CULTURAL DEFORMATION IN DISNEY MOVIES

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KULTURNA DEFORMACIJA U DISNEYJEVIM FILMOVIMA: DISNEY POGLED

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CULTURAL DEFORMATION IN DISNEY MOVIES: THE DISNEY GAZE

MA Thesis

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1. **Summary**

In this paper, I have examined Mulvey's idea of the male gaze, woman objectification, and the concept of scopophilia. hooks continued examining this theory further, as she focused on the necessity of a more inclusive approach to the representation of black people in media by developing an oppositional gaze. The term Orientalism is also described as a relationship of power and domination between the Occident and the Orient. The important part of this work is the development of what I call *the Disney gaze* as a method of creating content to meet the assumed needs of the targeted audience but failing to succeed at that attempt by frequently reinforcing stereotypes and ignoring diversity. Finally, I used Aladdin as a case study and looked at the damaging preconceptions and misrepresentations of Arab culture and people in Disney films.

Keywords: male gaze, oppositional gaze, Disney gaze, racism, Aladdin

Sažetak:

U svom diplomskom radu istražila sam Mulvyinu teoriju „pogleda muškaraca“, ideju o objektifikaciji žena i konceptu skopofilije. hooks je dalje razvila ovu teoriju sa svojom teorijom „oporbenog pogleda“ fokusirajući se na važnost inkuzivnijeg pristupa u reprezentaciji crnaca u filmovima. Također spominjem Orijentalizam koji je opisan kao veza moći i dominacije između Orijenta i Zapada. Bitni dio ovog rada je razvoj pojama kojeg zovem „Disney pogled“, a odnosi se na metodu stvaranja sadržaja na temelju potreba ciljane publike. No, pokušaj udovoljavanja želja publike ipak nije uspješan zbog provođenja stereotipova i ignoriranja različitosti. Na kraju,

analizirala sam Aladina i promatrala štetne predrasude i pogrešne prikaze arapske kulture i ljudi u Hollywoodu i Disney filmovima.

Ključne riječi: pogled muškaraca, oporbeni pogled, Disney pogled, rasizam, Aladdin

2. Introduction

"It's barbaric, but hey, it's home." This famous line from Disney's Aladdin's opening song caught my eye and sparked my curiosity on the subject of misrepresentation and cultural deformation in Disney movies. As someone who was once a big Disney fan, I understand that Disney has a considerable impact on audiences around the world, especially young children who are exposed to its films and characters. The company influences our culture, young minds and helps shape societal norms. That's why I believe it is important to analyze the content of its movies and see if Disney has a targeted audience for which it creates these movies.

Having this thought in mind, the idea of the Disney gaze appeared. The Disney gaze, developed with the help of Mulvey's male gaze and hooks' oppositional gaze, can be seen as Disney assuming what its targeted audience wants to see and focusing on making movies meet those needs. The company follows a certain formula while depicting certain cultures of simplifying and distorting reality to establish a connection with viewers. This approach, however, creates space for damaging stereotypes, and false representation and could lead to fear, dislike, and ultimately to the dehumanization of the population depicted.

In this paper, I will explore theories developed by Laura Mulvey, bell hooks, and other scholars and use the male gaze as well as the oppositional gaze as a base for developing the Disney gaze. Mulvey introduced the term male gaze and brought attention to its patriarchal structure while hooks developed the oppositional gaze as a way to fight against white supremacy and dehumanizing depictions of black people. *Orientalism* by Said is also explored as it is a system of knowledge shaped by European and American cultural dominance over the Orient.

I will use *Aladdin*, 1992 as a case study to analyze cultural deformation and harmful stereotypes as well as connect it with the important film theories mentioned. By examining these topics, I hope to demonstrate the importance of critical media analysis and provide awareness of the Disney gaze in the fight for more accurate representations.

3. Mulvey's Visual Pleasure

One of the most important texts of feminist film theory is Laura Mulvey's article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," which analyses the ways in which the patriarchal gaze operates in Hollywood cinema. Mulvey focused on the male audience stating that they are the target audience and that films are made to focus on their needs while analyzing the meaning of erotic pleasure and the portrayal of women in film (Mulvey 1975, 833). She introduced the term *male gaze* and brought attention to its patriarchal structure (Manlove 833).

Mulvey explores her theory around Freud's concept of scopophilia, which involves deriving pleasure from looking at another person's body as an object, especially in an erotic sense. In the dimly lit movie theatre, spectators can look without worrying about being seen and indulge in their voyeuristic fantasies. Mulvey suggests these conditions of cinematic experience facilitate both voyeuristic and narcissistic scopophilia (Mulvey 1975, 835). Voyeuristic scopophilia can be described as objectifying female characters while narcissistic scopophilia would be connected to the process of identifying with an idealized representation of the self portrayed on screen (1975, 834).

An analysis of the Disney movie *Pocahontas* (1995) shows that there are elements of scopophilia at play. The first time Pocahontas is introduced to spectators is when she was standing on a cliff while the camera is zooming in on her while making a 360-degree arc shot. This scene is eroticized because we see Pocahontas breathing deeply with her eyes closed as the wind is blowing on her long hair. The hair is touching her curves and she is wearing a short dress that reveals her one shoulder, cleavage, and long legs. The camera is making us look at her in a certain sexual way, in a shot that is not usually expected to be seen in a child's movie. In analyzing this scene from Pocahontas, we can say that this is an example of scopophilia because this scene was

introduced to show Pocahontas' beauty and for the viewer to take pleasure from it. Moreover, some critics state that the real Pocahontas was a child, not an exotic, sexualized woman wearing a push-up bra, therefore it is a misrepresentation of the Powhatan princess and Native Americans in general (Edwards 154). This shot is there only to forecast her unbelievable beauty, for us to fixate on her as a sexual object and not to progress the storyline. Christian Metz's *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* provides a framework for understanding the voyeuristic element evident here. According to Metz, movies involve a voyeuristic relationship between the viewer and the image on the screen. He describes that the desire to look grows as long as the object is not near and the viewer is not caught. For many people, cinema acts as an escape from the social aspects of their life, and as a medium that is well-suited to creating scopophilic pleasure (Metz 66). "Cinema is based on the legalization and generalization of the prohibited practice" (65), cinematic scopophilia, and voyeurism. The screen provides the necessary distance and allows the viewer to look at the image closer than they would in real life without being seen. However, it is not only distance that is attractive in this case, but also the absence of the physical object: "Not only am I at a distance from the object, as in the theatre, but what remains in that distance is now no longer the object itself, it is a delegate it has sent me while itself withdrawing" (61). These aspects of cinema make it a perfect medium for the creation of scopophilia.

Another scene that is clearly showing scopophilia is when John Smith and Pocahontas first meet. Smith is searching for Indians in the forest, holding his gun tightly, prepared to fight. Once he sees some movement, he prepares to shoot. However, once he jumps through the waterfall, he sees Pocahontas there standing and he is instantly mesmerized by her beauty. The camera's focus on her face from Smith's point of view aligns the audience with his scopophilic gaze, inviting us to share in his pleasure of looking at her while potentially objectifying her sexually. This could be

considered voyeuristic scopophilia, however, the scene incorporates elements of identification as well, or narcissistic scopophilia, as the spectator is encouraged to assume the perspective of the character and experience the pleasure of identifying with him.

Furthermore, Smith was instructed to shoot Indians as soon as he sees them, but he puts his gun down and stares at Pocahontas in awe. If Pocahontas had not been a beautiful, sexy "brown-skinned Barbie doll" maybe Smith would have shot her immediately without hesitation (Edwards 154). "Pocahontas' eroticized body thus performs a crucial gender role in this encounter: she is the racialized native sexual object for the colonizing male subject" (ibid.). Smith's refrain from shooting Pocahontas suggests a disruption of the traditional power dynamics presented in the male gaze. As Mulvey states, women characters often exist as objects that lack agency, however here Pocahontas' presence disrupts Smith's role as a colonizer, therefore challenging Mulvey's notion that the male gaze objectifies women who do not play any part in the progression of the narrative.

Throughout different films, however, female characters are passive, silent images, bearers of the meaning, and do not have any role in the story except for being pretty for the assumed male spectator (Mulvey 1975, 840). According to Mulvey a lot of films are structured in a way so that spectators can identify with the main male star and use him as their screen surrogate (838). Audience members project their look onto that of the male protagonist and internalize their representation of the imaginary existence (838). The film has a big task here and that is to accurately reproduce natural conditions of human perception by blurring the lines of screen spaces with camera movements and camera technology (ibid.).

Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) has been a major contribution to feminist film theory, offering a critique of the dominant gaze in Hollywood cinema. Mulvey argues that Hollywood cinema's patriarchal, phallocentric gaze functions to subordinate

women while also pleasuring male viewers. This gaze is reinforced by the film's narrative structure, which privileges male characters and their perspectives.

While Laura Mulvey's argument in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" is valuable it cannot be denied that it has some limitations. For this reason, it has received criticism from feminist scholars such as Teresa De Lauretis and bell hooks. These critics highlight how Mulvey's concept of the male gaze oversimplifies the complexity of the gaze and that it is not recognizing that Hollywood films also reinforce race, class, and other forms of oppression. In *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema,* De Lauretis proposes redefining the notion of imaging, or how meanings are attached to images (De Lauretis 8). She suggests that images created by the cinema have the power to affect and shape our perception of the world because the spectators are personally addressed by the movie and subjectively involved in the viewing process: "Cinematic representation can then be understood more specifically as a kind of mapping of social vision into subjectivity. In other words, cinema's binding of fantasy to significant images affects the spectator as a subjective production, and so the movement of the film inscribes and orients desire" (ibid.). The author argues that various techniques are used to create a certain gaze or perspective that is intended to guide the spectator's attention and affect their emotional response to the image (59). How these images will be presented, and which techniques used, will depend on the filmmakers' social and cultural values and assumptions (51).

