

From Mouse *The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* to Mermaid

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EDITORS

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For the children in our lives
who showed us Disney again
(and again and again):

Miranda, Meredith, Will, Duncan, Bethan, Danny, and Willow

definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science)" (1986, 108-11). The definitions in this essay are my own.

2. SF has become the standard abbreviation for science fiction within academic discussions of the genre, partly because it can also be made to stand for such related terms as *speculative fiction* and *science fantasy*. *Sci-fi*, common in the popular media, is often considered to have a pejorative connotation.

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The Curse of Masculinity

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*

Susan Jeffords

The only real addition Ronald Reagan made to Richard Nixon's agenda for the 1980s was a focus on the family and the moral values that, for those on the far right, defined it. But while Reagan was able to keep the disparate and potentially contradictory interests in a hard-boiled militarism and a warm-hearted familialism in check, largely through the force of his personal image, George Bush could not manage the same feat. The Republican ticket for 1988 revealed the divisions between these elements of the right, as Bush campaigned on his experience as vice president, as former CIA chief, as former U.S. ambassador, and as personal friend of foreign leaders, while Dan Quayle campaigned on his defense of family values and moral principles. This evidence of a splintering of the conservative movement was supported by other divisions, particularly the "gender gap," as Republican women began to become more vocal about their oppositional stances on abortion and women's rights in the workforce. But with the economy declining, the national debt skyrocketing, and the militaristic reason for many such expenses disappearing, the Reagan emphasis on family seemed to provide the only secure legacy of the Reagan ideology. At the same time, it provided a popular and facile site for retaining a sense of American superiority in the face of Japanese and European economic competition.

In such a context, it would seem quite logical that the hard-edged masculinity that had been so closely affiliated with the foreign policy angles of the Reagan era would now shift toward domestic policies, emphasizing the family and personal values over market achievements. With a good deal of bravado, these new male heroes would thumb their noses at an economic superiority that they did not have and return to the families they had neglected before. Leonard Reitman's 1990 film, *Kindergarten Cop*, for example, starring one of the 1980s' most muscular and hardened heroes, Arnold Schwarzenegger, shows how the transition to this new masculine heroism was to be sketched out.

At the beginning of the film, John Kimball is the '80s man, the lethal

weapon *par excellence*. He is a tough, unshaved, brutal, determined police officer who holds the single-minded goal of imprisoning Cullen Crisp, an expert drug dealer and murderer who is backed up by his evil, overprotective single mother. When legal police procedures prevent his partner from detaining the only witness to Crisp's crime, Kimball chases after her on his own, breaking down doors, blowing away furniture with a special-make shotgun, and brutalizing anyone who comes between him and his witness. For Kimball, as for all '80s action-adventure heroes, the legal system is only an impediment to getting things done and putting criminals away. In the mold of Martin Riggs or Dirty Harry, Kimball is a loner, a single-minded law officer who writes the rules as he goes along, a tough guy who needs no family or partners, and a brutal, violent, and unfeeling man. He is, in other words, the typical '80s action hero.

But by the end of the film, Kimball has given up being a police officer in favor of teaching kindergarten. He has broken through his emotional barriers to tell Joyce, another teacher, that he doesn't want to lose her or her son, Dominic. He feels guilty when he punches an abusive father and promises from now on to let the law punish such men. His life is most threatened, not by another super-macho, special combat male enemy (like Mr. Joshua in *Lethal Weapon*), but by a determined mother who is out to revenge the death of her son. And his life is saved, not by a fancy weapon or an effective body blow, but by his partner, a short woman with a baseball bat. What happened to turn that relentless, law-making, brutalizing cop into a nurturing, playful, and loving kindergarten teacher?

It takes only one word: Family. John Kimball, the cop, had a wife and child, but his wife left him many years ago and has since remarried a "nice man" who now raises Kimball's son. One of the reasons Kimball devotes his life to police work is simply that he has no other life to go to. He has, audiences are invited to psychologize, used the violence and confrontation of his job to block out the pain he feels about the loss of his family. It is only when he is reintroduced to children (who are coincidentally about the age of his son when they were separated), that he begins to remember this pain and realize how the loss has affected his life. When his police assignment invites him not only to have contact with another mother and son but to guard and protect them from the sadistic drug-dealing Crisp, Kimball's lost-family emotions are given full play, and he learns that he does not want to lose yet another opportunity to have a family. Consequently, when all the bad guys are caught and Kimball's battle wounds have begun to heal, he returns, not to the police station to tag yet another criminal, but to his newly found family and the life of a full-time father, both as parent and as kindergarten

teacher. The message? The emotionally whole and physically healed man of the '80s wants nothing more than to be a father, not a warrior/cop, after all.

