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The Disney Americanization of the Polynesian Heroine and the Ideological Struggle in Moana Film

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation presents my original and authentic research work that has never been submitted to any institution for any degree before.

Dedication

First and foremost, all praises be to Allah for blessing me with health, patience and strength to finish this dissertation. I would love to express my deepest gratitude to my parents who have been always by my side, raised me with all the love in this world and made me what I am today.

To those who have always tried to keep a smile on my face, my dear brothers: Okba, Mourtadha, and Louai.

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Abstract

Arguably, the majority of post- nineties' Disney films conform to one of Hollywood's basic narrative formulas in which a whole community is saved by a lone hero. This raises the controversy when it comes to depicting local indigenous cultures and adapting them into "something" more American. This thesis addresses the problem of Disney ideological representation of Polynesians foregrounding the issue of introducing an Americanized hero in the movie *Moana* released in 2016. It traces three major aspects that define Americanization in the film: The American way, American individualism and American exceptionalism epitomized by the heroic character of Moana. An eclectic approach under the umbrella of multimodal critical discourse analysis is deployed in the analysis combining the Barthesian structural analysis of film narrative, the semiotics of the images and the symbol, speech acts theory, Foucault's conception of power and discourse, and Maslow's hierarchy of needsto analyze Moana's persona and how she haphazardly began to develop apersonal individualist identity against her community's rigid collectivist values shedding light on the idea of interjecting an "outsider" hero who embodies American values. Additionally, it involves a semiotic study of Moana's persona and the way she epitomizes the widely held American belief of exceptionalism.

Keywords: Americanization, American exceptionalism, American individualism, identity, Moana.

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List of Abbreviations

CDA   Critical Discourse Analysis

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General Introduction

Ever since this world was created, man has been striving to communicate messages, share his thoughts, ideas, and beliefs with the other. Forall mankind, communication plays a vital role in creating social cohesion. It took various distinct forms throughout time. Cave paintings mark the very beginning of an intentionally established advanced means of communication. Scholars agree that these drawings were realistic depictions of the primitive life. The endeavors behind these prehistoric visual signs were a subject of anthropological debates for a long time. However, the widely common theory argues that these portrayals sought to inform about predatory animals and what ones are safe and easy to hunt for food.

These coded markings reveal the effectiveness of this symbolic system by which the primitive man could communicate with others in his time, and enabled us to make sense of our prehistoric past in the present day. The anthropologist Frederick baker argues "In this sense, the rock engravings are not just static images but pictures that created a story in the mind of the viewer, just like at the cinema" ("Prehistoric man went to the 'movies'").In the course of time, this seemingly primitive system of visual communication has been revived by man not as rock art but as a more innovative developed art in which technology is involved. This new form of visual communication has allowed the instantaneous self to transmit messages that transcend geographical boundaries. Moreover, it has become the iconic representation of the symbolic language. Cinematography as being a part of it is the focus of this study, Disney's film industry in particular.

In an attempt to reconstruct its long sexist, racist history, Disney released a new family of films. With its 56th animated film, *Moana*, the filmmakers relied on Polynesian culture and mythology to build the plot and set the story on the fictional island of Motonui. The animated feature has been extensively praised for the depiction of some cultural aspects of Polynesia as

well as for animation, and soundtrack.

Nevertheless, Moana seems to be even more problematic as the cultural aspect was appropriated to conform to Hollywood's narrative schema of a lone hero who embodies American values and rescues the world from a global disaster, neglecting the collectivist aspect of Polynesians and constructing messages which appear to harbor a bigger ideological weight. The film seems to depict the American culture at moral level. Virtually, filmmakers rely on making analogies between the fictional world of the story and life experiences; Thus, films may intentionally or unintentionally imply morals, cultural beliefs, and values that reflect the producer's cultural background. However, some cultural aspects such as ideologies raise the controversy in the academic field as they privilege and perpetuate certain modes of thinking and perception over others. Hollywood in general including Disney studios, as one of the global cinematic companies has been the subject of ideological criticism for years; and More often, politics and ideology have been proved to be an integral part of Hollywood's film industry.

Background of the Study

For nearly a century, Disney have been one among the cinematic titans of the world. The diversity of themes and storylines makes its film production appealing to both, children and adults. Moreover, the company continues to connect with a larger and more diverse audience by its family of films that depict indigenous cultures. Despite the fact that its portrayals seemingly appear successful, Disney has often received serious criticism for its problematic depictions of class and race. Nevertheless, post- nineties Disney remakes of its classic animated features and its latest animated films show a relatively positive attitude towards multiculturalism.

Lately, in pursuit of authenticity, Disney attempts to conduct careful researches on the targeted cultures. It is claimed that this procedure is an attempt to accurately depict these cultures

far from any racial prejudices and cultural misrepresentations. It is argued that Moana 2016 is probably the best example to define a new authentic Disney which offer a more progressive vision towards cultural diversity. The story is built around the Polynesian culture. Critics assert that the celebration of multiculturalism to be a major change that should be acknowledged, and the company has been generously praised for eliminating the old racist characterizations.

However, the movie seems to bear ideological messages as the main character of the movie regardless of where the source material originates is Americanized and Disneyfied is quite telling as is the characterization that these representations are not objective. Essentially, putting an emphasis on the championed individualism and the notion of exceptionalism to be a key component tied with an inherently liberal worldview involves re-coding these stories into the Western tradition in which the hero who saves the community is an epitome of the American way.

Statement of the Problem

In adapting its imagery towards a more multicultural marketplace, Disney has adopted a new approach of representation which has merely made its potentially offensive representations less overt and more ideological with presenting Americanized major characters who celebrate the American way. This study investigates the Americanization of the Polynesian Moana from *Moana* 2016, in which an outsider hero typical of the American exceptionalist imagery of the mid-century is celebrated in the film.

Methodology

This research relies on an eclectic approach methodology that draws primarily upon multimodal critical discourse analysis in analyzing the film narrative, images, symbols, and dialogue. It is necessary to mention that multimodal critical discourse analysis is not a single

approach but rather a compilation of approaches applied to the study of the aforementioned cinematic signs with the notion of ideology in mind. Tsui's speech acts approach and Foucault's approach to discourse and power are applied to the analysis of power relationships practiced through dialogue and their role in perpetuating the American way and provoking some actions taken by the major character, Moana. Barthes's structural analysis of narrative, his semiotic approach to images, and Maslow's hierarchy of needs are used essentially to investigate the different layers of meaning that evolve around the heroic character of Moana, and the way they are linked with one another to reach the signified of American exceptionalism.

Research Questions

- What are the filmic signs that may hint at an embedded ideology in film?

What aspects of Americanization are presented, and what American ideologies are celebrated in Disney's *Moana*?

- How, and to what extent do the major character's, Moana, attitudes and actions mirror the American way?

- Based on the aforementioned eclectic approach, how does Moana's persona reflect the notion American exceptionalism?

Objectives of the Research

This study aims to evaluate Disney's new approach of depicting non Western cultures. It intends to reveal the hidden aspects of Americanization and in depicting the Polynesian culture. Therefore, evaluating Disney's authenticity in portraying other cultures, and its tolerance towards multiculturalism through analyzing the representation of characters in Disney's Moana 2016 and identifying the tenets of American individualism, and exceptionalism embedded in the major characters.

Structure of the Research

This study involves Initially a general introduction as an entry to our research focus and research problem. The research is segmented in three chapters, two theoretical parts, followed by a final practical chapter in which a careful deep analysis of the movie focusing attention on the major character is presented. The first chapter chronicles the critical approaches along with key concepts related to them employed in the analysis of the film. The second chapter is devoted to an overall background information along with it we get acquainted with the plot summary, characters, and a critical response to the movie, and to Hollywood's production at a larger scale. The last chapter is assigned to the analysis of the main character's persona in which the theoretical background is made into practice, carrying an extensive examination and interpretation of the distinct structures of meaning in the movie.

Chapter One:

Key Concepts and Theoretical Nexus

1-1 Introduction

In the last decades, moving images have become the language of the era, and the audiovisual culture has replaced the written text. Such as with literature, this new socio- cultural pattern has become a subject of analysis as another form of a denoted and a connoted unit of meaning that the theories which evolve around the idea of sensual perception with regard to real life experiences, or the universal schemata of human psyche cannot do justice to.Taking into consideration the specificity of our case study, A film, it is necessary to note that an integrated paradigm to cinema has not been developed yet; however, film studies raise questions about the essence, origins and, perception of multiple filmic signs with the intention of revealing the filmic signification.

As a result of being a product of culture, film can be used as an instrument of depicting, as well as glorifying and even manipulating certain systems of belief, and systematic world views, or the so-called ideologies that define individuals, groups, social classes, and cultures, then assign them their position in the different socio- economic contexts. This chapter attempts to examine the distinct units of meaning in the language of cinema, and the way they operate together to construct the general meaning of a text that reflects the producer's cultural background emphasizing the ideological aspect. By understanding the language of film, and the discursive nature of language, an analysis of the different conscious and unconscious filmic signs in*Moana* can be conducted thoroughly to investigate the multiple layers of meaning which hint at embedded ideologies epitomized by the main character of the movie.

1-2 Cinematic Discourse

Film is constituted of three basic elements or patterns of representation, particularly image, narrative and sound which contribute to the process of meaning making. It is the

analogical reproduction of everyday life as it tells stories that reflect human experiences. In her article Film as medium for meaning making, Cloete quotes Browne words "[…] reproduce images that represent the world in which we live…capture life and freeze it for posterity" (1). The sum of audio- visual units and text in film the audience experiences at once communicates a story, tackles a theme and conveys a message. Thus, film constitutes a type of language and discourse. The notion of cinematic discourse emphasizes the communicative function of films. It regards the screening of the film as a communicative experience since it implies a perceptual and an emotional meaning directed to influence spectators (Cloete, Janney 1).

The small sub- units of expression, and the conventional procedures behind the construction of meaning should be taken into consideration when interpreting the cinematic discourse. The technical apparatus of cinema is multimodal. It combines multiple visual and auditory literacies including, attitudes, clothing, lightening, musical effects, dialogs, titles, and narration. Richard W. Janny argues that the interplay and interrelationships between these basic units creates a multi-coded and multiplex discourse that carries a multilayered meaning. He asserts that despite the fact that both, linguistic data, and characters' depiction play a key role in the formation of cinematic discourse, visual representations, and dramatic action carry a larger amount of subliminal messages than linguistic patterns (Janney 5).

