not open to nonhuman animal kinds' (Ingold, 42).

Like anthropomorphism, anthropocentrism can be found in several different forms, each of which has different implications for the conceptualization of species relations. At the high end of the scale is what Robin Attfield terms 'strong anthropocentrism', the metaphysical or teleological ideology that all things nonhuman (animals, objects, planets, et cetera) solely exist for the purpose and benefit of human beings (Attfield, 30). This strong anthropocentrism often appears somewhat quasi-religious (indeed, many religious myths endow humans with some feature to make them distinct from other animals) and has many obvious flaws in its justification. The most notable flaw of this belief is that from the perspective of 'Big History', a discipline which considers time scales from the small (the millions of years of human existence) to the very large (the billions of years of which our universe has existed), things have existed for billions of years prior to any presence to humans or humanity.

The more metered form of anthropocentrism, which Robin Attfield labels 'normative anthropocentrism' promotes the belief that only human beings have moral standing, and that only human needs and desires should be taken into account in ethical deliberations. In normative anthropocentrism, the only things of value or can be considered 'good' are those things which humans find valuable (Attfield, 31). Again, the centrality of humans is flawed in the judgment or valuation of a thing. Summarizing Kenneth Goodpaster's point, Robin Attfield posits 'that it makes no sense to ascribe moral standing to things that lack a good of their own, such as rocks and machines, since they cannot be harmed or benefited (as opposed to merely being damaged or reconstructed), but [it] makes much better sense to ascribe it to living organisms, since these really do have a good of their own, can be healthy or unhealthy, and can be harmed or benefited accordingly' (Attfield, 31). A nonhuman animal can have

their own 'good' which they understand without any human involvement in determining what form that might take. However, normative anthropocentrism does advocate that the only 'good' we need to concern ourselves with is the good of human interests.

Nature

A critical component of this thesis will be to consider how social identities and social difference are naturalized through the anthropomorphizing of social characteristics. The connotative associations between nonhuman animals and the cultural construct of 'nature' often intensifies the naturalization of social identities through anthropomorphized animals. Avoiding assumptions around the supposed universal dichotomy of human and nature, Tim Ingold's paper 'Hunting and Gathering as Ways of Perceiving the Environment' addresses the anthropological keystone that nature is a cultural construction. Ingold also asserts that the human/nonhuman animal binary (and by extension, anthropocentrism) is a uniquely Western belief and not an inherently human tendency. He observes that many societies do not have a divide between the internal human lives and an external world of nature and animals that is to be 'grasped' by humans, examining the Canadian Cree, Australian Aborigines, and indigenous Alaskans to illustrate his argument. Ingold describes how these groups interpret all organisms (human and nonhuman) as having both personal relations between each other and with the environment and that these relations are not necessarily anthropocentric. To these non-Western groups, all organisms have an equal claim to 'personhood' that humans have (Ingold, 40).

Ingold's explanation for why Western societies create the human/nonhuman animal binary is that the act of creating culture separates humans (cultural entities) from nonhuman animals ('natural' entities). However, Ingold finds there to be an inherent flaw in this division: culture is simultaneously opposed and dependent on nature which means that the two

concepts can never be separated. Ingold argues that while humans are both opposed to the idea of being animals in nature, they also must deal with the paradox that in their own human attempts at distancing themselves from nature (through culture), they still remain as entities with biological and existential animality (by being animals) who live in some physical universe (that exists as nature). Ingold cites Richard Shweder's argument as one articulation of this distancing process: Shweder propounds that humans (at least, humans from Western civilizations) create 'intentional worlds' through their perception of the environment(s) around them. For the inhabitants of these intentional worlds, things do not exist 'in themselves' as indifferent objects, but only as they are given form or meaning within the mental representations of human minds. Separated from the 'intentional worlds' of human societies and cultures is the existential background of 'really natural' nature which includes physical objects, nonhuman animals, and plants (Ingold, 35).

In Shweder's model of intentional worlds, nonhuman animals do not create their own intentional worlds and instead can only have some objective, non-cognitive perception of 'really natural nature'. Because of this supposedly less-crafted mode of perception, nonhuman animals are inherently closer to the non-cultured nature which humans perceive. By extension, nonhuman animals are therefore characterized as having behaviours undesigned and free from intention, making such behaviour 'purer' to reality. When a nonhuman animal performs an action, there is no abstraction of personhood or intentionality involved, and it is more 'natural' and 'pure'; such purity of the nonhuman animal's actions can be understood as being communicative of inherent specifications of reality that exist beyond the humans' intentional worlds. This concept will be explored in greater detail in further chapters, but there is one theoretical tenet continually underlying the thesis of this project: when nonhuman animals perform actions, such actions may be read as originating from some quasi-cosmic realm of 'nature', and that these actions cannot be attributed from within the simple

limitations of human designs or discourses, but are instead functions of the schematics of the universe.

When nonhuman animals are anthropomorphized, the nonhuman animal actions and behaviours are compelling evidence to the claim that these actions and behaviours cannot be explained by mere human intentions, but are signs of the inner workings of reality. Jack Halberstam critiques the documentary *March of the Penguins* as one particularly egregious example of using nonhuman animals on film as a means of naturalizing human behaviours. Unlike Claire Parkinson who posits that anthropomorphism need not be accurate to scientific understandings of animals to be culturally valuable, Halberstam strongly criticizes the film's deviation from scientific observation of penguin behaviours as deceptive tools with which to naturalize specific Christian ideologies. Halberstam notes that the footage of a colony of emperor penguins making their annual trek to their breeding grounds has been edited and accompanied with a voice-over to elucidate and explain several behaviours which anthropomorphize and decontextualize the penguins' actual behaviour into a form which seems to perfectly imitate several human behaviours and social structures. The documentary shows the penguins through 'the comforting spectacle of "the couple", "the family unit", "love", "loss", heterosexual reproduction, and the emotional architecture that supposedly welds all these moving parts together. However, the focus on heterosexual reproduction is misleading and mistaken, and ultimately it blots out a far more compelling story about cooperation, collectivity, and nonheterosexual, nonreproductive behaviors' (Halberstam, 38). The representation of hetero-reproductive family units through the penguins in *March of the Penguins* was taken as proof of some transcendent behaviour beyond human constructs by several Christian groups (Halberstam, 41). In this context, the film is naturalizing the social role(s) of hetero-reproductive family units in humans by presenting such family units as social formations which are not merely human cultural constructs, but innately 'natural' parts

of life in the physical universe. Halberstam notes that this naturalization is misleading because actual emperor penguins do not make strictly heterosexual parental bonds, do not care for their offspring after the first few years (as opposed to the rest of their lives, as the film implies), do not mate for life (like an faithful and monogamous human marriage) and does not account for the sizeable occurrences of penguins who do not engage in these behaviors (those penguins who Halberstam calls 'queer' for their deviation from Western social norms for humans). There is a clear distinction for Halberstam: it is not animals in their natural habitat doing natural things, but the anthropomorphism under the guise of the 'really natural' natural behaviour of nonhuman animals which may attempt to normalize social behaviours for humans.

The 'Wild', and connections between the Wild Child/Animal

An important point of focus in this thesis is the nonhuman animal figure in children's films. In addition to the reasons already stated, I would posit a more ontological reason nonhuman animal characters work so effectively in this genre: nonhuman animals are often associated with the 'wild', an association nonhuman animals share with human children. Just as the children's film genre and the anthropomorphized animal are often intertwined, I would also posit that the Western conceptualizations of the nonhuman animal and the human child are interconnected through the concept of the 'wild'. Indeed, similar to how Paul Wells considers the anthropomorphized animal a useful and subversive vehicle for exploring issues of human identity, the children's film genre convention of the child figure can also be viewed as an effective and subversive way of exploring human identity. Both the anthropomorphized animal and the human child figure share many similarities in their conceptualization that portray them as nostalgic and primal. To lay the basis for this explanation, the concept of the wild and wilderness should be crystallized as the wilderness is a concept which overlaps with

—but is distinct from—nature. In his essay 'The Trouble with Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature', prominent environmental historian William Cronon describes the societal understanding of wilderness similar to Tim Ingold's interpretation of 'culturally perceived' nature, as a malleable social construct that is often Othered from humanity and civilization. Cronon observes that over time, the Western connotations and usage of 'wilderness' have drifted. The Biblical 'wilderness' was presented as

a place of spiritual danger and moral temptation . . . In the wilderness the boundaries between human and nonhuman, between natural and supernatural, had always seemed less certain than elsewhere. This was why the early Christian saints and mystics had often emulated Christ's desert retreat as they sought to experience for themselves the visions and spiritual testing He had endured. One might meet devils and run the risk of losing one's soul in such a place, but one might also meet God (Cronon, 10).

Cronon finds that the liminal and spiritual aspect of this wilderness has carried over into contemporary characterizations of the wilderness as a landscape that is romanticised and sublime (although not explicitly theistic). However, unlike Ingold's interpretation of nature, Cronon directly considers the contemporary construct of the wilderness as incredibly emotionally evocative, romantically sublime, and inhumanly beautiful (Cronon, 12). Cronon also considers the several frontier myths of American colonization as bestowing two qualities on the wilderness: the first being individualism, the idea that those who lives in the frontier wilderness are largely leading solitary lives (Cronon, 13). The other quality that the frontier myth engenders the wilderness with is masculinity, suggesting that the ways of living and

surviving in the wilderness necessitate and/or endow some form of masculinity upon those settlers (the inverse implication being that living in 'civilization' emasculates and weakens an individual) (Cronon, 14).

Cronon also indirectly applies Tim Ingold's dichotomizing between nature and civilization to the wilderness and human civilization. Cronon notes that to live in the wilderness is inherently to live at a distance from civilization, and that therefore the wilderness is necessarily somewhat inhuman in its essence. One aspect of the wilderness that Cronon emphasizes in his essay is the fact that the wilderness is seen as a place which is both constructed by humans, yet also supposedly needs humans to preserve and distance themselves from the wilderness. As Cronon writes that

this, then, is the central paradox: wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural. If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall. The place where we are is the place where nature is not . . . to do so is merely to take to a logical extreme the paradox that was built into wilderness from the beginning: if nature dies because we enter it, then the only way to save nature is to kill ourselves (Cronon, 17-19).

Cronon's Othering of the wilderness from human society overlaps with the notion of a 'wild animal'—an animal is not seen as wild because of its temperament or personality, but mainly by its lack of domestication and/or taming via humans (Shadbolt, *Wild Welfare*). Cronon's paradox of the wilderness as this Othered space aligns with Jack Halberstam's notion of childhood as essentially a queer and non-normative experience, forced to negotiate and

manoeuvre through the various statutes and pitfalls of human identity.

The perception that nonhuman animals and human children have some temperamental affinity and propensity as phenomenological equals to each other in ways could entail the supposition that using anthropomorphized animals in children's films is an effective way of engaging a child audience. Through their shared wildness, these anthropomorphized characters may act as metonymic representations of human children. Like nonhuman animals, children can be seen as 'wild' through their lack of taming through human adults; the wild (or feral) child is both a reality as well as a notable figure in fiction. When the wild child figure in media is analyzed, one common trope conspicuously reveals itself: the human child is often 'raised' by nonhuman animals. There have been documented cases (as well as a great plethora of urban myths) of humans claiming, or have been carers who claim, that as children these individuals were 'raised' by wild animals (almost always, by one particular nonhuman species). As well as these documented cases, there are innumerable fictional 'wild child' figures who have been raised by nonhuman animals (e.g. Mowgli in Rudyard Kipling's book *The Jungle Book*, Edgar Rice Burroughs' character Tarzan, Jay Ward and George Scott's eponymous *George of the Jungle*, Donnie from *The Wild Thornberrys*, *AC Comics'* Cat-Man—just as Cronon notes that wilderness is a masculine quality, most of these wild children are male). These wild children (both fictional and nonfictional) say as much about the biopolitical qualities of the human condition (if not more) as they say about the understandings and conceptualizations of nonhuman animals. The use of anthropomorphized animals in children's films acts as a means of displacing the initial recognition of that character's human status while still exuding the 'wild' nature that a human child is imbued with. This displacement is a useful means of masking the representation of human identities which anthropomorphized animals portray while adhering to Wojick-Andrews' generic convention of containing the child figure.

Interspecies Kindness

By anthropomorphizing animals, children's films present nonhuman animals as leading lives modeled on human lives, suggesting that nonhuman animals share some phenomenological experience as humans. In her article 'Heidegger and the Dog Whisperer: Imagining Interspecies Kindness', Ashley E. Pryor contemplates post-human modes of envisioning the ways in which humans and animals can empathize with each other by positing 'kindness' as a philosophical bridge between human and nonhuman animals. Pryor's kindness is not 'a subjective and volitional attitude of cheerful solicitude or tenderhearted sympathy' but rather 'an acceptance that we are all of one kind, one nature'. Pryor discusses J.M. Coetzee's novel/essay *The Lives of Animals* where one of Coetzee's characters refutes a conceptual model of the 'twin abstraction' categories of the 'human' and 'the animal' (Pryor, 290). Although the biological common ground between human and nonhuman animals is irrefutable, the cognitive state of humans is often purported as unique and elevated from non-human animals (what Coetzee's character lists as comprising of 'reason, self-consciousness, language, political activity, or more subtly, a capacity for self-creation' (Pryor, qtd. in 290-291). Because of this purported elevation from nonhuman animals, humans have often thought that the species of humans must have some greater hegemonic authority over nonanimal species. In this sense, humans may be thought of as the 'animal plus'. Pryor and Coetzee's character both criticize this conceptual model which shares similar flaws to Martin Heidegger's *a priori* conceptualization of the human-nonhuman framework. Pryor observes that Heidegger's theoretical phenomenology of human and nonhuman animal creates a dichotomy on the assumption that humans possess *Dasein* (often translated as existence, being, or presence) which nonhuman animals lack and therefore merely 'exist' without presence (Pryor, 295). Pryor refutes Heidegger's first principle of *Dasein* (which she herself

notes Heidegger found problematic) by noting its notably anthropocentric line of thinking and that by being open to imagining the experiences of nonhuman animals a human could have insight into a kindness for nonhuman animals that extends beyond the human form of *Dasein* (Pryor, 296).

Pryor writes that kindness between the 'twin abstraction' categories of the 'human' and 'the animal' lies not in expanding either category in order to overlap with the other, but to establish that the sense of commonality 'is not a logical or linguistic operation whereby identity is wrestled from difference or derived from the idea of living in a shared world, but is rooted in many possible modes of communication, including, but not limited to, a receptivity to touch, scents, and the ability to "read" changing expressions of energy, mood, and voice' (Pryor, 292). In children's films, the kindness between anthropomorphized animals and human characters is often symbolic of transcendence. However, rather than transcending the twin abstraction categories between human and nonhuman, it is instead often seen as the act of overcoming symbolic social differences codified in the human-nonhuman relationship.

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Although the authors, academic theories, and conceptual models discussed in this chapter do not comprise the total aggregate of research for this project, I would posit that they are strong intellectual footholds for insight into this thesis's intended research. Authors such as Noel Brown, Tim Ingold, Jack Halberstam, Paul Wells, and Joseph Zornado discuss topics such as the children's film, anthropomorphized animals, and pedagogy in children's media, as both important and worthy of serious academic study, as well as expressing the opinion that such topics should not and cannot be ignored.

Chapter 3: Lost in Translation

In Lost in Translation films, nonhuman animals have the lowest phenomenological proximity to humans. Unlike other categories which may distort their physiognomy, the nonhuman animals in Lost in Translation films are often anthropomorphized in a way that closely matches their species' physical appearances and avoid distorting nonhuman bodies to match human physiognomy. While they can often converse with one other, the anthropomorphized animals are almost never verbally understood by humans (although the nonhuman animals may occasionally understand snippets of human speech). Lost in Translation films use an inherently dichotomous difference in human-nonhuman relationships which exemplifies binary difference. As previously mentioned in the literature review, in his essay "'You Can See What Species I Belong to, but Don't Treat Me Lightly': Rhetorics of Representation in Animated Animal Narratives' Paul Wells considers anthropomorphized animals in motion pictures to often oscillate between modes of 'animality' and 'humanity'. Wells terms the oscillation between these modes the 'bestial ambivalence' of anthropomorphized animals (Wells, *Species*, 106). The oscillation of bestial ambivalence seen in Lost in Translation films is often instantaneous and abrupt. One obvious example of this rapid altering of modes in Lost in Translation films is *The Secret Life of Pets* which revolves around a group of nonhuman pets living in New York City. These pets are cared for by human owners who act as docile and largely mindless creatures in the presence of humans. When under the supervision of humans, these animals generally behave as if they were not anthropomorphized and this is when they most resemble the normal behaviours of their species (cats playing with cat toys, dogs barking affectionately to their owners, et cetera).

However, as soon as humans look away from their pets, the pets behave as if they are 'human' (conversing in English with each other, having rational conversations to accomplish goals, articulating their emotional troubles). Similar to how the toys in *Toy Story* (Lasseter, 1999) play dead when humans look upon them, the chickens in *Chicken Run*, the rats in *Flushed Away* (Bowers, Fell, 2006), and the pets in *The Secret Life of Pets* all choose to act as nonhuman animals would act in the real world when humans look at them for no clearly-explained reason.

One reason that this rapid oscillation of bestial ambivalence is so prevalent in Lost in Translation films is that the species binary found in these human-nonhuman relationships is built so extremely strictly on binary difference. The explicit and rapid alternating of anthropomorphized animals' behaviours shifting between humanity and animality in Lost in Translation films constantly visually epitomizes that difference. Another noteworthy facet around this rapid oscillation of bestial ambivalence in Lost in Translation films is the use of 'humanity' as a zero-sum difference. This kind of bestial ambivalence is predicated upon the idea that humans may behave with 'humanity' *or* nonhuman animals may behave with 'humanity' but humans and nonhuman animals cannot simultaneously occupy this mode together. By contrast, non-Lost in Translation films which feature both humans and anthropomorphized animals (e.g. *Ratatouille*, *Bee Movie*, *Brother Bear*, *The Wild Thornberrys Movie*, *Follow That Bird*, *Stuart Little*) often feature human and nonhuman characters simultaneously acting as 'human' in the presence of each other. This mutual exclusivity of humanity between human and nonhuman characters in Lost in Translation films is indicative of inherently dichotomous difference within the human-nonhuman relationship.

I would posit two primary reasons as to why Lost in Translation films emphasize ideas about gender identities. The first reason is that the humans and nonhuman animals in Lost in

Translation films often demonstrate a total inability to communicate with the other, forming an intractable binary between humans and nonhuman animals. Of all the various elements of human identity (age, race, ethnicity, social class, nationality, religion, sexuality), gender is the aspect of identity most often conceptualized as binary. The binary of the human-nonhuman dynamic in Lost in Translation films resonates the gender binary as they are both dualistic and dyadic relationships. Locked down by the insurmountable and impenetrable phenomenological chasm between human and nonhuman animals, Lost in Translation films often use this divide to resonate insurmountable and impenetrable social differences found in gender.

The second reason as to why Lost in Translation films emphasize ideas around gender is the fact that the low phenomenological proximity to humans gives a cruder form of symbolic human identity to the anthropomorphized characters. These nonhuman characters are anthropomorphized in ways which have a low resemblance to humans comparative to other categories of anthropomorphism. Gender is the most immediate difference between human individuals, and empirical studies which have surveyed how people identify difference between human individuals find that gender is mentioned more frequently than any other attribute (Stangor, Ruble, 1). Due to this immediacy of gender as a necessary element in establishing an identity, anthropomorphized animals are inherently gendered with an immediacy not present in other facets of human identity (age, race, class, or sexuality). Gender is the foremost human element to be projected onto a nonhuman animal, especially for children. It is also the most clearly consistent element of anthropomorphizing an animal. By contrast, aspects of identity (such as age or race) are often rather ambiguous and malleable. *Follow That Bird* protagonist Big Bird is an anthropomorphized canary who is always gendered as masculine and whose canonical age is six years old; however, Big Bird's actual social and emotional maturity, as well as his capacity to take care of himself and

others, fluctuates depending on whatever the situation or plot demands him to be, and he inconsistently acts as a typical six year old human would. Likewise, Alex the Lion from *Madagascar* is unambiguously masculine, as well as nominally white under a vaguely symbolic Eurocentric model, but this is muddied by a canonically African heritage which clashes with two other *Madagascar* characters, Marty the Zebra and Gloria the Rhino, who clearly perform as African-American humans. Gender becomes the central facet of identity for anthropomorphized animals which is both immediate and reliable in a way that other identity facets are not.

Before delving into how Lost in Translation films emphasize social differences of gender, it is first crucial to outlay certain aspects of the ways in which children perceive gender to recognize how children's films conceptualize their own depictions of gender. In Charles Stangor and Diane N. Ruble's essay 'Development of Gender Role Knowledge and Gender Constancy', the authors review several developmental approaches to the ways in which children develop their understanding of gender. Stangor and Ruble first look at traditional approaches of developing understandings of gender in children, noting that these traditional approaches contain notable flaws within their theoretical frameworks. The authors reject Freudian theories of children internalizing gender roles through identification with their same-sex parent, noting that empirical research has generally not supported this theory (Stangor, Ruble, 3). Another model of gender learning in children is social learning, where children are rewarded or punished based on how their actions correspond to their expected gender roles (for example, a girl may be praised for wearing a dress while a boy may be scolded for wearing a dress) gradually reinforcing expectations in children of their own behaviours as dictated by their gender identities. While the social learning approach may be an improvement over the Freudian psychoanalytic theory, Stangor and Ruble note that social learning does not account for the fact that children can be inconsistent in their gendered

responses throughout their development (for example, a boy might acquiesce kissing a girl at four years old, then refuse kissing a girl at seven years old, then acquiesce again at eleven years old).

The third approach that Stangor and Ruble describe (and the one they emphasize most heavily) is the cognitive-developmental approach developed by Lawrence Kohlberg. This approach proposes 'that [the child's] learning of concepts (such as gender roles and gender stereotypes) is associated with specific cognitive changes in thinking patterns of abilities, and that the child takes an active role in acquisition of gender-related knowledge' (Stangor, Ruble, 4). This approach is premised on the notion that at an early age, children acquire rudimentary abilities in categorization and gender self-labeling (that they, or people they see, 'are' or 'aren't' a boy or girl) and that they later develop the concept of 'gender constancy' (the sense that these categories are fixed and that if they are a boy, they will always be a boy). Children then have a motivation to 'master' behaviours considered typical of their sex (a male toddler categorizes himself as a boy and therefore attempts to become masculine by imitating behaviours in that category). In order to organize their understanding of gender, children develop what is termed gender schema; 'first, the schema contains knowledge about gender differences such as which behaviours, clothes, and activities are for girls and which are for boys . . . second, the schema concerns the extent to which the knowledge is used to process information or to guide behaviour—the schema's importance, salience, or attitudinal rigidity' (Stangor, Ruble, 8). Kohlberg proposes that 'as children attain constancy, they begin to believe that typical gender role behaviour is morally correct and that nontraditional behaviours are wrong' (Stangor, Ruble, 9). Stangor and Ruble later note that multiple interview studies with children have validated Kohlberg's proposal, 'that children between ages five and seven judged gender-atypical acts (such as boys wearing barrettes; girls with crew cuts) to be at least as wrong as moral transgressions, such as engaging in a harmful act'

(Stangor, Ruble, 12). This equating of gender-atypical acts with moral transgressions is something that earlier studies on gender development in children took as a first principle of intellectual foundation. This earlier research in child development presumed that children were supposed to display their 'proper' gender identity (i.e. girls should be feminine, boys should be masculine) and that deviations from these identities was potentially the cause for various personality disorders (Signorella, 25). This notion of the gender-atypical individual being indicative of an immoral personality is a recurring trend in Lost in Translation films and will be explored further in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part I will consider the ways in which the pet dog figure in Lost in Translation films represents and generally reaffirms a traditional form of masculinity. The dog acts as a self-definitional symbol of a human's masculinity, validating a human's masculine gender identity. While being a pet, a dog acts as an extension of a human's gender identity but is not traditionally viewed as having a gender identity of its own. Anthropomorphizing the pet dog acts as a means of exploring this contradiction—a dog is an embodiment of masculinity and yet does not necessarily possess its own masculine gender identity. This exploration in children's films such as *The Secret Life of Pets* and *Isle of Dogs* (2018) often works to show how a dog actualizes the masculine gender identity which their species extols. Part II will examine the ways in which carnist theory can be applied to the literal visualization of misogynistic violence. In the film *Chicken Run*, the imagery of violence against animals which humans eat is portrayed as interconnected and axiomatic with the symbolic imagery of sexual violence against women. The film's persecution of chickens as women draws upon several ideological connections around women, meat-eating, and gender dynamics to highlight the violence against women that is perpetrated by the patriarchal and the gender-atypical.

Part I: The Rhetorical Particularities of Pets, the Human Look, and Masculinity in Dog Fighting

As previously mentioned in this project's literature review, John Knight views different species of nonhuman animal as totemic of specific human qualities (dolphins as symbols of love and peace, monkeys as symbols of playfulness, et cetera). In the anthology *Animals in Person: Cultural Perspectives on Human-Animal Intimacies*, Knight labels the association of human qualities with nonhuman animals' 'rhetorical particularities' and argues that associating qualities around animals (rats and pigs as dirty, elephants as meditative, bees as hardworking) does not originate within the animals' behaviours or personalities but is instead a product of cultural understandings of these animals (Knight, 3). While rhetorical particularities are projections of human understandings of nonhuman animals, depictions of anthropomorphized animals can strengthen culturally understood connections between certain species and their rhetorical particularities. This strengthening also veils the aspect of cultural understanding of rhetorical particularities, masking such qualities as biological determinism rather than human conceptualization. For example, *The Lion King* and *Madagascar* both feature anthropomorphized lions who are referred to as kings (Mufasa and Simba, and Alex as 'the King of New York City' respectively). Neither of these films give any explicit or implicit reason as to why a lion should be royalty—by the mere fact of their species, lions are 'royal' animals. The lions depicted in the aforementioned children's films also share a number of personality traits such as courage, nobility, strength, and brotherliness. By anthropomorphizing lions as kings through the guise of biological determinism, these films posit that lions have their own concept of monarchy, independent of human institutions of monarchy, and that these lions constitute monarchs through the simple fact that they *are* lions. These films also ignore the long historic and modern tradition of culturally depicting lions as

symbols of royalty, courage, nobility, strength, and brotherliness. Such cultural depictions (including Ancient Mesopotamian sculptures of lions, Biblical references of lions in Genesis 49:9 as 'the king of beasts', the sobriquet for Richard the Lionheart, and the lion on Queen Victoria's coat of arms) demonstrate that the depictions of the lion-as-king rhetorical particularity in *The Lion King* and *Madagascar* do not exist as isolated or original interpretations of lions, but follow a historical continuity of cultural understandings of lions.

Lost in Translation films often use the rhetorical particularities of anthropomorphized animals to emphasize different levels of traditional masculinity and femininity. Dogs are predominantly male, cats trend towards females, while rabbits, lizards, insects, and birds often represent people of colour (non-traditional masculinity) or (less commonly) the non-gendered beasts. The Lost in Translation films *The Secret Life of Pets*, *Isle of Dogs*, *Bolt* (Howard, Williams, 2008) and *Homeward Bound: An Incredible Journey* (Dunham, 1993) all have this loose convention of dogs-male/cats-female, with any exceptions being particularly conspicuous (for example, a female dog in *The Secret Life of Pets* is a specific 'toy dog' breed that has more effeminate connotations than the larger dog breeds, and the female dogs in *Isle of Dogs* are solely the romantic interests of for the male dog protagonists). By associating certain species with certain gender roles, children's films use the qualities of those species to inform stereotypical representations of gender. One common case of this gender-species rhetorical particularity is that dogs (men) are extroverted while cats (women) are demure. Conversely, representations of species can subvert gender expectations. One example of this subversion of a species' rhetorical particularity is the antagonist of *Cats & Dogs* (Guterman, 2001), Mr. Tinkles. Mr Tinkles is a male character who is a villainous Persian ragdoll cat with several queer undertones. The associations of the cat conflicts with traditional stereotypes of masculinity. These subversions still compound gender categories by presenting them as wicked and abnormal, reinforcing what counts as 'normal' by showing the inverse of the ideal

traditional displays of gender⁶.

These gender-species rhetorical particularities from these anthropomorphized characters give the appearance of biological determinism of gendered behaviours. However, just as biological determinism itself is problematic, gender-species correlations are similarly flawed and socially constructed. Anthropomorphized animals are (by the addition of human morphology to their anatomy) anatomically inaccurate but this also extends to an absence of sex-related genitalia and organs on the nonhuman body. Just as gender and sex are mutually constructive facets of identity, species can be seen as a substitute for anatomically (in)accurate sex differences. As well as naturalizing gender stereotypes by species, the wider discourse of nonhuman animals being more heavily interlinked with the Western construct of 'nature' than humans further enforces these gender roles as being drawn from some primal, quasi-deistic environment that is Othered from human culture. This naturalization of gender roles goes beyond ideas of biological determinism by suggesting that gender roles originate from something that transcends human society altogether. While these gender-species rhetorical particularities are present in other forms of anthropomorphism, they are more noteworthy in *Lost in Translation* films as gender is the clearest aspect of an anthropomorphized animal's identity.

Children's films use the rhetorical particularities of anthropomorphized characters to avoid explicitly presenting those characters with expectations of gender roles and instead allegorically explore their relationship with their gender roles. In children's films, anthropomorphized animals rarely (if ever) have the explicit goal of achieving a certain gender role to become a man, or to become a woman—these goals are the prerogative of

⁶ One notable example of averting gender-as-biology in children's films is *Barnyard* (Oedeker, 2006). The film revolves around a group of barnyard animals, specifically a group of bovine protagonists. These bovines have udders (a trait of females) but demonstrate a conservative representation of masculinity with deep voices, carousing, riding motorcycles, and taking leadership positions. This incongruity between female physiology and masculine traits is often noted in critics' reviews of the film as noteworthy and extremely discordant, and may be one of the contributing factors to the dismal critical and commercial failure of the film.

humans. For example, the human child protagonist Alan Parrish in *Jumanji* learns to 'be a man' while pubescent human girl Vada in *My Girl* (Zieff, 1991) must deal with the tribulations of womanhood such as menstruation and a budding desire for heteronormative romance. Furthermore, the titular protagonist of *Mulan* (Cook, Bancroft, 1998) must learn to acquire, and eventually embody, idealized expectations of masculinity to achieve narrative closure (although male characters rarely voluntarily aspire to feminine roles in children's films). Anthropomorphized animals superficially appear to be fully-realized gendered beings when they are introduced in children's films. However, their personal arcs still reflect their films' expectations of idealized gender roles. As nonhuman animals' fulfillment of gender roles and interpellation of gender to the films' audience is so much less clearly delineated than their human counterparts, understanding how nonhuman animals in children's films use their gender identities is equally as important to study as human characters. Nonhuman animals explicitly and earnestly setting out to embody an ideal gender would be a threat to the anthropocentric function of the gender-binary ideology. In *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Anderson, 2009), the titular protagonist's son Ash (an adolescent, anthropomorphized fox) goes through character development to be more assertive, emotionally mature, confident, and to stand up to physical violence from bullies—all hallmarks of a coming-of-age story about a boy learning to become a man—but the film is careful to never use the labels 'boy' or 'man'. While Ash's gender is superficially fully-realized at the beginning of the story, to define his intention to 'become a man' would not only indicate his desire to attain stereotypical masculinity but also transcend his nonhuman status and become more (if not, completely) human. As this would threaten the human-nonhuman binary, *Lost in Translation* films avoid the explicit goals of characters 'achieving' a gender role but instead create narratives wherein nonhuman animals fulfill the rhetorical particularities of their species that are indicative of their gender. For example, Max, the Jack Russell Terrier protagonist of *The Secret Life of Pets* does not aim to

'become a man' but instead to 'become the alpha dog' wherein being the 'alpha dog' requires him to become dominant and assertive (two traditionally masculine qualities).

I would posit that the anthropomorphized pet is an ideal means of using rhetorical particularities to allegorically explore expectations of gender roles. In John Berger's article 'Why Look at Animals?' he outlines the symbolic repercussions of the physical and cultural marginalization of nonhuman animals in human society after the Industrial Revolution. One main repercussion of this is that the current desire to look at animals is no longer to see them as separate nonhuman entities but simply as extensions of human identity. In regard to pets, Berger writes that

the pet is either sterilised or sexually isolated, extremely limited in its exercise, deprived of almost all other animal contact, and fed with artificial foods. This is the material process which lies behind the truism that pets come to resemble their masters or mistresses. They are creatures of their owner's way of life (Berger, 12).

Berger's assertion is that pets in modern society are reduced to extensions of their human owners, merely echoing their owners' identity. For example, a pet bulldog acts as a symbol for their owner's masculinity due to rhetorical particularities of the bulldog's species, but the bulldog itself is not seen as having their own gender identity which is independent from their owner. While other animals may act as totems of human qualities, a pet is specific to an individual human's identity and is a closer embodiment of their owner's qualities (in psychology termed as a 'self-definitional symbol' (Braun, Wickland, 173)). Dogs and cats are two of the most popular species for pets (Thompson, *Live Science*) and the gendered rhetorical particularities of cats and dogs can be read as parallel to conceptualizations of

gender as binary. Linguistically, cats are by default seen as female (a male cat distinguished as a 'tomcat') and dogs are by default seen as male (a female dog distinguished as a 'bitch') (Mitchell, Ellis, 2). The cat/dog binary is fairly common in most children's media, with cat-dog pairings featured in television series such as *CatDog*, *Garfield*, and *The Ren & Stimpy Show* feature the cat and dog as polarized in personalities and often antagonistic towards each other. The rhetorical particularity of dogs as masculine self-definitional symbols has a long history, wherein dogs are used as symbolic displays of masculinity. The use of dogs in masculine rituals such as hunting pursuits, blood sports, and dog fighting can be traced back to fifth century BCE (Kalof, Taylor, 321). Using dogs as hunting partners and as fodder for bull-baiting was both prominent and legal until the 15th century, although the popular use of dogs for dog-fighting has continued to the modern day and is primarily associated with urban and/or underground subcultures on an international scope (Kalof, Taylor, 323-324). This iconography of dogs as tools for violence as a means of affirming masculinity will be expanded upon further in *Isle of Dogs*, but one salient connection to be emphasized is the interrelation between masculinity, dogs, and physical violence within traditional conceptualizations of masculinity.

There is a definite trend for children's films featuring anthropomorphized pets to feature a dog as the protagonist (*Bolt*, *Lady and the Tramp* (Geronimi, Jackson, Luske, 1955), *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (Geronimi, Luske, Reitherman, 1961), *Balto* (Wells, 1995), *All Dogs Go to Heaven* (Bluth, Goldman, Kuenster, 1989), *The Fox and the Hound* (Berman, Rich, Stevens, 1981), and *Clifford's Really Big Movie* (Ramirez, 2004)). While this may simply be indicative of a broader trend for Hollywood protagonists to be male, this trend does underscore the emphasis on masculine protagonists in children's films. As previously argued, anthropomorphizing a pet dog into a main character can be a useful narrative means of using the rhetorical particularities of dogs to allegorically explore expectations of

masculine gender roles. On the surface, the anthropomorphized pet dog may be read as a self-contradiction: the dog is often an extension of a separate entity's masculine identity (their human owner), and yet because the pet's identity is largely contingent upon the connection to their human, this pet has no gender identity of their own to be anthropomorphized which is independent from the human owner. These anthropomorphized pet dogs have the expectation of masculinity due to the rhetorical particularities of their species while being a pet would indicate a lack of gender identity autonomous of their owner—this self-contradiction is the reason why anthropomorphized pet dogs are ideal for exploring masculine gender roles. These anthropomorphized characters often experience journeys of self-discovery of who they are, as characters with their own unique identity which is not bound by a human owner, and must often must act in ways wherein they learn to fulfill those expectations of masculinity in ways which come to determine the ways in which masculinity is in itself defined within these films.

The Secret Life of Pets

The Secret Life of Pets (Renaud, 2016) opens by introducing its protagonist, a Jack Russell Terrier named Max who lives with his human owner Katie. In the opening sequence, Katie is depicted adopting Max from a 'free puppies' box on the street (presumably, Max is a stray) and integrating him into her New York apartment and daily life. Through Max's voice-over, this owner-pet relationship is characterized with strongly heteronormative undertones:

'I'm Max and I am the luckiest dog in the world. Because of her. That's Katie. Katie and I, well, we have the perfect relationship. We met a few years ago and, boy, let me tell you, we got along right away. You know, it was one of those relationships where you just

know. And get this, she was looking for a roommate, and so was I, so I just moved in that same day. It was perfect. We've been together ever since. Katie would do anything for me. And I'm her loyal protector. Our love is . . . stronger than words. Or shoes. It's just me and Katie. Katie and me. Us against the world. I wouldn't go so far as to call us soulmates—even though any sane person who saw us would'.

The way that Max's voice-over frames his cohabitation with Katie clearly positions him as the masculine half of an intimate heteronormative relationship. Max's use of the term 'soulmate' also has connotations around a romantic ideal of their partner as 'the one and only' in a monogamous romantic relationship (Hefner, Wilson, 153). This positioning of Max as the masculine half of a relationship is consistent with his being a dog as dogs often hold rhetorical particularities of masculinity. However, there are several images during Max's introductory voice-over which playfully subvert Max's supposed masculinity by juxtaposing Max's envisioning of his gender identity as traditional masculine. Max's description of him and Katie as 'roommates' implies his understanding that they are equals when it is fairly obvious that Katie will care and provide for Max without any real reciprocation. When Max describes himself as Katie's 'loyal protector', Max is shown attempting to scare a smaller pigeon away from Katie only to be frightened by the pigeon and compelled to hide behind Katie, demonstrating a lack of traditionally masculine qualities such as bravery and independent strength. By showing Max as contradicting traditionally masculine traits in the beginning, the film establishes that Max has the potential to grow more traditionally masculine. This potential becomes part of Max's narrative arc, to eventually fulfill the masculinity which his species' rhetorical particularities signals.

Max's status quo is violently disrupted in the film's inciting incident when Katie brings home Duke, a brown, shaggy Newfoundland dog that she has adopted from the pound (who is twice the size of Max). When Max first learns of Duke moving into their apartment, he reacts in aghast horror at the notion. Part of Max's reaction stems from Duke's presence threatening Max's masculinity. Although Katie describes Duke to Max as Max's 'new brother', from Max's perspective Duke is an intruder into Katie and Max's implied monogamous relationship. By having another relationship with a dog, Katie is contravening Max's understanding of being his 'soulmate' and is emotionally cuckolded. Katie's unfaithfulness to Max can be taken as an obvious gouge to Max's traditional masculinity by implying that Katie adopted another dog due to some deficit in Max's role in their relationship. There are also phallic connotations surrounding Max's masculine inferiority to Duke in their body types—Duke is noticeably larger, heavier, and hairier than Max (size, heft, and hairiness all being stereotypical measures of a masculine body). This symbolic cuckoldry continues when Duke attempts to sleep in Max's dog bed (rather than the old blanket Katie has provided for Duke) and eventually forces Max out of his own bed. Although Katie herself does not sleep on Max's dog bed, this idea of the bed still acts as a metaphorical site of romantic union and position of occupation within a romantic relationship. When Duke aggressively growls at Max to solidify his commitment to staying in the apartment, Max rolls onto his back and exposes his belly to Duke, a traditional sign of submission in dogs towards the 'alpha dog' (Maher, *Vet Street*).

After consulting with Chloe (a cat who lives in the upstairs apartment), Max vows to become the 'alpha dog' and manages to blackmail Duke into submission by threatening to wreck the apartment, relying on Katie's foundation of trust with Max as a good dog so that Katie would presume Duke, not Max, was the wrecker. This blackmail demonstrates Max's intention to reveal to Katie as to how Max sees Duke: a home-wrecker. While Max is forced

to literalize the term in order to communicate this to Katie, the term 'home-wrecker' is also common slang for a person who incites infidelity in a monogamous relationship (especially a marriage). The term 'home-wrecker' has very negative connotations of intrusive and subversive interference within a relationship, dishonourable conduct, and destabilizing of a previously acceptable emotional alliance. One of the stereotypes of the home-wrecker is that this individual is often a woman (Porter, 293). Max's blackmail that Katie would see Duke as a home-wrecker also works as a means of demeaning Duke's masculinity by threatening him with the feminine role of the home-wrecker. Max's plan initially succeeds as Duke is forced to submissively obey Max's commands under this looming threat of being seen as a home-wrecker and being returned to the pound.

During a visit to the dog park by an apathetic and unobservant dog-sitter, Duke drags Max into an alley trying to get the dog sitter to lose Max, thereby eliminating him from Duke's life. While in the alley, Max and Duke are accosted by a destruction⁷ of stray cats, led by a skinny, hairless, male Sphinx cat Ozone who speaks in a Cockney British accent (a conspicuously foreign accent among the American voice actors). After the confrontation between Max and Duke and the stray cats is interrupted by a run-in with animal control, Max and Duke are caged and placed in the animal control van where Duke shudders at the thought that being returned to the pound will be 'the end of the line' for him. Before the van can return to the pound, the animal control van is hijacked by the Flushed Pets, an organization of abandoned pets led by Snowball, a small, fluffy white rabbit who speaks in a deep masculine, African-American vernacular. Snowball leads Max and Duke to his headquarters in the sewers where there are dozens of abandoned pets who have joined his cause. The Flushed Pets are presented as antagonists, hellbent on killing humans out of revenge for being rejected by their owners. Ozone and Snowball are striking examples of where children's films equate

⁷ 'Destruction' is the collective noun for a group of feral cats.

non-normative displays of gender in anthropomorphized animals with moral transgression. Contrasting with Chloe (Max's upstairs neighbour who is a female cat), Ozone is characterized as villainous and abnormal. By being a male cat, Ozone is being non-normative as a cat is generally gendered as feminine and his Cockney accent helps accentuate this outsider status. Ozone's presentation as a non-normative outsider is similar to Snowball whose adorable appearance as a fluffy rabbit might be considered infantile (and therefore non-gendered), but Snowball's juxtaposing between his adult male persona and his cute, baby-like physicality is indicative of his inherently immoral nature. By acting in ways which contradict the 'normal' gender qualities derived from the rhetorical particularities of their species, characters such as Ozone and Snowball are clearly framed as immoral, wicked individuals. In this film, non-normative gender transgressions are clearly equated with their immoral, wicked natures.

One important connection between these non-normative displays of gender and wickedness is also the way in which these characters are also portrayed as being stray animals. Many of the Flushed Pets are of non-mammalian species (alligators, tarantulas, geese, frogs, vipers, tortoises, ducks, iguanas, geckos) and/or pests (rats, mongooses). The rhetorical particularities of such animals would make them abnormal housepets in New York and so more likely to be read as undesirable and unwanted personalities. A notable number of Flushed Pets are also less-than-pristine than their domestic counterparts, having such physical imperfections as scars, torn ears, blinded eyes, muzzles, and missing teeth. Children's films have often equated ugliness as a visual signifier for wickedness and repulsive abnormality (e.g. the Witch disguised as an old hag in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* (Geronimi, Jackson, Luske, 1951), the Child-Catcher in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (Hughes, 1968), the Grand High Witch in *The Witches* (Roeg, 1990), Governor Ratcliffe in *Pocahontas* (Gabriel, Goldberg, 1995)). The Flushed Pets as vile, ugly

animals is markedly contrasted in the subsequent scene. In the film's B-story, Max's friends are trying to find Max and end up in Pops' apartment, an apartment overrun with healthy pets wearing collars, having a wonderful time partying (dogs challenging each other to 'chug' toilet water, turtles relaxing in punch bowls and gorging on fruit baskets, and large cats using kittens as projectiles in a competitive game of darts). Unlike the Flushed Pets who are physically imperfect, unwanted and hateful to humans, disgruntled, and villainous, the pets in Pops' apartment are well-groomed and physically intact, happy, healthy, and presumably have human owners whose collars they wear.