Kindergarten Cop anticipates the endings of many 1991 films that are resolved through a man's return to his family. When the character played by Billy Crystal in *City Slickers* finds himself on a cattle ranch and discovers the meaning of life, the "one thing" he learns is that he must return to his family, accompanied by his own "child," a calf that he birthed on the trail and subsequently saved from the slaughterhouse. Michael Keaton's character in *One Good Cop* is excused for the crime of theft that he committed and welcomed back onto the police force because he took the money in order to provide a house for his family. Steve Brooks (Steve Perry/Ellen Barkin) gains a pardon for his treatment of women and entrance into heaven when s/he gives birth to a daughter in *Switch*. And even though the Terminator "dies" in *Terminator 2*, it does so to insure the survival of its new family, Sarah and John Connor. In these films, families provide both the motivation for and the resolution of changing masculine heroisms.

In addition to laying the outline for the male transformation of the '90s, *Kindergarten Cop* identifies how the issues of manhood are to be addressed and defined in the next decade. One of the clearest messages to come out of *Kindergarten Cop* is that the tough, hard-driving, violent, and individualistic man of the '80s is not like that by choice. Kimball was, like the police officer of *One Good Cop*, the radio announcer of *The Fisher King*, the lawyer of *Regarding Henry*, or even the machine-programmed Terminator, trying to do his job, and doing it the way the job had been defined by a social-climbing, crime-conscious, techno-consumer society. The problem all these men confront in their narratives is that they did their jobs too well, at the expense of their relationships with their families. Spending so much time tracking criminals and making money left little time for having, let alone raising, children or meeting, let alone relating to, women. And, as *Kindergarten Cop* makes so clear, while these men were doing their jobs, they were unhappy, lonely, and often in pain.

Retroactively, the men of the '80s were being given feelings, feelings that were, presumably, hidden behind their confrontational violence. While '80s action-adventure films gloried in spectacular scenes of destruction, '90s films are telling audiences that these men were actually being self-destructive. At the cost of their personal and family lives, '80s heroes were rescuing armies, corporations, and ancient artifacts. Now, they're out to save themselves.

But didn't they bring all this loneliness and suffering on themselves? Were *they* not the ones who picked up the guns and went for the high-powered

jobs? Were *they* not the ones who spent time at the office (or firing range) instead of at home? According to these films, not exactly. Nineties films had already carved out a space for their heroes that allowed them always to be reacting to some outside force rather than acting from their own internal needs for violence or action (Reagan was always "defending" the U.S. against Soviet aggression). In each case, it was their jobs, their nations, or their friends who made it necessary to enter into these violent confrontations. It was not, these films conclude, the wishes of the men themselves.

But many '90s films go even farther than this, suggesting that it wasn't just the jobs or social obligations that brought these men to betray their own feelings and families. It was, in an odd way, their very bodies themselves, those heroic exteriors that made it possible for them to do what other people could not. One of the plot features of a number of '90s films is a discovery by the male lead that his body has failed him in some way, whether through wounds, disease, or programming. The body that he thought was "his," the body he had been taught to value as fulfilling some version of a masculine heroic ideal—suddenly that body became transformed into a separate entity that was betraying the true internal feelings of the man it contained. *Robocop 2* led the way here in 1990 by showing the distress brought about in its hero's life by the conflicts between Robocop's bullet-proof exterior and his memories of his family. The indestructible body that was to make Robocop invincible led not to a machine-like insensitivity but to deep pain and isolation at the loss of love. *Robocop* makes clear that behind the tough bodies of these male heroes lies, not cheap insensitivity and lusty brutality, but a caring, troubled, and suffering individual. But what 1991 films provide that *Robocop* did not is a happy ending, where the betrayed body is transformed, either back to its "original" loving owner, or into a body that is now in tune with the internal goodness that the film's narrative has revealed.

