Chapter 2: Totalizing Desire and Domination: Disney’s The Three Cabarellos and the Poetics/Politics of the Animation Film

The New World Order is in a Disney mode. But Disney is not alone in this mode of cannibalistic attraction. We saw Benetton with his commercial campaigns, trying to recuperate the human drama of the news (AIDS, Bosnia, poverty, apartheid) by transfusing reality into a New Mediatic Figuration (a place where suffering and commiseration end in a mode of interactive resonance). The virtual takes over the real as it appears, and then replicates it without any modification ([le recrache tel quel], in a pret-a-porter (ready-to-wear) fashion.

~Jean Baudrillard, “Disneyworld Company”

“history is written by the winners, and you can’t get much more victorious than Daddy Disney”

~ Globe 5 November 1994, P.C.14

The Making of Disney: Cinema, Consumerism, Ideology

Janet Staiger has emphasized the point (Staiger 1992:45-48) that Disney exploited his own success in children’s films in his dealing with other genres of films such as the musicals, converting the neomytheme of Disney into an auto-cannibalistic, yet incremental capital. Richard deCordova in his article “The Mickey in Macy’s Window” has studied historically how Disney films arose against a complex set of discourses, often ethical and/or pedagogic in nature and scope, about children’s leisure and the role of cinema in children’s lives. The cinema’s address to children was a site for contestation during the late 1920s and early 1930s—a period that synchronized with the brisk business that Mickey Mouse was doing as a cultural icon/commodity, and, with the systematization, intensification and rationalization of the osmotic ‘tie-in’ amongst American cinema, consumerism and neomythic fetish. The birth of canon formation in children’s literature and films based on a much maneuvered suitability criterion synchronized with this aggregation. Albeit this was not a matter of isolated coincidence but an epistemic vibe itself, in an age that consolidates its dominant economic machine by connecting what Baudrillard would call, in a different context, the essential with the inessential nodules—leisure and entertainment reforms for children,

debates in educational psychology, technical and ideological transformations in the film industry and the merchandization of different cinematic signifiers took place at this hour not as a fluke but as an inevitable, co-extensive strategy of the culture industry of the early ’30s to evolve itself into a wholeness, glossing over the conflicts and the regressions amongst the political, ethical and commercial functions of the machine, and thereby trying to resolve, the apparent inter-stitional gaps in cultural history. In other words, like we have already witnessed in the Phantomic domain examined in the previous chapter, every pathology of friction or lack or loss is re-filled by the gesture of cementing itself, in Disney we witness a totalizing mechanism that sustains by the veins of diversification that are nevertheless knot into an epistemico-political lösung whereby the concern for better governance of the subjects and better maneuvering of international relations do not interrupt, reduce, or recline but relate to, the differentiation of commodities into good buy/bad buy, the purpose of inductive training of children into motivated citizenry, and the vanishing membrane between the market of goods and the market of fictions and artistic representations, which had been hitherto all apparently different machines likely to interrupt each other’s potencies and discursive hegemons; We will also find in Disney’s ascendancy story, like the Phantomic naturalization and conversion of an alien space into a “nihil ultra” close-energy umwelt through a substitution of all the ontic tissues by epistemic connective tissues only, a making of the political, the fiscal and the entertainmental not separate atomic organs as such but an inseparable interfacial agglutination. In this chapter it is my intention to explore such totalization, of every discursive emanations and emprises related to the literal “selling of ideology” of pleasure and as pleasure, and their manifestive formations and representations.

Eckert analyzes how from the late 1920s to the middle 1930s organizations like Hollywood Fashion Associates and Modern Merchandizing Bureau emerged to concentrate on the display of fashions in the Hollywood films and fan magazines with the subsequent large scale manufacturing and marketing of those fashions, now bearing the signature as well as the semantic thrust of the “star”’s who have donned them, to the public. One purchase would necessitate the other, and a production of consumption boomed and appropriated production and recording machines. The studio exploitation departments in Hollywood methodically began to conceive of plots and scripts as backgrounds or platforms for wider ranges of lucrative product ‘tie-in’s. The overwhelming induction would mean that the films would acquire new meanings from the market and the market will receive more sumptuary demand because of the films. For Eckert, these transformations in the American film industry
consolidated the cinema's role as a decisive force in the rise of American consumerism. It was at about this time only that the "pastime" became a field of several symbiotic yet different discourses—pastime became an industry, pastime became a politics, pastime became a serious focus of moral and pedagogical prescriptions and denials. These new empires soon accommodated the child as its locus as well as sub-ject (that which supports): the fantasy of the child inside the capitalist economy, the child as consumer, and the child's consumption into a totalization of fetishes, the fantasy of and around the fantasy belonging to the child, materialized in terms of this enmeshing. This implied the privileged positioning of DISNEY into this totality, since Disney Company was one of the pioneers in the triadic merger amongst cinema, canon-formation and consumerism founded upon the figure of the child. In the 1930s, there was almost a "sacred connection" made between Mickey Mouse and idealized childhood, whose figure cropped up as an invested homogene from and within these totalizable Mammonism. The cultural interest about children, the commercial interest of the film and leisure industry and the political interest of the social reformer merged into this threshold that Disney exploited, and Mickey Mouse was made a hero of. However, Mickey's ascendancy was far from being innocent or unproblematic. There were occasional critiques of Mickey's occasional vulgarity, but it was summarily glossed over. Through an aggregation of market forces and political strategies, besides the very textual strategies of Disney, the cartoons and characters were soon made into a "healthful purchase", a normative and almost an imperative.

There are a number of popular writings about the business conducted by the Disney "family", especially the merchandization of Mickey: dolls, toys, clothings, school kit, and novelty items bearing the signature of Disney characters in a second order simulation were produced and sold. However there is a dearth of scholarly writings on the relation amongst the economy of such business and the sociology of spectatorship and the aesthetics of textual reception of signs for wonder. DeCordova identifies a factor responsible for such methodological gap in our body of knowledge on Disney: "it has concerned itself with consumers other than children". But in my analysis this exclusion is not the causative event but a symptom of the totalizing mechanism itself within which Disney operated. The requirement of programming

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3 DeCordova 203
4 Ibid. 204
the homogenized, ideal figure of American childhood, who would ideally be the foundation of 'good purchase' or the legitimate desirer and fantasizer of himself/herself activated in the fantasy of a nation of, as well as an economy of, validated pleasure, gave birth to the epistemological closure within which the 'child' was signified. This closure implied, besides other things, the child as a non-differential metaphor, an image whereby differences are to be suppressed and singularity is to accomplished through its selectively pre-implanted desires. The simplistic unitary notionization of the child and its placing within the a-political, away from the "adult" knowledge and praxis, concealing the enmeshing of the child-related fantasies in and with the adult-capitalistic fetishes on the sumptuary axis of economy, was responsible for what deCordova notices as the "methodological gap" in our scholarship regarding Disney's business, as the immediate links between the fetish, money and children's leisure were summarily overlooked. DeCordova talks of a distinction between "two different registers of consumption" that tied the child to the cinema:

Firstly, the child is actually paying to witness a show;

Secondly, the child is a consumer of products displayed through the cinematic apparatus.

What deCordova notes is that "the system of merchandizing and promotion employed by Disney and the other studios in the early 1930s worked by creating certain elaborate networks of mutual reference between these two registers of consumption". What deCordova does not observe is the homogenizing potential and practice of both these registers, and the fact that the interlocking of these sublates any threats of any eccentric or off-beat desire, any retarding or antagonistic gap from the circuits of desire and consumption. Thus the discursive emanation of the ideal child [fantasizer-consumer ethicized homogene, pro-logue to the ideology of pleasure and pro-visional to the economy of leisure] as the figure of a new totalization installed an ontological closure upon desire itself, which was formed by forging together a rule-bound desire of desire and a political economy based upon its moral limits and claims and keeping these in mutual treaty.

Particularly elaborate totalization was worked through and around Mickey Mouse. There were three concrete events/strategies that generated the impetus for this totalization through the anchorage of Mickey's consumable fictionality into concrete consumable commodity:

5 Ibid. 204
By 1932, there were more than twenty licensees in the USA alone. Children could obtain and keep the image of Mickey in almost all of their possessions—the Official Bulletin of the Mickey Mouse Club records underwear, neckties, handkerchiefs, jewelry, toothbrushes, flasks, bathroom accessories, platters, toys, games and school supplies. An interesting remark in this context was made by Roy Disney:

The sale of a doll to any member of a household is a daily advertisement in that household for our cartoons, and keeps them all "Mickey Mouse minded".

This is on one hand a clear indication of how the filmic signifier animates, and gets reanimated, by acquiring and yielding meanings vis-à-vis a consumeristic ideology. On the other hand, the ideology itself is a simulation of the textual and fictional features of Mickey, and the peri-textual features of the advertisement whose place the ideology co-occupies itself. This is why Disney Company was more interested in the publicity value of Mickey than the substantial royalties they would generate from licensing and rewarding. At some level, the Disneyesque urge to popularity can be compared to the Phantomic will to admiration, because these were the structuration of the neo-mythemes around them before the naturalization of such mythemes as regular habitual models for the subscribers to them, and in both cases the face value of the direct material gain, i.e., a royalty-oriented commerce for Disney and an imperial-dominant leeway for Phantom respectively, were repressed to the aufhebung of a desire for a more totalizable discourse and practice of power. This is Roy Disney again, talking about this profound sublation of manufacture or revenue by the public relations of promotion:

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7 Official Bulletin of the Mickey Mouse Club, January 01, 1932, p. 4.
8 Letter from Roy Disney to Carl Solloman, March 04, 1941, stored at Borgfeldt Files, The Walt Disney Archives
We feel that we should publicize our character from every angle and accept every opportunity.

