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## Dashing Heroes

The heroes of Disney's animated features are a varied lot: they range from shy, bookish sorts, to soldiers, to street-smart thieves who reform. Most function alone (or alongside a female romantic interest), but a small number find themselves teaming up – sometimes with the greatest reluctance – with another hero for whom, at least initially, they feel rivalry and jealousy. What all have in common is their importance to the narrative: either they are at the centre of the plot, or else they are essential for moving it along.

It is interesting that most of the non-aristocratic adult male characters in leading roles come significantly later in Disney studio history. Until Bernard (an unusual character in and of himself) comes along in 1977's *The Rescuers*, Disney's twenty-third animated feature, the main characters of the sixteen single-narrative films produced up to that time tended to be either young adult females (Snow White, Cinderella, Aurora), children (Pinocchio, Alice, Peter Pan and Wendy, Wart, Mowgli), or animals (Dumbo, Bambi, Lady and Tramp, Pongo and Perdita and their puppies, Duchess, Thomas O'Malley and the kittens, Robin Hood, Winnie the Pooh). Adult male characters in leading roles featured only rarely, and when they did, they – with the exception of the seven dwarfs – were either princes (the Prince, Prince Charming, Prince Phillip) or were in shorter narratives in the package features: Johnny Appleseed and Pecos Bill in *Melody Time* (1948), Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones in *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*. Bernard appears in two films: *The Rescuers* and *The Rescuers Down Under* (1990). But beginning in the 1990s, more non-aristocratic male characters begin to appear with greater frequency: Aladdin in *Aladdin* (1992), John Smith in *Pocahontas* (1995), Quasimodo and Phoebus in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), Hercules in *Hercules* (1997), Li Shang in

*Mulan* (1998), Tarzan in *Tarzan* (1999), Pacha in *The Emperor's New Groove* (2000), Milo Thatch in *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (2001), Dr. Delbert Doppler in *Treasure Planet* (2003), Flynn Rider in *Tangled* (2010), and Wreck-It Ralph and Fix-It Felix in *Wreck-It Ralph* (2012).

As to why there is a comparative increase in leading male characters in Disney's animated films, it is hard to say: no access to the archives means that any studio memos or story meeting notes which might suggest why, in the first forty years of Disney's animated feature production (1937-1977) there are only eight male leads plus the seven dwarfs (who function more as a unit than as seven individual characters), yet from 1977 to 2013 (the year in which this study was completed) – a period of thirty-six years – there have been a further sixteen male leads (both royalty and commoners), with fifteen of those appearing in the twenty-three years between 1989 (Prince Eric) and 2012 (Wreck-It Ralph and Fix-It Felix, the most recent characters at the time of the publication of this book). However, a number of trends in the larger context of Hollywood cinema suggest several possible explanations for this increase in Disney's male leads generally, and non-aristocratic leads especially. For a start, there seems to have been a shift, beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, in which Hollywood moved away from targeting primarily the female audience to aiming mainly at the male audience (specifically young white men aged sixteen to twenty-five years). Jackie Stacey writes in her study of female audiences that "... it has been argued that the cinema industry (linked as it was with other consumer industries) has always addressed its female spectators as consumers more generally".<sup>85</sup> However, as Robert C. Allen, writing around the same time as Stacey, points out, "Since the late 1960s, if not before, films had been marketed at what Hollywood with empirical reason regarded as its 'primary' box-office audience: young people between the ages of thirteen and twenty-five (particularly while males within that age group)".<sup>86</sup> This change in audience demographics, whether it is real or perceived, means that, very likely, Disney – in much the same thinking as I discussed in the introductory chapter of this book regarding the preference for film titles which were either gender neutral or at least included a male character's name – is acknowledging this shift by increasing both the number of male leading characters and by making them more prominent.

Richard Sparks, writing in 1996 about that decade's representations of men in Hollywood cinema, offers an interesting possible explanation for that decade's fascination with action

85 Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 85.

86 Robert C. Allen, "Home Alone Together: Hollywood and the 'Family Film,'" in Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (Eds.), *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies* (London: BFI, 1999), p. 117.



heroes: "It has often been suggested that heroic fictions presuppose some sort of failure of social arrangements – or their violent disruption by a figuratively or literally alien force – in a way that makes redemptive intervention from without necessary. ... Arguably what we see in some recent Hollywood cinema is a magnification of these antique starting points."<sup>87</sup> Though for the last decade many scholars and pundits have talked about American society in particular, but the west in general, as being either pre-9/11 or post-9/11 – and in certain respects, they are right to do so – the fact is that there have been continuities within American society and politics: an increasingly polarised political climate with particular distrust (by one side or another) of the US president has been one constant since the early 1990s. Between 1993 and 2013, there have been three two-term US presidents whose time in office has generated controversies (both real and imagined) which have been fed by, and in turn contributed to, the feeling that American society was fundamentally flawed and in need of saving. Bill Clinton (President from 1993 to 2001) was beset by a variety of scandals (Gennifer Flowers, the White-water Controversy, Monica Lewinsky) and became only the second president in US history to be impeached.<sup>88</sup> George W. Bush (2001-2009) began his presidency in the wake of his technical, Electoral College-based victory in which he lost the popular vote but carried enough states' Electoral College representatives to become president (even his re-election in November 2004 was marred by voting issues, but did not go to the courts, unlike in the 2000 "hanging chad" controversy, because his rival in 2004, Democrat John Kerry, conceded). His presidency included the September 11 attacks and the subsequent – and highly controversial – "War on Terror" in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the establishment of the politically-divisive detainee camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in January 2002. Barack Obama's presidency (2009 to 2017, expected), though elected and re-elected with majorities in both the Electoral College and the popular vote, has faced problems including thinly-veiled racist claims that he is not a US citizen by birth (the so-called "birther" movement), the continued existence of Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp (despite his efforts to close it), the on-going war in Afghanistan, and the on-going Wikileaks controversy. Likewise, 1937, the year in which *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was released, was during a difficult period of the Great Depression as well as a difficult year politically: the Spanish Civil war raged, the Sino-Japanese war began, Stalin launched a major phase of the Great Purge, the Hindenburg disaster occurred, Amelia Earhart disappeared, and the Nazi party contin-

87 Richard Sparks, "Masculinity and Heroism in the Hollywood Blockbuster", from *The British Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 36, No. 3: Special Issue (1996), p. 357.

88 The first US president to be impeached was Andrew Johnson, president from 1865 to 1869, impeached in 1868.



ued to grow more dangerous, edging the world ever closer to war. 1948 and 1949 – the years in which *Melody Time* and *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* were released – were also years whose turbulence and uncertainty are reflected in Hollywood's films: the movement later dubbed *Film Noir* would be in its heyday in this period, science fiction would begin depicting wave upon wave of alien invasion as it began to take on elements of the (at this period) nearly defunct horror genre, and melodrama would enter (arguably) a golden era with the films of Douglas Sirk and Vincente Minnelli. Signs of this unease can be found in the stories of Pecos Bill (discussed in the previous chapter), and in the character who features at the start of the second section of adult leading male non-aristocratic heroes: Johnny Appleseed. Johnny Appleseed, however, is a friend to all he meets, and is our least confrontational, most pacifist hero in all of Disney's animated films. He will be discussed along with three other characters with whom he shares the trait of being an unlikely hero owing to his quiet, gentle nature. This first group of characters never seek out heroism, but when they find themselves called upon to act, they do so bravely and selflessly. Following their section, discussion will continue to examine, thematically, our other heroes: the street-smart thieves who reform, the men of action and adventure, the pairs of men – whom I've dubbed "Frienemies", using popular recent vernacular – who find themselves thrown together by circumstance and, despite being competitors, find that, ultimately, they are on the same side ... more or less. But to begin our discussion of Disney's non-aristocratic heroes, we can go right to the beginning of the history of Disney's animated feature films – *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* – to look at a group who are amongst the most iconic of the Disney characters: the dwarfs themselves.

### **Team Work: The Seven Dwarfs**

So ... can *you* name all seven off the top of your head? Being asked to do so is a popular trivia question, arguably separating the "real" Disney fans from the rest of the herd. They are, of course: Doc, Happy, Bashful, Sleepy, Sneezy, Grumpy and Dopey. They live together in a little cottage, built by their own labour, deep in the forest, and together they spend their days mining in the Seven Jewelled Hills. Returning home from work one evening, they are amazed to discover, after a bit of confusion, that Princess Snow White is asleep in their beds. When she awakens, she begs them to let her stay with them (and in return, she will contribute to the household by looking after the cottage and doing the cooking),

and they agree (Grumpy reluctantly, the others enthusiastically). They all grow to love Snow White, and she comes to love them, too; they become one big, happy family. Of course her stepmother, the Queen, finds the cottage and tries to kill Snow White, but the dwarfs, with the help of the forest animals, chase her off and she ends up falling off a cliff as it is struck by lightning; she is crushed by the boulder she had intended to roll down the mountain onto the dwarfs. The dwarfs cannot revive Snow White, so they protect her body and keep vigil by her until, one day, the Prince, who had fallen in love with Snow White just before her stepmother ordered her murder, finds the dwarfs and Snow White. He kisses her, she awakens, and they go away, saying good-bye to the kindly, faithful dwarfs.

That is the basic plot of the Disney version of an ancient folk tale, a version of which was recorded by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in 1812 in the first edition of their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*.<sup>89</sup> Numerous changes to the tale have occurred over time, to include in different editions of the Grimms' collections. For example, D.L. Ashliman notes that, "Beginning with the edition of 1819, the Grimms add the statement that Snow-White's mother died during childbirth, and that her father remarried. Note that in the first edition, presumably the version closest to its oral sources, Snow-White's jealous antagonist is her own mother, not a stepmother." He goes on to add that "Beginning with the edition of 1819, the poisoned apple is dislodged when a servant accidentally stumbles while carrying the coffin to the prince's castle".<sup>90</sup> Of course, one of the changes most associated with the Disney version is their giving individual names to each of the seven dwarfs. But Disney is not the first to do this. He is not even the first to do this on film. The 1916 live-action silent film version of the tale, *Snow White*, starring Marguerite Clark and directed by J. Searle Dawley, establishes the dwarfs as having individual names: Blick, Flick, Click, Snick, Plick, Whick, and Quee. Walt Disney claimed that he attended a screening of this film as a young boy in Kansas City, so it may have influenced him in some respects. However, it is important to note that the idea of having seven leading characters appear in a film who do not have names of any sort (not even a generic one like "The Prince") would have been unusual for a film maker. There is evidence that names were considered for the dwarfs early in the film's production, with a list of possible names appearing in the story meeting notes from 9 October 1934. Some of the names appearing – Happy, Doc, Sleepy, and Dopey – would survive and be used in the finished film. Others, such as Hickey (because he hiccups frequently), Gabby, Nifty, Sniffy, Lazy, Puffy, Stuffy, Shorty,

<sup>89</sup> It should be noted that there existed prior to this other versions of the story, both within the German-speaking regions of Europe and elsewhere, to include "Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree", from Scotland, and "The Young Slave", "Maria, the Wicked Stepmother, and the Seven Robbers", and "The Crystal Casket", all from Italy. For more information, see <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0709.html>, which gives the texts of these versions of the tale in English.

<sup>90</sup> D.L. Ashliman, "Snow-White and other tales of Aarne-Thompson-Uther type 709", found at <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0709.html>.

Wheezy, Burpy, Dizzy and Tubby, did not.<sup>91</sup> In a much later story meeting (22 December 1936<sup>92</sup>) for *Snow White*, Walt would claim that,

When I was in Europe, I went to the various book stores and purchased copies of the story and brought them back with me. In our version of the story we followed the story very closely. We have put in certain twists to make it more logical, more convincing and easy to swallow. We have taken the characters and haven't added any. The only thing we have built onto the story is the animals who are friends of Snow. This wasn't in the original fairy tale. We have developed a personality in the mirror and comic personalities for the dwarfs.<sup>93</sup>

When asked by Fred Moore, "Is the mirror a hand mirror or a mirror on the wall?" Walt's reply is that "Different versions vary in this". It implies that he has read multiple versions, and that he and his staff have researched the tale to the point whereby they feel comfortable in describing it as a close adaptation. David R. Williams, who transcribed the extracts from the notes which were given to the British Film Institute's Library, records, "26 July 1934. First dated sheets in file give synopsis of Grimm's [*sic*] Fairy tale version of Snow White, and the Snowdrop story by Marion Florence Lansing Also Snow White from *Europa's Fairy Tales* by Jacobs".<sup>94</sup> Again, this indicates that multiple versions of "Snow White" were consulted, with aspects of them that seemed most appropriate for a cinematic rendering of the story making the cut.

Likewise, there is ample evidence from the Williams recording of the story meeting notes that an enormous amount of time was spent on the dwarfs, with Walt himself writing notes by hand on guides which would likely have been handed out to the team working on the film. One of these notes, on a guide dated 15 December 1936, sees Walt writing the following:

All dwarfs have definite characteristics except when called upon for unity of action. Then all are capable of moving or exerting with equal activity. For example in the scrum over the bed in sequence 5A. Also when a certain mood involving all characters is to be put across [all] can act with the same ability in getting across the mood; for example the walk into Grumpy in Sequence 6A where all the dwarfs approach the same action in the walk and stand around the barrel with the same body movements.<sup>95</sup>

While this is not the most articulate description ever given of the dwarfs, it is important to note that Walt's idea of them was that they act as individuals when in normal situations, but in key moments that they should lose some of that individuality and act as a unit. This, by and large, is what happens in the finished film. When individual personalities are emphasised, some receive more attention than others, presumably because these personalities can contribute more to the narrative's progression. Though

91 Extracts from Story Conference Notes Relating to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in the Disney Archives, Burbank, California, copied by David R. Williams, August 1987, p. 1.

92 This is almost exactly one year before the film's premiere, which was on 21 December 1937.

93 Extracts from Story Conference Notes Relating to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in the Disney Archives, Burbank, California, copied by David R. Williams, August 1987, p. 21.

94 Extracts from Story Conference Notes Relating to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in the Disney Archives, Burbank, California, copied by David R. Williams, August 1987, p. 1.

95 Extracts from Story Conference Notes Relating to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in the Disney Archives, Burbank, California, copied by David R. Williams, August 1987, p. 15.



much is made of Dopey – even Walt emphasised him in the film’s publicity, pushing forward Dopey’s clay model in the newsreel “How Walt Disney Cartoons Are Made” in such a way as to privilege the character<sup>96</sup> – in fact it is Grumpy who plays one of the key roles amongst the dwarfs. He is reluctant to allow Snow White to stay with them, warning the others that the Queen will “swoop down and wreak her vengeance on us” for sheltering the girl. The next day, when the dwarfs leave for their work in the mine, while Doc may warn her that, “The old Queen’s a sly one, full of witchcraft, so beware of strangers”, and the others beg her to be careful, it is Grumpy who takes a firm tone, saying, “Now, I’m warnin’ ya. Don’t let nobody or nothin’ in the house.” His advice is far more practical, and his coming to care for Snow White is made out to be a bigger deal, given his initial reluctance to let her stay. After the Queen (disguised as a pedlar woman) shows up to poison Snow White and the animals come to warn the dwarfs and get their help to rescue Snow White, as soon as the dwarfs realise what is happening, the other dwarfs fly into a panic, asking “What’ll we do?!” It is Grumpy who jumps into action, yelling “Come on!” to his brothers and, hopping onto the back of a deer, cries out “Giddap!” as he leads the way back to the cottage, riding at full speed, fearless and determined. The others follow his example, and they race back to their cottage. Spotting the Queen, Grumpy leads them in the chase, spurring the others on as they climb up the mountain after her. He is fearless, and proves himself to be a true leader, giving the others courage and direction. Even though they are too late to save Snow White, Grumpy’s actions show him to be the true hero of the film. He is also, incidentally, the first one we see break down and sob when they gather around Snow White’s lifeless body.

Yet in other respects, the dwarfs function as a unit: they work together, eat together, sing together (introducing, in their first scene in the film, one of the most famous work songs of all time, “Heigh Ho”), sleep in the same room, and when instructed by Snow White, all wash together at the same trough (except Grumpy, who heckles them throughout the scene and declares, “I’d like to see anybody make *me* wash, if I didn’t wanna”). They are depicted as old men (apart from Dopey, who seems to be younger), and because they are dwarfs, their bodies are proportioned differently than those of Snow White, the Evil Queen, and the Prince. But as Perce Pearce notes in the story meeting notes from 3 November 1936,

96 “How Walt Disney Cartoons Are Made”, produced by RKO, 1938.