This contrast between the Flushed Pets and the pets in Pops' apartment insinuates a point around the human-nonhuman difference which speaks to how films like *The Secret Life of Pets* conceptualize difference. The Flushed Pets who reject (or are rejected from) this binary human-nonhuman difference are portrayed as having maladjusted identities. The repellent, wicked nature of nonhuman characters who want to distance themselves from humans are avoiding interactions of difference. The Flushed Pets' wickedness marking them as abnormal and contemptible speaks to their lack of deference to such an established difference as the human-nonhuman relationship. By showing the human-nonhuman relationship (built on binary difference) despised by odious nonhuman characters while enjoyed by admirable nonhuman characters, the film reinforces the logic of having this difference continue as a necessary and enjoyable part of the characters' lives. The symbolism underlying the human-nonhuman difference here models the notion that individuals need to accept social differences like gender as an unquestionable part of life if they want to be happy, well-adjusted, and physically attractive people (like the pets in Pops' apartment) and that failure to embrace differences leads to ugliness, emotional instability and becoming an outcast.

Through a series of cartoon high jinks wherein Max and Duke journey back to Katie's apartment, the two dogs learn to cooperate and respect each other. One notable sequence involves Max and Duke sneaking into a sausage factory, deliriously ecstatic (to the point of hallucinating) over finding hundreds of boxes of sausages to eat. By visiting the factory, Max and Duke bond over a shared traditional masculine activity (meat-eating being commonly understood as a masculine activity) (Adams, 16). Later, Duke saves Max from drowning in the East River (above the iconic Brooklyn Bridge) even though it does not necessarily benefit Duke, and when Duke is recaptured by animal control, Max teams up with Snowball (who is also rescuing Flushed Pets from animal control) in order to free Duke. Max and Duke going out of their way to save the other demonstrates their character development from their introduction where they were trying to eject the other from their lives. I would posit that this character development establishes the film's ultimate ideal of masculinity. Max having learned his lesson around the benefits of working together and accepting the presence of another 'alpha dog' has improved upon his initial form of masculinity. Max and Duke's happy ending (returning to Katie's apartment to freely live with each other) acts as a form of basic reassurance, the genre convention where 'good' and 'bad' characters are through karmic or cosmic balance, rewarded or punished depending on their moral piety. By learning a lesson that an ideal form of masculinity requires empathizing, cooperation, brotherliness, and being less possessive of their romantic partner, Max is 'rewarded' for his 'good' behaviour.

Isle of Dogs

Isle of Dogs (Anderson, 2018) is set in the Japanese archipelago, largely taking place on two islands (the City of Megasaki, and Trash Island). The film opens with a prologue set in a traditional Japanese temple adorned with prominent pieces of cat-themed decor where a talking dog named Jupiter narrates the history of Japan's pets while moving through a series

of images made in the style of Japanese woodblock prints. The narrator's telling of history recaps the story of Japan's dogs and one Boy Samurai. In Jupiter's story, the Boy Samurai and the dogs are righteous and heroic in contrast to the warring, cruel, and cat-loving Japanese. As Jupiter says:

'Ten centuries ago, before the Age of Obedience, free dogs roamed at liberty, marking their territory. Seeking to extend its dominion, the cat-loving Kobayashi Dynasty declared war and descended in force upon the unwary four-legged beasts. On the eve of total canine annihilation, a child warrior sympathetic to the plight of the besieged underdog dogs betrayed his species, beheaded the head of the head of the Kobayashi clan and pledged his sword with the following battle-cry haiku:

I turn my back

On man-kind!

Frost on window-pane.

He would later be known as the Boy Samurai of Legend, RIP. At the end of the bloody dog wars, the vanquished mongrels became powerless house-pets: tamed, mastered, scorned. But they survived and multiplied. The Kobayashis, however, never forgave their conquered foe'.

The narrator then skips forward to Megasaki City 'twenty years in the future'. In a press conference held at a lavish theatre, the Megasaki Mayor, the Honourable Kenji Kobayashi (a descendant of the cat-loving Kobayashi Dynasty) decrees for all dogs be exiled to Trash

Island in order to quarantine 'Snout-fever'. Kobayashi's political rival, Science Party candidate Professor Watanabe, speaks against Kobayashi's decree, claiming he is close to a cure for Snout-fever and that the dogs have earned their people's loyalty by being loyal protectors. 'Whatever happened to "man's best friend"?' Watanabe asks the crowd of Japanese citizens who react strongly and violently against Watanabe's speech.

Unlike *The Secret Life of Pets* which has anthropomorphized animals rapidly alternate between 'animality' and 'humanity' depending on the presence of humans in the scene, *Isle of Dogs* uses spoken language as the primary means of conveying the dichotomous divide between human and nonhuman animals. A title card at the beginning of the film reads:

The humans in this story speak only
in their native tongue
(occasionally translated via bi-lingual interpreter,
foreign-exchange-student, or electronic device).
All barks have been rendered into English.

The Lost in Translation aspect in *Isle of Dogs* is very literal. Almost all of the human characters speak in Japanese while the dogs are depicted speaking in English. One consequence of this is the Orientalized Othering of the Japanese characters in this English-language film and every utterance from a Japanese character acts as a reminder of this Othering. The film's realization of Japanese men draws upon negative stereotypes of Asians as Oriental, linked to a long history of Western stereotypes of Asians as embodying non-traditional, inauthentic, and emasculated forms of masculinity. These stereotypes work on racial expectations of Asian men as emasculated and nonsexual (Yang, *Quartz*). White audiences also find Asian male bodies to be less authentic in embodying the same type of

masculinity compared to a Caucasian male body (Shaw, Tan, 122). Introducing Kobayashi and the Japanese as cat-loving individuals who seek to eradicate dogs, the film characterizes these humans as gender-atypical—if they were traditionally masculine, they would prefer dogs (more commonly viewed as a 'man's' animal) and be disdainful towards cats (more commonly viewed as a woman's animal). This queer form of Japanese masculinity also equates its non-normative form of gender with immorality, presenting the Japanese as antagonistic and antithetical to symbolic forms of traditional masculinity. The Japanese people exiling their dogs (who are all voiced by white American performers and embody conceptualizations of traditional masculinity) to a large island made mostly of unwanted trash (where these dogs must fight each other for scraps of food in order to survive) heavily positions the Japanese (particularly Mayor Kobayashi who ordered the exile) as antagonistic to traditional masculinity.

The protagonist dog pack are introduced on Trash Island (Chief, Duke, King, Boss, and Rex), all of whom speak with white American voices. These dogs act as the film's main representation of traditional masculinity. In an early scene establishing their masculinity, the protagonist dog pack fight another pack of dogs on Trash Island for a sack of trash containing scraps of food (shown largely as a cloud of dust but there are select details shown such as biting and scratching). At the end of the fight, the dogs have very visible injuries (torn ears, deep scars, eyes gouged). This iconography of dog fighting is repeated several times during the film and acts as a means of idealizing traditional masculinity. As previously noted, dogs have been highly symbolic of practises of masculinity such as hunting or dog fighting since the 5th century BCE. In Linda Kalof and Carl Taylor's article 'The Discourse of Dog Fighting', the authors note that animal fighting has been routinely normalized throughout history, even in many contemporary Western subcultures, and that 'sex, masculinity and the display of animal aggression are the basic ingredients of all blood sport rituals' (Kalof, Taylor,

320). While bear and bull baiting were more common in the Middle Ages in England's history, dogs were often used to taunt these animals as a means of energizing the combatants. Historians theorize that the English identified with the dog's courage and valour, 'creating opportunities for blood sport and baiting events to evolve into spectacular displays of masculine bravado' (Kalof, Taylor, 322). In contemporary America, dog fighting is still prolific in hip-hop, rap, and street cultural scenes; 'For those who own fighting dogs, the animals are used as extensions of social status, as symbols of masculine power, as tools to intimidate others, and as weapons for the protection of property' (Kalof, Taylor, 328). While the dog fighting imagery in *Isle of Dogs* is cartoonized in order to fit the genre, the role of dog fighting still reinforces ideals of traditional masculinity as ostentatious, aggressive, and bloody.

In the film's inciting incident set six months after Megasaki's exile of dogs, Mayor Kobayashi's distant thirteen-year-old nephew and adopted ward Atari Kobayashi, flies to Trash Island in order to find his beloved bodyguard dog Spots. The protagonist dog pack vote to help Atari find Spots by journeying across the island to consult with two wise dogs, Jupiter (the prologue's narrator) and Oracle. As Atari is Mayor Kobayashi's ward, the villainous Mayor sends several squads of military personnel and robot dogs to capture and return Atari to Megasaki City. These robot dogs act as further signifiers of Mayor Kobayashi and the Japanese people as embodying a non-normative form of masculinity. The robot dogs act as mechanical doppelgängers for the protagonist dogs, the robot dogs having replaced the dogs on the mainland and appear somewhat similar in size and shape (although the robot dogs are clearly made of metal), symbolizing the death of dogs as both living beings and companion animals for humans. The robot dogs are artificial and unnatural, and their unnatural nature conveys a disfigured form of masculinity. The conflict between the protagonist dogs and the robot dogs draws upon the common dichotomous conceptions of the natural as positive and

the artificial as immoral. The protagonist dogs inherently possess the morally correct form of masculinity which is 'natural' for them, implying masculinity as innate whereas the robot dogs are merely poor imitations attempting to replicate such innate masculinity. There are two dog fights in the film where the protagonist dogs are forced to fight the robot dogs in order to protect Atari and in both cases, the protagonist dogs win these fights. The protagonist dogs defeating the robot dogs in a dog fight is noteworthy as dog fights are an arena of masculinity and by defeating these robot dogs, the protagonist dogs assert the righteousness of traditional forms of masculinity over such artificial non-normative imitations.

The dogs in *Isle of Dogs* and *The Secret Life of Pets* share two important aspects to their characterization. The first is that the dogs on Trash Island also have a dependence on their owners for stability. The dogs often speak wistfully about the comfortable lives they had in Megasaki City and are happy to help Atari and obey his commands (i.e. 'sit', 'fetch') as a way of practising the social order they once knew. Chief, the one dog in the pack who was a stray dog, is the odd one out who believes that having a human owner spoils a dog's masculinity. 'I've seen cats with more balls than you dogs' Chief says after the dogs reminisce about their owners. 'We're a pack of scary, indestructible Alpha Dogs. You're talking like a bunch of house-broken . . . pets'. Chief eventually becomes the dog to spend the most time with Atari who feeds him dog treats and gives him his first bath. Chief eventually learns to appreciate his relationship with Atari and after discovering that Spots was his littermate and now a father, agrees to become Atari's new bodyguard dog (in effect, having an owner). In the film's coda, Chief is shown acting as Atari's security detail, telling another dog 'my friends think I like to fight, but it's just not true. Sometimes I lose my temper and blow off a little steam, but I've never enjoyed it. I'm not a violent dog. I don't know why I bite'. Chief's ability to show vulnerability and the revelation that his violence is used as a means of defending his friends conveys nuance to his traditional masculinity as a dog who is now nurturing and

introspective. Like *The Secret Life of Pets*, the human-nonhuman relationship that is founded upon this binary species difference is a key mechanism in the betterment of the character's masculinity.

The other important comparison between the dogs in *Isle of Dogs* and *The Secret Life of Pets* is the use of meat-eating as an activity of bonding between masculine individuals. During the trek across Trash Island to see Jupiter and Oracle, the dogs swap stories of their favourite foods. Each of the dogs' favourite dishes include animal matter (generally meat or milk): center-cut Kobe rib-eye seared on the bone with salt and pepper, hot-sausage yakitori-style, green-tea ice cream, Puppy Snaps (a processed dog treat) and homemade hibachi chili. As referenced in *The Secret Life of Pets* (to be explored further in Part II), the act of meat consumption is considered to be a masculine phenomenon in almost all cultures. By swapping stories of eating meat, the dogs are reaffirming each other's masculine gender identities while also tying their masculinity to the relationships they had with their human owners. This is emphasized with Chief, who uses the moment of bonding between traditionally masculine characters to reveal that he once had owners. In Chief's story, he was briefly adopted by a human family before biting a child for reasons he doesn't understand and then served a bowl of hibachi chili as a last meal before escaping being euthanized. Chief is later given a Puppy Snap by Atari which he declares to be his new favourite food, strengthening his attachment to the human boy. Chief's relationship with his masculinity through his food grows to incorporate his relationship with humans, learning that part of his masculinity is developed through human-nonhuman difference. Again, this reinforces the notion of difference as a key factor in the optimization of masculinity.

Part II: Misogynistic Violence as Carnism

Despite working against medical, economic, and environmental well-being, humans continue to eat meat. There are several health risks in eating meat (i.e. obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer), non-meat food products are readily commercially available for consumers, and there is an increasing amount of media coverage around the ethical and environmental issues of farming and slaughtering millions of nonhuman animals per year in order to sustain industries connected to animal produce (meat, dairy, leather, et cetera). However, even in the face of such downsides, the overwhelming majority of the world's population consume meat (Monteiro *et al*, 51). Only approximately 5% of the world's population self-identify as vegetarian or vegan which suggests that approximately 95% of the population consume some amount of animal food products (Figus, *Expo*). To identify the discourse of meat-eating as ideological rather than dietary, social psychologist Melanie Joy originated the term 'carnism'. Joy's explanation for the necessity of the label of this phenomenon as a means of revoking its entrenched philosophies which have dominated society (Joy, 30). Just as the label 'vegetarian' often refers to an ethical orientation rather than merely 'plant-eating', the label 'carnism' does not refer simply to 'meat-eating' but the rationales and justifications which sustain the animal industrial complex. Carnism theory proposes the human act of meat-eating entails a pervasive and non-conscious ideology of species domination and oppression of nonhuman animals.

The central thesis of the ideology of carnism is that humans eating nonhuman animals (as well as making items out of nonhuman animals such as leather or fur) is often presented as a normal, natural, and necessary phenomenon (or the 'Three Ns of Justification') (Joy, 96). Carnism theory also considers the specieist framework of selecting certain kinds of animals to be eaten by humans works as part of a larger system of species oppression. For example, the Western variation of carnism supports the use of cows as meat while in India social norms

dictate cows as a sacred species that should not be eaten. In China, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia, the consumption of dog meat has until recently been legal (*BBC Newsbeat*) while in contrast, the social norms of Western cultures characterize dogs as companion or service animals and traditionally held strong taboos on dog meat. Melanie Joy notes that this system of oppression and rationalization to form a carnistic schema (Joy, 131). Similar to gender schema, carnistic schema is a means of cataloging knowledge around nonhuman animal farming and exploitation and a guide towards informing the actions an individual can take based on this knowledge. Joy also asserts that carnism is inherently a 'violent ideology' as it is organized around and reliant upon humans treating and killing/murdering nonhuman animals violently in order to perpetuate the social norms of its ideological underpinning. At the same time, carnistic schemas encourages people to deny the harm of meat production on animals and the environment through elaborate myths of self-deception, psychic numbing, and attempts at hiding the effects of carnist violence (also known as the 'carnistic defense') (Monteiro *et al*, 52). Common forms of the carnistic defense are beliefs that nonhuman animals enjoy being on farms and their slaughter is tangential to their farm lifestyles, that nonhuman animals have ambitions to be eaten in order to fulfill their purpose, or at the very least lack the cognitive capacity to understand their eventual fate, and that there is some essential biological inner desire in all non-herbivorous animals to be satiated by eating meat that cannot be rationalized or reasoned with.

Although predating the term 'carnism', Carol J. Adams's book *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* explores meat-eating in Western society through the discourse of vegetarian ecofeminism. Adams posits that all systems of oppression are symbolically interconnected (Adams, 10). Adams asserts that human suffering and nonhuman suffering are not polarized but interrelated issues with implicit structural overlap

in public discourse. The core discussion of Adam's book considers two interconnected systems of oppression: the ubiquitous cultural synchronization between patriarchal and misogynistic culture with meat culture. 'What, or more precisely *who*, we eat is determined by the patriarchal politics of our culture' Adams writes. 'The way gender politics is structured into our world is related to how we view animals, especially animals who are consumed. Patriarchy is a gender system that is implicit in human/animal relationships. Moreover, gender construction includes instruction about appropriate foods' (Adams, 16). Adams considers images of food (as well as the act of consuming food) to be heavily loaded with gender norms. The gender politics of meat culture dichotomize meat-eating and vegetarian diets as masculine and feminine respectively. Consuming meat (itself an absent referent for nonhuman slaughter) is intrinsically tied to cultural ideas of masculinity and male virility while vegetarianism is seen as feminine behaviour. Furthermore, meat-eating is also symbolic of sexual violence against women. For example, women who are objectified often describe feeling like 'a piece of meat' but they cannot be speaking literally (for meat is deprived of feeling when an animal is slaughtered) (Adams, 67). Adams attributes the phraseology of the expression to be indicative of the metaphoric system of language that describes interlinked forms of oppression and suffering. Another example of nonhuman animals being thematically tied to masculinity and related sexual violence against women can be found in the sexual objectification of waitresses of the popular Hooters restaurant chain. Hooters is culturally interconnected with the slaughter of nonhuman animals for Hooters' meat-heavy menu and whose clientele are viewed as typically masculine archetypes. The interlocking of nonhuman imagery and the intense sexualisation of the waitresses symbolically amalgamates the oppression of nonhuman animals and human women. In reference to Gary Heidnik, a serial killer who raped, murdered, and butchered his female victims into several pieces before cooking and refrigerating body parts, Adams claims Heidnik's action as 'an overlap of cultural

images of sexual violence against women and the fragmentation and dismemberment of nature and the body in Western culture' (Adams, 65). The combination of male virility, masculinity, and misogyny will be hereafter referred to as 'patriarchal potency'.

I would posit that anthropomorphized animals on film can often depict the literal visualization of this interconnectedness between carnism and patriarchal potency. The human-nonhuman dynamic in Lost in Translation films allow both the characters and the narrative to maintain carnistic defenses. The explicit recognition of interspecies kindness by humans found in other categories of anthropomorphism would shift the eating of nonhuman animals from carnism to cannibalism (a related form of carnism but with highly different connotations). As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the human-nonhuman dynamics found in Lost in Translation films encourage exploration of social differences of gender. One such avenue of this exploration is the use of carnism of, and by, anthropomorphized animals in order to depict and scrutinize symbolic sexual violence.

Chicken Run

Chicken Run (Lord, Park, 2000) is set in a Yorkshire egg farm in the 1950s, largely told through the perspective of the anthropomorphized chickens. Having the story told from the perspective of anthropomorphized chickens on an egg farm confronts traditional carnistic defenses on the animal industrial complex by removing suppositions of animals enjoying (or at the very least, not suffering from) their captivity and exploitation while also confronting the invisibility of nonhuman animal suffering by making such animals the key players of the story. The egg farm is characterized (in both imagery and narrative) as a concentration camp for the chickens: there are tall wire fences imprisoning them, cramped sleeping conditions in the dormitory-like hen houses, roll calls carried out by the human farmers Mr. and Mrs. Tweedy, and executions for non-compliant inmates (chickens that stop laying eggs are

slaughtered and eaten by the Tweedys). The chickens all seem to perform as women (except for one elderly male rooster Fowler who seems to be exempt from egg-laying duties) and are largely passive in their confinement. The film's use of concentration camp iconography clearly presents a dichotomy between the humans and farm dogs as the wicked guards and tormentors against the chickens who are blameless victims. The iconography of the chicken farm as a concentration camp also lays out an inescapable paradigm of unjust misogynistic control and violence. As these characters are imprisoned without charges and are almost all female, the film conveys the farm as an environment where the conventional female characters are marginalized and exploited by the gender-atypical or 'queer' humans (the film's characterization of the humans as queer will be discussed further in this chapter).

Another significant aspect of the Tweedys' egg farm paralleling a concentration camp is the chickens' general unhappiness with their role as egg-layers. As referenced in this project's literature review, one of the key generic conventions of children's films is that 'when physical labour is depicted, it is shown to be pleasant, enjoyable, and highly rewarding as an activity in its own right' (Booker, 2). Quite contrary to the farm animals seen in *Babe* or *Home on the Range* (Finn, Sanford, 2004), the chickens do not have any sort of devotion to their farm, find their farmers contemptible, and do not find egg-laying particularly rewarding outside of its use in dissuading the Tweedys not to kill and eat them. I would posit that one of the reasons *Chicken Run* does not depict the chickens as enjoying egg-laying in its own right is that egg-laying is not presented as physical labour, but as sexual labour. The chickens as symbolic women draw upon stereotypes of sexual labour as something which is to be passively endured rather than actively participated.

The central underlying power dynamic of carnism in the film's initial status quo is the use of chicken eggs as feminine gender capital. Carol J. Adams notes that the consumption of nonhuman reproductive matter (milk and eggs) are a specific carnist subset of nonhuman

protein (what Adams refers to as 'feminized protein') (Adams, 21). This feminized protein still has the dual connotations of species oppression and sexual violence, but also has two additional associations: the oppression of female animals and the exploitation of youth. Adams considers these two additional underlying connotations of feminized protein to be doubly-oppressive as it exploits both nonhuman mothers and nonhuman children before slaughtering and butchering them. Just as carnist ideologies abstract meat from being viewed as animal flesh, feminized protein like chicken eggs are abstracted from denoting ideas of reproduction or motherhood in order to fit within the schema of carnism.

The egg-laying in *Chicken Run* acts as a means of conducting passivity and obedience from the chickens, suggesting the literal and psychological trappings of characters' ties to feminized protein. The chickens produce feminized protein (eggs) as physical proof of their compliance, passivity, and femininity within their imprisonment. The Tweedys' egg farm depends upon these chickens for purpose and profit but the institution of the farm is also predicated upon the carnistic violence of appropriating the eggs without compensation. When these chickens can no longer produce proof of their femininity as their egg-laying abilities cease, they can no longer validate their gender identity as feminine. This invalidation of their feminine gender identity in this misogynistic environment results in being beheaded and then eaten by the Tweedys as punishment for not fulfilling their gender role. As well as being executed, being eaten by the Tweedys illustrates how the chickens' failure to enact their allotted gender role nourishes the Tweedys and thereby helps to perpetuate this institution of misogynistic violence and control of the chickens. The use of eggs as feminine gender capital in an egg farm also initially naturalizes the notion that a woman's value can be measured through their capacity as female organisms, using the biological function of egg-laying (rather than any kind of skill or personality trait) as the means of quantifying what these women are contributing to their community.

In contrast to the chickens who are portrayed as performing in conventional gender roles, the Tweedys are characterized with a certain gender-atypical queerness. In many ways, Mrs. Tweedy acts as Freud's phallic woman by behaving in contrast to the female chickens: she is assertive (to the point of domineering), ambitious, proactive, and vicious. She also emasculates Mr. Tweedy and his farm dogs (which, as previously discussed, can be read as an extension of his masculinity) by insulting and demeaning them. Mrs. Tweedy also has an affinity for skintight latex gloves (stereotypical attire for a dominatrix) and blades—her introduction in the film begins with her choosing a chicken named Edwina from the ranks, slipping on her red latex gloves, and using an axe to slaughter the chicken for her supper. Later in the film, she wields a large saw that is part of the chicken pie machine. Mrs. Tweedy's carnistic intention to slaughter the chickens acts as a means of reaffirming her patriarchal potency and this affinity for blades acts as a visual representation of the castration anxiety which the phallic woman poses. By having Mrs. Tweedy act as the phallic woman while also posing a carnistic threat to the chickens, the film embodies the sexual violence against the chickens not just as a strictly patriarchal system but also through a figure that is far more sinister and controlling than a conventional patriarch. Mrs. Tweedy is similar in physique to Ginger and Rocky (thin and tall), and in many ways she has an implicit masculinity that is often evidenced in her total contempt for the entire egg-laying operation and its indentured servants (whether it be either chickens or Mr. Tweedy).

Similar to Mrs. Tweedy, Mr. Tweedy is also somewhat distorted from stereotypical ideals of his gender. Although Mr. Tweedy is a human male and is shaped differently to the chickens, the far thinner bodies of Mrs. Tweedy and a fleeting appearance from a male circus owner attest to Mr. Tweedy's obese rotundity as a human. Although he is not a biological chicken, Mr. Tweedy is (in both senses) a metaphorical chicken by his dedication to the farm's egg production (as were all his patrilineal ancestors), sharing the chickens' same

dedication to egg-laying. In this sense, he is just as much committed to the status quo of producing feminine gender capital in order to prove his value as the chickens must. In the second sense, he also demonstrates a chicken-like passivity towards both the egg-laying gender economy and the emasculating bullying from his domineering wife Mrs. Tweedy. The Tweedys' queerness forms part of their role as villains. Through their queerness, the film signals a connection between queerness and immorality to reinforce the Tweedys' wickedness. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, child audiences may already be predisposed to read non-normative presentations of gender as moral transgressions—the Tweedys are gendered in a non-normative fashion *because* they are wicked.

In the introductory montage of the film, the chicken protagonist Ginger continually leads the chickens in ill-fated escape attempts. After Ginger witnesses one of the chickens being beheaded by Mrs. Tweedy after that chicken has been unable to lay eggs for five days, the chickens hold a forum in Hut 17 (an obvious reference to the prisoner-of-war film *Stalag 17* (Wilder, 1953)) to discuss Ginger's next escape plan. This scene in Hut 17 explicitly articulates this connection between the chickens' egg-laying and their passive compliance to violent oppression under this misogynistic institution. When discussing Edwina, the chicken who was slaughtered after not laying the requisite number of eggs, Bunty (the chicken that lays the most eggs of all) remarks to Ginger that Edwina would be alive 'if she'd spent more time laying, and less time [with escape attempts]', with many other chickens literally (and figuratively) behind her. Bunty's qualification as a prodigious egg-layer and her assessment of their situation establishes a dichotomy between the chickens' role as producers of feminized protein against their ability to reject egg-laying and escape their gender roles. The metonymic use of egg-laying for feminine gender capital and compliance with patriarchal control is demonstrative in the stylized stop-motion animation of the chickens' physiology. The chickens are designed with bulged hips, roughly proportional with their proficiency with their

egg-laying; Bunty has the widest hips, while Ginger (the chicken protagonist who orchestrates escape attempts and is kept in solitary confinement as retribution, thereby settling on the other side of the egg-laying/escaping dichotomy) has the thinnest hips. Ginger's physique is comparable to the roosters (Rocky and Fowler) to demonstrate her masculine persona, showing that her value lies in stereotypically masculine qualities such as pluck and determination and not egg-laying. Having a visual element to egg-laying compounds the biological determinism of gender to the chickens (and also carries over to Mr. Tweedy who also has a round figure).

After Bunty has made this remark which dichotomizes egg-laying and escape attempts, the film cuts to Ginger who is alone in the frame. 'So laying eggs all your life . . . and then getting plucked, stuffed and roasted is good enough for you?' Ginger asks pointedly, replying to Bunty, 'you know what the problem is? The fences aren't just round the farm. They're up here in your heads'. Ginger's comment on the chickens' mentality as egg-layers (and eventually as meat for human consumption) as an acceptable status quo belies the fact that this systematic symbolic sexual violence is not simply an external system of exploitation and confinement from their symbolic sexual oppressors, but also an ideological system reliant upon the chickens' internal acceptance and compliance of that persecution as natural, normal, and necessary (the three Ns of carnism). Ginger's framing as the lone individual rejecting this passive acceptance implies that the initial rejection of this system of sexual violence is an act of aberration rather than a change in the collective opinion of the persecuted.

Another use of chicken eggs as compliance within a misogynistic system is also reflected in the eggs as currency in a symbolic patriarchal bargain. Sociologist Lisa Wade describes a patriarchal bargain as 'a decision to accept gender rules that disadvantage women in exchange for whatever power one can wrest from the system. It is an individual strategy designed to manipulate the system to one's best advantage, but one that leaves the system

itself intact' (Wade, *Sociological Images*). In addition to laying eggs in order to satiate the demands of the egg farm and the queer Tweedys, when the chickens require tools and materials for their escape attempts they use eggs as a form of bartering with a pair of anthropomorphized male rats (eggs which the rats intend to eat). It is noteworthy that the rats refuse to accept chicken feed (the stuff that the chickens themselves eat) as a form of payment as if what is good enough for women's food is deemed unworthy of the men's palate. Although the eggs in this later exchange are not produced to show obedience to the Tweedys' slavery, they are still tokens of feminine gender capital to appease men in order to acquire valuable items. When the chickens plan their final escape attempt, Ginger meets with the rats to place an extensive order for tools (meaning a large cache of eggs as payment). As she places the order she hands them one egg as advanced payment, there is a reaction shot of the rats giddy with the prospect of the eggs. In this transaction between the chickens and the rats, eggs literally act as gender capital for the chickens in order to obtain goods that they cannot acquire themselves (being literally trapped within a system that disadvantages them). The chickens must enact a patriarchal bargain with the rats, working with the system that depreciates and demeans them in order to wrest whatever power can be wrought for themselves. The excitement of the rats receiving the eggs punctuates the nature of the patriarchal bargain being struck. The chickens are working within this misogynistic structure (pleasing men with privilege and access for something they cannot otherwise acquire) because without the rats' cooperation, the chickens have no means of improving their position.

The chickens' patriarchal bargain with the rats differs from their dynamic with the Tweedys egg-farming operation through the distinction of decision. The chickens willingly part with their eggs so that the rats will provide them with tools whereas the Tweedys seize the chickens' eggs under threat of execution. The patriarchal bargain the chickens make in

order to escape the system of misogynistic oppression through carnism suggests this system of symbolic sexual violence is a fixed phenomenon; the chickens cannot dismantle the system, they can only escape the system. This suggestion of the patriarchal bargain is visualized in a montage where the chickens are using their bartered tools to convert their chicken huts into a flying machine, with parallel editing of Mr. Tweedy using his tools to repair the chicken pie machine. The montage often features Mr. Tweedy using his tools in a particular way and then match-cutting to the chickens using similar tools for a similar function (for example, Mr. Tweedy hammering parts of the chicken pie machine together is match-cut with the chickens hammering nails into the wood of their flying machine, Mr. Tweedy using a wrench to tighten bolts on the chicken pie machine is match-cut with a chicken tightening bolts on their flying machine). The constant match-cutting of the montage suggests that the means by which the chickens can improve their circumstance is by working within the same system that is violent and oppressive towards them, that it is not the system itself that they should be attacking, but instead using the tools of the system against their aggressors (and even then, only to eventually distance themselves from the system).

Dissatisfied by the profits of an egg farm, Mrs. Tweedy begins plans to convert the chicken farm into a chicken pie factory; in doing so, the pre-eminent paradigm of the farm's carnist violence shifts from feminized proteins to flesh. As the Tweedys' carnist violence shifts from oppressing the chickens with egg-laying to slaughtering the chickens, there is an obliteration of feminine gender capital. Traditionally, Western cultures consider overeating, unrestricted, or unrestrained consumption of food as antithetical to femininity and counterproductive to the ideal feminine body (Davidauskis, 175). Although this rejection of food consumption to femininity is linked to proportions of weight gain, the act of consumption itself can also be a loaded cultural expectation as a rejection or degradation of the feminine ideal. The chickens' feminine gender capital is correlated with the limits the

Tweedys have on subjecting the chickens to sexual violence and oppression. During a scene set after the Tweedys have ordered their chicken pie machine, Mr. and Mrs. Tweedy inspect the chickens in the chicken enclosure. One chicken (Babs) admits that she hasn't laid any eggs due to being occupied with their escape attempts. Mrs. Tweedy grips a tape measure in a manner similar to a piece of bondage and measures Babs' girth, ordering Mr. Tweedy to double the chicken feed rations to fatten all the chickens up to Babs' mass. After filling up the chicken feed trough to the very brim, Ginger watches in horror as the chickens gorge themselves as she realizes the Tweedys' growing carnist intentions. The sequence where Mrs. Tweedy measures Babs is shot and edited similar to one early in the film when Edwina is taken to slaughter: there are several shots of Mrs. Tweedy's boots walking into the yard, high-angled point-of-view shots from Mrs. Tweedy's perspective as she looks down upon her victim, and low-angled point-of-view shots from the chicken's perspective looking up at Mrs. Tweedy's gleeful face. Both sequences are accompanied with the same ominous music as Mrs. Tweedy makes her selection. The expectation that Babs will be slaughtered like Edwina helps to resonate the escalating threat of sexual violence as the chickens begin to fatten themselves by ravenously consuming food, the strong implication being that women who eat excessively (or simply eating to the point where they are satiated) are unknowingly courting their own death. By fattening themselves and thereby undermining their own feminine gender capital, the chickens are dramatically increasing their vulnerability as victims for a worse form of symbolic sexual violence than when they were producers of feminized protein.

In the climax of the film, the chickens use their flying machine to escape the Tweedys' farm, wrecking most of the facilities (such as the chicken pie machine and the buildings) in the process. The film's denouement shows the chickens now living in an idyllic bird sanctuary in the English countryside, away from any humans. In their sanctuary, the chickens are shown raising young chicks. The chickens' eventual triumph and haven from humans is

noteworthy for two reasons. The first noteworthy point around the film's ending is the chickens' success in using their flying machine to escape the Tweedys' farm. Children's films often thematize connections between 'natural', the 'authentic', and the 'real' (Booker, 7). For example, in *The Lion King*, the protagonist lion Simba attains his 'real' identity by claiming his 'natural' position in the animal kingdom as head of the pride of lions. In *Dumbo* (Sharpsteen *et al*, 1941), the eponymous elephant eventually learns that his ability to fly is 'natural' and not reliant upon psychological crutches such as his lucky feather. When this trope is employed in children's films, characters often unlock their 'real' or 'natural' identity during the climax of the narrative and throughout the story, characters (possibly including those who will achieve their 'natural' potential) usually dismiss or deny such identities or abilities to heighten the incredulous character growth when that moment of unlocking occurs. In *Chicken Run*, the story seems to set up this trope of the chickens being 'naturally' able to fly as other birds do, through Ginger's initial wistfulness of escaping while watching geese fly and later the other chickens and rats finding the idea of flying ludicrous. Ginger persuades Rocky to teach the chickens to fly, mistakenly believing that he is a flying rooster and Rocky unsuccessfully attempts to do so (with several characters voicing their disbelief at the possibility). This narrative set-up would seem to lead towards the chickens eventually flying to freedom through their 'natural' ability as birds. However, this turns out to be a subversion of the generic trope and the chickens use an artificial flying machine to fly to freedom in order to overcome their 'natural' biological deficit. I would posit that this subversion actually underscores a more nuanced 'natural' aspect to the chickens, framing their success not through inherent or endowed abilities like Simba or Dumbo but personality traits such as resourcefulness, courage, and teamwork. These traits do not seem to be particularly gendered but do serve to hegemonize the gender-typical characters (the chickens) over the non-normatively gendered characters (the Tweedys).

The second point to consider about this ending is that the inclusion of young chicks in the bird sanctuary implies a re-alignment of eggs as objects for reproduction and away from the carnist schema as food or currency. I would posit that this alignment acts as a restoration for the chickens' gender role as women by establishing the chickens as maternal beings with offspring that are consanguineal (blood-related) and thereby the most 'authentic' of children (a concept I will discuss in greater detail in the later chapter, *The Sentinel*). This restoration also implies a mutual exclusivity between the chickens' symbolic sexual violence through their carnist internment and their fulfillment of being motherly, one of the core stereotypical elements of being a woman. The mutual exclusivity signals the role of women as victims *or* as mothers—women who are victims of such misogynistic oppression cannot be mothers and that mothers are free from such oppression. Although the denouement is brief, it does idealize maternity as picturesque and paradisiacal. While the film does suggest maternity is not in itself an escape from sexual oppression, maternity is shown as the endpoint from escaping oppression. This idea of maternity as an endpoint from escaping oppression reinforces stereotypes of the ideal lifestyles for women as mothers, and also intimates that freedom for women from oppression is axiomatic to expectations of motherhood. Such expectations of motherhood in these stereotypes are problematic, suggesting through implication that women who are not mothers must therefore be oppressed in some form.

Anthropomorphism and Gender in *Lost in Translation* Films

Lost in Translation films are defined by their intractable and impassable divides between human and nonhuman animals, a mutually unintelligible dynamic which influences the anthropomorphism of nonhuman animals and the types of narratives told through such characters, often centering such characters and stories through the prism of binaries. Often, this prism of binaries informs the anthropomorphism of nonhuman animals by focusing on an

anthropomorphized characters' gender, and explores issues of gender through a binary structure. This exploration of gender considers how the agency and identity of anthropomorphized animals is informed. As discussed in this chapter, the rhetorical particularities of the dog makes the pet dog a useful means of exploring masculine gender identities in an anthropomorphized character who is both a symbol of masculinity without necessarily being seen as having a masculine gender identity. The traditional forms of masculinity are generally praised while non-normative displays of gender are portrayed as belonging to villainous and vile characters. In *The Secret Life of Pets*, Max and Duke learn that their masculinity is bettered through teamwork and brotherliness and this is heavily contrasted with the Flushed Pets, nonhuman antagonists who are unwanted by humans while demonstrating non-normative displays of gender. In *Isle of Dogs*, the dogs find nuance in their masculine identities through relationships with humans. Conversely, in *Chicken Run* the chickens find that their feminine gender identities is the crux of their persecution. This persecution is visualized through the interconnected imagery of the persecution of nonhuman animals and sexual violence. Both of these avenues maintain ideas of traditional hegemonic gender structures and what is lost in translation is the possibility of challenging such structures. However, Lost in Translation films are merely one category of anthropomorphism, and as the human-nonhuman dynamic shifts towards a greater level of interspecies kindness, the first hints of opportunity for subversive and challenging stories emerge.

Chapter 4: First Contact

The title for this chapter and category of anthropomorphism comes from the comparison between anthropomorphism and colonial narrative as mentioned in Chapter 1. First Contact films feature humans and anthropomorphized animals discovering each other as cognitive equals after previously being unaware of such equality. This discovery is similar to the anthropological use of the phrase 'first contact', the first meetings between two cultures previously unknown to one another. While films about first contact between cultures (such as *Pocahontas* (Gabriel, Goldberg, 1995) and the documentary *First Contact* (Connolly, Anderson, 1983)) consider first contact from a purely ethnographic perspective, the First Contact films between human and nonhuman animals differ in several significant ways. One key difference between films like *Pocahontas* and *First Contact* with First Contact films featuring anthropomorphized animals is the way in which the non-dominant group is characterized. In First Contact films, anthropomorphized animals are not necessarily monolithic ethnic or racial embodiments of identity as actual ethnically or racially distinct humans would be. Instead, these animals incorporate their nonhuman identity in ways that both inform and deform the dichotomizing of humans and nonhuman animals into Self and Other as nonhuman characters must also incorporate the rhetorical particularities of their species into their anthropomorphized identity. Another difference is the relationship between ethnicity and geography—the spaces of and between indigenous people and colonizers play an important role in the power relations between them. In First Contact films featuring anthropomorphism, the nonhuman animals are usually already heavily integrated or entrenched into anthropogenic spaces and the power relations of physical space play a far

more subtle role in these films. Furthermore, First Contact films may be differentiated from Postcolonial films (a further stage of anthropomorphism discussed more explicitly in Chapter 6) by the qualifiers of space—although First Contact nonhuman characters may visit physical human spaces (and occasionally vice versa), Postcolonial films feature nonhuman animals heavily integrated into human communities, sharing both the humans' physical and phenomenological spaces on equal terms with humans.

The notion of first contact has also been used in science-fiction films (e.g. *War of the Worlds* (Haskins, 1953), *Contact* (Zemeckis, 1997), *Arrival* (Villeneuve, 2016)). These films almost always see humans as the protagonists being contacted by extraterrestrial and intensely alien Others. These science-fiction films differ from First Contact films featuring anthropomorphized animals as extraterrestrial nonhuman beings often lack points of audience identification; in representations of anthropological first contact, often both sides have points of (human) identification to avoid the overt vilification of one faction when the conflict that inevitably stems from the first meetings is aggravated. It should be noted that First Contact films in this project are not colonial narratives which feature anthropological first contact and also incidentally feature anthropomorphized animals (e.g. *Pocahontas*, *George of the Jungle*, *Tarzan*, (Lima, Buck, 1999)). Such films do not engage significantly in the same conceptual discourses through human-nonhuman animal relations and do not encode symbolic social difference through anthropomorphism based on their films' human-nonhuman dynamic.

First Contact films are strongly characterized by Todorov's category of the Uncanny. For Todorov, the Uncanny mode of fantasy is characterized by the experience of the narrative being both strange and familiar, as are the reactions of characters towards seemingly impossible or otherwise inexplicable phenomena. First Contact films are defined by the discovery of and by humans and nonhuman animals that their species counterparts do in fact have complex identities and intelligence. These human/nonhuman others can communicate in

a way that appreciates and respects the cognitive equality of the other participants within their interactions. What differentiates First Contact films from later stages of human-nonhuman dynamics (the Tourist and the Postcolonial) is the mode of surprise as the entry into understanding interspecies kindness, and that this surprise elevates notions of kindness as a miraculous (but naturally-occurring) phenomenon. For example, in *Ratatouille*, the rat protagonist Remy and his human sidekick Alfredo initially profile each other by their own prejudiced notions of the other's species (Remy a diseased pest and Alfredo a rampaging behemoth). When alone together for the first time, Remy and Alfredo look into each other's eyes and *spontaneously* recognize the human-like sentience of the other and because of such sentience, that their lives carry similar importance. An effect of this mode of surprise in human-nonhuman interactions is the entailing specification that these interactions are happening on a strictly individualistic basis, a point which has strong ramifications for the codification of social class and ethnicity explored later in this chapter.

As previously argued, the species of an anthropomorphized animal can be a powerful means of naturalizing characteristics as intrinsic elements of their identity through the guise of biological determinism. In First Contact films, the anthropomorphism of biological determinism trends towards notions of social class (often coupled with elements of race and ethnicity) where nonhuman animals are coded as being of a lower social or ethnic caste to humans (sometimes nonhuman animals among themselves have a stratification of caste). First Contact films demonstrate characters learning to transcend the human/nonhuman binary. Unlocking this divide is clear evidence that dyadic binaries are not intractable frameworks and individuals are able to explore non-dualistic social structures, with aspects of identity through spectrum (i.e. social class, race and ethnicity) used to inform John Knight's rhetorical particularity of anthropomorphized animals (as discussed in Chapter 3). First Contact films move beyond dualistic structures and engage with representations of social difference in

another level of complexity (social class, race, and ethnicity are the foremost codified social differences). In contrast to the tepid codifications of gender in *Lost in Translation* films which naturalize gender notions and ideologies through assumptive characterizations, species as a determinant of social class, race and ethnicity are far more uniformly codified and keenly explored in *First Contact* films. In *First Contact* films, nonhuman species are almost always of a lower social position than humans. This is noteworthy as *First Contact* films are premised on human and nonhuman characters discovering a means of communication, a discovery which entails the explicit re-negotiation of human-nonhuman boundaries and challenges the status quo of species dynamics. These re-negotiations of human-nonhuman boundaries do not often overtly challenge social differences which are codified, but their liminal questioning often underlies allegories around class conflict and class mobility. The literal dehumanization of the lower social classes often invokes negative ethnic and racial stereotypes and attributes which contribute to prejudicial representation of people in lower social class lifestyles.