First as Phantom does not ever trigger his politics towards the Pigny Banders or any ethnic groups subjected to his hegemony, and this is an untypical territorial occupant of an alien land, because his ulterior motive is to emblazon his signature into a myth, a norm, a life-style and an ethics of being for his followers amongst the jungle-folks. Disney also concentrates on the dilution of the textual signifier with new meanings, disseminating his character as a signature of a world-view, a convention, an inevitable and hypervisible standard of pleasant living whose rituality was kept invisible.

In this sense, the interests of Disney and Borgfeldt were complementary, each striding half of the circuit between two forms of consumption. For Disney, the consumption of the toy would lead to a hype-ing of the movie. For Borgfeldt, the more the movie would sell, the more the toy would be consumed. The nexus between the world of film-exhibition and the world of retailing, or between the movie-theatre and the department store, is only the surface of the interface, because this whole process was already mediated/permeated by the nascent discourses of childhood, morality and entertainment triad that we have examined above. Besides, there was another strategy that took the issue beyond a simple and mere complementarity between trade and film—the taxonomical integration of all Mickey signifiers, and as a whole of all Disney signifiers coming to market, into a monolith—a rhetoric of singularity used while grouping, labeling, displaying. Mickey items in the early 1930s were neatly classified together, rescued apart from the general and confusing, almost polysymic multiplicity or diffusion of/among other toys, in the departmental stores. So firstly they were not toys anymore, they were Disney products—a semantic unity assured. Secondly, their profuse but disciplined display would mean to the young reader-consumer a realism of some sort for the already fictitious character's marionette—the dummy of a fiction became pressingly real by its neatly managed objective singularity amidst a chaos of other toys and other characters. Thirdly, it would privilege Disney as a superior, much like the taxonomical exclusivity and archival unity of Phantom privileges and unifies the many mortal phantoms into one assured, immortal figure in front of a chaotic, anonymous, ambiguous, unassailable, impenetrable, and unanswerable being.

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9 Letter from Carl Sollmann to Walt Disney. March 27, 1931, stored at Borgfeldt Files, The Walt Disney Archives

10 Letter from Carl Sollman to Roy Disney, August 27, 1931, stored at Borgfeldt Files, The Walt Disney Archives
numerous multitudes of jungle-people. The question of commercial prominence for Disney is satisfied; besides, and, moreover, the question of validity and an identity arises when we see the textual strategies of the Disney Stores. Building the special Mickey-windows, in prestigious outlets of business already loaded with cultural meanings, like Gimbel Bros [Philadelphia], Kresge's [Newark], Nugent [St. Louis], Bullock's [Los Angeles], Bloomingdales, Stearns Bros [Cleveland], followed. By making Mickey Mouse the “star” of the toy department, the “star” of the animation was brought into the homes of nation, as a homely requirement. this is where Disney apparently differs from Phantom—the latter is not meant for any cozy or personal sense of possession; its imperial politics is shrouded within the poetics of the uncanny, and its privileging lies in its elusive nature, whilst the former is privileged and made into a neo-myth by a regularization and naturalization of its sumptuary possessivity, as well as possessibility, and the domestication of an animation character from a fiction to an everyday exclusive of the home was required for that purpose.

Another significant strategy was the theatricalization of the link between textual and peritextual consumption, making the interlocking a spectacular, showy cusp in itself. Much of Mickey’s initial success depended heavily on its self-simulation.

Disney Store is an international chain of specialty stores, selling Disney-branded items, many of them exclusive. At Disney Stores in North America, guests can purchase passes to the Disneyland Resort and the Walt Disney World Resort. In France, Germany and Spain, they may purchase passes to the Disneyland Resort Paris. In Japan, guests can get passes for the Tokyo Disney Resort. So Disney Stores do not just sell products, but ensure the monopoly of diffusive strategies, or the unitarization of commercial width—they sell the proper noun and the access to the property, i.e., the admission to the concrete leisure-spaces covered by the proper. Thus invitation to the participation and, the allurement to the sumptuary procurement are enacted through control, which is commerce as well—commodifying the appearance of diversification of the unique proper, which implies possession, both in the sense of attainment and the sense of being possessed, offered as release and width of spending, and concentration and compulsion offered as seductive multiplicity. Access to the spaces of Disney, the entry passes, are one of the most important items on sale in the stores, just like we have witnessed that the ingress into the Phantomic spaces is one of the most privileged

11 Disney Stores are located in malls and commercial areas in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and Japan.
exchanges in Lee Falk’s comics. Having realized the decline of popularity of the mall-based chain, Disney decided to sell Disney Store. Japanese stores were sold in 2002, while all North American stores were sold in November 2004. European stores remain on the market, and are in danger of being closed due to declining revenue. Disney’s new company-owned store chain is World of Disney; but Disney still owns and operates the first-to-open Disney Store on the company lot in Burbank, California, which is accessible only to Disney employees and special guests. 

Disney’s total absorption of the discourses of several ideals—the ideal child, the ideal American, the ideal desire, the ideal fantasy, the ideal leisure, the ideal purchase, the ideal film—into the consumer capitalistic auto-nutritional catch-22, production of consumption for more consumption, was not limited to the matters of money and industrial-commercial tie-ins only. The totalization brought into its fold the discourses of international relations, war, tourism, and the sexual and colonial relations between differents. In the next section of this chapter, I would look into how the totalization of children’s filmic and peri-filmic consumerism paved the way, along with the historical political contingencies of 1930s and 1940s America, and the poetics of the animation film as a hybrid scopophilic yet innocuous genre conducive to many overt concealments about hierarchy, fantasy and pleasure, for a textuation and circulation of Colonial-libidinal privileging of the American, phallocentric self and a derogation of the others. I would take up Disney’s first animation-live action mixed media film, The Three Caballeros (1944-45), for a detailed analysis of the poetics and politics of Disney animations.

12 Quite a number of stores were also opened in Hong Kong. However, many of them were closed in the last few years and the only two Hong Kong Disney Stores (renamed as The Magic of Hong Kong Disneyland) are now located in the Hong Kong International Airport. Only the European Disney Stores remain property of the Walt Disney Company; Japanese Disney Stores are owned and operated by The Oriental Land Company, the company that owns and operates the Tokyo Disney Resort, and in the United States and Canada, they are owned and operated primarily by Hoop Retail Stores, a wholly-owned subsidiary of The Children’s Place, LLC. Both Oriental Land and The Children’s Place operate Disney Stores under long-term license agreements with The Walt Disney Company. TCP’s operating agreements extend at least 50 years. Having sold the majority of the Disney Stores, Disney’s flagship Disney Store is now on Queen Caroline Street, London. The Children’s Place intends to reinvigorate the Disney Store brand in the United States by expanding the number of stores, dipping initial selling prices (Disney Stores have been well known for inflated opening prices, which would be marked down substantially after just a few weeks), and opening outlet stores, which have lesser operating costs and typically have a high profit margin even though they have cheap prices compared to the prices at the mall stores. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disney_Store accessed on 22 September 2008.
The poetics and politics of "Distory"

To illustrate, it should be known that Disney "Unlimited," having taken over one of the major US television networks, is about to purchase 42nd Street in New York, the "hot" section of 42nd Street, to transform it into an erotic theme park, with the intention of changing hardly anything of the street itself. The idea would be simply to transform, in situ, one of the high centers of pornography into a branch of Disney World. Transforming the pornographers and the prostitutes, like the factory workers in Smurfland, into extras [figurants] in their own world, metamorphosed into identical figures, museumified, Disneyfied. By the way, do you know how General Schwarzkopf, the great Gulf War strategist, celebrated his victory? He had a huge party at Disney World. These festivities in the palace of the imaginary were a worthy conclusion to such a virtual war. 13

Baudrillard argues that the Disney enterprise goes beyond the imaginary it is now in the process of detaining and appropriating all the real world to integrate it into its mock cosmology, in the form of a vast "reality show" where reality itself becomes a spectacle [vient se donner en spectacle], where the real is 'retreated' into the opsis of the theme-park—an idealized yet simplified 'figure' of the ensanguining of the spectacle, "inside which we all have become extras [figurants]".

