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Lippi-Green Lecture Reflection

I felt that this lecture really expanded the way I thought about the use of accents in media, especially children's media, as it was something I had never truly noticed enough to put critical thought to it; however, now that we've discussed it, it's hard for me to believe that I hadn't! One of the most interesting parts of the lecture to me was our discussion on the use of British accents for villains. It was harder to understand this as a black-and-white judgement of whether or not cartoons are training children to see others as dangerous, as it does reflect that principle to some degree, but seems to be based in positive ideas about British people rather than negative ones. Some of the reasons that we came up with for this accent choice were that British accents are associated with being upper-class, academic, and intelligent, characteristics that were then translated into calculated and cunning villains. I think that the association between evil and any foreign accent is harmful, as it does add to the idea that foreign accents are untrustworthy; at the same time, it's interesting to apply it to an accent that isn't seen as inferior in American society, and rather as "sophisticated" or even attractive. It was also saddening when we discussed villain accents in the context of the Lion King. Scar, the commanding and cunning villain, is given a British accent, while the hyenas, who are meant to be less intelligent and followers, are given caricatured AAVE and Latino accents. It portrays a clear message about which accents are viewed as superior and which as inferior, and I worry about the way that impressionable young children would internalize these ideas.

Thinking about the use of American or British accents for movies that are set in different countries, therefore making them inaccurate, also brought up questions for me. I was thinking about The Lion King, where Timon and Pumbaa are given Brooklyn accents rather than African

ones that would reflect their location. This inaccuracy doesn't feel positive. However, I wonder about whether or not giving them an African accent would end up becoming caricatured, and used for comedic effect rather than simply for accuracy's sake, and what ideas that would give to children about African accents. In addition, if only the sidekicks had accurate accents and the others retained their American or British accents, what would this imply? Overall, I appreciated my new insight into these issues, and I feel that it will allow me to approach accents in media more critically in the future.