De Lauretis mentions Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and agrees that in Hollywood cinema, heterosexual cis men were the ones who defined the object and modalities of vision, pleasure, and desire based on social formations and patriarchal ideology. De Lauretis does not agree that feminist cinema should try to make the visible invisible or destroy the vision. "The present task of theoretical feminism and feminist film practice alike is to articulate the relations of

the female subject to representation, meaning, and vision, and in so doing to construct the terms of another frame of reference, another measure of desire" (68). Instead of accepting the passive role of the objectified image, feminist film theory should work to establish a new, active subjectivity in the process of imaging (68-69). De Lauretis' study is interesting because she does not give final answers or strict definitions, and she is trying to erase boundaries. Her claims about feminism are not hopeful, however, this approach is encouraging a lot of debates (Creekmuir 48). De Lauretis' theory is different from Mulvey's in that it emphasizes the need to move beyond a binary understanding of power relations in the act of looking (De Lauretis 59).

While Mulvey's theory focuses on the male gaze as a one-way power dynamic, in which the male spectator objectifies woman, De Lauretis' thought, on the other hand, argues that the gaze is a complex and dynamic and is shaped by a variety of social, cultural, and historical factors. De Lauretis suggests that femininity and masculinity are not so much qualities or states of being, but that they occupy positions in relation to desire (Creekmuir 49). According to De Lauretis, identification with an object and/or subject while watching a movie is a complicated process and a movement. Connecting the gaze with masculinity and image with femininity is something De Lauretis is fighting against since she sees that no image can be identified, except when looking at it and inscribing it as an image (ibid.). De Lauretis seeks to move beyond the limitations of Mulvey's theory, suggesting that the viewer is not simply a passive recipient of the images presented on screen, but rather an active participant in the creation of meaning (De Lauretis 143). She contends that the spectator's response to the image is shaped by their own experiences, beliefs, and cultural background and that the spectator brings their meaning to the image (145). The author continues to say that spectators come to cinema already bearing a certain viewpoint, with certain semiotic history, personal and social, and with presumptions (ibid.): "...the film’s images (for

them) are not neutral objects of a pure perception but already ‘significant images,’ as Pasolini observed; already significant by virtue of their relation to the viewer's subjectivity, coded with a certain potential for identification, placed in a certain position concerning desire. They already bear, even as the film begins, a certain 'place of the look'" (ibid.).

According to De Lauretis, it is the viewer's subjectivity that shapes their response to the images presented on screen. This theory can be applied to the scene in *Pocahontas* where the camera focuses on Pocahontas in an eroticized way. The viewer's experience, beliefs, and cultural background can influence their interpretation of the scene. For example, one viewer can see this scene and focus on Pocahontas as a sexual object, while other viewers may see the same scene as a misrepresentation of Native American culture and depiction of harmful stereotypes. Moreover, fixating on Pocahontas' perfect body in this scene can be observed as a reflection of social norms and expectations related to female beauty and sexuality. According to De Lauretis, the meaning of the scene is not fixed but depends on the viewer’s subjectivity and cultural background. Therefore, it is important to talk about the impact these images have on viewers and to constantly work on developing a critical perspective.

bell hooks, another Mulvey critic, also highlights the importance of presumptions and feelings about an image on screen because of a viewer's historic, social, and cultural background. hooks, like De Lauretis, suggests that previous experiences influence the way people see and interpret images. hooks focuses on the experiences of black women as spectators and argues that they have developed an 'oppositional gaze' as a resistance against the dominant narrative presented in mainstream media (hooks 122). She describes this in her work "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectatorship" which will be described in more detail in the following chapter of this thesis. But for now, it is important to note that hooks also criticizes the overgeneralization of

Mulvey's theory and her failure to consider the experiences of Black women or other marginalized groups. According to hooks, Mulvey's theory limitation is that it assumes a universal spectator who is a white heterosexual male and can identify with the white male protagonist:

> Black female spectators actively chose not to identify with the film's imaginary subject because such identification was disenabling…Black female spectators, who refused to identify with the white womanhood, who would not take on the phallocentric gaze of desire and possession, created a critical space where the binary opposition Mulvey posits of 'woman as image, man as bearer of the look' was continually deconstructed. (122-123)

Black female spectators could intentionally choose not to identify with either the object or subject of the gaze while watching the Disney movie.

When analyzing the scene when Pocahontas and Smith first meet, we can see that camera shifts to focus on her from Smith's point of view, emphasizing the male gaze. This scene can be analyzed as colonizing the male subject seeing the native woman as a sexual object. It is clear that black female spectators cannot identify with the imaginary male spectator. Moreover, black female spectators viewing this movie with an oppositional gaze might feel that this scene is showcasing stereotypes about Native Americans as being exotic and primitive objects of desire, therefore they might actively choose not to identify with them as well. Viewers who are aware of the history of racial misrepresentation come into the cinema with a preconceived idea of how the race will be depicted and might feel the urge to create a critical space, the oppositional gaze to fight against these issues of male colonizer's gaze, and over-sexualization of a young Native American girl. All in all, hooks' oppositional gaze theory gives a useful framework for analyzing the representation

of women and minorities in movies, which was missing in Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

Mulvey wrote another essay called "Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in which she reflects and acknowledges the criticism of her theory. She addresses two key issues that were heavily criticized – the first one being her focus on spectators that are male rather than on spectators that are female or members of a marginalized group, and the second one being her focus on mainstream Hollywood cinema or, the "melodrama issue" (Mulvey 1988, 122). Mulvey recognizes that her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" neglects the female spectator and that she did not take into account the possibility of a female gaze or any other gaze. Mulvey does not retract her arguments from the original essay and suggests that women have the desire to connect with masculinity, some part of them that was lost when femininity took over, and that Hollywood movies offer this possibility of reconnecting (124): "In this sense Hollywood genre films structured around masculine pleasure, offering an identification with the active point of view, allow a woman spectator to rediscover that lost aspect of her sexual identity, the never fully-repressed bedrock of feminine neurosis" (ibid.).

Mulvey goes on to say that in "Visual Pleasure" she focused on a certain narrative where the central character is male and the female character does not have anything to do with the progression of the storyline in her original essay (127). In her "Afterthoughts," she gave an example of *Duel in the Sun* as a female-centric narrative (ibid.). The main story in the movie is the interior drama of a woman having two conflicting desires. However, since now the woman is at the center of the story, the story becomes overtly about sexuality and becomes melodrama, while in movies described in "Visual Pleasure," woman was a signifier of sexuality (ibid.). In *Duel in the Sun*, heroine Pearl is conflicted between two lovers, Lewt and Jesse, who personify Pearl's two

sides – masculine and feminine side, and it is their terms that finally break her (128). Mulvey suggests that Pearl's position is similar to that of the female spectator as she temporarily accepts her masculine side. However, her identification with masculinity is not a success in the end, but a tragedy (129). Pearl's conflict can be connected with female spectators' conflict when identifying with the male gaze. "So, too, is the female spectator's fantasy of masculinization at cross-purposes with itself, restless in its transvestite clothes" (ibid.). Mulvey suggests that a female's desire to identify with "masculinization" is ultimately destined to fail: She describes that this desire is undermined by its inherent contradictions and limitations, which cause unease (ibid.). Female spectators' desire for masculinity is an unattainable fantasy and in conflict with the nature of femininity.

In contrast to the characters Mulvey discussed in her "Visual Pleasure," *Pocahontas* is not following the pattern of those female characters' behavior. Mulvey focused mostly on stories where the main character is a man and the female character is not participating in the progression of the storyline and female-centric narratives Mulvey referred to in "Afterthoughts" were seen as exceptions. Pocahontas represents a different perspective. She does not conform to the traditional male-centered narrative or serves just as a signifier of sexuality. As stated above, she has a significant role in the progression of the narrative and is a central character, as opposed to the main male characters described in Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure." She is portrayed as a strong and independent female character. Pocahontas is not doing the usual things other female characters are doing in movies described by Mulvey, but she partakes in dangerous activities, fights against stereotypes, and is embodying resilience, courage, and connection with nature. The desire for masculinity that is described by Mulvey as an unattainable fantasy and in conflict with the nature of femininity might not apply to Pocahontas. Pocahontas is fighting against traditional gender roles

and expectations and offers a different take on the representation of femininity as opposed to the representation in Mulvey's analysis. Much like Pearl described in "Afterthoughts," Pocahontas is offering an alternative representation of women in films and proves that female characters can be empowered and multi-dimensional.

Overall, "Afterthoughts" offers a thoughtful and self-critical reflection on Mulvey's original essay. She admits her approach had some limitations and advocates for a more inclusive future analysis of movies that includes a broader range of perspectives and experiences. Analysis of De Lauretis and hooks suggests that a viewer's cultural and social background, as well as subjectivity, shape their response to the image on the screen. It is important to realize that the theory and arguments in "Visual Pleasure" are not a universal truth and that they should be used as a tool among others that can be used to explore ways in which films are influenced by social and cultural norms.

