

APOLOGY FOR DUCKOLOGY

The reader of this book may feel disconcerted, not so much because one of his idols turns out to have feet of clay, but rather because the kind of language we use here is intended to break with the false solemnity which generally cloaks scientific investigation. In order to attain knowledge, which is a form of power, we cannot continue to endorse, with blinded vision and stilted jargon, the initiation rituals with which our spiritual high priests seek to legitimize and protect their exclusive privileges of thought and expression. Even when denouncing prevailing fallacies, investigators tend to fall with their language into the same kind of mystification which they hope to destroy. This fear of breaking the confines of language, of the future as a conscious force of the imagination, of a close and lasting contact with the reader, this dread of appearing insignificant and naked before one's particular limited public, betrays an aversion for life and for reality as a whole. We do not want to be like the scientist who takes his umbrella with him to go study the rain.

We are not about to deny scientific rationalism. Nor do we aspire to some clumsy popularization. What we do hope to achieve is a more direct and practical means of communication, and to reconcile pleasure with knowledge.

The best critical endeavor incorporates, apart from its analysis of reality, a degree of methodological self-criticism. The problem here is not one of relative complexity or simplicity, but one of bringing the terms of criticism itself under scrutiny.

Readers will judge this experiment for themselves, preferably in an active, productive manner. It results from a joint effort; that of two researchers who until now have observed the preordained limits of their respective disciplines, the humanistic and social sciences, and who found themselves obliged to change their methods of interpretation and communication. Some, from the bias of their individualism, may rake this book over sentence by sentence, carving it up, assigning this part to that person, in the hopes of maybe restoring that social division of intellectual labor which leaves them so comfortably settled in their armchair or university chair. This work is not to be subjected to a letter-by-letter breakdown by some hysterical computer, but to be considered a joint effort of conception and writing.

Furthermore, it is part of an effort to achieve a wider, more massive distribution of the basic ideas contained in this book. Unfortunately, these ideas are not always easily accessible to all

of the readers we would like to reach, given the educational level of our people. This is especially the case since the criticism contained in the book cannot follow the same popular channels which the bourgeoisie controls to propagate its own values.

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4 September 1971,
First anniversary of the triumph of the
Popular Unity Government

INTRODUCTION: INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO BECOME A GENERAL IN THE DISNEYLAND CLUB

"My dog has become a famous lifeguard and my nephews will be brigadier-generals. To what greater honor can one aspire?"

Donald Duck (D 422*)

"Baby frogs will be *big* frogs someday, which bring high prices on the market . . . I'm going to fix some special *frog food* and speed up the growth of those little hoppers!"

Donald Duck (D 451, CS 5/60)

It would be wrong to assume that Walt Disney is merely a business man. We are all familiar with the massive merchandising of his characters in

*We use the following abbreviations: D = *Disneylandia*, F = *Fantasias*, TR = *Tio Rico* (Scrooge McDuck), TB = *Tribilin* (Goofy). These magazines are published in Chile by Empresa Editorial Zig-Zag (now Pínsel), with an average of two to four large- and medium-sized stories per issue. We obtained all available back issues and purchased current issues during the months following March 1971. Our sample is thus inevitably somewhat random:

Disneylandia: 185, 192, 210, 281, 292, 294, 297, 303, 329, 342, 347, 357, 364, 367, 370, 376, 377, 379, 381, 382, 383, 393, 400, 401, 421, 422, 423, 424, 431, 432, 433, 434, 436, 437, 439, 440, 441, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 457.
Tio Rico: 40, 48, 53, 57, 61, 96, 99, 106, 108, 109,

films, watches, umbrellas, records, soaps, rocking chairs, neckties, lamps, etc. There are Disney strips in five thousand newspapers, translated into more than thirty languages, spread over a hundred countries. According to the magazine's own publicity puffs, in Chile alone, Disney comics reach and delight each week over a million readers. The former Zig-Zag Company, now bizarrely converted into Pínsel Publishing Enterprise (Juvenile Publications Company Ltd.), supplies them to a major part of the Latin American continent. From their national base of operations, where there is so much screaming about the trampling underfoot (the suppression, intimidation, restriction, repression, curbing, etc.)

110, 111, 113, 115, 116, 117, 119, 120, 128.

Fantasias: 57, 60, 68, 82, 140, 155, 160, 165, 168, 169, 170, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178.

Tribilin: 62, 65, 78, 87, 92, 93, 96, 99, 100, 101, 103, 104, 106, 107.

(Translator's Note: Stories for which I have been able to locate the U.S. originals are coded thus: CS = *(Walt Disney's) Comics and Stories*; DA = *Duck Album*; DD = *Donald Duck*; GG = *Gyro Gearloose*; HDL = *Huey, Dewey and Louie, Junior Woodchucks*; and US = *Uncle Scrooge*.

The figures following represent the original date of issue; thus 7/67 means July 1967. Sometimes, however, when there is no monthly date, the issue number appears followed by the year.)

* Popular Unity Government Printing House.

of the liberty of the press, this consortium, controlled by financiers and "philanthropists" of the previous Christian Democrat regime (1964-70), has just permitted itself the luxury of converting several of its publications from biweeklies to weekly magazines.

Apart from his stock exchange rating, Disney has been exalted as the inviolable common cultural heritage of contemporary man; his characters have been incorporated into every home, they hang on every wall, they decorate objects of every kind; they constitute a little less than a social environment inviting us all to join the great universal Disney family, which extends beyond all frontiers and ideologies, transcends differences between peoples and nations, and particularities of custom and language. Disney is the great supranational bridge across which all human beings may communicate with each other. And amidst so much sweetness and light, the registered trademark becomes invisible.

Disney is part — an immortal part, it would seem — of our common collective vision. It has been observed that in more than one country Mickey Mouse is more popular than the national hero of the day.

In Central America, AID (the U.S. Agency for International Development) — sponsored films promoting contraception feature the characters from "Magician of Fantasy." In Chile, after the earthquake of July 1971, the children of San Bernardo sent Disneyland comics and sweets to their stricken fellow children of San Antonio. And the year before, a Chilean women's magazine proposed giving Disney the Nobel Peace Prize.*

We need not be surprised, then, that any innuendo about the world of Disney should be interpreted as an affront to morality and civilization at large. Even to whisper anything against Walt is to undermine the happy and innocent palace of childhood, for which he is both guardian and guide.

No sooner had the first children's magazine been issued by the Chilean Popular Unity Government publishing house Quimantú, than the reactionary journals sprang to the defense of

* "At the time of his death (1966), a small, informal but worldwide group was promoting — with the covert assistance of his publicity department — his nomination for the Nobel Peace prize" (from Richard Schickel, *The Disney Version*, New York, 1968, p. 303). San Bernardo is a working-class suburb of greater Santiago; San Antonio a port in the central zone. (Trans.)

Disney:

"The voice of a newscaster struck deep into the microphone of a radio station in the capital. To the amazement of his listeners he announced that Walt Disney is to be banned in Chile. The government propaganda experts have come to the conclusion that Chilean children should not think, feel, love or suffer through animals.

"So, in place of Scrooge McDuck, Donald and nephews, instead of Goofy and Mickey Mouse, we children and grownups will have to get used to reading about our own society, which, to judge from the way it is painted by the writers and panegyrists of our age, is rough, bitter, cruel and hateful. It was Disney's magic to be able to stress the happy side of life, and there are always, in human society, characters who resemble those of Disney comics.

"Scrooge McDuck is the miserly millionaire of any country in the world, hoarding his money and suffering a heart attack every time someone tries to pinch a cent off him, but in spite of it all, capable of revealing human traits which redeem him in his nephews' eyes.

"Donald is the eternal enemy of work and lives dependent upon his powerful uncle. Goofy is the innocent and guileless common man, the eternal victim of his own clumsiness, which hurts no one and is always good for a laugh.

"Big Bad Wolf and Little Wolf are masterly means of teaching children pleasantly, not hatefully, the difference between good and evil. For Big Bad Wolf himself, when he gets a chance to gobble up the Three Little Pigs, suffers pangs of conscience and is unable to do his wicked deed.

