

She Was a Beautiful Girl and All of the Animals Loved Her: Race, the Disney Princesses, and their Animal Friends

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Abstract:

Disney Princesses are well-known for their magical relationship to animals. They can charm the beasts with nothing more than a smile and a song, and they count on the animals' help and protection when they get into trouble. However, this special relationship is imagined differently depending on the race of the princess in question. How does the Disney Princess Line teach audiences about their own subjectivity, about their gendered, racialized bodies, through these human/animal relationships? I contend that, in keeping with the historical linkage of people of color and animals, the Disney Princess Line presents two mirrored images of the ideal woman. White princesses are shown in positions of authority over a happy servant class of animal "subjects" who labor in their stead. Princesses of color are shown alongside animal "sidekicks" who are portrayed as being of equal stature and importance and with whom they must work in tandem to achieve their aims. While Disney's definition of princesshood initially seems to be welcoming to girls of all races, it actually sorts its aspirants into different categories. Thus, while the gestures towards diversification in the Disney Princess line seems designed to allow the Disney corporation to reassure its audience that the company is inherently inclusive and progressive at heart, the text of the Disney Princess films continues to imagine what it means to be a "good girl" differently depending on race. Animal characters serve to illustrate these differing registers of "goodness," different ways of relating to the world that, the films suggest, are appropriate for different types of girls.

1 In 2009, Disney fans were buzzing with excitement over the announcement of Tiana, the first African-American character to be included in the popular Disney Princess product line. Before the film ever arrived in theaters, "Tiana-themed products were being promoted in Disney stores across the nation" and a "version of Princess Tiana [could] be found at Disneyland, ready to pose for photos" (Gehlawat 429). However, cultural critics found themselves perplexed upon the film's release, as Tiana's story in *The Princess and the Frog* was quite unlike that of any princess who came before her. In fact, Tiana spends more time as a frog over the course of the movie (fifty-seven minutes of the film's ninety-seven minute running time), than she does as a human being, let alone as a princess (Breux 405). Disney Princesses have always been famously beloved by their animal friends,¹ but never before had a princess spent so much time literally

¹ The live action princess film *Enchanted* (2007) aptly parodies this trope by having Princess Giselle enlist the help of New York's animals (rats, pigeons, flies, cockroaches) to help her clean her Robert's messy apartment.

mucking about in a swamp. Never before had a princess transformed into an animal herself.

2 The Disney Princesses provide several different kinds of traditionally feminine models for little girls to choose from as they learn different ways they might perform their gender. However, like all socially validated categories, the princess is defined against an Other, an opposite object against which a subject can be created. In the earliest Disney films, animals provided the perfect foil for the princess. They were a class of peasantry whose simplicity and devotion proved the princess's worthiness as a ruler and a role model. The princesses proved they were exemplary (human) women by demonstrating their benevolent superiority over their animal subjects. However, when the role of the Disney Princess expanded to include women of color, the line between the animal and the human seemingly grew a bit fuzzier. Rather than contrasting sharply against their fellow animals, princesses of color were often depicted as being of equal stature with their animal friends or even as having beast-like traits themselves. As such, an account of the princesses requires an intersectional approach with a perspective on how constructions of gender, race, and class intersect and dissolve in the play between the categories of the human and the animal. Cary Wolfe argues that "you can't talk about race without talking about species, simply because both categories – as history well shows – are so notoriously pliable and unstable, constantly bleeding into and out of each other," (43) that "the distinction 'human/animal' – as the history of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism well shows – is a discursive resource, not a zoological designation" (10).