And while many 1991 films by black male directors about black men's lives emphasize families and masculinities as well—John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood*, Matty Rich's *Straight Out of Brooklyn*, Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever*—the thematics of internalization and bodily betrayal are not present as they are in Hollywood films about white male leads, largely because the action-adventure heroism of the '80s was never meant to figure black men's bodies in the first place.¹ While, for example, Martin Riggs (Mel Gibson) is the "lethal weapon" in the films named for his body, Roger Murtaugh's body (Danny Glover) is never depicted as "lethal" at all. The audience's first shot of him is in a bathtub, surrounded by his loving family, all of whom tell him he looks old. And Riggs has to insist that Murtaugh shoot, not to maim, but to kill, since the enemies you maim always come back to haunt you. Under

Riggs's tutelage, Murtaugh is able, at the end of *Lethal Weapon 2*, to fire point blank and kill the chief enemy of the film, Argen Rudd, a South African diplomat whose immunity, Murtaugh declares, has just been "revoked." The safe, nonlethal, aging image of an African-American police officer who kills only when provoked by true evil is an appealing screen character for white mainstream audiences who can be assured that assimilated black men will enforce rather than challenge U.S. systems. Murtaugh does not have to "discover" his feelings for or through a family, since he has one intact at the beginning of the film. His job, or more pointedly, his masculinity, has not taken him away from his family, largely because, such films imply, he has not been out saving countries, artifacts, or corporations. He has not, in other words, been carrying the white man's burden, or, by implication, his masculinity.

There is, consequently, a dangerous racial subtext to all this Hollywood body shifting and internal reform. As has historically been the case in dominant U.S. cultures, masculinity is defined in and through the white male body and against the racially marked body. Action films of the '80s reinforce these assumptions in their characterizations of heroism, individualism, and bodily integrity as centered in the white body. And though '90s films repudiate many of the characteristics of that body—its violence, its isolation, its lack of emotion, and its presence—they do not challenge the whiteness of that body, nor the "special" figuration that body demands. If, these films suggest, there is a body that has been betrayed, victimized, burdened by the society that surrounds it, it is not the body of color, the body that has been historically marked by the continuous betrayals of a social, political, and cultural system that has marginalized and abused it. It is, instead, the body of the white man who is suffering because he has been unloved.

No one, certainly, seems to have been less loved than the hero of the Walt Disney Studio's 1991 film, *Beauty and the Beast*, bringing to the screen an updated version of Marie de Beaumont's eighteenth-century tale. While animated film versions of classic fairy tales have been a Disney staple for decades (*Snow White* [1937] and *Cinderella* [1950], for example), the Disney corporation has also had success in recent years with animated features that develop new characters, such as *The Rescuers Down Under* (1990). But in a time when children's animated features are one of the sure markets of the film and, more pointedly, the home video industry, why would Disney return to a 250-year-old fairy tale? At least part of the answer lies in the fact that this tale helps to forward the image of unloved and unhappy white men who need kindness and affection, rather than criticism and reform, in order to become their "true" selves again.

In this context, it's worth looking at the changes Disney made to the original "Beauty and the Beast" story. Briefly, in its earlier versions, the beautiful daughter of the merchant is asked to take her father's place as the prisoner of a horrible Beast as punishment for the father plucking a rose from the Beast's garden. Her every whim satisfied at the Beast's enchanted castle, Beauty is soon more impressed by the Beast's generosity, kindness, and intelligence than by his animalistic appearance, though she continues to refuse his nightly request to marry him. When Beauty discovers that her father is ill, the Beast allows her to return home under the provision that she will return voluntarily in a specified time. When Beauty fails to return, she learns of the Beast's suffering through a dream (or enchanted mirror) and returns to the castle, only to find him (and there's never any question that the Beast is male) dying. Beauty declares her love and agrees to marry the Beast, only to find that the Beast has disappeared and a handsome prince has taken his place. The prince then explains that a wicked fairy cast a spell over him that could be released only when a beautiful woman would love him for himself and agree to marry him (equally, there is never any question in any of the stories that the spell could have been broken by the open-hearted affection and love of a man, Beauty's father, for example). The prince is restored to his wealth and power, and Beauty lives happily ever after.