4. hook's Oppositional Gaze

While Mulvey focuses on the male gaze and representation of white women on screen, hooks focuses on race issues and defines another type of gaze she calls the oppositional gaze. Hooks begins her essay "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectatorship" by reflecting on her own experience as a child when she was punished for staring at someone (hooks 115). The act of being a spectator, gazer was taken from her when she was a child and taken away from other black people. It is happening now, with black people experiencing great injustice – getting arrested, beaten, or killed while their only crimes are their gaze and the color of their skin. As hooks mentions, punishment for staring happened in the past as well when slaveowners denied enslaved black people their right to gaze and in that way showed their domination over them, however, this is happening today as well (ibid.).

One important work dealing with Blackness being wrongfully punished is Rankine's creative non-fiction collection of prose poems called *Citizen: An American Lyric* in which she describes various heart-breaking cases that are the reality for many people in America. Dedicating her work to the memory of many black people who got wrongfully sentenced, or murdered, she discusses the issue of racism in a way that moves the reader. She describes instances of a man getting pulled over by a police officer and taken to the police station only because he fits the profile: "the officer did not need anything from me except the look on my face on the drive across town" (Rankine 90). Rankine mentions another instance of injustice; that of Trayvon Martin, 17-year-old boy, who was killed for walking in his neighborhood while it was raining (Rankine 73). The killer was profiling him as a criminal, marking the start of the Black Lives Matter movement (Sexton 5). Another killing that started riots mentioned by Rankine was the shooting of Mark Duggan by police while he was unarmed (Rankine 97). Then there is a mention of the beating of

James Craig Anderson, by a group of white teenagers, fatal injuries caused by Deryl Dedmon running him over with the car.

These cases are still causing heated arguments, and according to Ibram X. Kendi, people are taking one of three sides. One group Kendi calls segregationists and their point of view is that black people are to blame for racial disparities (Kendi 9). The second group, antiracists, are taking a stand in blaming the racist behavior of white people, while the last group, assimilationists are blaming both black people and racial discrimination for racial inequality (ibid.). Throughout history, both assimilationists' and segregationists' ideas have been made to look attractive and good, and neither of these groups sees their point of view as racist. For about six centuries, they have been clashing with antiracist ideas which were presented as bad (ibid.). Kendi sides with antiracist ideas and believes that this clash between groups has divided America and left Americans ignorant of what racist ideas are (11). Ignorance makes those people who believe in white supremacy and black inferiority feel that somehow, they are not racist and that another person deserves to be punished for their crime of being different skin color. According to Kendi, racism has been embedded in generations of Americans as their common sense (10). Racism includes social, political, and institutional beliefs as well as accretion and continuous use of institutional power and authority throughout history to promote the unequal distribution of privileges and discrimination in a structured way with wide-ranging effects (DiAngelo 3).

However, even though all the pain, fear, and punishment black people were getting hooks acknowledges that mechanisms of control and dominating power were never so strong to hold her back from actually taking a look and fighting back (hooks 115). This need to fight against injustice is well described by Jared Sexton in his *Unbearable Blackness*: "The hatred of the world is upon you. It is also within you. It is the substance of your waking dreams, 'the single most constant fact

of [your] existence.' None of which diminishes your desire to fight" (Sexton 162). The danger of the punishment produced a need for resistance, a longing to look, a desire to fight against repression, and for the right to look – the oppositional gaze (hooks 115). The oppositional gaze is used to fight against the huge issue of racism and is used when staring at the television as well because it demonstrates resistance against repression.

hooks mentions that black people watched television and film with a dose of criticism and awareness that mass media was maintaining white supremacy (ibid.). She noticed various depictions of black people, dehumanizing, degrading stereotypical representation, and states that some black people would look at that content and critically interrogate it (ibid.). On the other hand, some black people would learn how to resist identification and dissociate from the film's image and characters so that they could enjoy what they were consuming (ibid.). They had to forget about racism, sexism, and stereotypical representation, to numb themselves so that they can experience pleasure while watching Hollywood cinema (120). For those who did not shut out the analysis of the content, watching movies often caused pain. Rankine and hooks both mention the anger and disappointment black people feel while dealing with injustice and dehumanization because of their skin color, "a disappointment in the sense that no amount of visibility will alter the ways in which one is perceived" (Rankine 23).

When it comes to black male spectators, they would feel as if they were rebelling against racism by daring to look at the white woman on screen (hooks 118). Since they were punished for too long because they were looking at white Other, watching a movie in private without interruption or penalty was their way of resisting and unleashing the repressed gaze (ibid.). Black female spectators, on the other hand, were aware they will not find an accurate representation of themselves, and that the female body that is desired and looked at in Hollywood cinema was white

(ibid.). "Even when representations of black women were present in the film, our bodies and being were there to serve-to enhance and maintain white womanhood as the object of the phallocentric gaze" (119).

Harmful representation of black females can be seen in Disney movies as well, for an example in *Fantasia* there is a scene where pretty centaur women are getting ready and cupids are assisting them, the only centaur that is helping through this process instead of getting ready is the Black pseudo-centaur, Sunflower (Cheu 17). It is not a real centaur because it has a body of a donkey instead of a horse. A black person appears as a donkey because this animal is known to carry a burden, and is stubborn and ugly (ibid.). Another reason this animal is chosen is that the scientific and Latin name for a donkey is equus africanus asinus (ibid.). Sunflower has stereotypical features: dark skin, big lips, wide eyes, and round earrings (ibid.). She helps the centaurs by doing their hooves, decorating their tail, and running around like a servant to help them. By making the only servant black Disney presents its idea that Sunflower is aesthetically and genetically lesser than the white woman she serves and because of that, she is given this role (ibid.). Sunflower is not an object of the male gaze like the rest of the female characters, and she does not have the option to get ready for male centaurs. In this movie we can see what hooks was talking about, black female characters are used to enhance the beauty of white characters and with that maintain white dominance.

hooks belongs to what Wilderson calls the Second Wave of Black film theorists and in his opinion, she improved Black film theory by examining the film beyond the concept of positive/negative images (Wilderson 86). The problem with this positive/negative image approach is that it presupposes what exactly a positive or negative image is. For example, the representation of Black people as middle-class heterosexuals can be offensive to homosexual Black people but

positive to heterosexual Black people, therefore it is not appropriate to put adjectives such as good or bad next to these images of cinema (83). Moreover, another problem here is that it switches the spectator's attention from important questions about the narrative and ideologies the characters are representing to the existence of certain types (ibid.). hooks challenged this binarism and by doing so included gays, lesbians, gangsters, and single Black women into the Black cinema audience (87). With thorough textual analyses, she presented how Black images can be wrongly represented, while the White image can be glorified instead of only proclaiming that are good or bad (87). hooks, according to Wilderson, replaced existing, unquestioned social values that are used for the interpretation of cinematic images, with semiotic codes and focused on the question of ideology (87). However, Wilderson sides with the Afro-Pessimism theory and concludes that hooks fails to address or recognize that Black people are not subjects but objects and that slavery is still ongoing (Wilderson 91). One of the main principles of Afro-Pessimism theory is that the condition of Black people being owned as slaves is not just an experience but it is an inseparable part of their being, the ontology of blackness (8). The slaves are defined in relation of property, they are objectified and are made an object that is owned and traded (ibid.). They are treated as non-human so that White people can define themselves as human. The slave is considered socially dead, which means he is subjected to unjustified violence, natal alienation, and disgrace (9). Wilderson states that Black people do not need to do anything to be targeted as Blackness is being criminalized on its own (ibid.).

hooks suggests that film feminist theorists that discuss the image of women do not see that they are only focusing on white females and that they could be in denial of the reality that sex/sexuality are not the only signifiers of difference (hooks 124). She goes on to say that by overidentifying with mainstream cinema – focusing only on white women, these theorists are

replicating its totalizing agenda (122). As seen, hooks focused on black female depictions and spectators, while Mulvey focused on white women and described their representation in most of the films as vulnerable, overly sexualized damsels in distress. Depiction of black women is different – they are seen as aggressive, ugly, big, and are not there to give pleasure to men.

While Mulvey states that identification with characters was one of the visual pleasures of watching a movie, hooks highlight that such identification was disenabling for black women. They could not identify with either side, the victim or the perpetrator, and instead developed the oppositional gaze (ibid.). The difference between hooks' and Mulvey's experiences, however, is that Mulvey developed her analytic gaze slowly while watching movies from a feminist perspective, and on the other hand, for hooks, the oppositional, critical gaze was a starting point when she approached cinema because of the reality of racism she lived in.

Mulvey's male gaze theory and hooks' oppositional gaze theory have one thing in common, they are focused on the audience's perspective and the objects of these movies. They are analyzing the audience's point of view by introducing gaze theories. Mulvey and hooks are identifying cultural issues that are present because of which these gazes occur. "The gaze is innately enmeshed in social and institutional power structures through the politics of looking relations" (Baker Kee and Grant 70). While Mulvey focuses on gender issues, hooks is criticizing overgeneralization and highlights issues concerning race.

The oppositional gaze theory by bell hooks is a critical and important viewpoint that opposes the dominant white gaze and empowers oppressed population to reclaim agency and control over their own narratives. Using this idea as a foundation, we can analyze how it applies to Native American representation and connect it with the insights by Carole Gerster's "Native Resistance to Hollywood's Persistence of Vision" in the book *Native Americans on Film:*

Conversations, Teaching, and Theory. Gerster sheds light on the misrepresentations of Native Americans in mainstream cinema. According to Gerster, Native Americans are seen in movies either as innocent, primitive, and disappearing Nobile Savages that are connected with nature, or as Hostile Savages, warriors, renegades, and killers of innocent pioneers (Gerster 143). In nineteenth and twentieth-century Westerns, American Indians are most often shown as vicious antagonists torturing and killing white women and children, while white American protagonists whom the audience is usually invited to identify, are there to save them just in time (143-144). Native American women though, are usually friendly and innocent and depicted as temporary love interests for European settlers (143). These two types, Nobile and Hostile Savages, often appear in the same film, like in *Pocahontas*, some characters are seen as children of nature, while others are seen as warriors ready to kill settlers.