Virtually films are intended not only to entertain spectators but to instruct them, and refine their mind. Thus, they present him with a morality or an ideological stand that privileges certain modes of thinking, institutions and cultures over others transmitted through the personalities of some characters, and actions in a fictional world viewed as the ideal. This view is highly influenced by the cultural background of the producer. Cloete argues that film is an

artistic work, layered with a wide range of cultural conducts; It is an innovative form of art that brings fantasy and realism together (Cloete1).

1-3 Ideology

The word has a common Greek root, logos which means science, plus idea. Hence, the science of ideas. The term was first brought to scientific discussions and debates by the French philosopher, Antoine Destutt de tracy, who sought to systematically analyze ideas. De Destutt was most inspired by John Lock's experimental philosophy, and the ideas of Condillac who believed that sensation is the basic source from which all ideas originate. According to him, ideology is the study of ideas in relation to the sensory elements, in an attempt to empirically analyze the human mind ("Destutt De Tracy, Antoine Louis Claude, Comte (1754–1836)").

Marx and Engels used the term ideology to indicate the abstract views that characterize a fictional sphere of ideas free of the real world, all what humans tell, imagine, and perceive such as morality, religion, politics and law. Later, Marxists used the concept to denote the ideological conspiracies against the masses. They believe that ideology operates as the superstructure constructed by the dominant ideas, cultural conventions, and conceptions of a particular society. The role of ideology is to legitimize those ideas in a stance of hegemony (Felluga par. 3, Martin 10). According to Heywood, ideology is a political system of belief, a pragmatic bulk of political ideas, the views of the dominant class, the world conceptions of a particular group of people, class, or culture, a body of beliefs subjected to propagate and legitimize a political apparatus or regime of truth.

Over the last decade, this perspective has been a subject of criticism as it limits the notion of ideology as a referent to the ideas which serve the economic interests, and social needs of class as if class is the only form of domination. meanwhile, some theorists like Robinson,

Nicholson and Spivak argue that gender and race discrimination are not less important issues as they are closely interwoven with class and economic oppression in various critical aspects. Hence, suggested that the concept of ideology should be broadened to include critical theories, texts, ideas, literature and media representations (Kellner 2). Thus, strictly speaking, ideology can be defined as the body of economic, political ideas and religious beliefs attributed to individuals, groups, or cultures. It represents what is thought to offer the optimal state of social organization and stability. Critically, ideology can be seen as equivalent to the manipulation of a certain systematically assumed knowledge that legitimize and justify certain political, economic or social practices and institutions.

1-4 Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and Cultural identity in CDA

In literary theory, the term multimodality refers to combining different communicative elements namely language, visual representations, sounds and music in multimodal texts and communicative contexts. It is argued that this type of texts cannot be fully understood without considering the role of nonverbal patterns of communication in meaning making. Hence, a multimodal discourse analysis draws upon different analytical tools applied to the study of narrative, images, and dialogue.

Multimodal Critical discourse analysis is not a single theory or method; it is rather a collection of critical approaches that can be considered as CDA. Theorists such as Richardson, Roggers, and Jeffries that the analysis should be based on a set of linguistic methods to investigate the way texts are produced and perceived. They share the idea of language as a tool of social construction. In other words, they agree upon the view that languages shapes and is shaped by society. However, Cad's primary subject matter is not language use; it is the Linguistic quality of social and cultural activities and structures. It can be applied to the study of

news, political speeches, literary works, cinema and advertisements. The analysis focus attention on the reasons behind the use of linguistic features and the way they are produced (Machin and Mayr 4, 5).

The concept of ideology is central in CDA. According to Reichenbach, texts are richly multilayered with ideological contents. They cannot be independent of contexts; these contexts are closely associated with the ideological ideas of social systems.As long as texts are not ideologically objective, language and text have a significant role to play in displaying, distinguishing, modifying and reproducing ideologies (Sabir and Kanwal 86) . Thus, CDA aims to reveal the internalized ideologies in a text. However, the ideological investment is not necessarily conscious for that CDA considers that language is inherently discursive.

In his book *Mythologies*, published in 1957 Barthes analyzes distinct cultural products and practices with the notion of ideology in mind. His analysis holds against the idea of the naturalness or the objectivity of the distinct cultural products and activities like advertisements, magazines, newspapers, sports, literature, and cinema. He believes that any significant entity whether verbal or visual shall be viewed as a speech, language, or discourse that has a form, and a meaning where ideologies locate. He argues that form does not totally eliminate meaning; it rather impoverishes, suppresses and subjugates it. In other words, form functions as a mold that hides the richness of meaning which implies an overall value system. Then he adds that we think that this would kill meaning. Nevertheless, despite losing its instantaneous value, meaning remains alive as keeps its historical value from which form draws its nutriment. Thus, in a way or another, form is in a constant need to bring up meaning frequently in a sporadic fashion (Barthes 117).

On discourse and identity, Fairclough suggests that discourses of nationalism, cultural or ethnic supremacy imply social values and ways of thinking, and have a key role to play in the process of reproducing the social reality. As it can be signified by verbal language, discourse could be encoded at the level of different visual elements which suggest a larger chain of ideas,cultural values, practices and identities. From a Social semiotic perspective, individual identities are implied in a large apparatus of social relationships where sign producers are involved in the process of sign making through semiotic choices. These signs are fragmented rather than systematically and loosely produced. Thus, ideologies cannot be easily detected (Machin and Mayr 26).

1-5 The Sign

Generally speaking, a sign is an entity which suggests the presence or existence of something whether a person, an object, or an idea. According to Saussure, the sign is a composition that can be divided into two components; The signifier which stands for physical letters, phonemes and gestures, and the signified that refers to the concept or the mental image.He views that the link between the two, or the signification is arbitrary; a result of social convention.

Charles Sanders Peirce presents us with a quite different definition of the sign. He claims that signs incorporate three interwoven parts, the representamen which functions like Saussure's signifier, and does the act of representing something. It is embedded in the act of representation through sounds, and gestures for a referential objective. He names the referent the object, a body detached from its context of emersion. Further, he refers to the meaning acquired from the sign as the interpretant, an entity which the sign- user analyzes and reacts to the meaning attributed to it in relation to a specific social, cultural or personal context (Sebeok 5,6). Saussure and Peirce

conception of the sign focuses mainly on verbal language, the language of signals, and gestures which communicate meaning. Over time, with the technological advancement, new sociocultural patterns of communication have emerged and the meaning of the sign has been extended in critical theory to refer to all units that carry meanings and convey messages namely image

1-6 Filmic Signs

1-6-1Narrative and Narrative Codes

A narrative is a collection of organized and interconnected sequence of events often take a cause- and- effect form. According to Roland Barthes, narratives are hierarchically structured that each level of representation can be analyzed independently. He views narrative as a long sentence in the way it brings together smaller units of signification from which it acquires its broader meaning. Each micro- narrative has a certain function in constructing the meaning of the macro-narrative. Furthermore, he argues that narratives involve fives narrative codes, semiotic elements or signifiers that create suspense and add meaning the general meaning of the text; each narrative is interwoven at least with one of them. These codes are a perspective, a body of rules which dictate a way of interpreting the text. Reading the text through the lenses of Barthes's codes results into extracting multiple meanings out of a single text. In other words, these codes can be described as different voices speaking at the same time suggesting different meanings of the same text (CUDDON, et al.458, 459, "Five Codes").

1-6-1-1Cultural Codes

Also called referential codes. A cultural code is a part of the text that refer to anything that exists in certain canonical works drawn upon what is seen as a regime of truth that cannot be criticized or challenged emphasizing religion and science. This type of codes usually overlaps with the poststructuralist concept of intertextuality. Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian French

philosopher and critic assumes that the text is not an independent self- sufficient entity that rises out of nothing; she used the term intertextuality to refer to the interconnections between texts, or the interrelations between the text and the context. Kristeva notes that each text allude or refer to other texts (.J78). In his essay, The Death of the Author, Barthes says "the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture" (Barthes 146); to clarify, the artist combines different elements from an external body of works or knowledge to create a text that can be compared to a dictionary whose words cannot be understood unless explained by other words in relation to a given context.

1-6-1-2 Semantic Codes

This category of codes refers to in the text that suggest or refer to extra meanings within the text. The units of the semantic code are referred to by semes which have a connotative function and suggest a hidden meaning in addition to their apparent one. According to Vijian This semantic code is closely connected with the stereotypical conducts, and sub- cultures related to sub- domains. As a result, the text would make sense only for a group of people unlike the referential code which refers to the common sense and can be regarded as background information ("Glossary", Vijayan 7).

1-6-2 The Image

Images are the primary units of meaning in film. Therefore, a systematic study of the film requires a good understanding of the language of images, and dissecting the concept of the image not only as a sign, but as a vehicle of signification that is manipulated and even repurposed including visual literacies such as attitudes, clothing. The ensemble of all is fundamental to the process of meaning- making. In his book, *the field of drama*, Martin Esslin notes that contemporary semiotics, originally established by Peirce, systemized and enlarged by

modern semioticians classifies signs into three main categories. The most basic of them all is referred to by the Greek word Icon, which means picture. It can be immediately identifiable as it depicts the object it signifies through offering a direct mimetic representation of it. He declares that pictures either realistic, graphic or artistically conventionalized including the small figures in dresses and trousers on doors, photographs, painted portraits of persons are clear iconic signs. He believes that representational arts such as drawing, photography sculpture and even dramatic performances along with sounds can be seenas iconic signs' systems (Esslin 43).

Roland Barthes, a French linguist, philosopher and semiotician draws our attention to non- linguistic types of languages and systems of signification that are not less important than verbal language. Barthes ideas made a genuine contribution to our understanding of signs and how language works in a social context, and the way it embeds culture and reflect it. Barthes suggests that there are two levels that construct the image, denotation and connotation.

1-6-2-1 Denotation

Denotation derives from the verb to denote which means to indicate, to function as a referent to something else. Barthes views that Denotation is the first order of signification which constructs the apparent message of the image. A denotative meaning incorporates what is believed to be literal, fixed, and universally affirmed. At this level, the relationship between signifiers and signifieds is recorded rather than transformed, or encoded; it explains this relationship in reality explicitly. The visual representation of the denotative meaning corresponds to the physical reality of the object it represents. The scene appears to be natural, objective and innocent to spectators who identify the explicit features of the image like framing, lighting, distance, shapes and colours. In this order of signification, meaning is detached from the socio-cultural context, and the various subjective readings as in connotation, for instance, the image

sunrise signifies the end of the night, and the beginning of a new day, while it may connote a new beginning full of hope (Barthes 44, Bouzida 5).