3 An examination of the relationships between the various Disney Princesses and their animal companions bears this out, revealing a continuum of humanity (Weheliye 3), with white human at one end of the spectrum, animals at the other, and with non-white humans occupying an intermediate position, sharing some of the characteristics of animals and some of the characteristics of human beings. As Alexander G. Weheliye points out, the design of this range of discursive categories with regards to human/animal relations utilizes "black subjects, along with indigenous populations, the colonized, the insane, the poor, the disabled, and so on [...] as limit cases by which [the straight white] Man can demarcate himself as the universal human" (24). The princesses of color and their animal friends serve as a kind of "troubling double" (Haraway 11) against which whiteness can define itself through contrast. In other words, the

Disney Princess line² sorts its members “into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans” (Weheliye 3). As such, these depictions of princesses of color actually reinforce white hegemony by occupying the boundary that divides civilization and savagery, culture and nature. Their existence allows whiteness (and white femininity in particular) to separate itself from animality. The princesses of color might be lovely and good at heart, but they are shown to be closer to expressing their animal natures than white women are. They are therefore unable to fully occupy the performative space of ‘universal humanity’ (and unable to partake in the privileges that accrue to those who occupy that space) in the way that white women can.

4 My thesis is not intended to reify the human/animal binary by implying that to be animal-like is to be debased and unworthy of moral consideration. Rather, I am interested in looking at how the anxious denial of the animal within has been used over and over again throughout history to justify various atrocities committed against both animals and people of color. After all, as Christopher Peterson writes in *Bestial Traces: Race, Sexuality, and Animality*, just as whiteness needs an excluded Other against which it can define itself in order to exist as a useful category in the hierarchical organization of human beings, so does that which “names itself human does so precisely by suppressing the animality that conditions its emergence” (2). Thus, “although speciesism and racism are often viewed as independent ideologies, they are logically and historically enmeshed” (2).

Walt’s Girls: Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty

5 Snow White, Cinderella, and Princess Aurora (otherwise known as Sleeping Beauty) are the three oldest characters in the Disney Princess line, the ones who were introduced to the

² This essay is only concerned with the official Disney Princesses as denoted on the Disney Princess Website. Interestingly, membership in this group does not actually require that one actually be a real princess (Pocahontas, Mulan). Furthermore, there are several actual princesses in the Disney canon who are not included (Princess Eilonwy of Llyr from *The Black Cauldren* (1985), Kida Nedakh from *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (2001), Princess Giselle from *Enchanted*, Vanellope von Schweetz from *Wreck-It Ralph* (2012), and, in light of Disney’s recent acquisition of the *Star Wars* (1977) franchise, Princess Leia Organa). These omissions suggest that it is not royal blood or marriage that makes one an official Disney Princess. Rather, the decision is based on marketability. Some princesses are not individually popular, but their inclusion allows the Disney corporation to make a claim for the diversity of their stable of films. Those princesses who don’t fill a hole in the line-up or who don’t fit the patterns of representation established by the brand are excluded. For more on this, see my article “Applying for the Position of Princess: Race, Labor, and Privilege in the Disney Princess Line” in *Princess Cultures: Mediating Girls’ Imaginations and Identities* (25-44).

public during Walt Disney's lifetime. They represent the traditional definition of princesshood within the Disney universe: they are kind-hearted and gentle girls whose beauty is so legendary that it inspires love and devotion from all the peasant people and animals who behold them. These animals do the most difficult tasks for Snow White as she cleans out the dwarfs' cottage, take on the burden of Cinderella's extra chores and sew her a dress so that she can go to the ball, and attend to Princess Aurora while she is hiding out in the woods from Maleficent. The use of their labor on the part of the princess is coded as natural and inevitable. They are happy to serve.

6 The first three Disney Princess films establish a hierarchy that separates the human princess characters from their animal helpers. Humans unquestionably represent a 'higher order of being' than animals in these early films. This separation is partially achieved through the use of very different artistic styles for the animal and human characters. The human characters were drawn in a realistic style and animated through rotoscoping, or the tracing of individual frames from footage of movements performed by real actors. The animals (and even Snow White's dwarfs) are drawn in a much more playful, cartoony squash and stretch style. The sound emphasizes this separation as well. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), the animals are completely mute. The princesses occasionally talk to them in the patronizing sing-song voice one might use to talk to (or rather, at) a pet or a baby.