Walt feels very strongly the point that we have got to keep these little fellows cute – mustn’t get grotesque. In some cases you want to see how far it has developed in the early stages from the first reel. The head size

has a definite bearing on it. We are playing with figures with bulgy noses and features. Walt points out that the animators must always try to feel the cuteness in the personal treatment of all these characters. This is a hard thing to catch.<sup>97</sup>

This cuteness, it seems, is what the animators and Walt Disney believed would make the dwarfs seem likeable and familiar, rather than strange or uncanny. They spent months discussing the dwarfs in terms of their design and general “cuteness”, as the story meeting notes show, and often discuss them in terms of various screen personalities, in particular the comedians of the silent era (or, when they liken Dopey to Harpo Marx, they reference silent comedians in the most literal sense). At one point, during a meeting on 17 November 1936, Perce Pearce says of Dopey that “Dopey has some Harpo in him, and Walt says that he’s made up of Harry Langdon, and a little bit of Buster Keaton and a little trace of Chaplin in the fellow”.<sup>98</sup> A few weeks later, on 9 December 1936, Walt asks his staff whether they can obtain and run some of Harry Langdon’s films to study his movements, presumably to incorporate some of them into Dopey’s actions. The drive towards realism at the studio was an essential part of the Disney studio’s animation in the 1930s, and it was felt very strongly that *Snow White* should incorporate this realist aesthetic. Yet it was understood that to make the characters appear *too* realistic would render them strange, even (potentially) off-putting to the audience. This incorporation of the principle of cuteness and roundness into the dwarfs, in particular, makes them entirely sympathetic as soon as we see them.<sup>99</sup> Their personalities add edge and humour, and their strong work ethic and close familial bond makes them admirable. Though they take a great deal of time to discuss each individual dwarf’s physical characteristics, voice and personality, they also show that they need the dwarfs to function as a unit. This strengthens their appearance as a family, and therefore makes their welcoming of Snow White into their family come across as entirely innocent and wholesome. She is simultaneously a mother and a daughter to them, and they likewise function as both her fathers and as her children.

Interestingly, D.L. Ashliman notes that there is a brief folktale from Switzerland, “Death of the Seven Dwarfs” (“Tod der sieben Zwerge”). In this, the dwarfs get into a great deal of trouble when, once more, they open their home to a lost young girl, this time a peasant girl. They have only seven beds, but offer her one nonetheless. A peasant woman then shows up, but the girl tells her that there is no more room, that the dwarfs only have seven

97 Extracts from Story Conference Notes Relating to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in the Disney Archives, Burbank, California, copied by David R. Williams, August 1987, p. 6.

98 Extracts from Story Conference Notes Relating to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in the Disney Archives, Burbank, California, copied by David R. Williams, August 1987, p. 10.

99 Thomas and Johnston, *The Illusion of Life*, pp. 68–69, 244–245.

beds. The woman accuses the girl of sleeping with all of the dwarfs, and vows to put a stop to it. She goes away, and brings back two men who break into the house, kill all seven of the dwarfs, bury them in the garden, and burn down their cottage. The peasant girl's fate is unknown.<sup>100</sup> It is a gruesome end for the kindly dwarfs. Happily, it is a story which never makes it into the world of Disney. They are a happy group of brothers when they bid good-bye to Snow White in their final shot (Doc and Grumpy even have their arms companionably around each other's shoulders), and it is nicer to think of them still living in their comfortable cottage and digging in their mine the whole day through.

### Meek and Mild

Johnny Appleseed, whose story is narrated and sung by Dennis Day in a segment of *Melody Time*, is a very atypical hero. He is introduced in his segment as defying the stereotypical hero, and yet it implies that these differences are what make him a truly-exceptional hero:

On the pages of American folklore, a legion of mighty men have left the symbols of their greatness: there was Paul Bunyon's axe, John Henry's hammer, Davy Crockett's rifle, and then, quite unexpectedly, one comes upon a tin pot hat, a bag of apple seed, and a holy book. And strangely enough, these are the symbols of one of the mightiest men of all: John Chapman – a real-life pioneer.

At the beginning of his story, Johnny is living on a farm in Pennsylvania, and he watches with longing as settlers begin heading out to settle the newly-acquired territories of what, in the early nineteenth century, would have been the West. Johnny, however, considers himself too "puny" to be a settler, even though he dreams of going. Suddenly, his guardian angel appears to him, and berates him for denying his dreams. Dismissing Johnny's worries that he is unsuited to be a pioneer, the angel points out that Johnny has an invaluable skill: he can grow apple trees. Johnny scoffs at this; what good are apple trees to the cause of westward expansion? The angel is shocked – of course apple trees are vital! They are a nutritious, versatile fruit, can grow in many different climates, and are delicious, too. The angel also persuades Johnny that he needs very little equipment for his journey: his bag of apple seeds, a cooking pot (that he can also wear as a hat), and his Bible. Singing a refrain that will run throughout the segment, the angel's pep talk concludes with his singing, "So pack your stuff and get a-goin'/Get them apple trees a-growin'/There's a lot of work out there to do!/Oh, there's a lot of work to do!" Another oft-repeated phrase – this one spoken, rather than sung – is that Johnny undertakes his mission "With-

100 D.L. Ashliman, "Death of the Seven Dwarfs: A Legend from Switzerland", found at <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/dwarfs.html>



out no knife, without no gun". When he begins to plant his first clearing with apples, he amazes the wild animals there: they have never seen a human before who didn't try to kill them, yet Johnny is so peaceful and good-willed that he even pets the skunk who approaches him. From that moment on, the animals of the forests trust him and are his companions, and though he never seems to adopt any particular one as a pet, he nonetheless is friendly, sharing his apples with them and showing them kindness and love. Throughout the segment, the only interaction we see him enjoy is with the animals; though he never is shown interacting directly with other people, it is made clear that he is planting his trees to benefit those who live in this new territory (and this is true of *all* of the people: in one scene, Johnny comes upon a harvest dance, and watches from afar with pleasure as the white settlers and Native Americans dance and celebrate together, all sharing equally in a feast which features a preponderance of apple-based foods and drinks, of course!). This theme carries on throughout the remainder of Johnny's life. At the end, we see him as an old man, asleep under a tree, when his guardian angel returns to fetch him. Johnny looks back and realises that his body (or his "mortal husk", as the angel calls it) is still sitting under the tree, and that he has died. Johnny is furious: he cannot die, he insists, because he still has so many trees to plant. The angel, however, informs Johnny that he is needed in Heaven; it seems Heaven is running very low on apple trees! Happy once more, Johnny and the angel march off toward Heaven, singing once more that "There's a lot of work to do". Johnny will go on to plant apple trees all over Heaven, which leads to the creation of "apple blossom skies".

To say that Johnny Appleseed is not an action hero is an understatement: he may travel on foot all over the western territories of the young United States, planting thousands and thousands (it is implied) of apple trees over the course of his life, yet neither his arms nor his legs ever show any sign of muscle development. Johnny also refrains throughout from even possessing, let alone using, any defensive weapons. The refrain of "Without no knife, without no gun" reinforces a particularly-heightened form of pacifism: after all, a knife is not always a weapon, and can just as easily (and in many cases, more easily) function as a tool. Johnny seems not to carry even basic farming equipment: when we see him planting his first apple trees at the start of his mission, he finds a stick, breaks off a few superfluous branches, and uses it as a plough (in what must be unusually soft ground!) to create furrows for planting apple seeds. His role as a creator is stressed to an unusually-high degree by characterising him in this way.

Admittedly – and as the beginning of the segment points out – the story of Johnny Appleseed is based upon the life of a real individual, John Chapman.<sup>101</sup> But the fact is that the choice to tell this story – let alone to craft it in this way – is important. 1948, the year in which the film was released, was not an easy one. The United States would enter a relatively brief recession in late 1948 which would last well into 1949. The Cold War was in its early days, and Hollywood was still reeling, to a degree, from the HUAC investigation into the possibility that communists might be working within its studios, using Hollywood films to spread propaganda all across the United States and to its allies abroad. Walt Disney himself testified before HUAC in this period, infamously appearing before the committee as a “friendly” witness who not only named names, but even spelled one of them out.<sup>102</sup> So why tell the story of someone like Johnny Appleseed? After all, there is nothing about him which suggests that he could function, as Pecos Bill does at the end of the same package feature, as a superhero who could save the day (as Bill is shown to do on many occasions). But Johnny is, in his own way, a hero, not least because he embodies many rare, important traits, most significantly humility and selflessness. His story, at least as it has been mythologized – and certainly as it is told in the Disney version (which, it must be said, adheres fairly closely to the surviving version of the legend) – brings to mind the final lines of Abraham Lincoln’s inaugural speech, given in March 1865:

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.<sup>103</sup>

*Melody Time* – and therefore the Johnny Appleseed segment – came to cinema screens at a time when the Allied Nations of World War II were still engaged in dealing with the aftermath of the war. In Europe, programmes of deNazification, which had been taking place (as a matter of US and Allied foreign policy) since Allied occupation had begun was, by 1948, becoming controversial in terms of its effectiveness, and genuine anger can be found in discussions of the policy in the final years it was in place.<sup>104</sup> Johnny, who roams (what was in his era) the western frontier – now the Mid-West – bringing people together and nourishing them through the planting of apples – apples which the people harvest for themselves, as Johnny only plants the seeds and tends the young trees – could be said to serve as an exemplar.

<sup>101</sup> John Chapman, a.k.a Johnny Appleseed, 1774–1845. For more on the history of the real individual upon whom the legend of Johnny Appleseed is based, see David Skarbek, “Alertness, Local Knowledge, and Johnny Appleseed”, from *The Review of Austrian Economics*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (December 2009), pp. 415–424.

<sup>102</sup> The Testimony of Walter E. Disney Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 24 October 1947. Found at <http://eserver.org/filmtv/disney-huac-testimony.txt>.

<sup>103</sup> Second Inaugural Speech, President Abraham Lincoln, delivered 4 March 1865. Speech found at [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/lincoln2.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln2.asp).

<sup>104</sup> An example of this can be found in John H. Hertz, “The Fiasco of Denazification in Germany”, from *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 4 (December 1948), pp. 569–594.

He embodies the spirit of peace and togetherness which, in the late 1940s, was sorely missing from world politics. Further, Johnny, by participating in such a positive way in the nation's westward expansion, is engaged in a very political form of nation-building. As the narrator of the segment says, "Johnny was planting hope". It is a concept which would have been very meaningful to audiences in 1948.

Our next retiring soul to be discussed also made his cinematic debut in another difficult era, this time in the second half of the 1970s. Bernard, the mouse from the Rescue Aid Society who, along with Miss Bianca, is called upon to save young children in terrible circumstances, was first brought to life in the 1977 film *The Rescuers*; unusually, he is the only one of the characters being discussed in this book to appear in two separate films. *The Rescuers Down Under* is considered by some to be a sequel, but given that the only aspect of the original story to carry over is the relationship between Bernard and Bianca, I would argue that it is no more a sequel than were any of the twenty-three James Bond films which followed *Dr. No* (1962). Another aspect of Bernard as a character which separates him from others discussed in this book is that he is the only one who is not physically human (or at least humanoid, as is the case with Delbert Doppler from *Treasure Planet*). As I note in *Good Girls & Wicked Witches*, Bernard and Bianca are exceptional animal characters in Disney, given the fact that they can communicate directly with humans in clear, intelligible English.<sup>105</sup> It is on the grounds that Bernard is so unusually heavily anthropomorphised that he should be included in a discussion of human characters: he functions more like a human than like an animal, and his (and Bianca's) proven ability to communicate and interact with humans justifies his inclusion in this discussion. Bernard is an interesting character. He appears in two films, *The Rescuers* (1977) and its sequel, *The Rescuers Down Under* (1990), and is shown to be simultaneously a very timid, cautious figure as well as a very brave one. His partner in the films – a work partner who becomes his romantic partner – is Miss Bianca, an exotic, glamorous Hungarian mouse voiced by Eva Gabor. Bernard, at the beginning of *The Rescuers*, works as a janitor at the Rescue Aid Society, which is located in the basement of the United Nations and which serves to rescue children in need all over the world. The two meet when Bianca chooses Bernard to work with her to save Penny, even though he is a janitor for the society, rather than an actual agent. He is reluctant – after all, there are official delegates who are volunteering to go – but Miss Bianca's calm assertion that he is the right mouse for the job is all it takes: from then on, he and Miss Bianca will work

<sup>105</sup> Davis, *Good Girls & Wicked Witches*, pp. 147–48.



together. Their first case is the rescue of Penny, an orphan girl who has been kidnapped and taken to a swamp, Devil's Bayou, to help Madame Medusa and her sidekick, Mr. Snoops, find the Devil's Eye, the largest diamond in the world. Over the course of their working together to save Penny, Bernard and Bianca grow increasingly close, despite their very different personalities; by the time their mission is completed and they have returned to New York, the pair are in love.

Bernard and Bianca, because they are so different from one another, balance each other perfectly: whereas Miss Bianca is glamorous, sophisticated, and loves travel and excitement, Bernard is a retiring, rather meek individual who prefers a quiet, predictable life. His cautious nature is further underscored by the persona of Bob Newhart, the actor who provides his voice in both films, and who was a popular American television and film star of the 1960s–2000s. In fact, at the time of each of the *Rescuers* films, Newhart was involved in two of his more iconic series, *The Bob Newhart Show* (1972–78), in which he played a neurotic psychiatrist, Dr. Bob Hartley, and later, *Newhart* (1982–1990), in which he played Dick Loudon, a neurotic “How-To” book writer and owner of an inn in a quirky town in Vermont. Like most of Newhart's trademark characters, Bernard is neurotic; but though he may be fearful and therefore tread cautiously into a dangerous situation, he is brave nonetheless, and will work his hardest and do his best to fulfil the latest mission he and Miss Bianca have undertaken. Furthermore, with his plainer appearance and introverted ways, he is a perfect foil to Miss Bianca, whose elegant, cultured personality is shown to be daring, bold, extroverted, and fond of adventure and action.

On the surface, such a representation of manhood is very unusual: though Bernard is brave, he is not an obviously heroic figure. He is frightened of excitement and danger, and clearly is someone who would be happiest with a more settled life, were it not for his attachment to Miss Bianca and the work he feels compelled to do with her on behalf of the Rescue Aid Society. He never seeks adventure – in fact, he seeks to avoid it whenever possible – and even shows himself to be frightened of air travel (though, admittedly, this is probably sensible, given that air travel for Bernard and Bianca involves riding in a sardine can strapped to the back of an albatross). In *The Rescuers Down Under*, when he and Miss Bianca meet Jake, the mouse in charge of the runway where they land in Australia, he feels himself to be overshadowed by (and forced into competition with) Jake, a ruggedly handsome Australian kangaroo mouse who shows himself to be very like

Miss Bianca when it comes to enjoying adventure, and also proves himself knowledgeable of the part of the outback where they must rescue Cody. Jake, who accompanies Bernard and Bianca as a guide through the outback, even interrupts Bernard's second attempt at proposing to Miss Bianca when he is nearly eaten by, but then ties up and masters, a huge snake named Twister, whom he uses to carry himself, Bianca and Bernard to McLeach's hiding place so that they can rescue Cody, the boy at the centre of the narrative.

When the trio arrive, they do so just as McLeach, the film's villain, is tricking Cody into believing that the mother eagle, Marahute, is dead so that Cody will go and find Marahute's eggs to protect them. The mice manage to hide in McLeach's vehicle, then get to Cody and warn him of McLeach's trick. Unfortunately, they are unable to warn him in time, and Cody, the eagle, Miss Bianca, and Jake end up caught in McLeach's cage. But it is here, just when things look their worst, that Bernard comes into his own. He hides the eagle's eggs and replaces them in the nest with stones; this prevents Joanna, McLeach's goanna lizard sidekick, from eating them. Once Joanna is gone, he then returns the eggs to their nest, and enlists Wilbur (the albatross who got them to Australia) to help him protect the eggs while he himself goes after Cody, Bianca, Jake, and the eagle. Miss Bianca certainly believes that Bernard can help them, and tells Cody so; Jake, who sees Bernard's timidity as a sign of incompetence and even cowardice, pretends to agree, but admits privately to her that he thinks Bianca is bluffing to make Cody feel better. But, of course, Bianca is right. Bernard will stop at nothing to rescue them, no matter how frightened he is. He even approaches a razorback, insisting that it help him reach McLeach's vehicle. The next time we see him is just after he has shut off McLeach's vehicle just as McLeach is about to use its crane to lower Cody to his death in a crocodile-infested river. Bernard steals the keys, then throws them to Miss Bianca and Jake so that they can free themselves from the cage, and leads Joanna away when she realises that he's trying to stop McLeach. When Bernard sees McLeach trying to shoot the rope that is suspending Cody over the crocodiles, Bernard goads Joanna into chasing him, then runs up McLeach's trouser leg so that Joanna will chase him onto McLeach. Bernard jumps away from McLeach just as Joanna knocks herself and McLeach into the water; Bernard then goes after Cody, whose rope has snapped and dropped him into the water (though, by this time, the crocodiles are following McLeach and Joanna, who are floating downstream on the current). Bernard then dives into the water and tows Cody to the surface, using the rope with

which Cody has been bound to try and haul Cody out of the water. They are pulled into the water by the strength of the current, however, and go over the waterfall, but are rescued in time by the Golden Eagle, Marahute; with Cody, Jake, and Bianca on her back (and Bernard still clinging, petrified, to the end of Cody's rope), she flies above the clouds and into the moonlit sky. Cody takes Bernard into his hand and thanks him before placing him on Marahute's back, next to Bianca. Bernard performs his final act of bravery for the film, seizing the moment and proposing to Miss Bianca at last. She accepts, and they all fly off to take Cody home before, presumably, returning to Marahute's nest (where Wilbur is tending her eggs for her) before Wilbur, Bernard, and Bianca set off for their return to New York.