1-6-2-2 Connotation

Roland Barthes's approach to images is notably influenced by Saussure's ideas around the concept of the sign. However, he emphasizes a big difference that should be taken into consideration when analyzing images. He assumes that unlike the arbitrary relationship between the signifier cat and the actual small, furry, four-legged animal in the real world, the connection between a picture of a cat and a real cat is not arbitrary but analogical. The denoted image plays a key role in naturalizing the symbolic message and drawing attention away from the semantic artifice of the connotative meaning. A pseudo -truth is covered by the radical objectivity of openly semantic systems of the image (Barthes 45).

In linguistics, connotation is an idea or quality suggested by a word in addition to its main meaning (Oxford 90). It refers to an impression or association that signs generate over what they actually signify. For Barthes, connotation is the second order of signification. It produces a second meaning imposed on the visual message. Meaning is perpetuated at the different levels of creating the graphic representation. He adds that the analogical reproductions of reality, works of art such as drawings, photographs, and films contain messages without a code, a system that two people or more use to communicate with each other, yet they instantly construct an apparent complementary message, along with the analogical content, known as the style of the artist (Barthes 17). A good example of this is the monumental statues of the pharaoh which is metaphorical in nature; yet, it does not keep itself at a long distance from reality; for it depicts the pharaoh weaved with the element of exaggerating the size carrying a culturalmessage. The statue t is larger in size than the pharaoh himself to indicate his high socio- cultural status.

Referring to images, the signifier of the style is the way the creator treats the image, and its signified refers to the perception of the aesthetic or the ideological message by a particular cultural group (Barthes 17). The recorded objects and their posing in the image are of a high importance. They are the smallest units from which the pictorial representation acquires meaning as they may provoke associations of ideas. In other words, there is a possibility for these objects to be responsible for the continuity of ideas because they induce associations in mind. The association of ideas is a continuous flowing process. In this form, they are more like signifieds. However, in their physical form, as signifiers, all objects are single separate pieces meant to have a particular function, and hence they are complete in themselves. These are the two essential qualities of the sign that these objects bear what makes them sublime elements of signification (Barthes 22,23).

Barthes calls for questioning the objectivity of imitative arts and investigating their connoted messages to assume if the work of art is turned into a mere system of significations. He declares "the code of the connoted system is very likely constituted either by a universal symbolic order or by a period rhetoric, in short by a stock of stereotypes (Schemes, colours, graphisms, gestures, facial expressions, arrangements of elements)".According to the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, the symbolic order is the sum of socio- cultural systems, language, norms, beliefs, institutions and ideologies, responsible for organizing human relations and activities (Barthes 18, Plato 14).

From the explanation above, we come to the conclusion that the image has a double meaning; the first one is straightforward whereby the image addresses our senses. The second is indirect and suggestive; However, it rises from the visual representation which acquires secondary meanings in relation to the socio- cultural context. Esslin does not neglect other types

of signs that function within the iconic mimesis. He declares that linguistic signs, and the gestures made by characters constitute another type of signs, what he refers to by the symbolic signs.

1-6-3 The Symbol

Peirce defines the symbol as "a sign which refers to the object it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the symbol to be interpreted as referring to that object" (Short 220). Peirce argues that the relationship between symbols and the objects they indicate is conventionally outlined, and the meaning attributed to symbols is culturally acquired. In his work, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, Eco suggests a quite different conception of symbols. He asserts that the use of the term symbol in everyday language does not refer to a certain fundamental quality. However, it is used by the pseudo everyday language of literary criticism and press in certain contexts where it is believed that the term will be more definable. To illustrate, when they say that Marilyn Monroe was a sex symbol, or that the terrorist tried to kill the American ambassador for symbolic reasons; the word symbol acquires meaning. Nevertheless, these expressions most likely cannot be properly understood by commoners (Eco 132).

Paul Ricoeur argues that all symbols are signs, but not all signs are symbols. A sign is intended to refer to something beyond itself; what distinguishes the symbol is its double intentionality, or multiplicity of meaning. The first intention comprises a literal meaning which refers to the external reality and points to a second intention or latent meaning (Piscitelli 289). A. Berkeley Mickelsen as well advocates that a symbol is sign which alludes to meaning rather than asserting it. It is intended to communicate a lesson or truth (Mickelsen 265).

The fact that the symbol is a sign, there might be an overlap between symbols, icons and indexes which constitute other types of signs inside the image; However, Peirce's classification of signs eliminates any confusion between them. Peirce notes that the sign is a symbol when it points to its object, what it represents, by virtue of law. There is no physical logical link that connects the symbol (the signifier), to the object it symbolizes (the signified). For example, there is no inherent quality of the colour red that makes it logically identifiable as a symbol of danger (Bradley).

For the icon, Peirce clarifies that the sign is an icon when it refers to its object based on a physical resemblance between the two. Therefore, the relationship between the icon and the object it indicates is analogical to a high extent, reasoned and justified. Photographs, and realistic paintings are a good example of iconic signs. The theorist terms the third category of signs indexes. The index is a sign that is related to its object based on the principle of causality. For instance, smoke is an index of fire (Bradley). Based on Barthes' comment on symbols inside the image, and Ricoeur's viewpoint on their double intention, it is assumed that symbols can be read from two different structural levels. like images, some symbols may have a denotative and a connotative meaning .

1-6-3-1 Denotation

It stands for the apparent, literal meaning of what the spectator sees between the frames of the image. For instance; the picture of a red rose denotes a type of red flower with a green stem; the image of a cross denotes an object which brings an upright bar traversed by a horizontal one together the denotative meaning of a given media text often represents something beyond itself, a second meaning or a connotation ("Denotation and Connotation" 14).

1-6-3-2 Connotation

In this level, the symbol becomes a coded unit that carries cultural significations as Eco suggests (Chandler 42). Eco's perspective on symbols is merely cultural; in his words "culture is an ensemble of symbolic systems such as language, marriage rules, economical relationships, art, science, and religion" (Eco134). These cultural elements, relationships, and practices are built around symbols, and they are at the same time the fertile ground for symbols to acquire their meanings and significations. For instance, the star and the crescent moon on the top of a dome of a huge building suggests that this architecture was constructed by Muslims.

Although there exist no Islamic doctrine advocates that these two shapes as a symbol of Islam, the latter is widely associated with Islamic culture. It gives us an idea about the religious belief of a group of people who belong to a particular culture. Based on these concepts and methods, the critic will be able to assume the meanings and significations iconic symbols may acquire in a given context based on the cultural background of the producer. This considers the need of scrutinizing society as a whole, and societal institutions to help us interpret symbols since meaning is socially constructed.

1-6-4 Language

Although much focus was directed towards the language of images, and the interpretation of symbols, verbal language is equally crucial to meaning making. Culture and language are inseparable. Dialogue is another significant element of expression that accompanies the image to explain or clarify what spectators see on the screen. It functions in relation to other patterns of representation to create and reinforce certain meanings on the text. Nevertheless, the marginalized supplementary fragmentary speeches which inform about embedded ideologies should be the main focus of the analysis for that ideology is hinted at rather than explicitly advocated. Therefore, it is important to accurately analyze what can be heard as well. As with the

written text, the use of certain speeches and lyrical elements along with moving images in screenplays contributes to communicating meaning with the audience.

In the philosophy of linguistics, Speech acts are equivalent to the speaker's utterances which carry meaning that urges the listener to take certain actions. Hence, language takes plays an active role in addition to the transmission of meaning. Based on this assumption, two constituent parts can be addressed in relation to the aims of the study; the illocutionary force which refers to the intention, of the speaker, and the perlocutionary effect which refers to the act performed by the listener as a consequence to the illocutionary act of the addresser. According to Asensio speech acts can be classified into many types namely directives which are closely related to the notions of identity, ideology and power. He states that the they are rigid and authoritative in nature. They inform the addressee that he has no secondary choices (Asensio 123, 124). This at some point overlaps with Foucault's conception of discourse and power despite the fact that the illocutionary force is linguistic and instantaneous in contrast with Foucault's view of power as inherently embedded in language, and eventually has a long lasting, subliminal directive function what transforms this instantaneous force to a historical power that perpetuates a collective mode of thinking, consequently, a way of life.

1-7 Foucault on Discourse and Power

In the last decades, the meaning of the term "discourse" has become imprecise. In scientific fields and discussions, the concept acquires its meaning exclusively in use. It has distinct meanings in different contexts. However, it is generally used to refer to the written or verbal exchanges in different social realms that allow people to make sense of their social reality and how it is constructed; largely known examples are medical discourse and political discourse (Jorgensen and Phillips 1).

Jerry Tew views that discourse does not refer only to speech patterns and texts. It assimilates the schemes of cultural conducts, symbolic structures of meaning, knowledge and truth which organize social relationships through informing about the right speech or action to be said or taken and by whom in a particular social context. Language and symbol systems harbor the power of discourse and its ability to affect and regulate social relationships (Tew 69). Thus, Discourse reestablishes and legitimizes ideologies through symbolic presentations and linguistic structures.

Michel Foucault, a twentieth century French philosopher, sociologist and critic claims that discourses are not the commonly known set of statements and speeches; they are schemes of knowledge which result into unequal relationships of power through displaying what is thought to be true, right or agreeable. Such regimes of truth are established by scientific discourses, modified and affirmed through societal institutions such as family, systems of education. In his essays on the relationship between Discourse, power, and language Michel Foucault introduces the notion of power as discourse.

Unlike previous philosophers and social scientists, Foucault does not see power as an independent single institution, nor as a structure that can be dominated or controlled by an agent through enforcing a set of rules, the legal system for instance, but rather as an unquantifiable and undefinable object that stands for a body of changing strategic relationships between individuals and objects in a certain society. He denies the abstract paradigms of power and argues that power is impersonal and objective. It comes to existence only when exercised by individuals or societal institutions Based on the idea of "power is everywhere", Foucault makes the distinction between repressive power, and normalizing power. He believes that while repressive power which restricts one's freedom forces individuals to behave in a particular way, normalizing power, the

so called "metapower" or "regime of truth" urges them to willingly to talk or behave the way they are supposed to do anyway; this type of power is established through knowledge, science and scientific truth, and reinforced by society (Powercube).

Characters in literature and cinema can be identified by what they say. Through language they express their thoughts, ideas and emotions. Moreover, they interact with each other through language. The study of power relations expressed through language, dialogue, between characters help to reveal values, norms, beliefs and ideologies, as well as identify the dominant ideological voices which bring action twists within the sphere of the text.