7 Cinderella speaks this way to her mice as well. And although we *do* see Cinderella's mice speaking to one another as they make plans to sew her ball gown, they pronounce words strangely and use an odd form of grammar. It is as though we are hearing a translated version of their mouse language. In fact, they never actually hold a conversation with Cinderella. They might speak in Cinderella's presence, but her words to them retain the peculiar feeling that they are being spoken to someone who cannot understand them (although we in the audience know they actually can). And though the animal characters sometimes attempt to put on the trappings of humanity by wearing the clothes in *Cinderella* (1950) or by working together to try and be a substitute for Aurora's dream-prince in *Sleeping Beauty*, their attempts to rise above their animal natures are only ever played for laughs.

8 The animal characters are also spatially and culturally separated from the princesses. The animals represent nature, the countryside, the wild. The princesses represent civilization, the home, the well-appointed castle. Snow White and Sleeping Beauty encounter their animal friends

only after they have been driven from their prospective palaces out into the forest, and even then, the princesses take time out to establish their inherent distance from their helpers. For example, when Snow White first encounters the various animals who will serve as her protectors and companions for the rest of the film, she demands that they help her find a suitable house to stay in, saying "But I do need a place to sleep at night. I can't sleep in the ground like you [rabbits] do, or in a tree the way you [squirrels] do, and I'm sure no [birds'] nest could possibly be big enough for me." Snow White reminds the animals and the viewer that, as a princess, she belongs indoors, not out in nature amongst the animals.

9 And while Cinderella's beloved mice and birds do live in and about the family household, their presence is seemingly unwanted. They are drawn as rural bumpkins, wearing aprons, kerchiefs, and rough spun cloth, a fact which emphasizes their connection to the natural and the unrefined as well as their place within the class system as rural laborers. Cinderella also emphasizes her distinctness from the animals with whom she shares her shores by recreating the classic scene in which the human differentiates himself from the animal: the Biblical story in which man names the animals. As Christopher Peterson writes, "In the biblical book of *Genesis*, the power of naming permits the human to establish itself as separate from and superior to the nonhuman. The Adamic act of naming authorizes humans to assert their mastery over a diverse group of species who are nonetheless catalogued under the general name of 'the animal'" (2-3). Like Adam, Cinderella grants herself the authority to name (and clothe) her animal friends, though she gives them individual pet names like Jaq and Gus instead of species names.

10 In each case, the films explain what princesses (and, by extension, the little girls to whom they are marketed) should be like by contrasting them against supposedly lesser creatures: the uncultured, the unrefined, the primitive, the provincial. Furthermore, the adoration that these animals bestow on the princesses seems to authorize the hierarchy that places human beings over and above animals. They are happy to serve the princess and so we do not question her rule over them. And, by extension, we come to accept the inevitability of her rule over the peasant classes, common folk who are themselves strongly associated with the natural world and who are traditionally depicted as closer to animals than are the nobles (Anderson 302).

Taming the Beast Within: Ariel and Belle

11 The second wave of princess films, developed under the stewardship of Michael Eisner, featured much spunkier, much more relatable princess characters than the impossibly perfect girls created by Walt Disney. And yet, it seems that the way in which these princesses embrace their fallibility necessitates an even stronger rejection of the concept of animality. In fact, these two princesses are forced into direct confrontations with beastliness, which they must either leave behind or rehabilitate in order to achieve their happy endings.

12 For example, Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) initially occupies a liminal position between humanity and animality. She is unhappy with what she perceives as the limitations of her life under the sea and so she attempts to purge herself of her fishy ways by purchasing herself a pair of legs from the sea witch Ursula. Multiple musical numbers are dedicated to laying out the two divergent worlds that Ariel must choose between: the peaceful, pristine, uncultivated world under the sea or the landlocked world where the people are. In fact, the driving force of the story is Ariel's desire to trade in her fishy existence for a place in the human world, whose markers of civilization and technology she fetishizes in the form of her collection of human artifacts. Ariel may be closer (physically and relationally) to the animals than Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora, but in her heart she desires to distance herself from her fishy origins.