In a documentary short on the making of *The Rescuers Down Under*, the film's director, Mike Gabriel, says of Bernard that he is "... the underdog. He's really our little link with the audience in this story. Bianca is the leader of the little duo – the rescue team – but Bernard's the one you link with because you know that he's been trying to propose to Bianca and he keeps getting put off for some reason or another, so you're rooting for him."<sup>106</sup>

In many ways, at least at first glance, Bernard's personality traits have more in common with the sidekick of a film, the character whose role is to make the hero look good. But given the bravery and strength Bernard shows when he must rescue single-handedly Cody, Marahute the eagle, Bianca, and Jake, Bernard demonstrates that being brave is about doing what one must despite being afraid. It is an important lesson, and one which can be overlooked in characters who are stronger physically, not to mention much larger – we are talking, of course, about a heavily-anthropomorphised mouse operating in a human world. Sadly for Bernard, his efforts in this film are sometimes forgotten, overwhelmed as *The Rescuers Down Under* is by the enormous success of the Disney animated features released on either side of it, as well as by the film's limited box office success. Nonetheless, he is remembered from *The Rescuers* as a likeable, sympathetic character.

Another unlikely hero is Milo Thatch, the main character of *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*. Milo is a scholar, an expert in ancient and modern Linguistics with a wide range of degrees and academic interests.<sup>107</sup> It becomes apparent early on in the film, however, that despite his brilliance, his career has been marred by his interest – practically an obsession – with finding the lost city of Atlantis, which he is certain was a real place, and not the myth it is assumed to be. At the start of the film, which is set in

106 "The Making of *The Rescuers Down Under*", Bonus Features, from *The Rescuers Down Under* (Region 2/PAL, © Disney Enterprises, DVD release date 28 January 2002).

107 According to the "Dossier" on Milo Thatch on disc two of the *Atlantis* dvd set, Milo was "Educated at Oxford University (1896-1903) [and] holds a double Doctorate in the fields of Linguistic Theory ... and Dead Languages ... . Minor Degrees in Chemistry, Literature ... Art History, Sociology and Anthropology." At age 32, he is by far the most educated and accomplished Disney character, male or female. Found at Disc 2/Files/Milo, page 3/8. From *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*, Disc 2, *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*, 2-Disc Collector's Edition (Region 1/NTSC, © Disney Enterprises, Inc., DVD release date January 29, 2002).



1914,<sup>108</sup> he is working in the Cartography and Linguistics department of a Museum (presumably the Smithsonian, though it remains unnamed) in Washington, D.C., but seems to be based in the boiler room, rather than having an actual office. He is practicing a speech to give to a committee in the hope of receiving funding to further his research, when he finds that the committee has tricked him: they send him a letter informing him that his presentation to an earlier time (at a little after 4pm, they tell him that his 4:30 meeting has been moved to 3:30) and then, in a letter which follows the first one by only seconds, tell him that, because he missed the re-scheduled meeting, his application for funding has been denied. Milo runs immediately to catch up with the board, and angrily resigns. He returns home to find a mysterious woman, Helga Sinclair, waiting to take him to meet Mr. Whitmore. It turns out that Whitmore was an old friend of his grandfather (also an academic and also obsessed with Atlantis), and that Whitmore is now prepared (thanks to his team finding the last piece of the puzzle) to launch an expedition to find and explore Atlantis, hopefully retrieving lost knowledge, proving its existence, and bringing back a mysterious power source which, according to legend, gave the people of Atlantis access to technology and capability far beyond that of not only the ancient world, but of the twentieth century, too. Whitmore has assembled a crack team, which he describes as “the best of the best”, and now wishes to add Milo to it, both because he is the best with dead languages and knowledge of Atlantis, and also because of Whitmore’s friendship with Milo’s late grandfather.<sup>109</sup> Milo is overwhelmed, but excited beyond belief that he is being taken seriously *and* is about to set out to find Atlantis.

Upon joining the expedition’s crew, Milo finds himself a little bit excluded (they seem to think him too bookish – too much of a geek/nerd, in modern parlance – to be worth paying attention to; one of the characters, Audrey, comments dismissively that “I used to take lunch money from guys like this!”), but Milo is too obsessed with studying *The Shepherd’s Journal* to notice much. The crew starts to warm to him, however, and gradually he is welcomed into the group, especially when his knowledge proves to be invaluable to the mission. But it is when they encounter – very unexpectedly – living people in Atlantis that Milo comes into his own. Initially, he is the only one who can communicate with them (at least until it is realised that the Atlantean language is a root of most modern ones, and this (rather magically) enables the Atlanteans to be able to communicate, with a little adjustment, in English, French, German (the languages we hear them speaking to the various members of the team) and so forth. Milo soon

<sup>108</sup> Mention is made at the start of the film that winter is on its way, and we see the Washington D.C.-based characters wearing overcoats. No mention at all is made of WWI, however, which would have begun a few months earlier in Europe. America was not involved, but it is interesting that the war plays no part even in their planning their sea voyage to find Atlantis.

<sup>109</sup> The final key the team has acquired is a book, *The Shepherd’s Journal*, which is written in a language that Milo is one of the last people alive who can read; this means that they need him to translate what it says in order to get past the obstacles between them and Atlantis.

forms a friendship with Kida, one of the warriors they meet when they first encounter people in Atlantis. Kida is also a princess, and the heir to her father's throne. She is shown to be highly intelligent, and also terribly worried. She is very aware that Atlantis is in trouble: its culture is dying (not even she can read their written language), the city is falling apart, and though the people are not yet suffering, she fears that it is only a matter of time. Realising that Milo's ability to read her language might mean that she can help her people, she turns to him, and as they work to piece together the lost knowledge of Atlantis, the two form a bond. When, at one stage, Kida removes her skirt so that they might swim to see an underwater ruin of a mural (which has writing on it she is sure will help them uncover more knowledge), he is shown by his reaction to the sight of her (she is wearing something equivalent to a modern bikini) to be both embarrassed and attracted to her. There is no time to explore their attraction, however, before the expedition's leader, Rourke, reveals his true colours and takes Kida hostage, forcing Milo to help him find and retrieve the Heart of Atlantis to take home with them to sell.<sup>110</sup>

Milo is torn: he has no desire to help Rourke steal the Heart of Atlantis, not least because it will lead to the destruction of the city and its people, but he is even more unwilling to allow Kida to be hurt. Reluctantly, he helps Rourke find the Heart of Atlantis; to his horror, Milo then must bear witness as Kida is lifted up by the Heart and bonded with it. She is transformed, and becomes the vessel for the Heart. From here on out, it will become Milo's mission to save Kida/the Heart, yet he is aware that he lacks the weapons and the physical strength to oppose the team. However, it is made very apparent that he has more than enough love, integrity, and moral strength to defeat Rourke, and this endows him with (or perhaps brings out in him) the abilities of a leader. By pointing out the immorality of what they are doing, Milo is able to persuade most of the expedition's crew, apart from Helga and Rourke, that what they are doing is wrong, and that they should stand together to save Atlantis and Kida. He then shows the Atlanteans how to use the flying machines which had belonged to their ancestors (but which, because they could no longer read, they could not figure out how to work). Together, and under Milo's leadership, they are able to defeat Rourke and Helga, rescue Kida, and restore the Heart of Atlantis to its rightful place, freeing Kida from its bond so that she can assume her role as queen (her father, the King, died shortly after the Heart was taken from Atlantis). The rest of the expedition returns home (bringing with them a huge amount of treasure given to them by the grateful Atlanteans), but Milo stays behind, saying that Atlan-

<sup>110</sup> Rourke is analysed in detail in Chapter 4, in the section "Enemies of the Earth".

tis needs someone who can “read Gibberish”, as the ancient language – and his ability to read multiple dead languages – had been disparaged earlier in the film. The crew leaves (and later, we see them all with Whitmore, settling on a story which will not reveal Atlantis’ whereabouts yet will explain why Milo, Rourke, and Helga are no longer around). We also see as the old king – Kida’s father – is memorialised and Kida, with Milo as her consort, rules over a revitalised Atlantis as its queen.

When she is released from the Heart, Kida falls into Milo’s arms and they embrace tenderly; later, as they bid farewell to the expedition team, we see a close up shot of their hands, which move to clasp each other in the way that only couples hold hands. We can also see that it is Kida’s hand which is on top, in a way that body language experts often cite shows who is the “dominate” member of the couple.<sup>111</sup> Shortly after this, during the memorial service to the late king, we see Milo, now dressed as an Atlantean, standing by Queen Kida’s side, in the role of her consort. Otherwise, very little “courtship” is shown between the couple, at least in the traditional sense of the idea. Milo never seeks to woo Kida: depicted in many ways as the typical scholar, his head either in a book or in the clouds, he cannot even drive a car (one could make much psychoanalytic meaning out of the fact that he fumbles briefly with the gear shift before admitting that he does not know what it’s for), let alone know what to do when a pretty girl lets him know that she is interested in him (and, indeed, Kida does exhibit mildly flirtatious behaviour when she prepares to swim with Milo to the sunken mural). But Milo is shown to be someone who knows how to fix things and solve problems: when we first meet Milo, working down in the boiler room, he knows how to fix the temperamental boiler when it malfunctions; he later uses the same technique to fix the expedition’s malfunctioning digging machine. Because he can read Atlantean, he is able to show first Kida, then the others, how to use the flying machines, and it is he who manages to turn the tide in his favour when he persuades the majority of the crew to switch their allegiance from Rourke to him. Milo is sweet, unaffected, enthusiastic, upright, and kind. He is very much an intellectual and a scholar, and it is in these pursuits where the determination that is part of his character first exhibits itself. But his greatest strength seems to be his moral integrity: when Kida, the Heart of Atlantis, and the people of Atlantis are all under threat, Milo will stop at nothing to save them. It does not matter that most of the others are shown to be stronger and more athletic than he (Kida, when she first meets him, comments, “You are a scholar, are you not? Judging from your diminished physique

<sup>111</sup> For a discussion on the body language of handholding, see Judi James, *The Body Language Bible: The Hidden Meaning Behind People’s Gestures and Expressions* (London: Vermilion, 2008), pp. 170–173.



and large forehead, you are suited for nothing else.”). But Milo has heart, and he has brains. These triumph over the brawn exhibited by Rourke. In many ways, Rourke is depicted as the hard-bodied action man and Milo the sensitive “new man” of the 1990s. For this reason, neither the narrative nor the characters ever question what Kida sees in Milo or why they are a good match: both are shown to be strong willed, intelligent, and willing to stand up for what they hold dear. They become friends, then their friendship deepens into something more. It may happen quickly, but it is not the classic “love at first sight” which is so often thought to characterise love in the movies. When the chips are down, it will fall to Milo to save the day, and he does. We are shown that he would have done anything to stop Rourke’s theft whether or not he had fallen in love with Kida. He wins despite the superior physical and military strength of the villain he opposes, and it is his goodness and strength of character which allows him to triumph. In the following chapter, on the princes, I will discuss this notion much more in relation to the Beast (from *Beauty and the Beast*), as he is the Disney hero who most embodies (and does so simultaneously) the rejection of the hard-bodied action hero of Reaganite cinema and the rise in mainstream depictions of a “kinder, gentler” action hero. For now, it is enough to say, in relation to Milo, that his unquestioned status as hero of the film shows that, by the time the film was released in June 2001, this particular type of masculinity had become very much the mainstream. Big, over-developed action heroes had become dated; geek chic was in.

Not quite a chic geek – and in no other way a typical dashing hero – is one way to describe our final character in this section, Dr. Delbert Doppler, the dog-eared (literally) astrophysicist who accompanies young Jim Hawkins into space in the 2002 film *Treasure Planet*.<sup>112</sup> Though in some ways Doppler functions as a sidekick for Jim, he nonetheless plays an important function in the plot, as it is Doppler who convinces Sarah Hawkins, Jim’s mother, to allow Jim to go into space. He finances the expedition to find Treasure Planet, and he accompanies Jim on the journey. When we first meet Doppler, dining at the Benbow Inn (owned by Sarah Hawkins), we see that he and Jim’s mother are old, close friends (albeit with no hint of anything other than a close, supportive friendship between them). Though it is clear that he has known Jim, too, for years, we are shown that he is not comfortable with young children; we also find that he is somewhat impressed with himself (albeit in an inoffensive way) when he intervenes, briefly, when the police bring Jim home after being arrested for yet another scrape. Doppler’s persona is informed a

<sup>112</sup> Doppler’s name seems to be a reference to the mathematician, physicist, and astronomer Christian Doppler (1803–1853).

great deal by the fact that his voice is provided by David Hyde Pierce, best known for playing Dr. Niles Crane on the television series *Frasier* (1993–2004); in his performance as Doppler, he plays very much on Niles’ tendencies towards fussiness, on the one hand, and unbridled enthusiasm for pursuing his goals on the other. When they realise that Jim has obtained a map which will lead them to Treasure Planet, Doppler is ecstatic. He rushes around his home gathering what he needs to take on the journey, enthusing that he will finance the voyage and accompany Jim. Having pointed out to Sarah that such a trip might be good for the troubled boy, Sarah asks him, “Are you saying this because it’s the right thing, or because *you* really want to go?” Doppler’s reply sums up his character well: “I really, really, *really* want to go – *and* it’s the right thing”.

Of course, Doppler’s enthusiasm in no way means that he actually knows what he is about to undertake. When he and Jim go to board the ship, Doppler shows up wearing a huge, elaborate “spacesuit” (albeit one which looks rather like a nineteenth-century diving suit) which makes him seem very naïve and out of place, and renders him something of a laughing stock (the scene has parallels with Niles Crane, in an episode where he promises to take his father ice fishing and arrives decked out in an elaborate hunting/fishing ensemble, commenting that he never realised how much he liked fishing until he knew how much shopping it involved<sup>113</sup>). Captain Amelia seems particularly amused by Doppler, smirking at him, poking fun at his ineptitude by adjusting his ridiculous costume so that he at least is wearing it correctly, and shortly after they come on board and Doppler nearly lets slip in front of the crew that Jim has a treasure map, the captain expresses her poor opinion of him in no uncertain terms; speaking slowing and enunciating her words in a way which implies her doubt that he will understand her if she speaks normally (and her normal speech is fairly fast, clipped, and precise), “Doctor, to muse and blabber about a treasure map in front of this particular crew demonstrates a level of ineptitude that borders on the imbecilic ... and I mean that in a very caring way”. Doppler is insulted by her attitude toward him and tries to retort, but Amelia never gives him the chance. He storms off, fuming “That woman! That feline! *Who* does she think is working for *whom*?” Doppler proves his worth to Amelia and the ship later, though, when a star they are sailing near begins to go supernova, but then implodes upon itself, transforming into a black hole. The ship is in danger of being sucked into the black hole, but it is Doppler’s knowledge of mathematics, physics, and astronomy which enables him to see that there is a chance for them to save themselves

113 *Frasier*, Season 2, Episode 20, “Breaking the Ice”, Original US Air Date 18 April 1995.

if they can ride the star's last explosive wave out of range of the black hole that is forming. In essence, his knowledge and quick thinking, combined with Amelia's knowledge as a sailor and a captain, work together to save the ship, with only one man lost (and that happens when one of the evil crew cuts Mr. Arrow's lifeline when the first mate has fallen overboard, not as a result of Doppler's actions).

It is at this moment that Doppler and Captain Amelia begin to see one another differently, and in much more favourable terms. This change in their relationship will become of great importance later, when they and Jim are forced to flee the ship when the pirates mutiny. Captain Amelia throws Doppler a pistol, but (unsurprisingly) he has no experience with them. When they are forced to shoot at the pirates while freeing their longboat from its moorings in the *Legacy's* hull, Doppler is just as amazed as Amelia when he manages to hit a small target which saves them, and begins firing back at the pirates with greater confidence. One of the pirates fires the ship's cannon at the boat, and though they avoid taking a direct hit, the longboat is clipped nonetheless and Amelia is hurt. She lands the ship successfully, but is injured enough that she must send Jim to look for a safer place for them to hide, and Doppler sets about tending to her wound. Once Jim has found a place for them to take shelter (B.E.N.'s home, where they can defend themselves while Amelia recovers from her wound), we next see Doppler carrying Amelia in his arms as she is still in a bad way (though we see that he has done his best to bandage her wound). When B.E.N. sees Doppler carrying Amelia and then gently laying her down, he comments, "Isn't that sweet! I find old-fashioned romance so touching, don't you? How about drinks for the happy couple?" It is the second time in the film that Doppler has been paired mistakenly with a female character: the first time was when Jim is brought home by the police and they ask whether he is Jim's father. In that scene, when he and Sarah Hawkins deny this and confirm that he is just an old family friend, we hear Sarah accidentally let slip, "Eew!" at the thought of being married to Doppler (and certainly he is no one's idea of handsome, given that he seems to be a somewhat canine-inspired humanoid: he has long, floppy ears and a large, brown dog nose). But in this instance, rather than look repulsed or irritated, Amelia looks at him fondly, with soft eyes, just as Doppler tells B.E.N. that they're not a couple. The realisation that Amelia is not repulsed by him seems to catch Doppler off guard, and he turns his attention to the markings on the walls and ceiling of B.E.N.'s home. The diversion works only for a moment; Amelia sits up to tell Jim to keep a lookout, but when she



winces from the pain, Doppler tells her to lay back down and stop giving orders. Rather than take offense, she looks at him, and says, almost flirtatiously, "Very forceful, doctor. Go on – say something else." The shot cuts back to Doppler, who is looking at her with great affection; the two are beginning to realise that they are falling for one another. A short while later, when Amelia, losing her train of thought, comments, "Doctor, you have wonderful eyes", Doppler cannot help but cry out, "She's lost her mind!" When Jim implores him to help Amelia, we are treated to another comic moment: a brief *Star Trek* reference ("Dang it, Jim, I'm an astronomer, not a doctor!"), then a dissembling ("I mean I *am* a doctor, but not *that* kind of doctor. I mean, I have a doctorate, it's not the same thing – you can't *help* people with a doctorate, you just sit there, and you're useless ..."). Later, after Doppler, Amelia, Jim, and B.E.N. have been captured by Silver, he and Amelia sit in a boat, tied back to back, while the pirates revel in the treasure. Doppler laments to Amelia, "All my life I dreamed of an adventure like this. I'm just sorry I couldn't have been more helpful to you." It is at this moment that he realises that his wrists are too thin to be bound up properly, and he is able to get his hands free. He then taunts the pirate standing guard over them, takes his gun, and rescues himself and Amelia. They retrieve the Legacy and come to the rescue of Jim and Silver, having already picked up B.E.N. and the surviving pirates (whom they secure in the hold). Once they are free of Treasure Planet and safely home, Doppler and Amelia embrace. They don't kiss, but they look at each other in such a way as to imply that they now recognise that they are a couple. How do we know it all works out for the couple? In the final scene, at the party celebrating the opening of the rebuilt Benbow inn, we see that Doppler is holding three infants who look like Amelia, while she cradles one who looks like Doppler. They have found love, started a family, and – it is heavily implied – will live happily ever after.