First Contact films usually open with the nonhuman main characters already having equally rich identities (gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, et cetera) so the meeting of first contact between humans and nonhuman animals is of level standing (*Paulie* (Roberts, 1998) is a noteworthy exception). As *First Contact* films are about the graphic re-negotiations of human-nonhuman boundaries, the species dyad is often characterized as an allegory for social class as social class is an element of an individual's identity which is something one is born into and yet can be renegotiated via the individual characters' efforts, good fortune, or education in an individual's interactions with others. The actual moment of first contact is catalyzed through the actions or reactions of a nonhuman animal. There is a certain anthropocentric logic to this: humans already communicate with nonhuman animals by domestication, training, and other anthropogenic actions so there is little spectacle in

nonhuman animals understanding humans, and humans who talk to animals are understood by other humans. It is only when nonhuman animals display or reciprocate a human-like capacity of understanding that the human-nonhuman dynamic is leveled. As the burden of initiating first contact falls to the nonhuman animals, the renegotiation of human/nonhuman boundaries is not wholly authoritative restructuring—in some ways, the renegotiation of boundaries acts as an uprising. The nonhuman uprising may act as a fantasy of symbolic insurrection for lower-social classes and ethnic minorities, although any rebellions are largely contained by the individualistic basis of the renegotiation (something elaborated upon in the first half of this chapter).

First Contact films often reinforce two forms of prejudice: social class, and race and ethnicity. Although the argument will be made more fully in Part I, it seems important to note at the beginning of this chapter that the type of prejudice being reinforced should not be thought of as a miniaturized form of prejudice practiced by adults, but a distinct variety developed by children. Forms of prejudice in children are not necessarily developed through intentional instruction nor are children necessarily aware of their prejudicial inclinations. The type of prejudice which children experience can often make the demographics of their prejudice seem menacing and threatening. The characters and social dynamics in First Contact films work to denature and disarm the threat from children's prejudice by reducing stereotypes to relatively harmless forms. By doing so, First Contact films validate the use of prejudice in understanding social difference while at the same time characterizing those targets of child prejudice as non-threatening to the systems that enforce social difference.

The first half of this chapter will consider representations of social difference through portrayals of the human-nonhuman dynamic in two films: *Ratatouille* (Bird, 2007) and *Bee Movie* (Smith, Hickner, 2007). These First Contact films are both told through a nonhuman character's perspective, and the nonhuman lives have a high phenomenological proximity to

their human counterparts. The symbolic difference seen in these films' human-nonhuman dynamic emphasizes two main facets of social difference: differences of social class, and differences of ethnicity and race. First Contact films with dual perspectives (told from the perspective of both nonhuman and human characters) often naturalize identities through the essentialism of social class structures by sanitizing violence and equalizing the mutual prejudice against the Other. As such, these children's films work to naturalize social divisions and reinforce an essentialism of identities that exculpates human responsibility for class difference. The second half of this chapter will consider *Dr. Dolittle* (Thomas, 1998), a First Contact film predominantly told through a human character's perspective where the phenomenological proximity between human and nonhuman animals purportedly matches the reality of the audience. First Contact films told through the singular human perspective use the human-nonhuman hegemony by fracturing the nonhuman category into reductive stereotypes. Rather than have all nonhuman animals share a unified symbolic social identity, nonhuman animals are atomized into disparate, simplistic stereotypes based around their species' rhetorical particularities. These stereotypes validate prejudice by racially and ethnically coding stereotypes into nonhuman animals in a fashion that is reminiscent of the totemic nonhuman frameworks of 'backward' cultures, while also 'defanging' these nonhuman characters of any threatening potency.

Part I: Dual Perspectives in First Contact Films

Social Class through Anthropomorphism

One of the key ways that the social difference between human and nonhuman animals is framed in First Contact films is as a difference of social class. To avoid the assumptive and reductive nature of labels (working class/middle class, rich/poor, worker/manager, blue-collar/white-collar), this project shall use the following definition for social class: 'a context rooted in both the material substance of social life (wealth, education, work) and the individual's construal of his or her class rank, and is a core aspect of how he or she thinks of the self and relates to the social world' (Kraus *et al*, 546). While First Contact films enforce rather than dissolve class difference, it would be inaccurate to assume that children's films simply provide a conservative perspective on the essentialist nature of class differences. Instead, children's films may be seen as responding to a potential child audience's predilection for class differences. Although there is plenty of statistical and theoretical research on how children are affected by the stratification of social class, there are far fewer number of studies on how children *perceive* this type of social stratification, as well as their own placement within such classification. The burgeoning research on children's perception of class difference does not span the entirety of childhood, but tends to focus on middle childhood (after infancy and at the beginning of childhood) to late childhood (the end of adolescence). What the research does indicate is that children in this age range are not ignorant or socially deaf to class difference—on the contrary, by the time that children are of school age, they are incredibly adept and capable of both identifying different social classes and competent in prejudicial practices in perceiving different social classes. In the meta-analysis 'Elementary School Children's Reasoning About Social Class: A Mixed-Methods Study', the authors found that

upper-middle-class adolescents were reasonably accurate at evaluating their own social class group. In contrast, most working-class youth subjectively identified as either middle class or upper middle class, not as working class, and aspired to be upper middle class as adults. This pattern of identification among working-class youth is consistent with findings from adults—research with adults (both in America and internationally) shows an overwhelming tendency to subjectively identify as middle class, regardless of actual levels of income and wealth . . . Toward the end of elementary school (i.e. between the ages of 10 and 12), children begin to show links between internal attributes (e.g. working hard, being smart) and social class group membership. Most of these beliefs are stereotypes in which being poor is associated with more negative attributes than being rich . . . a qualitative study with middle-class and poor children found that children described middle-class families in an idealized, positive way (e.g. good manners, happy, responsible), regardless of their own social class background (Mistry *et al*, 'Elementary School', 1655, 1656).

The first point of note is that children (and adults) are more inclined to believe themselves to be middle-class, regardless of whether they are actually middle-class or not. The second point is that, regardless of their own social class, children idealize middle-class living and negatively stereotype strangers who are perceived as poor.

In a similar study titled 'Children's Reasoning about Poverty, Economic Mobility, and Helping Behavior: Results of a Curriculum Intervention in the Early School Years', the researchers investigated statistical studies performed on children's perceptions of social class and economic class mobility. The researchers found that the younger children were, the less likely they were to see poverty as a malleable condition (Mistry *et al*, 'Children's Reasoning', 765). Another developmental facet derived from this research was that children were more likely to suggest individualistic factors (i.e. receiving money) for upward class mobility as opposed to social or institutional factors (i.e. social connections or education). The study found that 'children's reasoning about helping those living in poverty suggests that younger children (6–8 years olds) emphasize more egocentric ways of helping (e.g., giving money directly to a poor person) while older children (14–16 years olds) focus more on structural forms of help and creating greater economic opportunities (e.g., the government creating more jobs)' (Mistry *et al*, 'Children's Reasoning', 763). From this study, it may be reasoned that younger viewers are more inclined to conceptualize means of escaping from poverty to be both unlikely and based on individualistic (as opposed to structural) factors. As this is how children understand social mobility, children's films that explore class difference depict upward social mobility in social class systems frame these cases as individual (rather than institutional).

As noted in previous chapters, children's films are not necessarily propagandizing or indoctrinating children on the subject of social difference. Instead children's films have some awareness of their audience's understanding and account for that in the construction of their texts. From the findings of the aforementioned two articles, it could be asserted that children's films often give human characters middle-class roles to make them more identifiable and avoid explicit class frictions within human characters in order to demarcate the symbolic Self. Another assertion based on the two articles is that portrayals of interactions between social

classes happen on an individualistic basis as children are more inclined to accept portrayals of social mobility on a singular level. The singular nature of a film's depiction of social mobility avoids normalizing transgressions of human/nonhuman liminalities.

While First Contact films with dual perspectives usually have nonhuman protagonists and human deuteragonists, the point of identification for the imagined child audience is often through the nonhuman protagonists as sympathetic symbolic child characters. After the introduction of human-nonhuman dynamics and the point of first contact, the positioning of nonhuman animals as the lower-class or minority acts as a later form of distancing for the audience. For a child audience, the nonhuman protagonist is the first point of entry into the narrative, but is never meant to retain sole identification. As previously noted, the human-nonhuman dynamic of First Contact films focalize themes of transcendence, and the displacement of points of identification between nonhuman protagonist (as symbolic child characters) and middle-class human characters (as middle-class humans) invites viewers to reconsider how they identify with certain social groups. Such displacement invites viewers to transition their character identification between different species, encouraging these viewers to take a more empathetic approach to their understanding of difference. First Contact films with dual perspectives open with the perspective of a nonhuman protagonist who is a sympathetic symbolic child character and that nonhuman protagonist's higher social class is embodied in the human characters with whom they interact. The human-nonhuman interactions between the nonhuman protagonist and middle-class human often acts as a self-reflexive positioning of the child audience's understanding of their own societal understanding of class functions (as children are likely to identify with middle-class characters). Child audiences may identify with a nonhuman protagonist as a child while also viewing a very literal personification of the middle-class through the nonhuman protagonist's relationship with humans.

First Contact films with dual perspectives use parallel-phenomenologizing of human and nonhuman lives to amplify the films' codification of social class, decontextualizing nonhuman lives (and thereby divorcing them from the phenomenological fidelity of nonhuman species) in order to use nonhuman characters to imitate and satirise human social constructs. In Thomas Nagel's influential essay 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?' Nagel argues that not only is it impossible for a human to see *what* a bat sees, but also *how* a bat sees. Humans who attempt to mentally recreate the perception of a nonhuman animal may (fallaciously) try to significantly reduce the bat's perceptual world in order to make it comparable to our own; Nagel considers this decontextualization to fail approximating nonhuman perceptual experiences. By acknowledging that humans cannot comprehend a nonhuman animal's perception without a substantial amount of decontextualization, Nagel opens the possibility that nonhuman animals may have relational structures to their environments, thereby having lives of their own world and not simply existing as living creatures (Nagel, 437). I would argue that many First Contact films do not merely decontextualize nonhuman lives—they are re-contextualized into human lives, both figuratively and literally 're-skinning' their lifestyles to match humans. This re-skinning often physically separates anthropomorphized characters from humans by having their own physical spaces but also having nonhuman characters adopt analogous phenomenological aspects of the modern human lifestyle. For example, in *Bee Movie*, the opening sequence establishes that bees have lifestyles that are essentially miniaturized bee-themed human lives: they have traditional familial units with heterosexual parents and individual housing units, they have educational institutions and white-collar and blue-collar jobs, they socialize and use telephones, they drive automobiles, et cetera. Importantly, the majority of the bees' lifestyle takes place in an enclosed beehive, physically separating it from the human urban environment that appears later in the film as the predominantly human setting.

In terms of the human-nonhuman binary, recontextualizing nonhuman animals to have re-skinned human lives helps further the allegory of nonhuman animals being of lower social class to humans. *Pocahontas* (Gabriel, Goldberg, 1995) similarly deals with first contact in an explicitly colonial sense, and by using *Pocahontas* as a reference, a lot of the species renegotiation that is symbolic of class conflict can be more keenly identified. The central conflict in *Pocahontas* revolves around the white settlers and the indigenous Native Americans but the colonial narrative is sanitized from what modern societies recognize as immense historical injustices perpetrated by the white settlers. In analyzing *Pocahontas*, C. Richard King, Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo write that

in spite of this pending and palpable tragedy, [the film *Pocahontas*] suggests not that racism, imperialism, or other articulations of ideological frames and material conditions matter, but that everyone is ethnocentric, has the capacity to be prejudiced, and may be pressed to irrationality and violence . . . *Pocahontas* works mightily to erase racism and its connection to settler colonialism. It proposes human nature as the seat of the problem and the only solution . . . *Pocahontas* emerges as a kind of mediator, bridging the gap between settler and native, civilization and nature, through her heterosexual desire for Captain Smith . . . Importantly, *Pocahontas* in refusing history in favor of universal humanism and romance over and against power gives its viewers an important way out in which they incorporate the other, literally allowing them to lay claim to land through *Pocahontas* and cross-cultural borderlands via love. Coloniality erased and affirmed in one subtle gesture (King *et al*, 63).

By equating the white settlers' aggression with the Native Americans' hostility, the film alleviates responsibility on the part of the colonizers by suggesting that aggressiveness is simply a fundamental element of human nature mostly beyond human control (except for those in heterosexual love) and that in any conflict, there is an equal amount of suffering on either side and so one side cannot be morally superior to another. In the following discussion of *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie*, I would posit that, similar to the false equivalency of the scale of ethnic conflict in *Pocahontas*, these films sanitize violence and equalize the mutual prejudice between human and nonhuman characters. By doing so, these children's films work to naturalize social divisions and reinforce an essentialism of identities that exculpates human responsibility for class difference. While the human-human narrative conflict in *Pocahontas* drives the naturalization of identities through principles of humanist universalism, the human-nonhuman narrative conflict in *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie* draws the naturalization of identities through the essentialism of social class structures that is paralleled with ethno-racial hegemonic structures.

The Coupling of Racial/Ethnic Coding and Social Class in First Contact Films

Although the human-nonhuman allegories of social class in *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie* drive the narrative, the secondary coding of race and ethnicity in species is also a noteworthy example of social difference encoded within the anthropomorphism of nonhuman characters. In the following analysis of *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie*, I will elucidate where this coupling of ethno-racial coding to the symbolic coding of social class is found, and the ramifications of negatively compounding ethnic stereotypes as the lower social class. While the discourse around social class divisions may be difficult to underpin for interpellating to a child audience, the idea that ethnic and/or racial prejudices should be wilfully taught to children is

far more easily dismissed as socially unacceptable. This socially unacceptable idea of ethnic and racial prejudice is, however, in direct contrast to the ethno-racial undertones that children's films often portray, with ethnic minority characters reduced to recognizable stereotypes. The paradox may be articulated as such: 'if it is generally unacceptable to teach children that they should have ethnic and/or racial prejudice, why do children's films portray ethnic and racial characters in ways that reduce them to the prejudiced stereotypes that children will interpellate as such socially unacceptable prejudices?' I would posit that the answer to this paradox is to be found by understanding the ways in which children's films perceive how children conceptualize racial and ethnic prejudices.

To reconcile this contradiction and account for children's films stereotyping ethnic and racial minorities, it seems vital to first establish what the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' mean in this discourse. The discourse of race as a form of human categorization has, since the 1970s, been seen as problematic so clarification on definitions may help to establish the usage of the term. In the *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society*, Richard T. Schaefer defines the human category of 'race' with four criteria:

A race is a social grouping of people who have similar physical or social characteristics that are generally considered by society as forming a distinct group . . . First, race is socially constructed, in that humans use symbols to create meaning from their social environment. This means that race is not an intrinsic part of a human being or the environment but, rather, an identity created using symbols to establish meaning in a culture or society. Second, race is partially characterized by physical similarities such as skin color, facial features, or hair texture. Although physical characteristics constitute a portion of the

concept of race, this is a social rather than biological distinction. That is, human beings create categories of race based on physical characteristics rather than the physical characteristics having intrinsic biological meaning. Third, race is partially characterized by general social similarities such as shared history, speech patterns, or traditions . . . Fourth and finally, race is characterized by the formation of distinct racial groupings in society that self-identify as such. (Schaefer, *SAGE*).

Schaefer notes that historically, race has been used as a means of promoting biological racial superiority, being linked with ideologies of superiority of whites over non-whites through Western conceptions of how race is utilized in how it becomes associated with forms of civilization, intelligence, and disease (Schaefer, *SAGE*). Western cultures may see 'white' as the universal norm of race in society, or even further, not consider 'white' to constitute a race at all because it is the default position. Conversely, only 'inferior' non-whites may constitute as racial beings. It is this binary stratification of whites and non-whites which problematizes race as a term. Nonetheless, as a social category race remains an important part within the discourse of social difference. Although somewhat to do with hereditary physical appearance, race is still somewhat determined through social grouping and social appraisal. Although similar, the term 'ethnicity' diverges from 'race' in certain key aspects. Shonda Buchanan defines ethnicity in *Nationalism And Ethnicity: Definition And History* as 'a group of people who share cultural practices, beliefs, language or linguistic commonalities, geography, and religion' (Buchanan, *Race and Racism*). The aforementioned definitions of 'race' and ethnicity' diverge in their focal topics: 'race' is largely determined through biological and physical indicators while 'ethnicity' is based on culture, beliefs, language, and physical space.

The second component to reconciling the contradiction of portraying seemingly inappropriate ethnic and/or racial prejudice in children's films is returning to one of the first principles of this project: children's films do not hypodermically interpellate or indoctrinate children on social difference, but have a dialogic relationship of understanding their imagined child audience and producing texts that, while burdened with the 'social responsibility' of 'educating', must account for the dispositions of the children's viewing practises in order to maximize their paying audience. One answer to the aforementioned paradox is that children's films do not teach ethnic prejudice, but have found that children respond positively to ethnic prejudice. In her developmental child psychology study *Children and Prejudice*, Frances Aboud considers ethnic and racial awareness (and prejudice) from a child-oriented perspective rather than considering displays of ethnic prejudice from children to simply be the miniaturized form of adolescent or adult ethnic and racial prejudice. From the existing statistical research, Aboud has noticed that while the levels of adult and adolescent ethnic prejudice have steadily declined in the past forty years, the levels of child ethnic prejudice have remained consistently high, suggesting that the phenomenon of child ethnic prejudice is not merely reflecting that of adolescents and adults (Aboud, 2).

Aboud considers the two classic child development theories of the psychodynamic origins of prejudice in children to have strengths and flaws when attempting to explain all facets of ethnic and racial prejudice. Aboud's first theory of child ethnic and racial prejudice is social reflection theory, where children simply self-identify with their parents and adult figures of authority and mirror the prejudiced actions and behaviours of those adults in an attempt to please them. However, this theory does not account for the relative lack of variety of prejudice observed from children belonging to families of ethnic and racial minorities with children in the dominant ethnic and racial demographics (Aboud, 19). There is also no increase in prejudice as the child grows older, which one might expect as the child integrates

more prejudiced behaviours into their psyche. The second theory for prejudice is inner state theory, wherein a child punished for expressing hostility and aggression towards parental figures causes that child to generate anxiety and guilt (Aboud, 21). The inappropriate reaction of this sequence of emotions causes a child to have negative anti-social impulses which they displace towards people who lack authority and power (i.e. minority groups). Although a compelling theory, Aboud finds the lack of specifying what targets children will take and how they decide upon them to be an important weakness in explaining the psycho-social origins of prejudice. Although the theoretical explanations for child prejudice are not definitive, the empirical research does show that children's ethnic awareness (and prejudice) are well-developed by the time a child is four years old (Aboud, 43).

Accepting the fact that the majority of child audiences may hold some form of ethno-racial prejudice before they even watch a children's film, one might still question why children's films do not opt to completely avoid portrayals of ethnic stereotypes. One explanation as to why children's films might portray ethnic stereotypes is that children find reassurance and validation in viewing their ethnic and racial prejudice externalized by seeing ethnic and racial stereotypes onscreen. Children who are vulnerable to anxiety are found to be more predisposed to be affected with confirmation bias, confirming information perceived to verify a threat while disconfirming information falsifying the threat (Muris *et al*, 607). While Frances Aboud's research does not propound fear as a primary emotion in the origins of prejudice in the cognitive development of children, prejudice in adults has been postulated as a source of fear; the mere existence of difference that prejudice recognizes 'threatens our primary basis of psychological security' (Solomon *et al*, 200). First Contact films with dual perspectives open with nonhuman protagonists who are initially physically and phenomenologically distanced from humans. This distancing quells the nonhuman species symbolising the ethnic Other until the nonhuman characters begin interacting with humans.

Once the human-nonhuman dynamic is established through the introduction of human characters, the symbolic ethno-racial difference between species begins to inform how nonhuman animals may fulfil roles of ethnic and racial prejudice. Opening with nonhuman protagonists being distanced from humans allows these nonhuman characters to be initially identifiable, with the inclusion of human characters later altering points of identification through species codification of ethnic difference. Reductive representations of ethnic stereotypes may limit fear for the prejudiced child audience of potentially threatening ethnicities by appealing to children's confirmation bias and conveying that the audience's sensibility towards ethnic prejudice is both well-founded and useful in understanding the ethnic Other. Furthermore, these reductive representations of ethnic prejudice disarm or defang the threat of ethnic identities. By having these ethnic stereotypes, children's films both acknowledge ethnic prejudice in its child audience while de-emphasizing the threat from these perceived ethnic stereotypes as dictated by the generic conventions of children's films.

In First Contact films, where the re-negotiation of human-nonhuman boundaries embeds class conflict and mobility in the thematic foundation, social difference founded on the division of ethnicities is also significant. Because social class is more malleable and mobile than ethnicity, parallel-coding ethnicity with social class allows children's films a means with which to explore issues of social class that child audiences can follow. In his article 'Ethnicity and Disney: It's a Whole New Myth', Edward Rothstein notes that Disney films portray 'ethnicity [that] involves complicated relationships between an outsider and a supposed center, between an immigrant and the mainstream, an aspiring lower class and a complacent middle. And these relationships are often the very subjects of the films themselves. Disney movies do not just incorporate ethnicity; they are, in a broad sense, about it' (Rothstein, B.37). Rothstein's main argument is that every character Disney produces carries an implicit ethnic allegory through their ethnic performativity and relationship with an

outsider protagonist that will eventually achieve mainstream success; the Italian puppeteer Geppetto to Pinocchio, the Jamaican anthropomorphic crab Sebastian to Ariel the mermaid, and the Eastern-European dwarfs to Snow White, are all cases where marginalized companion characters who are primarily defined through their ethnicity become instrumental in helping the protagonist transition from fellow outsider to mainstream success without themselves benefiting from this transition. For Rothstein, these ethnic allegories are not something to be admired or negotiated with, but should instead be seen as a destabilization of the equalization of native and non-native cultures by suggesting that native cultures are best reduced to prejudiced, lower-class ethnic stereotypes whose societal function is to serve and aid the dominant ethnic class. Rothstein's point underscores a larger trend in the children's film genre to conflate non-dominant ethnicities with aspiring lower classes and to contrast those with the mainstream complacent middle-class. The parallel social differences of class and ethnicity ultimately underpin social prejudice, and though *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie* are premised on re-negotiating boundaries of difference, the individualistic basis of this re-negotiation does not interpellate or support universal deconstructions of prejudice and in fact reinforces systems of ethnic prejudice.

Ratatouille

The human-nonhuman dynamic in *Ratatouille* (Bird, 2007) strongly enforces the ideal that the status quo of class difference is (and should be) structurally and morally sound. *Ratatouille* follows Remy, a wild rat, who has a natural gift for cooking and has ambitions of becoming a chef (something that his pack of rats can't understand). 'I know I'm supposed to hate humans', Remy says in a voice-over during the film's opening sequence, 'but there's something about them . . . they discover, they create—just look at what they do with food'. Remy parallels Pocahontas in their conflict against their 'colonizers'; like Pocahontas, Remy

is able to compromise with and listen to the humans prejudiced against him and questions why he should be prejudiced against them. Remy performs as Paul Wells' 'aspirational animal' where nonhuman animals act 'as a tool by which to demonstrate favorable human qualities and heroic motifs' (Wells, *Animated Bestiary*, 52). As will be outlined later, Remy's realization of Wells' aspirational animal acts as a form of lower social classes reinforcing the class system. An early expression of Remy's aspirational animality is his un-rat-like fixation on hygiene. Remy's fixation on hygiene connects to his desire to prepare gourmet food. During the film's opening act, Remy's brother Emile is introduced while digging through an iconic cylindrical aluminium trash can, the garbage in strong focus. Emile's introduction as an unclean animal is underscored by the jump cut to a two-shot of Emile and Remy discussing cleanliness while walking side by side, with Remy walking bipedally to use his front limbs to carry food while Emile walks on his four limbs dragging food on the ground with his mouth. The framing of Remy and Emile displays the juxtaposition between their modes of walking and their conversation ties those modes of walking with cleanliness.

Emile: Why are you walking like that?

Remy: I don't want to constantly have to wash my paws. Did you ever think about how we walk on the same paws that we handle food with?

You ever think about what we put into our mouths?

Emile: All the time.

Remy: When I eat, I don't want to taste everywhere my paws have been.

Emile: Well, go ahead, but if Dad sees you walking like that, he's not going to like it.

Emile's introduction and dialogue with Remy quickly establishes the human standard of rats as unclean while also correlating cleanliness with food, a correlation which later informs the humans as middle-class characters.

After being separated from his colony after a physical confrontation with a human, Remy finds a human, Alfredo, who works in a menial position at a gourmet restaurant (Gusteau's). After Remy is discovered by the kitchen staff, Alfredo is tasked with drowning Remy in a canal as rats are considered unclean animals that have no place in the kitchen. Instead Alfredo recognizes Remy's sentience and culinary skills, and the two secretly team up to work as a chef at Gusteau's. Like Pocahontas and John Smith acting as 'mediators' by showing that heterosexual love is the answer to overcoming mutual detestation founded on social difference, Remy and Alfredo show that certain morally acceptable ambitions are the means to social and species mobility. The moment of first contact—Alfredo talking at, and subsequently, to, Remy, by the canal as Alfredo grapples with having to drown a rat—is filmed through a series of shot/reverse-shots over the shoulders of the two characters. The framing of the sequence makes each character occupy a similar amount of space within the screen which gives the impression that the Alfredo the human and Remy the rat are the same size; by being framed as being of similar size, the human-rat dynamic is temporarily leveled by removing Alfredo's power advantage of size compared to Remy. This levelling belies a form of interspecies kindness where the two are of the same kind by being of the same (filmic) size.

The film's story uses the obvious rhetorical particularities of rats to encode the anthropomorphized rats with stereotypes of the poor as parasitical and unclean pests; in contrast to the rats, the humans (all of whom are gourmet chefs or high-society food critics) fulfill stereotypes of the middle-class as cultured, influential, and talented. One way that *Ratatouille* encodes symbolic statuses of class in its characters is through vocal performance.

The rats speak in typical New York accents, an accent often perceived as 'lower class, ethnic or crude' (McClellan, *New York Post*), and also intertwined with Italian-Americans due to the accent's widespread use in the mafia film genre (as mafia films are often set in New York). In a conspicuous contrast to the rats, the human characters speak in cartoonish French accents (befitting the Paris setting) or, in the case of one malevolent food critic, an upper-class English drawl encoding them as European. Alfredo, the human chef who Remy secretly puppeteers to prepare food in the gourmet restaurant, is strikingly voiced in an American accent that far more closely resembles the rats' New York accent than the humans' French accents. As a mediator who is enacting the transcendence of the human-nonhuman binary, Alfredo's vocal ethnic performance disqualifies him as a middle-class human. *Ratatouille* parallels class difference with ethnic difference, and Alfredo's status as an imposter in middle-class European ethnicity belies a duplicitous element in helping the lower-class New York rats. Alfredo is consistently patronized by the other human characters in the film, hinting at the fact that he is symbolically passing as an ethnic equal and in the film's conclusion, Alfredo is happily relegated to the role of a waiter as if he has fulfilled his class role as an ethnic inferior to the other humans. While Remy becomes a chef at the end of the film, his role is both managed and hidden by human characters in order to avoid provoking systemic changes to the species (and ethnic) prejudice.

Although there is a clear power disparity between the rats and humans (symbolic of the class disparity between the working class and middle class), the film shifts the onus of this disparity away from the humans and suggests that the disparity is largely a function of nature and not an active and intentionally designed power structure. The shift of the disparity's root cause absolves humans for the disadvantages the rats experience (comparable to the humans) which in turn implies that both the rats and humans have equal culpability for their contempt for the other as both rats and humans are merely players within this

hegemonic system. In a scene which punctuates the 'natural' order of the human-nonhuman dynamic, Remy's father Django shows Remy a line of rat carcasses hanging in the window of a pest control store. As lightning and rain dramatically underscore the disparity of power between human and rats, Django says 'you can't change nature' as a way of demonstrating punishment for daring to attempt class mobility. However, this scene does not seem to vilify humans as inherently less moral beings than the rats (who are never shown trying to kill humans). The rats' hatred of humans stems from the fact that humans poison them, but this naturalized hatred is equalized by the humans' hatred of rats, suggesting that both sides are equally wrong in their hatred, and are simply misguided as Remy and Alfredo manage to transcend the human-rat (class) conflict through their culinary ambition. Rather than emphasizing the negative aspects of class difference, *Ratatouille* naturalizes the ideology that all animals have a species and social class, and that this understanding should be respected.

Remy's individualistic transcendence of the class divide is further reflected by the sociogenic identity of his species. The difference between rats as abject pest or adored pet is in numbers: a single rat has 'undergone a process of cleansing' to reduce its contagion to a minimum; this cleansing process works as a means of delineating those cleansed individuals from the masses of wild and disease-ridden rats (Edelman, 126). The sociogenic difference between an individual rat cleansed by humans and the contaminated masses of rats is conferred in the anthropomorphism of rats in *Ratatouille* largely through Remy. Remy's desire for upward social mobility is an individualistic and nonconformist desire, demarcating him as a cleansed rat in contrast to the mass of his rat colony. Remy's singular aspiration as a symbolic blue-collar individual wanting to advance to a white-collar position isolates and contains the threat of institutional traversing of class; it is not just that Remy achieves some success in social mobility as an individual (although it is limited and maintained through his social access to humans), but it is precisely because his success is presented as an inversion

of the conforming masses of the working class. The class codification of the human-nonhuman dynamic in *Ratatouille* does not totally disavow the possibility of social mobility and the essentialism of social class; instead, the film colours that possibility in the same vein of the fantastical and implausible nature which resonates with human-nonhuman first contact. By conflating social mobility with the unlikelihood of human-nonhuman first contact, *Ratatouille* almost completely extinguishes notions of institutional changes promoting mass social mobility. For these children's films, elevating from blue-collar to white-collar is a feat on par with talking nonhuman animals, and while *Ratatouille* demonstrates that this elevation can happen, it could never be attempted on a large scale, nor be normalized in any common extent. However, even if institutional change is not portrayed as a successful venture, Remy's own rise in social status should be taken into account. Although it took the effort of his colony and Alfredo to help Remy achieve a rise in social class, this rise demonstrates the undeniable precedent of upward class mobility.

Bee Movie

The film *Bee Movie* (Smith, Hickner, 2007) follows Barry B. Benson, a bee recently graduated from bee college, who, after getting lost on a pollen expedition in New York City, discovers that humans have been harvesting honey from bees for centuries to supply grocery stores. To confront the humans, he reveals the humanlike sentience of bees to humans in order to challenge the humans' exploitation of the bees. The bees in *Bee Movie* are anthropomorphized in a way that heavily allegorizes them as Jewish-American. Aside from the prominent Jewish star Jerry Seinfeld as the writer/producer of *Bee Movie* and the voice of protagonist bee Barry, there are several stereotypical markers of the Jewish-American identity in the portrayal of bees. For instance, the bees' display Jewish humour (often predicated on self-deprecation), Barry's mother is characterized as the stereotypical nagging, coddling

Jewish mother, bees scoff at the thought of Barry dating a human woman because she is not 'Bee-ish', the bees demonstrate a strong emphasis on community along with the fear of leaving their communal spaces to visit ethno-racial (and, in this case, species) others, and the bees' many nasal vocal ties of 'eh' reminiscent of Jewish characters in other forms of media (such as the sitcom *Seinfeld*).

I would posit that while the symbolic Jewish characters (the bees) in *Bee Movie* are portrayed as living middle-class lifestyles, these characters are, in many ways, an alternate variant of middle-class that have not wholly left behind the Jewish historical 'outsider' status. Re-skinning the bees with a secure point of identification as stereotypical modern, middle-class Jewish-Americans acts as the form of basic reassurance known as 'Jewissance' (a play on the French *jouissance*) (Abrams, 1). The Jewissance stereotypes act as a means of grappling and overcoming the historical turmoil of Jews being negatively represented as outsiders and invaders with recognizable and non-threatening archetypes in response to the pre-1960s anti-Semitic representations in cinema (Abrams, 12). While these Jewissance stereotypes offer secure points of Jewish identification and can ridicule the exclusion of Jews and Jewishness, there is still some vestigial historical Otherness that highlights tensions of Jewish assimilation into the middle-class. In discussing modern American representations of Jewishness, Alan Warren Friedman considers

the Jew [a] cultural schizophrenic, a concatenation of past and future haunted by a sense of his own unique-ness, and simultaneously blessed and burdened by his heritage and his vision. The heritage teaches him that he is something special, a creature umbilically linked to a historical grandeur and sense of destiny that, however, best manifests itself through the suffering of its exemplars and which

defines them whether or not they seek to escape it (Friedman, 42).

Friedman's cultural conceptualization of Jews emphasizes the dissonance between Jews becoming middle-class as they gain upward social mobility with their historical suffering as 'outsiders'. One continuous visual signifier of the bees' outsider status is the fluorescent yellow colour of the bees and their beehive. While inside their beehive, the bees' yellow colour scheme match their surroundings, displaying their connection to a living space which is physically distanced from the mainstream human environments. When they move to anthropogenic spaces like apartments, courthouses, and airports, the bees' bright yellow exteriors strongly contrasts with the more muted greys, browns, and greens of the human environments. The contrast of colours between the bees and human spaces constantly marks them as having an inconsistent placement in the non-bee landscape.

This idea of Jewish dissonance, as well as the notion of Jewish destiny through suffering, resonates in *Bee Movie* in various forms. The bees are re-skinned as ethno-cultural (rather than religious) Jewish stereotypes, as well as solidly middle-class lifestyles, parallel coupling the film's social class coding with ethnic coding. The bees' middle-class is treated as an alternate ethnic variant of the human middle-class with the bees' own class system acting as a social microcosm which reflects, but is not interconnected with, the human middle-class. *Bee Movie* re-skins the bees as Jewissance stereotypes to superficially centralize their identity as middle-class, while the bee-human conflict acts as a reminder for the viewer that while the symbolic Jews are an affluent community, there is an Otherness to them relative to the wider society. Indeed, the bees are physically segregated by living in bee hives so even though their middle-class lifestyles are comparable to humans, they are still geographically displaced from the rest of society. The bees' contentment and acceptance of suffering through their unwitting exploitation of labour by humans is indicative of how embedded the bees' suffering is to their

cultural identity (suffering being a key aspect of the Jewissance stereotype).

Incensed by the humans' corporate theft and exploitation of the bees, Barry sues the human race in a (human) court of law on behalf of bee-kind for the ownership and intellectual property of the world's supply of honey. After exposing the fact that beekeepers forcibly expose bees to smoke (likened to the dangers of cigarette smoking) in beehive farms (likened to internment camps), Barry wins the trial and the world's supply of honey and honey-related products is returned to the bees. The attorney for the humans, Layton T. Montgomery, gives a cryptic message to Barry after the judge's verdict: 'this is an unholy perversion of the balance of nature, Benson. You'll regret this'. After the honey is returned to the bees, the bees discontinue honey production and thereby stop pollinating the world's plants, leading the flora on Earth to quickly die out. Alongside the planet's ecological collapse, the bees become increasingly dejected due to their lack of honey production, portrayed as something akin to mass unemployment. Barry eventually takes responsibility for the dying ecosystem and works to save both the bees' sense of purpose and the world's plants. The film resolves with humans and bees working together to license bee-approved brands of honey and the bees continuing to produce honey (thereby pollinating plants and continuing the planet's ability to sustain life). Barry's repatriation of honey is treated as an act of empowerment for the ethnicized bees. However, the repatriation of honey also works as an acknowledgement and recognition that the bees are, in fact, outsiders by decisively dividing assets with the humans. This division separates the human middle-class from the bees' isolated and human-independent middle-class community. When out of work, the bees experience malaise and ennui in the community, as if their work (and suffering) defined them. The bees' dependence on work for self-worth mirrors Friedman's argument that the Jewish sense of destiny is manifested through suffering, thereby reinforcing the naturalization of the Jewish outsider as someone whose only purpose is to work. The recognition of the value of bees as individuals

who suffer for their work is an act of reclamation by demonstrating that bees find meaning in this productive form of suffering.

Like *Ratatouille*, *Bee Movie* uses the First Contact renegotiations of human-nonhuman boundaries to alleviate the culpability of humans for anthropogenic effects on nonhuman animals to suggest that class difference is a necessary societal framework in which people must depend upon for sustainable societal living. As outlined below, by remodulating the power dynamics between humans and bees through introducing interspecies kindness, these films are able to accentuate the necessity for class divisions for societal sustainability. Although *Ratatouille* suggests that humans culling rats is simply an intrinsic part of the species hegemony dynamic, *Bee Movie* actively suggests that humans and bees are vital parts and essential players for the continual existence of the other. Although the bees have visual markers of the American middle class (wearing ties, having bee-themed college educations, speaking in 'white', middle-class American accents), their tangible work as honey-producers is what gives their lives and community an ethno-cultural purpose and meaning. *Bee Movie* suggests that both humans and bees alike depend upon their relationship, inequality grounded in ecological diversity, for either to survive—without the stability of the human-nonhuman relationship built on inequality, survival of society itself is threatened.

This mutual dependency between human society and symbolic Jewish class is crystallized when the blame for the ecological catastrophe from the bees abstaining from pollination is willingly accepted by Barry (rather than the humans for a lack of compensation for the bees, or on all parties for passively engaging in an inherently inequitable class system). Barry accepting responsibility is characterized as a moment of personal growth as if accepting such inequality of class paradigms constitutes a marker of maturity. Barry taking the blame minimizes the humans' role in nonhuman exploitation by offering a worse fate for both humans and nonhuman animals. The status quo of ethnic difference in *Bee Movie* can

only ever be sustainable when founded on hegemonic structures of class inequality, and this is acknowledged by all participants—the human-nonhuman dynamic moralizes that the bees *should* be tireless workers for the humans because that is the 'natural' biological purpose of bees, and without purpose, the bees have no ethno-cultural meaning to their lives. Moreover, the film clearly presents nature and the ecosystem from the perspective of unmalleable and unwavering biological functional fixedness where certain species not only excel, but are designed for a specific subset of tasks (i.e. humans must take honey from bees to motivate bees to produce honey, bees must produce honey to pollinate flowers). As the ecosystem is symbolic of social class stratification, it cements both the danger and rigidity of class mobility for the Jewish community. While Remy the Rat cooks gourmet food under the auspice of a human avatar, Barry B. Benson is punished for refusing to cooperate in the interdependence of biological functional fixedness which nature dictates by taking responsibility for nearly causing ecological collapse. The difference between these anthropomorphized protagonists challenging the 'natural' order is that Remy disguises his actions through a human figurehead while Barry's openly nonhuman status violates the human monopoly on the anthropogenic discussion. Barry's punishment acts as a form of basic reassurance, the karmic or cosmic balance of being punished for morally 'bad' behaviour. While Barry had morally upright intentions in reclaiming the world's supply of honey, he is punished for the litigious insurrection as the lawsuit rebels against his outsider status as a member of the Jewish class.

As allegories of social class and ethnicity, *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie* seem superficially to promote social mobility through liberation from white hegemonies—they are First Contact films where the human/nonhuman divide is seen through the prism of the middle class and the working class, and nonhuman protagonists who knowingly seek to challenge this divide. In many ways, these films are resolved through token inclusion of

nonhuman animals into the human societal framework: Remy and his rat colony are secretly employed in the kitchen of a restaurant, and Barry continues to allow honey to be sold by humans through a non-detailed stamp of bee approval. These nonhuman characters singularize the Other and allow human privilege only for the most exceptional nonhuman characters without causing the child audience to question the current human-nonhuman *status quo* or invalidate the child audience's prejudices against social class. Although these nonhuman characters contravene species/class norms, the child audience is also never presented with any actionable morals for either rising in social strata or coping with the current system; as the aphorism goes, these exceptional nonhuman characters are *exceptions*—they prove the rule. By making exceptions on a strictly individualistic basis, children's films offer only the slightest possibility of social mobility and transcending social class while largely reaffirming the general legitimacy of class hegemony. Like gender roles in *Lost in Translation* films, social class in *First Contact* films seem to operate under an essentialist worldview.

Part II: Singular Human Perspectives in First Contact Films

In First Contact films with dual perspectives, nonhuman animals phenomenologically parallel human lives, acting as lower social class and ethnic counterparts to human lives. In First Contact films that take a singular human perspective, the codification of social class is far less apparent because the phenomenological lifestyle similarities are more difficult to compare. As outlined in Chapter 3, anthropomorphism prioritizes gendering an animal because gender identities have an immediacy and consistency to understanding an individual's identity while other elements of identity are more malleable. In First Contact films with a singular human perspective, anthropomorphism also racializes or ethnicizes nonhuman animals to more fully render nonhuman animals' identities as a means of better informing their interactions with human characters. The Todorovian reaction towards the seemingly impossible or otherwise inexplicable phenomena (the transgressing kindness between human and nonhuman animals) is far more keenly felt when the narrative is framed through a singular human perspective, with humans more strongly expressing denial and giving closer interrogation of the seemingly-impossible phenomena. As these nonhuman perspectives are more Othered to the film's audience, the direction of the renegotiations of human-nonhuman boundaries is less clear as the audience understands much less of the nonhuman intentions, modes of social interaction between the human and nonhuman, and the anthropomorphized characters' emotional and intellectual capabilities.

Dr. Dolittle (Thomas, 1998) is a strong demonstration of how ethnicizing and racializing anthropomorphized animals affirms problematic ethnic and racial social differences for minorities, and why coupling ethnic and racial stereotypes to an anthropomorphized character's species confirms those differences. Unlike *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie* which use nonhuman characters as initial points of identification as entry into the

narratives, *Dr. Dolittle* depersonalizes anthropomorphized characters through a marked absence of nonhuman perspectives. This depersonalization strongly codifies social difference into the human-nonhuman dynamic through the logic of cultural racism. As outlined in the next section, this cultural racist logic mirrors a framework of nonhuman animal totemism. The referencing to the framework of totemism itself helps to resonate cultural racism and absolve hegemonies of social difference for portrayals of ethnic prejudice and stereotypes.

Racial Coding, Anthropomorphism and Cultural Racism

As outlined in the second and third chapter of this thesis, species selection in anthropomorphism naturalizes qualities of social identities through the guise of biological determinism, and such a guise may often be framed through the lens of ethnicity and race. As referenced in *Lost in Translation*, in his essay 'Why Look at Animals?' John Berger appraises the role of nonhuman animals in human society from the origins of society itself from a largely anthropological perspective, and elucidates reasons for the ubiquity of nonhuman animal imagery in all human cultures. While nonhuman animals did offer a utilitarian function to humans (i.e. food, clothes, work, and transport), Berger rejects the origin of the human fixation on nonhuman animals solely being a lust for commodities as merely a projection of post-nineteenth century attitudes onto the history of human imagination (Berger, 2). Instead, Berger posits that nonhuman animals were the first symbolic proof that humans found that they were not animals (proof which predated language, and was among the first uses of symbolic reasoning in humankind), and the 'transcendence' of this revelation initiated the duality of humans as being in contrast to an animal as not-being (Berger, 10). There are two points that Berger makes in this essay that are relevant to the ethno-racial coding in anthropomorphized animals in children's films. The first is that different nonhuman species, either through their functionality as resources or biological disposition, are separate,

supposedly natural 'totems' that embody different human qualities. These totems may not be a form of hard anthropocentrism (where the universe has created them to externalize human qualities) but they have arisen from a system where humans are the only transcendent animal, exemplifying an anthropocentric species stratification as an ecological, rather than social, phenomenon. The second issue Berger raises is that totemizing nonhuman animals as the embodiment of human qualities is a tribalistic or pre-civilized impulse that has largely declined due to the physical marginalization of nonhuman animals in society. Anthropomorphism, Berger asserts, is the post-Industrial Revolution 'residue' of this nonhuman totemic understanding of humanity (Berger, 9).

