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Pocahontas and the Historical Bias in Walt Disney's Productions

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Dedication

I dedicate my graduation to the precious people of my life. I owe my success to my mother , the most caring and giving one in the world who supported, encouraged, and motivated me.

To my father, the man of my life.

To my brothers and my only sister .

To everyone that pushed me to stand and live this wonderful moment, celebrating my success.

I love you from the bottom of my heart and I thank all of you for your efforts .

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I dedicate this paper to my mother, who was my teacher from the primary school, until the high school.

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Abstract

By the end of 1970s, colonialism wound down, but the era of Eurocentrism commenced, which give the west the ability to take control of Media . Thus, history and culture of the colonised nations were represented from their perspective. The original inhabitants of America were among the nations that were subjected to colonialism. So, their history and culture were distorted. Disney, which is considered as a grand narratives , is one of the Western media companies, that are accused by historical bias and Eurocentrism , and that was the case in *Pocahontas*. But nine years after Disney released its movie, a book was published by Native Americans, it denies The story of Disney, after that, minor narratives were produced and they all denied Disney 's story. To what degree Disney's historical representation is accurate to the real history. Hence, The goal of this research is to provide an answer to the question asked . The result was that to a certain extent Disney was not accurate.

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General Introduction

By the fifteenth century, the world witnessed what is known as the age of exploration. The Spanish and the Portuguese Empires explored the Americas, the coast of Africa, the Middle East, India, and East India. This is how the story of colonialism began. In fact, the European powers found their sanctuary in these territories which had been drained for centuries. Then, by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the British and the French Empires followed Spain and Portugal's paths, and indeed they succeeded in imposing their entities overseas.

The circumstances remained unchanged, but not after World War II. Long journey and a long struggle that was not insubstantial, all the colonized nations got their independence by the late 1970s. The land was liberated, but not the minds.

At this stage, the West recognized that colonialism had come to its end and that it was no longer possible to subjugate or enslave the colonized nations. The west imposed its hegemony in terms of all, including history and culture , and they succeeded in doing so by giving birth to Eurocentrism, which resulted cultural hegemony and historical distortion.

During these invasions, the media became the new tool used by the west to promote their ideology, in order to represent history, culture, from their perspective, this issue became the new target that the west wanted to reach.

Disney is one of the most popular companies established in the western world. Its accounts are regarded as grand narratives. The company was and continues to be one of several tools used to glamorize the image of the west and disfigure the image of the east. Any non-western culture was attacked and represented from a Eurocentric perspective, in order to make the western culture a role model, historical falsification was the only way to realize so.

Native Americans, Turkish, Muslims, and others were mentioned as subjects for what was mentioned.

Pocahontas was one of the most popular princesses created by Disney. In 1995, Disney produced a movie entitled *Pocahontas*. The movie is about a love story between the British captain John Smith and the Native American princess, and in 1998, Disney produced its second part, entitled *Pocahontas II: Journey to a New World*. The events of the story revolve around Pocahontas's voyage to London, for a set of reasons, with John Rolfe, whom she fell in love with and got married to.

Pocahontas was the main character in the grand Narratives and the Minor ones as well. That fairy tale lasted for a long time, until a new story showed up, with a total of different historical events. Hence, the story by Disney became worthy of analysis and comparison with the other accounts.

The goal of this research is to determine which narrative is the most accurate in terms of falsifying history, underestimating other cultures, idealizing Western culture, and recommending Western ideas to others.

Based on what was mentioned above, the following research question has been formulated: To what extent is Disney's portrayal of Pocahontas historically accurate?

This investigation is divided into two chapters. The first chapter starts with a review of the early Indian American conflict, it represents the History of the Native Americans, the European invasion, and the influence of the British conflict. Then, it defines Eurocentrism and its impact on history and culture. Moreover, it tackles historical bias on general then in Disney's historical accounts. And it concludes with female figures in Disney including Pocahontas.

The second chapter is an analytical and critical study of the movie realized by Disney, in order to assure the exactness of the minor narratives that told the story of the Native American princess, by taking into consideration the influence of colonialism, Eurocentrism, historical and cultural misrepresentation, and the Western Hegemony on the media. First, it speaks of Pocahontas's biography. Moreover, it interprets the grand narrative of the story, followed by the story of the miner. Moreover, it examines the story of Pocahontas by taking into consideration the standards that confirm the validity of any historical accounts, the Eurocentric perspective of Disney, and its historical bias.

Chapter One

History of the Indian-European Conflict

1.1 Introduction

History and the culture of the non-whites were affected by colonialism at first, then by Eurocentrism (different types of imperialism). They were biased by the west. Thus, they utilized the media including Disney to represent them from their perspective and to promote their ideologies.

This chapter will deal with this dilemma. First, it represents an overview about the Early Indian European conflict in America, including a brief history about Native Americans, the European invasion, and the influence of their conflict on the centenaries. Second, it incorporated an explanation of Eurocentrism and its impact on history and culture. Then, it tackled the concern of bias in history and in Disney. And finally, it dealt with the representation of women in Disney.

1.2 Early Indian European Conflict in America

The American continent was a virgin land until the arrival of the Native American Indians who were the first feet to settle in the territory. That moment had been considered as the real commencement of the establishment of the history and the civilization of the Native Americans. After that, Europeans displaced to the new land in stages. This displacement resulted in: an infinite conflict and influence between the two sides.

1.2.1 Native Americans – A Brief History

Indigenous people's history dates back to 40,000 years ago. They came from Asia, crossed the Bering Strait (The Bering Strait is a strait between the Pacific and Arctic oceans, separating the Chukchi Peninsula of the Russian Far East from the Seward Peninsula of Alaska), and went down to North America. They settled in tribes. Each one had a chief; there

were hundreds of them, and each one, as well, was different from the neighbouring ones in terms of culture and even language. In this historical study, Reynoldson said that “There were probably some 200 Native American languages being spoken. Each one was different and one tribe could not understand the language of the neighbouring tribe next door” (2000, p.5). They were also strong and courageous warriors who loved and respected nature and animals, they were great hunters. Reinhart claims that "Indians used these weapons to hunt and fight: bows and arrows, spears, knives, and tomahawks" (1998, p. 20-21).