The Disney version follows much the same plot, with several key differences. First, and most importantly for the subject of masculinity, the enchanted curse is altered. In none of the other versions of the story that I read was the curse explained anywhere except at the end, when Beauty has already vowed her love for the Beast. In some stories, the Beast is even forbidden to tell of the curse before it is broken. And while the Disney version adheres to this plot pattern in keeping the Beast's enchanted state from Beauty, it doesn't hesitate to tell the audience what's at stake in this picture. As the opening scenes of the film explain, a selfish young prince refuses shelter to an old beggar woman. An enchantress in disguise, the woman condemns him for his selfishness: "I have seen that there is no love in your heart. . . . That makes you no better than a beast—and so you shall *become* a beast!" And, she goes on to explain, "The only way to break [the spell] is to love another person and earn that person's love in return" (Singer 1992, 2–3). To heighten the tension of the narrative, she adds that he must do so before his twenty-first birthday, after which time he will remain a beast forever.

There are several important consequences of this change. Most important, it is to make this movie really the story of the Beast, and not of

Beauty—or Belle, as she is called in the Disney movie—at all. The older tales only introduce the Beast well into the story, when the father has trespassed upon the Beast's property, and he is only seen then *as* a Beast, as a horrible and frightening creature who endangers those around him. The story throughout is Beauty's, telling of her goodness and kindness, her love for and devotion to her father, and her ability to transform through her love even the most miserable of circumstances. In contrast, Belle's equal kindness and love for her father are made secondary to the young prince's dilemma. Will he learn to love someone before his twenty-first birthday? How can someone love him when all are frightened by the sight of him? Who will break the spell?

Belle is less the focus of the narrative here—will she ever see her father again? will she escape the Beast's castle? will she remain good in the face of such horror?—than she is the mechanism for solving the Beast's "dilemma." And in case the audience doesn't understand this narrative setup from the plot arrangement, some of the most appealing characters in the film offer this information straightforwardly. For here's another change. While the older versions isolate the Beast in his castle, having all of Beauty's needs filled by enchanted magic, the Disney tale adds its own trademark to the tale—inanimate objects come to life, the objects that have intrigued audiences since *Snow White's* talking mirror (1937), *Cinderella's* dazzling pumpkin (1950), and *Fantasia's* dancing brooms (1940). In the updated *Beauty and the Beast*, all of the prince's servants are sharing in his plight, having been turned themselves into household objects: clocks, candelabras, teacups, pots, feather dusters, and wardrobes. Not only then are audiences to be concerned about the Beast's impending twenty-first birthday, but about the fate of all of those innocent servants as well. Even if the Beast seems to deserve his punishment for his selfishness, must all these people be condemned to lives of confinement as well? Consequently, when they remark, after first seeing Belle, that "Maybe, just maybe, the Beast could make Belle fall in love with him. And if he did the spell would finally be broken," audiences are to share these endearing and kind objects' dreams for a possible return to humanity (Singer 1992, 25).

There is another important change in the curse itself. While the older tales condemn the prince to live as a Beast until someone can see past his exterior ugliness to his interior beauty, the Disney curse is that the prince must also learn to love someone else. He must, in other words, learn to change if he wishes to live in human society again. This change in the curse reinforces the plot focus on the prince and away from Belle, since audiences

are now anxiously awaiting his changes as well as her insights. Will he be able to overcome his beastly temper and terrorizing attitude in order to learn to love?

This focus on the Beast helps to construct one of the key emphases of this 1991 *Beauty*, and that is the Beast's victimization. In the earlier versions, for instance, the Beast is invariably in command of the enchanted powers of the castle, using them to gratify Beauty's desires and make her comfortable in the castle. In one version, for example, the Beast anticipates all of Beauty's wishes, supplying magical trunks laden with gifts for her family, as well as the books and musical instruments that she enjoys. But for the Disney writers, the Beast is as much a prisoner in his castle as is Belle. He has no special powers, and the only services he can provide for her are at the hands—or the teapots—of the equally enchanted and helpless servants who surround him.

While the earlier Beasts are men who were often good but unfairly cursed by an evil fairy, it would seem that this Beast might well deserve his punishment, and therefore be legitimately punished through the curse. But the wording of the opening description of the prince is important here: "He had grown up with everything he desired, yet his heart remained cold. He was selfish, spoiled, and unkind. Yet because he was the prince, no one dared say no to him. No one dared try to teach him a lesson" (Singer 1992, 1). As an anticipated character shift would require, the prince was not innately selfish, but had been made that way, audiences can only surmise, through bad parenting. The anonymous "no one" 's who failed to teach him any differently seem finally to be more at fault for his behavior than does the prince himself. In this scenario, he simply didn't know any better. And while a man might be blamed for being knowingly cruel, can audiences fault this young man for having "no one" to teach him anything different?