And so it does not take much work for Disney to scoop up reality, such as it is. "Spectacular Inc.," as Guy Debord would say. But we are no longer in a society of spectacle, which itself has become a spectacular concept. It is no longer the contagion of spectacle that alters reality, but rather the contagion of virtuality that erases the spectacle. Disneyland still belonged to the order of the spectacle and of folklore, with its effects of entertainment [distraction] and distanciation [distance]. Disney World and its tentacular extension is a generalized metastasis, a cloning of the world and of our mental universe, not in the imaginary but in a viral and virtual mode. We are no longer alienated and passive spectators but interactive extras [figurants interactifs]; we are the meek lyophilized members of this huge "reality show." It is no longer a spectacular logic of alienation but a spectral logic of disincarnation; no longer a fantastic logic of diversion, but a corpuscular logic of transfusion and transubstantiation of all our cells; an enterprise of radical deterrence of the world from the inside and no longer from outside, similar to the quasi-nostalgic universe of capitalistic reality today. Being an extra [figurant] in virtual reality is no longer being an actor or a spectator. It is to be out of the scene [hors-scene], to be obscene. 14

Disney is not only interested in expunging the real by turning it into a three-dimensional virtual image with no depth, but it also tries to erase time by synchronizing all the periods, all the cultures, in a single traveling motion, by juxtaposing them in a single opsis. Thus, it marks the beginning of unidimensional time, which is also without depth: no present, no past, no future, but an immediate synchronism in a single atemporal virtuality. Lapse or collapse of time: that's properly speaking what the fourth dimension of simulacral retrait is all about. Disney operates on the fragile equilibrium of the limits: atemporality as the unique time, wrought by and through the recession of time itself, withdrawing time into the only omnipresent figure of time. Baudrillard comments:

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14 Ibid.
And so it has been said that, in a century or in a millennium, gladiator movies will be watched as if they were authentic Roman movies, dating back to the era of the Roman empire, as real documentaries on Ancient Rome; that in the John Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, a pastiche of a Pompeian villa, will be confused, in an anachronistic manner, with a villa of the third century B.C. (including the pieces inside from Rembrandt, Fra Angelico, everything confused in a single crush of time); that the celebration of the French Revolution in Los Angeles in 1989 will respectively be confused with the real revolutionary event. Disney realizes de facto such an atemporal utopia by producing all the events, past or future, on simultaneous screens, and by inexorably mixing all the sequences as they would or will appear to a different civilization than ours. But it is already ours. It is more and more difficult for us to imagine the real, History, the depth of time, or three-dimensional space, just as before it was difficult, from our real world perspective, to imagine a virtual universe or the fourth dimension [la quatrième dimension].

Corresponding, and politically co-extensive with this atemporality is Disney’s skewing, imaging and packaging of local histories into a-localized, de-contextualized and often anachronic and anatopic theme parks, much more viciously than Keats’ quasi-Hellenistic appropriation of the Grecian Urn into a wish-fulfillment rhetoric of Beauty, or the Orientalists’ timeless homogenization of the non-western space and culture into an ethnographic exoticity. In other words, the Other which Disney cannibalizes in the operation of desire is the historicity of the utterances that it profusely remakes into entertainment, devouring the production into and as the production of consumption, relegating history into what Bataille would call unproductive, sumptuary consumption. In this regard Scott Shaffer comments:

...the Walt Disney Company co-opts local histories, without their corresponding local social and political geographies, reconstitutes them as the Company’s own, and sells them to Disney’s customers as markers of American political, cultural, and imperial attitudes. This co-optation and perversion of local histories in the creation of the Disney Company’s products not only removes and rewrites these histories from their specific contexts, but also reduces the corresponding social geographies to terrains that can be colonized and brought within the "Small World" of the Disney theme park, and can then be sold over and over again to new generations of children, thereby perpetuating the Disney Company’s transmission to new generations of the stereotypes created to justify American imperial power.

Kunzle calls the cannibalistic recycling of the local historical and human-geographical contexts in Disney texts, especially animated films, fodder for the ‘the rapacious strip-miner’

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15 Ibid.
16 The Walt Disney Company abandoned its plans to develop an American history theme park near Manassas, Virginia, the site of a major battle during the American Civil War. Part of the reason for this decision, according to the company, was that the citizens of Manassas and surrounding areas had fought the development of the theme park, claiming that the “true” history of not only the Civil War, but also of all of America, would not be told there. At the same time, The Globe and Mail reviewed Disney’s then new live-action film, Squanto, stating that it was historically inaccurate.
in the goldmine of legend and myth,\textsuperscript{18} i.e., Disney denies history to use \textit{that which} he denies as the raw material for the anecdotal retrieval and reinforcement of the frozen [therefore atemporal], imaginary moment of the fantastic nationalism. In other words, Disney operates by an exploitation of the uneasy equilibrium of the limit, at the same time negating and overdetermining the sense of time with a sense of timelessness, and overriding geography with a metonymic shrinkage of space into the relative no-space or un-geography of the artificial theme parks and entertainment centers whose very lack of taxonomical accuracies are transposed and amplified into the placeless omnipresence of itemized signs. This is the \textit{poetics} of Disney’s metonymic re-treat of the time and place. The \textit{politics} of such a \textit{poetics} is, albeit imperial in nature and scope, as this allows Disney to co-opt the local under a quasi-universalistic Americanism.\textsuperscript{19}

Schaffer talks about the American "Distory", i.e., the distortion of history by Disney’s colonial misappropriation of it:

Making the conceptual stretch from examining Disney’s animated features to talking about the inscription of American cultural imperialist discourse seems to be nothing more than a senseless attack on one of America’s -- and the world’s -- most loved cultural icons. However, exploring those "myths" -- and here I use myth in the sense of cultural stories that provide a structure by which society and narratives for social action can be constructed ... is important, and especially for the Walt Disney Company’s (WDC) myths, because WDC is ideologically bound up with the American governmental apparatus, and has been since before World War Two. Officially, WDC became involved with the American government as a matter of finances, due to the near bankruptcy of WDC, thanks to Walt’s mishandling of funds and the war in Europe, which cut off quite a large market (and a popular one -- King George apparently refused to go to a film unless a Mickey Mouse short was being shown, and Disney himself was received by Benito Mussolini during a visit to Italy in 1937).\textsuperscript{20}

Schaffer’s argument is based on the historical contexts in which the \textit{poetics} of ‘Distory’ became an imperial political stratagem for installing and disseminating the ideology of American hegemon, whose ground was prepared by the subsumption of Disney’s filmic institution into the institution of American government and foreign policy. During the World War II, Disney and the governmental discourses of the war became enmeshed into each other. The Disney studios in Burbank, California, became "the most extensive 'war plant' in Hollywood, housing mountains of munitions, quartering antiaircraft troops, providing


\textsuperscript{19} Scott Schaffer, \textit{Op. Cit.}

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
overflow office space for Lockheed personnel. By 1943, fully 94% of the footage produced at the studios was war-related. Disney had become a government contractor on a massive scale. In addition, WDC was employed by Nelson Rockefeller, who was then (1940) Director of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, to produce a series of documentaries and motion pictures about the Latin and South American regions, providing a way for the United States to ameliorate any residual tensions with South American countries and governments in order to negotiate and sustain "hemispheric unity as a bulwark against foreign invasion," as well as to "show the truth about the American Way" to those who lived below the Rio Grande. As well, Disney nudged the government of the state of Florida to allow it to set up two cities that would encapsulate the Walt Disney World theme park so that it would have autonomy of its own estate governance as well as more influence over the Florida government in terms of administrative and financial permits etcetera. Ideologically, Disney portrayed itself as being the bearer of true American values to the world; as one piece of Disney Publicity circa the opening of Disneyland (1955) put it,

Disneyland will be based upon and dedicated to the ideals, the dreams, and the hard facts that have created America. And it will be uniquely equipped to dramatize these dreams and facts and send them forth as a source of courage and inspiration to all the world.

Disneyland was envisioned as something of a fair, an exhibition, a playground, a community center, a museum of living facts, and a showplace of splendor and enchantment. It would be the theatricalization as well as a concretization of the American dream, saturated with the accomplishments, the elations, the optimisms of the world we are to live in. And it will remind us and show us how to make those wonders part of our lives. And, metaphorically, WDC sees itself as interchangeable—or at least co-extensive—with the US government; its

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Disney Dollars, available from the theme parks, are exchangeable currency with the US dollar at a one-to-one ratio. The carnivalesque ruse of Disneyland was therefore, in practice, not the withdrawal but the re-inscription of the metonymic state.

The state controls over financial and technical excesses slapped on the other studios were not applicable to Disney because of two reasons. The primary, political and the most immediate was definitely the fact that Disney had enjoyed the nexus with the state-machinery. But the other factor is even more intriguing, and that is the exemption of the “animation” genre from the wartime state sanctions against the studios. The poetics of the animation film has to do much in this political allocation. The animation, as contradistinguished from the realist film, is expected to operate within certain irreality. 25 The phrase irreality is borrowed from Burton-Carvajal, who has defined it as the impression ‘of intangible and imaginable worlds in a chaotic, disruptive, subversive collusion’. 26 However, I do not see eye to eye with the terms “intangible” and “chaotic” because animation wrests out a liminal niche for itself whereby the perception of a realist textuality [ whether concrete or virtual, and in some cases even three-dimensional] and the fantastic propensity of an other-worldliness are resolved into an acceptable, perceivable reality of the irreal itself, through audible, visible, lisible forms with colour and shape associations, and, measurable dimensions, however malleable. The interpretation that the cartoon signs attend an immortal, immaterial, irreal world does not mean the erosion of textual realism in spite of their fantastic mode. Rather, they open up a possibility to displace the real tensions and conflicts into the domain of the unconscious desires, which are suitably managed by the generic betwixtness of animation and photofilmic; they are safer vectors of the political realism, although they seem to structurally be located and constituted at the withdrawal of the political and the real. The readiness of the animation, like the dream per se, to render parapraxis, and the gesture of the animation film to be already displaced from mimesis yet marking an inscription of political fantasies of the real world, makes it the most lucrative representational force for the ideological state apparatus and the imperial hegemons.

25 André Bazin tells us that the photograph is a fingerprint of a certain reality, or the real world’s impression. The animation, using a non-photographic mode of the filmic medium, defies the realistic anticipation of the photographic means, and operates in the liminal zone between the sense-perceptual and the nonsense-semantic. Thus the animation films are expected to embody as well as defy the filmic medium of representation. See André Bazin, What is Cinema?, Vol I, Trans. Hugh Gray, (Berkley: University of California Press, (1967) pp 15-16.