Although scientific racism in academic and societal discourses is largely denounced, Berger's framing of different nonhuman species via totems of human qualities as a pre-civilized inclination facilitates a structure of cultural racism. In his essay 'Hunting and Gathering as Ways of Perceiving the Environment', Tim Ingold ethnographically surveys non-Western cultures to assert that the cultural construct of nature as some geographic, spiritual, and ecological phenomenon antonymic of human society (what Westerners label as 'culture') is a uniquely Western ideology. For Western cultures, 'nature' is something from which human civilization originated from, but is something from which modern human life is generally to be excluded. Ingold notes that many non-Western societies do not have a divide between the cultural/natural wherein the internal human lives and anthropogenic environments are delineated from some external world of nature and animals. Instead, many non-Western societies (Ingold explicitly identifies the North American Cree, the Aboriginal Australians, and the Alaskan Natives) often interpret all organisms (human and nonhuman) as having both personal and interconnected relations between themselves, other species, and with the environment. Following this, in his essay 'The Theory of Cultural Racism' J.M. Blaut characterizes modern cultural racist theory as a shift from racial inferiority grounded in

biology to racial inferiority grounded in culture (Blaut, 2). Blaut illustrates the logic of cultural racist theory, positing that

such a theory would have to accept two propositions opposed to biological racism, propositions which were axiomatic in non-European communities: that Europeans are not innately superior, and that economic development can bring non-Europeans to the same level as Europeans. The problem was to show that non-Europeans, though equal to Europeans in innate capacity, cannot develop economically to the European level unless these societies voluntarily accept the continued domination by European countries and corporations, that is, neocolonialism. [Non-Europeans] are not racially, but rather culturally backward in comparison to Europeans because of their history: their lesser cultural evolution . . . Non-Europeans were thereby defined as inferior in attained level of achievement, not potential for achievement. This [is] the real essence of cultural racism (Blaut, 293).

Although Blaut never phrases cultural racist theory in such a way, describing cultural racist theory's supposition that lesser cultures are 'backward' implies a model of linearity in the progression of all human cultures, and that Europeans are simply further along this linear progression than non-Europeans. This linearity mirrors Ingold's Western duality of nature/culture and the progression of humans out of 'nature' and into 'culture'. From Ingold and Blaut, one principle of cultural racism should be affirmed: cultural racism proposes that the inferiority of non-European races is due to their lesser cultural evolution, and that by

being less culturally evolved, non-European races have some stronger affinity with 'nature'. To return to Berger's argument on the totemic use of nonhuman animals to understand human qualities, cultural racist logic would posit that totemizing nonhuman species through perceived human qualities is a cultural practice amongst the 'less culturally evolved' non-European races. From this logic, the cultural racism found in the ethnic coding of anthropomorphized animals is not European imperialism. Instead, the non-European stereotypes found in a totem-esque framework originate from the non-European cultures themselves. This logic absolves criticisms of European cultural racism towards ethnic and racial minorities by recasting the propagation of social difference amongst ethnicized and racialized anthropomorphized animals as a non-European practice.

In contrast to *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie*, there is not one single predominant nonhuman species in *Dr. Dolittle* with which to easily dichotomize human and nonhuman animals by simply contrasting humans with a single nonhuman species, and by extension, isolate the non-dominant group as one kind. Instead, the wide varieties of nonhuman species fracture the nonhuman caste and creates a complex hegemony of different nonhuman species (although all nonhuman species are still subjugated to humans). With this fracturing of the nonhuman, the order of the nonhuman hegemony reaffirms racial social difference through the ethnic and racial codification of species and the varying levels of prestige with which species are portrayed. Another difference of these films is medium: *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie* are entirely CGI films so the physical representation of their anthropomorphized animals' phenomenological decontextualization is relatively incongruous. In contrast, *Dr. Dolittle* is a live-action film where the nonhuman animals have only the subtlest animation to visualize their mouths moving as they speak. By using live-action animals, the film relies far more heavily on vocal performances to encode human identities in nonhuman animals. In *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie*, the visual re-skinning of nonhuman animals to human is also

much clearer; nonhuman animals have eyes, mouths, teeth, hands, and feet that are identical in anatomy and kinesiology (shape and movement). The live-action nonhuman animals in *Dr. Dolittle* are more visually Othered by lacking resemblance to the human form and this Othering informs the manner in which ethnic and racial coding is relayed.

Dr. Dolittle

The film *Dr. Dolittle* (Thomas, 1998) follows the eponymous Dr. John Dolittle, a middle-class African-American doctor with a San Francisco general practice who is also the patriarch of an all-black heteronormative family. After psychologically repressing the fact that he can speak to nonhuman animals in his childhood, Dolittle re-discovers his 'gift' after hitting a dog with his car, leading him to suddenly understanding all nonhuman animals as if they were speaking English (no other humans can hear the nonhuman characters speaking, even when the humans are present as nonhuman animals speak to Dolittle). Dolittle is given a medical check by both a neurologist and psychiatrist although no scientific cause for his ability is ever ascertained (Dolittle's father asserts to Dolittle's wife that Dolittle really can talk to nonhuman animals, and in the sequel films, Dolittle's daughters can also speak to nonhuman animals, which suggests some genetic component). After struggling to deal with his medical practice, family life, and acting as a medical consultant for nonhuman animals, Dolittle eventually performs major neurosurgery on a circus tiger to remove the tiger's chronic pain. In the film's coda, Dolittle accepts his ability to talk to nonhuman animals and tells his dog Lucky that, as a doctor, he will treat human and nonhuman patients as 'we're all basically the same'.

Dr. Dolittle has far stronger racial undertones than *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie* which codify their anthropomorphized animals along more ethnic lines. While Remy the Rat and Barry B. Benson are coded as ethnic minorities, they are still symbolic racially white characters and their interactions with humans are largely confined to white humans. The

Dolittle family are all played by black actors but very little non-white racial performativity is demonstrated by these characters. As Dolittle begins speaking with nonhuman animals, the film frames the Dolittles (as well as all humans) as dominant, while nonhuman characters perform as stereotypical ethno-racial minorities. Opening the film with a black protagonist and black family helps anticipate criticisms of the problematic aspects of racial differences in nonhuman animals later in the film by establishing the narrative as being framed by a character who is visibly a racial minority.

There are three prominent nonhuman species in *Dr. Dolittle*: dogs, owls, and tigers. The prominent anthropomorphized characters of these species display no stereotypically non-dominant ethnic or racial qualities, while their vocal performances and behaviours (in clear contrast with other nonhuman animals who are ethnicized and racialized) are racially coded as white. The nonhuman species coded as white in *Dr. Dolittle* are all relatively admired by Western cultures, and the prominent dogs, owls, and tigers act as characters where there is some capacity for the audience's emotional investment. The first to appear is the domesticated dog. The prologue of the film opens with Dolittle as a child, talking to the pet dog who is his 'best friend'. The other major dog of the film is Lucky who acts as Dolittle's sidekick after Dolittle hits Lucky with his car, and is the first dog that Dolittle hears speak English. Lucky becomes the Dolittle family pet, speaks in a casual, carefree way towards Dolittle, and helps motivate Dolittle to help medically treat nonhuman animals in pain, even after the stress of keeping his ability secret causes Dolittle to commit himself to a psychiatric facility. The species of dog has largely positive cultural connotations in Western societies and more than any other species, dogs have bonded to humans and shaped and been shaped by humans (Tacon, Pardoe, 52). Dogs are also seen as the artistic embodiment of loyalty, fidelity, and faithfulness (J. Hall, 105) ('Animal Symbolism', *Incredible Art*).

The second nonhuman species that is coded racially white is a barn owl with a woman's voice (the only noteworthy feminine nonhuman animal in the film). The owl's initial introduction differs from the previous talking nonhuman characters (Rodney the guinea pig, Lucky the dog, and some bickering pigeons) by being presented in a calm fashion. Rodney and Lucky are often framed through frenetic handheld shots and shown with a busy background in their scenes—by contrast, the owl is framed through very still medium-shots against a forest and gently-lit night sky. The owl (voiced by white actress Jenna Elfman) is the first nonhuman animal that speaks to Dolittle and invokes a civilized reaction from him, calmly requesting him to remove a twig lodged in the owl's wing which Dolittle acquiesces. The owl also later brings a swarm of malady-stricken nonhuman animals to Dolittle's human residence to petition his medical expertise. While not as beloved as dogs, owls are often seen as symbols of wisdom in Western societies (Mearns, 26). Having a tangible nonhuman white feminine character presence helps to give range to the codification of the white identity in nonhuman animals which contrasts with otherwise reductive codifications of ethnic or racial caricatures in other species. The third nonhuman species coded as white is the tiger, namely one specimen from the circus called Jake (voiced by Albert Brooks) who Dolittle talks from jumping to his death and later operates on to relieve Jake's chronic and painful migraines. Unlike dogs or owls, tigers are completely foreign to San Francisco and native to Asia and thus a tiger would be the most likely to be racialized or ethnicized based on country of origin. However, Jake the Tiger is vocally coded as white and his bemoaning of his declining career as a once-successful headliner to the circus mirrors those of successful (white) Hollywood celebrities.

In contrast to the nonhuman animals codified as 'white', there are several nonhuman species (mostly with an ancillary presence) who are characterized as modern ethnic and racial stereotypes, re-skinned to humorously match the species' traditional rhetorical particularity.

These characters are also often presented as a source of frustration for Dolittle, affirming a standoffish stigma to ethnic and racial minorities. The most prominent racialized nonhuman character is the guinea pig that Dolittle's daughter owns. The guinea pig (named Rodney) speaks with an African-American cadence, references the hip-hop scene by calling for love between 'East Coast [and] West Coast, let's unite!' and is recognizably voiced by Chris Rock (an African-American comedian whose material is often lined with explicit and provocative race-related comedy). Dolittle finds Rodney a source of antagonism, first as Rodney is the first nonhuman animal that Dolittle comprehends speaking to him as an adult, triggering a nervous breakdown, as well as Rodney's uncouth attitude. Conversations (often with an antagonistic or irritated tone) between Dolittle and Rodney are often edited through shot/reverse-shot, where Dolittle is cut away from mid-sentence to focus on Rodney's reaction, undermining Dolittle's supposed superior hegemonic position as human. Another prominent ethnicized nonhuman animal is a circus monkey who speaks with a French accent and who Dolittle treats for alcoholism. The monkey (with an exaggerated French voice) denies his exorbitant alcohol intake with claims that he is 'merely a social drinker', playing on stereotypes of the French as heavy drinkers. A third ethnicized nonhuman animal species are two brown rats that are situated in a trash can outside Dolittle's medical clinic and who speak in Mexican accents. These rats are rough-housing with each other, and, when they aggressively ask Dolittle what he is looking at, Dolittle replies 'I'm just looking at a couple of greasy rats fighting over some garbage . . . what if I take that light bulb, put it between your butt cheeks and make a rodent lamp out of you? How about that?! Let me tell you something. I'm a human! I'm a human!' Dolittle's assertion of species domination by claiming his status as human gives him the right to physically assault nonhuman animals symbolically naturalizes the legitimacy for racial minorities to be subjected to hostility and violence by the dominant racial groups. The low-angle shot of Dolittle over the rats as he threatens them

emphasizes how he towers over them, the hegemonic levels of species domination made physical.

The hegemony of nonhuman species in *Dr. Dolittle* couples the symbolic white identity with empathetic and respectable species (dogs, owls, and tigers) while caricaturizing ethnic and racial stereotypes as species with rhetorical particularities of far lower nobility (guinea pigs, monkeys, and brown rats). By fracturing the nonhuman subject from one species to many species, the codification of nonhuman animals shifts this interpellation from one simple difference between humans and nonhuman animals to a layered difference in differences. Within this fracturing is a hegemony of codified ethnic and racial identities between various nonhuman species with the potential to interpellate social difference. This fracturing of codification echoes Berger's framework of totemic animals, but where Berger's totems embodied human qualities without ethnic or racial codification, *Dr. Dolittle* couples ethnic and/or racial identities to different animals in order to signify their social position. Codifying a secondary set of ethnic and racial difference when anthropomorphising an animal absolves dominant groups of the symbolic cultural racism in First Contact films by reflecting the animal totemic framework (what may be seen as a non-European cultural practice). This totemic framework in a contemporary text may be interpreted as originating from non-dominant 'backward' cultures. As it comes from the practice of non-dominant cultures, the hegemony and social difference that arise from the framework is a form of internalized difference. From the perspective of cultural racism, rather than this social difference which de-values ethnic and racial minorities being overlaid by external dominant cultures, the difference originates from such minorities. As such difference is seen as an internal phenomenon, the prejudices of minorities is self-directed and creates the impression that opportunities to challenge this hegemony rest within the ethnic and racial minorities and not with dominant groups. By absolving dominant racial and ethnic groups of this hegemony, the

totemic framework in children's films both reflects and reinforces existing societal hegemonies and encourages inertia to current racial and ethnic differences.

Social Difference in First Contact Films

First Contact films engage in symbolic non-dualistic structures that interpellate ideologies of class, ethnic, and racial difference. Differing from the colonial narratives about the meetings between two human cultures, coding social identities through the anthropomorphism of nonhuman animals creates a multiplicity of recognizable points of identification for the audience for child viewers to transition their identification between nonhuman and human characters. Using nonhuman animals as principal players in the renegotiation and transgression of social boundaries resonates with child audiences—not because children are recalling the miniaturized (or quite literally un-adulterated) versions of social prejudices in adult society that are imposed on them by their aged counterparts, but because children in Western societies have been empirically shown to have their own inclinations to social prejudices. Younger children are more likely to view social class as an unchanging facet of identity, with the means of social mobility to be individualistic rather than institutional, and to think more negatively about those of lower social classes (although children, whether they are middle-class or not, usually perceive themselves to possess middle-class lifestyles). Children often develop forms of ethnic and racial prejudice, and these forms of prejudice do not necessarily originate from the intentional lessons or actions from the adults around them but arise from more circuitous and unintuitive routes of psychological development (Aboud, 5). Children's films do not challenge children's predilection for prejudice by attempting to invalidate their discrimination and biases. Instead, they legitimate such prejudice by using representations of prejudiced stereotypes as an externalization of prejudice while also defanging such representations as a means of de-threatening the potential danger to a child's

psychological foundation.

Although this chapter has focused on how First Contact films often passively support children's views of social prejudice, I would posit that these films are not wholly negative for challenging ideologies of institutional social equity. While children's films may repudiate social difference on anything except on an individualistic basis, the individualistic basis is an early precedent for social mobility; the non-existence of social difference in children's films would deny the existence of prejudice for an audience who may lack the self-awareness to realize what discourses they are engaging in. Just as First Contact films imagine possibilities of individualistic social mobility in non-dualistic structures as a progression to the intractable, indefatigable binaries of *Lost in Translation* films, the human-nonhuman dynamics of First Contact films lay groundwork for Tourist films to lay broader challenges to ingrained social difference—where the codifications of first contact explore racial and ethnic differences, Tourist films pick up the discourse on nationalistic divisions.

Chapter 5: The Tourist

The term 'Tourist Films' refers to films which feature human-nonhuman characters recognizing an explicitly artificial form of interspecies kindness. Unlike characters in *First Contact*, the Tourist film's interspecies kindness is not miraculous and inexplicable but achieved through some explicit technological or magical process. For instance, in *The Wild Thornberrys Movie*, human protagonist Eliza Thornberry is only able to converse with nonhuman animals after being given a magical gift by a mystic shaman. In *Brother Bear*, human protagonist Kenai is abducted by his indigenous Alaskan ancestral spirits and transformed into a bear as penance for acting against his tribe's wisdom. Through machines, voodoo rituals, shaman blessings, or magical potions, human and nonhuman animals acknowledge an artificial interspecies kindness between them, thus Tourist films do not posit the human-nonhuman animal kindness through some abrupt, innovative socio-biological phenomenon or miraculous 'natural' transcendence that imagines the possibility of permanent change to the human-nonhuman status quo. Instead, Tourist films present transcending the human/nonhuman animal dyad as an intentional, abnormal, and (importantly) reversible act of rupturing the species divide, a non-threatening exploration of transgressing the divide. While *First Contact* films often revolve around the premise of the surprising transcendence of human-nonhuman kindness, Tourist films can vary the amount of dramatic focus on interspecies kindness as this kindness does not inherently pose a seismic societal shift of species hegemony compared to *First Contact*. Although there are children's films which feature nonhuman tourists (Golden Retriever Dug in *Up*, Steve the Monkey in *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*), these nonhuman tourists are almost always peripheral to the film's

premise and their positions within the story are ancillary at best. Due to this narrative sidelining of nonhuman tourists, this chapter will focus on films featuring human tourists who use the human-nonhuman dynamic as a means of exploring major themes. For this thesis, 'Tourist' will be capitalized when referring to the category of films in which human and nonhuman animals share some artificial form of interspecies kindness; in contrast, 'tourist' will be spelled in lower-case to refer to the characters who achieve this kindness.

Just as *Lost in Translation* films exemplify symbolic social differences based in gender, and *First Contact* films exemplify symbolic social differences based in race, ethnicity, and social class, *Tourist* films exemplify a certain type of symbolic social difference, the kind found between different nationalities. The discourse of nationhood resonates with the transitory nature of the human-nonhuman dynamic as the impermanent and transient way in which the kindness between human and nonhuman animals is treated. As such, the human-nonhuman dynamic parallels the ways in which national identities can be shared, appropriated, exhibited, and re-purposed. *Tourist* films featuring human tourists often have these tourists as the protagonists, usually unwillingly or unexpectedly transformed from human to nonhuman animal (as opposed to intentionally crossing the human-nonhuman divide). Before delving into how *Tourist* films symbolize and allegorize nations and nationalities, it should be first established for theoretical purposes what constitutes a nation. In his 1983 book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Benedict Anderson notes the historic lack among intellectuals over how to define a nation in the context of discourses around nationhood. Unlike other elements of human identity such as gender, race and ethnicity, and religion, there have been few (if any) philosophers and academics pre-dating the nineteenth century specializing in or widely renowned for their analyses in issues of nationality and nationhood. Anderson argues that the concept of nationhood is a relatively recent innovation in terms of identity politics, arising in

the eighteenth century as a distinct continuation from previous modes of collective kindness (common languages and dynastic systems) (Anderson, 4). Anderson's own thesis is that nations are 'imagined communities'; 'it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson, 6).

Anderson's definition of nations as imagined communities come with three inherent qualities about the ways in which nations understand themselves. The first quality of a nation is that it is limited (Anderson, 7). A nation cannot encompass all of humankind (nor should a nation wish to convert the entire human population into its citizenry like a religion might set out to do), and outside of a nation's limits must necessarily exist other nations. Another quality of a nation is that it is imagined as having sovereignty over itself. Anderson argues that the pluralism of religions that exist within a nation means no common deity can be understood to rule over them and that therefore the people of the nation must rule over themselves. Anderson's third quality of a nation is that there needs to be a sense of community; '[a nation] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings' (Anderson, 7). Anderson's argument that nations are imagined communities makes the idea of an individual's nationality similar to gender or ethnicity, a fluid, malleable, and elastic construct in which to understand ourselves in relation to others.

Building upon Anderson's argument of nations as imagined communities in his chapter 'National Cultures as "Imagined Communities"', sociologist Stuart Hall writes that 'however different its members may be in terms of class, gender or race, a national culture seeks to unify them into one cultural identity, to represent them all as belonging to the same great

national family', positing that the key to this imagined community of national culture is in its condition of belonging (S. Hall, 296). This notion of the 'national family' is similar to Anderson's 'community' but emphasizes the idea of active participation in the embracing and self-identifying of a common nationhood, especially in regards to potential other social differences such as class, gender, and race. This nature of voluntary self-identification which national identity espouses is analogous to species tourists who have flexibility and leeway as to how they traverse across the human/nonhuman dyad. Another aspect of the Tourist human-nonhuman dynamic which resembles the conceptualization of nationhood is the explicit struggle of paradox: a tourist must wrest with the idea of being *both* human and nonhuman, just as members of a shared nationality conceptualize their nation as 'a rich and inalienable relationship of specifiable compatriots [while] at the same time it connects anonymous strangers most of whom will probably never even pass each other in the street' (James, xi). Just as species tourists grapple with how to exist as human and nonhuman simultaneously, members of a shared nationality must come to terms with feeling a brotherly kinship to those who may be complete strangers and share a sense of unity with people of a different social class, gender, religion, race and/or ethnicity. For these reasons, the stories of Tourist films often symbolically explore notions of nationhood and national identity.

Stuart Hall posits that nations are not concrete classifications or collections of people, and that 'national identities are not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to representation . . . It follows that a nation is not only a political entity but something which produces meanings—a system of cultural representation. People are not only legal citizens of a nation; they participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its national culture' (S. Hall, 292). Hall considers a nation as a socially constructed discourse, a means of understanding systems of symbols and representations which produce meaning for one's identity. Drawing upon then-recent theoretical works on nationhood by academics such

as Benedict Anderson and Homi Bhabha, Hall identifies five core elements which together comprise a nation:

i) 'First, there is the narrative of the nation, as it is told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture. These provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which stand for, or represent, the shared experiences, sorrows, and triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation' (S. Hall, 292).

ii) 'Secondly, there is the emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness. National identity is represented as primordial "there, in the very nature of things", sometimes slumbering, but ever ready to be "awoken" from its "long, persistent and mysterious somnolence" to resume its unbroken existence. The essentials of the national character remain unchanged through all the vicissitudes of history. It is there from birth, unified and continuous, "changeless" throughout all the changes, eternal' (S. Hall, 293).

iii) A third discursive strategy is the invention of tradition: 'Traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented "Invented tradition" [means] a set of practices, . . . of a ritual or symbolic nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviours by repetition which automatically implies continuity with a suitable historical past' (S.

Hall, 294). One example that Stuart gives of the invention of tradition is the pageantry of the British monarchy and its several public ceremonies within the British nation. While the monarchy and their ceremonies appear timeless, their modern form has in actuality only been standardized within the last two centuries.

iv) 'A fourth example of the narrative of national culture is that of a foundational myth: a story which locates the origin of the nation, the people and their national character so early that they are lost in the mists of, not "real", but "mythic" time. Invented traditions make the confusions and disasters of history intelligible, converting disarray into "community"' (S. Hall, 295).

v) 'National identity is also often symbolically grounded on the idea of a pure, original people or "folk". But, in the realities of national development, it is rarely this primordial folk who persist or exercise power' (S. Hall, 295).

Hall specifically notes that race and ethnicity are intersectional constructs to nationhood but are not synonyms (S. Hall, 298). Nationhood can be understood as a coalescence of shared history/mythology, race/ethnicity, social practices and culture, and geography, which together produce a sense of belonging, and may be understood both as an element of identity as well as an umbrella term for the components of nationhood. Part of Hall's stance on nations as imagined communities is the need for nations to perpetuate their national identities—nations cannot continue to exist unless they are passed down by their members. Connected to the

concept of nationhood is nationalism, the promotion of a nation's ideals and national elements. Nations must be somewhat nationalistic, that is to say that the specific ideological character of a nation is something which is not automatically accessed by a nation's newer individuals, but endowed by those already-inculcated members.

This chapter is split into two parts. The first part examines films which reinforce myths and stereotypes of the ways in which pre-colonized indigenous cultures are intrinsically and harmoniously connected to nonhuman animals and 'nature' in ways which Western nations are not. In two films (*Brother Bear* and *The Emperor's New Groove*), this is achieved through the nonwhite protagonists learning similar life lessons after being physically transformed into nonhuman species. These lessons often work to recalibrate and (re)connect adolescents who are skeptical of the traditional and/or 'pure' ways of their people, sending them back to the supposed indigenous wisdom which their people innately possess. The second part of this chapter contemplates the ways in which issues of nationhood are presented through the white saviour narrative. This white saviour figure in Tourist films is most clearly presented in *The Wild Thornberrys Movie* which contains a Euro-American protagonist in Africa who, as her introductory voice-over reminds us, 'can talk to animals'. However, Eliza Thornberry does not simply talk to these African animals—she also acts as their white saviour in order to protect them from white human aggressors.

The films I will be analyzing in in this chapter (*Brother Bear*, *The Emperor's New Groove*, and *The Wild Thornberrys Movie*) are all theatrically-released films financed and released by American-owned companies (Disney and Paramount). I propose that all of these films strongly use the human tourist character as a means of perpetuating stereotypes of indigenous nations, or reinforcing nationalistic myths of American nationhood. These films interpellate the idea that people indigenous to the geography of the United States of America had similar national identities even before colonization, that indigenous people have some

exotic and culturally exclusive connection to nature and nonhuman animals which Western cultures do not, and that Americans have a sense of moral duty to protect non-American nationalities. By doing so, they patronize such cultures and sanitize any violent implications of colonialization, whitewashing pre-colonized indigenous cultures in a way that implies a timelessness to contemporary American nationhood.

Part I: Nature, Indigeneity, and the Nonhuman Animal

One of the cornerstones of the Tourist films is the tripartite bond between nonhuman animals, indigenous cultures, and Western conceptualizations of the quasi-deistic entity of 'nature'. As discussed in both this thesis's literature review and previous chapter (First Contact), Western cultures often conceptualize a divide between 'nature' and 'human civilization' where cultures progressively evolve away from 'nature' and towards Western culture-style 'civilization' (Ingold, 40). Although this divide has already been briefly touched upon in First Contact, this dichotomy should be re-emphasized and more thoroughly explained for Tourist films as it is integral to this category of anthropomorphism. Anthropologist Tim Ingold posits that Western societies have created the human/nonhuman animal binary as such societies believe that the ability to create culture is what separates humans from nonhuman animals. However, culture is thereby simultaneously opposed to nature while being dependent on nature in which this culture may be situated (which means that these two concepts can never be truly separated). Ingold argues that (Western) humans are both opposed to the idea of themselves being animals in nature, but also must deal with the cognitive dissonance in their own human attempts at distancing themselves through culture. Ingold cites Richard Shweder's argument that humans in Western societies create 'intentional worlds', 'for the inhabitants of such a world, things do not exist "in themselves", as indifferent objects, but only as they are given

form or meaning within mental representations. Thus, to individuals who belong to different intentional worlds, the same objects in the same physical surroundings may mean quite different things'. These mental representations of physical objects and environments that individuals use to situate themselves are usually what comes to be known as 'culture' (Ingold, 32). At the same time, there must also be a physical realm for humans, what Ingold terms the 'really natural nature', to be able to map their 'multiple intentional worlds of cultural subjects'. 'Minds cannot subsist without bodies to house them' Ingold writes, 'and bodies cannot subsist unless continuously engaged in material and energetic exchanges with components of the environment. Biological and ecological scientists routinely describe these exchanges as going on within a world of nature' (Ingold, 34). Therefore, 'nature' can be considered in two different modes: the first mode being the objective existence of the environment that precedes and is separate from human culture (the 'really natural' nature). The second mode of nature is the 'culturally perceived' nature of social and cultural operations which humans subjectively create. The 'culturally perceived' form of nature is defined through humans' perceiving part of the world that exists outside of what they have defined as 'culture'.

The two varieties of 'nature' is the basis of a paradox between nature(s) and culture for Ingold who considers that 'between physical substance and conceptual form, [the] dichotomy between nature and culture is one expression, [deeply] embedded within the tradition of Western thought'. The 'really natural' nature is the foundation for our intentional worlds, the worlds in which we are able to create culture through our own understandings, and through the use of culture we create the 'culturally perceived' nature from which we are attempting to distance ourselves. Thus, culture and nature(s) both presuppose each other, while at the same time, create distance from each other. As humans create intentional worlds, and by extension culture, we create societies which are populated by other humans who overlap our own individual intentional worlds. Separated from these intentional human societies and cultures

is the 'really natural' nature which includes physical objects, nonhuman animals, and plants (Ingold, 35). The flaw in Richard Shweder's culture/nature dichotomy which Tim Ingold draws attention to is that humans who determine a living being's 'personhood' by the ability to create intentional worlds of culture and distance themselves from 'nature' fail to recognize that their own capacity of creating culture both creates 'culturally perceived nature' while being created by 'really natural' nature. In other words, Ingold believes that personhood cannot simply be qualified through existing as a being of intentional culture and not of nature because nature and culture are intrinsically interlinked and impossible to be separated; beings who create intentional culture are situated within a physical reality of nature, as well as creating the culturally perceived nature in tandem with defining culture. By underscoring this failure, Ingold demonstrates that the human/animal binary cannot be a neat division of culture and nature as culture can never escape its foundation *of creating* nature but also from *existing within* nature.

As nonhuman animals are not seen as creating their own intentional worlds, they are therefore closer to the culturally perceived nature than humans are as well as being perceived as having behaviours free from any moral intention, making such behaviour closer to the universal mechanisms of reality. When a nonhuman animal performs an action, there is no abstraction of personhood involved, and such actions can be read as being communicative of inherent specifications of reality that exist beyond the humans' intentional world. The actions deriving from the nonhuman animal form can be read as originating from some quasi-cosmic realm of 'nature', and that these actions cannot be attributed from within the simple limitations of human discourses, but are instead functions of the schematics of the universe. Ascribing human-like behaviours to the actions of nonhuman animals creates the impression that such human-like behaviours are motivated from following some greater, nonhuman force rather than through human institutions and social rituals. As previously noted, Jack

Halberstam's critique of the 2005 documentary *March of the Penguins* argues that the film's characterization of emperor penguins as animals which show exclusively heterosexual love, lifelong nuclear family units, and sadness at the love of a family member, conveys that these qualities are not merely embedded within specific cultural and political human contexts but are ontological necessities of a living creature's existence (Halberstam, 38). While in reality emperor penguins are not universally heterosexual, do not form lifelong family units, and do not necessarily exhibit sadness at the loss of family members, the film's editing and voice-over of these nonhuman animals to portray such behaviours implies the universal naturalization of these human values (and therefore provides justification to promote and perpetuate such values within human contexts).

Western cultures may view certain pre-colonized indigenous cultures believing their culture to be an intrinsic part of nature (and vice versa), as well as viewing these indigenous cultures as heterotopian nations closer to nature (regardless of historical accuracy). Societies that have been colonized by Western cultures may or may not have had some divide between the culturally perceived entity of nature and human culture (Tim Ingold notes the North American Cree, the Aboriginal Australians, and the Alaskan Natives as examples of cultures which have not historically held a cultural binary delineating between nature and human culture). As previously discussed in *First Contact*, J.M. Blaut theorizes that the cultural racism commonly found in Western civilizations creates a hierarchy of various civilizations based on the degree of 'progress' each civilization has made, with Western civilizations as the apex of progress. Within this hierarchy, cultures that are increasingly dissimilar to Western civilizations are seen as having made little or no progress. Considering the linearity of J.M. Blaut's theory of cultural racism wherein non-Westernized cultures have not progressed as far as Western cultures, Western cultures may also see pre-colonized indigenous people as being closer to nature due to the fact they are divergent from those Western cultures (as Western

cultures represent the cultural racist's eventual endpoint of cultural progression and are therefore the most distant from nature). It is not simply that these indigenous cultures are non-Western, but that they will at some point become colonized or otherwise globalized which, through the lens of Western culture, implies these cultures are incomplete or still in an ongoing process of formative cultural evolution. I would also postulate that Western cultures may view indigenous cultures as based around non-anthropocentric ideologies as these cultures are viewed as antipodal to Western cultures (which are prevalently situated within anthropocentric ideologies). These indigenous cultures may be viewed as rejecting Western anthropocentrism and the vast anthropogenic impact upon the environment, and so they may be considered as existing closer to nature than Western cultures (similar to how nonhuman animals are considered closer to nature). For these reasons, Western cultures may view indigenous people and nonhuman animals as both groups tied to nature but also symbolically linked and totemic of each other.

There are several important implications of the presumed tripartite relationship between indigenous cultures, nonhuman animals, and nature. One of the larger implications of this relationship is the presumption that, similar to nonhuman animals, indigenous cultures behave in ways that are closer to nature than Western ways of living could be, and are therefore 'purer'. In Shepard Krech III's book *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, the author deconstructs the specific stereotype of the pre-colonized Native American as a figure of 'ecological sainthood'. Krech describes the stereotype of the indigenous person as 'the [American] Indian in nature who understands the systemic consequences of his actions, feels deep sympathy with all living forms, and takes steps to conserve so that earth's harmonies are never imbalanced and resources never in doubt' (Krech, 21). Krech also notes that historically, Western perceptions around indigenous nations revolve around nostalgia and conservation (Krech, 18, 22). After Christopher Columbus characterized the American

continent as 'the Islands of the Blessed', Western philosophers have (both allegorically and literally) 'commonly linked several mythic places originating in pagan or Christian thought [to indigenous nations in North America]—notably the Islands of the Blessed, Arcadia, Elysium, the Earthly Paradise, the Garden of Eden, and the Golden Age (collectively, ideas of earthly paradise, eternal spring, and innocent life removed in space or time)' (Krech, 17). By positioning the American continent (and by extension, its indigenous population) as some ancient, idyllic, and bountiful haven, Western imagery of the indigenous Americans has been largely characterized as 'savage' in the sense of being socially unevolved.

This belief of the indigenous American population as 'socially unevolved', which falls under the pseudoscience of scientific racism, does have many real connotations as to the societal perceptions of how such indigenous people are viewed. Most of the imagery of the 'savage' indigenous American (whether they are the rational, vigorous and strongly moral 'noble savage' or the far more derogatory 'cannibalistic, bloodthirsty, inhuman' ignoble savage) suggest 'a nostalgic longing for the past and a simpler life' (Krech, 16, 17). This nostalgia also acts as a way to idealize the sense of environmental conservationism in the indigenous American stereotype, the heart of Krech's 'Ecological Indian' (Krech, 21). Krech notes the ambiguity when trying to differentiate between conservation, environmentalism, and preservation as these three terms are often used interchangeably, but clarifies that when the Ecological Indian stereotype is linked to conservation 'we do not mean that he calculates sustainable yield into the distant future or, in a preservationist-like manner, leaves the environment in an undisturbed pristine state, but rather that he does not waste or "despoil, exhaust, or extinguish" and that he does, with deliberation, leave the environment and resources like [nonhuman] animal populations in a usable state for succeeding generations' (Krech, 25, 26). The Ecological Indian stereotype often implies a culture which is aware of its anthropogenic presence within its environment and connects this awareness to a pristine

moral code. In *Animating Difference: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children*, C. Richard King, Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo support the idea of the Ecological Indian as a nostalgic figure of environmental conservation, and that the appearance of this stereotype in children's films has an important role in conceptualizing the Ecological Indian or similarly pre-colonized indigenous person as morally pure (King *et al*, 56), writing that

engagements with the natural world and indigenous peoples in animated films have opened important spaces to reflect on empire in an era of intensified imperial projects, sometimes glossed as globalization and/or the New World Order, and to return to the well-worn escape routes associated with the wild—the pastoral, the savage, the virginal, the native, the natural—which has always unfolded as a symbolic and experiential space of desire, central to efforts to resolve the contradictions of history, while providing a language to name and even avoid the problems of modernity . . . we would rightly characterize many of these projections and representations as manifestations of 'imperial nostalgia', or the longing for that which one has destroyed through conquest and colonization, in this case a longing for the freedom, lifeways, values, and possibilities associated with the indigeneity in the absence of indigenous peoples devastated by genocidal projects and ideological erasures . . . The entangling of nature and native, especially in the form of a noble savage, has allowed popular culture and educational institutions to revise the stories they tell about us and them, now and

then, wilderness and civilization (King *et al*, 56).

This supposed purity and sainthood of indigenous persons deriving from their connection with nature suggests some moral piety and that these people and cultures choose to act according to some universal design. Individuals from these indigenous cultures are not seen as having a comparable autonomy to someone belonging to a Western culture, but partly as vessels for the intent of the quasi-cosmic entity of nature. By being seen to be influenced or supervised by nature, indigenous persons do not act out of malicious, evil, or villainous intent, but instead following the intent of some quasi-diestic metaphysical force that is 'nature'. This quasi-diestic nature is also often seen as a positive entity, providing life, shelter, sustenance, harmony, and wisdom to all human and nonhuman animals. As they may be seen as acting under the guidance of nature, indigenous persons are more harmonious with nature than people from Western cultures as they are more directly performing actions as extensions of an objective and universal realm of 'nature'. Conversely, Western cultures may view themselves as discordant or morally impure by being distanced from nature (geographically or societally) in ways that indigenous cultures are not. From these diametric oppositions, there is the dichotomy between indigenous cultures and nature vs. Western cultures and moral impurity.

Brother Bear

The representations of indigenous nations in Tourist films often frame these pre-colonized people as possessing a wisdom that semi-spiritually and harmoniously connects them with both the quasi-cosmic entity of nature and nonhuman animals. *Brother Bear* (Blaise, Walker, 2003) is set in a pre-colonized Alaskan wilderness and portrays most (if not all) of the aspects of Krech's Ecological Indian—the indigenous nation in the film is shown to be saintly,

harmoniously interconnected with nature and nonhuman animals on a spiritual level, and espousing some supposed wisdom from a pre-colonized epoch. The film's prologue opens in a way which exoticizes and historicizes indigeneity by opening with an elderly Alaskan narrator starting a campfire in a cave, telling native Alaskan children a story as he draws cave paintings to help illustrate his tale. The film has this narrator diegetically speak Inupiatun (Alaskan Inuit). After a few seconds of speaking, the film overlays the voice of an older American man over of the onscreen Alaskan narrator in order to translate for the (English-speaking) audience (although the Alaskan narrator's Inupiatun voice is still somewhat audible to the viewer underneath the American voice-over). The narration explicitly ties the Alaskan tribe to nature through some mystical connection as well as to nonhuman animals:

This is a story from long ago, when the great mammoths still roamed our lands. It's the story of my two brothers and me. When the three of us were young, we were taught that the world is full of magic. The source of this magic is the ever-changing lights that dance across the sky. The shaman woman of our village told us that these lights are the spirits of our ancestors, and that they have the power to make changes in our world. Small things become big. Winter turns to spring. One thing always changes into another. But the greatest change I ever saw was that of my brother, a boy who desperately wanted to be a man.

The film then cuts to three adolescent Alaskan Native brothers—Kenai (the youngest and the film's main protagonist), Denahi (the middle brother and who is the younger version of the prologue's narrator), and Sitka (the eldest brother)—who are fishing with traditional Inuit canoes (the iconography highly reminiscent of the infamous canoe scene in the landmark

documentary *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty, 1922)). Kenai is then taken to his tribal coming-of-age ritual, where the tribal shaman Tanana bestows upon him a totem as part of the ceremony. After consulting with the spirits at the holy mountain, Tanana selects the 'Bear of Love' as Kenai's totem animal, which disappoints Kenai as he compares it to Denahi's Wolf of Wisdom and Sitka's Eagle of Guidance. This ritualization of assigning animal totems to humans works to analogize and connect the indigenous people with their nonhuman counterparts as directed by the spirits through a shaman/tribal elder.

Later, Kenai rebels against this indigenous cultural practice as if voicing a Western skepticism to this mystical system of interconnectedness between spirits, nature, and nonhuman animals. After Kenai attempts to hunt a bear as revenge for the bear taking the tribe's basket of fish, Sitka sacrifices himself to stop the bear from attacking Kenai and Denahi (albeit the bear is acting in self-defense) by causing an avalanche which sends both Sitka and the bear down the side of a mountain. At Sitka's funeral pyre, Kenai announces to Denahi that he intends to kill the bear who is seen to have walked away from the avalanche which killed Sitka. Attempting to follow his totem of wisdom, Denahi attempts to dissuade Kenai, warning him 'don't upset the spirits' and that 'killing the bear won't make you a man'. Kenai rejects Denahi's warnings and discards his bear totem figurine into the pyre's embers as he heads into the wilderness to find the bear. This rejection of the wisdom of the ancestral spirits and his own totem is framed as impetuous and immature, not only as it is needlessly violent but also because it works against the peaceful harmony between indigenous humans and nonhuman animals orchestrated by nature. One factor in this rejection is Kenai's age as the youngest brother and as an adolescent. Kenai's intent on revenge through hunting seems as though it were an immature act of adolescent rebellion, as if he might inevitably grow out of this rebellion and come to accept the wisdom of his tribe. Through the children's film convention of basic reassurance (where characters are, through cosmic or karmic balance,

rewarded or punished according to their deeds), Kenai is set up to be punished for violating the ecological sainthood of his pre-colonized indigenous nation (ignoring the spirits of his tribe) by hunting a bear and ignoring the wisdom of the spirits.

Kenai eventually finds and kills the bear with a hunting spear on a mountaintop in a violent confrontation. In response to Kenai killing the bear, the spirits (manifesting in the form of the Aurora Borealis) descend from the night sky and surround Kenai with ethereal visions of nonhuman animals and transform him into a bear as penance for killing the bear and to force him to learn more about how to be better connected with nature and nonhuman animals. The next scene, depicting Kenai waking up as a bear in the forest, is very different cinematographically to the previous scenes: when Kenai is a human, the aspect ratio is 1.75:1 and the colours are drab and muted, but when Kenai becomes a bear, the aspect ratio dramatically widens to 2.35:1 and the colours become far more vivid and vibrant (which they will be for the remainder of the film). The first shot with this change of cinematography is a point-of-view shot from Kenai's perspective, emphasizing how Kenai's literal perspective has become more refined and enlivened due to his transformation into a bear, foreshadowing how his mental perspective will soon expand and improve by becoming a nonhuman animal. Kenai's hatred for bears has made him dissonant from the harmony the indigenous Alaskans have with nature and nonhuman animals, and seeing his situation both literally and figuratively through the eyes of a bear is a way of recalibrating and invigorating that innate harmony. The shaman Tanana appears by Kenai's side and appears only mildly surprised that the spirits (namely Sitka's spirit) have transformed Kenai into a bear, and she explains to Kenai that he must travel to 'the mountain where the lights touch the earth' in order for the spirits to change him back into a human. It is worth noting here that although Kenai can apparently understand Tanana (he responds to phrases she says), Tanana cannot hear Kenai's words; to demonstrate this, a shot of Kenai speaking English to Tanana is cut mid-sentence to

another shot from Tanana's perspective where Kenai now seems to simply be making bear noises. Even these indigenous people who are supposedly more spiritually connected to nonhuman animals cannot understand their abilities to speak, and yet nonhuman animals are presumed to understand what humans are saying to them. This uneven unintelligibility does skew the human/nonhuman dynamic towards a slightly anthropocentric model—even when humans are supposedly not the epicentre of the environment in which they live, they still exercise some measure of power over other species by having the ability to speak *to* (and not *with*) nonhuman animals.

After Tanana leaves Kenai to his journey to the mountain, Kenai discovers that he can understand and be understood by all nonhuman mammalian and avian fauna in the forest (nonhuman interspecies intelligibility, especially favouring mammals and birds, is a fairly common convention in films featuring anthropomorphized nonhuman animals). One thing that is striking about the characterization of the anthropomorphized wildlife is the riffing and references to contemporary and anachronistic American culture. Kenai watches a flock of geese fly overhead and hears the voice of a young goose ask 'are we there yet?' to which an older goose curtly answers 'don't make me turn this formation around!', similar to the stereotypical exchange between human children and their parents during automobile journeys. Kenai then encounters a pair of moose who perform as stereotypes of Canadians, speaking in exaggerated Canadian accents, having laid-back, polite yet indecisive personalities, and act comically buffoonish and non-aggressive to Kenai, and are even later seen engaging in a touch of morning yoga. A young, child-like bear named Koda finds Kenai suspended by rope in a hunter's trap and attempts to 'help' by hitting Kenai with a stick, the imagery very resembling a child hitting a piñata, a party game popular in Mexican-American cultures. Kenai then makes a deal with Koda: Koda will help Kenai find the mountain where the spirits touch the earth if Kenai escorts Koda to the 'salmon run' (a gathering of bears with

the intent to catch salmon), formalizing the arrangement with a 'pinky swear' (a custom that is definitely not of indigenous Alaskan origin).