It is interesting, given Jim Hawkins' age, that a romantic element was displaced onto Doppler, elevating him from mere sidekick or secondary character to a level almost equal with Jim, and equal to that of John Silver in terms of character development. It is not a plotline which is original to the novel or found in Disney's 1950 adaptation; Doppler seems to be fulfilling the role of Squire Trelawney (and to a lesser extent, Dr. Livesy), and the captain in the original, Captain Smollett, is male (and particularly given the 1950s, and especially the late Victorian era, when Stevenson's 1883 novel was published, a romance between two male characters would be unthinkable). Disney seems to have decided that the film needed a romance, but rather than alter the storyline

further and provide a romantic partner for Jim, instead the characters of Doppler and Amelia were created. Perhaps the thinking was that a romantic interest for Jim would create too many tensions with and distractions from the father-son relationship he creates with Silver; as it is, very little of the romance is shown on screen, only a few loving looks and, later, a litter of babies (litter being the appropriate word, given Doppler's canine aspects and Amelia's feline traits). So while Doppler may not be the most dashing of our heroes, nonetheless he provides the narrative with the means to get Jim off on his adventure, with a strong degree of comic relief, and with a figure to use to allow for the obligatory romantic subplot to be developed. Interestingly, he also helps to mitigate the incredibly strong, independent character of Captain Amelia: he feminizes her and softens her, and by creating a heteronormative relationship with her, then creating a family with her, he domesticates her in a very real, tangible way. Nonetheless, in our final shots of the couple, Amelia is still dressed in a captain's uniform: becoming a mother has not meant giving up her career, and presumably Doppler supports her in this.

### Street Smart Scamps

Our next two heroes have in common the fact that, at the start of each character's narrative, he makes his living as a thief. Not only that, he is good at it. He is charming, intelligent, quick-witted, and fast, which makes him able avoid capture by the authorities. Neither is a thief because he is "bad", however. Both are orphans, both have found themselves in difficult situations, and both have turned to stealing out of necessity. It is when they each find love – and this love inspires them to find a better way of living – that the two will become their best selves, each finding strengths they had been unaware of, and each stopping a villain who targets the woman he loves. In the process, each will be elevated to the role of prince: but true love with a good woman and finding the best in themselves – not the princesses they each help – is their real reward.

Aladdin is introduced to us in an opening monologue by a market trader as "a diamond in the rough": he is called a "street rat" and a "thief". When we first meet him, Aladdin is working the marketplace, fleeing from the guards after stealing a loaf of bread (and marvelling that such a small theft is getting such attention). The fact is that this is far from Aladdin's first brush with the law: as he says in the song "One Jump Ahead", the number he sings during this scene, "Gotta steal to eat/Gotta eat to live". He (and

his monkey, Abu) are highly-skilled thieves with an enormous amount of practice. Yet at the conclusion of the scene, when Aladdin and Abu have managed to elude the guards and find a safe place to eat they see two small children scavenging in the rubbish and finding nothing. Aladdin has worked hard to steal the loaf of bread, and definitely is hungry, but he cannot resist giving his entire portion of the loaf to the children (he then persuades the much more reluctant Abu to give them his portion, too). The impression we are given is that here is a young boy, alone in the world (we learn in the song "One Jump Ahead" that he has no parents), doing what he must to survive but never letting go of his more noble instincts. He dreams of being more than he is – of being better – but at the start of the film, it is clear that he confuses being "better" with being rich. This, presumably, is because he is shown to be conflicted about having to be a thief; being rich and living in the palace would mean that he would never have to steal again.

When he first sees Princess Jasmine (who has disguised herself so that she might explore the marketplace for the first time), Aladdin is overwhelmed by her beauty. He watches her, and sees when she gets in trouble for stealing when she gives an apple to a child but has no money to pay for it (having never been outside the palace before, she was unaware that she needed to carry money to pay for things). The vender grabs her arm to cut off her hand (as punishment for thievery), when Aladdin comes to her rescue, pretending that she is his insane sister. He brings her back to his home, and the two bond over the fact that each feels trapped in his/her life. They may come from different worlds, but they are the same in spirit.

Meanwhile, Jafar, the Sultan's evil advisor, has realised that Aladdin is the "diamond in the rough" who can retrieve a magic lamp from the Cave of Wonders. Jafar kidnaps Aladdin, tells Jasmine that he has been beheaded for kidnapping her, and sends him into the cave. After a series of mishaps (caused mostly by Abu, who is tempted by the treasure around them, tries to take a jewel, and brings about the destruction of the magical cave), Aladdin finds himself trapped in the cave, his only company Abu and a sentient magic carpet they have found and befriended. It is then that Aladdin realises that Abu has the lamp: he takes it and tries to polish off some dirt to read the inscription, and ends up releasing Genie. Aladdin demonstrates his cleverness by tricking Genie into getting everyone out of the cave but not using one of his three wishes to do it. He promises to free Genie using his third wish, but uses his first to be turned into a prince – Prince



Ali Ababwa – so that he might be eligible to court Jasmine (by law, we are told, a princess can only marry a prince).

Initially, Aladdin works hard to seem like a “true” prince, arriving at the palace with overwhelming pomp and speaking with a kind of macho bravado that he thinks shows his power and wealth. But it is only when (as Genie keeps telling him) he lets down his guard and is himself with Jasmine (mostly; he still lies and tells her that he was a prince in disguise in the marketplace, rather than admit that he is a street rat disguised as a prince) that Jasmine lets down her guard. As they ride together on the magic carpet, singing “A Whole New World” as they fly over foreign, exotic lands, the two fall in love. An hour into the film, with nearly thirty minutes left of the narrative, the two share a kiss – a very unusual move in this genre, given that the couple typically share their first kiss as the film draws to a close.

Unfortunately, the elation of falling in love is quickly shattered for Aladdin when he is kidnapped (again) by Jafar (only this time, Jafar believes he is kidnapping a prince who will ruin his chance to marry Jasmine and become sultan himself; he believes Aladdin to have been killed in the collapse of the Cave of Wonders). Jafar’s thugs tie him up and throw him over a cliff into the water to drown, but fortunately Genie’s lamp was hidden under his turban, and so Genie is able to save his life and return Aladdin to the palace. He arrives just as the Sultan, under Jafar’s hypnotic control, tells Jasmine that she must marry Jafar. Realising what is happening, Aladdin accuses Jafar of trying to have him killed, and breaks Jafar’s magical staff, thereby breaking his hold on the Sultan. They have the guards arrest him, but Jafar manages to escape and disappears. The Sultan realises that Aladdin (or Prince Ali, as he thinks he is) and Jasmine are in love, and he declares that they will be married at once, telling Aladdin that someday he will become Sultan. Aladdin’s reaction here is key: intrigued and excited at the idea of being sultan, he is shown to have doubts as he hears the Sultan tell him, “A fine, upstanding youth such as yourself, a person of your unimpeachable moral character, is exactly what this kingdom needs”. As the sultan speaks, Aladdin’s face falls: he cannot help but be aware of the deception he is committing, and what it says about his character. When we see him next, he is trying to figure out a way to tell the sultan the truth; when the Genie congratulates Aladdin on his success, Aladdin becomes angry: Genie reminds Aladdin that he had promised to use his third wish to set Genie free (his first wish was to become prince; the second – which Genie claimed Aladdin had assented to – was to rescue Aladdin from drowning when

Jafar's men threw him over a cliff), but Aladdin refuses:

Aladdin: Look, I'm sorry, I really am. But they wanna make me sultan. No – they wanna make "Prince Ali" sultan. Without you, I'm just Aladdin

Genie: Al, you *won*!

Aladdin: Because of *you*! The only reason anyone thinks I'm worth anything is because of you. What if they find out I'm not really a prince? What if Jasmine finds out? I'd lose her. Genie, I can't keep this up on my own. I can't wish you free.

Genie: Fine. I understand. After all, you've lied to everyone else. Hey, I was beginning to feel left out. Now if you'll excuse me ... "master" ... [With a mock bow, Genie vanishes into the lamp.]

Aladdin speaks in an angry tone, but it is plain from his facial and body language that he is upset, and that he hates having to lie, feels terrible about having to go back on his promise to Genie, and is scared of losing Jasmine, whom he loves genuinely. He tries to apologise, but Genie will not accept it. Realising he has done wrong, he decides to tell Jasmine the truth.

When Aladdin goes to find Jasmine, Iago sneaks into his room and steals the lamp, bringing it to Jafar. Jafar rubs the lamp, bringing Genie under his command. Jafar makes his first wish to become sultan, and his second to become the most powerful sorcerer in the world. He then reveals to Jasmine that "Prince Ali" is the street urchin Aladdin, throws the boy into one of the palace's towers, and fires it off like a rocket. It comes to land in a far off, snow-covered place. Aladdin survives the journey, and finds himself alone in a frozen wasteland with Abu. He had been prepared to tell Jasmine the truth, and realises that, had he kept his promise to Genie and set him free, none of this would have happened. Vowing to set things right, Aladdin begins to make his way out. He discovers that the carpet is also with them, and so Aladdin and Abu hop aboard and they head back to Agrabah. When they arrive, they see that Jafar is abusing the sultan and Jasmine. He has just ordered Genie to make Jasmine fall in love with him; the genie tries to remind him that he cannot grant such a wish, and Jafar begins bullying Genie, ordering him to grant the wish. Jasmine then sees Aladdin and the others, but they signal to her not to reveal that they've returned, and so she pretends that Genie has granted Jafar's wish and, in a moment played very much for laughs, begins complementing Jafar on his most unattractive traits. Just then, Genie, too, realises that Aladdin has returned. He is thrilled to see Aladdin, but warns him that he can do nothing to help Aladdin so long as he is under Jafar's com-

mand. Aladdin, however, has regained his self-confidence. He reminds Genie that, as a street rat, he is a good improviser, and very nearly manages to grab hold of Genie's lamp, but Jafar sees Aladdin's reflection in Jasmine's crown and stops him with his sorcerer's power. Nonetheless, each of the characters continues trying to get hold of the lamp, but Jafar stops them at every turn, laughing manically. Aladdin calls him out, daring Jafar to fight him directly rather than using his powers, but Jafar transforms himself into a giant cobra and tries to kill Aladdin.

As a street rat, one of Aladdin's greatest resources is his cleverness and his ability to con people by using their own foibles against them (we saw this earlier, when he tricks Genie into getting them safely out of the Cave of Wonders without using one of his wishes). He reminds Jafar that, while he may be an all-powerful sorcerer, it was Genie who gave him that power, and therefore Genie could take it away. This goads Jafar into wishing to become a genie himself, just as Aladdin had wished. The others are horrified, and it is with the greatest reluctance that Genie grants the wish. But just as Aladdin remembered, being a genie may come with "Phenomenal cosmic powers", but it also comes with "itty bitty living space". In other words, by tricking Jafar into becoming a genie, Aladdin has made Jafar become a slave trapped inside a tiny lamp, unable to use his powers except at someone else's command, and only if they call him forth from the lamp. Genie proclaims Aladdin a genius, and order is restored.

But the restoration of order means that Aladdin is no longer Ali the prince, and therefore means that, by law, he and Jasmine cannot marry. Not at all angry that Aladdin pretended to be a prince to get close to her (since she knows that he did it because of his true feelings for her rather than as a ploy for wealth and power), Jasmine laments the law that keeps them apart. Genie reminds Aladdin that he has one wish left and can wish to be made a prince again, but Aladdin reminds him that he had promised to free Genie with his third wish. Aladdin gently refuses. He tells Jasmine that he loves her, but "I got to stop pretending to be something I'm not". He then wishes Genie free. It is a selfless and noble action, and also a kind of sacrifice, since Aladdin believes that honouring his promise to Genie means that he will never be able to be with the woman he loves. Genie is exultant, and Aladdin is truly happy for him, even if his happiness is bittersweet since it means giving up Jasmine; it also means giving up his friend Genie, since now Genie, no longer enslaved to whomever possesses the lamp, can go wherever he wishes. Genie hugs Aladdin, saying that no matter what, Aladdin will



always be a prince to him. The sultan, who has stood by quietly throughout the scene, suddenly speaks up. Telling Aladdin, that "You've certainly proven your worth as far as I'm concerned", he declares that the old law is dead, and that the princess may marry whomever she deems worthy. Jasmine chooses Aladdin, and the film ends with a brief reprise of "A Whole New World" as the two – now officially a married couple – fly off into the moonlight on the magic carpet.

Essentially, Aladdin cannot win – he cannot make his dreams of success come true and be with the woman he loves – so long as he hides his true nature. What is interesting is that his pretending to be Prince Ali is not the first deception we witness Aladdin commit in the film: the first is when he pretends to be *nothing more than* a thief and a conman. Aladdin is a noble, kind, generous, and honest young man, but feels that he has no choice but to use his intelligence and cleverness – his "street smarts" – to steal. He tries to justify this, mostly to himself, when he says in the song "One Jump Ahead" that "I steal only what I can't afford – and that's everything!" He leads the guards on a merry chase through the marketplace and surrounding houses, at one point singing to them, "Gotta eat to live/Gotta steal to eat/Otherwise we'd get along!" The line could be said to be an acknowledgement that his thievery is the one wrong he is committing, and it is an arguable wrong, given that he steals only what he needs to be able to survive, not to profit. This point is further emphasised later, when Aladdin gives the loaf to the pair of orphan children, then defends them further when a prince on his way to the palace to woo Jasmine nearly whips them for being in his path. Aladdin jumps in front of the whip, letting it curl around his arm and yanking it out of the prince's hand, lambasting him that "If I were as rich as you, I could afford some manners!" before throwing the whip back at him. The prince pushes Aladdin into the mud and Aladdin jeers him, saying, "Look at that, Abu – it's not every day you see a horse with *two* rear ends!" The prince turns on him angrily: "You are a worthless street rat. You were born a street rat, you'll die a street rat, and only your fleas will mourn you." He rides through the gates, which slam shut in Aladdin's face. *This* wounds Aladdin, and he sings the song "Street Urchins":

Riff raff – street rat –  
I don't buy that.  
If only they'd look closer.  
Would they see a poor boy?  
No, siree –  
They'd find out there's so much more to me!

It indicates that Aladdin is deceiving everyone around him by being a thief, and in many ways he is deceiving himself, too. He is better than the life he leads, but he tells himself that he has no alternative, just as later he tells himself that there is no other way to be with Jasmine than to pretend to be a prince and ask Genie to transform him into one. Aladdin achieves success only when he uses the clever intelligence he has gained from his life on the streets and combines it with the noble part of his character that only drew notice when he pretended to be Prince Ali. It is similar to the scenario in *Mulan*, which I discussed at length in *Good Girls & Wicked Witches*, in which Mulan achieves the final victory over the Hun not in her disguise as Ping, but rather as the Mulan who has revealed that she is also Ping, the “boy” who thwarted the Hun and defeated them in battle by causing them to be buried under an avalanche.<sup>114</sup> Whereas Mulan cross-dresses in her film because she finds herself in a desperate situation and must disguise herself in order to save her father’s life, Aladdin, by dressing as a prince, cross dresses not across gender, but across class, and does so because he, too, is in a desperate situation: he is an orphan, stealing to live, being pursued by the palace guards, and unable to be with his true love because she significantly outranks him and is forbidden by the laws of the kingdom from being with a man who is not a prince. Yes, there is a strong element of social climbing in his cross-class dressing, but his situation makes it more than something he does simply to make his life better materially. It is also about him achieving the opportunity to be the man he truly is. When he is Aladdin the street rat, then Prince Ali, he is still a diamond in the rough. Once he proves that he is willing to sacrifice all that is most precious to him so that he can remain true to himself and keep his promises, it is then that his best self can be revealed. This is shown, symbolically, by the final costume we see him wear in the film. His rags as an urchin included a fez-type hat and a vest with no shirt, and were ragged and patched. His Prince Ali costume was exaggeratedly blousy and full, and he was covered almost completely, so that even his turban had a long piece of fabric that concealed his neck. He struggled constantly to keep his turban from flying off, demonstrating that it was not his natural costume. But when he is Aladdin, the consort of Jasmine, he wears a nicer version of his street urchin rags, though with touches of the embellishments of his Prince Ali costume: long sleeves and large gold-coloured, exaggerated shoulder pieces (a cross between wings and epaulettes) but an open jacket with no shirt and a larger, nicer fez-type hat. It is like the finery of a nobleman, but understated, and worn as if it is as comfortable as the rags he wore at the film’s

<sup>114</sup> Davis, *Good Girls & Wicked Witches*, pp. 197–200.

beginning. It is emblematic of the true Aladdin, and it is in this that he can fly away with Jasmine into the whole new world of their life together.