They used buffalo for food, clothing, and tepees, which were portable conical tents made of skins, cloth, or canvas on a pole frame used by North American Indians in the plains and great lakes regions. They were farmers as well, and they cultivated corn to survive. In this context, Reinhart continues “Native Americans owned a wide variety of homes. Different tribes built different types of houses: the Wigwam houses, the Hogan, the tepee, the longhouses, and the Pueblo. They often decorated their tepees with colourful pictures. For instance, the peoples of the Pacific Coast often put big totem poles outside their longhouses” (1998, p. 21-22).

Most scholars break North America into 10 separate cultural areas: the Arctic, the Subarctic, the Northeast, the Southeast, the Plains, the Southwest, the Great Basin, California, the Northwest Coast and the Plateau. Yet, they gather when it comes to colour symbolism. They decorate everything with colours that have specific meanings, such as red, which represents the Spiritual Life, wounds, blood, violence, war, earth, and strength bleu, which means wisdom, sky, water, female, confidence, etc. They also created poetry and status. Native Americans painted pictures on big stone walls to tell stories about their lifestyle.

Over the centuries, the indigenous nations witnessed significant foreign sweeps. The sweep was assimilated mainly by European interference, and the intention was to take their land.

Within a short period of time, their way of living was changed forever. The changes were caused by factors such as loss of land, diseases, enforced laws which violated their culture, and much more. In this context Hulan claimed that:

The natives' impression of the invaders was "gusts." They taught the settlers how to grow crops. They also taught them how to live in the wilderness. Soon, the gusts declared war on the landowners in order to take it, and indeed, in the 1890s, the Indian wars ended. The Indians lost their land. America was now the land of the white settlers. The American Indians lived on reservations. It took Europeans, disease, guns, and horses less than 300 years to destroy a way of life that had been going on for at least 40,000 years (1999, p.50).

Indian Americans are tribes who established themselves in the new land and developed their culture. They were exposed to colonialism and abolition of their existence, and thus the entire race was erased.

1.2.2 The European Invasion

The Vikings were the first Europeans to land in America or the New World. Ziedan said that:

In 1960, Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad and his wife, archaeologist Anne Stine, discovered the remains of a Norse village at L'Anse aux Meadows, on the northernmost tip of Newfoundland land in the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador. This was the first conclusive proof that Greenlandic Norsemen had found a way across the Atlantic Ocean to North America, roughly 500 years before Christopher Columbus and John Cabot. (2013, para. 02).

Erik Erikson, the Explorer in A.D. 1000, and his crew moved to America after hearing about the new world from Bjarni Herjólfsson. Ziedan continues:

The Icelandic who arrived but never set foot in North America, according to the *Gmrlendinga saga* ("Saga of the Greenlanders") in the *Flateyjarbók* ("Book of the Flat Islands"), considered by many scholars to be more reliable in some aspects than the *Eiríkssaga rauða*, Leif learned of the new land to the west from the Iclander Bjarni Herjólfsson, who had been storm-driven there en route to Greenland about 15 years earlier (2013, para.1).

They settled in Canada first, then they moved south to Labrador, and finally they settled in the island of Newfoundland, where they found their sanctuary: a temperate climate, a fishing industry, and a flora and fauna, which meant the land was catalytic for consolidation. Once the winter came to an end and flowers blossomed, Erikson decided to return home to Greenland with spoils like wood and grapes, but never came back, unlike the other Vikings who kept sailing to the North of America and preferred to stay in Canada rather than in Newfoundland, where they witnessed a conflict with the natives, which resulted in the death of Erikson's brother.

The news of the new world and the Vikings' voyage to the other side of the ocean spread throughout Europe for centuries, and the Vikings opened European eyes to the new land.

In 1420, Europe knew the Age of Exploration. Vessels sailed towards Africa and Asia, looking for materials. Portugal was proactive in that, but the way to Asia and Africa was rugged. The explorers were looking for another way to reach India and the islands of Southeast Asia.

Around 1492, Christopher Columbus took the initiative and sailed to Asia across the Atlantic,. Four years later, Vespucci decided to follow Columbus' path, and by 1501, the latter landed in the new world, in this context John H. Lienhard claims that

Vespucci finally outfitted his own voyage in quest of the passage to the Indian subcontinent that had eluded Columbus. He sailed in 1499 -- seven years after Columbus first landed in the West Indies. Vespucci made two voyages between 1499 and 1502 and possibly a third one in 1503(n,d,para.04).

Again, news of the new world spread throughout Europe. Spain decided to take advantage of the occurrences. The Spanish throne didn't hesitate for a moment and decided to start its expeditions to America in order to plunder as much wealth as possible. They started with South America, then they moved to the north, which didn't drool the Spanish. Thus, Spain was the first empire that established colonies in the American continent.

A century later, the established their first colony, which they named Virginia in 1607. Then, by 1620, pilgrims established in Plymouth, Massachusetts. By the middle of the seventieth century, the British were the dominant race in America, while the Germans ranked second. Lotha, in this context claims that "In the 17th century, the principal component of the population in the colonies was of English origin, and the second largest group was of African heritage, German" (2019, para5).

By the end of the eighteenth century, America became a European colony. The European race invaded mostly all the American continent and based its rules and government on them.