According to Gerster, Hollywood, just like Disney, is an industry that relies on the repetition of proven successful formula to maximize box office profits. These formulas follow nineteenth-century narratives that encourage viewers to sympathize with Euro-American heroes and witness the portrayal of Native Americans being marginalized and killed. Since this formula has been repeated many times over the years, it has left little space for viewers of that time to question or challenge this narrative (144). These harmful narratives are simplifying the complex history of Indigenous people and are often omitting the truth. "Native Resistance to Hollywood's Persistence of Vision" in the book *Native Americans on Film: Conversations, Teaching, and Theory* highlights how important is to reclaim and reshape Native American narratives onscreen with Native American filmmakers' perspectives. It also emphasizes the importance and need for more authentic portrayals of Native American culture, history, and contemporary issues.

In parallel to the oppositional gaze, the term Savage gaze is explored in *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* by Frank B. Wilderson. Wilderson discusses the concept of Savage cinema, which are movies directed by American Indians focusing on ethical dilemmas faced by Native American central characters (Wilderson 149). While there are only a few fictional feature movies directed by Native Americans compared to films by Black or White directors, almost all of them are socially and politically engaged. According to Wilderson, they incorporate the iconography and symbolism of Blackness as well as White supremacy to highlight the history of Native extinction (149). However, these movies sometimes depict stereotypes and negative portrayals of Black people which can reinforce fear and prejudices associated with Blackness.

The author also discusses the difference between two modes of Native American cinema: the genocide modality and the sovereign modality (152). The focus on sovereignty allows the struggle between Settlers and Native Americans to be seen as a conflict rather than an antagonism, which could help with the healing process (153). However, Wilderson points out that these books, articles, and films have limitations in fully capturing the extent of the destruction caused by genocide (ibid.). By not fully addressing the genocide modality, Native American cinema aligns with the values of Settler civil society. The term Savage gaze is here mentioned and it refers to the perspective of Native Americans which challenges and questions the ethics and actions of the settled subjects in civil society. It offers a critical perspective on dominant narratives and structures and invites spectators to question representations and power dynamics perpetuated by the media and society. The Savage gaze is mentioned in regard to the movies *Smoke Signals* and *Skins* and is described as a critique of limited opportunities for Native Americans and of the media's representation of marginalized populations (154-202).

Disney's *Pocahontas* is also guilty of not capturing and not fully addressing the destruction caused by genocide. This animated feature is significant because it marked a crucial departure for Disney as they were attempting to tell a story rooted in history, rather than relying solely on European fairy tales (Howe, Markowitz, and Cummings 50). It is important to see how Disney exploits historical foundations to legitimize its version of history. This cartoon glamorized the story and changed the facts for Disney's commercial benefits (Murguía 649). Firstly, Pocahontas was a real girl called Mataoka and Pocahontas was most likely her nickname, which means "mischievous" or "naughty" (ibid.). In real life, she was only 10 or 11 years old when John Smith came to the land (ibid.). In Pocahontas like in Peter Pan natives had derogatory names such as "savages," "filthy heathens," "vermin," "demons," and "paleface" (ibid.). Moreover, the love story that is a central plot of the movie never happened in real life – as the young Native American princess was only 10 years old when she helped John Smith (ibid.). Her story was much more tragic than it was presented, she was taken prisoner in Jamestown in 1612, and she had to marry an Englishmen and get Christianized with a new name – Rebecca (650).

The Powhatan princess was then used as propaganda and after suffering an illness died an early death in 1967 (ibid.). The other problematic aspect of the movie is the depiction of Native Americans as either Good or Bad. Furthermore, Disney omitted the massacres of Native Americans that were happening when the English first came to the American land and showed only the attacks of Natives on Jamestown thus distorting the reality to fit their formula (ibid.). The members of the Virginia Company were shown as innocent while all the evilness of the conquest was reserved for one villain, Governor Ratcliffe (Howe, Markowitz, and Cummings 52). His body size and name make it obvious that he is Disney's prototype of evil. By making only Ratcliffe a narcissistic, power-driven character with a personality disorder, Disney is negating the

wrongdoings of all colonizers and political regimes (ibid.). However, this depiction of historic events has a huge impact on the public's construction of reality, especially on children who do not know about these stories and cultures. That is why these movies have a difficult role – they introduce various cultures but more than often do it with prejudicial representations and reconstruction of reality.

In a comparison of Black film theory and Native American film theory, we find both similarities and differences. Both communities share the goal of reclaiming their narratives and challenging stereotypes in their respective representations. However, Black film theory has a long history of engagement and activism, resulting in a more established framework for analysis. Native American representation, while gaining momentum, is still relatively less explored within film theory. As seen, there are unique challenges faced by Native American filmmakers in shaping their narratives and the need for further development in Native American film theory.

When exploring the realm of film theory and representation, it is crucial to examine the experiences of diverse communities beyond Black and Native American representations. One such community that has faced distinct challenges in cinematic representation is the Arab community. 'Arab' term here refers to more than 265 million people who live or are from 22 Arab states (Shaheen 173). The Arab area stretches from the Strait of Hormuz to the Rock of Gibraltar and it is a point where Asia, Europe, and Africa connect. This region gave important contributions to the world, three major religions, languages, and an alphabet (ibid.). In most Arab countries, Arab dress is traditional and Western, they are peaceful, most do not live in desert tents, and are not surrounded by harem women, most did not see an oil well and never climbed a camel (ibid.). They do not ride a 'magic carpet' and are not thieves. These are just some of the assumptions and

stereotypes Arab people are defying with their lifestyles. Yet Hollywood movies ignore this reality and falsely project harmful prejudice.

Western cinema has been returning to the mystique of the Orient time and again. For Americans, Arabs have been seen as the quintessential Other, different, fascinating, and repulsive at the same time (Michalek 3). By portraying various Arab, Persian, Chinese, and Indian cultures as exotic Orient they are negating cultural plurality and treating it as a monolith (Shohat 238). When mentioning the Orient, it is important to define it. The concept of the Orient was discussed in the book *Orientalism* by Edward Said who defined it as a constructed idea and should not be seen as a static or natural reality. According to Said, it is not something that exists on its own, therefore it is a product of human creation, both geographically and culturally (Said 5). However, both the Orient and Occident (West) are human-made constructs with a history of the tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given them meaning and significance in the Western context. These two entities mutually shape each other and are in complex hegemony. It would not be true to say that the Orient is just an idea or a creation without any reality supporting it. There are cultures and countries located in the East, whose lives, histories, and customs have tangible existence that goes beyond anything that could be described about them by the West (ibid.). The relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power and domination which brings us to the concept of Orientalism.

"Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (2). The important point Said is trying to make is that Orientalism also involves the manifestation of European-American culture dominating over the Orient and it is rooted in European/American superiority, racism, and imperialism (6). Orientalism, then, is a system of knowledge that has been shaped mainly by

European and American hegemony and cultural dominance. Misrepresentation, racism, and stereotypes in literature and media strengthen the Western authority over Arab, Persian, Chinese, and Indian cultures.

American movies with Orientalist themes aim to introduce Western audiences to Arab culture with the figure of the 'discoverer' (Shohat 239). The spectator who is aligning with the Western point of view, and identifies with the main Western character or a Western actor portraying an Oriental character understands this foreign culture swiftly because it is presented in a simplified and easily comprehensible way. Usually in this approach, there is no dialog or a dialectical representation of the East/West relation at the beginning of the movies (ibid.). The Orient, reduced to the passive and simplified version, becomes an object of spectacle for the voyeuristic Western gaze (240). In movies such as *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark,* but also *Aladdin* spectators are introduced to the perspective of the 'discoverer' or protagonist as he explores the static and submissive landscape, unveiling the mystique of this foreign land. The land is reduced to a barren and hostile desert landscape covered with sand and often has camels roaming around (Michalek 3).

One important book to mention is *Reel Bad Arabs* by Jack G. Shaheen in which he documents and examines more than 900 Hollywood films ever made and concludes that the vast majority portray Arabs by distorting what these men, women, and children are like in reality. He suggests that he wanted to expose the injustice in these movies, the degradation, and dehumanization of Arab people, and fight against it (Shaheen 172). Through the Hollywood lens, Arab people are seen as different and threatening. Since 1896 the theme is evident; filmmakers have consistently presented Arabs as Public Enemy number one. These films show Arabs as brutal, devoid of compassion, uncivilized religious extremists obsessed with money (ibid.). They are the

unknown 'Other,' cultural entity there to induce fear and terrorize Western people, especially Christians. When it comes to comedy movies, Arab people are often buffoons either good-natured or sinister, and in adventure melodramas, they are lawless, violent killers (Michalek 3). If they are depicted as good Arabs, then they often turn out to be of European descent by the end of the movie. Movies with Arab characters and culture often have negative themes such as kidnapping, theft, jealousy, bandits, revenge and slavery, murder, explosions, prostitution, smuggling, and terrorism (6).