Flynn Rider, our other thief who reforms himself when inspired by his love for a good woman, likewise must learn to be his true self – his best self – in order to live happily ever after with the film's heroine, Rapunzel. Flynn and Rapunzel balance one another well. They could be described accurately as the co-stars of *Tangled* (2010). Rapunzel, who has spent her life in a tall tower hidden away in the woods, has grown up knowing only her "mother" (really her kidnapper), Mother Gothel, and Pascal, her pet chameleon. She has no idea of her true identity, knows nothing of the world outside, and dreams of someday journeying to see the mysterious lights that float up into the sky every year on her birthday. Flynn, on the other hand, grew up in an orphanage and is now a thief who roams the kingdom, conceals his true identity behind the name and persona of a character called Flynn Rider (about whom he used to tell stories to the other children in the orphanage), and dreams only of being very rich. In this version of the tale, Rapunzel has magical hair. When her mother was pregnant, she became very ill and nearly died, but was saved by drinking a brew made from a magical flower which had grown from a drop of sunlight. For many centuries, this flower had been guarded jealously by Mother Gothel, who would perform a spell with it in which she would sing to the flower and it would restore her youth. The queen is healed by the flower, and soon gives birth to Rapunzel. Mother Gothel sneaks into the royal family's bedroom not long after Rapunzel is born, intending to steal a lock of the child's golden hair, knowing that it contains the flower's magic properties. But when she cuts the lock of hair, it turns brown and loses its magic. Mother Gothel kidnaps Rapunzel so that she may continue to restore her own youth, and raises Rapunzel as her daughter. Though she expresses love to Rapunzel through a charming back-and-forth ("I love you. I love you more. I love you most."), she constantly belittles the girl, too, weakening her self-confidence so that she will be too fearful ever to leave the tower.

Interestingly, all of this is told to us at the start of the film, mostly in voice-over narration, by Flynn Rider himself. It is an unusual touch that a character would narrate his own film. Up until *Tangled*, the closest any other films come to this is the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" segment of *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* (1949), and even here it is only that all of the voices and narration are done by Bing Crosby.<sup>115</sup> Having Flynn to begin the

<sup>115</sup> In 2012, however, *Wreck-It Ralph* would, like Flynn, narrate his film's opening and conclusion.



telling of the story – and especially to have him tell Rapunzel’s story – is a particularly interesting touch. Though we see his version of her life confirmed by the animation (rather than contradicted, as in the disparity between what “Don Lockwood”, played by Gene Kelly, tells us about his life, which is false, and the images we see, which are true, in the opening scene of *Singin’ in the Rain*, 1952), it still privileges Flynn’s position in the narration. His framing of the story further privileges him since, rather than begin by telling us about the little girl we are watching grow up, then introducing himself, his opening line for the film, as the camera moves forward and comes to focus on a wanted poster of Flynn hanging on a tree, is, “This is the story of how I died”. It certainly grabs the audience’s attention. Of course, he quickly follows this line, in a much lighter tone, by saying, “But don’t worry, this is a fun story, and the truth is, it isn’t even mine. This is the story of a girl named Rapunzel.” Nonetheless, Flynn’s claim that it is his story, yet not his story, is distracting. Of course, as it turns out, both his statements are true: Rapunzel’s story *is* also the story of how he dies, not least because he dies to free her from Mother Gothel’s clutches. As was said above, they are equally the narrative’s focus, and have roughly equal screen time, most of it spent in each other’s presence. Each learns from the other and grows to be a stronger, better person with greater self-knowledge and strength, and it is thanks to each other that they both find their roles in the world as well as their love for each other.

We get to meet Rapunzel first, visually: we see her childhood as part of the film’s prologue, and then meet her properly a few days before her eighteenth birthday in a scene in which she sings about how she fills her days with a million activities, trying to stave off boredom as she asks, “When will my life begin?” We also learn of her fascination with the lights she sees every year on her birthday, and how she longs to go and see them up close someday. As the scene ends, we then move to much more dynamic action as we see three men scuttling about on the roof of a castle. We quickly learn that one of them is Flynn, a handsome, rather rakish young man with a sense of humour and a cocky but charming demeanour. It turns out that the three are there to steal something from the castle’s throne room, which they do. The film then cuts back to Rapunzel as she plans to ask Mother Gothel to let her go and see the floating lights for her eighteenth birthday. In a song befitting a Broadway diva in which she recounts the terrible things out in the world, Mother Gothel sings “Mother Knows Best”, then warns menacingly that Rapunzel must never again ask to leave the tower. Mother Gothel then departs, and Rapunzel

is left on her own. This sets us up for Flynn's attempt (along with the Stabington brothers) to escape the pursuing palace guards. He tricks the brothers and gets away from them with the loot, but the guards catch up to him. He manages to knock one of the guards off his horse and jump on its back, but the horse, Maximus, screeches to a halt: an unusually intelligent horse with a strong sense of justice, the horse continues the attempt to capture Flynn, knocking the bag with the loot out onto a tree limb. Both Flynn and Maximus climb out onto the limb after it, but the branch breaks and they fall deep into a canyon. Miraculously, neither is hurt, but they are separated. Maximus, sniffing the ground like a dog, continues to pursue Flynn, who has managed to hide behind some vines. It is then that he stumbles into the valley and spots Rapunzel's tower. He climbs up it, hops into a window, closes the shutters, and gazes into the bag, saying, "Alone at last!" He is then knocked out by Rapunzel, who hits him in the head with a cast iron frying pan. She has never seen a man before, and he is not nearly as horrific as she had been led to believe men are, but she is still frightened of him, so as he comes to, she knocks him out again and bundles him into her closet. It is then that she comes across his loot, a bejewelled crown which, it turns out suits her perfectly. Mother Gothel returns, and Rapunzel is about to tell her about this strange man in her closet, when Mother Gothel flies into a rage. Realising that her only hope of seeing the outside world is to keep secret what she has found, she sends Mother Gothel to bring her some special white paint for her birthday – paint that it will take Mother Gothel three days' journey to get. She then ties up Flynn and waits for him to regain consciousness. Flynn tries to charm her: it is clear that this technique has worked on other women he has met, and he assumes that Rapunzel will be no different. But just because she has never seen a man before does not mean that she is overwhelmed by him. Whereas the male characters who had been raised in isolation from other humans (which we discussed in the previous chapter) – Pecos Bill, Mowgli, and Tarzan – are overcome the first time they encounter a human female, Rapunzel's first encounter with a human male is very different. She finds him strange, and it takes some convincing before she believes that he has not come to steal her hair. When he tries to "smoulder" at her, she is unmoved and unimpressed. For her, meeting Flynn is not the cause of her first stirrings of desire or the awakening of passion: he is an unknown quantity, and she decides to trust him only up to a point, and only because she needs someone to guide her in the strange world outside her tower. She makes a deal with him: he will take her to see the

lanterns and bring her back home safely, and she will return his satchel. Eventually, he agrees.

Instead, what overwhelms her is her first experience of the world outside her tower: the first time her bare foot touches the grass, the first time she experiences freedom. It sets her on an emotional rollercoaster where she goes between exhilaration and guilt, Flynn waiting patiently for her to settle down. Initially, he tries to manipulate her into returning early, but it backfires. He then tries taking her to a tavern which is the hangout of murderers and thieves (with the incongruous and comic name of “The Snuggly Duckling”), but though frightened initially by the men she meets, she soon has them all charmed, as they sing together about each of their life-long dreams (in the song “I’ve Got a Dream”). The ruffians then help Rapunzel and Flynn escape when the palace guard shows up. It is in this scene, as they escape the guard, and in particular when they become trapped in a cave that is filling up with water, that they begin to share with each other – and with us – what has led them to this point. It is in this scene that we learn that Flynn’s real name is Eugene Fitzherbert, and it is at this point that Rapunzel reveals to Flynn that her hair is magical and glows when she sings. She uses it soon after they escape to heal his injured hand. She begs him, “Don’t freak out”, but of course he does, comically trying to act nonchalant as he asks her questions about it, his tense body language and his voice (which sounds like it is on the edge of a scream) betraying just how thrown off he is by this revelation about Rapunzel. His shock changes quickly to sympathy, though, when he realises that, because of her hair and Mother Gothel’s “protection”, she has never before left her tower. It is the first open, honest conversation the two have, and their relationship – as well as Flynn’s motivations and intentions – change as a result. He admits that he took his name from a book, *The Tales of Flynnnagan Rider*, and talks about how Flynnnagan had enough money to do whatever he wanted to do, saying that, “For a kid with nothing, I don’t know, I ... Just seemed like the better option”. For Flynn, his dream of enormous wealth is not a selfish or stupid dream, as it turns out; it is a dream which equates wealth with freedom, something he has never really had. It is this lack of freedom – this being trapped in a life from which they can see no means of permanent escape (after all, Rapunzel feels as though she will have to return to her tower once she has seen up close the mysterious lights) – that unites them and helps them realise that they are the same, even if the forms their entrapments have taken have been very different. They have come to care for one another, however, and it is within their growing feelings for one another



that the two are able to find freedom, symbolised by the song that we hear sung by Rapunzel and Flynn in duet, first as voice-over narration/internal monolog, then out loud to each other, "I See the Light". Initially, Rapunzel is mesmerized by the lights; she then turns to Flynn, and he gives her a lantern, too, so that each has one, and they release them. They then begin singing to one another as they fall in love. In terms of its narrative importance, and in touches of its *mise-en-scène*, it is reminiscent of Aladdin's and Jasmine's duet, "A Whole New World". As in that film, the realisation of their love leads to a moment of crisis: in this case, Rapunzel is tricked into believing that Flynn has abandoned her (really, he has been knocked unconscious and tied to the wheel of a ship so that it looks as though he is sailing away intentionally), and so she returns to the waiting arms of Mother Gothel, who has used the Stabington brothers to get Rapunzel back. Flynn crashes into the side of the castle, where he is captured and, guilty of stealing the crown, he is about to be executed. Back home, it is then that Rapunzel realises that she is the lost princess (since she finally is able to put together various clues that have presented themselves to her during her day in the kingdom). Likewise, as he is being led to his execution, Flynn realises that Rapunzel, back with Mother Gothel, is in danger. Flynn is rescued by the ruffians from the Snuggly Duckling; they reunite him with Maximus (who has helped him help Rapunzel get to the kingdom to see the lanterns), who gets him safely from the castle and to Rapunzel's tower. He goes to rescue her, and is tricked into the tower by Mother Gothel; having bound and gagged Rapunzel, she mortally stabs Flynn as soon as he enters the tower. Mother Gothel then prepares to take Rapunzel away, vowing that they will go somewhere that they can never be found. Rapunzel makes a deal with her, however, to save Flynn's life:

Mother Gothel: Rapunzel, really – enough already! Stop fighting me!

Rapunzel: No! I won't stop! For every minute of the rest of my life, I will fight! I will never stop trying to get away from you! But if you let me save him, I will go with you.

Flynn: (Weakly) No! No, Rapunzel.

Rapunzel: I'll never run. I'll never try to escape. Just let me heal him, and you and I will be together – forever, just like you want. Everything will be the way it was. I promise. Just like you want. Just let me heal him.

Mother Gothel relents, and Rapunzel goes to him to heal his wound. He begs her not to, saying that healing him would mean her (metaphorical) death. He leans in as if he is about to kiss her,

but gathers up her hair in his hand and uses a shard from a broken mirror to cut it off. It turns dark brown and loses its magic. Mother Gothel instantly begins to age rapidly; she falls backward out of the tower window, but is dust before she hits the ground. Rapunzel tries desperately to heal him, but he stops her, telling her that she was his new dream. She replies that he was hers. He smiles weakly, then dies. She sings faintly the old song that made her hair's magical powers activate, and a tear drops from her eye onto his cheek. It sends a light through him which fills him and the room with golden threads, healing his wound and restoring him to life. They embrace and kiss. Shortly afterward, they journey back to the castle, and Rapunzel is reunited with her parents, the king and queen. They embrace, and pull Flynn into their family hug. The lost Princess Rapunzel is home, and the orphan Eugene has a family who loves him.

The film closes with voice-over from Flynn/Eugene again, describing the kingdom's celebration of Rapunzel's return. We learn what came next for various characters, to include Flynn, who says of himself, "I started going by Eugene again, stopped thieving and, basically, turned it all around. But I know what the big question is: did Rapunzel and I ever get married? Well I'm pleased to tell you that, after years and years of asking and asking and asking ... I finally said yes." We hear Rapunzel chastise him indulgently, and he admits that he asked her. The two agree that they are living happily ever after. Flynn still gets the last word, but we do hear briefly from Rapunzel in the final narration, presumably implying that they are equals within their relationship. We are informed, however, that it is Rapunzel who would rule the kingdom after her parents: no mention is made of Eugene ruling, even alongside her. This is not commented on in any way by the narrative, however: they are simply shown to be in love, happy, teasing one another and enjoying each other's company as friends, as well as being deeply in love with one another and passionate about each other. In this respect, they differ greatly from Aladdin and Jasmine: like Jasmine, Rapunzel is the daughter of the ruler of the kingdom. Unlike Jasmine, no law requires her to marry (she marries solely because she has fallen in love), and Rapunzel can rule her kingdom in her own right; Aladdin may become Sultan because he marries Jasmine, but Flynn/Eugene does not become King because he marries Rapunzel. Though the eighteen years that separate these two films may, in many respects, have seen feminism lose ground in the real world for real women, things have become better for Disney's heroines ... or at least for the princesses who marry thieves.

## Action Men

John Smith, the hero of *Pocahontas* (1995) is introduced early on in the film as a dynamic action man. When he arrives at the dock to board the ship bound for Virginia, Smith strides confidently forward, his back to the camera. We see a long rifle slung across his back, and a small amount of gear, but very little else: Smith travels light, and he travels fast. When he arrives, the sailors all know him by reputation if not personally, and they are impressed and pleased that he is joining them. One says proudly, "You can't fight Indians without John Smith!" and Smith replies, "That's right! I'm not about to let you boys have all the fun!" It is easy, light-hearted banter, and shows Smith to be at ease with the sailors under his command (he is *Captain* Smith, after all, and so is in charge of the ship). Rather than walk up the gangplank, Smith stands on one of the cannons being hoisted onto the deck: he looks comfortable in that position, as if this is neither showing off nor playing around, but simply an expression of his athletic and adventuresome nature. This immediately contrasts him with Governor Ratcliffe, who arrives just after we see Smith board the ship. He is brought to the ship in a stately carriage with plumes adorning the roof, and walks along a carpet with an honour guard saluting him on either side. Whereas Ratcliffe is pampered, pompous, and aloof, Smith mixes well with the men on the ship, working alongside them and leading them in particular during a terrible storm, when a young crewman, Thomas, is washed overboard but saved by Smith, who ties a lifeline around his waist and dives in after the boy. It is a heroic rescue that only a true action man could have achieved, and ties in with the persona at that time of Mel Gibson, who provided the voice for Smith, and with the various action heroes he had played up to that time, including Max in the *Mad Max* trilogy (1979, 1981, 1985), Martin Riggs in the *Lethal Weapon* films (1987, 1989, 1992), and, a little less than a month before *Pocahontas*' debut, as William Wallace in *Braveheart* (1995). Though he played other sorts of characters, too, these were amongst the roles with which he was most associated in the mid-1990s, and he was a popular, respected Hollywood actor, an earthy, heroic type more than willing to roll up his sleeves and get to work.

Yet even with his hands-on approach and adventurous spirit, Smith is shown to be unprepared for what awaits him in Virginia, especially his meeting with Pocahontas. She and her tribe, the Powhatan, are shown to live in complete harmony with nature, tending their crops, hunting and fishing, the men and women working together happily and living a good life. Of course, we



learn that they do not live in paradise: our introduction to the Powhatan tribe and its chief (who is called Powhatan because he is the leader of the people) includes the community and its leaders celebrating their victory over the Masawomecs, another tribe, who has threatened the Powhatan villages. In particular, the warrior Kocoum is singled out for praise of his role in the day-long battle. Kocoum is an important contrast to Smith, at least for Pocahontas. Her father wants her to marry Kocoum, but Pocahontas is reluctant: she finds him too serious, commenting sarcastically about the intense, stern young man, "I especially like his smile". She is drawn to Smith, however, because, while he can be serious, he also has a ready smile and enjoys laughter. He is a contrast to Kocoum, but very similar to Pocahontas: they make a loving, very compatible couple. While Smith's role within the Jamestown colony may well position him in a similar role as Kocoum – an accomplished fighter who can lead his people in battle if necessary – Smith would rather maintain peace and friendly relations, while Kocoum's first instinct is to fight. It is this instinct which will get him killed: seeing Pocahontas and Smith kissing passionately, his jealousy of Smith overpowers him and he attacks Smith, since he regards Pocahontas as his intended. Thomas, the young sailor Smith saved during the storm at sea, sees the attack and shoots Kocoum in order to defend Smith. This event – and Smith's assuming responsibility for it – will set in motion an important chain of events which will lead, ultimately, to Pocahontas saving Smith and bringing peace to the Powhatan and the British. It will allow the lessons Smith has learned from her to be shared with the British as a whole.