All of the human characters are voiced by clearly white American performers but the use of nonhuman animals referencing contemporary American culture is far more notably anachronistic and incongruent to the temporal and cultural time period of pre-history Alaska. The quirk of using anthropomorphized animals specifically to reference contemporary American cultures may be the film's reliance on the pop-culture knowledge of its audience to demonstrate how nonhuman animals are similar to the film's human audience. Just as Kenai is supposed to feel closer to ecological sainthood as an indigenous Alaskan through becoming a nonhuman animal, the film's audience recognize and feel more familiar with the anthropomorphized animals than the indigenous Alaskan humans (who are somewhat coloured by an ethnographic and historical lens). These references to contemporary American culture help to convey how Kenai's kindness to the nonhuman animals positively dehumanizes him as he integrates with nonhuman animals and nature; as a human, Kenai rejected the indigenous wisdom telling him to be harmonious with nature and nonhuman animals, but as a bear Kenai cannot escape the reality of this wisdom as he is a nonhuman animal.

Kenai's transformed species is later more explicitly used as a way of building interspecies kindness. As Kenai and Koda journey to the salmon run, they discuss their families. Kenai tells Koda that his brother was killed 'by a monster', referring to the bear who stole the basket of fish (Kenai previously calls the bear 'monster' when he tells Denahi he intends to hunt the bear out of revenge). Koda and Kenai later pass by a mural painted on a large stone, depicting a human spearing a bear. 'Those monsters are really scary' Koda says to Kenai, 'especially with those sticks' with a long take of a reaction shot of Kenai reassessing his previous assumptions of monsters by having the species roles reversed. Kenai's revelation

is punctuated through the lingering long takes of Kenai's eyeline match gazing at the mural's depiction of the human with a spear with a close-up reaction shot of Kenai's shocked and ashamed facial expressions at his own role as a monster to the bears. One curious facet is the film's use of a mural to visualize Kenai's revelation as it reflects the cave painting the Alaskan narrator uses in the prologue to set up the narration of the film. I would posit that the connection to the Alaskan narrator during Koda's story works to suggest how narratives are used to build perceptions of the roles that people (human or anthropomorphized) play. Kenai assigns bears the role of 'monster' when the presence of a bear ends his brother, but as a bear, is forced to confront the notion that humans play the role of 'monsters' to bears.

Kenai's epiphany of species reversal in the name of interspecies kindness is intertwined with his human brother Denahi's side-plot in the film. Denahi has been tracking Kenai in bear form as he mistakenly believes that Kenai's bear form has killed Kenai, and attempts to spear Kenai's bear form several times in the same feeling of vengence that Kenai had for Sitka's death at the hands of a bear. Kenai eventually learns that Koda is travelling alone because Koda's mother was the bear which Kenai (as a human) murdered, and when Kenai confesses this to Koda, he acknowledges the ambiguity of these divisions by saying 'I have a story to tell you [Koda] . . . well, it's kind of about a man, and kind of about a bear. But mostly it's about a monster. A monster who did something so bad'. Kenai's confession to Koda is framed as a moment of the human tourist taking responsibility for being unable to overcome speciesist divisions, emphasized through the use of a Phil Collins power ballad in the soundtrack. This theme of 'humans were the real monsters all along' is nothing new to fiction (e.g. H.G. Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (Wise, 1951)) but the dialogue's overt labelling of humans as monsters in children's films is far less prevalent compared to non-children's fantasy and science-fiction cinema. In Kenai's character arc, this theme is used to suggest that there are no divisions

between monsters and non-monsters, that there are merely fallacious preconceptions based on prejudices. Just as there are no real divisions between monsters and non-monsters, there are no significant divisions between human and nonhuman animals, but humans (at least, those indigenous people with this 'wisdom') and nonhuman animals are of one kind—a kind of life which is an extension of 'nature'.

The climax of the film is set on the top of the mountain where the lights touch the earth where Kenai, Koda, and Denahi are engaged in a fight. Sitka's spirit descends from the light to reverse Kenai's transformation and change him back into a human. Kenai is initially happy about this but when he realizes that Koda, now without a mother, needs someone to take care of him, Kenai asks Sitka's spirit to change Kenai into a bear once again so he may take care of Koda. Kenai's volunteering to become a nonhuman animal demonstrates that he now embraces the 'wisdom' of the indigenous Alaskan tribe, that he has overcome his belief in the prejudices and division between species. This reversal from Kenai's initial rejection of the spirits' wisdom and indigenous harmony with nonhuman animals to his embracing of such concepts is also reflected in the reversal of his familial status, as he has transitioned from being the youngest of his human siblings to being an older brother figure to Koda. In the film's epilogue, Kenai (as a bear) is shown having another coming-of-age ceremony with his human tribe, as the Alaskan narrator says 'my brother Kenai went on to live with Koda and the other bears. He taught me that love is very powerful, and I passed on the wisdom of his story to our people: the story of a boy who became a man by becoming a bear'. Again, there is this emphasis on the wisdom of the pre-colonized Alaskan natives around interspecies kindness and nature that is key to the resolution of Kenai's rejection of the beliefs of the indigenous people. The use of the Inupiatun/American voice-over and Kenai's coming-of-age ritual as a means of bookending the film suggests that Kenai's story has come full circle—he has been restored to the harmony with nature of which his indigeneity has always made him

capable. By choosing to indefinitely remain a bear to act as a foster brother bear for Koda, the film depicts Kenai as a saint who uses his indigenous wisdom for the benefit of a nonhuman animal (and thereby sacrificing his human life) as to a wise Alaskan native, pre-colonized indigenous humans and nonhuman animals have some inherent connectivity which Western humans lack.

The Emperor's New Groove

The Emperor's New Groove (Dindal, 2000) is, like *Brother Bear*, another Tourist film which features another pre-colonized indigenous nation (the nation is said to be in Mesoamerica and appears Incan in its mise-en-scène although this is never explicitly identified within the film itself). *The Emperor's New Groove* features a pre-colonized indigenous American nation just as *Brother Bear* does. However, *The Emperor's New Groove* less explicitly explores themes of how indigeneity, nonhuman animals, and nature inevitably must coalesce for ecological sainthood; instead, the film uses the representation of pre-colonized indigenous Mesoamerican people and their relationship with nonhuman animality as a means of critiquing the imperialism of American corporatization upon non-American nations. Although it does not use the specific imagery of Krech's Ecological Indian, there are several striking thematic similarities between how these two films interpellate the intimate symbolic and existential connections between the pre-colonized indigenous people and nonhuman animals.

In *Animating Difference: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children*, C. Richard King, Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo posit that *The Emperor's New Groove* is a film which uses the conflict of the characters as part of a larger cultural movement which commodifies and appropriates the contemporary Latino identity. King, Lugo-Lugo, and Bloodsworth-Lugo note the rise of both Americans with Latin American or Spanish ancestry in the US population since the 1990s, as well as the subsequent

rise in the presence of Latino cultural identities in cultural texts (King *et al*, 78). King, Lugo-Lugo, and Bloodsworth-Lugo consider this rise in Latino identities in popular culture as re-inventing Latino representation around three distinct attributes: 'their brownness, their hotness, and most certainly, their exotic "nature", that is to say, their otherness'. This link between the indigenous Mesoamerican imagery and the re-invented Latino identity, and the use of the film's Incan-esque empire as an allegory for (white) American corporatization and encroaching threat to the lifestyles of the indigenous nations, is the foundation of King, Lugo-Lugo, and Bloodsworth-Lugo's argument that *The Emperor's New Groove* symbolically explores the conflict between white American culture and Latino identities while also implying that 'Latino culture is mainstream-able and consumable' (King *et al*, 88).

The film begins *in media res*, with a title card: 'Long ago, somewhere deep in the jungle . . .'. Although far more hasty than Brother Bear's prologue, the words of the title card again historicize and exoticize the setting, placing the action somewhere in the (unspecified, and therefore implying pre-historic) past, and in a destination that must be far away enough from the viewer that 'somewhere' is vaguely foreign and non-anthropogenicised but as much as they will likely know about such places. The screen then fades to a depressed llama sitting in the jungle during a thunderstorm (who the audience will quickly learn is the eponymous Emperor Kuzco). In a voice-over, Kuzco explains to the audience; 'will you take a look at that? Pretty pathetic, huh? Well, you'll never believe this, but that llama you're looking at was once a human being. And not just any human being. That guy was an emperor. A rich, powerful ball of charisma. Oh, yeah! This is his story . . . well, actually my story. That's right—I'm that llama. The name is Kuzco, Emperor Kuzco'. The film then cuts to the opening credits which depict Kuzco in human form as an adolescent dressed in regal clothes as he luxuriates in a magnificent golden palace. Kuzco is surrounded by flanks of servants in the palace who do absurd tasks to serve him (like building a door into a wall so he can beeline

more easily to his throne, or carrying him to the throne up a flight of stairs when he is perfectly capable of walking). In every shot of Kuzco having some task performed for him by his servants there is a certain balletic gracefulness to the characters' movements, as Kuzco approaches something where he might desire something his servants swing into action in anticipation of his whim.

During this introduction, the camera whip-pans between two images: Kuzco (as a human) comfortably reclining on a pillow on his massive throne, and Kuzco (as a llama) sitting in the jungle during the thunderstorm. As the camera whips back and forth, Kuzco's voice-over emphasizes: 'Okay, this is the real me [human]/ Not this [llama]/ This [human]/ Not this [llama]/ Winner [human]! / Loser [llama]'. This whip-panning between the human and nonhuman versions of Kuzco polarizes the dichotomy by presenting a strong juxtaposition through camera movement; from this dichotomy, the film presents the most 'human' a person can be is a politically powerful, pampered, and sheltered 'winner' and on the reverse of this dichotomy, the least 'human' a person can be is a sad nonhuman animal who is vulnerable and alone. From the voice-over, Kuzco also sets up an expectation of authenticity, that only as a human (and, presumably, as the powerful and comfortable emperor) can he be his 'real' self while his llama self is somehow inauthentic.

The opening of the film also establishes the way in which the Empire is globalized and corporatized and I would argue that the underlying insinuation is that the Empire is globalized *because* it is corporatized. Although ephemeral pop culture references in children's films are far from new, there are many fleeting but instantly recognizable markers of non-South American culture inserted into the imagery of the emperor's palace which strongly hint at the characterization of the Empire as a globalized institution. The opening of the film begins with a song reminiscent of salsa music, describing Kuzco's magnificence, later revealed to be sung by one of Kuzco's servants, a character who wears teashade sunglasses, a

bedazzled white suit with flowing wings on the sleeves, a bouffant hairdo, a golden medallion necklace laid upon a wide open-collared shirt, and a handheld microphone, resembling the white American musical icon Elvis Presley. During this song, Kuzco briefly stands in front of a long line of palace guards as they tap-dance, recalling Riverdance, a theatre show which is heavily inspired by traditional Irish music and dancing. As he dances through his palace, Kuzco trips against an elderly gentleman and accuses the old man of 'throwing [Kuzco] off his *groove*'; '*groove* is a slang term referring to rhythm that is often associated with 1930-1950s jazz or swing music (music genres which, during that time, were predominantly African-American, Afro-Cuban, and/or African-Brazilian) (Kernfeld, *Grove Music Online*). These various cultural icons are features of the Empire because they have presumably been appropriated and become part of the Empire's culture. As such, these cultural icons no longer have their own individual meaning but contribute to a larger amalgamated meaning of the Empire.

The Empire is also characterized in many ways as a corporation. While globalization and the appropriation of cultures as part of a larger unification of cultural texts is not inherently negative, corporatization can often be read as a socially and societally harmful practice (Dayen, *The Nation*) (Lebaron, Dauvergne, *OpenDemocracy*) (Smith, *Salon*) (Willick, *American Interest*). In the film's opening theme song, Kuzco (while sitting on his throne) uses a pair of giant scissors to cut a large silk red ribbon, uses a stamp-like device to kiss the foreheads of three babies, and breaks a champagne bottle on the bow of a ship as it launches. Kuzco later tells his chief advisor (and the film's main antagonist) Yzma that he is removing her from her position using a series of corporate phrases in quick-fire succession: 'you're fired . . . um, how else can I say it? You're being let go, your department's being downsized, you're part of an outplacement, we're going in a different direction, we're not picking up your option'. Kuzco's phrases quickly establish that rather than some government

run through a dynasty, the Empire is far more akin to a company in a capitalist economy. C. Richard King, Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo view this characterization of the Empire as a corporation to be a form of whitewashing that acts as form of historical revisionism to sanitize any implications of colonial violence, positing that

within this context, capitalism is de-historicized and viewers are inculcated into a notion that makes the 'natives' seem like predecessors of U.S. whiteness. It is Disney's way of saying, see, these people really didn't lose (haven't lost) much in the last five hundred years. Capitalism was there, thus whiteness was there. The conquest was just a way of accelerating the inevitable spread of both . . . [The Emperor's New Groove] tells the audience that the indigenous peoples of the Americas have undergone no cultural changes resulting from the conquest and colonization they have endured for over five hundred years . . . history is rewritten and recast in ways that make brutal processes such as genocide and stealing of lands palatable to children and adults alike, making everyone comfortable (King *et al*, 89-91).

The film's historical whitewashing de-legitimizes the independence of Mesoamerican nationhood and instead shapes the Latino identity as dependent upon being an extension of contemporary American culture (which does not yet exist within the film's diegesis, and yet which pre-colonized Mesoamerica shares incredibly striking similarities).

The connection between the Empire as a globalizing entity and a proxy for American corporization is then demonstrated as socially destructive to indigenous nations in the

subsequent scene; it is the American corporation under a capitalist system which threatens to absorb the traditional people and place into its globalized institution for the sole benefit of those running such corporations. Kuzco has summoned the village leader Pacha (the secondary protagonist) to the emperor's throne room. Pacha is shown to have the complete opposite personality to Kuzco; he is middle-aged, wearing simple, traditional clothes (a tunic, sandals, and burlap hat), muscular (implying he does plenty of physical labour), and is humble and helpful (assisting the old man who ruined the emperor's 'groove' and is stuck on a flag pole after being thrown from the palace window as punishment). Kuzco brings Pacha to a model diorama of Pacha's village, where he dramatically flattens Pacha's model house using a gigantic model for 'Kuzcotopia', an enormous, elaborate vacation home that Kuzco is planning as a birthday gift for himself which dwarfs the models of the village houses. When Pacha protests that people live (and for six generations, have lived) in the village that Kuzco is planning to demolish to make room for Kuzcotopia, Kuzco is nonchalant and disinterested, brushing these protests off as something that he does not care about because he is the emperor. As emperor, Kuzco is in a position of total authoritarianism (as CEO of a symbolic megalithic corporation) and therefore believes that this justifies doing whatever he wants without regard to anyone else.

Kuzco's cruel apathy towards the fate of the village and its inhabitants evokes the negative and encroaching imperialism of American corporations on 'traditional' ways of living for indigenous peoples; the symbolic American corporation is completely indifferent to the plight of the indigenous people and is merely interested in furthering the superfluous and ostentatious comfort of those who would directly benefit from exploiting the indigenous land and its people. Kuzco and Pacha's dynamic positions the imperialism of American corporatization as a bureaucratic force which needlessly threatens to displace the 'traditional' indigenous population from 'their' land (for indeed, the village must literally fall under the

jurisdiction of the Empire). Kuzco, a metonymic figure for white American capitalism and materialism, threatens to incorporate and appropriate these traditional lifestyles in order to literally and figuratively deconstruct and redevelop the cultural space into the image of conspicuous consumption. Kuzco's age seems noteworthy as, like Kenai in *Brother Bear*, he pushes against tradition because of his youth, implying that he has not yet been inculcated with the wisdom of his indigenous nationhood which (like Pacha) would oppose such excessive corporatization as a means of constructing an unnecessary second mansion at the expense of the traditional villagers.

Yzma plots to poison Kuzco at dinner as both revenge and as a means of usurping the throne but through a mistake in the poison vials Yzma feeds him a potion which turns Kuzco into a llama (the dining table itself is rather long and oval-shaped like a conference table one might find in a white-collar office environment). Yzma's dimwitted but innocent assistant Kronk takes Kuzco's unconscious llama body out of the city under Yzma's instructions but cannot bring himself to drown the llama and instead drops the llama's body onto Pacha's llama-drawn cart which drives back to the very village Kuzco intends to destroy. Back at Pacha's village, Pacha discovers Kuzco's body on his cart and learns that the llama is the emperor as Kuzco's llama form can talk to Pacha (unlike Kenai in *Brother Bear*, Kuzco's animal form can converse with humans although he does not appear to be able to converse with nonhuman animals). Pacha makes a deal with Kuzco: Pacha will help Kuzco make the four-day journey to the palace where Kuzco expects Yzma can change him back into a human (not yet realizing Yzma has betrayed him) and in return, Kuzco says that he won't build Kuzcotopia on the village's land (although Kuzco quickly reveals he was lying just to convince Pacha to help him). During their journey to the palace, Kuzco goes through several trials and tribulations, having to trust Pacha to save their lives (and then selflessly saving Pacha's life), having to eat food at a restaurant that Pacha, a lowly villager, enjoys, and

overhearing Yzma (who now knows the emperor is still alive) telling Kronk that she wishes to kill and replace the emperor and Kronk notes that no one has missed Kuzco since his disappearance.

These tribulations develop Kuzco's emotional intelligence and self-awareness so that when he and Pacha defeat Yzma and turn Kuzco back into a human and restore him as emperor, Kuzco builds a much smaller summer house in the village that co-exists with the existing villagers. In order to learn the error of his capitalist, corporate, and materialist ways and respect the simple, traditional lifestyles of the villagers, Kuzco cannot simply be ousted as emperor and spend time among the villagers in order to connect with the traditional folk—he must be literally dehumanized first in order to learn his lesson. Although *Brother Bear* more explicitly states that Kenai is to be transformed into a nonhuman animal as a learning opportunity, Kuzco is also forced to learn about the upright morality of the indigenous people because of his dehumanizing transformation; by being forcibly taught a lesson about co-existing with the indigenous people through becoming a nonhuman animal, the film makes the implicit connection that in order to be like the indigenous Mesoamericans, a symbolically white person must be de-humanized. Like *Brother Bear*, this implicit connection links pre-colonized indigenous nations to some intrinsic co-existence with nonhuman animals.

Part II: The Human Tourist and the White Saviour

Part II of this chapter will consider ways in which Tourist films stress issues of nationhood through the form of the white saviour narrative. In the book *The White Saviour Film: Content, Critics, And Consumption*, sociologist Matthew W. Hughey notes the widespread use of this trope in film and television, and its ideological racial underpinning. Hughey asserts that while most white saviour narratives are perceived as avoiding issues of race, or addressing racial issues by moralizing togetherness and integration of different racial groups, the conventions of the white saviour narratives actually evoke racial biases in audiences and affirm white supremacy, often through white paternalism; Hughey also asserts that the prevalence of white saviour narratives has steadily been increasing over the past few decades (Hughey, *White Saviour* 18). 'These films commit a great deal of labor in constructing and fortifying both the category of white racial identity and a normative (and even moral or progressive) pattern of interracial interaction' Hughey writes. 'That is, in a quarter century (1987–2011) of marked racial tension, unease, progress, and conflict, these films work to repair the myth of a great white father figure whose benevolent paternalism over people of color is the way things not only have been but should be'. Hughey notes that there are seven general conventions of the white saviour narrative:

- i. The white interloper's intrusion on a nonwhite culture that is, or soon will be, under assault [often from other white entities].
- ii. The white protagonist must begin, through his grace, to save nonwhite people from an impending disaster. Generally, white saviours are kind and beneficent characters, even if their displacement

among people of colour was precipitated by their own moral failings.

iii. The white saviour often experiences pain and torment. Many saviours are immediately cast as disheveled or temporarily broken people who struggle with the sins of their past. However, their contact with people of color brings out their inner saviour. They rise to the occasion, overcoming their insecurities and hang-ups and dedicating their lives to saving their newfound nonwhite friends.

iv. The white saviours are commonly positioned next to two types of other characters to distinguish them and make them all the more bearable. First, the saviour is juxtaposed with racist, domineering, completely uncaring, and extremely violent white characters. Second, a nonwhite community, suffering a social malaise or ailment, surrounds the saviour and contextualizes his character development.

v. Another common dimension of the white saviour film is the patterned conflation of whiteness with an ethic of hard work, delay of gratification, and a mindset wholly focused on the individual triumph over obstacles. This dimension is particularly flexible and grounds the white saviour as the source of social uplift and redemption through an array of characters and cinematic plots.

vi. Another dimension of these films is the colonialist fantasy that situates whiteness (especially U.S. and European whiteness) as the

*par excellence*⁸ manifestation of civilization and rationality relative to the construction of blackness (especially African, West Indian, South American, and U.S. inner-city American) as savage, emotional, and even exotically magical in its quaint and premodern folkways.

vii. Many of these films claim they are based on a true story or directly refer to historical events of a highly racialized nature . . . Many defend the supposed lack of ideological slant or racial politics in these films by noting that they are based on actual, historical events.

Hughey considers the tropes of the 'noble savage', 'manifest destiny', 'white man's burden', and 'great white hope' as precursors, and in some ways, ideological foundations of the white saviour film (Hughey, *White Saviour*; 8). The white man's burden, a phrase made famous by a Rudyard Kipling poem, refers to the belief that white nations have some innate responsibility and moral obligation to civilize, rule, and govern non-white nations and people, and that this responsibility is not simply a justification for the imperialism and colonialism of white nationhood but makes such ideas of colonization of non-white nations into charitable, humanitarian efforts at great cost and labour for those white colonizers. 'Manifest Destiny' is, in many ways, a successor to the White Man's Burden, and has three core themes:

- The special virtues of the American people and their institutions.
- The mission of the United States to redeem and remake the west in the image of agrarian America.

⁸ emphasis added by me.

- An irresistible destiny to accomplish this essential duty (Miller, 120).

Manifest Destiny differs from the White Man's Burden by the specificity of the nation—in Manifest Destiny, it is the white American in particular who shoulders this 'burden'. There is also an element of romanticism to American imperialism, the idea that white American nationhood is 'destined' to be spread through the exceptional nature of its people.

The Wild Thornberrys Movie

In 2002, Paramount released *The Wild Thornberrys Movie* (Malkasian, McGrath, 2002). Based on the popular Nickelodean TV series, the film features the racially white Thornberry family, parents Nigel and Marianne who are Steve Irwin-type wildlife documentarians, their three children (daughters Debbie, Eliza, and adopted son Donnie), and their pet chimpanzee Darwin. In many ways, Eliza Thornberry demonstrates the traits of the white saviour figure. In the film's introduction (which re-uses the title sequence of the TV series), protagonist Eliza Thornberry makes an expository voice-over to quickly explain the status quo: 'We travel all over the world. See, my dad hosts this nature show and my mom shoots it. And along the way, something amazing happened. I freed a warthog who was really a shaman: Shaman Mnyambo. He granted me the power to talk to animals. It's really cool—but totally secret'. Unlike Kenai and Kuzco, Eliza Thornberry is a human tourist who is not involuntarily transformed in order to cross the human/nonhuman divide. As someone racially white, Eliza is not from a nation whose indigenous people are viewed as having some intrinsic intimate existential connection to nature and nonhuman animals (although her role as tourist is still granted through the an exotic and mystical figure of pre-colonized wisdom and power, Shaman Mnyambo). Befitting a figure who can spearhead the American exceptionalism of

the white saviour, Eliza has no 'natural' claim to an intimate kindness like Kenai or Kuzco, but earns her 'power' of talking to nonhuman animals through her exceptional demonstration of kindness to Shaman Mnyambo's warthog form (she is exceptional as demonstrated by the fact that no other white characters share her ability).

The film opens with Eliza and Darwin riding elephants in the open plains of Kenya as Nigel and Marianne intend to film some of the wildlife for their documentary series. The film opens with several swooping aerial shots over the African landscape to emphasize the non-anthropogenicised Kenyan plains and jungle. These establishing shots work to couch the film's representation of Africa as a timeless continent, largely untouched by human influence. C. Richard King, Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, and Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo note that many children's films depict Africa as nearly completely devoid both of indigenous humans or colonized human communities (Eric Darnell and Tom McGrath's *Madagascar* (Darnell, McGrath, 2005), *The Lion King* (Allers, Minkoff, 1994), *Tarzan* (Lima, Buck, 1999)), positing that 'Africa may be the only place pictured in animated films that has no human occupants. In none of these films can one find an indigenous community or local person. No one has a claim to this locality; there is no need to mention the legacies of colonialism or the imprint of underdevelopment . . . importantly, in the absence of embodied natives, the children of nature, the animals stand in for/as them' (King *et al*, 58-59). Although *Brother Bear* and *The Emperor's New Groove* feature pre-colonized nations as significant narrative forces to anchor the historicized lens of the story, *The Wild Thornberrys Movie* achieves this same effect of displacing the temporal setting through the erasure of indigenous African civilizations. While *Brother Bear* and *The Emperor's New Groove* use the historicization to connect the indigenous humans to nonhuman animals, *The Wild Thornberrys Movies* uses the timelessness of its setting to conflate the indigenous humans with the local nonhuman animals. This historicization of the film's setting through the erasure of contemporary African

civilizations also works to suppress the appearance of any overt ideological overtures of racial tension which Hughey notes as part of the white saviour narrative⁹.

Eliza takes Darwin to visit a trio of local cheetah cubs and proposes that the cheetahs and Eliza have a race. When the cheetah mother expresses her reluctance, Eliza assures her that she can be trusted to take care of the cubs, and that she won't go beyond 'the acacia tree'. The casual and gleeful conversations between Eliza and the cheetahs has gentle handheld camera movements framing the characters and folk rock Paul Simon song in the background, denoting Eliza's interspecies kindness through her friendliness with the cheetahs. During their race, Eliza and the cheetah cubs end up going beyond the acacia tree and wildlife poachers descend from a helicopter (obscured by the harsh helicopter lights) and take the cheetah cub Tally. Although Eliza (and, eventually, the rest of the Thornberry clan with their modified motor-home) give chase, the human poachers get away with Tally. During a contemplative scene at the Thornberry camp after the chase, Eliza is both energized and desperate to go after the poachers while her parents, grandmother, sister, and an older local (non-white) African ranger Jomo seem very still and collected about the Tally incident. 'I have to find Tally!' Eliza tearfully pleads, as the others calmly explain their limited avenues of finding the missing cheetah cub, and dismiss Eliza as she offers (nearly completely useless) recollections about the poachers' appearances. It is Eliza's juxtaposition to Jomo that is especially jarring. Eliza, a young, non-African tourist (in the literal sense) is far more visibly upset than the presumably native, racially black Jomo whose occupation directly revolves around the well-being of the local nonhuman animals. This juxtaposition gives the impression that she, not Jomo, is the person who feels most responsible for the safety of the symbolic African population.

⁹ There are two glimpses of African communities in *The Wild Thornberrys Movie*. The first is a very brief scene which shows a market with medieval-level technology (dirt roads, horse-drawn carriages, wooden stalls with cloth roofs). The second African community is a stereotypical exoticized African tribe which live deep in the jungle, wear simple clothes made out of materials found in the jungle, do not speak any English, and are amazed by Western technology such as digital watches and soda cans. These representations of African humans fits into reductive stereotypical images of Africa as a continent displaced by time and undisturbed by Western imperialism.

Positioning Eliza as the person who carries this responsibility (even over an African adult human whose job it is to care for African animals) strongly echoes ideas of the White Man's Burden and Manifest Destiny—the film seems to proclaim that Eliza's whiteness gives her both some virtuous and responsible duty to take care of non-whites as her whiteness inexplicitly gives her immediate jurisdiction over any non-white peoples. Eliza has some authority that goes above Jomo when it comes to taking care of Africans, not because she is more professionally qualified or more highly educated or experienced in these matters—she just happens to be a white person in an African country, and because she is white in a white saviour narrative, she must surely care more about Africans more than the African ever could and is bestowed with some duty to rescue these Africans. This heroic whiteness undermines the representations of non-white indigenous nations maintaining their own affairs without the help from white American interlopers. The juxtaposition between Eliza and Jomo suggests that it is not simply that Africans cannot stop the poachers from overstepping the African laws; the impression given through Eliza and Jomo in this scene is that the Africans just don't care, and without caring white Americans like Eliza Thornberry, this brazen assault on Africans would simply be rife and happening without any constraints—clearly, if the local African population are unable (or unwilling) to stop injustice, it is the white people (even a lone 12-year-old) who must intervene to pursue justice and maintain order.

In order to curb Eliza's 'wildness' (her interspecies kindness and saving of nonhuman animals), Eliza's parents and grandmother decide to send Eliza to a boarding school in England in order for her to attain a 'civilized' education. Although there is some undercutting of the idea of England as the pinnacle of civility through the pomposity and elitist attitudes regarding the nature of being sent to a private English boarding school, it still imprints the notion of the white nations as origins of civilization (as there are no visible African civilizations on-screen to counterbalance such a notion), and that Africa can be civilized

through the imperialism of white nations. This dichotomizing between England/civilized and Africa/uncivilized is reflected in the colour scheme of the geography—Africa is animated in vibrant, lively colours (mainly warm, cheerful shades of yellow and orange) while England is animated in subdued grey (the clouds, stone pavement, and the brickwork and interior of the boarding school). Eliza is flown to a boarding school in England, depressed about not being able to rescue Tally (as if she is Tally's only hope). During a dream, Eliza is confronted by a vision of Shaman Mnyambo who encourages Eliza to return to Africa and rescue Tally. 'I gave you this gift for a reason, Eliza' the Shaman proclaims in Eliza's dreamscape. 'You must not waste time. You must go to your destiny'. Aside from his cameo in the film's introduction, Eliza's dream sequence is Shaman Mnyambo's first proper appearance within the story. In this interaction, Shaman Mnyambo acts as the 'Magical Negro' to Eliza's white saviour. Like the white saviour trope, Matthew H. Hughey considers the Magical Negro a latently racist figure, defined as 'a stock character that often appears as a lower class, uneducated black person who possesses supernatural or magical powers. These powers are used to save and transform dishevelled, uncultured, lost, or broken whites (almost exclusively white men) into competent, successful, and content people within the context of the American myth of redemption and salvation . . . [this latent] racism reinforces the meaning of white people as moral and pure characters while also delineating how powerful, divine, and/or magic-wielding black characters may interact with whites and the mainstream. In so doing, these on-screen interactions afford white people centrality, while marginalizing those seemingly progressive black characters' (Hughey, *Cinethetic Racism*, 544). Eliza's dreamscape visually stresses the magical nature of Shaman Mnyambo—Eliza finds herself in a psychedelic, amorphous ocean with swirling colours in the sky and water, with Mnyambo forming from vapours into a tree and rock golem to talk to Eliza before unravelling and floating into the wind. Shaman Mnyambo's role as Magical Negro tasking Eliza with her 'destiny' to save and

protect the local African wildlife works to centralize the white Eliza as the main stakeholder in the struggle of African affairs and marginalize the responsibility of Africans in what happens within their own nations.

Heeding Shaman Mnyambo's encouragement, Eliza manages to travel from England and back to the plains of Kenya. During a train ride back to the rest of the Thornberry clan, Eliza spots a local rhinoceros fleeing from poachers and out of concern for the rhino's well-being, Eliza exits the moving train to assist the rhino, having to push through the non-white passengers and pleading with the non-white train driver to stop the train. This juxtaposition between white saviour Eliza and the apathetic non-white nationals repeats the earlier juxtaposition between Eliza and Jomo, again suggesting that the locals cannot stop injustices (or are unwilling to try) and that they therefore need the presence of white Americans in order for there to be law and order in a non-white nation. When Eliza meets the rhino, she is quickly joined by a white married couple (Sloan and Bree Blackburn). In many ways, the Blackburns' visual appearance and vocal performances mirror the personalities of Eliza's parents: both the Thornberrys and Blackburns are racially white characters, both Nigel Thornberry and Sloan Blackburn have over-enunciated English accents while Marianne Thornberry and Bree Blackburn have more realistic standard American accents, the Blackburns arrive in a motorhome (also the Thornberrys' vehicle of choice) as they are working in the Kenyan plains, and both the Thornberrys and Blackburns dress in khaki expedition clothes. The Blackburns' arrival is quickly followed by the African authorities who seem to follow the Blackburns' lead and take the rhino to a rhino sanctuary. In the film's final act, the Blackburns are revealed to be the poachers who are planning on corralling and hunting a large herd of local African elephants (seen at the beginning of the film as Eliza's friends). The Blackburns work as part of Eliza's characterization of Hughey's white saviour, antagonists who are 'racist, domineering, completely uncaring, and extremely violent

[whites]' whose juxtaposition to Eliza makes Eliza's efforts to protect non-white characters seem even more heroic and morally upstanding.

The Blackburns as threats to the symbolic African humans also underpins another facet of the latent racism of the film's white supremacy of non-white nations to Eliza and the other Thornberrys, the idea that deleterious intrusions of white characters in Africa can only be successfully combatted through the intervention of other white characters. While the Thornberrys present white American imperialism as positively bringing civilization, the Blackburns' mirroring of the Thornberrys makes them a dark, destructive corruption of this well-intentioned white American imperialism. The film still presents the Blackburns as superior to non-whites due to the lethal power they hold over the local African nonhuman animals. Although the Blackburns' corruption of white American imperialism does add nuance to the film, their eventual apprehension by Jomo and the park rangers in the film's denouement (through Eliza's intervention) closes the possibility of white American imperialism influencing or affecting the African nations in negative ways. The Blackburns arrest strongly insinuates that only well-intentioned white American imperialism can triumph while ill-intentioned white American imperialism is stopped through karmic rebalancing and mainly through the efforts of well-intentioned white Americans (as the local channels of justice are either incapable or overly naive to independently regulate such negative imperialists). The fact that the Blackburns are 'evil' is the very qualifier which blocks their influence—and that therefore any lasting white American imperialism (like the Thornberrys) must therefore be well-intentioned and constructive to the locals, and that the presence of such well-intentioned white Americans is vital to safeguard the vulnerable locals against those corrupt white Americans who would do these local nations harm.

In the third act of the film, the Blackburns force Eliza to reveal how she knew intimate details of their poaching operation and Eliza confesses to the Blackburns (with her sister

Debbie in earshot) that she can speak to nonhuman animals. Eliza's confession breaks the secrecy of her kindness and loses her gift. After escaping from the Blackburns, Eliza deduces that the Blackburns are planning on startling the herd of elephants into a stampede in the direction of an electrified fence which will electrocute the elephants. Unable to speak to the elephants, Eliza remembers something an elephant told her earlier in the film about how elephant mothers direct their calves through tugging the elephants' ears and is able to divert the elephants away from the electric fence before being knocked into a river. Shaman Mnyambo appears to Eliza saying that 'you did save [the elephants]. See for yourself. And you did this, not with your gift but with your heart. If this is what you can do without your powers you have a greater destiny than I've even known. I'm going to grant you your powers back'. Shaman Mnyambo's assessment of Eliza signifies that she has some innate power that allowed her to protect the symbolic non-white Africans from white American imperialists. Again, this idea of Eliza having such an innate power works as latent racism, part of her white saviour narrative; it is Eliza, not any non-white character, who is the true defender of the African nations, and that in effect, her kindness to the symbolic African locals was always secondary to her (white) moral purity and resourcefulness.

In the film's epilogue, Eliza and her father Nigel watch the elephant herd socializing in the African plain. 'Maybe they have reason to hope' Nigel remarks. 'Maybe these intelligent creatures believe that by standing together—as they have done for centuries—they may, one day, live without fear of man's greed'. There is an embedded point of condescension in Nigel's remarks, as he discusses the symbolic African humans as removed from the human kind and thereby incapable of such negative emotions as 'greed'. Nigel's remark also implies that greed is a quality only found in (some) white imperialists but that the presence of the Thornberrys does not need to be distanced from the elephants as they are the 'good' variant of white imperialism. Eliza then returns Tally to the cheetah family and is thanked by the cheetah

mother, thus the white saviour has completed her mission which has been the driving force of the narrative. Here, the well-intentioned white American imperialist shows that, unlike the ill-intentioned white American imperialists, any damage Eliza may cause is reversible and therefore poses no actual lasting danger to the locals. The final sequence of the film is Eliza (jokingly) telling Debbie that, as a condition of Shaman Mnyambo returning her powers, if Debbie reveals Eliza's gift then Debbie will be transformed into a baboon. Debbie is outraged by such a possibility and startles Nigel's video-recording of baboons who begin roughhousing, one of whom knocks over a radio which begins playing African-American hip-hop musician Puff Daddy's song 'Dance with Us' as background for the baboons' rollicking. The film's use of African-American hip-hop superficially seems to connect this timeless Africa with the part of contemporary North America which shares a direct genealogical and cultural connection and overlap with Africa. However, the choice of baboons to illustrate this symbolic connection between Africans and African-Americans somewhat softens this kindness of racial interconnectedness through the negative rhetorical particularity of the baboons in the sequence. Baboons are seen as being lazy, comedic, fun-loving, and arguably ugly animals (Baboon, *Animal in You*), all of which are traits similar to several historical African-American stereotypes such as the 'mammy', 'coon', or 'black buck'. Although the African wildlife is connected to images in the American consciousness, these are still reductive and negative stereotypes which still play into conceptualizations of whiteness as more optimal than non-whiteness.

Nationhood in Tourist Films

The human-nonhuman dynamic in Tourist films emphasizes a form of kindness which is premised upon the idea of understanding the species other in a way which is transitory, temporary, and reversible. These qualities of interspecies kindness often position Tourist films as stories which explore and reinforce stereotypes of nationhood. Such explorations and stereotypes can often interpellate forms of latent racism and racial hegemony. For tourists in pre-colonized indigenous nations, the focal points of their stories often discovering some harmonious, intrinsic existential interconnectedness between indigeneity, nature, and nonhuman animals. In *Brother Bear* and *The Emperor's New Groove* the notions of interconnectedness idealize indigenous nations as beings of ecological sainthood, and distance them from Western civilization by historicizing and exoticizing their representation, seen as nostalgic and regressive cultures by being less culturally evolved. The protagonists of these films are presented as brashly rejecting the wisdom of their nations as a consequence of their youth and then throughout the course of the narrative learning, through species tourism, how to fulfill their indigeneity's drive to connect with nature in some non-Western, pre-civilized fashion. In *The Wild Thornberrys Movie*, the latent racism and racial hegemony is portrayed through the use of the white saviour as American imperialist, whose whiteness necessitates them as a greater, more motivated defender of African nations than any non-white African. Tourist films tap into ideas of racial hegemony through nationhood as the dynamics of contrasting nations are often primed to demonstrate difference. Once the kindness of the human-nonhuman dynamic elevates even higher, these films transition from stories around nationhood to the heart of social difference itself; in the postcolonial phase, social difference is deconstructed when a stable human-nonhuman kindness truly recognizes that all differences can be subsumed or trivialized.

Chapter 6: The Postcolonial

The title for this chapter is derived from the analogy of the colonial narrative of categories of anthropomorphism outlined in Chapter 1 and represents the endpoint of integration of anthropomorphized animals into a framework of human phenomenology. In Postcolonial films, the human-nonhuman dynamic is premised on the notion of interspecies normalization where differences between human and nonhuman animals are largely muted; nonhuman animals are anthropomorphized in a way where their lives are superficially nearly identical to humans, often integrated into human spaces in an unremarkable fashion (i.e. where human and nonhuman animals living similar lives is considered to be 'normal'). For example, in *Sesame Street Presents: Follow That Bird* (Kwapis, 1985) a variety of anthropomorphized animals have attained an equally human state of personhood by demonstrating what anthropologist Richard Shweder terms 'intentional worlds': these anthropomorphized animals have fundamentally identical lives to, and alongside, their fellow human citizens on Sesame Street. On Sesame Street, nonhuman animals wear clothing, occupy anthropogenic domiciles (houses), hold jobs or go to school, and socialize and interact with human characters just as any other human might. The Postcolonial films move beyond Todorov's model of the fantastic-uncanny by eliminating the hesitation between belief and disbelief and couching the human-nonhuman relationship in the mode of the fantastic-marvelous; the integration of such extremely-anthropomorphized animals into human spaces is non-natural, but at the same time, is not supernatural and unworthy of comment or intrigue by its characters.

As previously noted, in his essay 'What Is It Like to Be a Bat?' Thomas Nagel argues that not only is it impossible for a human to see *what* a bat sees, but also *how* a bat sees; we

may try and significantly reduce the bat's perceptual world to make it comparable to our own (what Nagel terms 'decontextualization' where nonhuman animal interiority is re-imagined as a distorted, yet perceivable, perceptual human experience) (Nagel, 436). The anthropomorphism in Postcolonial films takes Nagel's decontextualization further than any other category of anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphized characters in Postcolonial films like *Big Bird* share the same language, lifestyle, and hobbies with his human friends, but also share similar morphologies to humans like fingers, tongues, and forward-bending knees. This extreme decontextualization intensifies the interspecies kindness found in the human/nonhuman animal binary further than any other category of anthropomorphism. The close proximity between humans and nonhuman animals (both physical and phenomenological) underlines similarities between 'human' and 'nonhuman' and by emphasizing sameness over dissimilarities, these films contain stories which thematically promote kindness over difference.

The term 'Postcolonial' has also been chosen to describe this category of anthropomorphism in order to acknowledge the ways in which theoretical concepts of Postcolonial studies can be used to explicate the underlying representations of social identities and social difference within this particular human-nonhuman dynamic. Postcolonial studies examines the ways in which certain peoples and cultures have been affected, impacted, and otherwise (re)defined through colonialism and imperialism. Postcolonial studies often works to destabilize hierarchies and emancipate the oppressed (Costa trans. Villalobos, 2) (Dirlik, 329) (McInturff, 74) (Parson, Hardings, 1). Postcolonial films generally share this outlook, working to deconstruct and destabilize social binaries and hierarchies of social difference. The codification of social difference in the anthropomorphized nonhuman animals in Postcolonial films diverges from the previous categories of anthropomorphism examined (*Lost in Translation*, *First Contact*, and the

Tourist). *Lost in Translation*, *First Contact*, and the *Tourist* films have some specific symbolic social difference based upon some fundamental difference of the human-nonhuman dynamic that informs the symbolic identity in anthropomorphized animals; the human-nonhuman dynamic in Postcolonial films is largely based on the absence of such visceral human-nonhuman differences. That is not to say that there is no diegetic acknowledgement or recognition of different species in Postcolonial films, but while *Lost in Translation*, *First Contact*, and the *Tourist* present the human/nonhuman difference as an indelible component of human-nonhuman interactions, the stories in Postcolonial films reject such inherent speciesist difference. As the human-nonhuman dynamic of Postcolonial films lacks any significant division in the human-nonhuman dynamic, Postcolonial films do not coherently exemplify any one specific type of prominent social difference but, like postcolonial theory, seek out to destabilize, deconstruct, and reject systemic divisions of difference.