The animation thus can be said to convene and convert ontological otherness into an axiological otherness, and can embed a narrative of the encounter between the self and the other without manifesting a conflictual reality at the surface, through its quasi-oneiric, irreal rhetoric. Burton-Carvalho, talking about Disney in particular and animation films in general, notes:

*Cartoon features are simultaneously, quintessentially both self and other*.

The impact of this poetics is the politics of making American self the foremost, to be professed, propagated, preached and if necessary preserved, at the defining moment of the encounters with the others. Scott Schaffer's comments, albeit with a subtle skepticism about his theoretical position and methodology, should be quoted here:

Put another way, cultural products naturalize the political and economic conditions within which they were created, and in the construction of cultural messages or legitimations presume a point of view that does not necessarily coincide with the place of the consumer and in fact, as Itwaru puts it, makes the consumer "faceless" and placed under the control, at least at the level of the political unconscious, of the creator of the cultural product. In doing so, imperialist discourse can ingrain themselves not at the level of normalcy, but at the level of the political unconscious (Itwaru and Ksonzek 1994: 59, 94), making critical reflection upon the messages embedded in cultural commodities even more difficult.

And moreover,

As a way of looking at the films and theme parks of the Disney Company as agents of legitimation for American imperialism, I would like to start with a simple premise: that the media works to affect and effect what Fromm called the "social character" of a society. In Fromm's conception, the social character is formed by the educational and cultural apparatuses of a society. There is also another level of the character of society, the social unconscious, which Fromm says functions as a "socially conditioned filter," through which "experience cannot enter awareness unless it can penetrate this filter" (Fromm 1994: 74). I would argue that within American society, the social character, formed as it is through the surface-level political discourses of liberty, equality, and freedom, is counteracted in some sense by the need on the part of the social unconscious for an Other -- not in the Levinasian sense of a Face to Face encounter, but rather as in the sense that Durkheim refers to the deviant -- as the defining moment of membership. This is not uncommon or unnoted: Hegel claims that the recognition of the self by another is the defining moment of humanity (The Phenomenology of Mind), and I would, following Bauman's discussion of exclusionary strategies of social group membership (1994:237), extend this into the realm of the larger social order as well. In other words, at the level of the social unconscious, the Self (namely, the American society) can only be defined in terms of denoting the boundary between itself and Others that it interacts with in the world system at large.

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27 ibid., 139

The generic poetics of the animation film, of enunciating alterity within the figuration of the ipso, and its strategy of the realizition of the irreal, and thus to re-inscribe the reality of the fantasy in the oneiric stratagem, is effectually heightened to dizzying levels of intensity and confusion in those films that combine animation and live action, like Disney's The Three Caballeros. Such hybrid cartoons produce a "metaphysical effect in both senses of the word: they literally transcend the plane of physical reality, and they situate their viewers in a disquieting zone of epistemological and ethical question marks." Narratives of celluloid miscegenation or the threatening yet fetishized desires that pass at the contamination membranes between the self and the other are more readily and comfortably accommodated, couched, wrapped and packaged for leisurely consumption in the animation form, or what Schickel calls the "bastard cinematic form", than in other genres available for aesthetic formation of such utterances.

Disney plays a part in boundary denotation, in that it allows for the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes that portray, albeit in a "cute" way, the Otherness of the areas of the world that the United States has come to dominate, be they politically, culturally, or economically. It does this by appropriating and re-cycling stories from the past -- from traditions, generally those of other countries -- in such a way as to reinforce the values and cultural practices of America. Disney's intention as a corporation is to portray life in the 'other' spaces in the way in which America either was like or should have been like, regardless of the historical specificity of the situation it attempts to inscribe or represent. While the Disney films do not unequivocally advocate neo-tribalism in their content, their evident involvement in as propagandists for the United States during World War Two, as well as the messages and textual strategies of their films and theme parks, combined with their marketing strategy regarding the recycling of films and the recontextualization of their managed geographies in the theme parks, provide sufficient reason to claim that their function vis-à-vis the "social character" that Schaffer was talking about, following Fromm, is to construct a stratified binary between America/Americans and the rest of the world and its citizenry, even within the United States. The Disney products function as cultural legitimations, which serve to make normal conceptions of the differences in access to power.

The products of the Walt Disney Company provide American society with a collective catharsis, a way of having all of the inner inconsistency and belligerence, both within its members and within social stratifications, exteriorized and spectacularized before and away from them. Problematically, though, Disneyesque catharsis marks out its aggressions from the perspective of the American hegemon, rewriting the others’ narratives from the surge of “neurosis of the colonizer, and re-treating the home [American] society’s own dilemmas and desires while trying to purge the inbuilt melancholia of the American self through the cute, cartoonesque, exotic exteriorizations. In doing so, the Disney Company’s products serve to construct a "white" (or, in other terms, an American imperialistic) pathway for its consumers from which to perceive the world and themselves, but that is already always inadequate to mourn off the hidden fissures of the American life itself. What we are finally left with is, like in Phantom, a guise of erasing the inner contradictions of the imperial self, and of concealing its encounters with the alterity, which nevertheless cannot suppress the “melan[in]cholia” of the ipseity born out of the withdrawal, thus re-inscribing that which it tends to procedurally eliminate—the schizoid. The capitalistic-consumeristic American self, idealized through the figural foundation of the homogenized, ethicized child-consumer of Disney, and endeavouring a persona of pleasure, is nevertheless the site of reinscription of the anomalies and reifications, of labour, of coloniality, of hegemonic and/or cannibalistic majoritarianism. Disney’s The Three Caballeros, a trans-generic film amongst a Donald Duck animation, a Eurocentric documentary and a live-action fantasy of thwarted carnival, retreats through and from the incompletions of the American self-fashioning and the totalization of cinema, consumerism, androcracy, and vice versa.

For the makers of The Three Caballeros (1945), 1940’s Latin America is an extended toontown, a marginal-spatial of the hybrid between the repulsions of the colonial ego and the unconscious allurements of the desire for the other’s differences, and the need to cannibalize the others’ jouissance—a space of excess [of spectacularity, of riot, of desire, of trappings, of then frustrations of the melan[in]cholic ego] and chaos [where boundaries between the animaloid/humanoid, desire/rationality, license/closure, dazzle/danger collapse to frustrate the neat taxonomical will of the seeing/intruding subject who desires the other but is for ever deferred from cannibalistic completion]. In the film these are traced in Donald’s libidinal and ethnographic pursuits and their frustrations; Latinness is equated with a spectacle of excess that titillates and threatens such pursuits, through a relentless erotogenization of all differences. The medley-irreality of the animation poetics, namely, the transitions between the photorealistic-humanoid and the cartoon-animaloid fantasies, heightens the libidinalization of the colonial economy of knowledge, travel and ‘recording’ in the text.
Let us examine how this ideological packaging of the Latin space, including the appropriation of geography into exoticy of excess and the perversion of the local norms and lifestyles into the violence of scopophilic subjection is manipulated by the text of The Three Caballeros. Structurally we can divide the text into three successive parts, each centering around one of the three gifts that Donald Duck has received from his Latin American affiliates, cronies, and well-wishers. Significantly all these three gifts are technologies of "looking"—gadgets or items for visualization, and in practice Donald turns all of them into a mechanism for corrupting the opsis into scopophilia or gaze. The three gifts are:

- a movie projector along with the film Ave Raras [Unfamiliar birds, thus naturalizing the colonial-exotic uncanny and also exotizing the Other's naturalness]

- a pop-up book that vibrates with spectacular Samba and functions initially for the as a theatrical stage for the Second Caballero, Brazilian parrot Carioca, but soon the book works an ingestive, implosive package tour into and inside its own contents

- a kaleidoscopic compendium of Mexican folk art and souvenir-like albums, full of paintings and touristic photographs.

In the second and then third gift, the sight of Donald's action of looking into the otherness of Latin and non-American spaces and cultures melts into the spectacle of Donald's entering the action that is being looked at itself—a meta-spectacular, meta-narratorial Chinese puzzle box is accomplished deliberately conflating the actor of look with the object being looked at. In other words, spectacle itself gradually becomes the protagonist—an all pervasive scopophilic validation brackets the whole phenomena, and the narrators, narrates and the narratives all become pure spectacle, fantastically leaping into the gravitational, all-pervasive, auto-permeable, ingestive field of visual forms. The fact of fictionalizing Latinness as an image designed for leisurely emption and the fact that textual strategies are simulating and encouraging the objects they focus upon [gift/exchange and consumable visual articles like film, book and album are objects of exchange, and can be obtained in the first place as a commodity] are veiled from the readers' scrutiny as the text becomes monstrously self-reflexive. Here lies the principle clue that hinges together the issues of visuality, consumerism, imperialism and as the analysis below would show, libidinality within the innocuous totalization built around children's entertainment.
The experience of Donald duck, the spokesperson of Disney, in the seventy minutes text runs as follows. Part-I, centred on the first gift, contains only one Caballero, and that is Donald duck uninitiated into the thematics of domination, possession and libidinal-imperial desire. By positioning Donald as the initial, original, first and foremost Caballero, the uniqueness of the American seeing-voyaging ego is foregrounded as the alpha module of the narrative of encounter with the other. Besides the prioritization of the American self even in the fantasy’s syntagm, there is also a pre-signaling of the generic limitations within which the narrative would operate in terms of poetics—the comic “heart of darkness” story. The comicality is conveyed through the innocence and jollity of the “birthday” and ‘gifts’, by the ignorance of Donald[ a vacuum in his knowledge and action which he must fill up with the incremental powers of discovering, knowing, seeing and desiring] and the uniqueness of the original Caballero as animaloid, animated, animationed yet American. The comic and the colonial textualities here merge, at the site of the incongruous, or the site of pleasure. Such a locus of laughter [both the critical-analytic punitive or satirical laughter and the shared laughter of the festive fiesta] textually suppresses the colonial agenda of the context of cultural imperialism. Notably, the entire part-I is singularly, monotonously imbricated within the generic limits of animation, in contrast to latter parts. Thus the way the text commences, we are meant to receive the guileless, innoxious pleasure of the irrealistic representation, as if that fixes the “identity” and proleptically, the mood, of the whole text itself. The erotesis that Disney has strategically cast here is: “are not the fantastic other-worldliness of cartoon, and the sheer comicality of its affect, poetically free from the realistic scandals and offences of history?”