"And finally, Mickey Mouse is Disney in a nutshell. What human being over the last forty years, at the mere presence of Mickey, has not felt his heart swell with emotion? Did we not see him once as the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" in an unforgettable cartoon which was the delight of children and grownups, which preserved every single note of the masterly music of Prokofiev [a reference no doubt to the music of Paul Dukas]. And what of *Fantasia*, that prodigious feat of cinematic art, with musicians, orchestras, decorations, flowers, and

every animate being moving to the baton of Leopold Stokowski? And one scene, of the utmost splendor and realism, even showed elephants executing the most elegant performance of "The Dance of the Dragonflies" [a reference no doubt to the "Dance of the hours"].

"How can one assert that children do not learn from talking animals? Have they not been observed time and again engaging in tender dialogues with their pet dogs and cats, while the latter adapt to their masters and show with a purr or a twitch of the ears their understanding of the orders they are given? Are not fables full of valuable lessons in the way animals can teach us how to behave under the most difficult circumstances?

"There is one, for instance, by Tomas de Iriarte which serves as a warning against the danger of imposing too stringent principles upon those who work for the public. The mass does not always blindly accept what is offered to them."*

This pronouncement parrots some of the ideas prevailing in the media about childhood and children's literature. Above all, there is the implication that politics cannot enter into areas of "pure entertainment," especially those designed for children of tender years. Children's games have their own rules and laws, they move, supposedly, in an autonomous and asocial sphere like the Disney characters, with a psychology peculiar to creatures at a "privileged" age. Inasmuch as the sweet and docile child can be sheltered effectively from the evils of existence, from the petty rancors, the hatreds, and the political or ideological contamination of his elders, any attempt to politicize the sacred domain of childhood threatens to introduce perversity where there once reigned happiness, innocence and fantasy. Since animals are also exempt from the vicissitudes of history and politics, they are convenient symbols of a world beyond socio-economic realities, and the animal characters can represent ordinary human types, common to all classes, countries and epochs.

* *La Segunda* (Santiago), 20 July 1971, p. 3. This daily belongs to the Mercurio group, which is controlled by Augustin Edwards, the major press and industrial monopolist in Chile. The writer of the article quoted worked as Public Relations officer for the American copper companies Braden and Kennecott. (cf. A. Matelart "Estructura del poder informativo y dependencia"

Disney thus establishes a moral background which draws the child down the proper ethical and aesthetic path. It is cruel and unnecessary to tear it away from its magic garden, for it is ruled by the Laws of Mother Nature; children are just like that and the makers of comic books, in their infinite wisdom, understand their behavior and their biologically-determined need for harmony. Thus, to attack Disney is to reject the unquestioned stereotype of the child, sanctified as the law in the name of the immutable human condition.

There are *automagic*** antibodies in Disney. They tend to neutralize criticism because they are the same values already instilled into people, in the tastes, reflexes and attitudes which inform everyday experience at all levels. Disney manages to subject these values to the extremest degree of commercial exploitation. The potential assailer is thus condemned in advance by what is known as "public opinion," that is, the thinking of people who have already been conditioned by the Disney message and have based their social and family life upon it.

The publication of this book will of course provoke a rash of hostile comment against the authors. To facilitate our adversaries' task, and in order to lend uniformity to their criteria, we offer the following model, which has been drawn up with due consideration for the philosophy of the journals to which the gentlemen of the press are so attached:

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO EXPEL SOMEONE FROM THE DISNEYLAND CLUB

1. The authors of this book are to be defined as follows: indecent and immoral (while Disney's world is pure); hyper-complicated and hyper-sophisticated (while Walt is simple, open and sincere); members of a sinister elite (while Disney is the most popular man in the world); political agitators (while Disney is non-partisan, above politics); calculating and embittered (while Walt D. is spontaneous, emotional, loves to laugh and make laughter); subverters of youth and domestic peace (while W.D. teaches respect for parents, love of one's fellows and protection of

in "Los Medios de Comunicación de Masas: La Ideología de la Prensa Liberal en Chile" *Cuadernos de la Realidad Nacional* (CEREN, Santiago), 3, Marzo de 1970).

** A word-play on the advertising slogan for a washing machine, which cleans "automagicamente" (automatically and magically) — Trans.

the weak); unpatriotic and antagonistic to the national spirit (while Mr Disney, being international, represents the best and dearest of our native traditions); and finally, cultivators of "Marxism-fiction," a theory imported from abroad by "wicked foreigners"* (while Unca Walt is against exploitation and promotes the classless society of the future).

2. Next, the authors of this book are to be accused of the very lowest of crimes: of daring to raise doubts about the child's imagination, that is, O horror!, to question the right of children to have a literature of their own, which interprets them so well, and is created on their behalf.

3. FINALLY, TO EXPEL SOMEONE FROM THE DISNEYLAND CLUB, ACCUSE HIM REPEATEDLY OF TRYING TO BRAINWASH CHILDREN WITH THE DOCTRINE OF COLORLESS SOCIAL REALISM, IMPOSED BY POLITICAL COMMISSARS.

There can be no doubt that children's literature is a genre like any other, monopolized by specialized subsectors within the culture industry. Some dedicate themselves to the adventure story, some to mystery, others to the erotic novel, etc. But at least the latter are directed towards an amorphous public, which buys at random. In the case of the children's genre, however, there is a virtually biologically captive, predetermined audience.

Children's comics are devised by adults, whose work is determined and justified by their idea of what a child is or should be. Often, they even cite "scientific" sources or ancient traditions ("it is popular wisdom, dating from time immemorial") in order to explain the nature of the public's needs. In reality, however, these adults are not about to tell stories which would jeopardize the future they are planning for their children.

So the comics show the child as a miniature adult, enjoying an idealized, gilded infancy which is really nothing but the adult projection of some magic era beyond the reach of the harsh discord of daily life. It is a plan for salvation which presupposes a primal stage within every existence, sheltered from contradictions and permitting imaginative escape. Juvenile literature, embodying purity, spontaneity, and natural virtue, while lacking in sex and violence, represents earthly paradise. It guarantees man's

*Actual words of Little Wolf (D 210)

own redemption as an adult: as long as there are children, he will have the pretext and means for self-gratification with the spectacle of his own dreams. In his children's reading, man stages and performs over and over again the supposedly unproblematical scenes of his inner refuge. Regaling himself with his own legend, he falls into tautology; he admires himself in the mirror, thinking it to be a window. But the child playing down there in the garden is the purified adult looking back at himself.

So it is the adult who produces the comics, and the child who consumes them. The role of the apparent child actor, who reigns over this uncontaminated world, is at once that of audience and dummy for his father's ventriloquism. The father denies his progeny a voice of his own, and as in any authoritarian society, he establishes himself as the other's sole interpreter and spokesman. All the little fellow can do is to let his father represent him.

But wait a minute, gentlemen! Perhaps children really *are* like that?

Indeed, the adults set out to prove that this literature is essential to the child, satisfying his eager demands. But this is a closed circuit: children have been conditioned by the magazines and the culture which spawned them. They tend to reflect in their daily lives the characteristics they are supposed to possess, in order to win affection, acceptance, and rewards; in order to grow up properly and integrate into society. The Disney world is sustained by rewards and punishments; it hides an iron hand with the velvet glove. Considered, by definition, unfit to choose from the alternatives available to adults, the youngsters intuit "natural" behavior, happily accepting that their imagination be channelled into incontestable ethical and aesthetic ideals. Juvenile literature is justified by the children it has generated through a vicious circle.

Thus, adults create for themselves a childhood embodying their own angelical aspirations, which offer consolation, hope and a guarantee of a "better," but unchanging, future. This "new reality," this autonomous realm of magic, is artfully isolated from the reality of the everyday. Adult values are projected onto the child, as if childhood was a special domaine where these values could be protected uncritically. In Disney, the two strata—adult and child—are not to be considered as antagonistic; they fuse in a single embrace, and history becomes biology. The identity of parent and child inhibits the emer-

gence of true generational conflicts. The pure child will replace the corrupt father, preserving the latter's values. The future (the child) reaffirms the present (the adult), which, in turn, transmits the past. The apparent independence which the father benevolently bestows upon this little territory of his creation, is the very means of assuring his supremacy.