In the past, Americans of Arab descent were not prominently visible in society and many Americans did not encounter Arabs, hear their stories, or visited their land. Arab Americans were not widely recognized and therefore there was minimal opposition to these negative depictions of Arabs in popular culture (8). However, the situation is changing and there are several Arab-American organizations, including the National Association of Arab Americans, the American-Arab University Graduates, the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, and the Arab American Institute, as well as groups like Najda (Women Concerned About the Middle East), are beginning to emerge and take action (ibid.). An early protest against stereotypical misrepresentation happened in 1984 when the filming of the movie *Protocol* was taking place (9). The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee came to know that the script had some negative stereotypes of Arabas so Executive Director sent the complaint to the producer. There was even a protest march against wrongful depictions. The script was changed, and the movie was not as bad as it could have been. However, it still had questionable humor and portrayals. The fictional Arab country was named 'El-Ohtar' ('Rathole' backward), while Arab characters were seen as rich, politically backward (ibid.). This indecent is still considered positive because from then on Arabs were more vocal in their resistance against derogatory movie depictions.

Just like these protests, in *Reel Bad Arabs* Shaheen is not suggesting that Arabs should ever be presented as villains, he is just highlighting that there is an overwhelming prevalence of negative depictions of Arabs in Hollywood, and almost all Arabs in these movies are depicted as evil (176). The truth is that for over a century, filmmakers have consistently associated the entire group of people with sinister characteristics.

Why do I focus so heavily on harmful stereotypical representation in movies? It is because I feel this is a critical matter as the dislike and fear of unfamiliar individuals, which fuel xenophobia, serve as a warning that when one ethnic, racial, or religious group is targeted, and another believes in its superiority, innocent people inevitably suffer. History reminds us that the hateful stereotypes portrayed in cinema have parallels to past abuses (Shaheen 174). Not too long ago, various groups such as Asians, American Indians, Blacks, and Jews were subjected to dehumanization which resulted in horrible consequences.

In 1942, over 100,000 individuals of Japanese descent were forcibly displaced from their homes and interned. For decades, African Americans were denied basic civil rights, robbed of their dignity. American Indians, too, faced displacement and slaughter (ibid.). Six million Jews perished in the Holocaust. These are the outcomes that occur when people are devalued and dehumanized. Hollywood and Disney films heavily influence our culture and shape the minds of young viewers. These movies nowadays reach nearly everyone, all over the world, and these representations of Arab people have an effect not only on international audiences but also on international filmmakers who continue distributing this distorted content.

5. The Disney Gaze

One place that the difference between Mulvey's and hooks' thought takes on great importance is the way that Disney assumes a certain audience. My main thesis about this is that there is a concept of the Disney gaze, which means that Disney makes its presumptions on what its targeted audience desires and focuses on making the content to meet those needs.

Wasko states that Disney has a certain formula that follows in a lot of its fairy tale movies (Wasko 202). After realizing the immense success of his formula, Disney stuck with it and never abandoned it (Bell, Haas, and Sells 40). According to Bell, Haas, and Sells, the formula includes innocent main characters, male-focused mentorship, the portrayal of women as patronized and sexualized objects, and the inclusion of elements of luck and predetermined fate (76). Most Disney films are light entertainment, they have musical numbers, physical gags, and slapstick humor (Wasko 202). The stories usually rely on known fairy tales or folklore, while characters have a goal that they, by the end of the movie, reach despite all the problems that occur (ibid.). There is a big emphasis on the cause-and-effect relationship, as well as on the central love story that is appealing in almost every movie (203).

When it comes to Classic Disney's main characters, they are often predictable, handsome, and pretty, with some kind of upper-class background (204). They usually have Anglicized features- light skin, thin noses, rounded eyes, and exaggerated American accents to appeal to the American audience. If they are a woman, they have flawless features, long beautiful hair, a small waist, and curves that are highlighted (Hurley 7). Villains on the other hand are almost always unattractive, extremely fat, or skinny, and their facial features are exaggerated (Wasko 204). Characters are not so complex; they are either good or evil (206). Most often they are stereotypical

representations of race and gender, and their sidekicks are anthropomorphized animals that provide comic relief (204).

When it comes to themes and values presented in Disney films, it is argued that in the beginning they were influenced by Walt Disney's views of the world, but later Disney films were influenced by Walt Disney Studio's perception of what the audience would accept and enjoy (205). Hence, following Mulvey's and hooks's gaze theories, we can argue that there is another type of gaze – the Disney gaze. If Mulvey's essay states that movies are centered around male desires, then following the same theory, Disney can make its presumptions on what its targeted audience desires are and focus on making the content to meet those needs, in other words, there is a Disney gaze. It can be said that Disney is assuming that its audience would be young children all around the world, especially children in the United States, a country whose cultural influence has penetrated lifestyles even miles away (Di Giovanni 207).

Disney offers its assumed viewers an illusion of reality, a balance between realism and fantasy, as well as modern references together with timeless ones (ibid.). This is important because Disney is trying to present relatable and familiar experiences while incorporating magical and fantastical elements so that the audience can connect with the story. Disney's movies are filled with values and meaning, some of which are deliberately encrypted while some are not intentional. Some of the main themes and values Disney company presented to appeal to its targeted audience are individualism, optimism, escape, magic, imagination, innocence, romance, happiness, and the most apparent one: good triumphing over evil (Wasko 205-206). The Disney gaze adapts its narratives to reflect the prevailing social and cultural context. This involves adjusting themes, storytelling approaches, and character portrayals and aligning them with the audience's expectations and the cultural context of the time. For example, during the Second World War

Disney produced propaganda movies, such as the controversial *Victory Through Air Power,* while during the Depression evident theme was optimism despite problems in movies such as *Mickey Mouse* and *Three Little Piggs* (Dorfman and Mattelart 30).

Some of the stories center around characters' desires to escape their living situations – *Snow White and Seven Dwarfs, Aladdin, The Little Mermaid* – and often they succeed because of the help of a magical being not because of their actions (Wasko 206). Except for escape, a lot of characters long for romance and often fall in love at first sight (*Sleeping Beauty*), which is painting an unrealistic picture of what love should be like, but this is what most children want to see in a movie (ibid.). Endings are predictable as they are almost always happy with good concurring evil (*The Lion King*). The main characters end up married and live happily ever after, while spectators are led to believe that their love never changes, nor loses its strength or intensity (*Cinderella*) (Davis 27). This is depicting a false sense that love remains constant and idealized forever (28). With all these positive themes Walt Disney Studio is building its magic kingdom while focusing on the assumed desires of its audience (Wasko 206).

Disney gaze could be defined as a specific perspective throughout which Disney creates its films to cater to the assumed needs and desires of its target audience, specifically young English-speaking children. It involves assumptions about what the audience would like and tries to produce that content. This gaze assumes a range of themes and values that they might like while simplifying and idealizing reality. Disney gaze presumes that characters would be relating to the protagonists, therefore making them predictable, handsome, and pretty with distinct Anglicized features. However, it also assumes that those unattractive characters with exaggerated features kids would easily identify as villains. By understanding there is a Disney gaze present, we can get insights into how Disney creates and shapes its magical kingdom while considering the huge cultural

influence it has. While Disney films present a wholesome and innocent façade, it is argued that Disney is not the embodiment of innocence it aims to project.

6. Racism in Disney Movies

Disney's innocence is not apparent in inappropriate and stereotypical portrayals of Blackness from the very beginning. In the movie from 1932 called *Trader Mickey*, racism takes the central stage and is used for comedic effect and amusement (Cheu 15). This short film, filled with various stereotypes, caricatures, and cultural deformations about African people is set on the coast of Africa. Africa is established by the appearance of hippos and cargo filled with various things, among others- musical instruments (15-16). Mickey and Pluto are captured by "wild-eyed" Africans (15). These characters have swirling eyeballs, facial features similar to those of chimpanzees and gorillas, grass skirts, and nose rings and they grunt and babble as a form of communication (15-16). This short reinforces negative stereotypes of Africans as cannibals with exaggerated lips that use skulls as decorations and trophies. The cartoon is portraying comic violence between Mickey and the African tribe and the aggression in it can be seen as an echo of the brutalities of slavery (Richards 4). The natives in this short irritate Mickey with their ignorance of musical instruments so he grabs the saxophone to show them how to use it. This fascinates the natives and they look at him wide-eyed while smiling. At this moment Mickey transforms himself from a prisoner to a colonialist and they all start to dance together, while Mickey kicks some of them as a part of the choreography.

The cartoon is offensive as well because it caricatures Africans' lips while they are playing the instruments incorrectly. In this cartoon, their lips stretch over the end of all the instruments and while the native women are dancing, they clap their lips together following the music and their kids slap their hips, again exaggerating their physique (Cheu 15-16). These racialized physical features are presented in a mocking and derogatory manner and contribute to the dehumanization and objectification of Black people. Just like female characters in Hollywood movies are seen only

as sexual objects, Black people here are only seen as ignorant cannibals. They are one-dimensional, exaggerated and there only for comedic elements. When analyzing the offensive and stereotypical portrayals of Blackness in Disney movies, it is crucial to consider who Disney assumes would derive pleasure from these scenes and who did not. As mentioned, Disney gaze, as a concept, implies that Disney constructs its content based on presuppositions about the desires and preferences of its target audience. In the case of *Trader Mickey*, Disney assumed that the predominantly white audience at the time would find pleasure and amusement in the racist depictions and caricatures of African people. By using racism as a comedic element, Disney aimed to elicit laughter and entertainment from viewers who might have had prejudice or lacked cultural awareness. However, these offensive and harmful misrepresentations would not have induced pleasure and amusement in African people who see the derogatory nature of these portraits. Assuming that the audience was predominately white and that they would enjoy this content, Disney promotes power dynamics at hand at the time and participates in marginalizing Black people. Disney's assumptions were based on limited and biased perspectives. Therefore, Disney gaze, in this context, is revealing a narrow understanding of audience preferences and is ignoring the various perspectives and cultures of its spectators.