Postcolonial academics such as Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak argue that when such communities are colonized, they do not simply become lesser or imperfect clones of their colonizers but create unique hybrid cultures that are distinct from both their pre-colonized states and their colonizers. As postcolonial societies separate from their original cultures and their colonizers, certain phenomenon often arise from these colonized communities. Homi K. Bhabha posits five concepts which will be relevant to this chapter's discussion of Postcolonial films (Hybridity, Third Space, Cultural Diversity and Cultural Difference, Ambivalence, and Mimicry). Before delving into the main analysis and discussion in this chapter, it is prudent to define these concepts and lay out the ways in which they are grounded within the types of stories in Postcolonial films.

Concepts of Postcolonial Literature

Hybridity:

First, Bhabha describes postcolonial cultures as 'hybrids', 'interstitial passage[s] between fixed identifications [that] entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 5). Bhabha uses the idea of a stairwell as a metaphor for postcolonial hybridity as 'the stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities' (Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 32). For Bhabha, hybridity is not wholly about the smothering overlay of one culture on top of another which occurs and then definitively ends, but is a continuous dynamic, complex and fluctuating set of multicultural negotiations emerging from societal interactions between the colonized and colonizers. Although Bhabha's notion of hybridity could be seen in any category of anthropomorphism, I would posit that the cultural 'connective tissue' between human and nonhuman animals is far more pronounced in Postcolonial films due to the extensive integration between humans and nonhuman animals. In Postcolonial films, nonhuman animals lead phenomenologically similar (if not, identical) lives to humans and that frames those nonhuman animals into positions where they are largely expected to lead 'human' lives. Such expectations create friction with their nonhuman identities and so often the narratives of these films explore how nonhuman characters navigate this friction.

Another way that this concept appears in Postcolonial films is through the visual depiction of characters who embody hybridity. Postcolonial films are the one category of anthropomorphism where prominent human characters are realized through different

mediums (i.e. there is a combination of human characters portrayed through live-action actors and puppets/animation). Postcolonial films such as *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and *Follow That Bird* have characters such as Baby Herman, Jessica Rabbit, and Bert and Ernie whose puppetry/animation is similar to the portrayal of nonhuman characters while noticeably contrasting with the live-action humans. The liminal status of these hybrids as human in species but puppet in portrayal is reminiscent of Homi K. Bhabha's idea of hybridity, between fixed points of identification without wholly belonging to either human or nonhuman. As discussed in the literature review of this thesis, in Paul Wells' article "'You Can See What Species I Belong to, but Don't Treat Me Lightly": Rhetorics of Representation in Animated Animal Narratives', he describes one binary model of understanding anthropomorphized animals in relation to humans. This model has two poles: 'humanity' and 'animality'. Wells terms the ways in which anthropomorphized animals 'oscillate' between these poles 'bestial ambivalence' (Wells, 106). While Wells applies the term 'bestial ambivalence' to how anthropomorphized animals switch between the two modes, I would assert that in Postcolonial films there can be certain characters who, in themselves, represent the liminal space between 'humanity' and 'animality'. Nonhuman animals on film have historically been connected to animation, and while some films featuring anthropomorphism use live-action nonhuman animal actors and live-action human actors (*Dr. Dolittle* (Thomas, 1998), *Homeward Bound: An Incredible Journey* (Dunham, 1993)), some films use animated nonhuman animals and live-action human actors (*Garfield* (Hewitt, 2003)), some films use animated nonhuman animals and animated humans (*Chicken Run* (Park, Lord, 2000), *Ratatouille* (Bird, 2007)), few (if any) films have live-action animals and animated humans and almost all films are consistent about the visual realization in their portrayal of prominent human characters (simply put, humans are *either* live-action *or* animated, but usually not both within the same film). Postcolonial films are the exception to this convention, portraying

animated anthropomorphized animals, animated humans, *and* live-action humans in the same filmic space.

The animated humans in Postcolonial films are strongly metonymic of the liminal space in Wells' bestial ambivalence: on the one hand, they are human through the essential disposition of their species. On the other hand, they contrast with the live-action humans by being animated, visually on-par with the animated anthropomorphized animals. These animated humans embody Bhabha's notion of hybridity, 'interstitial passage[s] between fixed identifications [that] entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 5). These fixed identifications between human and animal represent a bestial ambivalence (what Paul Wells considers the overlapping figure that oscillates in the binary of humanity and animality). The nature of the bestial ambivalent figure is to be the overt metonym of liminality in social difference based on species and act as recurring reminders of the lack of meaning behind those differences.

Third Space:

Related to hybridity is the idea of the Third Space. The Third Space refers to 'the interstices between colliding cultures, a liminal space "which gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation." In this "in-between" space, new cultural identities are formed, reformed, and constantly in a state of becoming. Artists at work in "the Third Space" speak of a creative edge that derives from the condition of being in a place that simultaneously is and is not one's home' (Third Space, *Amherst*). The Third Space 'undermines our sense of the homogenizing effects of cultural symbols and icons, by questioning our sense of the authority of cultural synthesis in general' (Bhabha, *Cultural Differences*, 155). The Third Space is not simply a geographical arena shared between cultures, but where the liminality and hybridity of

cultures is conducive to new heterogeneous and subversive forms of culture which confronts and challenges traditional sensibilities.

Although Homi K. Bhabha discusses the concept of the Third Space largely as a cultural space, I would posit that Postcolonial films often integrate the heterogeneity and subversiveness of cultural hybridity by representing Third Spaces as urban environments—namely, cities. Postcolonial films tend to idealize living in urban cities, generally with tall buildings and reasonably solid population densities, and a running theme is protagonists finding social units of different species in these cities who accept them as family (e.g. *Follow That Bird*, *Zootopia* (Howard, Moore, 16), *Paddington* (King, 2014)). I assert that there are two main reasons as to why Postcolonial films favour such settings, both of which are linked to fact that cities are cited as sites for the heterogeneity and subversiveness of cultures. The first reason is informing the characterization of the anthropomorphization of nonhuman animals in a way that nonhuman characters are viewed as being as close to human in lifestyle as possible. Seen through the dichotomy of 'nature/nonhuman animal and culture/human', integrating nonhuman animals into the city lifestyles which some humans adopt demonstrates the totality of the decontextualization of nonhuman animals, seamlessly living in entirely anthropogenicised environments and avoiding natural, non-anthropogenic environments such as forests, jungles, and oceans. The concept of civilization is often tied to the concept of cities (the word 'civilization' is often defined as simply 'living in cities') (Standage, 25). By living in cities as humans do, these nonhuman animals can prove they are as 'civilized' as humans supposedly are. Aside from their species and perhaps a few vestigial rhetorical particularities, nonhuman animals are phenomenological doppelgangers of their human counterparts.

This doubling between human and nonhuman animals through city residence is one of the ways in which Postcolonial films deconstruct social difference through 'post-speciesism'. Concepts like post-racism and post-sexism assume an erasure of difference, that whatever

social differences and/or prejudices that once existed are no longer significant issues (hence the suffix 'post' to denote that such issues belong to a time prior to the present day). Contemporary Western societies have not yet achieved widespread success (or indeed, interest) in challenging speciesism and there is far greater public interest in focusing on intra-species social differences (based on human understandings of identity such as social class, race and ethnicity, age, sex and gender, sexuality, and culture) than interspecies social differences (differences based on species). There is the implication of post-speciesism in the societies in Postcolonial films that if interspecies social differences can be resolved, then lesser intra-species social differences can (or may already) be largely resolved.

The second reason Postcolonial films often idealize urban cities is the fact that urbanization has often been seen as a phenomenon linked to rationalization, industrialization, and modernization (Gries, Grundmann, 493); these three qualities of urban cities echo several explicitly identified aspects of Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the Third Space, being places which encourage new cultural identities through the heterogenization and hybridity of cultures and undermining efforts of homogenization. Rationalization is a sociological process wherein traditional values and motives in a society are replaced with concepts built on reason and rationality; however, rationalization in itself does not necessarily challenge or dismantle prejudices based on social differences (as many individuals may rationalize or confabulate explanations involving social differences in order to justify their prejudicial views). However, modernization is often associated with an increased understanding and tolerance for social differences; one of the 'practicabilities' which people living in societies experiencing modernization will experience is that they are 'interacting [with] others, but in self-reliance, with genuine respect for difference' (Thapar, 33). Individuals in modernized societies must interact and respect people of different social identities and this respect for difference cannot be externally imposed but a generally autonomous awareness and civility towards that

difference. Idealizing living in a modernized environment is an encouraging means of modelling internally-directed behaviour which respects and accepts social differences.

Cultural Diversity and Cultural Difference:

Another concept which Bhabha writes about is the distinction between cultural diversity and cultural difference. 'Cultural diversity is an epistemological object—culture as an object of empirical knowledge—whereas cultural difference is the process of the enunciation of culture as "knowledgeable," authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification. If cultural diversity is a category of comparative ethics, aesthetics, or ethnology, cultural difference is a process of signification through which statements of culture or on culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability, and capacity' (Bhabha, *Cultural Differences*, 156). One aspect of the ways in which cultural diversity and cultural difference is portrayed in Postcolonial films is how cultural difference is separated from racial or ethnic difference. In most Postcolonial films, the nonhuman characters (whose subaltern culture is being differentiated from the dominant culture) are often performed as white (e.g. Stuart Little, Big Bird, Paddington), and encounter cultural friction from societies which are mainly represented by white human characters. Portraying these nonhuman characters as white, the social difference between human and nonhuman animals is founded as cultural and not upon racial or ethnic differences.

Ambivalence:

A fourth concept of postcolonialism is ambivalence. In postcolonial studies, ambivalence describes 'the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized

subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonizer; 'rather than assuming that some colonized subjects are "complicit" and some "resistant", ambivalence suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject' (Mambrol, *Literariness*). One of the noteworthy aspects of ambivalence in colonial contexts is that it is derived from conflicting feelings between the colonized and colonizers. Colonizers may attempt to be (or appear) supportive and protective of the colonized, being seen as attempting to advance and progress the occupied culture. This complicates the relationship between colonizer and colonized where the colonizer is attempting to persuade the colonized to become more similar to their dominance (rather than forced or coerced).

One of the common ways in which Postcolonial Films present Bhabha's ambivalence is by denying anthropomorphized characters the ability to oscillate between their bestial ambivalence, forcing characters to negotiate with simultaneously being human and nonhuman. Postcolonial films are the only category of anthropomorphism where anthropomorphized characters are situated in stories where they must balance between humanity and animality and cannot oscillate between the two modes. For example, in Postcolonial films like *Stuart Little* and *Follow That Bird*, the nonhuman protagonists must wrestle with the status quo of their human-like lifestyles and environments while still grappling with their nonhuman identity. These characters cannot voluntarily switch between human and then nonhuman in order to take advantage or refuge of that position. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Postcolonial characters such as the titular nonhuman protagonist of *Stuart Little* cannot be simply human and then nonhuman only when it is convenient for him. He must grapple with the fluctuating advantages and disadvantages of being nonhuman in a human's world whenever confronted with such challenges or opportunities.

Mimicry:

In postcolonial studies, mimicry is when individuals of a colonized society adopt cultural traits of their colonizers (languages, fashion, religious and cultural dispositions) (Singh, *Electrostatics*). Mimicry is a means for the colonized to attain the similar status and privilege that their colonizers enjoy by replicating the identity of the colonizers. Due to this replicating of the colonizer's identity, mimicry can also be seen as a suppression of the colonized individual's original cultural identity (if indeed, the colonizer's influence has left the original cultural identity intact). Bhabha also finds mimicry not merely to be a performance with which the colonized may imitate their colonizers, but also as a subversive means of challenging the colonial authority; 'mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers' (Bhabha, *Mimicry*, 126). As will be explored further in this chapter, in Postcolonial films anthropomorphized characters may mimic humans (or have the expectations to mimic) in order to fit into their social environments. Some Postcolonial films subvert expectations of mimicry to demonstrate that differences from the dominant class can be advantageous while other films portray 'passing' where characters can so perfectly mimic their colonizers that the colonizers themselves cannot tell the difference. As will be explored in the analysis of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, 'passing' is often viewed in a stigmatic fashion with connotations of duplicity and betrayal. The stigma of passing presents mimicry as a negative practice, again demonstrating that the nature of differences hold virtue.

These five concepts (Hybridity, Third Space, Cultural Diversity and Cultural Difference, Ambivalence, and Mimicry) are echoed in oblique but meaningful ways in Postcolonial films. In Postcolonial films, Bhabha's notion of the Third Space (sites where the forming and re-forming of identities colliding together) manifests in the cinematic geography of urban cities. These city settings emphasize and extol the virtue of cultural diversity and cultural difference. Another of Bhabha's concepts which manifests in Postcolonial films is mimicry. In the Postcolonial human-nonhuman dynamic, the degree to which nonhuman characters are privileged is ostensibly determined by how well they can mimic human lives. Some Postcolonial films portray a nonhuman character's inability to mimic humans as a positive social difference and that mimicry is not preferable to accepting difference. Other Postcolonial films show characters mimicking human lives as a means of subverting their own subaltern status from their nonhuman species. Another way in which postcolonial constructs manifests in Postcolonial films is hybridity. This hybridity is clearly embodied in the use of characters who human, yet animated in the same way which nonhuman characters are portrayed. These characters are perched on the liminality between human and nonhuman, acting as prominent visual reminders of both the human and nonhuman modes of hybridity, as well as their ability to simultaneously occupy both ends of their hybridity's 'connective tissue'.

This chapter will focus on how three Postcolonial films use their human-nonhuman dynamic to deconstruct and destabilize social binaries and social differences in ways that are reminiscent of postcolonial theory's own inclination to question the nature of hierarchies and defy oppression. In Rob Minkoff's 1999 film *Stuart Little*, the Postcolonial dynamic of a two-inch-tall mouse living in a human society seeks to transcend species ambivalence by demonstrating that differences are not necessarily disabilities, and uses the cinematic geography of urban cities as Bhabha's Third Space, conducive to heterogeneity and

challenging homogenization. In Ken Kwapis' 1988 film *Follow That Bird*, the action explores the idea of interspecies kindness dissolving divisions of difference by having characters overcome prejudices of correlating species and kinship; in this way, the species difference normalizes the acceptance of social differences by demonstrating how, if species is relatively unimportant to a person's identity, various other aspects of identity are not paramount and such divisions are ideologically unsound. *Follow That Bird* also features characters who act as postcolonial hybrids, human characters animated as though they were nonhuman characters, representative of the fluctuating interactions between the boundaries of human and nonhuman. Lastly, Robert Zemeckis' 1988 film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* uses the characterization and technology of the film apparatus to deconstruct differences by making such differences absurd. In *Animal Life & The Moving Image*, Laura McMahon and Michael Lawrence assert that animated nonhuman animals are effective vehicles for exploring human identity by considering the mediality of nonhuman animals, to not only prompt issues about gender, race, and ethnicity, but that it is in itself 'a collusion of ethnographic, zoological, and pornographic gazes' that models the specific ways in which human viewers understand nonhuman animals (Lawrence, McMahon, 3). *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* uses McMahon and Lawrence's three gazes of the nonhuman animal in an over-exaggerated fashion through the use of anthropomorphized animals in three ways—as performers in a Hollywood setting, through the behaviours of the nonhuman characters, and through the cinematographic juxtaposition between portrayals of live-action humans and cel-animation anthropomorphized animals. The over-exaggeration of McMahon and Lawrence's collusion of gazes deconstructs the human-nonhuman difference through the bombastic overttness of the presence of such gazes. The hybridity in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* is depicted as inappropriate, utilized for villainous, malicious purposes, and acts as a means of illicitly transgressing normalized social boundaries. These transgressions and villainous characterizations of difference are nullified

through their over-exaggerated fashion, making the necessity of social differences collapse in on themselves.

Stuart Little

Stuart Little (Minkoff, 1999) is a Postcolonial film which features an anthropomorphized mouse (the eponymous Stuart) who is adopted by the (human) Little family. Loosely based on the children's book of the same name by E.B. White, the main struggle for the protagonist in *Stuart Little* is the fact that he is a two-inch-tall mouse expected to live in an ergonomic environment designed for humans. The film opens with the idyllic Little family (parents Eleanor and Frederick, and their seven-year-old human son George) beginning their day as Eleanor and Frederick prepare to visit the orphanage to adopt a child while George goes to school. The Littles live in a New York brownstone building, a type of townhouse which is iconic in its association with New York City. As the Littles depart their building, the camera cranes to a deep establishing shot of urban New York with its unique skyline as well as Central Park. The action of the film is largely confined to a storybook-esque version of the city—as previously noted, Postcolonial films often idealize living in cities as a means of visualizing Bhabha's Third Spaces, places which emphasize the heterogeneity and hybridity of cultures.

Eleanor and Frederick Little visit the New York City Public Orphanage where they meet Stuart, an anthropomorphized two-inch tall mouse who is presented as one among the many other (human) orphans in need of adoption. Eleanor and Frederick take a liking to Stuart and adopt him despite the cautionary warning from the orphanage administrator Mrs. Keeper about Stuart's 'uniqueness', telling the Littles that 'we try to discourage couples from adopting children outside their own . . . species. It rarely works out'. Mrs. Keeper's reluctance regarding the Littles adoption of Stuart constitutes a form of Bhabha's postcolonial

ambivalence; the dynamic between human and mouse is strained due to the fact that Mrs. Keeper assumes that indelible components of Stuart's identity mean that he will not be able to 'mimic' his parental custodians (the Littles). Postcolonial films utilize the human-nonhuman dynamic to represent ambivalence because, unlike the previous categories of anthropomorphism, there is the expectation that nonhuman animals *should* simulate their human counterparts whereas in *Lost in Translation*, *First Contact*, and *the Tourist*, nonhuman animals are not expected to perfectly mimic human lifestyles. Mrs. Keeper's ambivalence is made manifest when the Littles bring Stuart home. As Stuart sizes up his new home, the Littles' pet cat Snowball tries to eat Stuart before Eleanor and Frederick verbally explain the situation to Snowball (Snowball is shown to talk, although the humans never acknowledge what their cat is saying). The species hierarchy and rhetorical particularities of cats and mice in this film are largely muted for an absurdist effect—Stuart is not a pet like Snowball who is treated *like* a member of the Little family, Stuart *is* a member of the Little family and therefore deserves to be treated as human. This ambivalence is partially supported by the cleansing of sociogenic traits by being one single mouse and not a colony of mice; like Remy the rat in *Ratatouille*, Stuart's individuality delineates him as a clean and adorable nonhuman companion rather than a part of a wild and diseased pack of mice. However, this absurdism of the Littles downplaying the obvious species differences of humans and mice is also a function of the human-nonhuman dynamic of Postcolonial films which proclaims equality between species. This equality of species is an example of the post-speciesism of urban spaces in Postcolonial films; the kindness that Eleanor and Frederick show Stuart models the ability to rise above differences, and the abstraction of social differences such as species difference impresses the universal application of kindness over social differences.

Stuart's spatial incongruity with the Little household is highly allegorical of a physical and/or medical impairment. Stuart's physical impairment is also evocative of Bhabha's

concept of mimicry wherein the colonized 'copies the person in power, because one hopes to have access to that same power oneself' (Singh, *Electrostoni*). By attempting to replicate a human lifestyle, Stuart is attempting to validate his newfound human privilege bestowed upon him by his adopted family. The film's exploration of this allegorical impairment destabilizes the hegemony of social differences around physical impairment by interpellating the separation between impairment as a medical reality and disability as a social construct. Within the field of disability studies, scholars separate and often dichotomize two models of disability: the medical model, wherein disability is an impairment to physical, physiological, or psychological functionality of an individual, and the social model that frames disability as a complex set of conditions between the individual and the social environment that prevents the individual's integration into the environment to the degree of a non-disabled individual (Marks, 88). The relationship between impairment as a manifestation of the physical body and disability as a social construct can be analogized to the dyadic relationship between sex and gender, or race and ethnicity—these are pairings between physical traits and social identity which are strongly interconnected and mutually constructive categories but, importantly, not identical or synonymous.

Using a character's nonhuman species in a human household as an allegory for impairment and/or disability fits better in Postcolonial films than in any other category of anthropomorphism because of the presumption of social and phenomenological equality between human and nonhuman individuals. While nonhuman characters in *First Contact* or *Tourist* films may attempt to perform human tasks (Remy in *Ratatouille* cooking in a human restaurant, the chickens in *Chicken Run* constructing and piloting a rudimentary aircraft), nonhuman Postcolonial characters like Stuart Little must contend with the societal *expectation* that he should have human abilities, and his lack of abilities against such expectations characterizes him as an impaired individual. Much of the second act of *Stuart*

Little revolves around Stuart's difficulties living in the Little household as the size disparity between the furniture built for humans being incompatible for a two-inch tall mouse. The Littles' human son George is also disappointed by the fact that his adopted brother is a mouse as George was initially excited to do mutually human activities with his adopted sibling (play ball games, wrestle, et cetera). This allegory of impairment is highlighted in a scene where the extended Little family visit the Littles at a welcoming party for Stuart and the gifts they have brought Stuart are all things Stuart can't do (a human-sized bicycle that Stuart can't ride, a bowling ball that is several times bigger than Stuart, a drum set Stuart can't use, a baseball Stuart could neither throw nor catch).

The film's use of Stuart's species and size as an allegory for impairment is a means of demonstrating that social differences are neither deterministic, nor are they necessarily disabilities. As Stuart acclimatizes to his adopted family, he begins to adjust to his spatial impairments to overcome being seen as disabled. One of the gauges of Stuart's difference due to his impairment is his relationship with his adopted human brother George. George initially acts coldly to Stuart, his disappointment of having a mouse for a brother, one who is physically incapable of many normal/human activities, as if George's disappointment stems from the stigma of a disabled sibling. George avoids Stuart because of his disappointment and plays alone with his miniature model vehicles (model trains, remote-control ships, remote-control cars). As George warms to Stuart, Stuart demonstrates that his size is actually an advantage to George's hobby of model vehicles: in a remote-control boating race, Stuart steers George's boat to victory after a bully destroys George's remote, and later George gifts Stuart his beloved model racecar which Stuart eventually uses to drive himself home in the climax of the film. George's growth in accepting Stuart as an equal helps to exemplify how prejudices around cultural differences are not static and impenetrable, and the ways in which to overcome such prejudices is through the acceptance of difference as diversity rather than

disadvantage.

Follow That Bird

Sesame Street Presents: Follow That Bird (Kwapis, 1985) is a spin-off of the popular PBS series *Sesame Street* and the film extends the experimental and queer ethos from its parent material in order to gently suggest and broaden pre-conceptions of social difference for its audience. The opening shot of *Follow That Bird* has a large and pristine American flag in the background and a grubby cardboard-box podium of cylindrical aluminium garbage cans in the foreground. An American-accented voice-over says 'ladies and gentlemen, would you please rise for the Grouch Anthem?' A green nonhuman character, Oscar the Grouch, rises from one of the garbage cans to override the voice-over, directly speaking to the camera: 'no, no, no. With the Grouch Anthem, you stay sitting down!'. The juxtaposition of this imagery between the proud American flag and the stereotypical receptacle of trash (objects that are supposedly no longer of use, and should be disposed of and out of sight) with the direct instruction by Oscar to act against a highly ingrained and ritualized American social norm, announces the declarative queerness of the film; there is a mildly irreverential ethos that, although is non-normative, poses no overt challenge to conventional social orders. Within the diegesis of *Follow That Bird* and *Sesame Street*, Grouches act as the inversion of the typical cheery, optimistic protagonists of children's media by often acting (or reacting) as antithetical to whatever the usual goals or behaviours of the main characters might be—while the majority of characters might value politeness, Grouches value rudeness, while the majority prefer cleanliness, Grouches prefer untidiness, the majority want their friends to have fun, Grouches want their friends to be miserable, et cetera. In many ways, Grouches are inherent manifestations of Bhabha's cultural difference, acting as the definitional Other through their inherently inverse personalities to the majority which distinguish them from the cultural

majority. However, the Grouches are never framed as villainous or indeed even particularly abnormal (albeit occasionally a little tiresome) like an Othered group might typically be characterized—indeed, they are always accepted by the majority as social equals. The social differences which Grouches represent towards the majority is a difference of the mundane and commonplace; Grouches are the general embodiment of social differences but the citizens of Sesame Street model interactions with difference as pedestrian and ordinary, to act respectful and tolerant when exposed or confronted with difference. Diminishing the stakes of difference through Grouches proclaims the minimization of the role which social difference plays in daily life.

After the Grouch Anthem prologue, the film shifts to a conference room for the Feathered Friends Society, a flock of various species of anthropomorphized birds whose self-appointed purpose is 'to place stray *birds* with nice *bird* families'. The Feathered Friends Society has convened to review the case of Big Bird, a six-year-old, eight-foot-tall yellow canary who lives on Sesame Street. The Feathered Friends Society are convinced that '[Big Bird] can't be happy [because] he needs to be with his own kind with a bird family'. Just as most films which feature anthropomorphized animals and humans, *Follow That Bird* quickly establishes a species binary within the social order of its characters. The noteworthy aspect of this scene's exposition is the way in which the scene establishes the film's anthropomorphized species dichotomy; while most films' species binary are human/nonhuman, this film's inordinate species binary is bird/nonbird. The species binary of *Follow That Bird* may act as a way of displacing the (human) viewers from traditional binaries; the species binary of *Follow That Bird* groups humans as part of the category defined by its opposition to a particular species. Rather than being grouped into a category of their single species, human viewers may find that they are simply one of many (nonbird) species. The notion of a non-anthropocentric species binary challenges notions of human exceptionalism by suggesting

that in this context humans are not the principal species, and challenging human exceptionalism (an ideological norm in most Western societies) encourages the questioning of how ideological norms are observer-relative—while humans may think of themselves as exceptional due to the virtue of being human, the film offers viewers the chance to see how such frames of reference in this species exceptionalism affect an individual's understanding when such logic is shifted onto a nonhuman character's interpretation of species. The notion of challenging pre-conceptions so early in the film announces its thesis of questioning and accepting the non-normative and queer.

The film then moves to Sesame Street, a working-class neighbourhood located in urban New York. The establishing shots include a diverse range of live-action actors of different racial backgrounds, and various Muppets¹⁰ of different Muppet races (human Muppets, nonhuman animal Muppets, monster Muppets, and Grouches); this diversity of urban living is shown as idyllic, where adults work and children play happily, interpellating the harmonious possibilities of diversity. *Follow That Bird* uses cinematic geography in two key ways to deconstruct social difference, the first of which being that Sesame Street, New York is part of an urban city. As previously discussed in *Stuart Little*, the use of the urban city as cinematic geography anchors a sense of modernization, and such modernization necessitates certain practicalities of sociability such as 'interacting [with] others, but in self-reliance, with genuine respect for difference', similar to Homi K. Bhabha's idea of the Third Space. Sesame Street is a location which embraces differences between its people in order to forge new, original identities distinct from its separate constituent pieces.

In the film's inciting incident, Big Bird is greeted by Miss Finch, another

¹⁰ Although Jim Henson was instrumental in the realization of the puppets on *Sesame Street*, the term 'Muppet' is used by *Sesame Street* on the understanding that the trademark belongs to The Muppet Studio and occasionally, puppets are referred to as 'Sesame Street Puppet Characters'. In her 2008 article 'A Usefully Messy Approach: Racializing the *Sesame Street* Muppets', Heidi Louise Cooper has no hesitation in using the word 'Muppet' to be synonymous with 'Sesame Street puppet' and I am following that taxonomic precedent.

anthropomorphized bird (and also portrayed through the use of a full-bodied puppet) who is an emissary for the Feathered Friends Society. Miss Finch offers to move Big Bird away from Sesame Street, New York and to a bird family in Oceanville, Illinois as she disapproves of him living with nonbirds and believes that he can only be happy placed with a bird family. Although the residents of Sesame Street try to dissuade Big Bird from leaving by asserting that they are Big Bird's family, they acquiesce when Big Bird reluctantly expresses his desire to try living with other birds. Big Bird takes a plane to Oceanville where he is placed with the Dodos, a nuclear family (mother, father, and two children) of dodos. The Dodos are a well-meaning but idiotic family who happily take Big Bird to their suburban home and show him activities which Big Bird finds banal and bewildering (such as looking for worms on a lawn comprised of artificial turf). The second way in which *Follow That Bird* uses cinematic geography to deconstruct social difference is through the unappealing characterization of suburbia. In her *Sight and Sound* article 'Close to the Edge', Leslie Felperin characterizes the predilection Western cinema has for portraying suburban spaces as trapping, claustrophobic, and excessively homogenous places to live (especially in direct opposition to highly urban spaces):

Characters stuck in suburbia in films usually have only one way to go, and that's out . . . a byword for boredom, a shorthand for insularity, the word 'suburb' carries negative connotations both in everyday speech and in the language of cinema. In many typical US films (*Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead*, 1991; *Three Wishes*, 1995; *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers: The Movie*, 1995), the suburb features as little more than a bland and banal backdrop, a signifier of mindless conformity. At best, this conformity is something to be sent up in broad comedy (*Meet the*

Applegates, 1989; *Wayne's World*, 1992; *The Coneheads*, 1993). At worst, it presents the rictus of normality disguising bizarre or occult secrets (*Parents*, 1988; *Society*, 1989), or alienated souls (*Blue Velvet*, 1986; *Welcome to the Dollhouse*, 1995), or even serial killers (*Manhunter*, 1986; *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*, 1989). Instantly recognisable, with well-manicured lawns stretching a few tens of feet in front of tract houses, white convenience stores and lurid malls, acres of parking lots, cinematic suburban spaces . . . are too often merely anonymous locations with little presence in the films themselves. Cities are ruthlessly particularised and lovingly evoked in films, often almost characters themselves (Woody Allen's *Manhattan*, the Paris streets of Godard's early films, Wong Kar-Wai's *Hong Kong*). But as suburbs become ever more diverse, complex and populous in the real world, the film industry uses and reuses the same worn-out dichotomies to map them: urban sophistication versus suburban banality, youthful restlessness versus middle-aged conservatism, the tract-house estate versus vibrant, mean city streets (Felperin, 15).

As Felperin observes, the film industry often polarizes and dichotomizes city living and suburban living, and just as there is a certain romanticism to cities, there is some socially defective underside to suburban spaces. Just as Sesame Street is geographically as far distanced from Oceanville as the film's plot allows, Sesame Street's social sensibilities are as distanced from Oceanville as well. Through the Dodos, the suburban living of Oceanville, Illinois represents the dangers and pitfalls of suburban living. One of the main aspects of Felperin's perilous characterization of suburban living in *Follow That Bird* is homogeneity—the film primarily portrays Big Bird and the Dodos as the primary residents of the suburb and

the Dodos' banality and idiocy which trap Big Bird is what is shown as the main (and substantial) detraction from such a lifestyle; the idea that being exclusively with one's own kind is shown in this film to constitute an environment of dissatisfaction. The sense of dissatisfaction at suburban homogeneity reinforces the positive attributes of social difference, conveying the idea that social difference is a necessary ingredient for happiness.

Big Bird finds the suburban homogeneity of Oceanville unbearable after the Dodos declare that Big Bird's best friend on Sesame Street (Mr. Snuffleupugas or 'Snuffy') can never visit Big Bird as Snuffy's nonbird identity has no place in their neighbourhood. Spurned by the excessive exclusivity and banal homogeneity of the Dodos' lives, Big Bird makes the decision to run away from Oceanville and trek back to Sesame Street on-foot; Big Bird's fleeing the suburbs for the city propounds the idealization of city living with its modernized attitudes towards interacting with individuals which embody difference, as well as the negative connotations of homogeneity in suburbia. Big Bird leaves a note to the Dodos about his intentions, and his runaway is covered by the news media, which the Sesame Street residents learn about (as well as learning that Miss Finch is also determined to find and return Big Bird to a bird family as she still firmly believes he belongs with a bird family). The various Sesame Street residents divide into several odd-couple pairings (which mix humans and Muppets) and head west in order to intercept Big Bird in the canary's quest to return to Sesame Street. One of the most recognizable teams in this interception for Big Bird is Bert and Ernie, two human-species Muppets who, although they do not prove instrumental to the film's narrative, are an iconic duo in their own right. Bert and Ernie's presence is striking because their portrayal of humans through puppets is consistent with the portrayal of the anthropomorphized animals, as well as contrasting with the prominent use of live-action humans in the film and this contrast strains the liminality of the essential disposition of being human; in many ways, Bert and Ernie's particular liminal status as human in species but

puppet in portrayal is reminiscent of Homi K. Bhabha's idea of hybridity, between fixed points of identification without wholly belonging to either human or nonhuman.

During Big Bird's trek back to Sesame Street, he walks through the roads of the American Midwest countryside, the peaceful imagery of the transitory nature that is the open road strongly reminiscent of the popular, non-confrontational works of Norman Rockwell. One of Big Bird's encounters on the road are two human children (Floyd and Ruthie) who are portrayed through live-action. Floyd and Ruthie live in the quintessential American farmhouse, complete with a brick well and red two-storey barn, and when Big Bird tells them of his quest to return to Sesame Street, the human children hide Big Bird in the barn for the night, and the next day, Big Bird and the children spend the day together happily doing chores and having fun. Although Big Bird himself has a childlike mentality and there are several childlike Muppets, Floyd and Ruthie are the first live-action human children to appear in the film. I would posit that Floyd and Ruthie's recognition of difference between themselves and Big Bird (Floyd says that Big Bird 'is the biggest chicken [he's] ever seen') and still treating the species other as an equal plays into conventions and stereotypes surrounding the conceptualization of the child figure in film. One of the most consistent aspects in the representation of children is the child's nature being 'innocent' and/or 'pure' (Lury, 2). Since the 19th century, Western societies have perceived an inherent connection between innocence and childhood and this stems from the interpretation of children as figures who lack; 'the notion of innocence refers to children's simplicity, their lack of knowledge, and their purity not yet spoiled by mundane affairs' (Bühler-Niederberger, *Oxford Bibliographies*). Western societies view children as having an absence of experience, knowledge, or learning which may 'corrupt' their 'true' innocence which presumes that children are innately morally flawless before their transition to adulthood buries or blemishes this flawlessness. This perception of children is ubiquitous in Western societies but is still an

ingrained ideological understanding of childhood (it is quite possible to imagine a different model of moral development in humans that runs counter to the aforementioned model, one where children are innately morally bad and improve through learning moral behaviour(s) over time). Just as nonhuman animals in film can be persuasive means of naturalizing human behaviours (as described in this thesis' literature review), the representation of children in film can also be a powerful way of suggesting some innate quality in humans, some existential element of being which all humans are capable of as it is something that all human children (and therefore, adults) have accessed. Floyd and Ruthie suggesting some innate human element is far more obvious in *Follow That Bird* as they are live-action children, unadorned and unaffected from the possibly-obscuring process of anthropomorphization. As Floyd and Ruthie are unambiguously children, their recognition and embracement of kindness of Bhabha's cultural difference implies the universal capacity for acceptance of cultural difference. If children, individuals with greater instinct or purity of the human condition than adults, can accept cultural difference then adults must also be capable of accepting those cultural differences.

While walking on the roadside with Floyd and Ruthie, Big Bird is spotted by Miss Finch and flees into the dusty countryside to avoid her and gets himself lost. Confused as to his location, Big Bird gets tricked into stepping inside a giant cage on the back of his truck ('bird-napping') by Sid and Sam Sleaze, two human, dim-witted, penniless funfair owners who think that Big Bird would be a hugely profitable attraction for their carnival. The Sleaze Brothers are interspersed through the film watching Big Bird on the news, and engage in several bouts of antisocial behaviour (stealing, yelling at each other, acting boorish to others) and this characterizes them as antagonists whose actions can be seen as undesirable. In order to avoid being detected by the authorities, the Sleaze Brothers paint Big Bird with blue paint, make him sing for a paying audience of carnival attendees, and advertising him as 'the Giant

Eight-Foot Bluebird Of Happiness [who is] one of a kind!' Just as the Sleaze Brothers predict, Big Bird's show generates them a sizeable amount of revenue as plenty of people go to the attraction. The Sleaze Brothers' comment about Big Bird being 'one of a kind' is notable for its crystallization of Big Bird's difference (while the film has several prominent bird characters, Big Bird is the only eight-foot-tall canary)—the Sleaze Brothers are capitalizing on Big Bird's difference as commercialized spectacle. Big Bird's lack of consent, his clear misery at his 'bird-napping', and being forced to perform in front of an audience, frames the Sleaze Brothers' show as commercializing the exploitation of difference as a morally repugnant act. Unlike the main antagonist Miss Finch whose attitude of difference is largely analogous to the negative practice of segregation, the Sleaze Brothers use difference as spectacle in the name of capitalism, but also make difference as spectacle an act of consent; Big Bird does want to recognize and appreciate social difference in his affection for his fellow residents on Sesame Street, but such differences cannot be forced or made unseemly by profit. The interpellation of the Blue Bird of Happiness is that while difference is an integral part of an individual's identity in relation to their friends and neighbours, it is personal and requires self-autonomy of how such difference should be handled.

In the conclusion of *Follow That Bird*, the Sesame Street residents catch up to the Sleaze Brothers Funfair and bring Big Bird back to Sesame Street. Big Bird reunites with the many residents of Sesame Street before being alarmed by Miss Finch who has come to take him to another bird family. The live-action human character and mother-figure Maria makes a speech about how different species can live happily in the same area as a family in order to prove to Miss Finch that social difference is not necessarily a barrier for integration: 'well we're all happy on Sesame Street and we've got all kinds! We've got people, and cows, and we've got Bert and Ernie, and there's dogs, and birds—we've got Monsters, and kids, and there's Honkers. Why, we've even got Grouches!' In one long unbroken panning shot (along

with celebratory harmony in the soundtrack), the multi-species crowd cheers in agreement at their acceptance of their cultural differences, the camera unifying and uniting their belief that even though they are of different species, they are of one kind (the city residents of Sesame Street) as they are all happy together. Miss Finch realizes that Big Bird's home is on Sesame Street; what should be noted in her decision is that she has come to this conclusion herself after realizing her mistake. While only a middling part of the film's denouement, I would argue that Miss Finch's change of understanding represents an important element of the film's treatment of social difference: it interpellates the importance of the ability of an individual to change their mind. By demonstrating that an antagonist like Miss Finch is able to change her mind around social difference, the film proposes and encourages the flexibility of difference in the minds and hearts of other people; if the tentpole of refusing social difference can be persuaded that difference in itself is not inherently negative, it models the notion that changing minds on social difference is an achievable objective.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit

The social difference codified in speciesism in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (Zemeckis, 1988) is similar to the codifications of social identities in anthropomorphized animals in *First Contact*, allegorizing hegemonies of race and ethnicity coupled with social class into its nonhuman characters. However, I would posit that, unlike *First Contact* films like *Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* handles the social difference between human and anthropomorphized animals with such a brash, burlesque quality that the notion of social difference is deconstructed rather than interpellated. The social difference portrayed in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* so heavily emphasized and made bizarre and alienating that the notion of social difference becomes nonsensical. By becoming nonsensical, these portrayals of social difference question and deconstruct the nature of such divisions.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit opens with a Looney Tunes-style short, animated entirely in 2D cel-animation. In this opening sequence Roger Rabbit (an anthropomorphized rabbit) is tasked with taking care of a human infant (Baby Herman) in a 1940s suburban American household. Baby Herman escapes from his crib and tries to climb a series of dangerous kitchen appliances in order to reach the cookie jar. Through a series of mawkish, cartoonish antics, Roger is violently hurt through slapstick physics (falling into an oven, being projected onto an ironing board, nearly stabbed by knives catapulted in his direction, et cetera) as he attempts to apprehend Baby Herman and return the infant to the safety of his crib. The idea of cartoon violence in the film's introduction fulfils a staple that children's cartoons incorporate violence as part of the cartoon medium's content (Kirsch, 548). This caricature of violence also purportedly acts as a means of undercutting any consequential mediation to the viewer; 'Humorous elements in cartoons are thought to signal viewers that seriousness of the events they are watching should be down played' (Kirsch, 549). The violence in Roger and Baby Herman's dynamic establishes the normal treatment of the social 'Other' in Roger as opposed to the human 'Self' represented by the angelic and untouchable Baby Herman; there is some social difference in the dynamic, but the cartoon violence is meant to signal an inconsequential ethos to such difference—there *is* some unspecified nature of difference in the human-nonhuman dynamic, but such differences are not to be carefully considered.

This opening sequence abruptly ends with an offscreen voice shouting 'cut!' after a refrigerator falls on Roger's head, and the camera pulling back from the 2D cel-animated kitchen to reveal that the entire sequence has been taking place on a film soundstage, with the production spaces of the soundstage being realized through live-action sets and actors. The meta-setting of the live-action Hollywood soundstage for the cartoon kitchen denotes the layering and self-reflexivity of what viewers should be watching, the dissociation between the 2D-animation (the 'Toons') and the 'real world' of live-action. The jarring transition

between the cartoon world and the live-action surroundings explicitly constructing the performances of this cartoon world pushes an incongruity between what an audience might accept from the cartoon violence (the seriousness of which is to be downplayed) and physical live-action violence (the seriousness of which is to be taken somewhat literally). This incongruity questions the nature of the camera gaze and the viewing process vivifies the exceptionally brutal nature of cartoon violence and human-nonhuman difference as spectacle and not as inherent reality. This incongruity is highlighted when the on-screen director of the soundstage, frustrated over Roger's performance in the scene, begins to walk off the set as Roger tries to persuade the director to continue filming. Pleading with the live-action director, the 2D animated Roger tugs on the director's live-action jacket which physically reacts to the strain of Roger's grasp, the disjunction between the mediums giving the cartoon an errant tactile capability (such interplay of physical and animated mediums is a recurring feature throughout *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*). The disconnect between human and nonhuman, between 2D animation and live-action, visualizes the liminality of the social difference which these human and nonhuman characters are performing, but unlike other categories of anthropomorphism, the social difference is not clearly anchored in any one codification or allegory of real social difference, and as such, this liminality of social difference is made bizarre and absurd.

Like Bert and Ernie in *Follow That Bird*, Baby Herman is revealed to be a bestial ambivalent figure, human by species but animated like an anthropomorphized animal and contrasting to the live-action humans. Unlike Bert and Ernie, Baby Herman is not immediately apparent as a bestial ambivalent figure, further characterizing Baby Herman as Bhabha's hybrid figure by even more explicitly placing the character in between the human and nonhuman as the 'connective tissue'. As the on-screen, live-action human director in the studio shouts 'cut!', Baby Herman (an animated character like Roger, but human) immediately

'drops character'—during the shooting of the scene, Baby Herman acted like an ideal, angelic human infant, but off-camera he confidently walks bipedally, speaks in a deep, gruff, loud voice, uses coarse language, and has an overall cynical and short-tempered personality. The harsh transition between Baby Herman's personas draws attention to pre-conceptions of the obvious and apparent, and encourages the self-reflexivity and challenging of understanding the supposedly superficial.

The performance(s) of Baby Herman make the performativity of identity construction conspicuous while emphasizing the flexible and fluid borders of an individual's identity. Social difference based on solid and rigid structures that exclude and divide, the types of structures often seen in *Lost in Translation*, *First Contact*, and *the Tourist*, assume some level of stable permanence between characters; the Postcolonial characters in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* are constantly performing and maintaining their identities and their relation (and difference) to others is in flux. The performativity of the Toons' identities is underpinned by the Toons' occupations being dependant on being performers in the entertainment industry; the three prominent Toons (Roger Rabbit, Jessica Rabbit, and Baby Herman) are all performers in show business who are seen both as professional performers for an audience and as private citizens. The Toons' occupations as performers underpins the performative nature of their social identities by signalling their reliance and awareness on their capabilities to stage and theatrically present their presence in social environments. This staging and presentation of the Toons' identities is also made ostentatious by the Toons' portrayal through 2D cel-animation against the live-action background, making the presentation of their presence deliberately conspicuous and flamboyant.