But there is more: this lovely, simple, smooth, translucent, chaste and pacific region, which has been promoted as Salvation, is unconsciously infiltrated by a multiplicity of adult conflicts and contradictions. This transparent world is designed both to conceal and reveal latent traces of real and painful tensions. The parent suffers this split consciousness without being aware of his inner turmoil. Nostalgically, he appropriates the "natural disposition" of the child in order to conceal the guilt arising from his own fall from grace; it is the price of redemption for his own condition. By the standards of his angelic model, he must judge himself guilty; as much as he needs this land of enchantment and salvation, he could never imagine it with the necessary purity. He could never turn into his own child. But this salvation only offers him an imperfect escape; it can never be so pure as to block off all his real life problems.

In juvenile literature, the adult, corroded by the trivia of everyday life blindly defends his image of youth and innocence. Because of this, it is perhaps the best (and least expected) place to study the disguises and truths of contemporary man. For the adult, in protecting his dream-image of youth, hides the fear that to penetrate it would destroy his dreams and reveal the reality it conceals.

Thus, *the imagination of the child is conceived as the past and future utopia of the adult*. But set up as an inner realm of fantasy, this model of his Origin and his Ideal Future Society lends itself to the free assimilation of all his woes. It enables the adult to partake of his own demons, provided they have been coated in the syrup of paradise, and that they travel there with the passport of innocence.

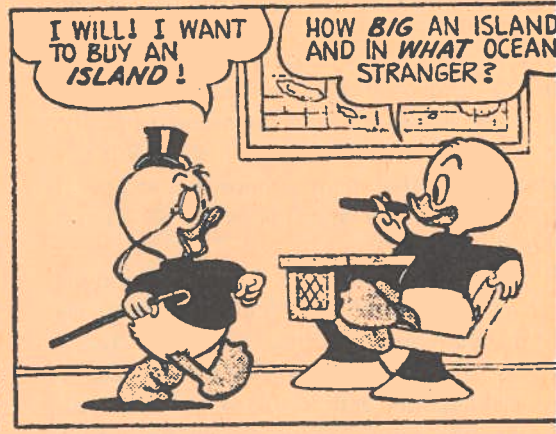
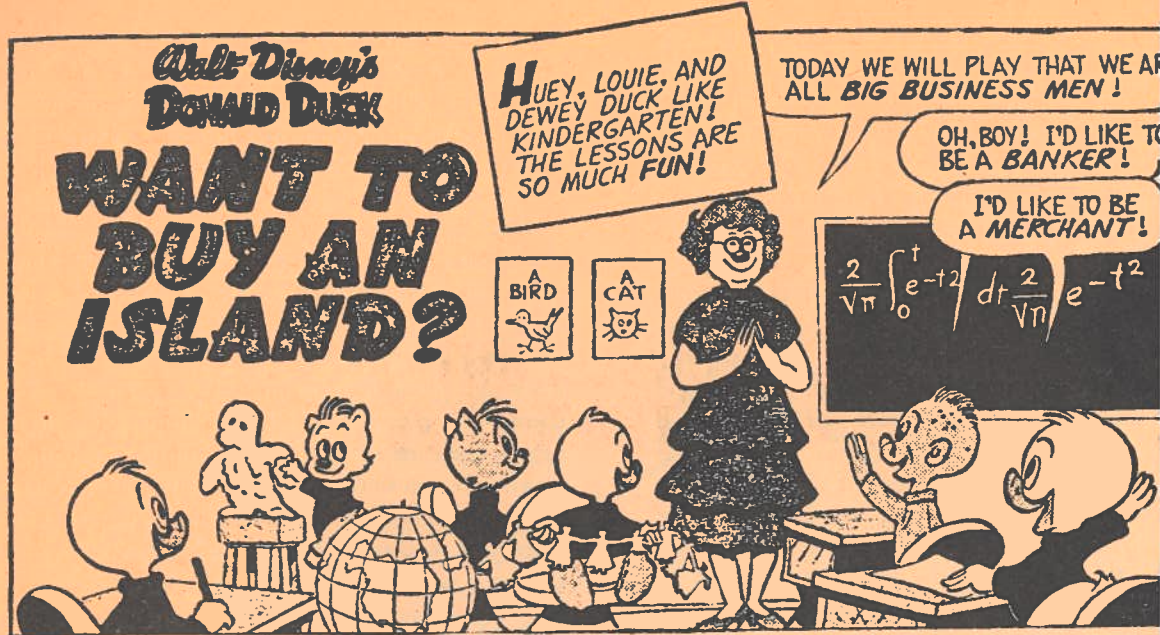
Mass culture has granted to contemporary man, in his constant need to visualize the reality about him, the means of feeding on his own problems without having to encounter all the difficulties of form and content presented by the modern art and literature of the elite. Man is offered knowledge without commitment, a self-colonization of his own imagination. By dominating the child, the father dominates himself.

The relationship is a sado-masochistic one, not unlike that established between Donald and his nephews. Similarly, readers find themselves caught between their desire and their reality, and in their attempt to escape to a purer realm, they only travel further back into their own traumas.

Mass culture has opened up a whole range of new issues. While it certainly has had a levelling effect and has exposed a wider audience to a broader range of themes, it has simultaneously generated a cultural elite which has cut itself off more and more from the masses. Contrary to the democratic potential of mass culture, this elite has plunged mass culture into a suffocating complexity of solutions, approaches and techniques, each of which is comprehensible only to a narrow circle of readers. The creation of children's culture is part of this specialization process.

Child fantasy, although created by adults, becomes the exclusive reserve of children. The self-exiled father, once having created this specialized imaginary world, then revels in it through the keyhole. The father must be absent, and without direct jurisdiction, just as the child is without direct obligations. Coercion melts away in the magic palace of sweet harmony and repose—the palace raised and administered at a distance by the father, whose physical absence is designed to avoid direct confrontation with his progeny. This absence is the prerequisite of his omnipresence, his total invasion. Physical presence would be superfluous, even counter-productive, since the whole magazine is already his projection. He shows up instead as a favorite uncle handing out free magazines. Juvenile literature is a father surrogate. The model of paternal authority is at every point immanent, the implicit basis of its structure and very existence. The natural creativity of the child, which no one in his right mind can deny, is channelled through the apparent absence of the father into an adult-authoritarian vision of the real world. Paternalism *in absentia* is the indispensable vehicle for the defense and invisible control of the ostensibly autonomous childhood model. The comics, like television, in all vertically structured societies, rely upon distance as a means of authoritarian reinforcement.

The authoritarian relationship between the real life parent and child is repeated and reinforced within the fantasy world itself, and is the basis for all relations in the entire world of the comics. Later, we shall show how the relationship of child-readers to the magazine they con-



sume is generally based on and echoed in the way the characters experience their own fantasy world within the comic. Children will not only identify with Donald Duck because Donald's situation relates to their own life, but also because the way they read or the way they are exposed to it, imitates and prefigures the way Donald Duck lives out his own problems. Fiction

reinforces, in a circular fashion, the manner which the adult desires the comic be received and read.

Now that we have peeked into the parent-child relationship, let us be initiated into the Disney world, beginning with the great family ducks and mice.

III. FROM THE NOBLE SAVAGE TO THE THIRD WORLD

Donald (talking to a witch doctor in Africa):
 "I see you're an up to date nation!
 Have you got telephones?"
 Witch doctor: "Have we gottee telephones!
 ... All colors, all shapes ... only
 trouble is only *one* has wires. It's a
 hot line to the world loan bank."
 (TR 106, US 9/64)

Where is Aztecland? Where is Inca-Blinca?
 Where is Unsteadystan?

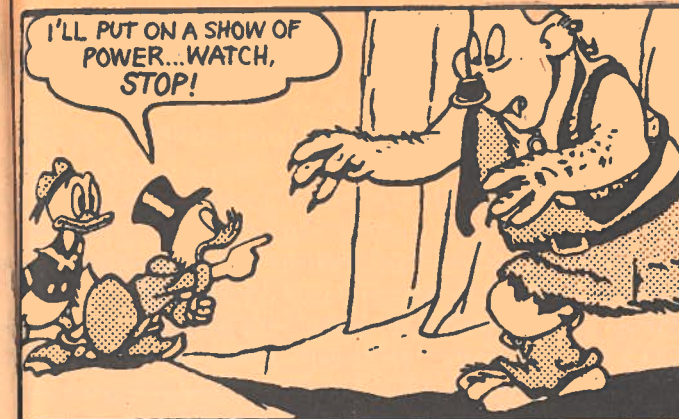
There can be no doubt that Aztecland is Mexico, embracing as it does all the prototypes of the picture-postcard Mexico: mules, siestas, volcanoes, cactuses, huge sombreros, ponchos, serenades, machismo, and Indians from ancient civilizations. The country is defined primarily in terms of this grotesque folklorism. Petrified in an archetypal embryo, exploited for all the superficial and stereotyped prejudices which surround it, "Aztecland," under its pseudo-imaginary name becomes that much easier to Disneyfy. This is Mexico recognizable by its commonplace exotic identity labels, not the real Mexico with all its problems.