But the mood of merriment and marvel associated culturally with the poetics of cartoon is internally deconstructed by the didactic, pedagogic mediation of the dry voice-overs, maps, devices of teaching, instructive commentaries. Donald is shown as the “learner mode” figure in the first part. He does not permeate the narrative action but receives the narrative, picking up bits of information, pieces of notions, registering the narratives received from the “film within the film”—Ave Raras. Beneath the surface of the comic-cartoon closure, the irreality gives in to the structuration of the inbuilt documentarity. The inaugural irreality, through which the withdrawal of the real was inscribed, retreats the political. A strategic and contrapuntal reading would expose that which the poetics of then inception of The Three Caballeros obscured from the notice—the film is about re-figuration of the real international relationships into a palatable, agreeable form. The anomaly of the animation film as a genre, the elasticization of ‘look’, the amendment of racial otherness into comic otherness, and most
importantly, the veiling of these motivated poetics within and behind the thick make-up of a playful childishness are at once enacted, achieved and revealed or betrayed to such a reading.

Part-II of the film, centering on the pop-up book, is simultaneously an account of Latinness as a textual invention, and an enunciation of Donald Duck's protagonism or agency. The second Caballero [sequentially the second, making and marking it as a fallen secondarity of Donald's or the first Caballero's syntagmatic forwarding] is a Brazilian parrot, Joe carioca. He and Donald 'enter' the contours of the book, whereby Joe guides Donald on a trip to Latin American landscape and culture. Two significant interchanges occur in this part of the film, both dismantling the erstwhile innocuousness of the cartoon. Firstly, the recipient of the pop-up book soon becomes the protagonist in and of the book. The process of consumption of the book from outside and then process of participating in the syuzhet of the book from inside become conflated or interchangeable processes, but with the subtle yet dull suggestion that consuming is protagonism. Such a mélange based on the 'insetting' of the reader into the character, the book into the plot, and the act of reading as the act of being read is very much an instance of the retrait of the political within the bibliogenic, like Prospero's book or Phantom's library. Secondly, in part-II of The Three Caballeros, the animated and the live are also brought into a chiasmus, ingrafting each other into its own fold, not only problematizing the initial mossback exclusion of the realistic, but steals the benefits of the animation form that has been pre-installed into the text's expectancy and siphons them in favour of the political. That is why the continuum of cartoon is not left undisturbed.

We can easily infer that the technique of "insetting" paves the way for the non-Latin voyeur of Latin culture and space, the first Caballero Donald Duck, to tour, goggle, and conduct the narrative with some heroism, thus installing his presence as the pivot of all visual semiolagies of the adventure. The ideological other of the other, i.e., the Latina lass with her spectacular and different bodyscape are textually and politically introduced, both to Donald's ogling and the readers' perception. During Donald's trip to Bahia, the cookie-vendor Yaya, played by Aurora Miranda, enchants his heart, which utters both the possibility of cross-cultural eroticity and a thwarted possibility of cross-species miscegeny. At this stage of the film, male gaze is kept basically asexual, but not desexualized. Donald's surgent amorosity is buffered by a group of Latino male admirers of Yaya, who all exude masculinity against the relative neutrality of the animation character, and who dance surrounding the Latina, thereby insulating her from miscegenic contact
and rebuffing Donald’s initiation into the libidinal economy of first-world tourism. A number of tropes is used here, which may be enumerated below as:

- the initial feminization and eroticization of the Latin space
- the difficult impermeability of the Latin entity, by which cross-cultural eros is hindered
- the carnal licentious stereotype of the Latin entertainment
- the androcratic contest between males of different races for the Latina female

The tropes are, as it is apparent from the above list, not very compatible with each other always. Transnational sexual opacity and transcultural sexual energetic are invoked simultaneously, in one frame of the narrative. The entire responsibility of Donald’s apparently comic failure to have some miscegenic frolic is shifted, from his essential neutarity vis-à-vis the live-action Latina to the cultural other that Donald cannot penetrate and defeat—the Latino males. Simultaneously, the protagonist’s un-win in the patriarchal contestation amongst competing male-desires is narrated as the unpiability of the Latin space. Thus Latinness is constructed as an inconsistent, irrational, self-contradictory chimera. E.M. Forster’s imperial erotics in A Passage to India depicted the intrinsic anomaly of Indianness as one of the foils of such ‘passage’; Donald’s passage to Latin America is also antagonized by, as the film presents it, by the essential obscurity or absurdity of the Latin space and people. That there might have been some hubris in Donald’s gaze, intention, Caballero-methodology, is altogether denied and absolved by the comicality of Donald’s frustration, while the seriousness of the offensively seductive yet immune Latin entity is projected as an antagonist from outside. Moreover, this part of the film goes by the usual erotics of heteronormative colonial encounter, visualizable as scopophilic inequation and enactable as masculine conquest of the feminized other. Such easy masculine/feminine model of colonial action is thwarted by the sight and movement of the Latin males; rather, the corollary stereotype of the Other race as the “body” while the American Self is disembodied mind cusps and punctuates the heteronormative erotics of Donald’s imperial travelogic—the liveliness, vivacity, vitality, physical prowess of the Latin male is too much of a hurdle for the hopelessly animated Donald. In fact, the discourses at contestation—the eroticity of the feminized Latin entity, and the disembodiedness of the American self vis-à-vis the primitive Other of Latinness, or rather, the libidinal and the Cartesian economies at work here, are
policed and managed by a third order of political motivation that might have been the hidden agendum and from which apparently the comicality of the text emanates to a large extent—the fear of miscegeny, enacting a counter-desire within the textual motor itself, of racial purity. One may remember that:

Genetics overdetermined European culture in the nineteenth century, policing identity border and protecting them from the anarchic fluidity of racial-sexual exchange.

It is not too difficult to see its continuity over time. The letdown for Donald’s cross-species, cross-cultural miscegenic fantasy might actually be a promotion of such continuity—an ideological victory of colonial world-view, nevertheless.

Part-III of the film can be considered as the core section of the poetics of spectacularity bearing the politics of “packaging” the other. Here the third Caballero, a Mexican rooster named Panchito escorts Donald and Joe. The pivot of this segment is the third gift, a folder or album of visual objects—artifacts like folk-paintings and photographs—that the tourist, the ethnographer, the anthropologist and the colonial knower all use for the arresting and possessing the unfamiliar sight of the other. While folk-paintings are generated from within the Latin cultures, the photographs embody the outsider’s perspective or selective mode of looking at the Latin culture. In the portfolio gifted to Donald, however, the two supposedly different artifacts of visualization blend without friction, because the album is a “gift” from the “Latin” friend to Donald. The fact that the ‘souvenir’ is rhetorically different from the “collection”—the former is endowed with a surface of intimacy and hospitality, and an a priori affinity between the bequester and the recipient—marks the “recording” [of the Other culture] as a spontaneous, cross-cultural exchange consented and willed by both the parties, thereby reducing Donald’s colonial culpabilities. The other, represented by the Latin friend of Donald, is shown as an already always inviting, welcoming and non-confrontational ally to the American self. Again we have a number of tropes, not necessarily collaborative, in operation in this part of the text:

- the bundling of the diverse heterogeneous visual impressions into one visual compendium
- the exchangeability of the packaged other as ‘art’ and ‘gift’, both consumable as consensual handing over

The abrasion between Yaya’s native suitors and Donald’s excitement that occurs in the previous part of the text is compensated in favour of the white spectator this time, and may be not without reason. The imperial erotic would also imply miscegenic contact, which would shrink the priority and ipseity of the imperial/American self. But no such loss or contagion or lessening is feared in case of possessing the knowledge and the image of Latin culture, for it is an event of the self’s complete and unharmed mastery over the other, an epistemological as well as non-corporeal privilege, and therefore does not necessitate for Disney any constraint or regulation or inhibition of the act. The optic fiesta, in keeping with the scopic regime of the colonial epistemology, is only celebrated and not forbidden.

It should be noted here that the gifts are not only scopic but they are also all woven, literally, in textual format—film, book, album. But the access of the readers of The Three Caballeros, to these texts, are filtered and valved by Donald’s hermeneutics. When Donald reads these, we can. So the précis of the Latin culture, exists as a textuation, by virtue of its primary lisibility to Donald—as a brochure, manual, monograph, document that he has acquired, not through an enterprise per se but as a natural corollary of having an American life-event, namely, the birthday party gift. This would mean, firstly, that the Latin cultural existence is not defined, as knowledge, by the structural coupling of the locals’ belonging but the metis of the American colourful, sociable, communitarian[!] way of life-as-dream-and-leisure. Secondly, this would also imply that the definition of the Latin culture as an object of knowledge is fettered to the mimetic agency of the external homo faber, without which it exists but only as an amorphous limbo [like the abrupt and unproductive dance of the Latina youths around Yaya, signifying vitality without value].