Another movie worth mentioning that is dealing with racist stereotypes is *Dumbo* (1941) and it is important to examine it through the lens of Disney gaze. In this animated feature, crows are depicted as a representation of black people, with one crow named Jim Crow. The choice of using crow is significant due to a couple of reasons. The first reason is that the movie is set in the South during the Jim Crow era (Cheu 18-19). Jim Crow was the name of the laws that enforced the view of African Americans as second-class citizens (Urofsky). The term was used to represent every law of racial segregation from 1877 until the 1950s but later came to be a degrading term

for African Americans (ibid.). The second reason for this choice is that crows are typically seen as annoying and loud birds that produce screeching sounds (Cheu 15). The birds in the movie, led by the crow named Jim Crow, show typical black stereotypes, use Southern African American slang, wear shabby clothes and sign jazz songs (Murguía 236). The voice behind Jim Crow was a white man, Cliff Edwards, and his imitation of the stereotypical African American language enhanced the parody of the scene (ibid.). It may seem at the surface that *Dumbo* is a charming and endearing story about a small elephant that is subjected to discrimination because of his big ears but racism is evident even with human characters. The circus workers are all African Americans and they are singing a racist song about their contentment with their position in society (237). One line that caught much attention is "Keep on working, stop that shirking, pull that rope, you hairy ape" (ibid.) Despite this line and racist depictions, as astonishing as it may seem, this movie achieved great success. That could be attributed to the racist and segregation laws in the United States at the time so the audience overlooked these remarks. In analyzing Dumbo through the lens of the Disney gaze, it is clear that Disney's assumption about its audience played a significant role in the portrayal of racial stereotypes in the film. During the time of Dumbo's release in 1942, racist attitudes and segregation in the United States were unfortunately normalized (Cheu 18-19). Disney reflected and perpetuated those harmful ideologies because it was following what the audience was expecting.

Another film that was criticized for its offensive stereotypes and distortion of historical facts is *Song of the South*. When it was released, this film received protests by the black community because many believed the false idyllic master-slave relationship is shown to push the white supremacy agenda (Murguía 790). Moreover, the black community did not appreciate how black speech was presented- as an ill-educated dialect (ibid.). Despite these reviews, the film was still a

success, grossing 3 million American dollars domestically and winning several Academy Awards (Baker Kee and Grant 72). However, due to racial controversy, Disney stopped re-releasing it in 1986, thus making it the only feature-length Disney movie that has never been released domestically in cinemas or on video since the mid-1980s (ibid.). The stories shared in Song of the South are worth remembering and celebrating as a part of black oral culture, however, it should not be used as a way for white people to find comfort or as a way to sugar-coat the reality.

While examining the wrongful depiction of Native Americans in the famous animated feature *Peter Pan* we can see that Disney belittles the cultural heritage of Native Americans. Even though *Peter Pan* was not Disney's original story but a retelling of J.M. Barrie's story still the stereotypical features of Natives were not left out of this 1953 adaptation. Since J.M. Barrie lived most of his life in London he was exposed to a racist depiction of indigenous groups and based on these experiences wrote the play in 1904 (Murguía 629). Disney, however, did not change his story and went with this stereotypical depiction indicating a willingness to accept and perpetuate these attitudes. This depiction is problematic in many ways: the name of the tribe presented in the film is Piccaninny which is a racist nickname for black children; the Darling kid calls them Aborigines and Injuns; while Lost Boys refer to them as Redskins and make fun of them while singing lyrics "What Made the Red Man Red?" (ibid.). This song, however, was not in Barrie's original play and it was created by Disney filmmakers, therefore proving that they expanded on these racist stereotypes Barrie displayed in the story (ibid.). The song received much criticism for conveying racist and absurd assumptions that the "red man" is red because he is in constant pursuit of red women (Cheu 41). Many Americans saw Natives as people who live in tipis, have big noses and low voices, carry tomahawks, and are aggressive towards white people (Murguía 629). The best example is of the Chief- he is presented as a grotesque buffoon, stereotypically crossing his arms

while doing a caricatured dance around the fire. This approach and the lyrics used in Peter Pan would be considered offensive by present standards (Brode 25). Today, people request more respectful and accurate representations. The audience's rejection and criticism even when the movie got released show that Disney makes wrong assumptions about what its audience would find amusing.

Another movie that includes problematic scenes and covers multiple ethnicities while showing various stereotypes in just a few minutes is *The Aristocats*. While the main characters appear to be French and members of high society none of them speak with a French accent. These animals are portrayed to have a high-class accent, great living conditions, and rich inheritance while other characters who are of different ethnicity have miserable living conditions (Murguía 56). For example, two geese show strong English accents but with a negative connotation, they wear hats, act silly and ignorant, gossip, and drink a lot. Other characters, cats that are living in bad conditions with Thomas O'Malley, the alley cat, also show stereotypical behavior: the Russian cat holds an empty alcohol bottle, Italian cat wears stereotypical colors and clothing such as a red and white bandana and a green hat, British one is a hippie, has long blond hair, shades, and a necklace (ibid.). There is even an African American cat that plays jazz trumpet. However, the most racist scenes were with an Asian cat that speaks with an overly exaggerated Asian accent, laughs franticly, and sings random Asian terms ("Shanghai, Honk Kong, Egg Foo Yong, Fortune cookie always wrong") while playing the piano with chopsticks (*The Aristocats*). Egg foo yung and fortune cookies are Western attempts to emulate Chinese food and with that create familiar terms for the audience to connect with (Larson 13). Disney wants kids to see something familiar so that it is easier to follow the story and identify with the characters. Although this cartoon may seem

innocent because of its theme and main characters, still it is filled with wrong depictions of various ethnicities and races which may negatively influence young children.

Lady and Tramp is another movie I chose to analyze with the help of Disney gaze. Characters in the movie, Siamese cats are an example of derogatory and caricatured representations of Asians. These cats, called Si and Am have slanted eyes, buck teeth, and a strong Asian accent. They use chopsticks, love fish, and are sly, spiteful, and malicious (Murguía 440). They have no redeeming qualities and are there to oppose the hero and heroine of the story (Brode 203). The song they sing begins with a gong, a typical Asian instrument, and shows their broken English. This display of Asians is made because at the time relationship between Asians and Americans was tense and cold (440). The similarity of the movie with the American's perception of Asians is interesting: Lady's bliss is jeopardized by conniving Si and Am, just as Americans thought their lives were disrupted by foreigners (Cheu 55). The Siamese cats invaded Lady's house which could be a metaphor for America's fear of illegal Asian immigrants invading the United States (Larson 13). This portrayal of Si and Am as villainous characters suggests that Disney may have assumed that its targeted, predominately white audience would find amusement in these racial depictions. However, that assumptions as mentioned do not reflect reality and do not include children from various racial and cultural backgrounds who also watch Disney movies. That's why it is crucial to challenge assumptions that these contents would be enjoyed by all viewers. They can have a detrimental effect on children's perceptions and attitudes toward people from these nations.

It should be noted that Disney gaze analysis is not limited to the historical context of these films' releases. Audiences today, with increased awareness and sensitivity towards discrimination would never accept or tolerate offensive remarks and racist depictions if these movies got released

nowadays. Currently, people are demanding diversity, inclusion, and accurate representation in media. Disney understands this and therefore knows that racist stereotypes would be met with strong backlash and that the company would suffer great loss. Disney is catering to a diverse global audience and is trying to avoid any offensive remarks and promote positive and authentic portraits of various cultures and races. This shift in Disney's approach is proof that Disney is following the demand of its audience. It is following the evolving cultural climate and is aligning its content with contemporary values.

In conclusion to this section, the Disney gaze is allowing us to see how social and cultural norms and the audience's expectations influence the content produced by Disney. While some depictions, such as Native American, black and Asian, were acceptable because of the different social climates this does not mean that they were still not wrong. Times are changing and harmful, racist depictions in the past would not be accepted by today's audience. Disney's understanding of its audience's needs and desires and changing cultural climate has resulted in the company adopting a more inclusive and responsible approach in its movies today however it still has some work to do.

7. Analysis of *Aladdin*

7.1. Aladdin – *The Original Tale*

The original story of *Aladdin and his Magic Lamp* is found in *The Arabian Nights or One Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of folktales of Middle Eastern origin. The tales were popularized in Europe after Antoine Galland translated them into French in 1704. However, the tale of Aladdin was not part of the original Arabic manuscript – *Thousand and One Nights* (Long 210). It is believed that Galland wrote *Aladdin and his Magic Lamp, Ali Baba, and the Forty Thieves*, and *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor* after he encountered Syrian storyteller Hanna Diab in Paris (ibid.). Therefore, Galland used a four-volume Syrian manuscript as well as other stories he got from oral transmission and other sources (Plotz 120). However, the first known reference to the *Thousand and One Nights* dates back to the 9th century. This collection of Arabic, Iranian, Indian, and Greek stories is set within a single frame (Plotz 120). They are tales told by Shahrazad (Scheherazade) who was determined to stop the king from killing any more women. She after they are wed, tells one story every night to the king but does not finish it. Since tales are so entertaining, the king postpones killing so that he can hear the rest of the story, and does so every night until finally, he abandoned his whole plan. Even though the story of Aladdin was not one of the original stories Shahrazad told, still it can be found in The Arabian Nights and is a part of the Arabian culture (ibid.).