The film then shifts to its main protagonist, private investigator Eddie Valiant who is a Phillip Marlowe-esque character, hired by the Hollywood studio manager to follow Roger Rabbit's wife Jessica Rabbit in order to prove her infidelity to her husband (the manager explicitly requests photographs as evidence of Jessica Rabbit's affair). Valiant follows Jessica Rabbit to a speakeasy (the Ink and Paint Club) whose clientele is 'strictly humans only' which transpires to be exclusively white, live-action human men. The Ink and Paint Club's entertainment is a Toon revue, the headliner of which is Jessica Rabbit singing a cabaret-style song. Jessica Rabbit is a human Toon (her surname apparently being her married name and not a reference to her species). Without the disparity of medium between the live-action human men in the audience and the 2D cel-animated Jessica Rabbit, the sequence with Jessica Rabbit singing a sultry and seductive song onstage is a quintessential example of Laura Mulvey's male gaze in cinema: men gazing at a woman (especially Valiant whose whole purpose is to spy and photograph Jessica Rabbit) and this gaze eroticizes Jessica Rabbit through her sexualized image (large bust and wide hips compared to her small waist, her red dress which emphasizes her legs, and her caressing touch of the male audience during her song). There are several reaction shots in Jessica's song which cut between members of the club's audience in spellbound awe of Jessica's beauty, reinforcing Mulvey's main thesis of the film audience's gaze often aligning with the male characters' eroticized gaze. However, the differences in gender that are set up by Mulvey's male gaze are subverted through Jessica Rabbit's 2D cel-animation portrayal against a live-action environment, presenting Jessica's sexualization as caricaturized and parodic. Jessica Rabbit's contrast to the live-action male audience is a reminder that she is literally sexualized beyond belief; she is impossibly sexy, and while it is heavily noticeable that Jessica Rabbit is sexy, the underlying fact is that she breaches and contravenes the realms of *possibility* for a human.

By characterizing the male gaze towards Jessica Rabbit so utterly ridiculous it loses its sexual potency, the sequence seems to subvert Mulvey's theoretical model by exposing the mechanism behind the gaze. Mulvey's model of the male gaze expects the subject to be objectified in a sexual fashion but Jessica Rabbit being a caricature and parody makes the character seem abstract, estranging her sexualization to the viewer. This use of cartoon characters to estrange and deconstruct the gaze is foreshadowed by an appearance of Betty Boop shortly before Jessica Rabbit's song. Betty Boop, a pre-existing well-known 1930s cartoon character and sex symbol, appears as a waitress at the Ink and Paint Club and unlike the other Toons, is completely black-and-white (an homage to her origins in black-and-white cartoons). Boop's black-and-white appearance adds another layer of displacement to the Toons, not just contrasting through cartoon but also contrasting through colour. Betty Boop's status as a sex symbol is made strange and out-of-place in her appearance in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, emphasizing the artificiality of cartoonized sexualization.

After the Ink and Paint Club, Valiant secretly takes photos of Jessica Rabbit and Marvin Acme (studio head of a rival company to Roger Rabbit) literally 'playing patty-cake' (treated as tantamount to an extramarital affair). The next morning, Valiant is awoken by a police detective who notifies him that Acme has been murdered (a piano falling on his head) and that the police believe Roger to be responsible. Valiant goes to the crime scene and is confronted by the film's main antagonist Judge Doom. The performativity of Judge Doom is also used as a means of deconstructing social differences by suggesting the fluidity and malleability of social identities, demonstrating the flaws of the essential disposition of identity constructs. Judge Doom is primarily portrayed through a live-action actor (Christopher Lloyd), and in his last scene at the climax of the narrative is revealed to be a Toon constantly disguised as a human for political gain. Doom uses his performativity to convince others that he is human; using performativity as a means of masking an individual's

identity is a social practice known as 'passing', a form of Bhabha's mimicry taken to its logical extreme. In his essay 'A Cartography of Passing in Everyday Life', Daniel G. Renfrow describes passing as a means of social advancement through transgression of the exclusionary boundaries of difference; 'whenever individuals come together, we share information about our identities. Our words, gestures, and physical appearance, even our style of dress, send clues about *who we are* and about *who we are not*—clues that then guide social transactions . . . cultural performances [of passing] in which individuals perceived to have a somewhat threatening identity present themselves or are categorized by others as persons they are not. Each of these transgressed identities carries social meaning rooted in a unique sociohistorical-political milieu' (Renfrow, 487). Individuals may identify with one social group, such as their gender, ethnicity, or class, they may intentionally perform as another to escape social stigma and overcome social boundaries to which they would normally be subjected. Passing for another identity is generally viewed as a negative practice, both for the individuals who perform it as well as the implications for the societies which produce the necessity for it. Passing is always an interaction between individuals, and an individual who passes violates the degree of trust in the relationship of the interaction (Renfrow, 487). Furthermore, passing may be distinguished from simply posing as a different identity as 'passing is an issue only for those minority group members who possess the capacity to present themselves in terms of appearance and behaviour as a majority group member. The incentive to do so is quite clear. The discrimination and antagonism suffered by the subordinate group may be avoided while the benefits and advantages enjoyed by the dominant group may be obtained' (P. Brown, 34). Passing betrays the veracity of the trust found in most social interactions; due to the duplicitous nature of passing, performativity poses the possibility of destabilizing the borders of identity.

Doom's passing as human destabilizes social differences by demonstrating not just the flexibility of the liminal boundaries of identity upon social differences are founded, but through intentional oscillation of an individual's identity (or, for that matter, *identities*). Doom's passing as human is partly realized through the use of a live-action actor, but also through Doom's performance 'as human' and not only mimics, but also exaggerates, those markers of human performativity (much in the same way that a drag queen exaggerates markers of femininity for satirical effect). There are clear contrasts between the characterizations of the humans and the Toons which establish the markers of human performativity: drab and colourless outfits, generally restrained and emotionally muted speech tones, and stiff and topologically consistent body language. Heavily accentuating these human markers, Doom wears a dramatic black suit and cape (with a matching fedora, leather gloves, and teashade sunglasses), speaks almost entirely in a loud, deep staccato, and uses sharp, precise movements to move through the blocking. In effect, Doom performs with excessive human markers to pass as human. Just as Jessica Rabbit's sexualization is parodic in a way which estranges her sexuality, Doom's passing as human is so caricaturized that it estranges the difference between human and Toon by presenting Doom's human disguise as awkward and strange, even among other humans. Doom's passing as human is strong evidence that his identity is shaped by the transgressions of his own identity, that he is who he wishes to be without concern or detection from those social groups who have a pre-conceived notion of what he should be based on his Toon identity. Doom is capable of transgressing the cultural difference between human and Toon to be human by passing, and the humans and Toons are completely incapable of realizing his transgression. With no one able to tell that the cultural divide between human and Toon is being transgressed, it throws into question the legitimacy of such a difference embedded within a culture (for if no one can detect a transgression of this difference, there can hardly be much substantial difference to begin

with).

To return to an earlier point about Postcolonial films, Doom's narrative role in the story underscores the use of cinematic geography as Bhabha's Third Space (i.e. a symbolic site dedicated to encouraging cultural difference). The film is set in the highly urbanized region of California, and the film emphasizes the urbanization of its setting in several ways. Each shot in the exterior of the city is a long take with plenty of movement, displaying the highly concrete nature of California's urban spaces (which also lack trees, grass, or any other flora). While riding a streetcar, Valiant remarks to some fellow passengers that their city has 'the best public transportation system in the world', positively remarking on the interconnectedness of city lifestyles as another way of idealizing city living (the infrastructural metaphor for rationalization, modernization, and self-acceptance of a genuine respect for difference). In the denouement of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, Doom explains that his villainous conduct (namely, framing Roger Rabbit for murder and attempting to capture and execute him) has been part of a scheme to dismantle the city's public transportation and demolish large tracts of the city (mainly Toontown) in order to build the then-unprecedented inter-state highway (what Doom simply calls 'a freeway'). Like Miss Finch and the Dodos in *Follow That Bird*, Judge Doom's opposition to highly urbanized environments as antagonistic advances and glorifies city living and the acceptance of differences which such lifestyles encourage.

Destabilizing Social Difference in Postcolonial Films

Similar to postcolonial theory, the human-nonhuman dynamic of Postcolonial films aims to destabilize and deconstruct the notions of inherent social difference. The physical and phenomenological proximity between human and nonhuman animals in this category of anthropomorphism creates liminal spaces which embraces heterogeneity as hybridity and

overcomes ambivalence of differences. The kindness demonstrated in Postcolonial films does not dismiss difference, but recognizes its potential to bring about positive change and growth. In *Stuart Little*, the anthropomorphism of Stuart is symbolic of physical impairment and explores that Stuart's physical difference is not a disability, that his difference is a social asset in certain contexts. While some of the humans are ambivalent about Stuart's ability to mimic human morphology, the film argues that difference need not rely on mimicry to be collapsed and that difference should be utilized and celebrated. *Follow That Bird* uses cinematic geography to use urban cities as analogous to Homi K. Bhabha's Third Space and positively portray spaces of culture-mixing as worthwhile places to live, as well as negatively portraying the spaces of suburbia as stifling and suffocating due to their desire for homogenization and exclusion of difference. Child characters like Big Bird do not recognize difference as threatening or distasteful, exemplifying the universality of recognizing the positive aspects of difference and interpellating that prejudices based on social differences are not inherent qualities, but acquired personality traits which can be persuaded otherwise. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* uses conspicuous contrasting technical elements of film language to deconstruct the ethnographic, zoological, and pornographic gazes of nonhuman characters in ways that make the foundations of difference absurd and nonsensical. In Postcolonial films, the symbolic social differences in human-nonhuman relations are dissimilar to the previous categories of anthropomorphism as they do not assume the permanence of difference—instead they work to interrogate assumptions of difference. This questioning of social difference as an indelible element of society cannot be said to overtake ideologies of the necessities of social difference and prejudice—even still, it is an encouraging start.

Chapter 7: The Sentinel

The name for this category of anthropomorphism is admittedly less clear at describing the human-nonhuman dynamic than the previous categories. The name 'Sentinel' is derived from the North Sentinel Island tribe (also called the Sentinelese or Sentineli), a group of humans who have been left largely uncontacted by the rest of the world (Nuwer, *BBC*). Just as the Sentinelese are (nominally) completely free of interaction from potential colonizers, the nonhuman animals in Sentinel films are completely unaware and unconcerned of any traces of human society. In Sentinel films, there is no human-nonhuman dynamic because these films do not incorporate humans within the diegesis. Sentinel films are distinct from Lost in Translation films because there are no on-screen humans for whom nonhuman characters can be verbally and socially alienated and excluded. Sentinel films feature nonhuman animals in non-anthropogenic environments and little (if any) evidence of the existence of humans is depicted. As John Berger argues in his essay 'Why Look at Animals?' the last two centuries of Western conceptualizations of nonhuman animals have widely been centred around the ways in which those nonhuman animals act as both symbolic and literal extensions of human society rather than as epistemological beings who may exist outside the realm of human civilization. Sentinel films occupy a peculiar position in Todorov's theory of the fantastic as nonhuman animals are recognizable to viewers, yet the phenomenological lifestyles of nonhuman animals outside of human purviews is somewhat dissimilar from the usual understanding of nonhuman animals who are defined through their adjunct physical and phenomenological proximity to human society. As discussed in Chapter 1, Todorov describes fantasy as 'in a world which is indeed our world, the one we know . . . there occurs an event

which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world'; the inexplicable fantastical nature of nonhuman animals in Sentinel films is not their strikingly similar phenomenologies to humans—it is their striking epistemological independence from humans, totally unfettered from the erasure (of indeed, complete non-existence) of human society (Todorov, 25).

By being entirely untethered and disassociated from diegetic humans, there are several unique aspects as to how the symbolic constructions of nonhuman characters' identities are characterized compared to other categories of anthropomorphism. As has been argued in all previous chapters of this thesis, an integral element in anthropomorphized characters in all other categories of anthropomorphism stems from the varying types of kindness and difference in the human-nonhuman dynamic. In Sentinel films such as *The Lion King* (Allers, Minkoff, 1994), *Ice Age: The Meltdown* (Saldanha, 2006), and *The Land Before Time* (Bluth, 1988), nonhuman animals have no affiliations with anything human and so their anthropomorphism is not predicated on their relative position to humans. I would argue that the lack of humans in Sentinel films is key to understanding the ways in which nonhuman animals are anthropomorphized. As discussed in *Lost in Translation* and *First Contact*, humans often act as anchors for the existential sense of being of nonhuman animals for the humans who view them (Berger, 12) (Knight, 9). As nonhuman animals are often viewed as being extensions of human identities, a core part of anthropomorphizing nonhuman animals in Sentinel films is the ways in which the total lack of connection to humans informs the identities of these nonhuman animals.

As nonhuman animals are never defined by their relationship(s) with humans, nonhuman animals in Sentinel films are less likely to be portrayed as having stable traditional family structures (for there are no human individuals or communities for these nonhuman animals to be a part of). As Sentinel films are the only category of anthropomorphism defined

by the absence of humans, the codification of social difference normally found in anthropomorphism is inverted—social relations in Sentinel films are not predominantly defined by difference, but instead by social unity and cohesion. As mentioned in Chapter 2, in *The Children's Film: Genre, Nation, and Narrative* the author Noel Brown posits that one of the key syntactic conventions of the children's film genre is 'the reaffirmation of family, kinship and community' (N. Brown, 14). Some children's films affirm the notion of family through definitions of genetic relatives (consanguinity or 'blood relation') and marriage (also termed as 'affinity' by anthropologists to recognize partnerships between non-consanguineous individuals). *Mary Poppins* (Stevenson, 1964), *The Incredibles* (Bird, 2004), and *Coco* (Unkrich, 2017) are high-profile examples of children's films which celebrate the value of families which are connected through blood relations and marriage. Sentinel films are children's films which are more expansive in their definition of family. By lacking visible (human) societal stability by having some human centrality to their existence, nonhuman animals in Sentinel films are portrayed as having ersatz family units and often engaging in 'chosen family' structures. These chosen families are usually portrayed positively, and Sentinel films often explore the contrasts and possible mutual exclusivities between chosen families and 'traditional' family units.

Definitions and Classifications of Family Structures in Children's Films

Before discussing in-depth the ways in which Sentinel films portray a specific form of family unit, it seems important to define the various ways in which family can be understood through the lens of the children's film genre and how exactly this chapter will approach the concept of 'family'. While the notion of 'family' may seem obvious, the particulars can be divisive and inconsistent in varying contexts. One example of this inconsistent usage of 'family' is sociologist Stuart Hall's description of a nation 'as belonging to the same great

national family' (S. Hall, 296). In this context, Hall is presumably not implying that all members of a nation are closely genetically related or married. There is also the use of 'family' as a taxonomic rank in biological classification (species, genus, family, order, class, phylum, kingdom, domain), and in this taxonomic context, 'families' may be disparately genetically related in a socially incompatible context (the taxonomic family 'Hominadae' includes gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, humans, and Neanderthals). There are also various uses of 'family' as a means of denoting concepts in mathematics (family of sets), chemistry (family of elements), and religion (Holy Family)—while a ubiquitous concept in society, the specifications and criteria of what constitutes a family is not necessarily intuitive and can sometimes be largely contextual. Noel Brown's syntactic convention of the reaffirmation of family presumably does not refer to the nationalistic, taxonomic, mathematical, chemical, or religious context of 'family' but the social and anthropological context: as a social unit as a means for creating and supporting aspects of people's identity, and the raising of children. In providing a useful overview of the concept from a sociological perspective, Lisa M. Warner and Brian Powell write that

family is among the most important social institutions—if not the most important. Sociologists recognize the centrality of families in providing their members with valuable resources, both economic and noneconomic, in creating and shaping self and collective identities, and in the rearing and socialization of children. There is no doubt that family relationships and processes affect individual well-being in profound ways. Families also interact with other social institutions and contribute to social stability and change. Sociologists—both those who self-identify as family sociologists and those who do not—

have written extensively in these areas. They also have explored the precursors to and consequences of major demographic changes over time and place. In addition, they increasingly have moved away from a monolithic view of "the family" and instead recognize, and in many cases embrace, the diversity that exists in family forms (Warner, Powell, *Oxford*).

Note that Warner and Powell's overview of family does not necessarily demand consanguinity or affinity as the connective tissue between family members (although, as will be demonstrated below, many family models do rely on these two types of connections to determine family membership). While Warner and Powell's definition of family may be considered broad, there are various models of family units which have specific patterns to family relationships. Most of these models of family units are largely grounded in descent (or lineage) theory and alliance (or affinal) theory, relying on consanguinity and marriage in order to determine familial relations; I will refer to these family units which depend on consanguinity and marriage for connections as 'families of origin':

Nuclear Family:

A nuclear family (also called an elementary, conjugal, or consanguineal family) is comprised of two parents (often heteronormative and married) and 'socially recognized' children (either genetic descendants of both or either of the two parents, or adopted). In the nuclear family model, parents are seen as the main (if not, sole) caretakers of their children and responsible for their children's physical, emotional, mental, and moral wellbeing. The bond between parents is the focal strength of the nuclear family unit; 'The stability of the conjugal family depends on the quality of the marriage of the husband and wife, a relationship that is more

emphasized in the kinds of industrialized, highly mobile societies that frequently demand that people reside away from their kin groups. The consanguineal family derives its stability from its corporate nature and its permanence, as its relationships emphasize the perpetuation of the line' (Nuclear Family, *Britannica*). The nuclear family unit has been touted as an essential component of a stable Western society by American social conservatives and that a set of heterosexual parents are more likely to raise psychologically sound children than other parenting units (although a number of sociologists have questioned or explicitly disagreed with this assertion) (Johnson, 331). *The Incredibles* (Bird, 2004) is a prominent children's film which celebrates the nuclear family unit: the main characters are two heteronormative parents (Bob and Helen Parr) who must care for and bond with their biological offspring, and the potential threat to the parents' marriage is treated as a threat to the entire family unit. The Parr family overcome opponents who stand against the Parr family's ideological values and Bob Parr's character arc follows his realization that he must embrace his (nuclear) family in times of hardship in order to become the strongest version of himself.

Single-Parent Family:

A single-parent family is comprised of one parent and any number of dependent children; one parent may have sole custody of children or share custody with another parent. The majority of American single-parent families have women as parents (Lee, *Single Mother Guide*) and single-parent families which include adopted children are not uncommon ('Adopting as a Single Parent', 1). Critics of single-parent families contend that single-parents do not qualify or are not capable of being called 'families' although this is a topic of much debate and controversy (Snowdon, *Divorce*). Single parents are also associated with below-average income and above-average occurrence rates of mental instability (Brown, Moran, 21). *Despicable Me* (Coffin, Renaud, 2010) and its sequel *Despicable Me 2* (Coffin, Renaud,

2013) are two children's films which depict a positive single-parent family: an adult man who chooses to adopt three girls and learns to care for them in order to grow as a mature adult (as well as realizing that his pride in being a supervillain is not as important as the joy of parenting). By contrast, *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* (Siberling, 2004) provides a more tepid portrayal of single-parent families, following three orphans (the Baudelaires) who are consecutively adopted by three single guardians. Each of the Baudelaires' new guardians are shown to be either incompetent or intentionally malicious, and unable to provide the same comfort and support which they once received from their two biological parents in the nuclear family to which they once belonged.

Matrifocal Family:

A matrifocal family consist of a mother raising children and acting as the leader of the family, with the father playing a marginal and/or infrequent role in the family. Matrifocal families differ from single-parent families in that matrifocal families do not have the expectation of a two-parent unit and therefore are not defined by the absence of one parent. Matrifocal families are far more obliquely portrayed in children's films (Andy and his mother in the *Toy Story* film series is one marginal example)—perhaps due to the predominant normalization of the two-parent nuclear family in Western society.

Blended Family:

A blended family (or stepfamily) refers to a family unit where parents have remarried and may potentially bring new or existing children (who may be step-children or step- or half-siblings) into the group. *Yours, Mine & Ours* (Shavelson, 1968) and *Elf* (Favreau, 2003) both contain positive portrayals of blended families who learn to recognize familial bonds despite not sharing the genetic familial status of a nuclear family. Blended families may also be seen

as inadequate or inferior to nuclear families with less connective integrity to the family unit (Kumar, 110). The Disney film *Cinderella* (Geronimi, Luske, Jackson, 1950) is an iconic representation of a blended family that largely demonizes blended families in its characterization.

Extended Family:

An extended family is a family model which like the nuclear family model determines family membership through consanguinity and affinity. Extended families are distinct from nuclear families as extended families do not necessarily adhere to the two-generation parent-child model, and may include several generations of family members. Extended families may also be more lateral in nature, including uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, cousins, and any in-laws through marriage. 2017 film *Coco* (Unkrich, 2017) is a well-known example of a children's film which celebrates the multi-generational, multi-branched nature of the extended family structure. *The Addams Family* (Sonnefeld, 1991) and its sequel *Addams Family Values* (Sonnefeld, 1993) are also examples of positive representations of extended families in children's films, extolling the joys of being part of an extensive family culture with various traditions and shared heritage.

Family of Choice (or Chosen Family):

A family of choice (also known as chosen family or fictive/voluntary kinship) is, by definition, a family which does not rely on consanguinity and/or affinity in order to determine familial bonds. A chosen family is determined through individuals taking on, or being allocated with, roles with other people which amount to a similar support system to a family of origin. As I will discuss further below, the notion of chosen families resonates strongly in the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) community, and the term 'chosen family' is derived

from LGB individuals create non-consanguineal family units when they experience or fear rejection from their consanguineal/affinal family (or 'family of origin') (Dewaele *et al*, 313). Although they may be prevalent in queer communities, representations of chosen families in children's films are not universally shown to be queer. In *Muppet Treasure Island* (Henson, 1996) and *Spy Kids 3D: Game Over* (Rodriguez, 2003), the protagonists eventually explicitly learn how their friends and allies are their chosen families who support and encourage their wellbeing. The protagonists of these films develop their acceptance of chosen families after they experience an explicit deficit from their families of origin. For reasons discussed further in this chapter, although chosen families are often prevalent in LGB communities, neither of the aforementioned films have any explicit characters of non-heterosexual sexualities ('queer') although there are characters who have subtle queer undertones (for example Benjamina Gunn, played by Miss Piggy in *Muppet Treasure Island*, has several aspects of drag performativity, such as a male falsetto speaking voice and an over-exaggerated feminine gait, encoded into her character's performance).

I would posit that Sentinel films have a predilection to promote chosen families for several reasons. As previously stated, Sentinel films' usage of chosen families stems from the lack of human presence in the epistemological being of these nonhuman animals in order to justify their existence to the (human) audience. As nonhuman animals are often conceptualized as the extensions of humans rather than entities autonomous from humans, the existence of nonhuman animals in Sentinel films may seem somewhat anomalous. Nonhuman animals with primarily consanguineal relations (especially consanguineal parent-child relationships) imply the ontological perpetuity of nonhuman animals independent from humans. Such ontological perpetuity is difficult to reconcile with the conceptualizations of nonhuman animals as extensions and/or dependents of humans which John Berger describes. I would

posit that Sentinel films avoid this contradiction by emphasizing nonhuman animals having chosen families, families whose bonds are subjective to change and actively participated in, without indefinitely continuing the family unit (rather than passively achieved through biological reproduction).

Another factor in Sentinel films emphasizing chosen families is the decentralization of familial connectivity which these family models contain, usually centred around the parent figures. All of the other aforementioned models of family units are structured so that one set of parents are the focal figures around which other family members use to identify their relative position to one another, and use consanguinity of their relative positions as objective admission of familial status. In nuclear families, the integrity of the family connectivity is largely dependent upon the connection between the two parent figures, and any extended family or children may be part of the family but the loss of one extended family member does not alter the family dynamic to the degree of losing one of the parents. In single-parent and matrifocal families, the single parent is the defining feature of the family models, and without that parent, those family units might be disqualified from the criteria of those definitions. Blended families share connectivity through updated connections of parents, step-sibling and step-parent relationships are forged to accommodate parents who re-marry and include their offspring into new family units. Even extended families have some centrality to their family structure (although the extended family model has a focus on family demarcation which is more amorphous than the others); grandchildren and grandparents receive these designations through the continuity of generations—a person cannot have a grandchild without first having a child, and a person cannot have a grandparent without having a parent. This aspect of lineage is also important to lateral branches of extended families: a person cannot have an uncle or aunt without first having a direct parent, and a person cannot have a nibling (niece or nephew) without first having a direct sibling. While the integrity of connectivity with

extended families is not quite so reliant on one or two particular parents, extended families will likely have some members with closer family links than other (e.g. parent to child is a single link, whereas grandparent to grandchild requires two links), so there are some family members who are more central than others in the extended family tree. This is not to say that closer links necessarily means greater kinship or affection; it is certainly possible that a grandparent-grandchild relationship may be more emotionally intimate than a parent-child relationship, or a bond of friendship between cousins is stronger than a bond between siblings.

Chosen families do not have such inherent centrality to their structure. Chosen families are not perpetuated in a largely monodirectional fashion; in non-chosen families, parents have children to create new family members (or, in blended families, parents remarry which create step-parents and step-siblings), children cannot create parents to achieve the same result. Chosen families are non-hereditary and genealogically extemporaneous, and family membership is not automatically granted or mutually understood in equal terms. For these reasons, chosen families may be unevenly organized, points of reference in terms of chosen familial connections differing between family members themselves, and without objective connections. These qualities lead to a lack of centrality around the chosen family unit. I would argue that chosen families have a subversive, queer, and non-normative quality which other family models lack, and that aside from the lack of centrality (based upon consanguinity and affinity) chosen families stand apart as the unusual family form. One of the alternate names for the chosen family is 'fictive kinship' which implies some fabricated or untrue element to the connection between chosen family members (while also suggesting that there is some higher authentic, truthful connection between consanguineal and affinal relations). Chosen families are often initiated by, and are popular among, the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) community, and the name of the family structure 'reflects the

construction of elaborate friendship networks to compensate for a lack of supportive family ties' (Dewaele *et al*, 313). There are underlying assumptions that chosen families must compensate for the lack of supporting functions which non-chosen families should provide, suggesting that chosen families cannot be the default family unit. The prevalence of chosen families in non-heterosexual communities in a largely heteronormative society also colours the chosen family model as non-normative.

I would posit that Sentinel films emphasize chosen family units as they mirror the lack of epistemological human centrality with a lack of traditional familial centrality although any qualities of these chosen families related to non-heteronormative sexualities is often made humorous or downplayed (perhaps due to another of Noel Brown's syntactic conventions of children's films: the minimisation of 'adult' representational elements such as sexuality). This chapter will focus on three Sentinel films (*The Land Before Time*, *Ice Age: The Meltdown*, and *The Lion King 1½*) and consider the ways in which chosen family units are portrayed and how they handle the issue of chosen family connectivity against the symbolic social differences codified in different species. Although they differ in setting and medium, the films' representations of chosen families share similar points in their characterization. The first similarity is that these chosen families are comprised of characters deprived of (or are otherwise outcasts from) their families of origin, suggesting chosen families themselves are lesser social units to families of origin. Another similarity between these three chosen families is that they are all ostensibly searching for a geographical location to settle (as opposed to a temporal or spiritual place) as a result of eminent dissatisfaction with their previous settlement. The main characters of these films often grapple with reconciling a sense of familial mutual exclusivity (either belonging to a family of origin *or* a chosen family). In *Lost in Translation*, *First Contact*, *the Tourist*, and *Postcolonial* films, nonhuman characters have a fixed abode of physical residence and familial social acceptance, but in Sentinel films

this journeying for home underscores the characters' quest for familial stability among their chosen families. The third similarity between these characterizations of chosen families is the need for chosen family members to both recognize differences of origin and improve themselves as a result of accepting this difference; characters in Sentinel films are shown as better (rather than lesser) for accepting kinship in the face of difference. However, this betterment from their chosen families usually directly results in characters reuniting with their families of origin so that characters are never ultimately faced with the aforementioned familial mutual exclusivity and avoids endings where they are solely members of chosen families. In some ways, this avoidance of familial mutual exclusivity between families of origin and chosen families undermines the value of chosen families compared to families of origin. Sentinel films never demand characters stay exclusively with the chosen families they have acquired, instead often making their chosen families ancillary appendages to their families of origin, the families of origin for these characters consistently characterized as a vital component for their ongoing satisfaction with their family unit.

The Land Before Time

The Land Before Time (Bluth, 1988) follows a pack of dinosaurs, all of whom are of a different species, as they attempt to traverse a barren landscape in order to reach 'the Great Valley'. *The Land Before Time* begins with a short montage of various terrestrial and avian species of dinosaurs roaming pre-historic Earth, a narrator says to the audience:

Once upon this same earth, beneath this same sun, long before you . . . before the ape and the elephant as well, before the wolf, the bison, the whale, before the mammoth and the mastodon in the time of the dinosaurs. Dinosaurs were of two kinds: some had flat teeth

and ate the leaves of trees. Some had sharp teeth for eating meat. They preyed upon the leaf-eaters. Then leaves began to die . . . Desperate for food, some dinosaur herds struck out toward the west, searching for their Great Valley, a land still lush and green. It was a journey toward life. It was a march of many dangers . . . The leaf-eaters stopped only to hatch their young.

The dinosaur herds in this montage are comprised of visually similar individuals. Each of these herds are depicted as comprising of two sizes of dinosaurs (as opposed to an assortment of sizes), the larger group representing adults and the smaller group representing children. The montage also frames all of the herds in profile shots in order to highlight this size disparity between the adults and children. The onscreen duality of adults/children and the narrator mentioning the dinosaurs' hatching of eggs visualizes the child-rearing duties of families of origin, typifying certain members of the herd as either those who raise their young or those young who need adults to raise them. This introduction to the film stresses notions of kindness and difference in origin, setting up an initial expectation that what connects and/or divides these animals is primarily a matter of biological determined familial units.

This montage also actualizes the naturalization of parenting in families of origin is through the introductory interactions between the main characters and their parents. Ducky, a *Saurolophus* and one of the film's main characters, is shown hatching from her egg in this introduction and, after briefly encountering a giant snapping turtle, is picked up by a larger *Saurolophus* who Ducky is seeing for the first time and addresses as 'mama' (*The Land Before Time* shows a preference for matrifocal families of origin as its chief protagonist Littlefoot is also shown as having a mother but no father). Ducky's 'mama' then returns Ducky to a nest with four other *Saurolophuses* of Ducky's size. Ducky's interaction with her

mama is noteworthy in two ways: the first is that it establishes the parent/child dynamic within the dual sizes of dinosaurs. The second noteworthy aspect of Ducky's interaction with her mama is intriguing is Ducky's ability to recognize her maternal parental figure without any prior socialization or training. This implies some biological or intrinsically instinctual drive from Ducky to instantly understand her familial relations—this drive seems to lend credence to ideas of biological determinism in familial units, that Ducky's biological make-up bestows upon her some foreknowledge on her relationship with her family of origin. This impression of biological deterministic personality traits and/or knowledge is compounded with the next sequence of the montage showing a *Triceratops* herd (or as the film calls them, 'Three-Horns') with Cera, a *Triceratops* and another of the film's main characters, hatching from her egg (the last of her clutch to hatch). After hatching, Cera immediately begins wanting to roughhouse with the two larger *Triceratops*; 'Some of the young seemed born without fear' the narrator says over Cera's headbutting of her parents, implying some inherent predisposition of personality from birth.

After this introductory montage, the film focuses on its main protagonist: a newly-hatched *Apatosaurus* (or as the film refers to them, 'Long-Necks') called Littlefoot. Littlefoot's herd (Littlefoot, his mother, and Littlefoot's grandparents) are heading for the Great Valley, a mythic place which Littlefoot's mother describes as being 'filled with green food, more than you could ever eat and more cool water than you could ever drink. It's a wonderful, beautiful place, where we'll live happily with many more of our own kind'. The comments made by Littlefoot's mother suggest that the Great Valley is a utopia, and that the utopian ideal is therefore to be with one's own kind. This idea of being with one's kind as utopian is undercut by two immediate aspects of the scene. The first is that as Littlefoot's mother says these things to Littlefoot, there is a shot of deep focus emphasizing the huge stretch of road that the Long-Necks must traverse. This deep focus works to displace the

authenticity of the claims made by Littlefoot's mother by suggesting a great deal of distance between where they are in relation to what she is talking about.

The second point to undercut the Great Valley as a utopia of residing with one's kind is Littlefoot's mother adding the ambiguous statement 'some things you see with your eyes, others you see with your heart' when describing this utopia. One reading of this statement, when considered alongside the description of the Great Valley as populated 'with many more of our own kind' is the suggestion that kindness is not based on visual similarity—perhaps kindness cannot be determined solely through families of origin. This early discussion of the Great Valley implying that kindness is more than consanguineal or affinal connectivity seeds the idea of chosen families—families built upon social affection and not romantic/sexual partners or genetic lineage—as a familial unit which (as befitting a setting such as the Great Valley) is the optimal form of kindness for an individual. This theme of kindness over difference is crystallized in the subsequent scene when Littlefoot tries to play with Cera. Cera, Cera's parent, and Littlefoot's mother all admonish Littlefoot, his mother telling him 'We all keep to our own kind—the Three-Horns, the Spiketails, the Swimmers, the Flyers. We never do anything together, well, because we're different. It's always been that way'. This unconvincing appeal to tradition to justify a separation of kinds characterizes these differences as fallacious and nonsensical.

After this initial questioning of differences in dinosaur kindness, Littlefoot's mother is fatally injured rescuing her son from a Tyrannosaurus Rex, getting caught in an earthquake which physically separates Littlefoot and Cera from their respective families of origin. Littlefoot is depicted grieving over his mother's death, an important moment that the film uses to demonstrate that Littlefoot has an emotional need—children's films such as David Hand's *Bambi* similarly include the death of the protagonist's parent but largely avoid showing the grieving process. In her article 'Children's Grief Narratives in Popular Films'

Mary Ann Sedney specifically identifies Littlefoot's grieving as an important conduit in the diversification of his emotional support (Sedney, 320). Littlefoot grieves for his mother but soon encounters other child-like dinosaurs: Ducky the *Saurolophus*, Petrie the *Pteradon* or 'Flyer', and Cera. These four dinosaurs later find a lone *Ankylosaurus* (or 'Spiketail') egg which hatches a dinosaur whom they call 'Spike'. After meeting with these other dinosaurs, Littlefoot quells his grieving. Littlefoot gains some emotional support from the other dinosaurs and reciprocates that support, giving Ducky hope that she will find her family of origin the Great Valley and tricking Cera into eating food when Cera refuses to eat what she has not obtained herself in order to maintain both her nourishment and pride. This idea of emotional turmoil from losing a family member being quelled through creating connections of chosen families sets up expectations of mutual exclusivity around families of origin and chosen families—Littlefoot is happy with his family of origin *or* his chosen family. This idea of mutual exclusivity around families of origin and chosen families is further compounded during a group shot of Littlefoot's chosen family appearing together in frame. Prior to Littlefoot's mother dying, Littlefoot only briefly appears in the same shots with one other species of dinosaur at a time. The group shot of Littlefoot, Cera, Ducky, Petrie, and Spike together demonstrates Littlefoot's growing kindness of non-Long-Necks after being deprived of his consanguineal relations.

One way in which Littlefoot's newfound friends can be identified as a chosen family is in their inability to fully connect with their family of origin, making them in some ways outcasts from their consanguineal relations. As previously discussed, there is a certain element of chosen families being perceived as lesser alternatives to families of origin. All of the dinosaurs Littlefoot finds while grieving are immediately noticeably deficit in some way—Ducky acts infantile and is unaware of serious dangers, Petrie cannot fly due to acrophobia (fear of heights), Spike appears incapable of verbal communication as he has the mentality of

a newborn baby, and Cera often has a disagreeable personality. The five dinosaurs decide to trek to the Great Valley together; the narrator describes them as 'the five hungry dinosaurs [who] left for the Great Valley. There had never been such a herd—a Long-Neck, a Three-Horn, a Big-Mouth, a Flyer, and a Spiketail'. Littlefoot's emotional support to and from characters not belonging to his family of origin, the characters' collective caretaking for Spike (an infant-like individual at a far less developed stage than the others), and the stability and security derived from physical proximity, are all functions that might be expected from a person's family; in this regard, Littlefoot, Cera, Ducky, Petrie, and Spike can be seen as a chosen family.

The coalescence of these five dinosaurs as a social unit also reflects another aspect of chosen families: a lack of centrality. As previously posited, chosen families have a general lack of centrality in the familial relations of the members who comprise the social unit. As the models of families of origin generally rely upon one set of parents in order to provide a reference for the relationship of all family members, chosen families do not have such a reliance. This is visually implied through Littlefoot, Cera, Ducky, Petrie, and Spike all depicted as roughly the same size and visualized with an equal amount of space of the frame—unlike the families of origin in the introductory montage, this chosen family does not have two tiers of sizes that reflect a parent-child binary. Although Spike is more recently hatched than the others, there is no real focal relation between these individuals. The fact that this chosen family is comprised of children also suggests some universal ability for individuals to form chosen families. As previously discussed in the Postcolonial chapter, Western conceptualizations of children often perceive them as 'pure' beings with innate human qualities; the representations of children's actions are thus persuasive means of conveying intrinsic behaviours and abilities of humans. While several children's films have anthropomorphized characters act as symbolic child figures (Marty the Zebra in *Madagascar*,

Remy the Rat in *Ratatouille*, Koda the Bear in *Brother Bear*), Littlefoot's chosen family are all shown hatching during the narrative of the film—these are not simply symbolic children but literal children as well. Another point to be made about the decentralization of the family unit in children's films is the opposition to the common genre trope of knowledge and wisdom being passed down from older mentor-types to the young protagonists (who are often genetically related to them) (e.g. Mufasa mentoring his son Simba in *The Lion King* (Minkoff, 1994), Helga teaching her grandson Luke about witches in *The Witches* (Roeg, 1990), Doc Hudson giving racing advice to Lightning McQueen in *Cars* (Lasseter, 2006)). By decentring the family unit, chosen families do not have a central chain of transmission for passing down knowledge; instead, these chosen families must often learn from each other on equal terms.

Littlefoot's origin of his chosen family exemplifies a typical notion of chosen families in Sentinel films: the idea that they are largely instigated from deprivation from one's family of origin and most (if not, all) chosen family members coalesce after rejecting, or being rejected from, consanguineal familial bonds. As will also be discussed further in the chapter, chosen families in Sentinel films tend to be portrayed as being comprised of characters who are somewhat defined by their deficits and create the impression that chosen families are second-tier to families of origin in their functionality as families: Littlefoot is an orphan, Cera and Ducky are physically separated from their families of origin, Petrie cannot fly even though he is a Flyer, and Spike has the mentality of a newborn. Littlefoot's chosen family all show a mono-directional transitioning between family units—these characters begin in a family of origin (making a family of origin the default or normative family unit) and then later join a chosen family (which by contrast become the non-normative receptacle for those characters with deficits). By having the connective bonds between members of a family of origin as default or intrinsic to the mechanisms of genealogy, the film presents families of

origin as a distinct and dissimilar contrast to chosen families; families of origin have an *inequal* importance to chosen families. This is not to say that Sentinel films portray chosen families negatively (in fact, Sentinel films such as *The Land Before Time*, *Ice Age: The Meltdown*, *Dinosaur*, and *The Lion King 1½* have extremely positive portrayals of chosen families). However, this disparity between families of origin and chosen families means that consanguineal kinship does not match (for better or worse) the worth of voluntary kinship.

The memory of Littlefoot's mother shadows Littlefoot during his time with his chosen family; during times of distress when Littlefoot's despair makes him unable to continue his journey, he sees visions of his deceased mother in clouds and hears her voice as she gives him encouragement (extremely similar to the cloud apparitions of Mufasa to Simba in *The Lion King*). Mary Anne Sedney considers this memory as a novel representation of the grieving process where child characters are shown continuing their bonds with the deceased (as opposed to trying to intentionally distance and separate themselves from those they have lost). This connection to a member of his family of origin somewhat diminishes Littlefoot's chosen family as Littlefoot is drawing upon both his consanguineal parent in addition to his chosen family members for emotional support, as if the emotional support from chosen families must be supplemented in order for individuals to have the social confidence they need to be functional.

This undermining of chosen families as lesser to families of origin is further evidenced in the film's denouement: the five dinosaurs reach the Great Valley, a bountiful paradise they envisioned, where they reunite with their families of origin (Littlefoot finds his grandparents, Cera finds her parents, Petrie finds his mother and siblings, and Ducky finds her family of origin and introduces Spike as their 'new brother'). The film depicts the reunification of these families of origin through the use of a montage (as opposed to showing the various families of origin in the same camera frame), an editing technique extremely similar to the montage in

the introduction. By returning to the editing style from the film's original status quo, this ending implies that equilibrium has been restored by the characters returning to their families of origin (as opposed to accepting their chosen families as their primary familial units). By coming full circle, the film reinforces norms of families of origin as the dominant social unit which are separate and superior to interim substitutes such as chosen families. The narrator wraps up the story by saying 'they all grew up together in the valley' with a final tableau of the chosen family embracing each other. However, Littlefoot and the others (aside from Spike, who is adopted by Petrie's family of origin) also have their family of origin alongside their family of origin so there is no need for this chosen family (like a family of origin) to be seen as socially or emotionally indefinitely sustainable.

Ice Age: The Meltdown

Ice Age: The Meltdown (Saldanha, 2006) is a sequel to *Ice Age* (Wedge, 2002). The first installment of *Ice Age* explores the concept of family by naturalizing a kind of fatalism of gendered family roles within its protagonist herd. Like its predecessor, *Ice Age: The Meltdown* is set during an unspecified ice age period (although Neanderthals do appear in the original film). Unlike its predecessor, *Ice Age: The Meltdown* does not feature any onscreen representations of humans and as a Sentinel film, *Ice Age: The Meltdown* instead draws more heavily in emphasizing the positive nature of chosen families. The film works to first create expectations around families of origin as superior to chosen families in the first act of the film, then demonstrating the ways in which the characters develop a better understanding of the psycho-social functions of family. This character development undercuts the initial impressions of superiority in families of origin before finally highlighting the positive nature of chosen families.

The first act of *Ice Age: The Meltdown* begins with its three main protagonists (Manny the Woolly Mammoth, Sid the Sloth, and Diego the Sabre-Toothed Tiger) spending recreational time in a seemingly-idyllic community comprised of other prehistoric nonhuman animals on a bright, sunny day. The community is enjoying the ice and water in their habitat similar to a waterpark, sliding along the ice structures and swimming in the pools of water. As previously mentioned in the literature review, in the video essay 'How CGI Transformed Animated Storytelling' Sage Hyden argues that the technological features of CGI-animated films incentivizes clockwork motion in the mise-en-scène through the ease of computerized duplication of moving animated objects. The duplication of clockwork-type movement onscreen naturally leads to the subsequent logical creative decision to create some structured order for this abundance of on-screen movement. Hyden posits that these creative decisions often emphasize a parallel between regularity and normative societal behaviour which the protagonists eventually disrupt by being exceptional oddities who do not conform to social norms within their clockwork society. Hyden's clockwork motion is clearly shown in the opening of *Ice Age: The Meltdown* in the movement of the nonhuman animals playing by having a sense of synchronized regularity to their spatial blocking of the scene (Hyden, *Just Write*). From such synchronized movement, Hyden posits how CGI-animated children's films are often 'liberal allegories', stories where the protagonists learn to work against the normative standards and act as characters who embrace the non-traditional ways of living. There are two obvious aspects of film form featured in the beginning of *Ice Age: The Meltdown* which obviate Hyden's synchronized regularity: long shots and rapid character interactions in individual takes. The beginning of the film features these clockwork motions of nonhuman animals framed in extreme long shots to present a sense of grand scale as to the interlocking and synchronized actions between all the various species in the community. As well as having these extreme long shots, each take of the introductory sequence shows a very

rapid interaction of cause-and-effect (animals sliding down ice glaciers and knocking over other animals like bowling pins, juvenile animals chasing each other and knocking down a miniature dam built by a beaver-like animal). The rapid cause-and-effect chain of events highlights a sense of interconnectedness, largely benign and for the enjoyment of many members of the community.