Once more, the insetting of the protagonism into and within the met-textus takes place—the album swallows, absorbs, sucks Donald into a tour through its own interiority. Donald becomes an actant in the contained plot. Thus for the viewer[ the ideal American, and apparently a young-adult consumer of American ethico-leisurely commodities], occularity, or the opsis of the ipso of the American self dramatized at its interfaces with the Latin other, takes place thrice: the viewer sees the movie, displacing and condensing himself into an ideal figure of the American child-consumer, and sees in the movie Donald seeing and then moving into a scene another visual form, such as the film, or the book or the album, which
implodes into the main narrative. At each grid of such an optics, there are a number of eidetic as well as political maneuvers that take place. The deferral of the viewer’s immediacy and of close reading therefore, acts as ideological multi-layered haze, beginning with the anomaly of the animation as a visual genre that we discussed above. Besides, the *insetting* also conceals the core scopophilia, which is libidinal and colonial in economy, as a mere metonym for what might have been too obvious an exercise of phallocentric-capitalist-Eurocentric hegemon. We are deferred from watching the real relationships but the non-real, irreal world of animation only, and Donald’s gaze is fogged, enveloped in the semiotics of looking although it is central politically in all the operations that happen in the tripartite narrative. In other words, a myopic comprehension of the animation is encouraged, while the full absorption or internalization of the political content is made compulsory by the essential pleasantness, comicality and leisureliness of the commodity called the film.

The core operation is in the transportation of the officiating gazer, Donald, into a plane of spectacular protagonism. Parallel to this optic transportation, there is much of physical, spatial transportation in the narrative—transportation as voyage.33 Interestingly, the psychological channel of voyage, i.e., voyage into the mind of the voyager, is kept to a single track—we voyage into the mind and fantasy of Donald, identifying them with our fantasy and scopophilia. But there is no attempt to voyage into the cognition of indigenous people—keeping the Latin mind for ever deferred from the limpidness of observation and knowledge and for ever elusive to the fantastic self, sustaining the Latin mentation for ever as a “che vuoi?” crisis, guilty of suspicion, and necessitating attempts on part of Donald, Disney and the reader to steal the Other’s stealthy fantasies and jouissance as an epistemic as well as political counterbalance. In *Phantom* this is managed by the benevolent retrieval of the unknown other’s redemption myth as already hospitable to the anachronic but absolute empowerment of the White outsider as a deified figure—the other’s fantasy is put in the service of the enigma of Phantom’s despotic arrival. But in *The Three Caballeros*, the Distory of the USA’s interface with the Latin America is not resolved in such essemplastik way, because Disney had to totalize the fetishization and commodification into its offer, and that would definitely require alienation, fragmentation and a remnant lack-quotient.

33 In fact, transportation and look are conjoint tropes in discovery narratives: “most discovery narratives place the reader on a European ship, the land is sighted [usually through an anachronistic telescope...].” See Stam and Shohart, *Op. Cit.*, p71. Italics mine.
The two escorts, Joe and Panchito, both demonstrate Donald some features of Latinness, followed by a love song. The inset crooning is addressed to Bahia the locale itself and it is structured like an uneasy hybrid betwixt an elegy and an ode:

Oh Bahia
Someone that I long to see
Is haunting my reverie
And this loneliness deep in my heart
Calls to you
Calls to you...

The sentiment of “loss”, forgoneness, absence is evoked by the emphasis on longing and loneliness. Again, invitation, invocation and wish are communicated. The feelings and statements of deprivation and wistfulness are summarily managed by the climactic sonorosity of salutation and hailing. Donald feels induced by this call of the other, and is immediately absorbed into the visual and aural intensity of the moment, transported to its core by riding a square-wheeled animated railway car belonging to part-1 of the film. The railway car is a litotes for Donald’s insetting and joins the three phases of it. Another transport that we see, this time more exotic and allusive than comical in incongruity, is the “flying serape’ that voyages through the photographs of the album, taking Donald in and further in. arrived at the core of the spectacle, Donald gazes at the spectacular Latina females directly, without any mediation of the mimetic forms used so far. He shows a comic lack of self-control in his encounter with the Latin beauties. The narrative form itself becomes sexualized here where corporeal intrusion into the space of the other becomes possible. Donald’s flying serape comes to Acapulco, a beach densely populated by a bevy of bathing Latina beauties, packaged in live-action footage. The poetics of the text here becomes interesting: the bodyscape of the Latina female is presented in live-action, using photographic realism, to ensure the validation of the maximum sexual attribution to the colonial encounter, Donald is the innocuous, irreal denizen of the animation kingdom, retaining the marker of fundamental and essential comicality as an excuse, and his neutarity in effect is a ruse of neutrality for Disney.

The Latin beach is crowded by a homogeneous, exquisitely feminine demography, and a very energetic field of movements, marking it as a spectacular space ready-made for scopophilic

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34 The a priori assumption about animation is that the cartoon characters can see each other but they cannot see the live-spectator outside. The metafilmic situation enables Donald to see the live and active Latin people and to rank them as per his needs, desires and fears.
subordination. This is what Shohat and Stam would call “the procrustean forcing of cultural heterogeneity into a single paradigmatic perspective.” Donald takes a crazy leap off the magic serape to join the women and encounters the unhomeliness of the other’s che voui. The Latina maids are playful and rebuffing at the same time, taking him into their all-female group in the frolic-time but punishing him in a jocular way by tossing him repeatedly with a beach blanket. Then he is blindfolded, put by the ladies into a game of blindman’s bluff, whereby he seeks to grab and guess the señoritas. Ironically, his friend Joe intervenes, but Donald grabs him thinking him to be a señorita, and kisses him repeatedly. On one hand we find an interruption into the heterosexual, cross-species pursuit and on the other hand we find an unconscious hamartia of homoerotic, same-species [bird to bird] unintended encounter. Joe immediately protests by screaming: “...No, Donald, don’t do that”. Donald’s purpose of seizing a human Latina female is already thwarted, followed by Joe’s injunction of ‘same-to-same relationships’.

But the most significant event is in terms of the lack or loss defined by the abrupt self-reflexivity of the scopophilic forms: Donald’s privilege as the officiating seer-voyager is suspended for quite some time as he is blindfolded. In these instances, everyone including us can see him but he lacks sight. It is in these moments of literal non-scope only that his sexualized gaze as well as sexual desire for the other sinks into an accidental misrecognition or misknowledge both on the libidinal and the racial scale. This bathos reveals, ironically, the centrality of the visual and libidinal mastery in the production of the colonial self. This is in direct contrast to Phantomic gaze which is always received by others and cannot ever be redirected unto the masked avenger of evil—an opacity to the reverse gaze marks the identity of Phantom in his contact-moments with his others [thieves, thugs, ethnic tribes, monsters, city-men] while Donald’s apology for the colonial discourses is formatted in terms of the “che voui” of the inscrutable and capricious other, including the other’s bleary recession of visual-libidinal welcome.

There are a few moments in Part-I of The Three Caballeros also, when the semiotics of the unidirectional “look” is problematized. Donald scrutinizes the celluloid strip he has just received. From inside a frame on that strip, Pablo Penguin, a character totally contained within the strip and intrinsic to the frame, is seen looking at the outside of the frame and the strip, or more like looking into Donald’s world. The gazed at object looks back, apparently, to multiple layers of external gazing subjects—Disney’s camera, Donald’s eye, the reader/spectator of The Three Caballeros. The instrument through which Pablo exercises the
counter-gaze is a large telescope, occupying a greater portion of the frame and the screen of the movie itself, through which the penguin’s eyes look extremely dilated. The inflation of Pablo’s ocularity and the telescopic reach signals the stretch and strength of gaze itself in the scopophilia of animation and film, but significantly, the counter-gaze is exercised not by a colonial other but the colonial ipseity, by a homogenus co-colonizer, as Pablo is also a bird like Donald and more than Donald in his territorial occupation—he has explored the globe and finally colonized the exotic tropical island of Galapagos, along with a native animal as a servant. On two accounts Pablo’s act of telescopic gesticulations are not “looking back”: his gaze has no narrative status or narrative consequence in the text, and counter-gaze is actually a transferred epithet of Donald’s/Disney’s gaze itself along with its colonial panopticality and/or voyeurism. Besides, Pablo is not looking back at Donald but looking at the various inferior others of himself, like the tropical tortoise. So the appearance of Donald’s disappearance as an ocular agent does not challenge the central hierarchy of gaze in the text, but complements it as a co-option. He is best though as a surrogate or double, an annotation, a disciple-cum-donor to the self of Donald’s libidinal-colonial quest.