The original story takes place in China where a young, stubborn, disobedient boy, Aladdin is approached by an African magician who tricks him into retrieving a lamp from a magic cave but leaves him trapped. Aladdin wakes the genie up with the help of a magic ring, gains fortune,

marries the Emperor's daughter, and builds a beautiful palace. However, the evil magician returns steals the lamp, and moves the palace to Africa. Aladdin foils the magician's plan, saves the Princess, and everyone lives happily ever after.

Over the years there have been various translations and versions of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp, but maybe the most successful and the most controversial one is the Disney version.

7.2. Aladdin *(1992)*

Aladdin (1992) is one of the most successful Disney films ever made, having won two Academy Awards and earning $504 million in revenue worldwide (Murguía 24). *Aladdin* won 28 awards and was nominated for 18 others from festivals all around the world, but still, it was severely criticized for the racist depiction of the Arab community (Murguía 24). In *Aladdin,* the influence of Disney gaze can be seen as the movie is tailored to meet the presumed desires of its target audience. However, it perpetuates harmful stereotypes and disregards the diversity and reality of Arab culture and people. The story takes place in a little city called Agrabah, in the middle of the desert, and not in China as it is in the original tale. The main hero Aladdin is living there as a "street rat," stealing to survive and always on the run from the guards. His dishonesty and treachery are common examples of stereotypical depictions of Arabs in the movie as mentioned by Shaheen in an earlier chapter. Princess Jasmine is deeply unsatisfied with the royalty rules and wants to be free. Therefore, she sneaks out of the palace to the marketplace where Aladdin first sees her. Much like in the original tale, he instantly gets mesmerized by her beauty. He helps her, they get to know each other and there is instant chemistry. However, they get interrupted by the guards that arrest

Aladdin because of the orders from the sultan's evil advisor Jafar (25). Jafar, disguised, then sends Aladdin to the Cave of Wonders to find a magic lamp. There Aladdin gets trapped because of his sidekick Abu's attempt of stealing which caused the cave to close down. Like in the original story, Jafar did not want to help them out before getting the lamp first, however, Abu stole it back and they ended up in the cave with Genie. Genie helps Aladdin escape the cave, transforms him into a prince, and helps him get the princess. Even though Jafar at one point got a hold of the lamp and was trying hard to rule the world, eventually Aladdin tricked him and saved the kingdom (ibid.).

Disney's story however simplified the original tale and deleted some important characters such as Aladdin's mother. This character played a big role in the original tale since it was her that Aladdin sent to ask for the princess's hand in marriage (Bourenane 239). This is a typical oriental tradition that has been deleted from the movie adaptation (ibid.). Aladdin's mother was an important female character and producers deleting it could be seen as pushing the agenda of having predominately male characters and catering to the audience of mainly little boys. In the original tale, Jasmine was called Badrou el-Badour and was much more submissive and passive (242). The Jinni of the lamp and the ring has an unlimited amount of wishes to give, while Robbie Williams' Genie only had three (ibid.). The Sultan in the original story is an intelligent, authoritative, and competent ruler, whereas the Sultan in Disney version is a naïve, easily manipulated man who is spending a lot of time playing with his toys (ibid.). This modification reinforces the Americans' point of view of Arab leaders as being incompetent and weak and could be a symbol that Americans see themselves as superior to Arabs which is supporting the Orientalism theory by Said (245). Furthermore, Disney added some characters to compensate for deleted characters and to follow his known formula of having comedic animal sidekicks: Abu the monkey, Rajah the tiger, and the parrot Iago (ibid.). *Aladdin* introduces the Western audience to Arab culture through the

perspective of the 'discoverer', who explores and unveils the mystique of the foreign land. The reduction of the Arab culture to a passive and simplified version caters to the voyeuristic Western gaze, treating Arab culture as an object of spectacle (Shohat 239).

As it is apparent, the original tale and Disney's version of this folktale have some similarities but when looking at them more closely, they are very different. Disney gave the story its touch by following the Disney gaze, which also involves sanitization and Americanization (Wasko 203). If we follow the theory of the Disney gaze which states that Disney offers its assumed audience tailor-made content to meet their assumed needs then *Aladdin* conveys this theory by having musical numbers, humoristic animal sidekicks, good heroes, really bad villains, stereotypical representations of gender and race, mainstream American values, themes such as escape, magic, romance, good wins over evil, all elements that other Classic Disney movies have. (202). According to Wasko, Disney takes children's stories and folktales and distorts themes, characters, and cultural and geographic settings and the same thing was done with Aladdin (1992) (215). Disney stories end up with different essence and motivation than those of the original tales because filmmakers are trying to create the content to fit the Disney gaze. Overemphasis on some Americanized characters or altered parts of the story makes the original intent of the tales different (ibid.). There is little left to make kids eager to think or imagine. The big criticism Disney is receiving is that company is only interested in reaching a wide audience and making a lot of money (ibid.). To do that Disney needs to make these stories relatable, and close to home.

Following the Disney gaze, Disney aims to provide feelings of comfort and familiarity through the mixture of originality and standardization when dealing with stories that are taken from folktales, especially stories about cultures that are distant in time and space from the familiar culture and experiences of the American audience (Di Giovanni 208). When presenting these Other

cultures Disney does so in a crystallized, simplified, and smoothed way to appeal to this audience who does not poses specific cultural knowledge. However, this is not always a successful attempt as we will discover in this analysis.

7.3. The Oppositional Gaze in Aladdin *(1992)*

As already noted, Disney is creating a certain gaze, the Disney gaze, with which young children who do not poses cultural knowledge will be forced to look at these distant cultures presented in a distorted way. These misrepresentations could cause an oppositional gaze among Disney viewers since there is a big number of them that cannot find someone to identify with. Everything depicted is simplified, mixed with American culture, and characters are misrepresented and this can make Arab viewers frustrated as they cannot see an accurate representation of their culture. Arab people while watching *Aladdin* could get an urge to resist stereotypical representation and analyze it with the oppositional gaze. They might even feel angry going into the cinema because they assume the depiction of Arabian culture will be offensive which is the case with black female spectators described by hooks as well.

In *Aladdin*'s (1992) case, those feelings would be proved correct right from the beginning of the movie. The opening song called *Arabian Nights* has questionable lyrics and does not offer an accurate depiction of Arabian culture, however, the first version of *Aladdin* (1992) contained even more controversial verses that now seem unbelievable. These racist lyrics were: "Oh I come from a land/ From a faraway place/ Where the caravan camels roam./ Where they cut off your ear/ If they don't like your face./ It's barbaric, but hey, it's home" (Giroux 104). After the release of the movie, Jack Shaheen, professor of broadcast journalism at Southern Illinois University together

with radio personality Casey Kasem summoned a public protest against racist stereotyping of Arabian culture (Giroux 104-105). At first, the Disney executives ignored the demand but after the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) mentioned before, urged Disney to change these lyrics, they eventually obliged, changing one line of the stanza for the video version of the movie to: "It's flat and immense, and the heat is intense." but leaving the questionable "It's barbaric, but hey it's home" unchanged (Murguía 25). It is hard to imagine that Disney executives were unaware of how problematic the implications of these lyrics were especially since Howard Ashmen, the writer of the song, submitted alternative lyrics when he was delivering the original lines (Giroux 105). However, as mentioned "It's barbaric, but hey it's home" was not changed as well as the mispronunciation of Arab names, and nonsense scrawls instead of actual written Arabic language in one of the scenes (ibid.). The reason why this was not changed could be because as suggested by Said, racism and stereotypes in media strengthens the Western authority over Arab culture. Another reason could be because as Shaheen mentioned there is the dehumanization of Arab people present which can be really dangerous and bear great consequences.

Moreover, there is some racism evident in another song from Aladdin called "Friend Like Me" where Genie calls Aladdin "nabob" which is used for white men in England who are not noble and would go to the colonies, make their fortune, and come back (Murguía 25). The term is an alternation of "nawab" which means a Muslim nobleman (ibid.). These racist representations and terms resulted in *New York Times* publishing an article called "It's Racist, But Hey, It's Disney," and criticizing this children-targeted movie (ibid.). As hooks stated based on these examples, we can conclude that mainstream media is pushing the white supremacy agenda while the other people are degraded. The use of such terminology not only reinforces stereotypes but also fails to accurately represent the diversity and complexity of Arab identities. This culture has a rich history

and Arab people gave important contributions to the world, so harmful terminology and assumptions are defying their lifestyles and reality (Shaheen 173).

Male characters in the background of the movie that represent the common people of the town are portrayed as dirty, either fat or skinny, darkish men with hairy faces, large noises with some lost teeth, and scars from fights (Bourenane 245). They possess a thick, foreign accent and are carrying big swords, and are very aggressive as seen in the scene where Jasmine at the market feeds a child by stealing an apple and is then faced with threats of losing a hand. This scene is important because it wrongly depicts Arab culture as having laws that revolve around cutting hands and killing people when only one country has this law (Eddarif 63). In this scene, it could be said that Disney makes a point that even a kind gesture such as feeding the poor should be heavily punished by men in the name of religion (ibid.). Just like Hollywood movies mentioned in *Reel Bad Arabs* by Shaheen, *Aladdin* promotes a negative image of Arab people and contributes to the making of the Arab public identity in the West as an uncivilized and threatening enemy. As Shaheen notes, most of Arab characters are presented as brutal, devoid of compassion killers, and this depiction is seen in *Aladdin* as well. (Bourenane 245). Disney perpetuates a distorted view of Arab culture and its people in the main characters as well (ibid.).