13 Ariel also has animal subjects that can and do talk directly to her and are given much more of a sense of 'personhood' than Snow White's and Aurora's animal helpers or even Cinderella's mice. However, viewers should take Ariel's seemingly friendly relationship with Flounder the fish and Sebastian the crab with a grain of salt; when her desires clash with theirs, she invariably pulls rank, dragging them along in her wake into adventures above the surface that they do not want to undertake and which are dangerous to them. In this manner, Ariel's differs somewhat from the earlier princesses. While the animal friends of Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora were all too happy to help, Flounder and Sebastian often express exasperation and even frustration with the tasks that their sovereign gives them, though, in the end, they remain fond of her.

14 And yet, Ariel's disturbingly blasé attitude towards the various attempts made by the humans on land to kill and eat her animal chaperones indicates a certain lack of concern for their welfare. She is warned time and again that humans harvest from the oceans to kill and eat the

sentient beings (fish, crab, clams, oysters etcetera) over which her father, King Triton, rules. And yet, this horrific fact does not deter her from wanting to join humanity. Part of her separation from her animal side entails coming to terms with this gradual Othering of the entities that she called her friends. Jacques Derrida describes this relation to the bodies of others in “Eating Well or the Calculation of the Subject”:

I feel compelled to underscore the *sacrificial* structure of the discourses to which I am referring. I don't know if "sacrificial structure" is the most accurate expression. In any case, it is a matter of discerning a place left open, in the very structure of these discourses (which are also "cultures") for a noncriminal putting to death. Such are the executions of ingestion, incorporation, or introjection of the corpse. An operation as real as it is symbolic when the corpse is "animal" (and who can be made to believe that our cultures are carnivorous because animal proteins are irreplaceable?), a symbolic operation when the corpse is "human." (278, original emphasis)

And, indeed, as history has shown, these same rhetorical gymnastics that allow us to apply the commandment “thou shall not kill” (Derrida 279) to some kinds of life and not others is regularly extended from the discourse of animality to discourses of racial identity and biopolitics.

As Derrida, Agamben, and others have reminded us, those who fall outside the frame, because they are marked by differences of race, or species, or gender, or religion, or nationality, are always threatened with ‘a non-criminal putting to death.’ [...] One of the most powerful insights of biopolitical thought is thus to raise this uncomfortable question: if the frame is about rules and laws, about what is proper, and is not simply a matter of a line that is given by nature between those inside and those outside, then to live under biopolitics is to live in a situation in which we are all always already (potential) “animals” before the law – not just nonhuman animals according to zoological classification, but any group of living beings that is so framed. (Wolfe 10)

15 Furthermore, the animal world that Ariel so longs to escape is "given many elements which link it with disenfranchised groups in American society" (Davis 108). For example, Sebastian, the royal composer for King Triton's court and the foremost cheerleader of the virtues of life underwater, has a Caribbean accent, and his featured songs, "Under the Sea" and "Kiss the Girl," have a calypso beat. Furthermore, there are a few background animal characters played as visual gags, namely a "black fish" reminiscent of a Little Black Sambo figure and a fluke who is dubbed the "duke of soul" and who closely resembles jazz musician Duke Ellington, in the "Under the Sea" number.

16 These fish of color demonstrate “the conflation of racialization with mere biological life as opposed to human life” which “enables white subjects to ‘see’ themselves as transcending

racialization due to their full embodiment of this particular genre of the human while responding apathetically to nonwhite subjects as bearers of ontological cum biological lack” (Weheliye 27). In other words, the world that Ariel longs to leave is not just the undersea world or the animal world. It is the non-white world. Eric’s kingdom is your typical white fairy tale setting, complete with a European style castle and a French chef.

17 If Ariel is desperate to escape from the world of the beasts under the sea then *Beauty and the Beast*’s Belle (1991) is tasked with civilizing a beastly prince and returning him to his (white) humanity. When her father is captured by the imposing Beast, Belle bravely sacrifices her own freedom to take his place. While trapped in his castle, Belle becomes familiar with the curse that has condemned all of its residents to be trapped in inhuman bodies. Her job is to tame the Beast, turning him into an object worthy of love and therefore enabling the breaking of the curse (Craven). This involves Belle teaching the Beast about proper, high society white coded behaviors such as polite dinner manners and ballroom dancing.