Eventually, Donald’s visual-sexual enterprise of possessing the other’s other succeeds in Mexico city. The episode takes place as part of a “packaged” representation of Mexican nightlife, equating Mexican charm with the nocturnal exoticity and glamour and license. Donald watches Dora Luz croone “Solamente una vez”, literally meaning “you belong to my heart”, and he consummates his desire with the woman. In this ensemble, the young female Latin cultural performer is reduced from the authenticity and dignity of an artist to a representative Latina as sexual commodity, ready to succumb. But more importantly, oneiric displacements and condensations re-configure Donald’s success into a magic realistic fragmentation. In a state of dream-within-dreams, leading to Donald’s unfulfillment, several pairs of disembodied lips seem to surround Donald and kiss all together. Donald escapes in an abrupt flight, rocket like, and all mass within his skeletal outline vanish, leaving him like the Cheshire cat’s smile in Wonderland’s horizons, as a trace of his being, and in the context

35 However, to the contrapuntal reading of the text, Pablo is not the same as Donald. He comes from an absence of cultural-imperial grounding, a nowhere like Antarctica while Donald comes from America as a representative American. Pablo drifts from the south to the north in his search for a colony, Donald goes “south of the border”. There is also no Ibidinal element or voyeurism in Pablo’s “look”.

36 The film, which tells the story of Pablo Penguin moving north from the South Pole, introduces Donald to the allure of the exotic “other” of the islands off of the Pacific coast of Latin America, and sparks Donald’s desire to “live the life” of Latin Americans.
of the current text, as either castrated by the devouring profusion of other’s fantasy (Latina labia) or disembodied amidst and in spite of nymphomaniac Latin space and essential Latin corporealities. In all three possibilities, the other’s sexual energy and purpose, hitherto secret, appears threatening. Airy and volatile, devoid of mass, Donald is on the threshold of a flight—even wings crop up on his contours, suggesting through the irreality and comicality of animation the insubstantiation or loss of the colonial ego-gravity. A number of broken and disjoint images surface modernististically, like in Eliot’s “Marina” or Auden’s “Look Stranger”, reformatting the supposed integrity of the colonial self under the burden of essentially fissured mnemonic distortions. A riot of colours and movements capture the whole frame, suggesting not the freakish frenzy of Donald’s jouissance but the anti-climax of the trauma of disintegration, and regression into a castration complex fueled externally by the deep-seated misogyny and the racist “fantasy” of the other’s inaccessibility. With the irruption of a possible instance of sexual possession and satisfaction, Donald Duck is seized by and into the chronotope of colonial emasculation. There is a clear disruption of the pain/pleasure equilibrium, and that helps Disney to rewrite and therefore distort the narrative of colonial violence as a baroque of psycho-somatic disturbance, cannibalizing and substituting the history of the colonial libidinal economy with a vague “Distory” of the theft of jouissance. Stam and Shohat observe that “obsessive disintegration” can “mask a perverse identification: repulsion can overlay desire”.37 Benita Parry comments in Delusions and Discoveries that such postures can be read as confessional discourses, the betrayal of terror at the face of what is imagined as erotic lure.38 The unity and identity of Donald being problematized with his dipterous, ornithological transmogrification [which is ironical as well as tautological, as essentially the animation-figure was named as a ‘duck’, yet with a magic realitization of that taxonomic irreal he is “transformed”] and the explosion of splintered images, the culpability is still written as pertaining to the otherness of his object of desire. Donald’s sexual consummation with the Latina is immediately followed by a teratological profusion of the fetishized female “lips”, locating the cause, motive and origin of disintegration and dispersion in the other—the other that dissevers itself. Donald’s emaciation and vacuity and volatility start only after being hauled up and contacted by such labial-genital ambiguity.

37 Stam and Shohat, Op. Cit..., p20
The text becomes monstrously vehemantic at this phase. The hurried and random pace of events, the unrestful syntagm de not so much kinaesthetize Donald’s race of adrenaline but the frivolous essence of the Latin space, an imaginary that can be compared to the collapse of all meaning and all taxonomies in the Mordon Caves in *A Passage to India* or the paranoia of slutty hysterical/Indian deity conflation in *Holy Smoke*. However, it also traces the in-built melancholia of the colonial agency; fiesta as a pseudonym of a panic performance.

There are other textual strategies by which the discourses of gender, coloniality, American selfhood and desire are addressed in the film. A very dark spectacularization works when the Latina singer, the oracular source of melody; crooning and the narrational “Solamente Una Vez”, is made into a bodyscape and then dissolved into the vision of the kissing, multiplicitous lips, toning speech down to spectacle. This perversion strategically excludes the possible link between lips/orifice and speech/communication, as the monstrous plurality of lips and Donald’s concomitant aphasia denote a traumatization of communication itself. Lips do not invade with words but with kisses that shut the principal word-processor himself into un-narratorial and helpless silence and anxiety. The oral-aural failure and the spectacular overdraft reinforces a regression, of Donald’s imperial-libidinal symbolic into the chaotic, pre-symbolic and pre-Self imaginary, as nightmarish to the western eye/l as the om-baum of the womb/tomb-like cave was to Mrs. Moore and Adela in Forster’s novel. Gender is also put at stake by the fracturing of the humanoid eroticized bodyscape of the Latina into the relative neutarity of the irreal lips [the only other instance of lips in a gesture of kissing was the unpurported homosexual threat when one Caballero mistakenly seized another into its arms].

The spectacles make the contrapuntal reader confirmed about the text’s status as a strategic drama of self-fashioning via the complex circuit of othering the other. Spectacularization is on one hand directly linked to the visual packaging of the other as other; on the other hand, the occcular processes are also related to fetish [a chiasmus, albeit reterritorialized and re-totalized into the Disneyesque suturing economy and ‘Distory’, among desire, consumerism, coloniality, alterity, fragmentation and possession]

Accordingly, the spectator’s gaze at the text’s visual-purchasable form, i.e., the film-object sold and consumed in a market of hype and ideological thresholds pumped from outside, is sutured into the gaze that Disney would like to claim as his own, which is also paradoxically the ideal gaze of the child-reader of the text. These are some of the operations that we have already noted in the poetics of *The Three Caballeros*, which manage the inbuilt discords of that gaze:
1. the ambiguity of the lips are after all, the marker of the ambiguity of the Latina

2. the concreteness of the live-actress is replaced by the animated-
irreal of unruly lips—thus receding the other's presence into a simulation

3. the other finally vanishes, as the very corporeal presence of the Latina is withdrawn, *absented*

4. the orificial analogy of the lips [sexual engulfer] is counterbalanced by the phallicity of the kiss [something that Donald could also perform in the previous parts]

5. the other is in effect, made both a *taboo* and a culpability

6. the simultaneity of the erosion of the other [live-singer to live-sexualized body to lips (organ) to kisses (the motion only)] and the exhaustion of the self [Donald is depleted of any mass, so inundated his contours become] is withdrawn from the reader's attention by the foregrounding of Donald's wings and flights—the synecdoche for the extravagant romance and ecstasy in usual aesthetic representations of American-Latin cross-cultural encounters. While Dora's erasure and *transformation* involves repeated reduction and disgracing fragmentations, Donald's transformation is incremental [a pair of extra-wings with extra-meanings added to his already always retained totality as 'form' or avicularity].

7. The closing scene involves a syrupy love-song, which is again and again punctuated and distracted by Donald's sidekicks and writhing. Again, spectacular centrality of representation undermines the verbal. Donald attempts first to partner a dancing *tehuma* [traditionally a matriarchal and matrilineal tribeswoman] and then a phallic female *charra* [a cowboyish figure], surrounded by syncopated and even more phallic cacti. The frenzy of competing rhythms and imagery continue to mount until the explosive finale. In part-II, a fountain ejaculated over his helpless body through a horizontal, erect pipe. In the grand finale of part-III, a flood of Mexican firecrackers blurs over his body and shoots him to sky. Donald descends along the fluidly-projectiled jet to end up in a very common "feminine' pose of blush and embarrassment.

In the first part of *The Three Caballeros*, we have a narrative of territorial/servitudinal occupation. Pablo, a clever penguin longs for the territorial possession of a tropical island, and eventually acquires it. In the same sequence, little Gauchito captures, tames and instructs a flying donkey for personal benefit. He makes a plan to programme the flying donkey into
an effective racehorse to win the jackpot. Burton-Carvajal notes, " [...] every story packaged here is a narrative of conquest or of enslavement."  

We have to note that Pablo Penguin comes from the South Pole into a global search for a colony in the shape of an "isle of his dreams," he eventually finds Galapagos. He is shown to be enjoying a royale sunbath amidst an aristocratic suavity, served by an ethnic tortoise. This story of colonization and enslavement is presented in terms of a number of technical/poetic manipulations:

1. The story of Pablo's pursuit for an inhabitable colony is rendered in terms of farcical setbacks. The leisure and laughter of his pursuit is highlighted but the serious or conflictual allegories of colonial expansion/discovery are kept away.

2. The narrative of how the indigenous tortoise is enslaved by Pablo is totally omitted from Pablo's narrative. His enslavement becomes a spectacle sans a history.

3. The perspective of the conquered is minimized or written off. Deprived of agency, the Latin American male as we have seen in the form of Donald's Brazilian and Mexican allies, is constrained to serve as the informant and tour-guide for the would-be-conqueror.

4. Gauchito's flying donkey is shown to have shown his real colours when he subotages Gauchito's ambitions and makes him loose the jackpot. The farcical vein of the event renders the narrative of anti-colonial resistance as extremely comic, malicious and abrupt. Thus the 'political' of the flying donkey's subversive act disappears in its appearance. This can be directly linked to the comic-farcical absurdity in which other acts of resistances are shown—the potency of Donald’s Latin competitors during his lust for Yaya, the counter-aggression of Dora shown as the absurdity of the disembodied deluge of vaginal lips and their incessant kisses, the blinding of Donald molten into the mistaken-identity farce. Thus the resistances to colonial-libidinal advances are disclaimed by Disney with an impish grin of the comic. One may see Donald's ineptitude and phallic incompetence when Carmen Molina appears in part-III as the phallic woman. She is attired in masculine, heavy-duty accessories and surrounded by phallic symbols like the cacti which are punitive. Donald runs through the bushes of the elongated cacti, each with a prominent lateral appendage high above him, in futile pursuit of Carmen, who herself becomes congealed into a cactus before he reaches her. Green, the American colour of

envy and the Latin colour of lust, dominate the sequence to submerge the resistance of the Latina into a carnal accident resulting Donald’s penile inferioritization.