Walt took virgin territories of the U.S. and built upon them his Disneyland palaces, his magic kingdoms. His view of the world at large is

framed by the same perspective; it is a world already colonized, with phantom inhabitants who have to conform to Disney's notions of it. Each foreign country is used as a kind of model within its very pages. Vietnam should dare to enter into open conflict with the United States, the Disney Comic brand-mark is immediately stamped upon it, in order to make the revolutionary struggle appear banal. While the Marines make revolutionaries run the gauntlet of bullets, Disney makes them run a gauntlet of magazines. There are two forms of killing: by machine guns and saccharine.

Disney did not, of course, invent the inhabitants of these lands; he merely forced them into the proper mold. Casting them as stars in his hit-parade, he made them into decals and puppets for his fantasy palaces, good and offensive savages unto eternity.

According to Disney, underdeveloped people are like children, to be treated as such, and they don't accept this definition of themselves; they should have their pants taken down and given a good spanking. That'll teach them! When something is said about the child/noble savage, it is really the Third World one is thinking about. The hegemony which we have detected between



the child-adults who arrive with their civilization and technology, and the child-noble savages who accept this alien authority and surrender their riches, stands revealed as an exact replica of the relations between metropolis and satellite, between empire and colony, between master and slave. Thus we find the metropolitans not only searching for treasures, but also selling the native comics (like those of Disney), to teach them the role assigned to them by the dominant urban press. Under the suggestive title "Better Guile Than Force," Donald departs for a Pacific atoll in order to try to survive for a month, and returns loaded with dollars, like a modern business tycoon. The entrepreneur can do better than the missionary or the army. The world of the Disney comic is self-publicizing, ensuring a process of enthusiastic buying and selling even

Enough of generalities. Examples and proofs. Among all the child-noble savages, none is more exaggerated in his infantilism than Gu, the abominable Snow Man (TR 113, US 6-8/56, "The Lost Crown of Genghis Khan"): a brainless, feeble-minded Mongolian type (living by a strange coincidence, in the Himalayan Hindu Kush mountains among yellow peoples). He is treated like a child. He is an "abominable housekeeper," living in a messy cave, "the worst of taste," littered with "cheap trinkets and waste." Hats etc., lying around which he has no use for. Vulgar, uncivilized, he speaks in a babble of inarticulate baby-voises: "Gu." But he is also witless, having stolen the golden jewelled crown of Genghis Khan which belongs to Scrooge by virtue of certain secret operations of his agents), without having any idea of its value. He has tossed the crown in

*For the theme of physical superdevelopment with the connotation of sexual threat, see Eldridge Cleaver, *Houlihan*, 1968.

a corner like a coal bucket, and prefers Uncle Scrooge's watch: value, one dollar ("It is his favorite toy"). Never mind, for "his stupidity makes it easy for us to get away!" Uncle Scrooge does indeed manage, magically, to exchange the cheap artifact of civilization which goes tick-tock, for the crown. Obstacles are overcome once Gu (innocent child-monstrous animal - underdeveloped Third Worldling) realizes that they only want to take something that is of no use to him, and that in exchange he will be given a fantastic and mysterious piece of technology (a watch) which he can use as a plaything. What is extracted is gold, a raw material; he who surrenders it is mentally underdeveloped and physically overdeveloped. The gigantic physique of Gu, and of all the other marginal savages, is the model of a physical strength suited only for physical labor.*

Such an episode reflects the barter relationship established with the natives by the first conquistadors and colonizers (in Africa, Asia, America and Oceania): some trinket, the product of technological superiority (European or North American) is exchanged for gold (spices, ivory, tea, etc.). The native is relieved of something he would never have thought of using for himself or as a means of exchange. This is an extreme and almost anecdotic example. The common stuff of other types of comic book (e.g. in the internationally famous *Tintin in Tibet* by the Belgian Hergé) leaves the abominable creature in his bestial condition, and thus unable to enter into any kind of economy.

But this particular victim of infantile regression stands at the borderline of Disney's noble savage cliché. Beyond it lies the foetus-savage, which for reasons of sexual prudery Disney cannot use.

Lest the reader feel that we are spinning too fine a thread in establishing a parallel between someone who carries off gold in exchange for a mechanical trinket, and imperialism extracting raw material from a mono-productive country, or between typical dominators and dominated, let us now adduce a more explicit example of Disney's strategy in respect to the countries he caricatures as "backward" (needless to say, he never hints at the causes of their backwardness).

The following dialogue (taken from the same comic which provided the quotation at the beginning of this chapter) is a typical example of Disney's colonial attitudes, in this case directed against the African independence movements. Donald has parachuted into a country in the African jungle. "Where am I," he cries. A witch doctor (with spectacles perched over his gigantic primitive mask) replies: "In the new nation of Kooko Coco, fly boy. This is our capital city." It consists of three straw huts and some moving haystacks. When Donald enquires after this strange phenomenon, the witch doctor explains: "Wigs! This be hairy idea our ambassador bring back from United Nations." When a pig pursuing Donald lands and has the wigs removed disclosing the whereabouts of the enemy ducks, the



following dialogue ensues:

Pig: "Hear ye! hear ye! I'll pay you kook some hairy prices for your wigs! Sell me all your head hangers!"

Native: "Whee! Rich trader buyee our old head hangers!"

Another native: "He payee me six trading stamps for my beehive hairdo!"

Third native (overjoyed): "He payee me two Chicago streetcar tokens for my Beatle job."

To effect his escape, the pig decides to scatter a few coins as a decoy. The natives are happy to stop, crouch and cravenly gather up the money. Elsewhere, when the Beagle Boys dress up as Polynesian natives to deceive Donald, they mimic the same kind of behavior: "You save our lives . . . We be your servants for ever." And as they prostrate themselves, Donald observes: "They are natives too. But a little more civilized."

Another example (Special Number D 423) Donald leaves for "Outer Congolia," because Scrooge's business there has been doing badly. The reason is that "the King ordered his subjects not to give Christmas presents this year. He wants everyone to hand over this money to him." Donald comments: "What selfishness! And so to work. Donald makes himself king

being taken for a great magician who flies through the skies. The old monarch is dethroned because "he is not a wise man like you [Donald]. He does not permit us to buy presents." Donald accepts the crown, intending to decamp as soon as the stock is sold out: "My first command as king is . . . buy presents for your families and don't give your king a cent!" The old king had wanted the money to leave the country and eat what he fancied, instead of the fish heads which were traditionally his sole diet. Repentant, he promises that given another chance, he will govern better, "and I will find a way somehow to avoid eating that ghastly stew." Donald (to the people): "And I assure you that I leave the throne in good hands. Your old king is a good king . . . and wiser than before." The people: "Hurray! Long Live the King!"

The king has learned that he must ally himself with foreigners if he wishes to stay in power, and that he cannot even impose taxes on the people, because this wealth must pass wholly out of the country to Duckburg through the agent of McDuck. Furthermore, the strangers find a solution to the problem of the king's boredom. To alleviate his sense of alienation within his own country, and his consequent desire to travel to the metropolis, they arrange for the massive importation of consumer goods: "Don't worry about that food," says Donald, "I will send you some sauces which will make even fish heads palatable." The king stamps gleefully up and down.