1.2.3 The Influence of the British Conflict

By the 16th century, the British presence had penetrated the new land; some sought religious freedom, others sought economic opportunities, and still others sought political liberty. At first, relations were good between them. In this context, the journalist Rosenbaum claims that

The British dealt with the natives, and this matter bridged the English colonists and the local Indian American nations. However, the mistrust grew gradually, and small incidents led eventually to the Anglo-European war. The main cause of the conflict was the difference in lifestyles of the two nations; the Indians grew corn and vegetables and relied on hunting animals for the majority of their food and clothing. The settlers relied on agriculture, and in the east, forests were cut down to provide agricultural land. After they destroyed the forests above and below, marine animals could no longer live in the area. In the West, white hunters killed thousands of wild buffalo just for their skins. The Indians had to choose between migrating to new lands occupied by other hostile Indian tribes and fighting for their land. They realized that the whites were threatening their lives and competing with them to take their land away.(2013,p

The events occurred one after the other to write history and to raise up a colonized nation. France for instance, entered the political arena for the same reason that Britain did: to seek geo-economics expansion. The British were controlling thirteen colonies and they were looking to expand west. For the French, they occupied Canada and wanted to invade the south.

The French Indian War (1754-1763) greatly served Great Britain; it provided more gains, victories, and territorial acquisitions in the new land. Yet, it caused tremendous debts,

which made the British government impose taxes on the colonies in America, the matter that was not much appreciated by the locals, which led to years of protests, petitions, and eventually the American Revolution, the creation of the United States of America and the repression of the indigenous Americans to the present day.

The seven years of war affected the Indian Americans. Generally speaking, the tribes before the war had no common ground and lived in mutual mistrust and separation. Then they realized that being a united force can effect change.

Retribution was one of the war's most devastating long-term effects on Native Americans. The British exacted vengeance on the native tribes that had sided with the French during the war by cutting off their supplies and then forcing the tribes to obey the rules of the new mother country. They were, however, unpleasantly surprised when a large number of new settlers began to arrive (Hofstra, 2007, p. 54).

Furthermore, once the French were gone, there was little to divert the British government's suffocating attention away from whatever Native American tribes lay within its grasp. All of these factors played into the multinational Indian uprising called Pontiac's War that erupted directly following the end of the French Indian War.

1.3 Eurocentrism

All definitions of Eurocentrism given by primarily all scholars state that it is an ethnic classification created by the west, which was considered and still considers the non-white race to be inferior to the white race. Colin Mackerras claims that "Eurocentrism refers to a discursive tendency to interpret the histories and cultures of non-European societies from a European (or Western) perspective" (n.d.para. 01).

The concept emerged in the late 1970s, following the decolonization movements, as the west could not find another excuse to justify their centuries-long colonial movement.

By the end of the 1990s and exactly on the twenty-sixth of December, the world witnessed the fall of the Soviet Union and had become sovereign to Western hegemony. The West became dominant economically, politically, and militarily.

Because of this power imbalance, the West has had the advantage of reversing history, promoting Western culture while attempting to distort and obliterate it, and giving birth to accounts that go hand in hand with the Eurocentric concept. In this framework, Miguel claims that "This approach and understanding derived from applications of Western thought at the time, a thought process which viewed the Western "civilized" world as being at the forefront from which all other human societies were to admire and follow—usually at the behest of applied force along the way" (2000, para. 05).

The Native Americans for instance, who were described as savage and barbaric in almost all western accounts, such as *Pocahontas* and *The Last of the Mohicans*, are all sorts of demonstrations of the western view towards the Native Americans, who in fact had their own lifestyle, language, and culture. Miguel pursues his idea

Many Native American populations had already developed highly advanced civilizations. Some of these Native American cultures had created extensive irrigation networks comparable to those found in Europe. They had formulated an acute understanding of nature. They had domesticated crops. They had incredible knowledge of natural medicines. They had also developed extraordinarily sophisticated forms of government in which the concept of freedom was not only treasured but was also the leading principle throughout their respective administrative bodies. However, these

high achievements by America's indigenous peoples are seldom acknowledged as significant foundational elements of the American cultural landscape and beyond (2000, para.03).

Algerians were also commonly depicted in almost all Western accounts, including *The Garden of Allah*, *The Sheltering Sky*, and many others. The proportion of educated people was as higher than in Europe when France colonised Algeria. In the light of this, Hebenstreit said that "I deliberately searched among the population in the cities of Algeria. I did not find one person in Algeria who is ignorant of reading and writing, but I did not find him, while I found that in the countries of southern Europe, so hardly anyone encounters someone who can read" (1980, pages 52–53).

The Turkish people are another example that can be considered. History of the Ottoman Empire was always under attack. The westerners claimed that the Turkish conquests were a sort of colonization or invasion. On this basis, Mansel claims that "Muhammad the Conqueror had enslaved thirty thousand of the people of Constantinople" (1998, page 65).

The Ottoman Caliphs were portrayed from a western perspective. In 2011, the Franco-Luxembourg interviewer Stephan Bern presented a show called *Secrets of History—Suleiman the Magnificent*, in which the latter gave a typical stereotyped view of the Sultan. And because the West knew how to give a higher position to its ideology, it managed to realize the following: After the 1990s, western culture has become an ideal the world should follow, although its assumptions do not fit the assumptions of other cultures.

All nations, including almost all of the non-white ones, adopted new concepts such as democracy, materialism, complete freedom, etc. Hence, the underestimating of non-white culture was unchallenging for the West. And that is simply shown in the example below.

Islam became associated with terrorism, Islam was represented as a religion of violence and Jihad, and they hardly attempted to persuade the people with this perspective. Within this interpretation, Dr Wafaa asserts that "Mohammed was killed, Mohammed invaded, and Mohammed surmised". (The debate between Dr Wafaa Sultan and Sheikh Tariq Youssef: Is Islam a religion of war or a religion of peace? 2012, 35:00).

Indeed, the West was successful in making Western culture a role model for all nations. The world is undergoing a cultural globalization.

1.4 Historical Bias

According to scholars, bias is a prejudiced opinion with an utter rejection of others' opinions. Everyone is biased in one way or another. For example, a feminist is biased against masculine society; a secular-minded person is biased against Islamic ideology. Subjectivity expressed in history includes feelings, opinions, and impressions. Thus, the incidence of bias is high. In this context, Trevelyan claims that "the problem of bias in history is fundamental and pervasive." "No one can teach history for ten minutes without coming into contact with the question, whether he's aware of it or not." (n.d., para. 02).