1-8 Conclusion

The language of cinema is the most significant element the spectator experiences when watching films without being able to identify what it really is due to the multiplicity and the diversity if the sensual data the human mind's receives. As literature speaks to us with words, film communicates with us through visual forms. Although images are considered the most essential units in the process of constructing meaning, the dialogue that often accompanies, connects and arranges the scenes, and acts is fundamental to a more effective film experience.

The power of film to communicate certain ideas, morals and messages have made it a major subject of analysis especially with reference to the socio-cultural context. As being a product of culture, cinema may intentionally or involuntarily imply the values, the beliefs that are unique to a specific culture. Moreover, it may depict, as well as glorify and even manipulate certain systems of belief and values, and systematic world views, or the so-called ideologies that define individuals, groups, social classes, and cultures, then assign them their status in the different social and economic systems.

Chapter Two:

Americanization, Americanized Identities and Ideological Representations in Disney Animated Features

2-1 Introduction

Disney films constitute a type of cultural icons of the United States at a narrow scale, and the Western world at large. Disney animated features appeal to large young audiences, around the globe and have a role to play in shaping children's identity. This criterion highlights Disney's production as a subject for cultural criticism that investigates what values do these movies uphold, what kind of meanings they construct, and what messages they bear. Disney's representations of class, race, and gender has been often proved to be biased and unauthentic constructing stereotypical images of gender, and race identities have raised the controversy in cultural studies for years. The practice of Americanizing the local cultures of other races and ethnicities was a major point of focus in respect to borrowing stories from their cultural heritage and the portrayal of the Western and indigenous character.

In *Moana*, the cultural heritage of Polynesians was the ground on which the narrative was built. In search for authenticity in depicting the Polynesian culture. The interaction with the pacific islanders helped to inform about the setting, Polynesian myths, tales, norms and habits. The movie gained much praise concerning animation, music, clothing as well as the updated representation of the indigenous cultures, and was described as Disney's best classic among the new family of its released films.

2-2 Identity

Identity is a large concept used in the field of social sciences to refer to one's view and expression of individuality. Erikson suggests a definition of identity that is equivalent to self-concept. It describes the individual's awareness of the self, and the ability to view himself as a separate unique being in a larger socio-cultural context. The formation of identity is a human

criterion that encompass all humanity. Nevertheless, the term identity can be used to describe one aspect, or a part of the personal identity, religious identity, for instance (Sharma 4).

The term may also be used to refer to the ability of self-reflection, self-expression and consciousness of the self. In the way sociology emphasizes the notion of role behaviour, involving group behaviour, the idea that the concept of "identity negotiation" may come into existence from acquiring social roles through personal experiences. Hence, a diverse classification of identity categories may arise from Individual to group and society's identity which are continuously communicate with one another (Sharma 5).

In respect of identity development, Erikson presents the concept of identity crisis, or what her calls the disability to achieve ego identity during adolescent years. He believes that during this stage, the individual is exposed to a physical and a biological development, and sexual maturation, associated with the activity of developing a self-image, and the way the social surrounding environment think him. An effective resolution of this crisis depends on the adolescent's level of progress through the preceding stages emphasizing the issues of trust, autonomy, responsibility and right guidance related the large socio-cultural context (ibid).

2-3 Ethnic Identity

It refers to the extent of commitment to specific commonly shared patterns of communication between the members of the ethnic group of a certain culture including values, beliefs, worldviews as well as the use of certain symbolic attitudes, expressions, ways of speaking, and behaving which are vital in the process of communication and identities' negotiation. It is important to mention that meanwhile race is innate, ethnicity is acquired. It becomes noticeable once the individual begins to behave, and talk like the members of his ethnic group (Shawn Wahl and Juliann Scholl 81).

2-4 Americanization

The origins of the term can be traced back to the early years of the twentieth century. It refers to a set of practices and activities used as an instrument to pave the way for the American way to be the dominant mode of life embraced by the foreign - born American residents, consequently, ensuring their full engagement in the citizenship. The American social philosophy of the" melting pot", therefore, had been brought to the political sphere as a symbol of the esoteric power of the pre-eminent democracy whereby multiple distinct races, and ethnicities were amalgamated to form a new amicable harmonious blend (Sinha 1, 2).

According to There exist at least two types of Americanization as being practiced on other nations; the one that historically appeared the first is concerned with the structural change, the other is about the cultural and moral transmutation that is leisurely and cumulative in critical discussions and debates over the concept of Americanization which occurs within a vast cultural realm, pop culture has often been given its due attention with a tendency to view it as equivalent to Americanization when considering its nature of being culturally biased. In this context, Americanization refers to the process whereby the united states attempt to shape and adapt the world to its image. It refers to adapting people, and cultures to the American way of life and to make them American in character and assimilate them to submit to the customs and institutions of the united states. This includes adopting the American way of life, values, and ideologies (Langley 55, 57, 58).

Americanization may refer also to the process which may result into one's loss of identity by "acting American" by adopting the American way of doing things in the different political and socio- economic realms (Mensah, et al. 11). In relation to popular culture, Americanization is equivalent to cultural imperialism. It is intended to promote the American

culture at the expanse of the local culture of other nations. In this context, the term "to Americanize" is equivalent to the word "to universalize", or "to dominate" other cultures that the value system of the authentic culture steadily disintegrates due to the enormous effect of the American culture. It is not a difficult for a world power like the United to sell the American culture through media brands (Christina, Suprajitno 30).

Americanizing indigenous characters in films often correlates with the way the Americanized hero is distinguished from other people. According to Leeuwen the relationship between the picture and the viewer has three dimensions: the social distance, the social connection, and the interaction between the represented people and the audience. He adds that these pictures can be investigated from the aspects of exclusion roles: specific/generic, individual/group and categorization. Exclusion is used to analyze the picture and identify the characters who are omitted in the image, the way they are depicted whether it is specific or generic ethnic group, and their role in the story. This includes the representation of the individual as separated, or belonging to the group. An image of an individual attributes a clearly distinguished strong identity as opposed to the representation of the individual as a part of a large group which blurs one's identity and suppresses his own voice in the story (Rahayu, et al. 26).

2-5 Americanization and Domestic Cultural Bias in Disney's Animated Features

Disney studios' history of Americanizing non-American cultures embarks on the Americanization of European fairytales. Jack Zipes declares that Disney altered and Americanized the classic European fairy tales to injecting its own ideology, consequently, losing the values, the morals, and the messages of the original version. Richard Shickel Likewise, accuses Disney's adaptations of the contemporary fairytale, describing its ideological investment as "appealing to the worst aspects of middle-class conservative values". In other words, the

translation of Disney's modern fairy tale remarkably mirrors the values of the conservative values of the American middle-class hat foreground independence, innovation and nonconformity (Mollet 111).

Beginning with Snow White, released in nineteen thirty-seven, scholars like Brode and Sammond position Disney's adaptations of classic fairytales in the American sociohistorical context of the time. They assert that Snow White was recoded to bear the notion of the American dream and the ability to achieve success intended to affect Americans. Walt Disney Studios' Snow White instills some sense of hope and positive thinking in a nation with wrestling with the great Depression. The massive popularity and the remarkable success the animated film enjoyed, Successively, casted doubt on the power of Disney animated features in shaping prevalent national myths about the United States, the nature of Americans and their character (Mollet 111, 112).

Similarly, the concept of the American dream was casted into the screen with Little Mermaid by Hans Christian Anderson, and Madame Leprince Beaumont's Beauty and the beast through entwining the plot with elements that contribute to the reconstruction of the American dream. This imagery is reflected through introducing heroines who constantly dream about some relief from the current surrounding environment and conditions, eventually, her dream becomes true whether by living a new life far from her homeland, or by being rescued by her prince. Robert Sklar believes that Walt Disney Studios played an enormous role in the formation of the American national myths, and hopes through transforming the brutal depressed American land during the Second World War into a "happily ever after" heavens (Mollet 122, 123).

Jack G. Shaheen in his book Reel Bad Arabs, published in 2006 exposes the studios' racist depictions of Arabs. He states that the setting, Agrabah, where the events of the story take

place is depicted as an exotic, undemocratic city, clearly described as "city of Mystery ". The discourse of Arabs along with their stereotyped appearances and foreign accents labeled the Arab Man, as Primitive, static, wicked hostile and barbaric. The lyrics of the original opening song " Where they cut off your ear if they do not like your face, it is barbaric, but hey it is home" embrace an offending image of the Arab race. Additionally, Arab women are portrayed as submissive, and oppressed by their sexist society in which they are not regarded as more than sensual erotic bodies.

As opposed to his people, Aladdin is characterized by a large number of features attributed to the American hero, a commoner "From rages to riches", what is often associated with the concept of the American dream which suggests that through hard work and sacrifice, ordinary people will be able to achieve success and improve their social statues. This theme is recurrent in American literature and mainstream cinema. Aladdin is physically distinguished from other characters in the animated movie. He is depicted as a young, handsome athletic with a light skin tone who represents all what is good and positive as opposed to other characters who are portrayed as Arabs with a dark skins and beards correlated with their primitive, barbaric, evil attitudes. Establishing a stereotypical association between a particular ethnic group and villainy and an Americanized hero and heroism and goodness is a kind of othering, which implies "us" versus "them" philosophy ((Rahayu, et al 29).

With Disney's Mulan, released in nineteen ninety-eight, Disney takes a step into the Chinese culture. A very significant cultural value in the original folklore of Mulan that centers around a Chinese girl is Americanized. The Confucian values, a Chinese value system that emphasizes the strong relationship with parents and self-devotion to them as well as doing the womanly activities are blurred due to Americanizing the Confucian principles. Disney's version

fuses the concepts of Confucianism with the American beliefs of equality of opportunity expressed through granting Mulan the opportunity to pursuit her personal goals, freedom of speech, embowed with American individualism and the active role of women (Christina, Suprajinto 31). Similarly, Bogle explains that Elsa from the movie Frozen adapted from the Norse story of Snow queen, Elsa glorifies her freedom when she starts her own journey. She sings "let it go", a ballad of individualism and self-realization. She believes that her power as an individual comes from her isolation. He also states that her freedom was at the expanse of the relationship with her family and people (Bogle 4, 5).