Of course, very little about this event changes John Smith: it is Smith's initial meeting with Pocahontas that changes his life irrevocably. When he first arrives in Virginia, he sees the "New World" as an adventure and a challenge, someplace he can explore and map. When he first begins to talk with Pocahontas, he tells her patronisingly that he and the English can instruct her people to "use this land properly – how to make the most of it", adding that the British will "build roads and decent houses". Pocahontas, however, is unimpressed with his attitude, and in the song "Colors of the Wind" she educates Smith, teaching him to empathise with and respect other groups and cultures, and to recognise that his way is not necessarily the better way, not least because he thinks of the land and animals as things that can be used and claimed and possessed, whereas she is aware of them as living things, asking in the song's prelude, "How can there be so much that you don't know you don't know?" To his credit, inspired by his growing feelings for Pocahontas and by his gen-

erally open-minded approach to life, he listens to what she has to say and begins to recognise the environment as an organism that is in balance and needs to be respected and protected. He also realises that the British have much to learn from the Powhatan. These themes of environmentalism and ecology, which are core parts of the narrative, are the most obviously didactic aspects of *Pocahontas*, and it is in the song "Colors of the Wind" that they are most apparent. But these messages are found elsewhere in the film, such as in the negative way that the narrative treats Ratcliffe's efforts to dig until gold is found, and to fell as many trees as possible, robbing the landscape of its real treasures.

Smith falls in love with Pocahontas – and she with him – fairly quickly, and it is their love which inspires them, at least in part, to try and find a way for their two peoples to get along. Eventually, each will perform a heroic act which will inspire others to do what is right: Pocahontas will throw herself over Smith to stop her father from executing him, and a few moments later Smith will throw himself in front of Chief Powhatan, taking the bullet (fired by Ratcliffe) that was meant to kill the chief. Pocahontas' bravery will stop a war from breaking out, and Smith's self-sacrifice (in which he is badly wounded but does not die) will lead to the British men's overthrow of the corrupt Governor Ratcliffe. It is by following Smith's journey – both his physical journey to and around Virginia, and his spiritual journey toward becoming in touch with the environment and learning to respect other cultures and ways of life – that the film is able to convey its messages championing environmentalism as part of a larger drive in some of its films in the 1990s.<sup>116</sup> From the perspective of a gender study focusing on masculinity, Smith functions as an example of the action man with an intelligent and open mind. He is strong and athletic, but Smith is not an example of the exaggerated hyper-masculinity of 1980s action films. He is Man as active and adventurous. Initially, he seems to be fulfilling the role of man as invader: after all, he is a leader amongst a group of men who intend to colonize and claim Virginia for their own. Naturally, the end of the film implies the historically-accurate fact, known to all watching the film, that of course the Jamestown settlement was an important step in the British gaining a foothold on North America, eventually conquering, renaming and claiming thousands of square miles of it along the eastern seaboard in what became known as the thirteen colonies, leading eventually to the founding states of the United States of America by the time of the American Revolution (1775–1783). But by following Smith's example, these first colonists learn to get along with the Powhatan (who consider the land to be theirs and initially see the

<sup>116</sup> A more in-depth discussion of this trend in Disney's animated films during the 1990s may be found in chapter four of this book in the section entitled "Enemies of the Earth".

British as a dangerous invasion ... again, not a wholly inaccurate interpretation, given the consequences of European settlement for the Native American peoples), allowing the film, at least, to end on a hopeful note.

But the film cannot end on a romantic note. There are no known versions of the myth of Pocahontas and John Smith in which the two marry (in only some of the versions do they have any kind of romantic interaction), and many, at least amongst the American target audience for the film, would have been aware both of that fact and of the historical fact that Pocahontas would marry a different Englishman, John Rolfe. Therefore, narratively, there needed to be a reason to keep this couple apart, despite the fact that much of the film is spent showing how perfect they are for each other and how much they love one another. Though the idea of sending Smith back to England to receive treatment for a gunshot wound is preposterous in the extreme for many reasons (the nature of sea voyages in the early seventeenth century, the idea that the Virginia Company would have sent a group of people to found a settlement in Virginia and *not* have sent a doctor of some sort with them ... the list goes on), it is an effective way of separating the pair. She cannot leave her people because of her leadership responsibilities, but he does not lose face as a man who cannot form a solid, loving adult relationship. Their separation comes about in the story as a result of his great heroism when he saves her father's life, as well as her sacrificing her own longing and wishes out of her duty to the Powhatan and her new role with the British settlers, who respect her as a figure of wisdom and authority. Smith and Pocahontas are an example of an idealised, egalitarian, heterosexual couple. Given the erosion of feminism that was taking place in the 1990s, perhaps the separation of the couple – narratively crucial to comply with the traditional story – also served to preserve the illusion that, had they married, they would have continued to maintain their perfectly balanced, equal relationship. It is a way to highlight the possibility of a truly equitable marriage which avoids exploring the implications this would have for gender roles within the story. Ultimately, given the romantic constraints built into the myth, the most important message for this film was not about gender roles, but instead about environmentalism.

A more obvious choice of narratives in which to discuss gender roles and the representation of masculinity is *Mulan* (1998). What it means to be male and what it means to be female are vital themes, as Mulan herself spends a large section of the film trying to pass as a young man. She disguises herself as a soldier in order



to protect her elderly, crippled father so that he will not have to re-join the army when the Huns invade China. It is a fascinating film and very enjoyable to watch, though – in reality – the same issues about how gender restricts our roles in life (and how others react to us) could have been discussed in a setting rather closer to home than medieval China. Many of the issues the film examines – what behaviours are appropriate for each gender, whether one particular gender is more suited for certain activities than the other gender, how much of gender is natural and how much is performative – continue to be discussed and debated, belying the notion, inherent to the misleading concept of Post-Feminism, namely that Feminism has succeeded, creating a society in which men and women are respected as equals in all things. This, of course, is patently (albeit sadly) not true, and does not require a story set in medieval China to illustrate it. Yet for those who cannot recognise that sexism is alive and well, perhaps seeing it depicted in an extreme form, as in *Mulan*, can help them to think about where the modern west still needs to improve.

The story of *Mulan*, essentially, is that a young woman – one who is intelligent, lively, resourceful, loving and brave – who disguises herself as a young man in order to take her elderly father's place in the army when China is under threat from the Hun. She struggles, initially, in her attempts to pass as a man, and is nearly thrown out of the army, but her determination (and desperation) both are such that she passes her army training. In battle, she proves herself again when she uses her brains to thwart the Hun and (initially) stop them. She is injured, however, and found to be a woman. The penalty for pretending to be a man is death, but her (rather dishy – yes, *Mulan* has noticed) commanding officer, Li Shang, spares her life because of her bravery and because she saved his life during the battle. After the rest of the company has moved on, she realises that the Hun were not killed, and that they are now advancing on the capital. She manages to beat them to the Imperial City and tries to tell her former comrades, but because she deceived them once, they do not believe her, initially. A few finally decide to trust her, however, including Li Shang, and together, under *Mulan*'s leadership, they are able to kill Shan-Yu, the leader of the Hun army, and save China. *Mulan* returns home, having brought honour to her family. Soon after, Li Shang arrives at *Mulan*'s house; it is obvious that he has fallen for *Mulan*, and that he respects her as an equal. Though nothing is stated, it is strongly implied that *Mulan* and Li Shang will be married, and that they will enjoy a marriage of true equals.

Having discussed the symbolic, historical, and cultural implica-

tions of Mulan's cross-dressing in *Good Girls & Wicked Witches*, I will only reiterate here that, ultimately, Mulan achieves her greatest triumph when she allows herself to be her *whole* self, utilising equally both her animus (the male side which went by the name Ping when she was in the army) and her anima (the beloved daughter and tomboy we met at the start of the film).<sup>117</sup> So what of Li Shang, the young captain of the troops who trains and leads Mulan and her fellow soldiers? We meet him when he is made captain and begins leading a unit for the first time. His excitement and eagerness at this surprise promotion come out briefly, but he quickly regains control of himself. For Shang, control and strength are enormously important parts of being a man. This is shown in the first training exercise he sets the men: shooting an arrow into the top of a pole, he has them try to climb up to retrieve the arrow while carrying two weights: one represents discipline, the other strength. One by one the men and Mulan try and fail to reach it; it becomes the ultimate goal for all the men. In the training montage which follows, Shang sings the song "I'll Make a Man Out You", and both taunts the men and teaches them what it means, by his/the army's definition, to be men. The second verse and chorus of the song are particularly instructive in this respect, and echo his focus on discipline/control and strength:

Tranquil as a forest  
 But on fire within  
 Once you find your centre  
 You are sure to win  
 You're a spineless pale, pathetic lot  
 And you haven't got a clue –  
 Somehow I'll make a man out of you!  
 (Be a man –) You must be swift as a coursing river  
 (Be a man –) With all the force of a great typhoon  
 (Be a man –) With all the strength of a raging fire  
 Mysterious as the dark side of the moon!

Mulan, of course, is the first to figure out how to use the weights to help her climb the pole (by linking them together around the pole so that they become extensions of her arms) rather than as forces which drag her down, and her success inspires the men to excel in the training programme which, before Mulan retrieved the arrow, had been rather too much for all of them. By the end of the montage, the army is well-trained, strong, and can function as a single unit. Shang has succeeded in moulding them into a strong, cohesive unit who will be able to do battle effectively.

Mulan is the main character in the film, so we see things primarily from her point of view. But we also get to know Shang in his more private moments, and are shown that he, too, must struggle

<sup>117</sup> See Davis, *Good Girls & Wicked Witches*, pp. 195–202.

with an enormous duty and responsibility while dealing with a detractor who constantly questions his ability – Chi Fu, the emperor's counsel. Shang's – and his troops' – chance to prove their worth comes when they have their first encounter with the Hun. It comes shortly after they stumble upon the burned-out ruins of a village, then a battlefield littered with dead. They discover that Shang's father was amongst the soldiers killed. Horrified by what they have found, their attitude changes from one of excitement – of seeing the war as an adventure – to one of determination to do their part to protect the emperor and save China. Very soon afterward, they are ambushed by the Hun army, who vastly outnumber them. Shang tells his men, "Prepare to fight. If we die, we die with honour". Shang intends to lead his men against the Hun in a straightforward way, but Mulan/Ping has different ideas. She fires a cannonball over the heads of the Hun, striking a snow-covered cliff which causes an avalanche and buries the Hun army deep under the snow. She is struck by Shan-Yu's sword, however, and wounded. Nonetheless, she manages to save herself, her horse, and Shang, but finally collapses from her wound. When the doctor treating her discovers that she is a woman, he informs Shang. Shang's reaction is strong. He is shocked and furious, unable to speak. We see a brief glimmer of understanding when Mulan tells him that she pretended to be a man to protect her father; having just lost his own father, this is clearly meaningful to him. He walks toward Mulan with her sword, seemingly about to execute her, but then tosses her sword on the ground in front of her, saying only, "A life for a life. My debt is repaid." He then orders the rest of his men to move out, and they leave Mulan behind without another word. Yet when all are celebrating the victory parade, Shang and the men are dejected; they have won the battle and (they think) saved China, but they have lost their friend Ping; Shang has also lost his father. When Mulan comes riding up beside him to warn him that Shan-Yu and the Hun army are on the move, he dismisses her, saying he has no reason to trust her. When Shang is presented to the emperor, he offers him Shan-Yu's sword; before the emperor can accept it, however, Shan-Yu's falcon swoops down and takes it, returning it to Shan-Yu, who is crouched nearby on the roof, hiding in the shadows. His men swarm out of nowhere and seize the emperor, dragging him into the palace, Shang and his men hot on their heels, but unable to break down the door. Mulan signals them, saying she has an idea, and her three closest comrades follow her. Shang hesitates, but soon we see him join them, though opting *not* to follow their example and dress like women so that they can sneak past the Hun.



In fact, though Shang plays an instrumental role, saving the emperor from Shan-Yu's initial onslaught, ultimately it is of course Mulan who saves the day. What shows Shang to be worthy of the status of hero is his reaction to this: he is not jealous, angered, or defensive. Very much to the contrary, he defends Mulan against Chi Fu, the emperor's counsel, who demeans Mulan by referring to her as "it" when, in replying to Shang's assertion that Mulan is a hero, replies, "'Tis a woman. She'll never be worth anything." Shang is amazed but proud when Mulan is honoured by the emperor, gracefully and willingly bowing to her, following the emperor's lead. He is proud of her, but feels awkward; we realise that it is because he has begun to feel an attraction to her (one which has grown out of his admiration and respect for her as they rescued the emperor, and combined, no doubt, with what he came to know about her when he thought she was a boy). He watches her ride away from the palace when the emperor comes to stand beside him, saying "The flower that blooms in adversity is the most rare and beautiful of all". Shang expresses his confusion, and the emperor gives his advice in a more straight-forward manner: "You don't meet a girl like that every dynasty". Shang smiles to himself; we are given the impression that the emperor's words have helped him to realise that his feelings for Mulan are honourable and good. When he shows up at Mulan's family's home shortly after she has returned, he comes on the pretext that he is returning to her the helmet she left behind, but his nervousness indicates that he has come to court Mulan, and that he will be her perfect match because he accepts her and respects her for her true self.

Both John Smith and Li Shang are the perfect balance of physically strong and emotionally sensitive. Each is a warrior, highly capable and well-trained in the skills of combat, yet each seems to be aware of the fact that fighting is at its most successful when it is avoided. Of course, for Shang, whose homeland has been invaded by a savage army, avoiding a fight is not an option: he knows that, sooner or later, his troops will find themselves in a battle. Therefore, he does everything he can to ensure that they are ready; he does this not only so that they will be able to defeat their enemy, but also so that, hopefully, they will have a chance of survival. Smith, too, is seen teaching those who lack experience (such as the young sailor, Thomas) how to shoot, and making the first attempts to show the British that the Powhatan can help them to survive in their new home. Likewise, neither Shang nor Smith is interested in monetary gain: when Smith learns from Pocahontas that there is no gold in Virginia, he merely shrugs, commenting (with a degree of amusement) that many of the men

will be disappointed. Likewise, Shang fights not for glory but out of his sense of honour and duty. He is a soldier, from a distinguished military family, and his country has been invaded by a hostile force. If he must die, he will do so readily. When he has the opportunity (if he wishes) to take credit for Mulan's victory in killing Shan-Yu, he insists that she is the hero and gives her full credit for what she has achieved, even defending her against the emperor's prejudiced, sexist counsel. When they realise that they have fallen in love with the strong, intelligent, capable woman who is at the heart of their narratives, each man is aware that this love – and this woman – is worth fighting for and dying for, and they become better men as a result of their relationships with these women. Shang and Mulan will be able to be together and happy in their love for one another, their film's ending implies. Pocahontas and Smith might have been, but circumstances outside their control have separated them forever. Each has a truly loathsome enemy to defeat, and each works (knowingly or otherwise) in conjunction with his love interest to stop the villains they face. These are action men as whole, balanced men, capable of using reason and intellect, as well as being in touch with his feelings.

### Frienemies

Our final section will look at three pairs of heroes who find themselves thrown together, linked by a common love interest (which makes them rivals) or a common goal. At the start of their stories, they are not friends. Though each scenario plays out differently, we see that the better the two men learn to work together, the better the outcome is for all involved. In the case of the first pair, Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones, however, what begins as mild antagonism only escalates; by the end of their story, the fate of Ichabod Crane is a mystery, the possibility hanging over the narrative that he, as the final line of the film suggests, "had been spirited away by the Headless Horseman".

Ichabod Crane and Brom bones are two of the leading characters in the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow", which is the second half of the 1949 package film *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad*. It is a much-loved Disney film, and as a segment was for many years shown on American television (independently of the "Wind in the Willows" half of the film) in the lead-up to Halloween. Though in recent years, and in particular outside of the United States and Canada, some may be more familiar with the Tim Burton film *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), in fact Burton's film bears only a marginal resemblance to Washington Irving's novella. The

Disney version, however, follows the story much more closely, with whole sections of Irving's prose (albeit somewhat condensed) comprising the narration performed (wonderfully!) by Bing Crosby. For those unfamiliar with this version, Ichabod Crane, an itinerate schoolteacher, arrives in the little town of Sleepy Hollow to run their schoolhouse. Ichabod is described as "a most unusual man. To see him striding along, one might well mistake him for some scarecrow eloped from a cornfield. ... Altogether, he was such an apparition as is seldom to be seen in broad daylight". In the first song of the segment, which describes the townsfolk's reaction to his arrival (and which is begun in recitative by Brom Bones, who declares, "Odds bodkins! Gadzooks! Look at that old spook of spooks!"), Ichabod, though seen as unusual, nonetheless is welcomed into the community. Shortly after we are given Ichabod's description (and just before the song about Ichabod), we are told about Brom Bones: arriving onto the scene in very dynamic fashion, galloping into town on horseback (as contrasted with Ichabod's arrival, on foot, his large nose buried in a book), we are told that Brom, "was a burly, roistering blade, always ready for a fight or a frolic". Both are shown to be popular with the residents of Sleepy Hollow: Brom is introduced to us as he joins a group of friends outside the local tavern, where they meet simply to have a drink and enjoy each other's company (and Brom's generosity is demonstrated when he makes sure that everyone present – even the dogs and his horse – are able to enjoy a beer). Ichabod is described as "the town's ladies' man, [who] gets around like nobody can". So neither is a threat to their community, and both contribute actively to its happiness and well-being. Even before they become rivals for Katrina's heart, we learn that Brom enjoys teasing Ichabod, but not in a harmful way; the narration says that, "To Ichabod, these were trifling matters, for the schoolmaster possessed a most remarkable equanimity that remained quite undisturbed".