History was, and still is, a fitting example of bias. For instance, the Jews showed their suffering throughout the centuries. Several films were produced to highlight this issue, like *Schindler's List*, *The Pianist*, and *The Roundup*. But the West, including the Jews themselves, did not produce any movie or mention it in any account in which they wrote that they were the first to extend help to France in 1830 in order to colonize Algeria. In this context, Maoushi¹said that "The Jews of Algeria were among the first to welcome the French occupation, and they expressed feelings of joy and happiness for the new situation that

¹ Maoushi Amel 's work is originally published in Arabic(2013,p.33)

Algeria had become, and during that difficult time, they only cared about preserving their lives and arranging their affairs” (2013,p,33).

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a new era began in which Europe completely dominated the world. Thus, it was divided into a colonizer and a colonized. Europeans like the British and the French found themselves controlling almost all of Africa, Asia, and America, whereas Africans, Asians, and Native Americans found themselves under colonial subjugation.

Europeans did not simply take the natives' lands and resources. They were aware that the battle was a battle of ideologies more than a battle of arms. . They knew previously that they are remaining, even though they would leave one day lies on the obliteration's identity of the colonized, this is why France for instance: destroyed mosques, constructed shrines, and prohibited the use of the Arabic Language when it colonized Algeria . Hence, Bouzrina and Moushmoush in this context assumed that:

After the French occupation, there were 13 large mosques and 106 small mosques in Algeria, and most of these mosques were destined to be demolished, either obliterated or transformed. Some of them, under the guise of other unjustified reasons, are still standing. We will mention the dilapidated mosques that have left no trace and the mosques that are still standing. This is what shows and reveals the hidden hatred and the systematic destruction of the colonial policy in Algeria (2021, para.01).

Thus, the native were ignorant, unaware of the history's value. They wrote down their history centuries later on. Mustapha² said that "the Native Americans started to write their history recently." (2015, page 120).

That policy did not make the colonizer able to gain power; it gave the colonizer the right to write history and present it in a way that serves its own interests and justifies its actions. Thus, history was biased, and because it is a tale told by the victors, the non-white race was represented as uncivilized, in need of civilization, a nation without history, and a nation with a savage culture.

1.4.1 Historical Bias in Disney

The west, as is well known, used the media to promote their ideas, changed the whole game and ascended the throne. Its target was to attract the largest possible number of fans and followers, who became addicted to watch rather than to read. Interviews, talk shows, and even cinema; movies and series replaced historical written forms. Indeed, the transition from written to audio-visual presentation of history was criticized in terms of credibility, that is, including inaccurate information or data that could confuse the audience. *Brave Heart* is a movie that tells the story of William Wallace, a Scottish knight who became one of the main leaders during the Wars of Scottish Independence. Though the movie has been criticized for its many historical inaccuracies, it does include many factual elements, no matter how unbelievably brutal they may seem, including a scene showing the practice of defenestration, a real Medieval punishment. *Gladiator*, *Marie Antoinette*, *The Patriot*, *The Last Samurai*, and so many other examples are proof of the inaccuracy that can be included in such productions or a type of art produced by several western media companies.

² Ahmed Khaled Mustapha 's work is originally published in Arabic; *explanation of the primary source* (2015,p.120)

One of these popular production companies is Walt Disney. Disney productions, also known as the Walt Disney Company, is an American corporation founded on October 16, 1923, by brothers Walt and Roy O. Disney. Over the centuries, Disney has been and continues to be a global company that has had an impact on both adults and children. By 2021, Disney will have a global presence. It had reached the threshold of seven hundred and forty-seven films, which had ranged from fictional to historical to fairy tales and other genres.

Disney, as well, contained inaccurate data in its movies. Sure, Disney's audience is mostly made up of children, but they should learn pure history in order not to raise a generation that believes in Santa Claus and entrenches or engraves in their minds the inferiority of other nations; and that was the case in *Aladdin*; the story telling, the setting really made the Arabs feel upset that they associated spirituality, magic, exoticism, eroticism, and savagery with such characters from the Middle East. The movie took place in the Middle East, but it is full of Indian architecture and iconography. The palace looks more like TajMahal, and in *Mulan*, Orli in this sense states that "the timing is way too wrong. The real timing is 386–534 CE, and the movie is talking about events that happened until the early 1400s "(2015, para.05).

Of course, Disney changed the course of the story for specific purposes. The way the scenario is made shows that being a grand narrative has an ultimate goal, which is representing self-power and the cultural mainstream. These literary master pieces are works that stand to confirm the literary canon.

Grand narratives, also known as master narratives, are a term coined by Jean-François Lyotard in his seminal 1979 work on the postmodern condition. Promoting white western culture's supremacy by depicting the qualities of themas cultivated by other nations. Coloured people are always represented in grand narratives such as Disney's

as inferior, uncivilized, and ignorant slaves. For example, Robinson Crusoe, for example, is a grand narrative and all the Victorian literature is a master narrative (Goswami, What is the definition of grand narrative? And if possible, could you please explain its meaning in a historical art context? 2014, Research Gate).

Hence, the grand narratives, as mentioned above, are the works that stand for the mainstream perspective. Disney, which is a grand narrative in this example, is opposed by minor narratives that are simply defined as the opposing narratives that deny and contradict the grand narrative perspective. Indeed, using evidence and proof. This comparison of the two gave birth to a new genre of approach to studying any historical event, which is new historicism. This new approach studies history from numerous points of view and perspectives resulting various accounts of the same historical event.

1.5 The Representation of Women in Disney

Disney considered the female character to be omnipresent in their productions. Despite the fact that non-whites made up 20% of the population in the 1980s, Disney produced twenty-three films in which all female characters were white-skinned, such as Cinderella and Snow White. Laemle claims that "Seven of the eleven official Disney Princesses are white" (2018, page.8).