In this research, Americanization and the technical procedures that accompany the Americanization of characters will be used as a theory to investigate the portrayal of the Polynesian ethnic group in Disney's Moana, released in 2016, Emphasizing the notion of the Americanized hero who adopts the American mode of life, and the American values of American exceptionalism and American individualism reflected in the film

2-6 American Exceptionalism

American Exceptionalism as an entrenched ethos in the project of American national identity formation that traces back to the American Puritan roots, American Exceptionalism has been a complex idea traversing multiple views in ideology, politics, economics and religion. The foundational meaning is generally associated with the idea of uniqueness in terms of history and foundation. For analytical frame of reference of this study, the narrowly defined the idea of American exceptionalism on which the analysis's arguments will depend on, can be recognized as encapsulating three distinct and consistent characteristics: American superiority, chosenness and divinely-ordained mission. Simply put, the belief in these traits, which stemmed from religious sentiments, is what American Exceptionalism stands for, and the way these qualities

shifted to encompass the American history, values, and political system (Ereli 44).

During the Puritan pilgrimages to "Promised Land" i.e America in 1630, the Puritan Lawyer John Winthrop used the phrase "a city upon a hill" in his renowned sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity," to purport the idea of superiority over the rest of the world. These Puritan pilgrims considered themselves as the Chosen People pridefully destined for a divine mission (ibid). Therefore; the upshot of such religious upheaval was the first seed of the construction of American exceptionalism which was enlarged to form the American national identity within which a sentiment of individualism was the core subtlety in its every aspect.

Americans tend to think of themselves as the "indispensable nation", and America as the "last best hope of earth". American leaders claim that the uniqueness, and the potency of the United States require them to take unique responsibilities and burdens at the international level. This idea rises from a plethora of beliefs. Americans believe that the United States is uniquely righteous. It calls for peace and peaceful coexistence, promotes freedom, respects human rights, and civil liberties. In addition to the fact that America is enjoying an extraordinary success as being the world's greatest power, what Americans believe to be the result of the virtues of the American constitution that upholds the ideals of individual freedom and hard work. Moreover, Americans give credit to their country as having a positive impact on the international developments and assume having God by their side in their divinely assigned mission (Walt).

2-7 American Individualism

Individualism refers to the ideology, the political perspective, the social pattern that prioritizes the moral worth of the individual. It is necessary to note that individualism is not unique to the United States. Nevertheless, American leaders and citizens have always believed that the individualism of America is distinct, and unique as being a part of the newly established

American ideals and culture free from the individualism of the Western thought. In a speech he delivered in the nineteen twenties, Herbert Hoover, an American former president, declares that what distinguishes American individualism from Western individualism is the equality of opportunity, an individualism that does not nurture tyrannies, injustices and domination (Hoover). This cultural value encompasses all the fields of society, politics and economics; moreover, It plays a vital role in shaping the character of the united States. According to Stephen Mennell, American individualism can be viewed from two distinct perspectives that are historically connected: America as a unique country that has a unique culture which has its effects on the American habitus of viewing the American individual as an independent autonomous subject (Mennell 1).

American individualism is closely related with the ideas of freedom and equality of opportunity. It encourages individuals to be self-oriented and seek to develop their inner self. It draws upon the concepts of self- choice, self- reliance to achieve self- actualization. The sentiment of self-reliance has its roots in the period of the westward expansion when people moved towards the western frontier overcoming all the natural hurdles and establishing a new life through hard work and self-reliance. Maslow's humanistic psychology which emphasizes the idea of self-realization gained popularity in America during the middle part of the twentieth century had an enormous effect on individualism in the United States (Yuxian 37).

2-8 Self-actualization: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Self-actualization is a term in the modern humanistic psychology, firstly coined by Kurt Goldestin, then, developed by the American psychologist Abraham Harold Maslow in his psychological theory widely known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs summarized in the following Diagram:

diagram:

Figure 1 : "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Saul)"

With respect to Maslow's theory, self-actualization can be defined as individuals achieving their highest potential, "fulfilling themselves", and doing the "best they are capable of doing". Maslow argues that this stage cannot be reached unless the lower stages in the pyramid, the distinct types of needs are satisfied. Maslow's hierarchy should be read from the bottom, starting with psychological needs that imply the basic human needs of food, water, and, shelter. It proceeds to safety needs that involves the feeling of personal security resulted from being financially secured. Then, the belongingness and love needs fulfilled by the surrounding social environment including family and friends. It progresses to esteem needs which implies two classifications: esteem for oneself which includes independence, freedom and skill, and recognition by others or reputation. taking into consideration the ethnocentric critique, the notion of self actualization, and the features that define a self-actualized individual are proved to be relevant and applicable essentially to individualistic cultures (McLeod, Ivtzan, 114, 134).

American Individualism is a distinctively American characteristic, which has shaped their culture to a great extent. Self-responsibility, self-reliance and freedom of choice. Despite these all- embracing aspects of American Individualism, this philosophy demonstrates a realistic

limitation where the individualist cannot be completely detached from community.

2-9 Moana 2016

Moana, or Oceania is an American animated film produced and released by Walt Disney Animation Studios. Among a large number of animated feature films, Moana ranks fifty sixth. The movie is directed by the American well- known directors Ronald Francis Clements (1953), and John Muscar (1953). Time and space in Moana are real. According to Gooding, the movie does not depict real places yet it represents real areas in times that were real. The movie is a collection of Polynesian legends, stories, and historical facts about Polynesia. The directors had organized research trips to pacific islands. The interaction with Pacific Islanders helped to inform about Polynesian myths, norms, beliefs and habits and set the story on the fictional islands of Motonui and TeFiti.

When it was first released in 2016, Disney's Moana attracted critics and viewers' eyes and hearts. Animation, colours, music, characterization, and characters' clothing were the major elements Disney's was generously praised for as well as the progressive image of Polynesians. The element of entertainment, was highly present in the movie. Soren Anderson notes: " Moana is a joy […] it represents a pinnacle of the computer-generated animation". He asserts that the Moana's strength derives from the action of moving from an aspect of the story to another with joyousness and delight (Anderson).

2-10 Plot Summary

The movie opens at with Moana's grandmother Tala telling the story of creation and the emergence of the mother island, TeFiti, after there had been only ocean. She explains how her life- giving heart could create life what made some seek to steal it because they thought that possessing the heart will enable them to hold the great power of creation until one of them, Maui,

the demi-God of the wind and sea, could do so. He wanted to grant it to the inhabitants of the island. After taking her heart, Te Fit started to fall into pieces, resulting into a horrific gloom. Maui could not escape peacefully as Te Ka, the demon of earth and fire stood in his way and attacked him that he fell from the sky, his fishhook and the heart of TeFiti were lost at sea and from there on, he had absconded and could not be found again for a thousand years. The old lady tells that the darkness would end life on islands one after the other and people will be confronted by upcoming death unless the heart of TeFiti was found by someone who takes his journey to put back TeFiti's heart and rescue them all.

The story continues with the protagonist, young Moana being chosen by the ocean to restore the heart. Moana who is the one and only child of Tui, the chief of Motoniu, shows a great attachment to the ocean and sailing since her childhood. However, her father has always prevented everyone from going beyond the reef especially his rebellious daughter who has tried to leave the island various times. Moana has been always torn apart between her love for sailing, and the need to meet her people's expectations and become the next chief of the island. Until one day, grandmother Tala shows Moana the cave of her ancestors which tells their voyaging stories and the way they used to live before, and tells her that the chiefs of the island forbid voyaging because voyagers had started to be attacked by the demons awakened by Te Ka, and whoever had sailed across the sea, never came back again. Then, she repeats again that the darkness has continue to spread, and life on islands impossible and that the young girl is the chosen one who will save them.

Moana discovers that an action needs to be taken the day she sees that coconut trees are seriously damaged, and their traps has started to trawl less fish. The story continues with Moana leaving her island in her journey to find Maui who would help her voyage across the sea to

restore the heart of TeFiti. In her way, she faces many obstacles but with the aid of the ocean she overcomes them all, finds Maui and beg him for help. Maui does not really want to help but he wants to find his magical fishhook and become people's hero. So, he decides to accompany her and take the long way to TeFiti. At the end, when reaching the island Moana realizes that Te Ka is TeFiti after her heart had been stolen. Moana restores the heart and Te ka becomes TeFiti again. Darkness banishes and mother island shares life with the world again.

2-11 Polynesia: Geographic location, Inhabitants, Social System, Religion

Polynesians are the native inhabitants of the ethno- geographic society of pacific islands commonly identified as Polynesia. Polynesia covers a large geographical area including the Hawaiian Islands, New Zealand, Easter Islands, Cook Islands, Western Samoa, French Polynesia, and Austrel Islands. Early in this century, around seventy percent of the Polynesian population occupied Hawaii. DNA analysis of Polynesians has proven that they share common genes that are more closely related to the original inhabitants of East Asia, Micronesia, and Taiwan (Chepkemoi, C. Kiste). Scientific research identified a long pause in Polynesian sailing for around two thousand years. They ascribed this pause to the lack of sailing technology that are able to resist the natural obstacles. This intriguing puzzle had postponed human settlement of Hawaii, Tahiti, and New Zealand (Chepkemoi, St. Fleur 3). The pause was the missing link on which Disney relied to create the time code.

Polynesians have a distinct unique collectivist culture that contributes to the richness of their way of viewing the world and the capacity to overcome obstacles together. Cultural collectivism differs from the cultures which emphasize the worth of the individual over the group in western thought in the way it calls for social connectedness and integration between the members of the society, maintaining stable social relationships, and building a shared future.

Another aspect of collectivism is holistic modes of viewing the world, namely, spirituality and religion (Allen, and Smith 323).

Polynesian system of beliefs is based on animism, the view that all animate and inanimate objects in nature has some sort of supernatural power, commonly known among the indigenous people as Mana. They believe that mana can be good or evil and could be voided by different human behaviours. However, the majority of the community's "tapu", taboos, were set to prohibit restrict such actions. Their religion centers about a large number of myths, gods, demi- Gods, deities, and heroes which were intended to fit the surrounding environment (Kahn 1). Pacific islanders are closely attached to their deities, legends, heroes and tricksters; Maui is the most known and celebrated of them all. He is a demi- God, a trickster whom Disney studios chose to be one of the major characters of the movie, Moana.

2-12 Conclusion

American Films often demonstrate a high level of cultural superiority and pride. On the other hand, they may imply a tone of condescension to other cultures. The aforementioned Disney films, for instance has often functioned like a mirror that reflects the American national and cultural sentiment of American superiority and American exceptionalism through establishing the link between the American values, modes of viewing social realities, and the notions of heroism and leadership in the film.

Unlike other Disney films which have been a subject of cultural debates for years that often close result into directing serious criticisms of cultural stereotyping and appropriation, the movie *Moana* is viewed as the best example to define a new authentic Disney. Nevertheless, the portrayal of a protagonist's individualist mindset along with the concept of heroism is highly problematic considering the collectivist nature of Polyenesians.