18 As Kay Anderson describes in “‘The Beast Within’: Race, Humanity, and Animality,” racialized discourse often refers to people of color as “beastly”: ruled by their passions and unable to control their violent rages. We see these constructions regularly in news account about people of color such as those surrounding the recent riots in Ferguson, Missouri (Terkel) and Baltimore, Maryland (Gordon) over the killings of unarmed young black men by police in which “hardly a month goes by without a judge or journalist proclaiming that someone ‘lives like an animal’ or, worse, has become one through their behaviour” (Anderson 302). Such rhetoric is a part of the

discursive production of social groups identified for their base drives, proximity to “nature”, infantilism, eroticism, and absence of civilised manners. Human beings “in the raw” supposedly motivated in their conduct by naked impulse rather than rational deliberation... either beyond, or potentially improved by, the cultivation of self-government. So too have such groups been variously identified with the discursive spaces of “wild” nature (as distinct from that proud monument of “civilization” known as the city or, alternatively, those counterpoint spaces like “ghettoes” within the city’s “dark side”). (302)

Thus Belle’s intervention into the Beast’s beastliness can also be read as a restoration of the Beast’s whiteness (and therefore, the restoration of his suitability as a romantic partner for Belle).

Jasmine, Pocahontas, Mulan, and Tiana: The Princesses of Color

19 Disney's *Aladdin* (1992) was Disney's first attempt at broadening the role of the princess to include non-white characters. It also reimagines the relationship between its principal characters and their animal friends. In keeping with the racialized logic of the films of the past, Jasmine and Aladdin are depicted as being of equal status with animals, not as their betters or their masters. In this way, a modicum of difference divides Jasmine from Snow White, Cinderella, Aurora, Ariel, and Belle. This difference, as we shall see, will be exaggerated in *Pocahontas* (1995) and *Mulan* (1998) and will reach its greatest height in *The Princess and the Frog* (2009).

20 While previous princesses held themselves above their animal helpers, Jasmine and Aladdin are quite intimate with the animals in their lives, as though the gap between racialized others and animals is smaller than the one between animals and whites. Firstly, all of the major characters, Aladdin, Jasmine, and Jafar, are referred to as various types of animals in the dialogue of the film. Aladdin is constantly called a "street rat" by the palace guards, and, during her foray into the market place, Jasmine is dubbed a "street mouse." Jafar describes Jasmine as a "pussy cat," and he is in turn cursed by Aladdin as a "snake." Secondly, the principal characters of *Aladdin* have a much more egalitarian relationship with their animal friends like the monkey Abu than do the previous stars of Disney Princess movies. These animal partners do not fawningly obey their human companions but rather 'talk back' to them as equals. They have their own desires and interests which sometimes are not in alignment with those of Aladdin and Jasmine.

21 Pocahontas, Mulan, and Tiana, all also have close bonds of friendship with the animals they know. Readers might be forgiven for not knowing that Pocahontas and Mulan are even a part of the Disney Princess line. As Peggy Orenstein notices, they are often excluded from images that feature the rest of the lineup posing together. Nevertheless, the Disney Princess website lists Pocahontas and Mulan as official members of the royal group (though neither one actually is a princess in the traditional sense of the word: Pocahontas is the daughter of a Native American chief and Mulan becomes the wife of a general in the Emperor's army, not a prince).