By 1989, Disney produced twelve films in which women played leading roles for the first time. Appearance of the non-white female characters this time was like Jasmine and Pocahontas, but they were not represented in the same way that the white princess was represented. The Beauty, according to Disney, was an intellectual and civilized lady, whereas Jasmine, the Arabian girl, was a thief with dark skin, and Pocahontas, the Indian princess, married John Rolfe because she was impressed by British civilization. All the non-white females were typically portrayed. In this context, Oppenheimer claims that

Women embody the whims of the harem, wearing bras and head scarves in the markets, unlike most Disney princess films, Jasmine is the mistress rather than the main character. While her European counterparts in other films sing to birds and attend elaborate dance parties, the first non-European princess seduces Jafar; her opponent is a man years her senior and the man she is supposed to marry. Princess in a turquoise bra and baggy pants, a rebel against her own oppression, whom Jafar calls a "kitten," is one of Disney's most sexualized characters (2019, para.05).

Even when Disney decided to give birth to an African American princess like Tiana, she missed the feministic features that white princesses had and dressed in a western way.

Distorting culture was not enough for Disney, the American company falsified history too. *Aladdin's* story was not one of the Arabian Nights stories, as westerners claimed. Oppenheimer said that "Galland included stories such as *Aladdin*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and *Sinbad the Sailor*. These are stories that will soon be erroneously attributed to Scheherazade, the famous fairy tale narrator in the original book, *One Thousand and One Nights*"(2019, para.06).

Pocahontas is another story misrepresented by Disney. All the historical facts stipulated in the movie were erroneous. Minor narratives, such as *Antichrist* by Ahmed Khalid Mustapha and *The Real Story of Pocahontas: The Other Side of the Story* by Dr Linwood and Angela Daniel Silver Star, provided a completely different version than Disney. Women in Disney, in terms of their history and culture, were pictured through a European view.

1.6 Conclusion

To conclude, everything has been restated until now. The settling of the world by the English in 1607 had been considered by the centenarians as colonialism. Bearing in mind that the first people who arrived in the new world came from Asia 40.000 years ago, then, the Vikings arrived. They lived in tribes until the European geo-economic expansion reached its ferociousness.

The Indigenous people were gravely affected by the establishment of the Europeans in their land. Simply because they violated their home, culture, and families. Not only that, the drop that overflowed the cup was imposing taxes on paying their debts. Hence, the revolution was needed and the United States of America was created. Thus, the Indigenous people were repressed till the present day.

The worst part is that history has been written by colonists, the white race. Because history is always written by the victors, they made it seem like settling on the American continent was a grace for the centenarians. The concept of Eurocentrism manifested in distorting their history and showing the world that they were on a mission of civilizing and cultivating the inferior and savage nations; the supremacy of western culture requires that they must spread all over the world.

The historical Bias of the westerners was represented Via Media. All sorts of media went hand in hand with the written forms to entrench the idea of that they have not done anything wrong or illegal . Audio- visual means were represented by different production companies , Disney was one of them that had a lot of fallacies. As a mean of production , Disney neglected the non-white race within its heroes and heroines , and when mentioning them , it always made them look like savage , barbarian , uncivilized and shared a lot of manifested in distorting their history and

showing the world that they were on a mission of civilizing and cultivating the inferior and savage nations ; the supremacy of the western culture requires that they must spread all over the world .

Chapter two

Depiction of Bias in the Story of
Pocahontas

1.2 Introduction

Disney gave birth to several princesses that marked the childhood of many, and Pocahontas is one of them. Her fairy tale remained too long until the emergence of the minor narratives that represents different account from Disney. Hence, it became a necessary to verify the authenticity and the accuracy of the Grand narratives.

The research work deals with the practical part of this chapter. First, it exposes Pocahontas's history, according to Disney. Then, according to minor narratives, Moreover, it provides an extended interpretation of the movie by taking into consideration the following: the standards that assure or turn down any historical account, the imperial history of Great Britain, the Eurocentric view point of Disney, and its historical bias.

2.2 Pocahontas's Biography

The flower is between two streams, Amonute and Matoaka, or Rebecca. All of these names refer to one of the most well-known figures in early American history. The daughter of Wahunsenaca (also known as Powhatan), Derba in this respect claims that "he was the powerful chief of the Powhatan," a Native American tribe who lived near the Chesapeake Bay. "We know very little about her mother" (2015, para 02). Wahansenaca got married thirty times. He did that out of the traditions which require the leader to marry a girl from every village and have babies with her so that the blood of the rolling family enters the whole kingdom as a declaration from the village of allegiance to the king. However, Pocahontas' mother was his first love; her name was Pocahontas too. He married before he even became a leader. She died when she gave birth to her daughter. The matter that made Wahansenacawistful that the folds of his soul had blackened, so he decided to call his daughter Amonute (privately, Matoaka) Pocahontas, which means playful one. This is why Pocahontas was his favourite. In about 1559, Pocahontas was born. In this context, Wasowicz

assured that “Despite being the chief's daughter, Pocahontas' childhood would have been similar to most Native American girls.” She would have lived in a thatched roof hut, learned how to make a fire and cook, foraged for food in the woods for berries and nuts, and played games with other children. “She had a peaceful and happy childhood” (1996, p.378). She was ten years old when the English tribe arrived in the New World, and her life was forever changed. She married a planter named John Rolfe. Pocahontas was baptized. She converted to Christianity and was named Rebecca in 1614. Her marriage was thought to be the first recorded union of a European man and a Native American woman. The Rolfe family boarded a ship bound for Virginia in 1617. However, Matoaka would not complete this journey home. She became gravely ill, theories range from smallpox, pneumonia, or tuberculosis, to her having been poisoned, and she was taken off the ship at Gravesend, where she died on March 21, 1617, and was buried at St. George's Church. It is believed she was 21 years old when she died.

2.3 Disney’s Narrative Vs. Minor Narratives, an Opposition

Disney produced two movies in which a non-white character was the main character, Pocahontas. Neither the west nor the east can deny the success of the movie, whether the first part or the second one. Pocahontas was the first non-white princess who swept the box office. However, grand narrative and minor narratives about the Native American princess are completely different from each other.