5. For want of a completely devourable female victim, Donald himself is often posited as the “little guy” and the “underdog’. In fact, Donald's non-intimidating intrusion into the other's sexual space, full of comic animatedness rather than any apparent threat to the other, is an epigrammatic spectacle. Whenever Donald is obsessed by the desire to connect, he ends up mimicking that desired other, transgressing gender-lines. For example, Donald’s kiss prolepsizes Dora’s, Donald’s maleness is punished by phallic cacti, in the last section Donald’s jouissance is overpowered by analogues of penile ejaculation. Donald’s last appearance, as we have noted earlier, is in a stereotypical feminine gesture of coyness and vulnerability.

An overarching ‘Distory’ works beyond all this in the text—the a-historicity and un-man-liness of Donald himself, that largely expunges the colonial discourse off its guilt. Donald is a function of particular relations, a conduit of particular choices. But his animationality gives him an extra quotient of supra-fictionality than any photofilmic character—we cannot analytically separate Donald the character from Donald the actor as such. Had Donald been a live character, we could have separated through proper historical analysis between the textualized function of his character and the historical function of the actor-as-character that Timothy J. Wiles speaks of. But Donald’s animatedness generates regression rather than any verfremdungseffekt. Cartoon insulates him much from the historical analysis of Caballerodom—and this makes him the wolf in the duck’s clothing, to quote Panchito, or rather a conquistador in compaiero’s clothing; he is disarmingly inept but no less effective as a textual function from the man in the imperial machine.

40 In part-III of The Three Caballeros, Donald engages in a quasi-bullfight, robed as a mock-bull with his comrade Carioca and Panchito. He is expelled from the guise of the bull but the bull-mask continues to animate itself. Donald switches his fight, from against the two males to against the bull’s mask. In the background the two caballeros burst out in a song of male-bonding, and in today’s context, fratriarchal gaiety.


42 In part-III of The Three Caballeros, Donald engages in a quasi-bullfight, robed as a mock-bull with his comrade carioca and Panchito. He is expelled from the guise of the bull but the bull-mask continues to animate itself, almost supernaturally. Donald switches his fight, from against the two male to against the bull’s mask. In the background the two caballeros burst out in a song of male-bonding, and if read in today’s context, fratriarchal gaiety. The animation’s own generic expectations can explain this rivalry with a “shape” and a “mask”, because that is what Donald himself technically is. And the political implication is clear enough—Donald’s rivalry is not with the Caballeros, but with the Latin American culture itself whose masochistic index the bullf Fighting is.
While originally contracted for and touted as a vivid and authentic representation of what Latin America and Latin Americans were "all about," *The Three Caballeros* ends up becoming what I see as the standard pattern of Disney animated features: a legitimation, of the political, economic, and cultural hegemony of the United States. The intention of the film was to show the American movie-going public what life was like in Latin America, much in the same way that Disney's nature films showed what "wildlife" was like. As well, as Burton points out, it was to convey the idea of the American Way to Latin Americans, and to show that the US was not solely out to colonize their neighbours to the south. However, this is precisely what happens in *The Three Caballeros*: the different media by which Donald Duck is shown the way of life in Latin and South America (a film, two books, and a piña-album) are all easily commodifiable forms in which the story can be consumed and the life can be colonized. In the cases of both Bahia and Mexico, Donald's participation in the festivities is only possible when the local music and dance begins to sound like American. For example, Donald can only join in the fiesta when the mariachi band begins playing Dixieland-style jazz. Hence, *The Three Caballeros* also privileges the flattening-out of local cultures and their Americanization, making it possible for something this "foreign" in these strange places to be consumed, difference to be exoticized and cannibalized simultaneously, and a retreating of America at the zones of its disappearance. Like *The Three Caballeros*, other animation films produced by Disney also functions as the vector of Americanisms, consumerism, leisure-economics and the libidinal theorization of the non-American space. Historical data referred to above makes it evident that in all fronts of social representation and formation, there was a totalization of the discourses of morality, nation, empire, market, cinema, consumerism, pleasure, childhood and desire in the 1930s and 1940s, discourses which were uniquely coalesced and reterritorialized into Disney discourses. The films that followed and still follow are situated within the overflow and the surplus of this totalization, even today.

In *Aladdin*, Disney's 1992 release, we find another instance of American cultural and political imperialism, this time grafted into a Distory of the Middle East. Contemporaneous with the

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43 Roosevelt vigorously reasserted the Good Neighbour Policy and accordingly created the Office of the Coordinator of inter-American Affairs as a privileged subset of the Motion Picture Section of the State Department during the first traumatic years of the 1930s. Nelson Rockefeller was appointed the director of the office, and the Director of the Motion Pictures Section, John Hay Whitney, was to function as his assistant. This setting up of a node of the ideological state apparatus was a dispositif against the growing anxiety about U.S.A.'s gargantuan hegemony in all inter-continental matters including filmic misdemeanor.
Persian Gulf conflict, this film re-marks the traditional story of Aladdin's Lamp and the Genie with overtones of American power, as well as reinscribing it with the cultural commodities of Disney, making the film self-reflexive, in that Disney's own cinematic history is written into the Distory of Aladdin. Disney begins the film by marking off its subjects as the cultural Other for America. The theme song that runs over the opening credits sums up the barbarity of this place:

Oh I come from a land  
From a faraway place  
Where the caravan camels roam  
Where it's black and immense  
And the heat is intense  
It's barbaric -- but hey, it's home.

Originally, though, these lyrics portrayed a much darker, more evil portrait of its subjects, one which Arab-American groups reacted adversely. Since then, Disney has rewritten the lyrics to make the place, but not the people, seem barbaric; previously, the fourth and fifth lines, the offensive ones in the original theatrical release, read "where they cut off your ear/ if they don't like your face". The barbarism of Arab justice (both in the removal of one's ear "if they don't like your face," as well as the removal of the hands of thieves) also broaches to meiosis of the of Western capitalism -- those who steal from the King (and here, as Jaffar points out when disguised as a prisoner so as to lure Aladdin into taking him to the Cave of Wonders, where the Genie's lamp is stashed, "Whoever has the gold makes the rules") deserve to have their hands removed. Aladdin, though, has to wonder --"All this for a loaf of bread?"--thereby giving voice to what could be called the subaltern in the filmic sociology of voices.

However, here the proletariat is definitely not eulogized or glorified. Instead, Aladdin is portrayed throughout the film as "nothing but a street rat". The proletariat’s agency is shrunken, even in terms of his magical potential. He has to use the power of the Genie in order to make himself appear appreciable to the local gentry, in particular Princess Jasmine.

In another allegory of capitalism in the text: the will to become an "everyman," or in the case where Princess Jasmine runs off from the castle and goes into the marketplace, "everyperson", tossing away the shadows of the mantle. In a sense, then, we can see that the film gives the message that neither of the two typifications of Arab society -- the egregiously wealthy or the "street rat" peasant -- are acceptable within Disney's Arabia; instead, what is needed are self-made individuals (like Pinocchio), who have the ability to judiciously live within, throw out, or rewrite tradition as it suits their contingencies. In Aladdin, this is prominent in Aladdin's use of the Genie in order to make himself noticeable to the Princess—
the Princess no longer obeys the local custom of marriage, and she convinces her father to rewrite the law so that she can marry Aladdin. The Genie's will to autonomy and sovereignty are the only renumerations he has in ambition while taking the service of Aladdin.

*Aladdin* marks the first time that WDC has inscribed its own history into the history of the film. As Fjellman points out:

> The Company has managed to insinuate its characters, stories, and image as good, clean, fun enterprise into the consciousness of millions around the earth.  

The sublimation of Disney products into the consciousness of the viewer makes it easy for the same process to occur in the narratorial and spectacular aspects of the text, even though anachronistically, timelessness being Disney's poetics of "Distory". At one point, the Genie catches Aladdin telling a lie, and briefly transforms his head into that of Pinocchio's, complete with foot-and-a-half long nose. In another scene, once Aladdin, posing as Prince Ali Ababwa, has won the heart of Princess Jasmine, is asked by the Genie: "What are you going to do now?" in the same manner as WDC has commercials with victorious sports teams and Miss America beauty pageant winners responding to this question with, "I'm going to Disneyland [or Walt Disney World, or Tokyo Disneyland or EuroDisney]." Finally, at the end of the film, when the Genie is released by Aladdin and becomes his own master -- in other words, when he wins the battle of capitalism, having been in servitude for thousands and thousands of years, only to finally make himself his own boss -- he is going to Disneyland, or at least Walt Disney World; dressed in an riotingly colourful tropical print shirt, carrying golf clubs, and wearing a Goofy hat, he looks as if he is headed to one of the theme parks, with the intention of partaking of all of its leisure activities. Hence, as Schaffer points out:

> Disney's own history, being bound up with the collective conscience of the world, also gets bound up with the local stories of the world, regardless of how far away those locales might be.

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