Chapter Three:

Analyzing the Aspects of Americanization, Power Relations and Ideologies in Disney's Moana

3-1 Introduction

Several studies on Disney's new generation of films agree upon the idea that Disney's animated feature, Moana, marks the beginning of the company's new mode of representation that celebrates unprejudiced views of non- American races and ethnicities. At first glance, Disney's representation of Polynesians seems to be a progressive step that will impoverish the studio's racist past which has been attracting critics' reproval for decades. Although the depiction of the Polynesian culture seems to offer a tolerant view of the other, it harbors a euphuistic image of the self with presenting an Americanized hero as an epitome of the notion of American exceptionalism. The protagonist, Moana, shows a cultural deviation from the social values of collectivism. She is depicted as an outsider who steadily develops an American character, and a public identity throughout the course of events from a Polynesian adolescent with psychic complexities resulted from identity loss to a self-actualized American hero. The main objective of this study is to unveil the different layers of meaning through investigating multiple visual and verbal signs, and the analysis Moana's persona at heart to bring the hidden meanings and ideologies in the film to the surface.

3-2 Collectivism: "**Where You Are**"

Probably, the majority of Disney films which depict non- Western or indigenous cultures have received extensive criticisms of perpetuating racial stereotypes and encouraging racial discrimination. However, in the movie Moana, the portrayal of Polynesians seemingly appears to be authentic and innocent; emphasizing the collectivist practices of pacific islanders. Day to day life in Moana's home underlines the group's activities in which the members of the tribe are involved in the same task willingly and contentedly. Moana's people are represented as the quintessential of a utopian "we" collectivist group. The collectivist sentiment of Polynesians is

richly reflected in the film "We share everything we make; we joke and we weave our baskets" (Loulou 13)sings chief Tui, along with the intention to maintain a collective harmony which will lead to prosperity and happiness "We'll build our future together, where we are"(21). Moana's home social environment provides fertile ground for building a typical collectivist individual. In a such community, the interconnectedness between the members of the society, and the individual's conformity with the group is a basic component of his identity.

Figure 1: Collective Farming

(Clements and Muskar 0:01).

Figure 2: Coconut Harvest

(Clements and Muskar 2: 48).

The inhabitants of Motonui live primarily on coconut harvest and fish; "We make our nets from the fiber, the water sweet inside, we use the leaves to build fire, we cook up the meat inside" (18) sings Moana's mother. Similarly, chief Tui points at the importance of coconuts as he says "Consider the coconuts; the trunks and the leaves, the island gives us what we need" (21). Hence, coconuts and coconut trees are depicted as a symbol of the collectivist nature of Moana's people, and the mode of life in Motonui in the sphere of the movie.

Figure 3: Polynesian Collective Dance

(Clement and Muskar 0:17)

Figure 4: Polynesian Festive Ceremony

(Clement and Muskar 1:34)

Disney portrays Moana's people living happily in harmony. It represents the members of the tribe singing and dancing together expressing their gratitude for the life they are living regardless of the environmental disaster that threatens life on Motonui except Moana who constantly expresses her desire to voyage across the sea and save her people. Although the representation of the collectivist aspect of Polynesians is at a great extent successful, the paradox of presenting a non- conformist hero expressing his unhappiness and dissatisfaction with this way of life and the commonly shared values of the group on the other hand, disturbs the consistency of what was first introduced as a utopia. Moana's overwhelming desire to sail and her noble mission to rescue her people who were in an imminent danger gives her salience over the rest. Hence, her actions and thoughts will be regarded as superior in contrast to her people's passivity and their low awareness of the severity of the situation.

3-3 The Aspect of the Outsider

3-3-1 The Significance of the Boat

Figure 5: A Boat's Drawing

(Clements and Muskar 0:32)

Figure 6: Fiber Boat

(Clement and Muskar 0:43)

Moana is depicted as different from the rest by her nonnormative attitude. Since an early age, she shows a great affection towards boats. The sailboat is used as a symbol that defines Moana's individuality emphasized through distinct visual and verbal signs that reinforce the aspect of individuality in Moana's personality. As we notice in the images above, the drawings of the two children mainly constitute of an island, cottages and coconut trees which signifies their normative behaviours, and sense of belonging to the group as opposed to Moana's isolation, uniqueness and non- conformity. Furthermore, the Sailboat is a symbol of a journey, the central theme that creates tensions in the narrative later, and marks the beginning of the psychological metamorphosis of the young lady after being freely able to embrace her individuality.

3-3-2 Conscious Suppressed Individuality and Alienation

As she grows older, Moana becomes aware of her individuality; however, she faces the dilemma of disobeying her father, and taking the first steps in her journey out of the Motonui or becoming the chief and have her family and people around her; "I wish I could be the perfect daughter" (74), "so here I will stay, my home, my people beside me" (30). Moreover, The equation of the salient unique "I", and the homogeneous "them" is abundantly clear in Moana's expressive song How Far I'll Go. She sings: "I wish I could be the perfect daughter, but I come back to the water no matter how hard I try […] I know everybody on this island seems so happy

on this island […] I know Everybody on this island has a role in this island" (74). This hints at Moana's mentality of us- versus- them. According to Emamzadeh the political aspect of the us- versus- them mentality is usually localized in the context of national identities, racial and ethnic groups (Emamzadeh 6).

Moana has been attached to the ocean since her childhood. She begins to express her overwhelming unjustified feelings towards it as soon as she becomes able to speak. She tries several times to leave the island but her father is always there to prevent her. Chief Tui views her individuality as a threat that should be controlled.

Chief Tui: Don't walk away; Moana stay on the ground now; Our people need a chief and there you are.

Chief Tui and Sina: There comes a day, when you're gonna look around and realize happiness is where you are.

Chief Tui and Sina: You must find happiness right where you are (Loulou 15-16, 22).

The speeches above imply the practice of power in its Foucaudian sense on Moana through a societal institution which is family. She is being prepared to accept and learn the traditions, the values and the practices of the Tribe. Nevertheless, this discursive practice does not seem to have its impact on her. This suggests that Moana is an outsider who has experienced a different way of life before. Based on the idea of the human mind as a tabula rasa, blank writing tablet, individuals are born without pre- existing concepts, and ideas. knowledge is a structure of experiences and perceptions. Being raised in a collectivist society without an exposure to other concepts of the self and the other, other conceptions of the world, and different culturalpractices, should inevitably result into the formation of a collectivist individual, the reality that Moana's non-expected behaviours and thoughts do not reflect.

"So here I will stay, my home, my people beside me"(30), said the ensure, confused Moana. This frustration makes Moana a young unhappy, hopeless adolescent. Consequently, she begins to alienate herself; alienation is the social isolation or dissociation from the other, a human condition which is believed to be a result of identity loss in philosophy. According to Hegel, engaging in the wide social collaborative practice establishes some sort of identity that resists the notion of alienation, once man experiences individuality this leads to identity loss (Sallem 70, Leopod).

3-3-3Tala's advice: You Decide who You Are

Figure 7: Moana and her grandmother (Clement and Muskar 2:00)

Tala is positioned as a mentor in the film. She is also identified among people by her bizarre behaviour. She shares a close relationship with Moana. Meanwhile Moana is encouraged by her parents to ignore her desire of sailing, Tala supports her to take a step outside the island. The name Moana means the ocean or a vast body of water; when she is dancing with her granddaughter, in an attempt to convince her to rebel against the rules Tala sings "I like to dance with the water, the undertow and the waves, the water is mischievous, I like how it misbehaves" (23) informing Moana that if she breaks the rules, she would be pleased and supportive to her. then she closes her song with "if the voice starts to whisper, to follow the

farthest star, Moana that voice inside you is who you are". This decreases Moana's sense of insecurity which causes her internal conflicts as her individuality, and her right to reestablish her identity is recognized by someone whom she views as a role model. Before voyaging across the sea, Moana finds only her grandmother reminding her that she is the chosen one to save life on Motonui; and reasserting her individuality "she is separated from the crowd" in Tala's words.

3-4 The Significance of The Journey: Facing the Enemies Within and the American way

The story mainly centers on Moana and her journey to Tefiti. The theme of the journey is widely popular throughout history. It is very common in literature and mainstream cinema. It often appeals to audiences on life challenges, and how to overcome its hurdles, as well as the path to personal development and psychological growth. Arguably, the theme of the journey has a psychological rather than a spatial significance. The literal meaning of the journey is nothing but an action of moving from one place to another; the obstacles which lead to fulfilling one's highest potential to cultivate the inner self and redefine his character are the essence of the character's journey. Cirlot asserts that from a spiritual perspective, the journey is not merely a matter of an actual movement; it is the manifestation of an irresistible desire for discovery, adventure and growth that accompany the action of geographic mobility (Cirlot164).

Moana continues failing to prove her distinct individual identity. Remarkably, Moana discards her father's rule and leave Motonui once she owns the heart of TeFiti which gives her a push to rebel against her parent's rules. The heart awakens her buried desire of voyaging and gives her the motive, the courage and, the power to leave the island, her family, and her society behind to discover who she truly is. It pushes her to adopt the American values of geographic mobility, risk- taking and sacrifice because without risk- taking and sacrificing her safe life beside her people, she cannot restore the heart of Tefiti what constitutes the notion of American

dream that has been always a nucleus facet of the American identity.

Unlike previous Disney movies which evolve around the binary opposition of good and evil characters, the movie Moana does not represent us with prototypes of classic villainy. Although Maui was the first to seek the heart of Tefiti and cause the disruption, he is portrayed as a helper and a second mentor for Moana. He teaches her how to sail, and engages with her in the battles against who are supposed to be the villains. Antagonists in the film are not depicted as entirely evil or highly dangerous; they are romanticized, from the small adorable coconuts Kakamora whom Moana herself describes: "They're … kind of cute"(Loulou 159), to the sarcastic, comedic, dancing giant crab, Tamatoa, and the demonic creature Te Ka

3-4-1 The symbolism of the Kakamora

Figure 8: The Battle Against Kakamora (Clements and Muskar 2:56)

In the beginning of the movie, Disney depicts coconuts as a symbol of the collectivist value system of the tribe. Surprisingly, the Kakamora, themed villains whom Moana and Mui encounter during their journey are pirates- like coconuts. According to Beau Cameron coconut has been always used as a racial offensive stigma against the native people of Polynesia. Moana and Maui fight against the Kakamora and succeed in keeping the heart for Moana. The little pirates are weak when they are scattered. However, they become threatening as a team. Hence, winning the battle against the Kakamora may symbolize the overthrow of collectivism and

Moana's disposal of the remains of collectivism, and the society's values she has been taught in Motonui.