22 In a move that will not surprise any reader who is familiar with the stereotypes that surround popular depictions of Native American characters, Pocahontas constantly reminds both

John Smith and the viewer that, as a Native woman, she has an uncannily intimate relationship with the natural world. Pocahontas has an animality about her that is unique in the princess line. Her buckskin dress marks her as a child of nature and her graceful style of movement as she creeps through the forest to watch John without his knowledge resembles that of a stalking cat. She also has two close animal friends who follow her wherever she goes, Flick the hummingbird and Meeko the raccoon, and their relationship is far more egalitarian than that of Cinderella and her mice and birds or Snow White and her forest friends. Like Abu and Iago in *Aladdin*, Flit and Meeko make mischief in Pocahontas's life. They live together with her rather than working under her. Her theme song, "Colors of the Wind," in which she evokes her connection to the wolf, the grinning bobcat, the heron, and the otter (who she calls "my friends"), emphasizes this connection. She even brings John to see a family of bears, implying to him that, to her, animals and people are equally deserving of respect and even familial love. In the case of Pocahontas's mentor (and judging by her title, her relation?), Grandmother Willow, they are perhaps deserving of an even greater degree of respect and deference than are humans. These egalitarian relationships are in direct contrast with the way in which the film's villain, Governor Ratcliffe, treats his companion animal, a pug named Percy. Percy may be pampered, but he is most definitely not his owner's equal. He is a pet, treated more like a prized possession than a friend. It is not surprising when this animal, who is originally antagonistic towards Meeko and Flit, defects to join up with Pocahontas and her friends, as they afford him a greater degree of freedom and respect.

23 *Mulan* also features egalitarian (at times antagonistic) relationships between protagonists of color and their animal friends. Mulan is not worshiped and adored by her animal companions. They are her friends and family. For example, although Mulan does foist her daily chores off on the family dog in the first scene of the film, she also calls that dog "Little Brother," implying a familiarity and a love between them based on equality and mutual respect, not servitude. Even Mulan's trusty steed cannot be counted on to work for her silently and meekly. He, too, is more of a friend than a possession, and he is bold enough to laugh at Mulan's attempts to adopt a masculine drag persona so she can serve in the army. And of course, Mulan's most boisterous, most rebellious companion, is the dragon, Mushu, who is voiced by African American comedian Eddie Murphy and who anachronistically "speaks with a cadence and vocabulary that the U. S.

mainstream society associates with twenty-first century African Americans" (King, Lugo-Lugo, and Bloodsworth-Lugo 100). Mushu often acts as Mulan's superior; as her family's guardian spirit he sets himself up to be both her moral guide and her drag king coach. Interestingly, Mushu seems to realize that his relationship with Mulan is somewhat different from the ones that have existed between earlier Disney princesses and their animal friends. In one scene, when Mushu wakes Mulan up for her early morning training, he sarcastically calls her "Sleeping Beauty," as if to highlight the distance between Mulan's princesshood and that of her filmic ancestors.

24 While *Mulan's* heroine is marked as different from previous depictions of white princesses by her closeness with animals, the villains of the piece are also defined according to their animalistic, racialized identities. *Mulan* is a story about a conflict between two peoples, the enlightened Hans and the evil Huns. One of the ways that the film ensures our identification with the Hans is by depicting the Huns as little better than wild animals:

To empathize with the Hans, the dominant Chinese race, the audience must be made to reject the Other – the Hun invaders. The polarization of race manifests itself in the Huns' gray skin tone and in the Hans' fairer skin tone. Disney accomplishes this further by rendering Shan-Yu and his followers as animalistic, predatory barbarians. With fingers like hawk's talons, the steep forehead of a gorilla, eyes and eyebrows squashed together, and two pointed snake fangs, Shan-Yu is, arguably, simian. He hangs upside down like an ape; he scales the Great Wall and climbs trees; he sniffs at the doll which his falcon brings back from its scouting. With his superhuman strength, he bursts out of snow that annihilates his entire army except his closest comrades. His henchmen subsequently penetrate the palace hidden inside the dancing dragon, a Chinese Trojan Horse in mockery of the emperor's symbol. (Parekh 162)

In this way, the film sets up a sort of sliding scale of animality for racial Others that further complicates the model set up in *Aladdin* and *Pocahontas*. Mulan and the Hans are not white and so they quaintly identify with animal spirits and allow their animal friends to back talk them and interact with them as equals. But the evil Huns are even worse. Their race is so barbaric, and evolutionarily underdeveloped that they have become animal-like themselves.