Again, enter Belle to solve the Beast's problem. She becomes that absent "some one" who could, and will now, save him from the curse, for she will teach him all he needs to know in order to return to—or perhaps enter for the first time—humanity. For another of the key differences between the earlier and the Disney tale is that Belle is consistently cast as the Beast's teacher, positioning him again as powerless, awaiting her decisions to accept and love him: "He didn't know how to eat with a fork and knife, so she taught him. He didn't know how to read, so she read to him. She taught him how to feed birds and how to play in the snow" (Singer 1992, 48). One of the key romantic scenes of the earlier tales is when the Beast finally feels comfortable enough with Beauty to ask her to dance. In this scene, she is

impressed with his grace as a dancer and begins to forget about his beastliness and think of him as human:

Firmly, lightly, the creature danced with her, gently guiding her across the balcony. Beauty was astonished at the skill of his movement, the strength of his grasp and tenderness of his touch. She closed her eyes and released herself. Her heart pounded, and she was filled with an inexpressible happiness. (Apy 1980, 44)

But in the Disney *Beauty*, the Beast took Belle in his arms and "whirled her into a dance position. He lifted his huge, hairy foot and took the first step—and practically mashed her toes." Belle's reaction to the "clumsy" Beast typifies the shifts in their relationship in this story: "She gave him a warm smile and did what she had been doing for the last few days—she taught him" (Singer 1992, 49).

Why does this matter? Because in contrast to the commanding, sophisticated, and intelligent Beasts that frequent the other tales and that finally make them so deserving of Beauty's love, this Beast seems childish, blustering, "clumsy," petulant, and untutored. As with his upbringing and his initial acquisition of his selfish personality, the Beast does not have to take responsibility for his behavior. It is the work of other people, especially women, to turn this childish Beast into a loving man. This message is clear: if the Beast has not changed before, it is not his fault, but that of those around him who failed to show him otherwise.

This less-than-attractive character of the Beast explains one of the other Disney changes to the tale—the addition of the arrogant and beautiful Gaston, Belle's suitor. While Beauty's beauty and goodness made her the object of other men's affections in the earlier tales, none played as prominent a role in the plot development as Gaston. From the second scene, where he declares that Belle "is the lucky girl I'm going to marry" (Singer 1992, 6), to the climactic scene where he stabs the Beast with what seems to be a death blow, Gaston figures throughout the film as an antagonist in the clearest sense of the term. He thwarts all of Belle's desires: he tries to force her to marry him, arranges to have her father locked away in an insane asylum, and rallies the village to kill the Beast. He is, clearly, the external social version of the prince's flaw. At large in the world, Gaston seeks to gratify only his own interests and epitomizes the quality of selfishness.

But unlike the Beast, he is beautiful, as Gaston is the first to inform the audience. Belle's credential as heroine is early logged in when she is the only one of the town's single women not to swoon over Gaston. With his cleft

chin, broad shoulders, brawny chest, wavy hair, and towering height, Gaston fulfills the stereotyped image of male beauty, the hard body that populated 1980s films. And with his pastimes of hunting, drinking, and male bonding, he fulfills a stereotyped image of masculinity as well. Gaston does not simply look the part of the hyper-masculine male, he holds all the opinions that are supposed to go along with it. Not only does he decide to marry Belle without asking her opinion, he paints this picture of their wedded bliss: "A rustic hunting lodge. My latest kill roasting on the fire. And my little wife massaging my feet while her little ones play on the floor—six or seven of them" (Singer 1992, 19). He operates through terror and bullying, intimidating those who do not succumb to his beauty. And, in his condemning moment of the film, he tells Belle that "it's not right for a girl to read" (Singer 1992, 7). But while Gaston serves both as comic relief and plot motivator, he functions as well to contrast to the Beast. Only the purely and self-consciously self-centered Gaston could possibly make the petulant and childish Beast appear to be an appealing choice. Once the character of the dignified and worldly Beast was abandoned in favor of Disney's spoiled brat, Belle's choice to love the Beast could only be made reasonable and effective by visualizing a worse man she could have chosen.