Right from the beginning, the two men are contrasted against one another, and a dichotomy is established which, in more modern language and types, can be characterised as "nerd" (Ichabod) versus "jock" (Brom). This notion is supported by the narration and by their visual depictions. The narrator (Bing Crosby) says that "It was inevitable that such a figure as Ichabod should become an object of ridicule to Brom Bones and his gang". Ichabod nonetheless finds a place for himself within the community. In addition to teaching Sleepy Hollow's children at the local schoolhouse, he is also shown teaching singing to a group of young ladies. A glimpse we get of his social calendar reveals that he also attends such gatherings as the Young Ladies Sewing



Circle, the Women's Tatting and Chatting Club, the Ladies Auxiliary, a box social, dinner at the homes of his pupils, and the Ladies of Sleepy Hollow Choral Society. This last is actually shown, and played for laughs, as Bing Crosby's "crooner" style of singing becomes Ichabod's own, much to the delight of the three young ladies who swoon, bobby-soxer style, at his melodic scatting. These associations, however, serve in some ways to feminise Ichabod, and contrast him with the more hyper-masculine Brom. We see Brom often in the company of other men, but typically Ichabod is seen with women. Yet, the narration implies, this is to do with Ichabod being something of a ladies' man: they like him and flatter him and fawn over him, and so he prefers their company. The boisterous Brom, however, prefers the outdoors and is more rough-and-tumble; his friends, therefore, are mostly men. Visually, we see an extremely thin Ichabod: he is tall and long-limbed, but narrow, and has a small, round head. The only things large about Ichabod are his nose (which is exaggeratedly large and beaky) and his appetite. He walks at a leisurely pace, and his worldly goods seem to fit in a handkerchief tied to the end of a stick. The song about him says that he is "Lean and lanky, skin and bones/With clothes a scarecrow would hate to own". However, and in contrast to this, the song goes on to say of Ichabod, "Yet he has a certain air/Debonair and Devil-May-Care". Ichabod is not at all handsome: not to us as the audience, not to those around him. Rather, Ichabod's appeal is his calm, confident sophistication and intelligence. In contrast, Brom is shown to be a man's man, an action man, but rustic. His muscles come, we can assume, from years of farming work; the years of good eating and physical activity have built Brom into a strong, more attractive man, but they have come at the neglect of his developing his manners and his education. It is never implied that Brom is stupid, just that he has never had any need to develop his mind when his strength and sense of humour were enough to gain him friends and admirers throughout his community.

What ties them to one another is their shared attraction for Katrina Van Tassel; she is not the *cause* of their competition with one another – that competition is well established by the narrative before she is introduced to the story – but she is the catalyst which takes it to a whole new level. Before Katrina, they were just two opposites who clashed in a friendly, sparring kind of way. Once she shows up, the gloves are off as they become genuine rivals. Because they are involved in a love triangle, both contenders for the heart of wealthy beauty Katrina, and because Katrina enjoys playing them off against each other, they never have any real incentive to become better people. Unlike the other two pairs of

frienemies being examined in this section, Ichabod and Brom have no common enemy, and therefore lack any reason to work together. Neither is a villain, however: Ichabod, for all his faults, never does anything harmful or hateful, nor is he ever really vicious or cruel, even when he takes the opportunity to put Brom in his place (remembering, of course, that Ichabod had taken Brom's teasing good-naturedly for some time); the narration tells us that even Brom was forced to admit (albeit grudgingly) that Ichabod presented "a flawless picture of ease and grace". Ichabod is shown as more cultured and sophisticated than the rustic Brom, and therefore is better at courting and romancing Katrina. Equally, the narration makes a point of saying that, "though Brom was much given to madcap pranks and practical jokes, still there was no malice in his mischief. Indeed, with his waggish humour and prodigious strength, Brom Bones was quite the hero of all the country 'round". We are given to understand that Brom was one of Katrina's many suitors prior to Ichabod's arrival, and that he used his intimidating physical presence to rise to the top. But this irritates Katrina, we are told: "Now the ease with which Brom cleared the field of rivals both piqued and provoked the fair Katrina, and she often wished some champion would appear and for once take the field openly against the boisterous Brom". She welcomes Ichabod's attentions; whether she is genuinely interested in Ichabod is debatable, however, as she makes a bit of a fuss about demonstrating her affection for Ichabod in front of Brom in a way that is designed to make Brom jealous. It is clear, though, that she enjoys Ichabod's more cultivated manners and social skills: we are shown that Ichabod is better read, more of a gentleman, and a much better dancer than Brom. Likewise, Ichabod is seen to be better at flattering Katrina (and her father). It is clear that Brom had assumed that he would win Katrina's hand eventually; Ichabod, unexpectedly, is his first real competition. Though both are shown to have good qualities, each is shown to have equally despicable traits: Ichabod maybe a good and conscientious school teacher, but he is also shown to be a social-climbing gold-digger. Brom is generous, good-hearted and has a lively sense of humour, but he is rough, rude, cocky, and tends to be a bully. Indeed, as enjoyable as the film and the characters are, it is increasingly hard to like any of them, not least because it is impossible to tell whether any of them actually have feelings for each other. Ichabod finds Katrina attractive, but he seems to find her father's wealth and farm – and the fact that Katrina will inherit the whole of her father's estate – at least as attractive as he does Katrina herself. We are never given the sense that Brom is interested in Katrina's position as an heiress; however, she is

shown to be *the* leading beauty of the town, in whom all of the young men are interested. In a way that would be echoed forty-two years later with Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*, Brom seems interested in Katrina because she is the most beautiful young woman in the town, and that makes her the best. Therefore, he pursues her because capturing the best young woman in town will show that he is the best young man in the town. As for Katrina herself, she is shown to be more interested in Brom's and Ichabod's competition over her than she is in either of them individually, and repeatedly stirs up their rivalry for her own amusement. She does, in the end, marry Brom; after Ichabod's disappearance, we see Katrina kiss Brom enthusiastically at their wedding. Her allowing herself to be courted by Ichabod may have been her way of making sure that Brom "appreciated" her, rather than taking her for granted. Whatever the reasons, the rivalry between the two men only gets more heated as the story goes along.

The climax of the story – and of Brom's and Ichabod's competition – is when Ichabod, riding home from Baltus Van Tassel's Halloween party, is terrorised by the Headless Horseman. We are told the story of the Headless Horseman by Brom Bones at the Van Tassels' Halloween party. Brom knows that Ichabod is very superstitious and a "firm, potent believer in spooks and goblins", and decides to use this to his advantage, telling the story knowing that it will frighten Ichabod, and also knowing that Ichabod will have to ride through the Horseman's territory later that night to get home. Ichabod's fears begin to play upon him during his ride, and he becomes more and more frightened until he realises he has been imagining things. He begins to laugh, nervously but with relief, when he and his horse hear an angry, booming laugh and turn to see the Headless Horseman himself. The Horseman gives chase, Ichabod and his panicked horse trying to flee. The scene is both comic and frightening (in perfect balance), utilizing the multiplane camera in some shots in order to heighten the reality and therefore make the *mise-en-scène* menacing. The scene culminates with Ichabod crossing the bridge over the brook (according to Brom's story, the boundary past which the ghost cannot go) and the horseman throwing a flaming jack-o-lantern across the bridge at him. The scene fades to black. The story resumes in the light of early morning, on the road just past the bridge. We are told that, "The next morning, Ichabod's hat was found, and close beside it, a shattered pumpkin. But there was no trace of the schoolmaster". What we are *not* told, however, is who the Headless Horseman was. There is a moment during the chase scene when we see Ichabod gaze into the open neck hole



of the Horseman's jacket and, to his terror, see no sign of a head. The Horseman is shown to be a very skilled and lively rider, like Brom, and to have a very well-developed physique, also like Brom. But we never know for sure that this was Brom trying to trick Ichabod and drive him away. There is a bit more evidence in Irving's novella which implicates Brom: "Brom Bones, too, who shortly after his rival's disappearance conducted the blooming Katrina in triumph to the altar, was observed to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related, and always burst into a hearty laugh at the mention of the pumpkin; which led some to suspect that he knew more about the matter than he chose to tell".<sup>118</sup> But as closely as the Disney adaptation follows Irving's novella, this detail is omitted. We are, however, given evidence that Ichabod did not die: that he in fact (and in a detail which differs from the novella) "was still alive, married to a wealthy widow in a distant county". We are shown Ichabod presiding over a dinner table, surrounded by a woman and seven children (who all have his same large nose and ears and so are undoubtedly his offspring), as he lifts the lid off of a sumptuous roasted turkey as the family prepares to eat dinner. This is described as a rumour, and we are told that the "Good Dutch settlers refused to believe such nonsense, for they knew the schoolmaster had been spirited away by the Headless Horseman".

In other words, the individuals whose story this is – Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones – never have the chance to redeem themselves in the narrative. They start out reasonably likeable, grow increasingly contemptuous of one another, and their competition ends only when one of them, Ichabod, is driven completely from the community. Brom is kept from being the villain of the piece, however, because he is never implicated directly; the Disney adaptation in particular makes no suggestion that Brom went to such lengths to terrify and drive out Ichabod; all he does is tell the story (in a context in which the Van Tassels' guests are invited to tell ghost stories for Halloween), and even says that he himself was chased and threatened by the Horseman a year earlier. So while neither character is particularly bad, neither is particularly good, either. The story can end on a fittingly mysterious note, and thereby allow the viewers to decide what they think really happened. Arguably, such an ambiguous resolution is possible because, ultimately, the section of the film in which this story is told lasts just under thirty-two minutes. We are not encouraged to love or hate the characters, only to watch them and enjoy their antics and scrapes, and we are reminded visually, by being shown, at the start of the segment, a leather-bound book

<sup>118</sup> Washington Irving, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, Illustrated Deluxe Edition for Kindle, (Northpointe Classics, 2008), Location 503 of 552.

being taken from a shelf and opened to a title page which displays the title of the novella and the author's name prominently; what we are watching is an adaptation of classic literature, and therefore what happens in the film is what happens in the book, it is implied. It is Irving who made them despicable, not the team at Disney.

Our next pairing, Quasimodo and Phoebus from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), are also from a literary adaptation. In this film, we find two men who, initially, seem very different, but who transform from rivals into true friends. We meet Quasimodo first, up in his bell tower, encouraging a baby bird from a nest in the bell tower so that it will learn to fly and, therefore, so that it can fly away. He looks out over the square outside the cathedral, but is sad because, as Laverne, one of the gargoyles (who are his friends), says, "What good is watching a party if you never get to go?" For Quasimodo, the gargoyles are alive because he is alone most of the time and needs someone to talk to. Other than ring the bells for the cathedral, all that he has with which to keep himself occupied is the model he has made of the cathedral square: it is an elaborate, beautifully and somewhat whimsically-rendered model, and a source of great comfort to Quasimodo as it gives him a means for pretending to be a part of the ordinary world and interacting with others (amongst the model people is a little miniature of Quasimodo himself). Quasimodo is shown to be kindly, sensitive, and very good-hearted. With the gargoyles' encouragement, he determines to disguise himself and sneak out of the bell tower just for a few hours so that he can experience the festival below – the annual Feast of Fools – for himself. Because he is an innocent, he believes what Frollo has told him: that his deformed appearance makes him a monster, and that others will look upon him as an abomination. But his craving to experience just one day amongst the people he has watched all his life is too much for him to bear anymore, and so he determines to sneak away from the bell tower and experience the Feast of Fools in person.

We are next introduced to Esmeralda, the beautiful Gypsy woman who will befriend Quasimodo, and Phoebus, the new captain of the guards who has just returned to Paris to take up his post. We are shown very quickly that Phoebus does not suffer the same prejudice against Gypsies as Frollo and the city's guards: when two of the guards attempt to arrest Esmeralda and steal the money she has earned as a street performer, he helps her to get away by getting in the path of the guards, only using his authority when they threaten him. We see that he is in no way like Frollo

when he arrives at the Palace of Justice to report to the judge; we see that Frollo is overseeing the torture of a prisoner, and that Phoebus disapproves, even though he makes no comment (nor can he, since Frollo is his superior).

The four characters at the heart of the story – Quasimodo, Frollo, Phoebus and Esmeralda – come together when Esmeralda dances as part of the festival and Quasimodo ends up being crowned king of the festival (on the grounds that they were looking for the ugliest face in Paris, and Quasimodo has it). Initially, it seems as though Quasimodo's worst fears are coming to pass: when the people realise that he is not wearing a mask, they are horrified; they are reminded that the King of Fools is supposed to be the ugliest person in Paris, however, and so their horror changes to celebration. Quasimodo is crowned and lifted up on their shoulders. Then the guards start throwing rotten food at him, and the villagers, shocked at first, also begin laughing. Quasimodo's moment of triumph becomes his torture, and he begs Frollo to help him. Phoebus asks permission to put an end to the cruelty, but Frollo tells him to wait, saying, "A lesson needs to be learned here". Esmeralda, however, steps forward and stops his humiliation, apologising for putting him into such a position. When Frollo forbids her from helping Quasimodo, she ignores him, cutting the ropes that have him bound, and starts to comfort him. Phoebus is shown to be glad; shortly after this, when he sees Esmeralda fight off ten soldiers and escape, he exclaims, "What a woman!" He cannot help but admire her. He follows her into the cathedral, and the two spar, both verbally and physically: they are shown to be equally matched, their cut and thrust demonstrating that they have compatible personalities and temperaments. She realises that he has not followed her into the church to arrest her; when Frollo bursts in and orders her arrest, he whispers to her to claim sanctuary. When she does not, he pretends that she has, reminding Frollo that he cannot arrest her so long as she is in the cathedral. Esmeralda (and Djali, her goat) cannot bear to be inside for too long, and so Quasimodo helps her to escape the cathedral.

Quasimodo and Phoebus meet just as Quasimodo is climbing back into the cathedral. Phoebus is looking for Esmeralda; it is implied that he cannot stop thinking about her, and wants to get to know her better. Quasimodo, too, has fallen for her, because she has shown him kindness and friendship. He quickly realises that Phoebus means her no harm, but still keeps secret that Esmeralda has escaped. Their rivalry for Esmeralda is established when we see that Quasimodo has confused Esmeralda's affectionate friendship for romantic feelings, and he begins to hope



that the two of them are falling in love. He is upset, however, when Esmeralda brings a wounded Phoebus to his bell tower to hide him, and sees that she has developed romantic feelings for Phoebus, not him; when Esmeralda and Phoebus kiss, he is heartbroken. But he still protects Esmeralda and Phoebus from Frollo; when Phoebus plans to find the Court of Miracles and warn the Gypsies of Frollo's intention to raid the "Court" and destroy the Gypsies, he shames Quasimodo into helping (Quasimodo hesitates because he has already suffered so much for defying Frollo). Quasimodo is jealous of Phoebus, but he relents, though he says he is doing this only for Esmeralda. They call a truce in order to help Esmeralda: a common enemy and a common friend have united them, and their dislike for one another is put to one side. Unfortunately, Quasimodo has been tricked by Frollo, and inadvertently leads Frollo and his men to the Court of Miracles. The Gypsies, Phoebus, and Quasimodo are arrested, and Esmeralda is declared a witch. Frollo ties her to a stake and sets the pyre alight, a vindictive grin on his face as he watches her begin to burn.

Quasimodo has been chained to a ledge on the cathedral so that he is forced to watch his friends die; finally enraged, he breaks free of his chains, rescues Esmeralda, and sets in motion a chain of events which will allow Phoebus to break free and stir the citizens of Paris to rise up against the evil Frollo. Quasimodo fights from overhead, Phoebus leads the charge from down below, and between them they are able to defeat Frollo and his minions. Quasimodo is distraught, however, when he realises that Esmeralda may be dead. Frollo creeps into Quasimodo's bedroom, where Esmeralda is laid out; we see that he is holding a knife behind his back as he approaches Quasimodo, clearly intending to kill him. Frollo claims that it was his duty to execute Esmeralda and that he hopes he can be forgiven. Quasimodo then sees from the shadows that Frollo is about to stab him, and so overpowers him and grabs the knife. He berates Frollo, saying that "now I see that the only thing dark and cruel about [this world] is people like you". Just then, Esmeralda stirs; Quasimodo grabs her and flees, Frollo close behind them with a sword. Frollo thinks he has Quasimodo trapped, but Quasimodo is able to turn the tables; soon it is Frollo who is dangling from high up on the side of the cathedral, the fire he lit on the pyre now raging out of control. For a moment, Frollo manages to climb onto one of the rainspouts, raising his sword to strike Esmeralda as she holds onto Quasimodo; the rainspout breaks, however, and Frollo plunges to his death. Esmeralda loses her hold on Quasimodo. A few stories below, Phoebus is able to catch him and pull him into the

cathedral to safety. At this moment, Quasimodo is able to let go of his jealousy: he hugs Phoebus, then Esmeralda, then brings them together, placing Esmeralda's hand in Phoebus' and blessing the match. This time when Phoebus and Esmeralda kiss, he looks on happily. They lead him out onto the steps of the cathedral so that the people can acknowledge his victory, and a little girl comes forward from the crowd, hugs him, and leads him forward. They cheer him and celebrate him as a hero, this time genuinely. He looks back and waves at his friends: all his jealousy and dislike of Phoebus have been forgotten, and replaced with true respect and admiration.