25 In each of these examples, the contrast between how white princesses and princesses of color interact with their animal friends creates two separate models of how one relates to the world (or perhaps, how the world relates to you). The racial identity of the princesses determines whether they are treated with deference and awe or thrown into a joyful but chaotic scramble.

And for no movie is this more true than *The Princess and the Frog*, a film in which all of the associations between animality and race come together in the most literal way.

26 The figuration of African Americans as frogs has a long history in American animation (including animation produced by the Disney corporation). Many animation studios took to creating froggy caricatures for the voices of African-American jazz musicians in musical shorts because, according to one former studio animator, their large mouths made them "suitable animals to depict as African Americans" (Lehman 39). Ub Iwerks, an animator who intermittently worked for Disney during his career, created one of these jazzy frogs with his *Flip the Frog* series from the 1930s while MGM produced froggy versions of Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Thomas "Fats" Waller, Louis Armstrong, and Ethel Waters throughout the 1930s and 1940s (Maltin).

27 Thus, it struck many as unfortunate that Disney's first ever African American princess would spend the majority of her movie saddled with a froggy body. Tiana is transformed into a frog because she dares to occupy a princessly position by kissing Prince Naveen before she has the proper credentials (which are depicted in her friend Charlotte's story book as beauty, wealth, and whiteness). As a result, she and Naveen are forced to flee to the Louisiana bayou. There they meet their animal companions, Louie the alligator and Ray the lightning bug, who help them on their journey, as well as the black voodoo priestess Mama Odie, who "lives deep in the bayou in a boat on top of a tree, and receives her voodoo wisdom (and walking assistance) from the living plant and animal community surrounding her" (Terry 478). Mama Odie has an affinity with the animal world that goes far beyond that of the white folks who live in the city. It is in the bayou, not in a church, that Tiana and Prince Naveen are finally married by Mama Odie, and, at the conclusion of the film, Tiana's restaurant functions as a borderland space where white humans, black humans, and animals alike can enjoy gumbo and jazz music. While she may end up as a princess in the end, her court is quite unlike those of the white princesses who came before her. Her wild "kingdom" provides a stark contrast to the fairy tale castles occupied by Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty.

Conclusion

28 The Disney Princess line purports to encourage little princesses of all races and creeds to

live out their fairy tale dreams. But as my analysis has shown, the diverse representations of princesshood found within the franchise actually work to erect a barrier (or rather, use the labor of princesses of color to build and maintain a barrier) that separates white women from women of color, thereby strengthening racialized, gendered divisions instead of breaking them down. The drawn bodies of Jasmine, Pocahontas, Mulan, and Tiana serve as foils to the traditional, white princesses, Snow White, Cinderella, Aurora, and even to the spunky, feisty royals, Ariel, and Belle. The franchise invites girls of color to try their luck at adopting a princessly role only to insist that *their* princesshood be different from the one experienced by white girls. Princesses of color are expected to be more rugged, more earthy, and less cultured and refined than their white counterparts due to their greater degree of animality, their greater kinship to the beast within.

29 Since *The Princess and the Frog*'s debut in year, three more official Disney Princess films have been introduced, all of which feature white protagonists: *Tangled* (2010), *Brave* (2012), and *Frozen* (2013). Although these films deserve more space than I can give them here, I do think it is important to briefly situate them in terms of the structures of race, femininity, and animality outlined above.

30 *Tangled*'s Rapunzel has a chameleon friend named Pascal with whom she is very close. However, the film implies that she is forced to have animals as friends because Mother Gothel has never allowed her to meet any another human beings. Anna and Elsa of *Frozen* do not really interact with animals very much although the trolls in that film serve as racialized animalistic not-quite-humans against which the royals of Arendelle can be compared. And finally, *Brave*'s Merida, much like Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, must reject the beast within by curing her mother, who has been transformed into a bear. Although these films deserve to be celebrated for the ways that they subvert many of the gendered tropes of the Disney Princess line, the racialized tropes I describe above are still firmly in place. These princesses might have more freedom than their forebearers, but they are still not allowed to embrace their wild side.

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