Hyden's notion of CGI-animated films telling stories about the non-traditional eventually breaking free from the traditional borne out of using the computerized duplication of moving animated objects can also be seen in how *Ice Age: The Meltdown* uses character designs to focus on consanguineal and affinal connections between family members. Aside from the three protagonists who form a 'herd', most of the other nonhuman animals have companions who are of the same species and have character designs which visibly resemble others of their species, implying either a consanguineal or affinal connection (unlike the Postcolonial human-nonhuman dynamic, interspecies romantic and/or sexual attraction in Postcolonial films is not a noteworthy phenomenon—any such relationships are strictly intra-species connections). These nonhuman animals also vary by coming in two sizes (the larger being parents and the smaller being offspring); as discussed earlier in this chapter, parents in families of origin often form the centrality of the family unit; there are several instances of the parents nurturing, caring for, and disciplining their offspring, demonstrating the familial notion of parents as the paramount caregivers for their children in families of origin. This use of families of origin in this synchronized regularity of on-screen movement frames the family of origin as the regular and normal family unit.

After a brief interlude at the top of one of the community's glacial walls, Manny, Sid, and Diego discover that the ice surrounding the community is quickly melting and will soon flood their communal space. While trying to convince the community of their impending doom and urgent need to relocate, one of the parents in the community questions Manny's

survival instincts by asserting that mammoths are (aside from Manny) all extinct. Manny denies that mammoths are going extinct as they're the biggest animals on earth and don't make enemies (like the dinosaurs), although he later begins to agonize over possibly being the last mammoth throughout most of the film's first act. Visually, Manny's character design and large size comparative to the other animals helps distinguish him amongst the others as a lone towering animal, his unique physical presence in the *mise-en-scène* announcing his state of difference to the community. This theme of Manny's trepidation of the extinction of his species is clearly allegorical of fears of 'dying alone'. Media portrayals of 'dying alone' do not literalize the usage of the term 'alone' but instead focuses on the absence of a spouse (and, to a lesser degree, children)—dying in the company of others (even close friends) qualifies as 'dying alone' (DePaulo, *Psychology Today*). Traditional conceptualizations of dying alone discount chosen family members and only validates consanguineal and affinal family; while all of the animals in the community of *Ice Age: The Meltdown* are threatened with death from flooding, Manny's potential death is more impactful and significant as he has no family of origin to support him in this crisis. Manny's fear of extinction/dying alone creates the initial expectation that families of origin are necessary for an individual's ability to be emotionally satisfied, and the film repeatedly demonstrates this fear throughout the first act; passers-by marvel at Manny as 'the last mammoth, you probably won't see another one of those again!', and Sid insensitively sings songs around Manny about the mammoths' extinction¹¹. In one scene, Manny despondently looking at his reflection in an icicle wondering if he really is the last mammoth; Sid tries to cheer Manny up by saying 'but Manny, look at the bright side: you have us!', to which Diego retorts 'not your most persuasive argument, Sid'. Diego's comment undercuts the chosen family unit of the Manny-Sid-Diego herd, giving the impression that

¹¹ Such lyrics from Sid's repertoire include 'Someday, when you've gone extinct/ When you make a stink!', 'Stop, hey-hey, what's that sound? / All the mammoths are in the ground!' and 'If your species will continue, clap your hands! If your species will continue, clap your hands!'

chosen families are not comparable to families of origin for supporting someone's sense of identity.

In the inciting incident of the film, the animals in the community hear stories of a boat at the end of the valley which might save them from the flood and begin trekking in their herds to find this boat. This idea of a boat being able to save various species of animals from a catastrophic flood clearly parallels the Biblical story of Noah's ark. In the Biblical story, God decides to create a near-cataclysmic flood on Earth which will destroy all land-based animals (including, and mainly because of, humans) as he deems them sinful and unworthy of life. However, God deems Noah and his consanguineal and affinal family worthy of living due to their moral virtuousness and instructs them to construct a gargantuan seaworthy vessel in which a breeding pair of every land-based species will board in order to repopulate the planet after the flood has passed. The parallels between *Ice Age: The Meltdown* and the tale of Noah's ark implies this tripartite connection between moral virtue, consanguineal family and intentions to have biological offspring with a partner, and being saved from certain death. Manny being the last living mammoth implies his own moral weakness and an unalterable fate with a definitive end to his existence.

Manny's fear of dying alone also sets up expectations of how dying alone relates to the perpetuation of family. Conceptualizations of dying can characterize and moralize individuals based upon different circumstances (a 'good death' versus a 'bad death'). In his article 'Media constructions of dying alone: a form of "bad death"', Clive Seale reviews common themes in the portrayals of those who have died alone and how dying alone informs the ways in which people's personalities are understood. Seale posits that people who die alone are viewed as 'reclusive', 'eccentric', suffering from 'self-neglect', 'lonely', 'partly responsible' for dying alone, and who often 'deserve' their fate (Seale, 970-972). There is also evidence that a person's mortality salience (an individual's awareness of their own death) increases their urge

to have children. In Arnaud Wisman and Jamie L. Goldenberg's article 'From the Grave to the Cradle: Evidence That Mortality Salience Engenders a Desire for Offspring' the authors observe the common correlation between disasters and baby booms. From these points, it can be inferred that the fear of dying largely creates the impulse for consanguineal children (as a spike in child adoptions would not instigate a spike in births). 'Aside from rational and relational reasons to desire children, a desire for offspring might be motivated by emotional and individual desires to leave something behind in this world' Wisman and Goldenberg write. 'To the extent this motivation affects reproductive desires, having children may represent a way to deal with the threat of death . . . [procreation] can be regarded as a potential means to regulate concerns about mortality. After all, having children provides a sense of meaning and value and can provide an avenue to immortality' (Wisman, Goldenberg, 46). By having consanguineal children, a person may not only feel that they will not be dying alone, but that having children symbolically offsets the event of death itself.

At the end of the film's first act, Manny, Sid, and Diego discover a female mammoth named Ellie as well as two opossums named Crash and Eddie. Although Manny, Sid, and Diego are initially elated by the sight of another mammoth, this elation soon turns to consternation when they discover that Ellie self-identifies as an opossum, that Crash and Eddie are her brothers, and that she denies any part of being a mammoth. Although Manny, Sid, and Diego are flummoxed by Ellie's sense of identity, they invite the 'opossum' family to join them on their journey to the boat and the 'opossums' accept the invitation as a mammoth and sabre-tooth tiger can protect them from predators. In many ways, Ellie, Crash, and Eddie parallel the chosen family nature that Manny, Sid, and Diego have: both groups are comprised of various species, self-identifying as family members as a mutual support system, and each group has a general lack of parental centrality. However, while Manny, Sid, and Diego are characterized as lovable misfits, Ellie is more openly treated as queer (in the sense

of being a non-normative oddity) as a result of her chosen family. Ellie's queerness stemming from her chosen family is emphasized several times in her nonsensical behaviour around Manny (nonsensical in the sense that Ellie's behavioural traits as an opossum serve no purpose for a mammoth). When a passing hawk flies above the protagonists, Manny, Sid, and Diego watch Ellie, Crash, and Eddie play dead as a means of warding off the hawk—although Crash and Eddie might be snatched by the hawk, hawks would be completely unable to prey upon a living mammoth. Ellie is also shown to be hanging from tree branches like Crash and Eddie, often falling down because her mammoth weight makes her impractical to swing from trees. Ellie's engagement in opossum behaviours contradicts her rhetorical particularities as a mammoth and acts as a manifestation of the queerness of her role in her chosen family.

Throughout the second act of the film, Manny attempts to convince Ellie that she is a mammoth and not an opossum with the eventual aspiration of mating with her. After Manny demonstrates the physical similarities between himself and Ellie, Ellie draws the conclusion that Manny is part-opossum. Ellie's erroneous confabulation of Manny's part-opossum heritage recognizes a kinship even if she does not relate that kinship to mammoths rather than opossums. Manny's attempts to convince Ellie that she is a mammoth in order to breed with her as a means of curbing mammoths from extinction also fits into Wisman and Goldenberg's assertions that having consanguineal children may offset the symbolic finality of death. Wisman and Goldenberg also note that women are more ambivalent in this motivation for children than men (Wisman, Goldenberg, 49); just as Manny has very linear intentions for having children with Ellie to avoid extinction, Ellie is reluctant to see herself as a critically endangered animal with any need to breed with Manny.

After Ellie accesses a long-forgotten memory of being adopted by a mother opossum after wandering on her own through a snowstorm, she begins to accept the fact that she is

biologically a mammoth. After this revelation, Manny calls Ellie 'attractive' and then goes on to talk of their 'responsibility' to save their species—Ellie responds to Manny's notion of responsibility with hostility. As discussed earlier, the opening sequence presents families of origin as normal and idyllic; Manny's attempts to begin a consanguineal nuclear family with Ellie causes emotional turmoil for the pair of them after Manny's proposition. The pressure on Manny and Ellie as a heteronormative coupling to breed subverts those initial expectations of families of origin as sources of emotional stability and happiness. Manny is also shown to have some hesitation in starting a consanguineal family with Ellie as he previously already had a mate and child (who were hunted by Neanderthals). 'You can't be two things!' Manny states when Sid suggests that Ellie is both a mammoth *and* an opossum, showing a certain familial fixedness which family of origin units possess (the relative positions between family members in families of origin being largely permanent and stable). The film portrays the desire to start a family of origin from an impetus of non-affection-related motivations as an upsetting and off-putting personality trait, and families of origin, as a means of trying to deal with the terror of dying alone, are not necessarily better than the prospect of dying alone.

In the final sequence of the narrative, the film highlights the positive nature of chosen families by upturning the moralizing and pressures of families of origin and having characters embrace familial bonds on the criteria of voluntary affection rather than consanguineal and/or affinal obligation. Manny, Sid, and Diego eventually reach the boat at the valley (a gargantuan buoyant surface of tree bark), seeing dozens of animals in visible consanguineal families slowly board the vessel. As Ellie, Crash, and Eddie disagreed with the route to reach the boat (as well as the animosity between Manny and Ellie surrounding Manny's attempts to mate with Ellie as their 'responsibility'), Manny, Sid, and Diego forego boarding the boat in order to search for the opossum family. '[Seen] a possum?' Diego asks a boarding anteater, acknowledging Ellie's chosen family 'about eleven feet tall?' Manny, Sid, and Diego

eventually find Ellie, Crash, and Eddie but, in the nadir of the film, are reunited too late to board the boat as the valley begins to flood. In returning to the parallel of Noah's Ark, this initially presents the six characters as having failed due to moral weaknesses arising from being in a chosen family (unlike the families of origin who have all boarded the boat as beings worthy of salvation from the catastrophe).

The protagonists are saved from drowning when a small B-character (Scrat) who has been featured in several vignettes accidentally causes a seismic split in the glacial valley wall, allowing the flood to drain away from the valley. Scrat splitting the valley wall iconographically resembles another Biblical story: Moses parting the Red Sea. In this Biblical narrative, God chooses Moses to lead the Israelites from their positions as slaves in the servitude of the Egyptians. As the Egyptians chase the Israelites to their camp by the sea (the Sea of Reeds or 'Red Sea'), God imbues Moses with the power to part the ocean by raising his staff and causing the ocean to split apart into two walls of water, forming a path by which Moses and the Israelites to escape the Egyptians (Moses later closes the parting, allowing the water to return to its nature state, drowning the pursuing Egyptians). As the frozen walls divide in a miraculously improbable fashion, an angelic beam of light shines through the parting and accompanied in the score with a heavenly choir singing a joyous melody. This imagery bears a striking similarity to the climactic scene of *The Ten Commandments* (Demille, 1956) where Moses parts the Red Sea. Scrat parting the walls is a narrative *deus ex machina*, a spontaneous narrative plot device for the characters' salvation, as well as a diegetic miracle which serves to parallel Moses' own miraculous ability of parting the Red Sea. This layering of Biblical imagery (from Noah's Ark to Moses and the Red Sea) as a subversion of previous expectations of ideals of family is in itself reminiscent of the non-normative (but still admirable) nature of chosen families. The protagonists shift from characters doomed to drown as a result of being a chosen family to symbolic figures of a

marginalized group who are validated and emancipated from their difficulties. This shift enunciates that belonging to a family of origin is not necessarily salvation and belonging to a chosen family is not necessarily damnation.

After the flood drains from the valley, a herd of dozens of woolly mammoths triumphantly walks through the parting of the valley glaciers to the awe of both the protagonists and the animals who have since disembarked from the boat. The mammoths acknowledge Manny and Ellie as a means of inviting them to join their herd, completing the subversion of the personal pressures and social obligations of belonging to a family of origin—Manny and Ellie were faced with the symbolic prospect of dying alone through the allegory of extinction, but these pressures and obligations were ultimately unsound as there was never any danger of extinction. After Ellie considers joining the herd of mammoths and leaving her chosen family behind, Manny hangs out of a nearby tree like an opossum, telling her 'I don't want us to be together because we have to, I want us, to be together because we want to!'. Ellie accepts Manny's courtship by telling him 'you're possum enough for me'. When Manny and Ellie rejoin Diego, Sid, Crash, and Eddie, Diego is confused that Manny and Ellie are not joining their consanguineal kin; 'but . . . your herd's leaving' Diego says, to which Manny enthusiastically replies 'we are now!' as the six members of this chosen family walk toward the sunset. These interactions between Manny and Ellie, and between Manny and Diego, positively emphasizes the notion that the social foundations of family should be based on choice rather than circumstance—the protagonists have achieved a happy ending where they have chosen their family unit without the encumbrance of consanguineal or affinal obligation. However, just like the chosen family in *The Land Before Time*, Manny ultimately does not have to make a decision between a chosen family or family of origin, but now has both. Although he is now a more developed character by having learned to accept differences in his chosen kin, chosen families are still treated in the film's ending as

supplementary to families of origin.

The Lion King 1½

The Lion King 1½ (Raymond, 2004) (also known as *The Lion King 3: Hakuna Matata* outside of North America) is a sequel/interquel to Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff's 1994 film *The Lion King*, focusing on the ways in which chosen families are oriented in relation to families of origin. The film initially portrays chosen families as antithetical and mutually exclusive to families of origin before finally demonstrating that chosen families are not a variation of family structure that is incompatible with families of origin but actually an alternative family structure which may supplement an individual's needs for emotional support. This initial positioning of chosen families as a mutually exclusive obverse family unit to families of origin works as a straw-man argument, presenting this negative perspective on family structures in order to demonstrate that this perspective is incorrect and that chosen families are in fact support structures, equal to and capable of co-existing with, families of origin.

The opening sequence of *The Lion King 1½* briefly recreates the iconic opening of its predecessor *The Lion King*, using the identical opening shots of a sun ascending over the African plains and African nonhuman animals raising their heads to see the light, with the same aural soundtrack (Elton John's highly-recognizable song 'Circle of Life'). The film then reveals that the reason the famous opening sequence of *The Lion King* is being shown is because Timon and Pumbaa (an anthropomorphic meerkat and warthog respectively, both of whom are side characters in *The Lion King* and the protagonists of *The Lion King 1½*) are in a movie theatre, watching a home-video copy of *The Lion King* (the set-up similar in both visuals and tone to *Mystery Science Theater 3000*). This framing device of Timon and Pumbaa in a movie theatre recurs throughout the film and is somewhat fourth-wall-breaking

as Tim and Pumbaa often refer to the audience of the film and motion to the camera as if the audience of *The Lion King 1½* is sitting in the movie theatre with them. When Timon uses their home-video remote control to fast-forward through their screening of *The Lion King* to skip to parts of the film where they appear, Pumbaa suggests that instead they should show the audience of *The Lion King 1½* the story of where Timon and Pumbaa came from and how they came to be in the events *The Lion King*.

This opening of *The Lion King 1½* is indicative of the topic of chosen families in two ways. The first way in which this introduction pitches the idea of chosen families is in its re-contextualization of the iconic opening of *The Lion King*. Through the diegetic re-purposing of such a recognizable piece of cinema as *The Lion King*, *The Lion King 1½* demonstrates a willingness to be overtly subversive and play against popular expectations. Just as how chosen families are seen as non-traditional alternatives to those families of origin (which rely on traditions of consanguinity and affinity in order to determine relational positions between family members), *The Lion King 1½* works on a narrative level to provide an unorthodox story explicitly dissimilar to what audiences have come to know, and in many ways acting dialogic to plot points established in the original film. The re-purposing of *The Lion King* invites the audience to rethink about their own pre-conceptions as Timon tells the audience to view a fresh perspective of an iconic and recognizable narrative. The second way in which the opening of *The Lion King 1½* is indicative of chosen families is in its explicit decision to focus on Timon and Pumbaa, minor characters in the original film; shifting the focus on a minority encourages seeing issues from non-dominant perspectives. Chosen families are non-dominant in the sense that they are not the default type of family (one is born into a family of origin, one must choose to be in a chosen family) and so belonging to a chosen family involves taking on a non-dominant position in regards to the classification of family structures.

In the framing device Timon rewinds the film's main story to events prior to and not shown in *The Lion King*. The main story of *The Lion King 1½* begins in the outskirts of the Pride Lands. The Pride Lands acts as the characters' geographical term for civilization, the centre of which is Pride Rock, a White House-esque political capital, iconic landmark, and residence of the ruling family (a particular pride of lions). The first shot of the beginning of the main story opens with Pride Rock before an extreme accelerated reverse-dolly shot that backtracks for several miles to the outskirts of the Pride Lands. The extreme reverse-dolly shot from the diegetic political capital emphasizes how physically (as well as politically and socially) distanced the characters in this region are from this society's socio-cultural centre; the inhabitants (Timon among them) are therefore of a far lower social status than the dominant groups. At the outskirts of the Pride Lands, there is a gang of meerkats¹² who are both literal and metaphorical underground citizens—the meerkats have no political capital, live outside an area patrolled by law enforcement, and dig tunnels to avoid the hyenas who wish to prey upon them (the threat of hyenas later plays a major role in Timon's arc of understanding family). The film introduces the meerkats by having them dig tunnels in synchronized movement as they sing about the joy they find of the never-ending task of digging; 'Digga tunnel is what we do/ Life's a tunnel, we're diggin' through/ Digga tunnel is what we sing/ Digga tunnel is everything/ Mud and clay is a meerkat's friend/ Always more around every bend/ And when you get to your tunnel's end/ Shout hallelujah, let's dig again!' Similar to *Ice Age: The Meltdown*, *The Lion King 1½* uses visually homogenous character designs and a clockwork synchronicity of repetitive movement to emphasize the consanguineal connection between the meerkats. The meerkats' synchronized movement in the Digga Tunnel song connotes the connection between consanguinity and familial harmony, conveying the notion that conformity of consanguineal families is the means in which to

¹² The use of the word 'gang' is not meant to imply any connection to organized crime, control of territory, or violence; 'gang' is simply the collective noun for meerkats.

establish a happy social equilibrium.

At the end of the Digga Tunnel song, the meerkats' tunnel is accidentally destroyed by Timon (who had not taken part in the song) due to the fact that he was trying to add a skylight, causing the tunnel collapse. Aside from Timon's mother, all of the other meerkats (including his Uncle Max) act frustrated and tired of the calamities Timon unintentionally brings upon them through impulses that are non-normative for meerkats (like adding skylights to tunnels). Within the meerkats' gang, Timon is treated as abnormal and contemptible for his irregularity and non-conformity within his family of origin. By being unable to act within the role designated to him by his consanguineal allocation, Timon is a dissonant dissident. Unsatisfied with what he sees as the meerkats' monotonous, worthless existence, Timon embarks on a journey to find the place where he belongs. Timon's search to find belonging necessitates his removal from his family of origin which suggests the notion that individuals can only belong to one family unit at any given time—he cannot stay with his consanguineal family if he wishes to search for other means of supporting his identity. Timon's rejection from his family of origin as the catalyst for joining a chosen family is consistent with the idea of chosen families as social units which offer refuge for LGB individuals who are expelled from their consanguineal relatives on the basis of fulfilling some element of their identity.

On his first stop on his journey to find a place he belongs, Timon meets shamanistic mandrill Rafiki (another main character from the original *Lion King* film) for the first time. Timon asks for advice in order to find 'some beautiful place outside . . . a carefree place where I don't have to hide or worry' (or 'hakuna matata' as Rafiki puts it). Rafiki meditatively encourages Timon to 'look beyond what you see' in order to find hakuna matata. Timon's implementation of this advice is simply to focus his eyeline farther than normal before settling on Pride Rock (unaware of its political importance) as his new destination. While

Timon's literal interpretation of Rafiki's advice is treated as comical (as there is the dramatic irony that Timon cannot live in Pride Rock as its occupants are well-known), I would argue that there is some validity in interpreting Rafiki's advice as literal in terms of physiognomy instead of geography. Timon leaving his family of origin and the meerkats who reject him indicates Timon's need to look beyond what is visually similar to himself to locate betterment in his life.

On his journey to Pride Rock, Timon encounters Pumbaa for the first time. The pair quickly discover that they each have something to offer the other: Timon can be a friend to the lonely Pumbaa whose digestive idiosyncrasies repel other animals, and Pumbaa's warthog physique can act as a deterrent and protector for predators who might attack Timon. Spurred by their mutual benefit to the other, Timon and Pumbaa journey together to find their dream home. Along their journey, Timon and Pumbaa are humorously shown to be present for several prominent moments in *The Lion King* which they had not originally been shown appearing (the cavalcade of animals across the African plains at sunrise, Rafiki raising the newborn Simba at the peak of Pride Rock during 'The Circle of Life', the villainous lion Scar conspiring with his hyena henchmen to usurp the other lions while singing 'Be Prepared'). Like the opening sequence, the re-contextualization of an established story through the perspective of a pair of familial oddities fosters a welcoming sense of questioning the normalized and dominant narrative. After several scenes' worth of searching, Timon and Pumbaa arrive at a vacant paradisiacal jungle, full of amenities like vines to swing on, watering holes to bathe in, and an abundance of insects for Timon and Pumbaa to feast upon.

After Timon and Pumbaa have discovered their dream home, they find a lone lion cub laying half-dead in the hot sun—this is Simba, the protagonist of *The Lion King*. Timon and Pumbaa instantly become adoptive parents for Simba, with Timon referring to their situation as 'parenthood', showing a montage of Timon and Pumbaa engaging in child-rearing activities

such as supervising Simba's playtime, providing his meals, and attempting to act as disciplinarians. Although Timon and Pumbaa have their dream home, it does not qualify as a family home in the traditional terms of 'family' until Simba's arrival. Timon and Pumbaa's intention to cohabitate makes them a homosocial couple; they cannot count as any family of origin (even a blended family) as families traditionally function not just as a means of supporting an individual's identity but also as a means of child-rearing. Because of this, Timon and Pumbaa's lack of a child makes them a tenuous chosen family at best. Timon and Pumbaa are a platonic pair who are not bound by any affinal connection, and their adoption of Simba gives the two an ersatz affinal bond as a parenting team. When Simba joins the homosocial couple, the connections between Timon, Pumbaa, and Simba give the distinct impression that the three comprise a chosen family.

There are several noteworthy aspects of this chosen family which model certain traits about the ways in which chosen families are formed and comprised. The most prominent aspect of this chosen family is that the main motivation for these chosen family members to unite as a family is that they are all familial/social outcasts (like the chosen family in *The Land Before Time*)—Timon has been rejected from his family of origin, Pumbaa is given a wide berth by others due to his unappetizing physiology, and Simba (as is established in the original film and also quickly verbally re-capped by another character) believes himself to be a fugitive from the reigning lion pride. Like Littlefoot's chosen family in *The Land Before Time*, this portrayal of chosen families as receptacle social units for outcasts characterizes chosen families as consisting of second-tier individuals to families of origin, comprised of the lesser or unwanted offcuts of consanguineal and affinal social units. This portrayal of chosen families as the coalescence of outcasts also characterizes the sensibility of unwantedness as a means of kinship between individuals of a chosen family; presenting the quality of unwantedness as part of the familial connectivity between chosen family members

homogenizes the experience of rejection, suggesting that all outcasts have similar backgrounds and emotional responses to rejection. Another noteworthy aspect of the film's chosen family is the mono-directional transitioning between family units—an individual originates in a family of origin and then transitions into a chosen family (rather than the other way around). This modeling of mono-directional transitioning between different family structures again casts chosen families as the non-normative variant of family units by presuming that chosen families cannot be the default or original family unit for an individual to belong. By casting the chosen family as the non-normative family unit, the film intimates a consanguineal partiality, suggesting a biologically determined advantage of families of origin over socially-constructed chosen families.

Near the end of the second act of the film, Simba, Timon, and Pumbaa encounter Simba's childhood love interest and fellow lion Nala. Timon observes the romantic attraction between Simba and Nala and interprets this as a threat to their chosen family, predicting that 'she's going to put a stake right through the heart of our hakuna matata'. In order to preserve their status quo, Timon and Pumbaa dedicate themselves to ensuring that '[the lions] can't feel the love tonight'. In a montage, Timon and Pumbaa are shown trying to covertly meddle with Simba and Nala's rekindling of romance (their efforts unintentionally intensifying the romance). After seeing Simba and Nala embracing, Timon and Pumba ironically sing their defeat to the love ballad melody 'Can You Feel the Love Tonight?'; 'if he falls in love tonight/ It can be assumed/ His carefree days with us are history/ In short, our pal is doomed'. Timon equates the eroding of his chosen family to Simba's desire for a traditional affinal familial connection relies on expectations of the mutual exclusivity of families set up in the film's first act wherein Timon must first leave his family of origin in order to join his chosen family. Timon's assumptions of this mutual exclusivity is also indicative of his superimposing a familial functional fixedness that, as mentioned in this chapter's discussion of *Ice Age: The*

Meltdown, might be more typically seen in families of origin—for Timon, Simba is either a member of his chosen family *or* a member of his lion family of origin, but cannot be both.

Timon's fear of this familial mutual exclusivity is initially borne out when Simba leaves the *hakuna matata* of the jungle to return to Pride Rock in order to confront his uncle Scar and reclaim his rightful place as true king of the Pride Lands (Nala quickly re-caps Simba's situation to Timon and Pumbaa while also unknowingly describing part of the plot of *The Lion King*). Nala pleads Timon and Pumbaa to aid Simba's cause, to which Timon responds '[Simba] needs us? Then he shouldn't have left us!', again demonstrating Timon's inability to see individuals as simultaneously belonging to multiple family units. However, after Nala and Pumbaa leave the jungle to help Simba, Timon is miserable at the separation from his chosen family. When Rafiki the shamanistic mandrill appears in the jungle, Timon recounts the situation with his chosen family leaving the jungle and, through his own articulation, arrives at the epiphany that his chosen family has not abandoned him but that he has abandoned them, that his *hakuna matata* has gone with Simba and Pumbaa to Pride Rock and so he should go to support his chosen family. Timon's moment of self-realization shows an internal growth in his understanding of familial belonging, collapsing the binary division between families of origin and chosen families—Timon accepts that Simba is both a member of his family of origin with certain monarchical duties and responsibilities *and* a member of Timon's chosen family, and as a member of Timon's chosen family, Timon has a familial obligation to aid Simba's duties to Simba's family of origin.

Timon reunites with Pumbaa on the way to Pride Rock, as well as his mother and Uncle Max who have been searching for Timon, fearing for his safety. Timon assesses Simba's situation: Simba is physically confronting his uncle and usurper Scar, and Scar is also supported by a pack of vicious hyenas (who incidentally also prey upon meerkats, thus forcing the meerkats to spend their days digging tunnels). Timon decides that the best way in

which to help Simba is to dig tunnels, strategically making tiger traps to incapacitate the hyenas. The threat of hyenas is first established in the beginning of the film, the hyenas terrorizing Timon's family of origin. Timon is finally able to deal with the hyenas, the predominant threat to his family of origin, by being in service of his chosen family (namely, Simba). While Timon once rejected the familial identity of the meerkats' tunnel-digging, he now embraces this as an individual who is part of the meerkat family (while also being part of his own chosen family). Timon's plan works: the hyenas are incapacitated due to the meerkats' tunnels, Simba defeats Scar, and Timon, the extended meerkat gang, Pumbaa, and Simba are shown happily living together in the jungle. Timon's plan of defeating the hyenas has the clear implication that Timon's growing understanding of family makes him a stronger family member to both sets of family by belonging to both. Timon's ability to defeat the hyenas rests upon his acceptance that he simultaneously belongs to both his meerkat family and his chosen family, that these family units are not mutually exclusive and that he is, in fact, a more capable person by belonging to both. A need that arises from Timon's chosen family (defeating the hyenas) is fulfilled through the skills of his family of origin. Timon also excels at digging tunnels (a defining trait of his family of origin) when performing it in the duty of his chosen family when previously his tunnel-digging prowess was simply an annoyance to his family of origin. Timon's story conveys the notion that by belonging to multiple family sets an individual is greater than the sum of their individual familial roles.

Representations of Family in Sentinel Films

Contrasting the predominant conceptualizations of nonhuman animals as extensions of human society, Sentinel films focus on forms of social cohesion rather than social difference. Modern Western conceptualizations of nonhuman animals focus on both individual and collectives of nonhuman animals as literal and symbolic extensions of human society (rather

than as perpetually procreating animals whose continual existence is not contiguous and contingent upon humans' existence). Sentinel films are unique in their portrayal of the human-nonhuman dynamic by having the notable lack of humans or any human artifacts inform the anthropomorphism of nonhuman animals; without any visible connections to humans, Sentinel films often thematize chosen families to accommodate the nonhuman animals' lack of humans as their objective anchor of continued existence—just as Sentinel animals have a non-normative human-free existence, they also belong to non-normative family units as a means of affirming their identity.

Don Bluth's *The Land Before Time*, Carlos Saldanha's *Ice Age: The Meltdown*, and Bradley Raymond's *The Lion King 1½* are three Sentinel films whose central story revolves around the idea of chosen families. There are several trends in the ways in which these Sentinel films characterize chosen families and while these films reaffirm the nature of family, there are certain qualities which tarnish their positive representation (particularly in their connection to families of origin). Chosen families are depicted as family units which initially come together out of the usefulness and practicality which characters offer to one another and not out of a sense of affection or kinship. Chosen families are also comprised of oddballs and outcasts, characters who are deprived of or otherwise rejected from their family of origin. Due to these qualities, chosen families in Sentinel films often appear second-tier to families of origin, family units for the abnormal and atypical whose members accept their differences to each other in addition to differences to their consanguineal relatives. The endings of these three films also depicts the characters' chosen families happily existing alongside their family of origin but that implies chosen families as supplementary to families of origin—characters begin with their family of origin, form a chosen family, and then ultimately return to their family of origin along with their second family unit. Sentinel films reaffirm the notion of chosen families not as mainstream substitutes to families of origin, but

as non-normative alternatives for non-normative individuals.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Children's films are often perceived as having a 'social responsibility' to educate children, educating their young audiences (either explicitly or implicitly) about the world in which they find themselves (Zornado, 12). Children's films are texts that are seen as being tasked with infusing ideology with pedagogy (what Joseph Zornado terms 'social responsibility') for the supposed betterment of those child viewers who are seen as 'disadvantaged adults' (Zornado, 2). Children's films are charged with an immense responsibility to educate children on a pedagogical, ideological, and/or social level, and the widespread distribution of these films propagate so many forms of ideological 'education' on a colossal societal scale that their ideological interpellation is worthy of serious academic contemplation (N. Brown, 98). Children (and by extension, the genre of children's film) are often stereotyped as unsophisticated and idiotic due to their lack of adulthood—in this sense, children are primarily defined by an absence of experience rather than as individuals with an autonomous presence in the world. This stereotype of children masks the complexity and urgency in understanding how children's films are tasked with interpellating notions of identity and social difference to its audience. As Monique Wonderly writes, children are often seen as

incompetent and immature. By contrast, adults are developed, competent and mature—unless of course, they are 'acting like kids'. Also, pre-adolescents are frequently excused for immoral behaviour on the grounds that they are 'just children' . . . While we ought not to hold pre-adolescents to the same moral and rational standards that we

impose on adults, there is evidence that children are thoughtful, competent moral agents (Wonderly, 2).

Wonderly's countering of the negative stereotype of children opens up the possibility that, although they lead phenomenologically different lives to adults, children can still have their own unique capacity for competent thought and reason. In acknowledging that children are not simply disadvantaged adults but can in fact lead lives capable of their own variety of thoughtfulness and dignity, the films intended for children can be understood as intelligent, influential tools with which to educate such individuals on a range of topics in a manner distinct from adults.

Anthropomorphized animals in children's films can be extremely effective symbols of social difference. Like the children's film genre, anthropomorphized animals may be seen as trivial and unimportant forms of media. Also like the children's films, this reputation of triviality for anthropomorphized animals obscures the powerful interpellation of social difference to its young audience and true potential for subversive symbolic portrayals of gender, social class, race and ethnicity, national identity, and family units. Anthropomorphized animals in children's films can take on an enormous range of symbolic identities which have the capacity to propagate, reinforce, and revolutionize stereotypes of social identities and social difference for their child audience. Analyzing the symbolic identities of anthropomorphized animals in children's films quickly uncovers the variety of ideological underpinnings of the genre and demonstrates the genre's multi-faceted, often complicated (and sometimes contradictory) interpellations of social difference. This film genre is not consistently conservative or progressive, not purely populist in its appeal nor explicitly politically didactic, neither mere mass entertainment or morally authoritarian—through the textual analysis of an array of these films, it is clear that the genre has the

potential for all of these predispositions (sometimes simultaneously) and more.

The phenomenological proximities between the human and nonhuman characters in these films emphasizes a specific form of social difference embedded in the anthropomorphized characters' symbolic identities. While there has been a growing trend of academic research focused on children's films and of anthropomorphized animals in film, these interpretations of the symbolic identities of anthropomorphized animals and the human-nonhuman dynamic have previously been only seen through the lens of race and ethnicity. The original contribution to academia which this thesis offers is considering how the phenomenological proximities of these anthropomorphized animals can be divided according to the type of human-nonhuman dynamics portrayed within the films' diegeses. By applying Tzvetan Todorov's theoretical framework of the fantastic, different human-nonhuman categories in children's films demonstrate what those categories convey about social difference. The central principle of my theoretical framework has been that the phenomenological proximity between human and nonhuman characters (i.e. the degree to which the human and nonhuman characters share similar lifestyles) can be sorted into five categories (Lost in Translation, First Contact, the Tourist, the Postcolonial, and the Sentinel) and that each of these categories lends itself to a particular form of social difference.

The range of human-nonhuman categories demonstrates a breadth of symbolic social differences, as well as a range of lenses with which to interpellate these differences. Lost in Translation films are the closest to Todorov's 'realist mode' of fantasy, the human-nonhuman dynamic acting so close to reality that the separation between the diegetic reality and the viewer's 'objective' reality may be difficult to delineate. Lost in Translation films are largely premised on intractable and impassable divides between human and nonhuman animals, portraying worlds where human and nonhuman characters cannot intelligibly communicate with or recognize the sentience of the other. This intractable, unintelligible human-nonhuman

dynamic emphasizes notions of gender, a facet of identity that is often viewed through the prism of binaries. Two nonhuman species in *Lost in Translations* are particularly effective in conveying the gender focus of this category: dogs, and chickens. In *The Secret of Life of Pets* and *Isle of Dogs* the dog protagonists act as self-definitional symbols of masculinity who implicitly seek to fulfill normative expectations of masculinity. The antagonists of these films are characters who embody stereotypical non-normative forms of masculinity (bunny rabbits and anthropomorphized cats who are coded masculine, as well as Asian men whose racial connotations queer their masculinity). The dog protagonists and the non-normative antagonists ultimately reinforce expectations of traditional forms of masculinity while stigmatizing masculine personalities which fall outside of that purview. In *Chicken Run*, the protagonists' species as chickens strongly encodes their gender identities as women, and this encoding helps translate the systematic carnist violence the chickens experience at the chicken farm into a very visceral symbolic depiction of symbolic sexual violence against women.

In First Contact films, the human-nonhuman dynamic is largely characterized by Todorov's Uncanny mode of fantasy. The relationships between human and nonhuman animals in these films can simultaneously be both strange and familiar to the viewer, as the reactions of human and nonhuman characters towards the seemingly impossible or otherwise inexplicable (being able to, spontaneously and without rational explanation, cognitantly communicate to the species other as equal) is one of immediate fear and confusion. The abrupt and inexplicable kindness in the First Contact dynamic centres the narratives of these films around the renegotiation of social difference, and invoking themes of renegotiation emphasizes issues of social class difference (social class being viewed as the facet of identity most notably up for renegotiation). The portrayal of class difference in First Contact films is often re-skinned through the lens of race and ethnicity as a means of enunciating class

difference. Children formulate their conceptualizations around social class at a young age, empirical studies demonstrating that children as young as ten often developing associations between positive attributes and middle-class living, as well as negative attributes and lower-class living (Mistry *et al*, 'Elementary School', 1655, 1656). However, children often demonstrate an awareness of race and ethnicity as early as five years of age, so this re-skinning of social class as a form of racial/ethnic difference helps audiences in early childhood to recognize the social difference being portrayed in the human-nonhuman dynamic. In two First Contact films (*Ratatouille* and *Bee Movie*), the human-nonhuman dynamic explores the social mobility of the anthropomorphized nonhuman protagonists, encoded as working-class and non-normative ethnic stereotypes. In these films, the protagonists somewhat achieve the human, middle-class lifestyle they desire on an individual basis, leaving the rest of the anthropomorphized characters more or less in the status quo of the beginning of the story. In *Dr. Dolittle*, a collection of ethnic and racial stereotypes are used in the anthropomorphism of a score of nonhuman characters to create a totemic, socially embedded framework of internalized difference.

The human-nonhuman dynamic in Tourist films is geared more towards Todorov's fantastic-marvellous, providing an in-universe explanation for the introduction of human-nonhuman communication. These films take place in a universe where the laws of reality are different to the viewer's 'objective' universe. The ability for human and nonhuman animals to intelligently speak to each other in Tourist films is somewhat abnormal, but the means with which to do so is both intentional and reversible, and often is treated as something that was always technically possible within the realm of the story. Unlike First Contact films, the kind of human-nonhuman dynamic seen in Tourist films does not inherently pose a seismic societal shift of species hegemony or emphasize renegotiation. The transitory nature of the human-nonhuman dynamic as the impermanent and transient way in which the kindness

between human and nonhuman animals is portrayed resonates with the ways in which nationhood is understood. Being connected to a nation has the paradoxical struggle of being both an individual with a limited number of acquaintances *and* being connected to strangers on the basis of shared nationality just as a species tourist must wrest with the idea of simultaneously being *both* human and nonhuman. Tourist films often play with notions of indigeneity and nature, with implicit assumptions of racial hegemony. In *Brother Bear*, *The Emperor's New Groove*, and *The Wild Thornberrys Movie*, the settings are historicized to some extent (*Brother Bear* and *The Emperor's New Groove* are diegetically set in an unspecified past, and *The Wild Thornberrys Movie* is set in an Africa that seems temporally displaced) and use this historicization as a means of exoticization of foreigners to contemporary American audiences. In *Brother Bear* and *The Emperor's New Groove*, this exoticization takes the form of implying that indigenous Americans are inherent saviours to the environment and more attunedly connected to nature and nonhuman animals. In *The Wild Thornberrys Movie*, the protagonist becomes a white saviour to the (nonhuman) indigenous Africans, using her own white American imperialism to fight against another more predatory white American imperialism.

Postcolonial films demonstrate a type of human-nonhuman dynamic which often challenges and deconstructs the role that social difference plays in society, featuring stories which ultimately present difference as nonsensical (either through presenting difference from the non-normative as something of value, or as something so bizarre it loses all meaning). In Postcolonial films, the physical and phenomenological proximity between human and nonhuman animals is ostensibly predicated on the assumption that human and nonhuman characters lead such similar lives that they have no significant disparities or contrasts in the ways they exist. However the stories of Postcolonial films are still heavily informed by species differences in ways that can be read through postcolonial concepts (such as Hybridity,

Third Space, Cultural Diversity and Cultural Difference, Ambivalence, and Mimicry). In *Stuart Little* and *Follow That Bird*, the protagonists' character arcs ultimately lead them to the realization that their differences from others not of their species is actually an indelible and empowering aspect of their identities. In *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, the nonhuman animals are depicted with such a literally cartoonish treatment (most notably, the Toons being a different medium to the humans, obeying vastly bizarre laws of physics) that the differences between human and nonhuman characters becomes so absurd that the notion of difference itself becomes difficult to contemplate.

The category of Sentinel films is particularly unique in the theoretical framework of this thesis as it is the only category where there is no human-nonhuman dynamic—because there are no humans. These films are set in worlds without any meaningful acknowledgement of humans sharing or informing the lives of nonhuman characters. Modern Western conceptualizations of nonhuman animals largely relegates them as extensions of human lifestyles (i.e. as pets, livestock, food sources, service animals, exhibition subjects to be gazed upon) rather than as phenomenological beings who have autonomous existences outside of human purview. As it can be difficult to imagine nonhuman animals existing comfortably and indefinitely outside the realm of human society, Sentinel films emphasize the ways in which the characters participate in active, voluntarily social units such as chosen families. By doing so, these films downplay the strengths of families of origin, a type of family which characterizes procreation of the family as an intrinsic biological function. *The Land Before Time*, *Ice Age: The Meltdown*, *The Lion King 1½* are three Sentinel films which feature protagonists who are deprived and/or ejected from their families of origin and learn to accept their place among their chosen families. Although these films all arrive at the same conclusion (that merging an individual's chosen family and their family of origin is ideal), the embrace of a non-normative family structure indicates that rather than emphasizing social

difference, Sentinel films are primarily about praising social cohesion.

Children are raised in part by the media they consume. If a society desires children to be or become thoughtful and independent individuals, it is important to consider the kinds of media targeted at them. The children's film genre is often tasked with having to either explicitly or implicitly 'educate' children on a range of matters—one of which being the role in which social difference plays in society. Anthropomorphized animals can be effective conduits for such a purpose, fulfilling a diverse variety of representational positions while able to sidestep any explicit engagement with human identities. This sidestepping creates the possibility to imagine social differences in subversive stories which challenge dominant social, political, and religious norms. What is clear from this thesis is that while children's films have enormous potential for interpellating ideological notions of social difference to children, there is absolutely no consistent agenda or political position that unifies the genre. This film genre is labyrinthine and complex, with a wide range of sophisticated ideological positions embedded within their narratives that rarely conform, and sometimes contradict, each other. These films can be powerful tools in shaping the ideological landscape for children and the fact that they are often disparate and dissonant in this role is a clear sign that this genre deserves serious scholarly scrutiny and consideration in order to untangle this knotted skein of ideological, political, and social threads. If we expect our children to become respectable, thoughtful individuals, then the films made specifically for them need to match—perhaps even exceed—those expectations.

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