Wreck-It Ralph and Fix-It Felix are our final pair of "Frienemies", and our last characters to be considered in this chapter. The stars of *Wreck-It Ralph* (2012), the two do not like or trust one another because each has been designed to be pitted against the other. They are characters in a 1980s video arcade game called "Fix-It Felix, Jr.": Felix is the hero who saves the Nicelanders (the people who live in the building), and Ralph is the thug who tries to destroy their apartment building. It is his role in the game, and Ralph accepts this, to a degree. But at night, when the arcade closes and the game's characters relax and celebrate another day's play, Ralph is cast out from them, forced to sleep on the side of a waste dump, where he lays and watches Felix and the Nicelanders through the windows of their apartments. We learn all of this about Ralph during a meeting of a support group for video-game villains, Bad-Anon, and also see that this is a common sentiment amongst the bad guys. As one of them, Zangief, says, in an effort to help Ralph understand the importance of being the bad guy in his game, "If Zangief is good guy, who'll crush man's skull like sparrow's egg between thighs? And I say, 'Zangief, you are bad guy, but that does not mean you are "bad" guy.'" The others applaud, but Ralph does not understand. He sees Felix receiving medals and pies every day to celebrate his accomplishments within the game, and does not understand why his own accomplishments cannot be celebrated, too. He is spurred to attend the meeting because it is the thirtieth anniversary of his game, and therefore is feeling worn down and reflective. He admits that he no longer wants to be a bad guy, much to the horror of the other bad guys: they react with shock, worried that Ralph is about to "go turbo", or leave his game during the hours when the arcade is open (which means that the game will be thought to be broken, and will end up being unplugged and junked). He denies this, however. The Bad-Anon meeting ends with the "Bad Guy Affirmation", and Ralph returns to his game.

When he gets home, he sees that the Nicelanders and Felix are having a thirtieth anniversary party, attended by the heroes of other games, like Pac Man. Ralph goes up to join them, much to their horror. Felix goes out to “talk” to him, really to smooth things over and get Ralph to go away, but Felix (voiced by Jack McBrayer, whose Felix character borrows heavily from his sweet, innocent, kindly character Kenneth Parcell from the series *30 Rock*, 2006–2013) finds that he cannot get Felix to go away in a diplomatic fashion. Reluctantly – since he does not trust Ralph not to wreck the party and knows that the other guests do not want Ralph there – he finds himself inviting Ralph in to have a slice of cake. Ralph is made to feel very unwelcome, however, not least because the cake, a depiction of the building and the game’s characters, has him standing in a mud-puddle and the other characters celebrating atop the roof. He gets into a confrontation with Gene, one of the Nicelanders, who tells Ralph that he does not deserve a medal and does not belong in the celebration. He taunts Ralph: “Only good guys win medals, and you, sir, are no good guy”. When Ralph replies that he could be a good guy and win a medal if he wanted to, Gene is dismissive: “Uh-huh. And when you do, come and talk to us. ... If you won a medal, we’d let you live up here in the penthouse! But it will never happen, because you’re just the bad guy who wrecks the building.” In his fury, Ralph slams down his fist and smashes the cake. Realising what he has done, he vows that he will win a medal and prove himself to the others. He leaves the game, going in search of an opportunity. He soon finds one, and enters into a much more modern game, “Hero’s Duty”, where he mingles with the ranks of the soldiers in the hopes of winning the medal that is claimed by those who complete the game. Though the game is far more intense and violent than anything he has ever experienced, he is successful and wins a medal. However, his destructive presence causes havoc; the game descends into chaos as he inadvertently unleashes too early a new swarm of Cy-bugs, and Ralph finds himself expelled from the game entirely when he stumbles into an escape pod (accidentally bringing with him one of the Cy-bugs which terrorise the soldiers in “Hero’s Duty”), ending up in another modern – and very different – game called “Sugar Rush”. It is here where the majority of the film’s action will take place.

At this stage, we have only met Felix briefly: we know that he is the hero of the game (and that it is named after him), that he is beloved by the citizens whose apartment house he rebuilds, and that he is a sweet, diplomatic, friendly, warm-hearted guy, but that he, too, does not trust Ralph or want him around. He has



spent thirty years fixing the damage Ralph has inflicted, and so when he learns (from Q\*bert, who has watched Ralph enter the “Hero’s Duty” game), that Ralph has “gone turbo” and that “Fix-It Felix, Jr.” is in danger of being turned off by the arcade manager, Felix, too, leaves the game, determined to go find Ralph, bring him back, and thereby fix the damage that has befallen the game as a whole. He tracks Ralph down to “Hero’s Duty”, where he makes contact with the commander in charge of the troops in “Hero’s Duty”, a tough, no-nonsense woman named Calhoun; Felix is amazed at the “high definition” of her face, and is instantly smitten. When he and Calhoun realise that Ralph and one of the Cy-bugs have left “Hero’s Duty”, they are determined to find them and restore order. We learn that Calhoun – whom Felix finds to be very intense – has been programmed to have “the most tragic backstory ever”: in a flashback, we are shown Calhoun on her wedding day – “the one day she didn’t do a perimeter check” – when a Cy-bug attack kills her groom as they stand before the altar, about to be married. This background has left her bitter and emotionally shut down, intent on destroying the Cy-bugs at all costs. Felix and Calhoun team up: Felix will fix what Ralph wrecks (as per his programming), and Calhoun will hunt down and destroy the Cy-bug.

Much to his displeasure, Ralph finds that the escape pod from “Hero’s Duty” has crash-landed in the “Sugar Rush” game, which he describes dismissively as “that candy go-cart game owned by the Whac-A-Mole”. He plans to grab his medal and go home, only to realise that it is stuck on a high branch in a candy tree. He starts to climb up after it when he meets a little girl from the game, Vanellope, who teases and annoys him. When she spots his medal, she races up to the top of the tree after it, and manages to get it. She wants it for herself so that she can use it to enter the races. As she walks away, she suddenly glitches; we are told later, by King Candy (who, it turns out, is the game’s villain) that she is considered a “glitch” in the game – a programming fault with the potential to destroy it if she is allowed to race and somehow manages to win. Initially, Ralph is angry at Vanellope for stealing his medal, but then he sees her being bullied by the other avatars and his attitude begins change toward her: they make a deal that, if he will help her build a new go-cart (after the other avatars destroyed the one she built herself), she will give him back the medal when she receives her winnings (all of the gold coins paid in by those participating in the race). Likewise, as they journey through the “Sugar Rush” game together looking for Ralph and the Cy-bug, Felix and Calhoun begin to bond and, despite their very different personalities and programming, begin to fall in love

– an attraction of opposites that, at least partially, is humorous because the two are so different in every way, especially physically. Naturally, Felix and Calhoun's romance runs into a few snags, not least his inadvertently referring to her as "a dynamite gal", the same thing her fiancé had called her and which triggers in her a rush of terror that makes her dump Felix and run away. But they are reunited eventually, when, later in the film, Calhoun finds the nest of eggs that the Cy-bug has laid, the eggs hatch and begin destroying "Sugar Rush", and she charges in to evacuate the game's citizens to safety and to try and hold back the Cy-bugs from leaving the game. After this, except when they are in their respective games doing their jobs, they are together; our final scene with the two of them is of their wedding. They have found true love, and will always be together.

At one stage, after helping Vanellope to build a car and learn to drive it, Ralph is convinced by King Candy that allowing Vanellope to win the race could lead to the destruction of the "Sugar Rush" game: if the human gamers see her glitching, King Candy warns, they will assume that something is wrong with the game, it will be shut down, and all will be left homeless. Even worse, because glitches cannot leave their games, Vanellope will be trapped in the empty void forever. Ralph falls for King Candy's lie, and tries to convince Vanellope not to race, even going so far as to destroy the car they built together. It is when he returns to his own game, however, that he begins to doubt King Candy's story. Alone in the Nicelanders' penthouse, gazing out through the screen, he notices a picture of Vanellope on the side of the "Sugar Rush" console – something that would not be there if she was nothing more than faulty programming, as King Candy claims. Ralph begins to uncover the truth, returning to "Sugar Rush" and interrogating Sour Bill, King Candy's lackey. He learns that, in fact, the game's programming has been altered by King Candy, who tried to delete Vanellope from the game completely but was unable; he could only turn her into a glitch. If Vanellope ever completed the race, it would re-set the game and restore order; this is why King Candy is desperate to stop her. Ralph also learns from interrogating Sour Bill that Felix is being held in King Candy's dungeon (or "fungeon", as King Candy likes to call it), and goes immediately to rescue him. The two quarrel (Felix telling-off Ralph), and Felix realises that his terrible experiences – being rejected by Calhoun and then treated like a criminal by King Candy – mirror Ralph's daily life of rejection by the Nicelanders and being forced to live in a dump. They talk, and Ralph explains to Felix what is happening. From that moment on, they begin to work together to help Vanellope and fix

"Sugar Rush", two allies united by a common enemy and in support of a common goal. Felix fixes Vanellope's car, Ralph breaks her out of the dungeon, and they hurry to the race track, where Vanellope is able to join in just after the race has begun. It turns out that, as she suspected, Vanellope is a born racer (or, in the language of the film, racing is in her code). She may have joined the race late, but she forges ahead, soon moving up into number two, hot on the heels of the lead racer, King Candy, whom she soon overtakes. He attacks her, their cars hitched together, and he, too, begins glitching. As Ralph and Felix watch on the monitor from the finish line, they are shocked to realise that King Candy is none other than Turbo, the main racer from "Turbo Time" who, decades earlier, had escaped his game, destroyed both it and another racing game (causing them both to be unplugged), and disappearing: he is the inspiration for the reference "Going Turbo". They realise that Turbo has disguised himself in a new persona and taken over "Sugar Rush". Vanellope, too, realises what is going on; having learned (to a degree) to control her glitching, she uses it to her advantage, glitching intentionally to detach her car from King Candy's and heading off toward the finish line; King Candy/Turbo, however, ends up driving into the open mouth of a Cy-bug (the one that came in with Ralph laid eggs; they have hatched, and now "Sugar Rush" is under attack from a swarm of Cy-bugs, Calhoun doing all she can to protect the game's citizens and defeat the Cy-bugs). It looks, at least at that moment, as though King Candy has died.

A swarm of Cy-bugs destroys the finish line; Calhoun is about to shut down the game to prevent the Cy-bugs from spreading to other games, but of course Vanellope cannot leave the game. It is then that Ralph has a brainwave. He learned in "Hero's Duty" that the only way to stop the Cy-bugs is to create a beacon which destroys them. He races to a part of the game made up of a diet cola hot spring, with Mentos stalactites hanging over it. Knowing that the Mentos will create an explosion with enough light to attract the Cy-bugs, Ralph plans to use his wrecking skills to knock all of the Mentos into the diet cola hot spring. He is nearly stopped by King Candy, who has joined his programming with one of the Cy-bugs and become even more dangerous (he thinks), but ultimately he is too manic. Ralph is able to escape Candy's clutches. Believing himself to be sacrificing his life, Ralph recites the "Bad Guy's Affirmation" – this time with true understanding – as he falls amongst the Mentos. Vanellope is able to use her car to jump through the falling Mentos and catch Ralph, however, and they escape. The beacon draws all of the Cy-bugs, including the King Candy/Cy-bug, and peace is re-



stored. Felix fixes the finish line, and Vanellope finally crosses it. The game is reset; Vanellope is transformed into a princess as the other players remember her true identity. Vanellope, however, is not interested in being a princess. She knows that she is a racer at heart. She will still lead them, but instead declares herself to be President Vanellope von Schweetz. All celebrate the restoration of "Sugar Rush". Ralph, Felix, and Calhoun return to their own games just before the arcade opens; order is restored to all of their games, and peace returns to the arcade. We learn that, back in the "Fix-It Felix, Jr." game, things are much better. Ralph is still the wrecker, but that is only during the day. At night, he joins the Nicelanders in their community activities; they even adopt the homeless Q\*bert characters, who help them out in the bonus levels of "Fix-It Felix, Jr." The game becomes more popular than ever, and all within it live happily. Felix and Calhoun are married, with Ralph as their best man and Vanellope as the maid of honour. Ralph tells the support group (Bad-Anon) at the end that, for him, the best part of his job now is when the Nicelanders lift him up to throw him off the roof, because then he is high up enough to look out and see Vanellope racing in the "Sugar Rush" game. As he says, "Turns out I don't need a medal to tell me I'm a good guy. 'Cause if that little kid likes me, how bad can I be?" He, Felix, and the Nicelanders are all friends now, living together happily; Felix even builds Ralph and the Q\*bert characters a street of lovely new homes so that they are no longer homeless.

A possible explanation as to why Quasimodo and Phoebus, as well as Ralph and Felix, can unite, ultimately, and work together is that they have a definite common foe. Judge Frollo may be more dangerous than King Candy, but both are equally threatening to the existence of each of the film's heroines, Esmeralda (*Hunchback of Notre Dame*) and Vanellope (*Wreck-It Ralph*). Because Ichabod and Brom have no one who threatens directly either them or Katrina, they have no reason to move beyond the friendly rivalry that exists between them, a factor which causes it to escalate almost out of control; their competition ceases only when Ichabod disappears after the Headless Horseman has attacked; in this sense, it is immaterial whether or not the Horseman was Brom in disguise – something which the characters in the film do not believe, though Irving's novella hints that Brom very likely was involved. Being romantic rivals creates tension between Phoebus and Quasimodo, too, though ultimately their love for Esmeralda – and their need to stop Frollo – unites them and turns them from enemies, to "frienemies", to true friends; Quasimodo can even be happy for Phoebus' and Esmeralda's love

for each other. As for Wreck-It Ralph and Fix-It Felix, they are never romantic rivals, only two characters who have been created to work in opposition to one another. They learn to be friends, however, when Felix understands how miserable he and the Nicelanders have made Ralph over the thirty years that their game has run, and when Ralph learns to embrace his destructiveness and use it for the good of others. Ralph and Felix can be friends because they realise that they need each other: if Ralph does not destroy things, Felix will have nothing to fix. They are both parts of the whole, a balance to each other, and – ultimately – brothers.

## Conclusion

The characters examined in this chapter – the non-aristocratic leading male characters – come in many forms. If there is anything which unites most of them – Ichabod and Brom, as well as Johnny Appleseed, are the exceptions here – it is their shared sense of justice and their being motivated to be their best possible selves by the love they feel for a woman. This is not to say that this is always a romantic love: the seven dwarfs' love for Snow White is fairly paternal in nature, as is Ralph's for Vanellope. For Bernard, Doppler, Aladdin, Flynn, John Smith, Shang, Quasimodo, Phoebus, and Felix, the love they experience is very much a romantic one. Quasimodo's is unrequited (though Esmeralda loves him, it is only as a friend), but it still helps him to grow and become better than he was. Milo is perhaps given greater energy by his love for Kida to keep fighting against all odds, but it is clear that his sense of moral outrage at Rourke's actions is independent of his love for Kida: he would have fought no matter what. Only Johnny Appleseed has no human love interest. However, he is very full of his love of God and his wish to do his best for his fellow man. The only exceptions to the idea that love has made them better are Ichabod Crane and Brom Bones. However, as was said previously, whether they feel actual love for Katrina is debatable. So perhaps the implication is that real love makes us better; desire, however, is too selfish on its own to cause anything but harm.

Though these characters range across the whole of Disney's history of producing animated feature films – we started with the seven dwarfs, from 1937, and finished with Ralph and Felix from 2012 – it is interesting that so many of the non-aristocratic adult male leading characters have arisen since 1990. Prior to 1990, only four of the films in this chapter featured such characters. Since 1990, there have been nine films whose characters war-

ranted inclusion in this discussion. Why this is, as stated at the beginning, may at least in part be linked to changing audience demographics: as Hollywood as a whole began to focus on young men as audiences, more films featuring male leading characters have been created. Though, traditionally, Disney has aimed at the family audience since before that became an official Hollywood designation/genre, it still hopes to attract viewers who are not generally thought of as being part of the family audience. Therefore, producing animated films – at great expense – which have a chance of pulling in boys and men is crucial to a film's financial success, and therefore is important to the health of the studio. Yet it is also important to stress that a large proportion of the films discussed in this chapter – five out of twelve – were made during the 1990s. Before this period, again, we have four films spread out over a forty-year period (1937, 1948, 1949, 1977). After the 1990s, we have another four films spread across eleven years (2001, 2003, 2010, 2012). Expand that to include *all* films with male characters (of any age, both royals and commoners) in leading roles, and you get, in the first fifty-three years, twelve films out of twenty-eight; from 1990 to 1999, eight films out of nine (*The Lion King*, 1994, is the only film in this period not to have a *human* character in a leading role, and of course it still had male leads); and in the thirteen years since, seven films out of fourteen. The remaining films had either animals in leading roles, or else were package films whose segments had no discernible human male leads. Perhaps this shift since the 1990s reflects a shift of the target demographic away from a male focus to one which is roughly equal in terms of male:female. This, of course, is hard to know, particularly as we are still going through the post-1999 period; better analysis of the first two decades of the twenty-first century can only come after they have become firmly ensconced in history.

But beyond that, including such characters in their roster gives Disney the chance to broaden their focus more generally, and to address themes and stories which incorporate a broad range of character types. Including male characters who are not bound by their roles as princes means that the men can enjoy much broader adventures and experience different outcomes – to include, as is the case for the seven dwarfs, Johnny Appleseed, John Smith, Ichabod Crane, Quasimodo, and Wreck-It Ralph, no romantic entanglements at all. Unlike princes, they have no duty to marry and continue the royal line. This means that, while they *can* be romantic leading men, they can be other things, too.