The same formula is repeated over and over again. Scrooge exchanges with the Canadian Indians gates of rustless steel for gates of pure gold (TR 117). Moby Duck and Donald (D 453), captured by the Aradians (Arabs), start to blow soap bubbles, with which the natives are enchanted. "Ha, ha. They break when you catch them. Hee, hee." Ali-Ben-Goli, the chief says "it's real magic. My people are laughing like children. They cannot imagine how it works." "It's only a secret passed from generation to generation," says Moby, "I will reveal it if you give us our freedom." (Civilization is presented as something incomprehensible, to be administered by foreigners). The chief, in amazement, exclaims "Freedom? That's not all I'll give you. Gold, jewels. My treasure is yours, if you reveal the secret." The Arabs consent to their own despoliation. "We have jewels, but they are of no use to us. They don't make you laugh like magic bubbles." While Donald sneers "poor simpleton,"



Moby hands over the Flip Flop detergent. "You are right, my friend. Whenever you want a little pleasure, just pour out some magic powder and recite the magic words." The story ends on the note that it is not necessary for Donald to excavate the Pyramids (or earth) personally, because, as Donald says, "What do we need a pyramid for, having Ali-Ben-Goli?"

Each time this situation recurs, the natives' joy increases. As each object of their own manufacture is taken away from them, their satisfaction grows. As each artifact from civilization is given to them, and interpreted by them as a manifestation of magic rather than technology, they are filled with delight. Even our fiercest enemies could hardly justify the inequity of such an exchange; how can a fistful of jewels be regarded as equivalent to a box of soap, or a golden crown equal to a cheap watch? Some will object that this kind of barter is all imaginary, but it is unfortunate that these laws of the imagination are tilted unilaterally in favor of those who come from outside, and those who write and publish the magazines.

But how can this flagrant despoliation pass unperceived, or in other words, how can this inequity be disguised as equity? Why is it that

imperialist plunder and colonial subjection, to call them by their proper names, do not appear as such?

"We have jewels, but they are of no use to us."

There they are in their desert tents, their caves, their once flourishing cities, their lonely islands, their forbidden fortresses, and they can never leave them. Congealed in their past-historic, their needs defined in function of this past, these underdeveloped peoples are denied the right to build their own future. Their crowns, their raw materials, their soil, their energy, their jade elephants, their fruit, but above all, their gold, can never be turned to any use. For them the progress which comes from abroad in the form of multiplicity of technological artifacts, is a mere toy. It will never penetrate the crystallized defense of the noble savage, who is forbidden to become civilized. He will never be able to join the Club of the Producers, because he does not even understand that these objects have been produced. He sees them as magic elements, arising from the foreigner's mind, from his word, his magic wand.

Since the noble savage is denied the prospect of future development, plunder never appears as such, for it only eliminates that which is trifling, superfluous, and dispensable. Unbridled capitalist despoliation is programmed with smiles and coquetry. Poor native. How naïve they are. And since they cannot use their gold, it is better to remove it. It can be used elsewhere.

Scrooge McDuck gets hold of a twenty-four carat moon in which "the gold is so pure that it can be molded like butter." (TR 48, US 12-2/59). But the legitimate owner appears, a Venusian called Muchkale, who is prepared to sell it to Scrooge for a fistful of earth. "Man! That's the biggest bargain I ever heard of in all



history," cries the miser as he closes the deal. But Muchkale, who is a "good native," magically transforms the fistful of earth into a planet, with continents, oceans, trees, and a whole environment of nature. "Yessir! I was quite impoverished here, with only atoms of gold to work with!" he says. Exiled from his state of primitive innocence, longing for some rain and volcanoes, Muchkale rejects his gold in order to return to the land of his origin and content himself with life at subsistence level. "Skunk Cabbage! [his favorite dish on Venus] I live again... Now I have a world of my own, with food and drink and life!" Far from robbing him, Scrooge has done Muchkale a favor by removing all the corrupt metal and facilitating his return to primitive innocence. "He got the dirt he wanted and I got this fabulous twenty-four carat moon. Five hundred miles thick! Of solid gold! But do not bargain!" Poor, but happy, the Venusian is devoting himself to the celebration of the simple life. It's the old aphorism, the poor have no worries; it is the rich who have all the problems. So let's have no qualms about plundering the poor and underdeveloped.

Conquest has been purged. Foreigners do no harm, they are building the future, on the basis of a society which cannot and will not leave the past.

But there is another way of infantilizing others and exonerating one's own larcenous behavior. Imperialism likes to promote an image of itself as being the impartial judge of the interests of the people, and their liberating angel.

The only thing which cannot be taken from the noble savage is his subsistence living, because losing this would destroy his natural economy, forcing him to abandon Paradise for Mammon and a production economy.

Donald travels to the "Plateau of Abandon" to look for a silver goat, which his Problem Solving Agency has contracted to find for a rich customer. He finds the goat, but breaks it while trying to ride it, and then discovers that this animal — and nothing else — stands between life and death by starvation (forbidden word) for the primitive people who live near the plateau. What had brought this to pass? Some time ago, an earthquake cut off the people and their flocks from their ancient pastures. "We would have died of hunger in this patch of earth if a generous white man had not arrived here in that mysterious bird over there [i.e. an aircraft]... and made a white goat with the metal from our mine." It is this mechanical goat which leads the flocks of sheep through the dangerous ravine to pasture in the outlying plains, and without it, the sheep get lost. The natives admire the way Donald & Co. decide to venture back through perilous precipices "which only you and the sheep have the courage to cross. Our people have never had a head for heights." Once through the ravine, Donald and nephews mend the goat and bring the sheep safely back to their owners.

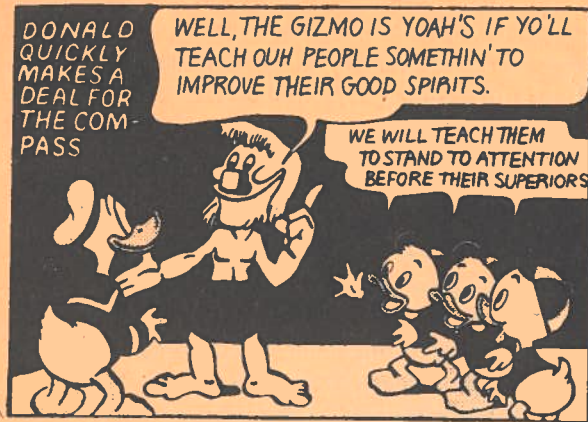
Enter at this point the villains: the rich Mr. Leech and his spoiled son who had contracted and sent Donald off in search of the goat. "You signed the contract and must hand over the goods." But the evil party is defeated and the ducks reveal themselves as disinterested friends of the natives. Trusting the ducks as they did their Duckburg predecessor, the natives enter into an alliance with the good foreigners against the bad foreigners. The moral Manichaeism serves to affirm foreign sovereignty in its authoritarian and paternalist role. Big Stick and Charity.* The good foreigners, under their ethical cloak, win with the native's confidence, the right to decide the proper distribution of wealth in the land. The villains; course, vulgar, repulsive, out-and-out thieves, are there purely and simply to reveal the ducks as defenders of justice, law, and food for the hungry, and to serve as a whitewash for any further action. Defending the only thing that the noble savage can use (their food), the lack of which would result in their death (or rebellion, either of which would violate their image of infantile innocence), the big city folk establish themselves as the spokesman of these submerged

*Original: Garrote y Caritas. Caritas is an international organization under the auspices of a sector of the North American and European Catholic Church (Trans.)

and voiceless peoples. The ethical division between the two classes of predators, the would-be robbers working openly, and the actual ones working surreptitiously, is constantly repeated. In one episode (TB 62), Mickey and company search for a silver mine and unmask two crooks. The crooks, disguised as Spanish conquistadors, who had originally stolen the mineral, are terrorizing the Indians, and are now making great profits from tourists by selling them "Indian ornaments." The constant characteristic of the natives — irrational fear and panic when faced with any phenomenon which disrupts their natural rhythm of life — serves to emphasize their cowardice (rather like children afraid of the dark), and to justify the necessity that some superior being come to their rescue and bring daylight. As reward for catching the crooks, the heroes are given ranks within the tribe: Minnie, princess; Mickey and Goofy, warriors; and Pluto gets a feather. And, of course, Duckburg gets the "Indian ornaments." The Indians have been given the "freedom to sell their goods on the foreign market." It is only direct and open robbery without offering a share in the profits, which is to be condemned. Mickey's imperialist despoliation is a foil for that of the Spaniards and those who, in the past, undeniably robbed and enslaved the natives more openly.