2.3.1 Disney’s Narrative

In 1995, Disney produced a new fairy-tale that lasted eighty-seven minutes entitled *Pocahontas*, and then in 1998, the second part was produced, *Pocahontas 2: Journey to the New World*. It is an animated, familial movie, directed by Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, and written by Carl Binder, Susannah Grant, and Philip Lazebnik. John Smith's diaries were one of the sources that Disney counted on when producing the movie.

The events of the story revolve around a thorny love story between the British captain, John Smith, and the Native American princess, Pocahontas. She was a young, eighteen-year old girl. She was the only child of her father, the king and the leader of the Powhatan kingdom.

The tale began as soon as the white vessels landed on the princess's ground, those who came from behind the blue , they had white skin , those white were the British who came under the command of the Captain John Smith , to dig for gold.

Pocahontas broke the rules, the norms and her father's saying only to meet John Smith, even though she admitted that she was ignorant , savage and different from him , the princess could not resist the captain's charm and unconventional feelings started to sneak into Pocahontas's heart, John became her obsession and her concern



Figure 2.1. Pocahontas and John Smith in love. (40:46 *Pocahontas*)

The Native Americans decided to start a war, after the union of all the tribes and due to their ritual, they were convinced that the war was the only solution. Thus, they attacked the British, who defended themselves and thus, the two sides became enemies. Under these circumstances, the love birds Pocahontas and John kept meeting and preferred peace over war, and decided to make an end to it, but destiny was not in their favour.

While the birds of love were meeting in secret, Koccum; the one who she was supposed to marry, caught them, and tried to kill John, the fight ended with Koccum's death. John was eventually captured and was going to be executed for being the reason behind the death of the princess's fiancé. Again, Pocahontas broke the rules, she threw herself on his arms, announcing bravely in front of her father that John was the one and she had chosen him, saved him and at the end, she succeeded in convincing her father to forgive him.



Figure 2.2. Pocahontas saving John Smith. (01:05 *Pocahontas*)

At that stage, the British intervene armed to save their captain. Yet, the stray bullet of Reckless, the counsellor's king, injured John instead of Powhatan's chief. Hence, the crew decided to return to England.

The second part of the movie is a follow-up to the first part. The events revolve around Pocahontas's journey to London, led by John Rolfe. The aspects of the story changed; setting, characters, themes, etc., which resulted in the ultimate change of the rolling events.

Then, John Rolfe carried a gift of peace from his king James I to the Powhatan King and his daughter, hoping to reform the relationship between the two peoples. Pocahontas then sailed to London as an ambassador of peace for her people, after a long and intense debate with her father, Pocahontas imposed on him her decision to travel. As soon as she arrived, she climbed the tree, as she always did, and sang about her fascination with urban modern life there. The Indian princess tried to adapt to the new lifestyle that was unfamiliar to her; she wore corset, wore makeup and the aspect that Disney showed was the scene where she took off her mother's necklace which symbolizes her origins and put on the diamond one offered by John Rolfe. She met with the king in order to reach an agreement, and she eventually succeeded. Pocahontas stopped the war, and returned to her nation with peace in one hand and John Rolfe in the other.



Figure 2.3. Pocahontas dances with John Rolfe in the party. (44: 42 *Pocahontas 2; Journey to the New World.*)

2.3.2 Minor Narratives

There are numerous minor narratives that tackle Pocahontas as a subject to discuss, such as: *Antichrist* by Ahmed Khaled Mustapha, *The True Story of Pocahontas: The Other Side of History* by Angela L. Daniel and Linwood Custalow; and *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma* by Camilla Townsend. In addition to documentaries such as Shannon Quinn's *Pocahontas: The Tragic True Story* and Smithsonian Channel's *Pocahontas beyond the Myth*.

According to the above-mentioned sources, the story goes as follows: The tale began as soon as the white vessels landed on the princess's ground. Those who came from behind the blue had white skin, and that is what raised the princess's curiosity. The Native Americans gave hospitality to the British for four months. Yet, and in view of the fact that they had no more ability to furnish those British with supplies, their villages were stocked with blood, the British did not approve the act. So, they forced the Native Americans to provide them with subsistence under threat. In this context, Custalow and Daniel claim that

Many of the Powhatan people were afraid of the English because they used tinder sticks to kill them. They had begun to believe that Smith was like a deity because of his gun and sword. When Smith went into any village, he would take four or five English colonists with him. They would traumatize the people with their weapons to the point that they would give Smith what he wanted to get him to leave. For instance, Smith would pretend to come into a village in a friendly manner. When he was in close proximity to the chief of the village, he would put his pistol to the chief's head, demanding a ransom of food in exchange for the chief's release. Smith and his men

would proceed to take all the corn and food in the village. As they left, Smith would throw down a few blue beads, claiming to have traded with the Powhatan people (2007, p.20).

Due to these events, Pocahontas's father and John Smith signed a treaty of peace, and within this interpretation, Mustapha³ said that:

My father was a wise politician. He reprimanded him at first for what he had done in some villages for food, then Powhatan offered him better land than the land on which they built their camps. It contained fresh water, salt water, and an outlet into which they would put their ships. The British would benefit from their supplies, help them build their camps, and even marry their most beautiful girls as long as they declared their loyalty to the Powhatan (2013, p.157).

John Smith returned to London for treatment because an exploding cartridge exploded in his face. And that was the point of no return. The British broke the covenant, the conflict rose and the Anglo-Powhatan war began. It lasted for four years, and it was dominated by the British. This is how the eradication of the Native Americans started. Da Silva in this sense claims that

The settlers began the act of war. Considering that these men already saw the natives as less-than-humans and they had not been with a woman for a long time, they took women and children from their homes and violated them. In the Powhatan culture, if a man committed sexual assault, the rapist was immediately sentenced, so the Powhatan people interpreted this as an act of war, and the chief Powhatan was ready to attack James Town (2020, 4:45).