The film admires Belle for refusing Gaston's offers and resisting his scenario. But she is, as the audience's introduction to her reveals, an exception in her town. In fact, in one of the longest production numbers of the film—requiring a cast of voices, elaborate animation, and complex movement—the townspeople call her "strange" and not "normal," principally because she spends all of her time reading. While the earlier Beautys were also avid readers, the Disney film marks Belle's interest as more of a social than a character feature, using it to distinguish Belle from the rest of the townspeople, marking her as better and less provincial than they.

And here's the clue that Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is more than just the "don't judge a book by its cover" morality play that characterized so many of its predecessors. For Belle is, for all intents and purposes, a Disney Feminist. And Gaston is a Male Chauvinist Pig, the kind that would turn the women of any primetime talkshow audience into beasts themselves. And the Beast—well, where does this new gender scenario leave the Beast?

The Beast is The New Man, the one who can transform himself from the hardened, muscle-bound, domineering man of the '80s into the considerate, loving, and self-sacrificing man of the '90s. The Beast's external appearance is here more than a horrific guise that repels pretty women, but instead a *burden*, one that he must carry until he is set free, free to be the man he truly can be. The body that is strong (he fights off a dozen snarling wolves),

protective (he shelters Belle from their attack), imposing (he frightens Belle's father), domineering (he growls every order he gives), and overpowering (he is even bigger than Gaston)—this body is not, as it was for Rambo, a gift but a curse. It is as if, the Beast's story might suggest, masculinity has been betrayed by its own cultural imagery: what men thought they were supposed to be—strong, protective, powerful, commanding—has somehow backfired and become their own evil curse.

But whose fault is this? Presumably, men brought this curse on themselves by acting so self-centeredly and deriving pleasure from the power it gave them. But those opening descriptions of the prince put a halt to such an easy interpretation. For men, like the prince, were only doing what they had been taught. If no one stopped them from terrorizing the household, how were they to know that they should act any differently? With the film's emphasis on teaching, it's clear that such ugly and repulsive men are not *really* to be shunned; they're to be nurtured until their "true" goodness arises. For as the ever-reliable servants tell Belle, "the master's really not so bad once you get to know him" (Singer 1992, 35); this, from the people he has probably been terrorizing during all those selfish years. To reinforce this nurturing theme, the Beast's curse ends at age twenty-one, implicitly apologizing for all men over twenty-one who have remained Beasts, because they simply were not educated properly in time.

And why should audiences care at all about this transformation? Because, like the helpless servants who are equally suffering from the enchantress's curse, audiences are to believe that they too are implicated in this burden of hyper-masculinity, captured, like it, in a false and confining objectification that can only be reversed when the *Beast* is released from his enchantment. In other words, this plot suggests, no one can be free until men are released from the curse of living under the burdens of traditional masculinities.

While *Kindergarten Cop* showed that men could change and that they were really loving and kind beneath those brutal exteriors, *Beauty and the Beast* offered the reasons for men's aggressive behaviors and suggested that they should not only be forgiven but helped along toward revealing their "true" inner selves. The Disney film, like so many of its 1991 companions, pinpointed men's problems in the very place that their successes had been located earlier—in the muscular bodies that made them heroes. But for the Beast and his friends, those bodies are not resources but burdens, the exterior images that they must overcome in order to be happy. And the weight of this task lies less with the men themselves than with those who must learn to look past the hard body to the loving interior (Robocop is more than a machine; John Kimball is not just a cop; the Terminator is not a killer; and

so on) in order to achieve their own real happiness. Without changing direction, only course, these films continue to suggest, as did the films throughout the '80s, that the happiness and well-being of society as a whole depends upon the condition of these men, whether that happiness be defined as national security, social justice, or familial bliss. True to these earlier narratives of masculinity, the quality and continuity of *everyone's* life finally depends upon these white men.

Notes

1. As Donald Bogle states in his study of blacks in U.S. films (1990), the heyday of black male action-adventure heroes was in the early 1970s, with the appearance of films such as *Shaft* (Gordon Parks, Sr., 1971) and *Superfly* (Gordon Parks, Jr., 1972), films that were made largely for black audiences. A 1992 film, *Passenger 57*, starring Wesley Snipes, seems to be challenging the black/white buddy films in its presentation of a black male as a single action hero.

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III.

Erasures/Disney Film as Identity Politics