Things are different nowadays. To rob without payment is robbery undisguised. Taking with payment is no robbery, but a favor. Thus the conditions for the sale of the ornaments and their importation into Duckburg are never in question, for they are based on the supposition of equality between the two negotiating partners.

An isolated tribe of Indians find themselves in a similar situation (D 430, DD 3/66, "Ambush at Thunder Mountain"). They "have declared war on all Ducks" on the basis of a Previous historical experience. Buck Duck, fifty years before (and nothing has changed since then) gyped them doubly: first stealing the natives' land, and then, selling it back to them in a useless condition. So it is a matter of convincing them that not all ducks (white men) are evil, that the frauds of the past can be made good. Any history book — even Hollywood, even television — admits that the native were violated. The history of fraud and exploitation of the past is public knowledge and cannot be buried any longer, and so it appears over and done with. But the present is another matter.



In order to assure the redemptive powers of present-day imperialism, it is only necessary to measure it against old-style colonialism and robbery. Example: Enter a pair of crooks determined to cheat the natives of their natural gas resources. They are unmasked by the ducks, who are henceforth regarded as friends.

"Let's bury the hatchet, let's collaborate, the races can get along together." What a fine message! It couldn't have been said better by the Bank of America, who, in sponsoring the minicity of Disneyland in California, calls it a world of peace where all peoples can get along together.

But what happens to the lands?

"A big gas company will do all the work, and pay your tribe well for it." This is the most shameless imperialist politics. Facing the relatively crude crooks of the past and present (handicapped, moreover, by their primitive techniques), stands the sophisticated Great Uncle Company, which will resolve all problems equitably. The guy who comes in from the outside is not necessarily a bad 'un, only if he fails to pay the "fair and proper price." The Company, by contrast, is benevolence incarnate.

This form of exploitation is not all. A Wigwam Motel and a souvenir shop are opened, and excursions are arranged. The Indians are immobilized against their national background and served up for tourist consumption.

The last two examples suggest certain differences from the classic politics of bared faced colonialism. The benevolent collaboration figuring in the Disney comics suggests a form of neocolonialism which rejects the naked pillage of the past, and permits the native a minimal participation in his own exploitation.

Perhaps the clearest manifestation of this phenomenon is a comic (D 432, DD 9/65, "Treasure of Aztecland") written at the height of the Al-

1951, beach sun

imprisoned

liance for Progress program about the Indians Aztecland who at the time of the Conquest had hidden their treasure in the jungle. Now they are saved by the Ducks from the new conquistador, the Beagle Boys. "This is absurd! Conquistadors don't exist any more!" The pillage of the past was a crime. As the past is criminalized, and the present purified, its real traces are effaced from memory. There is no need to keep the treasure hidden: the Duckburgers (who have already demonstrated their kindness of heart by charitably caring for a stray lamb) will be able to defend the Mexicans. Geography becomes a picture postcard, and is sold as such. The days of your cannot advance or change, because this would damage the tourist trade. "Visit Aztecland Entrance: One Dollar." The vacations of the big city people are transformed into a modern vehicle of supremacy, and we shall see later how the natural and physical virtues of the noble savage are preserved intact. A holiday in these places is like a loan, or a blank check on purification and regeneration through communion with nature.

All these examples are based upon common international stereotypes. Who can deny that the Peruvian (in Inca-Blinca, TB 104) is somnolent, sells pottery, sits on his haunches, eats hot peppers, has a thousand-year-old culture — all the dislocated prejudices proclaimed by the tourist posters themselves? Disney does not invent these caricatures, he only exploits them to the utmost. By forcing all peoples of the world into a vision of the dominant (national and international) classes, he gives this vision coherency and justifies the social system on which it is based. These cliches are also used by the mass culture media to dilute the realities common to these people. The only means that the Mexican has of knowing Peru is through caricature, which also implies that Peru is incapable of being anything else, and is unable to rise above this prototypical situation, imprisoned as it is made to seem, within its own exoticism. For Mexican and Peruvian alike, these stereotypes of Latin American peoples become a channel of distorted self-knowledge — a form of self-consumption, and finally, self-mockery. By selecting the most superficial and singular traits of each people in order to differentiate them, and using folklore as a means to "divide and conquer" nations occupying the same dependent position, the comic, like all mass media, exploits the principle of sensationalism. That is, it conceals reality by means of novelty, which not

incidentally, also serves to promote sales. Our Latin American countries become trash cans being constantly repainted for the voyeuristic and orgiastic pleasures of the metropolitan nations. Every day, this very minute, television, radio, magazines, newspapers, cartoons, newscasts, films, clothing, and records, from the dignified gab of history textbooks to the trivia of daily conversation, all contribute to weakening the international solidarity of the oppressed. We Latin Americans are separated from each other by the vision we have acquired of each other by the comics and the other mass culture media. This vision is nothing less than our own reduced and distorted image.)

This great tacit pool overflowing with the riches of stereotype is based upon common cliches, so that no one needs to go directly to sources of information gathered from reality itself. Each of us carries within a Boy Scout Handbook packed with the commonplace wisdom of Everyman.

Contradictions flourish, however, and this is fortunate. When they become so blatant as to constitute, in spite of metropolitan press, news, it is impossible to maintain the same old unruffled storyline. The open conflict can no longer be concealed by the same formulas as the situation which, although inherently conflictive, is not yet explosive enough to be considered newsworthy.

The diseases of the system are manifest on many levels. The artist who shatters the habits of vision imposed by the mass media, who attacks the spectator and undermines his stability, is dismissed as a mere eccentric, who happens to cast colors or words in the wind. The genius is isolated from real life, and all his attempts to reconcile reality with its aesthetic representation, are neutralized. He is caricatured in Goofy, who wins the first prize in the "pop" art contest, by sliding crazily through a parking lot overturning paint cans and creating chaos (TB 99, DD 11/67). Amidst the artistic trash that he has generated, Goofy cries: "Me [the winner]! Gawrsh! I wasn't even trying!" And art loses its offensive character: "This sure is easy work. At last I can earn money and have fun at the same time, and no one gets mad at me." The public has no reason to be disconcerted by these "masterpieces": they bear no relation to their lives, only the weak and stupid devote themselves to that kind of sport. The same thing happens with the "hippies," "love-ins," and peace marches. In one episode (TR 40, US 12/63) a gang of irate people (observe the way they are lumped together) march fanatically by, only to be decoyed by the Donald towards his lemonade stand, with the shout "There's a thirsty-looking group. Hey people, throw down your banners and have free lemonades!" Setting peace aside, they descend upon Donald like a herd of buffa-





loes, snatching his money, and slurping noisily. Moral: see what hypocrites these rioters are; they sell their ideals for a glass of lemonade.

In contrast, there stands another group also drinking lemonade, but in orderly fashion — little cadets, disciplined, obedient, clean, goodlooking, and truly pacific; no dirty, anarchic "rebels" they.

This strategy, by which protest is converted into imposture, is called *dilution*: banalize an unusual phenomenon of the social body and symptom of a cancer, in such a way that it appears as an isolated incident removed from its social context, so that it then can be automatically rejected by "public opinion" as a passing itch. Just give yourself a scratch, and be done with it. Disney did not, of course, get this little light bulb all on his own. It is part of the metabolism of the system, which reacts to the facts of a situation by trying to absorb and eliminate them. It is part of a strategy, consciously or unconsciously orchestrated.

For example, the adoption by the fashion industry of the primitive dynamite of the hippie is designed to neutralize its power of denunciation. Or, the attempts of advertising, in the U.S., to liquify the concept of the women's liberation movements. "Liberate" yourself by buying a new mixer or dishwasher. This is the real revolution: new styles, low prices. Airplane hijacking (TR 113) is emptied of its social-political significance and is presented as the work of crazy bandits, "From what we read in the papers, hijacking has become very fashionable." Thus, the media minimize the matter and its implications, and reassure the public that nothing is really going on.

But all these phenomena are merely potentially subversive, mere straws in the wind. Should there emerge any phenomenon truly flouting the Disney laws of creation which govern the exemplary and submissive behavior of the noble

Division

too far (a. shot)

savage, this cannot remain concealed. It is brought out garnished, prettified, and reinterpreted for the reader, who, being young, must be protected. This second strategy is called *recuperation*: the utilization of a potentially dangerous phenomenon of the social body in such a way that it serves to justify the continued need of the social system and its values, and very often justifies the violence and repression which are part of that system.