3-4-2 The Symbolism of Tamatoa

Tamatoa is the giant crab who who lives in the realm of monsters where Maui's hook was lost. He's the second antagonist whom Moana and Maui confront. Tamatoa lives in a massive shiny shell on which he saves valuable treasures and jewels. He believes in outside beauty and mocks at Tala's philosophy of life "listening to your heart"; "did your granny say listen to your heart? Be who you are in the inside, I need just three words to tear her argument apart, I'd rather be shiny" (233)singsTamatoa.

The crab is a spiritual animal which reminds people that the path they have chosen lead to their personal objectives. It evokes the idea that the individual is in need of introspecting his thoughts and inner senses regardless of the significant role of the community in building his character. Moreover, the crab symbolizes the inherent quality of self- protection. It offers the moral that people should protect what is valuable for them.

As a consequence of identity crisis, Moana's personal identity is characterized by serious complexities of self doubt and self devaluation what nourishes a fragile psyche that constitutes the most menacing constant enemy. Tamatoa teaches moana how to be courageous and self-protective outwardly as "hearing the voice inside" is not enough to fulfil one's goals considering the fact that Maui does not provide enough help. He also inspires Moana to follow the passage she has followed despite her family's objection in strong confident steps and protect her quality as being distinguished from the others.

3-4-3 Glimpse of Individualism

3-4-3-1 Freedom and Independence: A Reference to the Statue of Liberty

Figure 9: Reaching Te Ka

(Clements and Muskar 0:52)

Figure 10: The Statute of Liberty

(Kadar)

The captured scene above alludes to the statue of liberty, the national symbol of freedom in the American consciousness and the most significant and famous milestone in the united states. In the beginning of the movie, Moana is represented as a confused adolescent who wants to develop a personal identity. After breaking the constraints of her society, Moana develops an individualist concept of the self arched by the concepts of freedom, and independence. Over the course of the film, moana succeeds in overcoming several obstacles that broaden her view of the personal identity.

Freedom was vital to Moana's self-discovery. It can be categorized into two intertwined types: a physical freedom that correlates with a psychological one. Once moana becomes conscious of her individuality which dictates the subordination to the inner self and desires, she learns freedom and how to deviate from the standard norms of the society. During the period of time she lived in her homeland; she has always longed for changing her social surrounding environment to a place where she can enjoy the merits of freedom and independence to pursue her own goals. Leaving Motonui freed her from the society's rigid values which make her trapped in the island unable to live the life she has been always dreaming of. After reaching Te fiti Moana takes a body position by which she refers to the statue of liberty, cherishing the

concepts of freedom and deliverance.

As soon as she becomes aware of her social reality, Moana becomes deeply depressed and sad because she lacks the sense of belonging to her community. Moana continues to suffer by staying in Motonui until she realizes that she is the chosen one to restore the heart of TeFiti. She wants to be responsible by helping her people. Her attitudes indicate that she is an individualist. She makes her decision to sail despite her father's warnings. She believes that she needs to redeem the mistake made by her people's idol Maui. However, Moana still keep a good relationship with the members of her tribe the fact her interactions with them dictate.

Moana: What if … we fished beyond the reef?

Chief Tui: No one goes beyond the reef.

Moana: I know. But if there are no fish in the lagoon…

Chief Tui: Moana…

Moana: And there is a whole ocean…

Chief Tui: We have one rule.

Moana: An old rule, where there were fish (56, 62).

Moana: I know everybody on this island has a role on this island see

When coconut corps failed all over the island Moana, and fishermen returned to the island with their lagoons empty Moana proposes a solution that her father ignores completely. The dialogue above indicates Moana's independent thinking. Nevertheless, she is skillful at maintaining the balance between her personal identity and social life.

Moana: I know everybody on this island has a role on this island… I can lead with pride; I can make us strong… but the voice inside sings a different song. This line implies the major character's non- conformity and individualist mindset. She tends to think as an individual and

rejects the idea that everything determined by her society reflects her personal needs and desires.

3-4-3-2 Self- responsibility and Self- reliance

Grandmother Tala: Go.

Moana: Gramma.

Tala : Go

Moana: Not now. I can't.

Tala: You must. The ocean chose you. Follow the fish hook (114, 116).

Then she gives her the heart of TeFiti. From the conversation above we understand that Moana is encouraged by her grandmother to take the responsibility the ocean has put on her. Before this moment, she felt weak, lost and confused. However, Tala's words make her realize that she is responsible for taking the mission and rescuing her people. In this sense, Moana succeeds to fulfill the element of individual responsibility.

Moana does not know how to sail nor can read the stars to determine the right direction to TeFiti. The ocean provides some help. Nevertheless, Moana is aware of the necessity to find Maui who will help her reach TeFiti. When she finds him, Moana calls him for help Maui keeps constantly refusing to provide any kind of help. Furthermore, he tricks her and try to steal her boat yet this does not mark the end of Moana's attempts to convince him deliver her across the sea.

Maui: First, we get my hook.

Moana : Then save the world. Deal?

Maui: Deal. Worth a shot. Okay, we go east to the lair Tamatoa. If anyone has my hook, it's that beady- eyed bottom feeder (180-182).

The dialogue above embeds a hidden facet of American individualism where the

autonomous self- responsible, individualist subject cannot be entirely detached from society. Hossain and Ali argue that the individual and society co- exist and construct the total reality together. They have close correlation. They depend on each other despite the fact that the relationship between them can never by totally harmonious and stable. Moana is portrayed as self- reliant. Even when Maui abandons her, she continues her journey towards mother island. She longs to leave her comfort, safe but frustrating social environment in hopes of finding a new place where she can embrace her inner self.

3-4-3-3 Self- Actualization

Figure 11: Reaching Te Fiti

(Clements and Muskar 2:45)

Figure 12: Self-actualization

(Clements and Muskar 2:42)

At the end of the movie, Moana is depicted literally and psychologically as a self-actualized being. Her self-actualization was driven by two major external and internal factors. The first is social; it derives from Moana's awareness of the danger that is threatening their lives on the island and which justifies and supports her personal desires that need to be fulfilled for her to feel self- actualized. By the end of her journey, she achieves success by fulfilling both, a social goal and a personal goal which is voyaging across the ocean. Now, she is fully satisfied with the current situation. Living a life in which she adopts the American way. She sings: "they call me… I've delivered us to where we are. I have journeyed father. I'm everything I learned and

more, still it calls me, and the call isn't out there at all; it's inside me… I'm Moana" (321). This suggests that Moana's journey is merely psychological. She needed to an introspective speculation far from the crowd to discover herself.

When she reaches the lava monster Te Ka, Moana calls it by its real name, TeFiti then she sings: "I have crossed the horizon to find you. I know your name. They have stolen your heart from inside you but this …does not define you" (325). This is not who you are. You know who you are; who you truly are. This implies that Moana's identity is not defined by what she has been taught by her parent, but rather by what she experienced through her journey in which she made her sense of individuality, self- responsibility, freedom and self- reliance into practice.

Although she is primarily presented as a human being, she does not appear in need of much of human's physiological needs. She does not feel the sense of belonging still she could be the better version of herself and fulfill her highest potential. The safety need is fulfilled by the living ocean which helps her in several occasions and her grandmother's spirit. Esteem needs are the category of needs that are remarkably manifested as Moana is portrayed as strong, and free, autonomous person. Gender factor was totally eliminated in the story to offer a self- actualized character as a role model to teach us to be self- actualized regardless of our gender. Musker narrates that the original story of the film depicts Moana as the only girl having many brothers, and that in that version, gender has its impact on the story. He declares that they agreed upon the idea that gender should not have a role to play in the film. The most important is that Moana should be self- actualized.

3-5 Semiotics of Moana of American

3-5-1 The Notion of The American Hero and the American Identity

Figure 13: Moana (Disney Animation Studios)

Moana is depicted as a young woman, with a medium height, but a strongly built and body, strong large legs standing powerfully, with the arms on waist, long curly dark hair blown away by the wind and a confident gaze. She wears a red, and white outfit with a shade of yellow, a blue and white necklace. She is the sixteen years old young lady Moana. This colour scheme bears a reference to the American flag in addition to the yellow colour that assimilates the character to the pantheon of commonly known American superheroes namely Superman, Spiderman and Wonder Woman.

Her costume constitutes a signifier of the signified notion of the American hero. Hence, informs about Moana's American identity. The fact that Moana has a brown skin tone, and that she is the daughter of a chief the reality that her appearance does not indicate, and her having a unisex name suggests that she represents every American regardless of his gender, race, or class or represents America itself. Moana signifies the American superhero in popular culture. Merriam Webster dictionary define superheroes as fictional characters with superhuman abilities. The major character in the film conforms to Hollywood's formula of a lone hero embowed with

superhuman powers who defeats evil and saves people.

Moana's superpower correlates with the fact that she is the only human being who has a strong metaphysical bond with nature. She is able to communicate with the ocean which becomes a living creature only when addressed by her. Additionally, she owns the heart of Te fiti, the life-giving gemstone she uses to rescue the world from a global environmental disaster is about to happen. Like other American superheroes, Moana has a double identity; she is an ordinary girl, a daughter of a chief. Moana's second identity is not explicitly advocated in the film; it is rather implied and can be assumed based on visual evidence which suggests that Moana and TeFiti are one.

3-5-2 A Christ-Like Figure

Moana is portrayed as the classic hero. She is the world savior. The movie is richly layered with biblical allusions and Christian ideals as well which appear to offer a great aid to Moana and justify the way she unimaginably overcomes all the problems she faces during her travelling experience. She shares a plethora of features and traits with Christ. The notion of the chosen one is recurrently presented mentioned in the story. Moana is the one whom the ocean chooses to take the journey and saves humanity "the ocean chose you" (97) says Tala. Moreover, she is like Jesus, sensitive, gentle, and forgiving. She feels compassionate about Maui's sad past when he was once abandoned by his parents.

Like Jesus, Moana is able to see the truth. She is the only one who comes to realize that Tefiti and Te ka are actually one. She postulates that the demon of fire which everyone fears is the anger that resides in all of us when we get hurt. Furthermore, both, Jesus and Moana have a dual identity. Jesus was a common man as well as the son of God; similarly, Moana is the daughter of a chief, a voyager, at the same time, she is the Goddess of life Tefiti, the identity she

discovers at the end of her journey. We often see Moana asserting that she is the only one that

take the responsibility of restoring the heart. She expresses outwardly "I am Moana from

Motonui. You will board my boat, sail across the sea, and restore the heart of TeFiti"

addressing Maui. Although Maui is intended to be a demigod, he is depicted as less than a

noble human being. He is Humorous. He has flaws. He is the responsible for all the chaos that is

draining life from islands. Moana is thought of as someone to wash Maui's sin of stealing the

heart the way the Christ cleansed the wrongdoings of man.