Jafar is a symbol of evil, therefore he is wearing a dark outfit and has dark skin and hair (Bourenane 245). He is presented as "a dark man [who] awaits a dark purpose," even though his horse is black and his parrot is initially shown as black to highlight his evilness (Hurley 226). It is a recurring issue that villains in Disney movies have darker skin than heroes of the same ethnicity. Jafar's character relies on common stereotypes of Arabs as violent and bandits, portraying him as a murderous and manipulative magician without remorse (Bourenane 245). *Aladdin* encompasses several themes that align with Michalek's "The Arab in American Cinema: A Century of

Otherness" observations of common themes found in Arab movies, including elements such as kidnapping, theft, jealousy, bandits, revenge, and slavery, murder, explosions, and smuggling.

Moreover, there is a coding of white for good and black for evil evident in the movie (Hurley 226). This coding can be seen right from the beginning of the movie when we are introduced to the home of the lamp, Cave of Wonders, which is a black panther. Then there is a scene when Jasmine opens a white cage and white birds fly out, enhancing her goodness and demonstrating further the importance of black and white coloring (ibid.). Furthermore, when Aladdin turns into a prince with the help of Genie's magic, he is dressed from head to toe in white.

To conclude this section, the oppositional gaze is developed when spectators who identify with Arab culture or who seek authentic representation fight against the wrong depiction. The misrepresentations and stereotypes in Aladdin could result in frustration and anger, and these viewers could feel as if they are marginalized. The movie has problematic lyrics, terms, and depictions with which Disney fails to represent the diversity and complexity of the Arab population. The appearance of extravagated male characters and the villain Jafar's dark setting and skin further perpetuate negative images of Arab people in the West. As Mulvey (1975, 835) said, analyzing pleasure destroys it, so it is crucial to continue talking about these issues and to unmask all the strategies filmmakers use to manipulate their viewers.

7.4. The Male Gaze in Aladdin *(1992)*

In the movie, Jasmine is often presented as weak and powerless, she has to marry a prince by law, she cannot go outside of the palace, and has no choice in how her life will look (Davis 178). This description fits well into that of female characters described by Mulvey in the previous chapter.

Jasmine, much like the woman mentioned in Mulvey's “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” is passive, the object of desire, and her story is heavily dependent on the male protagonist, without him her narrative would not exist. Jasmine fits the male gaze's theory because she is presented in a sexualized way, objectified, and a victim of patriarchy. One scene, in particular, shows her position in society and that is when she is talking to her father and saying how she is not allowed to do anything on her own, she has not seen the world outside of the palace, and she does not have any friends except her tiger pet. Her father responds that she is a princess, meaning that she is obliged to follow those rules. She says angrily to that: "Maybe I don’t want to be a princess anymore!" showing her deep frustration. As she looks at the birds confined in a cage, it seems like she empathizes with their captivity, sensing her own confinement and inability to experience true freedom. In the final shot of that scene, she opens the cage and frees the birds, symbolizing her intention to break free from the patriarchy as well (ibid.).

She does just that in the next scene when she disguises herself, escapes the palace, and goes to the market. In this scene, the male gaze can be seen through various cinematic techniques. As the scene begins, the camera shifts from focusing on Aladdin and Abu to Jasmine, slowly revealing her on the screen. This deliberate camera framing highlights her beauty and sets the stage for the male gaze. From that point, the camera follows her every movement and emphasizes her as the central focus. The camera here is dynamic and the framing choices convey Mulvey's theory by allowing the audience to indulge in their voyeuristic fantasies. Incorporating Metz's theory on voyeurism here, it can be said that the spectator is given an unobstructed view of Jasmine and a sense of detachment while being shielded by the distance screen provides.

While Jasmine is walking around the marketplace it is evident that she is surrounded only by men, creating an impression of a male-dominated world, in which she is an exception. Jasmine

is presented as naïve and unaware of her surroundings which is seen when she collides with a background character and gets easily frightened. This visual representation not only reflects power dynamics but also emphasizes Jasmine's vulnerability within the scene. The male gaze is further intensified when Aladdin first spots her. The camera zooms in on Aladdin's face, capturing his mesmerized expression as he becomes completely captivated by Jasmine's beauty. The shot is followed by a zoom on Jasmine's face which shows her unawareness of being looked at. Viewer sees her from Aladdin's point of view which portrays Jasmine as the object of desire for both Aladdin and the spectator. Mulvey's theory of voyeuristic and narcissistic scopophilia aligns with this sequence, as the camera acts as a surrogate for the audience, facilitating the objectification of Jasmine's image on the screen.

Moreover, the next part shows Jasmine's ignorance and naivety regarding the world beyond the palace walls. Jasmine spots a young boy standing in the middle of the market and offers him an apple she did not buy from the market stall. When the merchant angrily threatens to cut off her hand, Jasmine's lack of understanding regarding the concept of paying and the consequences of stealing are depicted. This scene serves as a racist depiction as mentioned before, but it also reinforces Jasmine's s sheltered lifestyle and her limited knowledge of common people's problems. Aladdin saving her with his cunning ways reinforces the traditional narrative of a damsel in distress that needs to be rescued by a man.

Throughout the movie, we can see that Jasmine did show her fearlessness, intelligence, and strong character. She was not afraid to say her opinion and even yell at other male characters who were trying to control her. She had a choice when it comes to her husband however she had to marry a prince. Eventually, she does have a say and verbally chooses Aladdin to be her husband, however, Sultan did have a change of laws in their favor first.

As we can see, *Aladdin* (1992) has a lot of main male characters and Jasmine is the only female character that is not in the background. "As it is a fundamental ideological tenet of patriarchy that men and masculinity are privileged over women and femininity, it should come as no surprise that Hollywood film has always privileged men and male roles over women and female roles" (Benshoff 213). As Benshoff states male characters and actors having a lot of screen time has been a trend in the past and *Aladdin* (1992) is no exception. The male-centered narrative is also one of the issues described by Mulvey.

That small amount of screen time female characters do get in this movie is filled with the depiction of females as sexual objects that are there for men's entertainment (Eddarif 63). In *Aladdin* (1992), every Middle Eastern woman, apart from Jasmine, is a belly dancer shown wearing provocative clothes that expose her curves. These belly dancers have distinct facial features such as black almond-shaped eyes and long noses (ibid.). The beauty of these women is connected with their singing and dancing and there are there only to fulfill man's wishes and fantasies (ibid.).

Another important object Arab women get associated with is a harem which is used to show the inferiority of Arab women and to degrade them (ibid.). When Aladdin escapes the guards, he accidentally enters a harem where partially nude women are dancing and singing. By the end of the movie, Jasmine joins Jafar's harem as well where she is subjected to his male gaze as she is wearing revealing clothes and moves in an overtly sexual way (64). Here scopophilia is apparent, Jasmine is not only subjected to the character's gaze but the audience's gaze as well (ibid.). The spectators join the characters in spying on the female bodies as secret agents (ibid.). The act of looking at the woman in animation gives pleasure to the audience and male characters. As Mulvey states, another pleasure is identification with characters.

All in all, the male gaze theory is present in Aladdin, particularly in the portrayal of Princess Jasmine. She is often seen as weak, powerless, and confined by societal expectations and rules imposed by her father. In *Aladdin*, the camera framing and cinematic techniques are really important as they emphasize Jasmine's beauty while objectifying her and the distance from the screen allows the audience to partake in voyeuristic fantasies. Jasmine's vulnerability and the male-dominated surrounding further highlight the patriarchal objectification of women.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, the analysis of Mulvey's theory on the male gaze, De Lauretis' on active subjectivity, Hooks' oppositional gaze, the Orientalism theory by Said, and the development of the Disney gaze offers valuable understandings on how dominant narratives, power dynamics, and stereotypes are depicted in mainstream movies. These theories provide light on the negative consequences of misrepresentation and objectification of women, black people, and Arab people in Hollywood as well as in Disney movies. Mulvey's male gaze focuses on the needs and desires of the male audience by objectifying woman characters. hooks' oppositional gaze theory extends Mulvey's concept by highlighting the experiences of black female spectators and their resistance to the stereotypical representation of black people. While these theories stand as a base, the focus was also on the Arab representation in Hollywood movies and the Orientalism notion that there is Western dominance over the Orient and it is enhanced with negative and distorted depictions of Arab culture. These misrepresentations are dangerous because they fuel fear, hate, and ultimately dehumanization which could lead to disastrous consequences.

The idea of the Disney gaze is important here as it suggests that Disney is making content specifically to meet the desires of its assumed audience. It is an effective tool through which to examine the construction of narratives, stereotypes, and cultural deformation within Disney films. Analyzing Disney's *Aladdin* through the lens of the Disney gaze we can see that the movie was created to meet the assumed needs of its targeted audience but at the same time failed to accurately represent the reality of Arab culture and its people. Analyzing wrong depictions, stereotypes, and racism evident in the movie shows that the Disney gaze can influence narratives, strengthen power dynamics, and reinforce biases. It also emphasizes how crucial it is to fight against these depictions, promote diversity, and encourage a more responsible production of movies. As seen

Disney is trying to cater to its audience, so by raising awareness of these harmful representations in cinema and demanding more respectful and accurate depictions the film industry will have no choice but to obey.

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U slučaju potrebe ograničavanja pristupa ocjenskom radu sukladno odredbama Zakona o autorskom pravu i srodnim pravima (111/21), podnosi se obrazloženi zahtjev dekanici Filozofskog fakulteta u Splitu.