Such is the case of the Vietnam War, where protest was manipulated to justify the vitality and values of the system which produced the war, not to end the injustice and violence of the war itself. The "ending" of the war was only a problem of "public opinion."

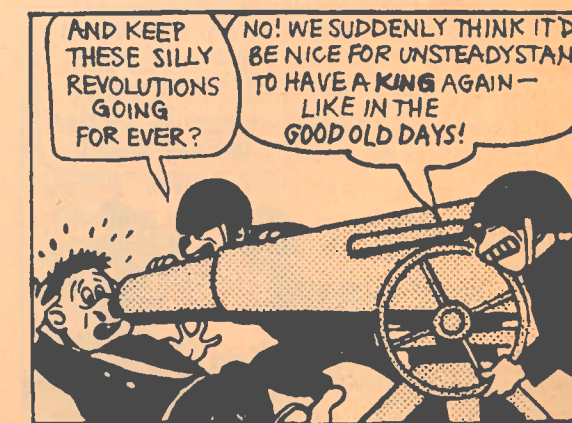
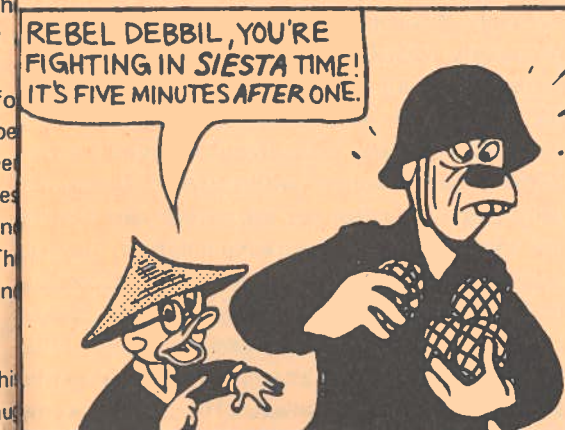
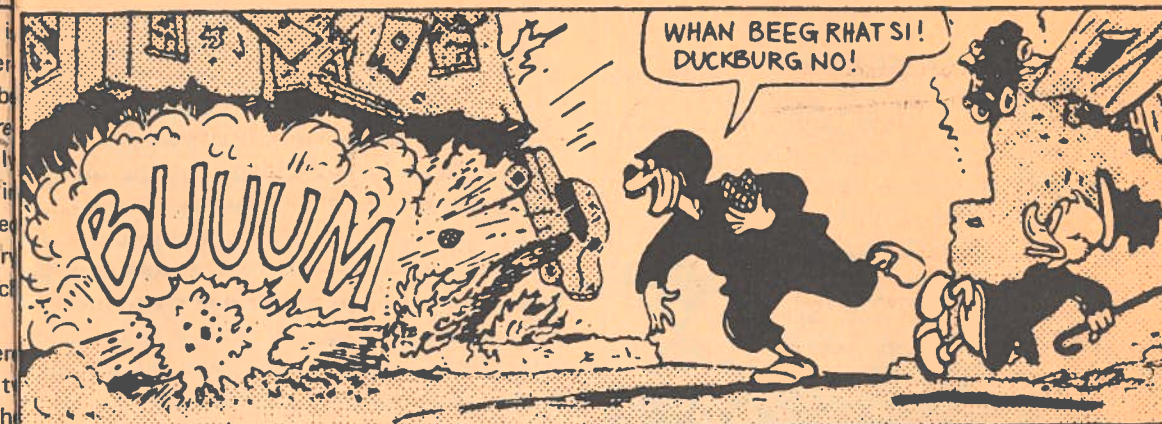
The realm of Disney is not one of fantasy, for it does react to world events. Its vision of Tibet is not identical to its vision of Indochina. Fifteen years ago the Caribbean was a sea of pirates. Disney has had to adjust to the fact of Cuba and the invasion of the Dominican Republic. The buccaneer now cries "Viva the Revolution," and has to be defeated. It will be Chile's turn yet.

Searching for a jade elephant, Scrooge and his family arrive in Unsteadystan, "where every thing wants to be ruler," and "where there is always someone shooting at someone else." (TR 99, US 7/66, "Treasure of Marco Polo"). A state of civil war is immediately turned into an incomprehensible game of someone-or-other against someone-or-other, a stupid fratricide lacking in any ethical direction or socio-economic *raison d'etre*. The war in Vietnam becomes a mere interchange of unconnected and senseless bullets and a truce becomes a siesta. "Wahn Beeg Rhat, yes, Duckburg, no!" cries a guerilla in support of an ambitious (communist) dictator, as he dynamites the Duckburg embassy. Noticing that his watch is not working properly, the Vietcong (re-

less) mutters "Shows you can't trust these watches from the 'worker's paradise.'" The struggle for power is purely personal, the eccentricity of ambition: "Hail to Wahn Beeg Rhat, dictator of all the happy people," goes the cry and *sotto voce* "happy or not." Defending his conquest, the dictator gives orders to kill. "Shoot him, don't let him spoil my *revolution*." The savior in this chaotic situation is Prince Char Ming, also known [in the Spanish version] as Yho Soy ["I am" — the English is Soy Bheen], names expressive of his magical egocentricity. He comes to reunify the country and "pacify" the

people. He is destined to triumph, because the soldiers refuse to obey the orders of a leader who has lost his charisma, who is not "Char Ming." So one guerrilla wonders why they "keep these silly revolutions going forever." Another denounces them, demanding a return to the King, "like in the good old days."

In order to close the circuit and the alliance between Duckburg and Prince Char Ming, Scrooge McDuck presents to Unsteadystan the treasure and the jade elephant which once had belonged to the people of that country. One of the nephews observes: "They will be of use to

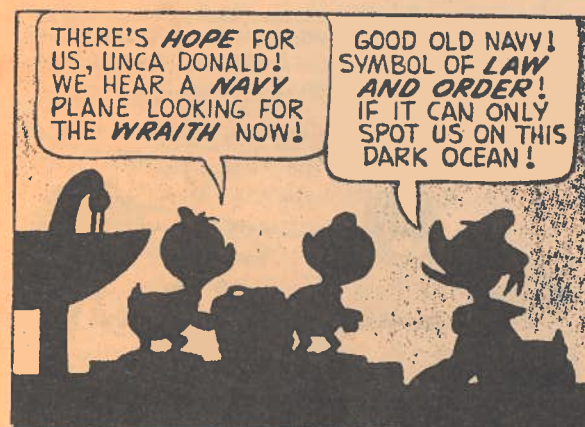
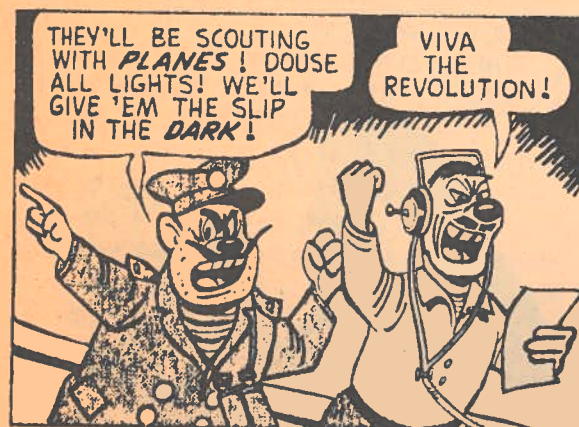


the poor." And finally, Scrooge, in his haste to get out of this parody of Vietnam, promises "When I return to Duckburg, I will do even more for you. I will return the million dollar tail of the jade elephant."

But we can bet that Scrooge will forget his promises as soon as he gets back. As proof we find in another comic book (D 445) the following dialogue which takes place in Duckburg:

Nephew: "They got the asiatic flu as well."

Donald: "I've always said that nothing good could come out of Asia."