3-5-3A Reference to Moses From Hollywood's *The Prince of Egypt*

Figure 14: Moses Parting the Red Sea

(Chapman, et al. 1: 42)

Figure 15: Moana Parting the Ocean

(Clements and Muskar 1: 53)

Another reference to the bible is the story of Moses. The first image is the call for

success. The tensions begin when the ocean calls Moana; she sings: "There's a line where the

sky meets the sea and it calls me" (121) to go beyond the island. Analogously, in the movie *The*

Prince of Egypt, an American animated film, God calls Moses to deliver the Israelites across the

sea. Moana realizes that if she does not leave Motoniu, her people will continue to suffer from an

eternal darkness and death will be inescapable. Metaphorically, Moana's people are imprisoned

in the way that they cannot voyage across the ocean. They live in a constant state of fear from

sailing because of the lava monster, Te Ka. In the parallel story, Moses'people were imprisoned and enslaved by the Egyptian pharaoh. Like what happened with Moses when he stretched out his hand, Moana holds the heart of TeFiti high and walks through on dry land and the waters part in two walls until she reaches Te Ka and restores the heart of TeFiti.

3-5-4Moana as a Prototype of American Exceptionalism

Figure 16: The Chiefs' Stones

(Clements and Muskar 0: 32)

Figure 17: Moana's Conch shell

(Clements and Muskar 2: 36)

A Polynesian long held tradition is depicted in the film where each new chief on Motonui lays a stone on the top of a stock of stones of the previous chiefs. In the final scene, when Moana returns back to Motonui, the stack of stones is captured again with a seashell on top. The conch shell belongs to Moana. The image connotes Moana's uniqueness. Hence, exceptionalism and superiority along with the notions of chosenness, and mission. Moreover, it marks the end of a particular phase, and the beginning of a new phase in which Moana and her people are no longer obliged not to leave their island and sail. Schneider believes that the shell symbolizes the prosperity of a new generation (294).

All the previously analyzed signs in correlation with the secular foundations of the notion of American exceptionalism lead us to another signified in which Moana is viewed as the prototype of American exceptionalism which emanates from a set of religious beliefs,

assumptions and conducts that affirm and support the idea of American supremacy, and divine mission. In Pease words "American exceptionalism includes a complex assemblage of theological and secular assumptions out of which Americans have developed the lasting belief in America as the fulfillment of the national ideal to which other nations aspire". Like the history of America, Moana's past is different. She has been first introduced in the beginning of the movie as the Goddess of life. Although she has been raised by human parents, her attitudes which do not conform to what she has been taught informs that there exists a missing link. This implies the possibility that she had lived a life in which she learned and experienced the way of life she wants to embrace now.

Both Moana and America are the "last best hope on earth", chosen to bear special burdens due to the power they have. Moana is chosen to restore the heart of TeFiti and save humanity. Like the United states which behaves better than other countries do, Moana thinks and behaves better than the rest of her tribe. She prefers to take the risk, journey across the ocean and achieve what her ancestors and her father did not attain before her. This implies the American values of individualism, liberty, self-responsibility and self-reliance she embraces throughout the movie, in contrast with the socialist practices which repress one's freedom, regards the individualist mindset of the citizens as a threat to the social and economic stability, and encourages the ills of depending on one another, and idleness which obstructs economic growth. Lydia Dubois argues that, superheroes in popular culture are inextricably with American identity, nationalism (Dubois). Hence, mirror a romanticized American way of life and bear ideological discourses. The two, Moana and America are responsible for the good that exists in the world. Moana with her double identity creates life and share it with the world, fights evil and saves people's lives.

Americans are best known as one of the most religious nations in the world the reality their national anthem, The Star- Spangled Babber reflects; and this be our Motto: "In God is our trust". Similarly, Moana sings How Far I'll Go where there is a direct reference to a line from the book of Psalms; "if the wind in my sails stays behind me, one day I'll go". The original salvation prayer is "Bring me back from gray exile, put a fresh wind in my sails; Give me a job teaching rebels your ways so the lost can find their home"(Peterson). Moana sounds like she is praying for salvation. She is imprisoned in the island of Motonui with her people which feels like an exile for her. In the end of the movie, when Moana returns from her journey, she teaches her people how to sail, and they all voyage across the sea singing "We keep our island in the mind, and when it's time to find home, we know the way".

3-6 Conclusion

The analysis of the major character in Disney's Moana proves to be a vast field for multiple critical sub-approaches under the umbrella of multimodal critical discourse analysis to be employed. Considering the visual nature of our case study that constitutes essentially of visual data to be analyzed, calls for a semiotic approach to images correlated with the analysis of verbal language through speech acts theory and Foucault's approach to discourse. The ideological representations which form the deepest structure of meaning analyzed in this research requires the analysis of power relations and the loudest ideological voices in the film with all the previously studied elements in mind. Investigating the aspects of Americanization in the film forces studying the American values and ideologies in a movie embodied by Moana against the collectivist Polynesian value system. Analyzing speeches, symbols, and allusions helps moving from one signified to another, and from sub- ideologies to the macro-ideology of American exceptionalism.

A psychological analytical approach, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is needed to explain and justify Moana's triumph after embracing the American way putting an emphasis on the concept of American individualism and dissecting it into its main components to study each of them carefully. Additionally, the analysis of the micro- structures of meaning to reach the macro- structure of signification allows us to expose the harbored ideology of American exceptionalism and studying its aspects through Moana's persona in the film at large. The analysis of the multiple filmic signs and their signification in relation to each other helps the study of the aspects of American exceptionalism reflected in Moana's persona.

General Conclusion

Since inequity, the image has imposed itself on man as a type of language and discourse. from prehistoric primitive rock engravings, and drawings, to the current day's interactive video games, the image has always been the basic and the most significant unit of meaning in visual communication as it connects the instantaneous, self with the distant instantaneous, and the historic other. It is the analogical reproduction of reality and the link between the past and the present. As with verbal language which constitutes of letters, the image is composed of symbols that carry meanings, and bear messages. The cinematic production analyzed in this research relies essentially on this iconic language to construct meanings and significations that are closely associated with the cultural background of the producer.

The American cultural consciousness is as richly reflected in the film as it could strongly overwhelm the distinct aspects of the Polynesian culture. The authentic depiction of Pacific Islanders' appearance, and daily practices is made less objective through introducing a Polynesian hero typical of the American character, and giving him salience over the rest. Images, along with the narrative, and the dialogue build a discourse that informs about the process of Americanizing Moana and presenting her as an epitome of the American values, and the American way. The discourse of the American value system, beliefs and ideologies is constructed through the signifier of Moana's character embowed with the notions of heroism and leadership.

Moana's heroism is associated with American popular ideals, and national myths including the American dream that cannot be achieved unless Moana follows the American way. Throughout the movie, Moana's American view of the special, distinguished celebrated American "I", in contrast with the Marginalized Polynesian "Them" becomes more and more

obvious. The discourse first begins with alienating the protagonist, constructing his unconscious individuality in a collectivist society. Then, raising his awareness of it as he grows older, causing him an identity loss resulted from being torn apart between his individualistic nature, and the social system of the collectivist group he is supposed to adopt.

The notions of chosenness, and mission contributed to reinforcing this principle. Surprisingly, the fact of being chosen by the ocean to save her people, meets Moana's personal desire of voyaging across the sea. Once Moana, leaves what is depicted as a physical and a psychological exile, Motonui, she becomes able to embrace her inner self that has been always longing for freedom, and independence. This correlates with the concepts of self-responsibility, and self-reliance. From a social semiotic perspective, the signifier Polynesian Moana, has multiple signifieds that are structurally arranged. The relationship between these signifieds and Moana's American character, identity, heroism hints at the notion of American exceptionalism highlighted through making the distinction between the Americanized Moana's major role in the story and the insignificant role of the rest of her tribe.

The relationship between Disney cinematic production and the concepts of ideology, Americanization, and cultural imperialism is a vast subject of debate, yet it can be summarized in "selling America"to the world. Disney films that depict domestic culture contribute to establishing and reinforcing cultural connectedness as they offer the less popular cultures to go beyond their geographic frontiers and reach a global audience. Nevertheless, adapting the local culture to Hollywood's formula that best corresponds to the American national identity and the American way raises questions about the slowly occurring negative psychological and cultural implications of Disney film industry.

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ملخص

يمكن القول بأن غالبية أفلام ديزني التي تم إنتاجها في فترة ما بعد التسعينات تتوافق وإحدى صيغ السرد الأساسية لهوليوود والتي يقوم فيها بطل وحيد بإنقاذ شعب كامل، ما يصبح أمرا مثيرا للجدل عندما يتعلق الأمر بفلم من المفترض أن يعكس ثقافة غير أمريكية وتكييفها الى إلى'' شيء ''أمريكي أكثر منه محليا. تتناول هذه الأطروحة مشكلة تصوير ديزني الإيديولوجي للبولينزيين في مقدمتها قضية أمركة بطلة القصة في فلم موانا من خلال دراسة ثلاث مظاهر رئيسية لعملية الأمركة في الفلم: نمط الحياة الأمريكية، الفردانية الأمريكية، والاستثنائية الامريكية التي تجسدها الشخصية الرئيسية المسماة موانا. تقوم هذه الدراسة على منهج انتقائي يقع تحت منهج التحليل النقدي للخطاب متعدد الوسائط يتضمن التحليل البارتي لبنية السرد، سيميائية الصورة والرمز، نظرية الأفعال الكلامية، فلسفة الخطاب ومفهوم القوة عند فوكو، وأخيرا تسلسل ماسلو الهرمي للاحتياجات لدراسة شخصية موانا والطريقة العشوائية التي تباشر بها بناء هوية شخصية ذات نزعة فردانية تنافي القيم الجماعية الصارمة لمجتمعها بتسليط الضوء على فكرة إقحام بطل دخيل يمثل القيم الأمريكية. يتبع هذا التحليل بدراسة سيميائية موانا لتبيان الطريقة التي تجسد بها موانا مفهوم الاستثنائية الأمريكية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

أمركة، فردانية أمريكية، استثنائية أمريكية، هوية، موانا.