³ *Antichrist* is the Original work of Amhed Khalid Mustapha written in Arabic.(2013,p.157)

This is how the situation has remained. Then, the British decided to kidnap Pocahontas and use her as leverage to stop the chief from obliterating the colony. Thus, the Captain, Samuel Argall, was the one who held her captive in his boat for a period of time that lasted for over a year. The Indian princess was raped by the crew on a regular basis for over a year and got pregnant, and her torture could no longer be hidden. Therefore, she was baptized in the Anglican Church and Rebecca was her new English name, and she married John Rolfe by force, wherein the peace treaty was made and it became known as ‘the Peace of Pocahontas’.

After their marriage, they sailed to England, where the British tried to give birth to a new Pocahontas who would fit into their culture; she learned how to dress, eat, and behave. In 1617, after lots of Pocahontas’s begging Rolfe to visit her family, he approved, and then, no longer than they set sail, Pocahontas died on the boat of an unfamiliar disease.

2.4A Criticism of Disney’s Perspective Based on Minor Narratives

The occurrence of multiple accounts or sources about any historical event is a must in history, and among the researchers of the field. Yet, there are standards that always solve any dilemma about any historical event.

Historians bear a great deal of responsibility for dating history because of its value and significance to nations. It can be said that to confirm the accuracy of any historical account, there are three standards that should be taken into consideration: the narrator, who must be dispassionate in order to consider his narratives; the content, which should be logical and

accurate; and the objectivity of all the narrators who are representing the historical event to prevent any kind of distortion.

Regarding the narrator in this context, Jarvis asserts that the western historians, including the British, assure us that John Smith's narratives are not reliable and accurate, especially those of his *Journey to the new world* and *The stories of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith*.

Unfortunately, a good deal of the early criticism was confined to petty details like the Pocahontas story, so that more important considerations became obscured. Captain John Smith's historical writings were conceived in an expensive spirit, with the goal of presenting a broad view of British achievements in the Western hemisphere. Smith undertook for America what Hakluyt and Purchas had projected for the world at large: the compilation of a complete account of exploration and colonial settlement. It was a noble ambition, under the quickening influence of which he wrote untiringly until the year of his death. If the finished product was marred by inaccuracies and lacked literary merit, it nevertheless stood as an accomplishment not to be sure "(n.d., P.4).

Concerning the content as well, the representation of the British in the movie does not go hand in hand with the colonial history of Britain. Great Britain was a colonial power. The Empire committed bloody crimes in India, Burma, America, and the rest of its colonies all over the world. There are British historians who are proud of that, and recognized it, and even went much deeper by finding justifications and excuses for their colonialism. Mline in this context claimed that

Barely a generation after the ignominious end of the British Empire, there is now a quiet but concerted drive to rehabilitate it, by influential newspapers, conservative

academics, and at the highest level of government. Just how successful this campaign has already been was demonstrated in January when Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Tony Blair's heir apparent, declared in East Africa that "the days of Britain having to apologise for its colonial history are over." His remark, pointedly made to the Daily Mail—which is leading the rehabilitation chorus in the run-up to May's general election, was clearly no heat-induced gaffe (2005, para.01).

No one can deny the fact that the British are known by their racial and ethnic ideologies and no one can deny the racial view of Winston Churchill towards Indians. Longworth said that "I hate Indians; they are beastly people with a beastly religion" (2020, para. 05).

Their racism and the assumption of the whites are superior and any other kind in this world is inferior were clearly seen either in their speeches and declarations or simply in their colonialism and torture for years.

Returning to the point, in both movies, Pocahontas was represented from a Eurocentric perspective. She walked on four feet, climbed trees swiftly and ingeniously, and she even gawked at John Smith when she saw him for the first time. She admitted that she was savage, ignorant, and different from him and that was what made her fall in love with him. When Pocahontas reached London in the second part of the movie, she was shocked and fascinated by the modern urban lifestyle. Indeed, she climbed the tree again and ran in London's streets. She could not hold herself, she danced and sang: London is everything I imagined and more. London is nothing I have seen before.



Figure 2.4. Pocahontas climbs the tree. (36: 30*Pocahontas*)

Culture as an aspect as well was mentioned and discussed in the movies, and it was a mistreated product. Their contradiction was shown from the extreme to the total opposite. Pocahontas's culture was distorted. Native Americans were portrayed in every negative conception possible in order to instill the indigenous culture's inferiority.

Another feature that Disney focused on was the patriarchal, conservative Native American society. The patriarchal, conservative society that Pocahontas belonged to was depicted as an impediment; men had the total right to make decisions, to control women, and to do whatever they wanted without getting permission. Women, in contrast, had to follow in silence. Pocahontas was forced by her father that she would marry a member of her village and she could not refuse, this is what Disney portrayed. However, the reality is that Native American society hallows women and empowers them to do whatever they want. Therefore, by adopting such a concept, Disney gave a wide berth to subjectivity.

Historical bias is a common issue at Disney. The story of Pocahontas is one of several stories that Disney biased, and that was well explained and demonstrated in the first chapter. The Native American Princess was a decade old. She was not a young eighteen-year old lady. For example, Pocahontas did not intervene to save John Smith's life or fall in love with him.

This is one of the most common policies that Disney has adopted over the years: choosing one of the most popular historical characters, making them the protagonists, and creating a love story between them, in order to distract the audience from a certain fact for a particular reason. And that was the case in Pocahontas. In addition to this, children in the indigenous people's customs were never allowed to be near anything such as a trial, betrayal, or execution. Disney lied, and it was all propaganda to instil the idea that the natives were savages who would kill anyone for no reason. In addition, Pocahontas sailed to Britain violated, raped, humiliated and certainly not willingly as Disney showed that she was the dove of peace between the two nations, that she brought peace to her nation and convinced the king to stop the war. She did not marry John Smith. She married a man of her tribe and was forced to marry John Rolfe. The British were not gentlemen, they were rapists and murderers, and their only intention was to take their land and resources, which means the historical biases of Disney are the best evidence of the company's inaccuracy.