A similar reduction of a historical situation takes place in the Republic of San Bananador, obviously in the Caribbean or Central America (D 364, CS 4/64, "Captain Blight's Mystery Ship"). Waiting in a port, Donald makes fun of the children playing at being shanghai-ed: These things just don't happen any more; shanghai-ing, weevly beans, walking the plank, pirate-invested seas — these are all things of the past. But it turns out that there are places where such horrors still survive, and the nephew's game is soon interrupted by a man trying to escape from a ship carrying a dangerous cargo and commanded by a captain who is a living menace. Terror reigns on board. When the man is forcibly brought back to the ship, he invokes the name of liberty ("I'm a free man! Let me go!"), while his kidnapers treat him as a slave. Although Donald, typically, makes light of the incident ("probably only a little rhubarb about wages," or "actors making a film"), he and his nephews are also captured. Life on board is a nightmare; the food is weevly beans, even the rats are prevented from leaving the ship, and there is forced labor, with slaves, slaves, and more slaves. All is subject to the unjust, arbitrary and crazy rule of Captain Blight and his bearded followers.

Surely these must be pirates from olden days. Absolutely not. They are revolutionaries (Cuban, no less) fighting against the government of San Bananador, and pursued by the navy for trying to supply rebels with a shipment of arms. "They'll be scouting with planes! Douse all lights! We'll give 'em the slip in the dark!" And the radio operator, fist raised on high, shouts: "Viva the Revolution!" The only hope, according to Donald, is "the good old navy, symbol of law and order." The rebel opposition is thus automatically cast in the role of tyranny, dictatorship, totalitarianism. The slave society reigning on board ship is the replica of the society which they propose to install in place of the legitimately established regime. Apparently, in modern times it is the champions of popular insurgency who will bring back human slavery.

The political drift of Disney is blatant in these few comics where he is impelled to reveal his intentions openly. It is also inescapable in the bulk of them, where he uses animal symbolism, infantilism, and "noble savagery" to cover over the network of interests arising from a concrete and historically determined social system: U.S. imperialism.

The problem is not only Disney's equation of

the child with the noble savage, and the noble savage with the underdeveloped peoples. It is also — and here is the crux of the matter — that what is said, referred to, revealed and disguised about all of them, has, in fact, only one true object: the working class.

The imaginative world of the child has become the political utopia of a social class. In the Disney comics, one never meets a member of the working or proletarian classes, and nothing is the product of an industrial process. But this does not mean that the worker is absent. On the contrary: he is present under two masks, that of the noble savage and that of the criminal-lumpen. Both groups serve to destroy the worker as a class reality, and preserve certain myths which the bourgeoisie have from the very beginning been fabricating and adding to in order to conceal and domesticate the enemy, impede his solidarity, and make him function smoothly within the system and cooperate in his own ideological enslavement.

In order to rationalize their dominance and justify their privileged position, the bourgeoisie divided the world of the dominated as follows: first, the peasant sector, which is harmless, natural, truthful, ingenuous, spontaneous, infantile, and static; second, the urban sector, which is threatening, teeming, dirty, suspicious, calculating, embittered, vicious, and essentially mobile. The peasant acquires in this process of mythification the exclusive property of being "popular," and becomes installed as a folk-guardian of everything produced and preserved by the people. Far from the influence of the steaming urban centers, he is purified through a cyclical return to the primitive virtues of the earth. The myth of the people as noble savage — the people as a child who must be protected for its own good — arose in order to justify the domination of a class. The peasants were the only ones capable of becoming incontrovertible vehicles for the permanent validity of bourgeois ideals. Juvenile literature fed on these "popular" myths and served as a constant allegorical testimony to what the people were supposed to be.

Each great urban civilization (Alexandria for Theocritus, Rome for Virgil, the modern era for Sannazaro, Montemayor, Shakespeare, Cervantes, d'Urfé) created its pastoral myth: an extra-social Eden chaste and pure. Together with this evangelical bucolism, there emerged a picturesque literature teeming with ruffians, vagabonds,

gamblers, gluttons, etc., who reveal the true nature of urban man; mobile, degenerate, irredeemable. The world was divided between the lay heaven of the shepherds, and the terrestrial inferno of the unemployed. At the same time, a utopian literature flourished (Thomas More, Tommaso Campanella), projecting into the future on the basis of an optimism fostered by technology, and a pessimism resulting from the breakdown of medieval unity, the ecstatic realm of social perfection. The rising bourgeoisie, which gave the necessary momentum to the voyages of discovery, found innumerable peoples who theoretically corresponded to their pastoral-utopian schemata; their ideal of universal Christian reason proclaimed by Erasmian humanism. Thus the division between positive-popular-rustic and negative-popular-proletarian was overwhelmingly reinforced. The new continents were colonized in the name of this division; to prove that removed from original sin and mercantilist taint, these continents might be the site for the ideal history which the bourgeoisie had once imagined for themselves at home. An ideal history which was ruined and threatened by the constant opposition of the idle, filthy, teeming, promiscuous, and extortionary proletarians.

In spite of the failure in Latin America, in spite of the failure in Africa, Oceania and in Asia, the myth never lost its vitality. On the contrary, it served as a constant spur in the only country which was able to develop it still further. By opening the frontier further and further, the United States elaborated the myth and eventually gave birth to a "Way of Life," and ideology shared by the infernal Disney. A man, who in trying to open and close the frontier of the child's imagination, based himself precisely on those now-antiquated myths which gave rise to his own country.

The historical nostalgia of the bourgeoisie, so much the product of its objective contradictions — its conflicts with the proletariat, the difficulties arising from the industrial revolution, as the myth was always belied and always renewed — this nostalgia took upon itself a twofold disguise, one geographical: the lost paradise which it could not enjoy, and the other biological: the child who would serve to legitimize its plans for human emancipation. There was no other place to flee, unless it was to that other nature, technology.

The yearning of a McLuhan, the prophet of

the technological era, to use mass communications as a means of returning to the "planetary village" (modelled upon the "primitive tribal communism" of the underdeveloped world), is nothing but a utopia of the future which revives a nostalgia of the past. Although the bourgeoisie were unable, during the centuries of their existence, to realize their imaginary historical design, they kept it nice and warm in every one of their expeditions and justifications. Disney characters are afraid of technology and its social

implications; they never fully accept it; they prefer the past. McLuhan is more farsighted: he understands that to interpret technology as a return to the values of the past is the solution which imperialism must offer in the next stage of its strategy.

But our next stage is to ask a question which McLuhan never poses: if the proletariat is eliminated, who is producing all that gold, all those riches?

IV. THE GREAT PARACHUTIST

"If I were able to produce money with my black magic, I wouldn't be in the middle of the desert looking for gold, would I?"

Magica de Spell (TR 111)

What are these adventurers escaping from their claustrophobic cities really after? What is the true motive of their flight from the urban center? Bluntly stated: in more than seventy-five percent of our sampling they are looking for gold, in the remaining twenty-five percent they are competing for fortune — in the form of money or fame — in the city.

Why should gold, criticized ever since the beginning of a monetary economy as a contamination of human relations and the corruption of human nature, mingle here with the innocence of the noble savage (child and people)? Why should gold, the fruit of urban commerce and industry, flow so freely from these rustic and natural environments?

The answer to these questions lies in the manner in which our earthly paradise generates all this raw wealth.

It comes, above all, in the form of hidden treasure. It is to be found in the Third World, and is magically pointed out by some ancient map, a parchment, an inheritance, an arrow, or a

clue in a picture. After great adventures and obstacles, and after defeating some thief trying to get there first (disqualified from the prize because it wasn't his idea, but filched from someone else's map), the good Duckburgers appropriate the idols, figurines, jewels, crowns, pearls, necklaces, rubies, emeralds, precious daggers, golden helmets etc.

First of all, we are struck by the *antiquity* of the coveted object. It has lain buried for thousands of years: within caverns, ruins, pyramids, coffers, sunken ships, viking tombs etc. — that is, any place with vestiges of civilized life in the past. Time separates the treasure from its original owners, who have bequeathed this unique heritage to the future. Furthermore, this wealth is left without heirs; despite their total poverty, the noble savages take no interest in the gold abounding so near them (in the sea, in the mountains, beneath the tree etc.). These ancient civilizations are envisioned, by Disney, to have come to a somewhat catastrophic end. Whole families exterminated, armies in constant defeat, people forever hiding their treasure, for . . . for whom? Disney conveniently exploits the supposed total destruction of past civilizations in order to carve an abyss between the innocent present-day inhabitants and the previous, but non-ancestral