As a result, there are two edges of the same figure: one provided by whites and the other by non-whites. Story given by Disney does not fit with the requirements of any historical account. The second one includes and maintains those requirements. In the first story, Pocahontas is an example of a perfect typical Native American who reflected white racial ideas. Thus, what was mentioned demonstrates the accuracy of the miner narratives that are told by the non-whites, including the Natives. Based on the historical proof and evidence, when Disney's account was analysed, there were cut-off points between them that demonstrated Disney's inaccuracy.

2.5 Conclusion

To summarize everything that has been said thus far, West tried to aestheticism their image, including Britain in front of the world, to hide their bloody history and to preserve the supremacy of their culture. Hence, the media was their target as usual. They started on their sneaking ways. To do so, Disney created an excitable love story between Pocahontas and John Smith. Eons and eons later, the non-whites reacted and wrote accounts, opposing the whites and revealing the ultimate truth about the real side of the West.

For Pocahontas, the matter is simple. The account written by the Whites is considered as the "version written by the victors." And without any doubt, they changed the story to a substance that serves their demands, a grand narrative as Disney produced a movie which portrayed the pure stereotype image (Pocahontas' representation, her culture, her history).

The emergence of multiple narrations for the story raises questions and demonstrates that the story has a false edge. Disney's credibility has been belied by the fact that one of its sources that the movie is based on is the Diaries of John Smith. This captain, as already mentioned, is depicted as an author who do not have enough credibility to be considered as a narrative that represents history, a narrator who invented stories and wrote books to gain fame and wealth.

Disney pictured the natives as less-than-humans. Thus, Pocahontas was presented as the Indian princess who was ashamed of her nation's barbarian attitudes, loved the western culture, and loved one of the settlers. She even married a British man and became the dove of peace between the two nations. The points that showed the lies of Disney were the content, the context, and the narrator. Hence, the truth is totally different and way too far from the grand narrative. The major accounts were published as minor ones to ensure that Disney lied and that its version is an inaccurate false story. Narratives emerged to re-build Pocahontas's image and make her soul rest in peace, and to be known as the Indian princess who was

tortured and violated by the modern western world, yet she kept her origins and culture with her.

General Conclusion

The target behind this dissertation is to shed light on the story of Pocahontas, the Native American princess who has been a subject to historical and cultural distortion and misrepresentation in western accounts such as Disney productions. The aim deals with the analysis of the Disney movie version based on other versions; grand narrative versus minor ones; in order to prevail over the lies of Disney and present the truth to the world and rebuild her image.

The first chapter presented at the beginning an overview of both the original centenaries, who were the native Americans, and the European settlers who swept onto the American continent due to geo-economic expansion and exploration. The British settlement is mainly considered as colonialism. They used their power to violate the Natives' land, homes, and families and to make them surrender. Not to mention that the historical events of the colonial era in the new world were transmitted and written only by the western victors, and without any doubt, they tried to hide their crimes, and glamourized their acts and culture. The concept of Eurocentrism was mentioned as well and manifested in distorting the Indigenous people's history and showing the world that they were on a mission of civilizing and cultivating the inferior savage nations; the supremacy of western culture requires that they must spread all over the world. Some British historians truly believe that their interference was a grace because they brought modernity to those nations.

The first chapter discussed the term "historical bias" when writing about inferior nations and applied it to the tools used by the British to write that inaccurate history; the media, which worked in tandem with written forms (accounts, narratives) to promote false ideas. Means were represented by different production companies, and Disney was one of them. As a mean of production, Disney represented not only one example of historical

inaccuracy, but numerous ones that really raised the viewer's curiosity and inquisitiveness. When watching such western productions, one realizes that non-white female characters such as Mulan, Jasmin, Tiana, Pocahontas, and so many others have been subjected to injustice and oppression. Either completely ignored or represented in such a savage, uncivilized manner, even distorting her history for the purposes and requirements they require.

The second chapter focused more on the analysis and the examination of both the grand and minor narratives about Pocahontas. Pocahontas's biography was provided to give her full image. Then, her story from the Disney production was summarized in order to highlight the points where the Eurocentric perspective was shown. In comparison to the summary of the other narratives (books and documentaries), the analysis was constructed; during the Renaissance era, Disney gave birth to twelve films in which women played leading roles for the first time. Non-white female characters like Jasmine and Pocahontas appeared, but they were not represented in the same way as the whites. The Beauty, who had white skin, was an intellectual and civilized lady, whereas Jasmine, the Arabian girl, was a thief with dark skin, and Pocahontas, the Indian princess, married John Smith because she was impressed by British civilization and decided to convert to Christianity, leaving her origins, according to Disney. All the historical facts stipulated in the movie were erroneous. *Pocahontas: The Tragic True Story* by Shannon Quinn and *Pocahontas beyond the Myth* by Smithsonian Channel presented a completely different take on Disney's epic story.

Pocahontas was only ten years old; she was not eighteen. She had never intervene to save John Smith's life or fallen in love with him. He was twenty-seven years old and she was not allowed to be near him or any political council according to the Native American norms. The British attacked the Native Americans when they ran out of supplies and food and forced them to. They violated their families (women and children) and used their powers and arms to

eradicate them. They did not enter the continent in peace, as Disney mentioned. They did not want their gold only but the whole land. Pocahontas was raped, humiliated, violated, and tortured. She was forced to marry John Rolfe and to be baptized in the Anglican Church. The British settlers were not gentlemen; they were rapists and murderers. Disney portrayed the Natives in a totally savage manner to prove that the British existence on the American continent was justified.

To answer the research question, the interpretation of the Grand narrative based on the minor ones assured that Disney's historical portrayal of Pocahontas was far from the accurate truthful story. Disney did not respect the standards required to write a historical narrative about any historical event, and that is due to the sources, narrators, and even the historical context it assumed. Disney took advantage of the story when there was no strong presence of minor narratives to contradict and oppose it. Moreover, the truth prevailed centuries after, and this research work shows that.

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