

Resisting the Romanticized Colonial Portrayal of Native American Women in Monique Mojica's Play *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*

Maha S. Alanazi*

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Sciences and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia

Abstract—This paper examines the romanticized portrayals of Native American women in colonial narratives and highlights how Monique Mojica's play *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* resists these colonial images through counternarratives. By reclaiming the voices of iconic Indigenous women such as Pocahontas and La Malinche, this study explores how the play decolonizes feminine stories and challenges the European imagination of Native American women. The method employed in this study involved an analytical approach, drawing on indigenous feminist and postcolonial literary theories to examine Mojica's depiction of Native American female characters as symbols of resistance and resilience. The findings reveal that Mojica's play not only critiques the colonial mistreatment of Indigenous women but also promotes cultural healing and solidarity. The study estimates that key moments in the play demonstrate the significance of counter-narratives in reshaping the audience's understanding of Indigenous women's histories. Based on these findings, this study recommends further exploration of Indigenous narratives in the literature to continue the process of decolonization and cultural empowerment.

Index Terms—Pocahontas, Mojica, Indigenous feminism, postcolonial theory, decolonization

I. INTRODUCTION

Monique Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, first published in 1991, has since become a cornerstone of Canadian theater and continues to be widely studied in universities and colleges worldwide. In this satirical play, Mojica honors native women as creators and healers while simultaneously confronting the long-standing history of sexual abuse against them. She strongly critiques colonial traditions that have contributed to the marginalization and misrepresentation of indigenous women, particularly in American mythology, literature, and documentaries. The play adeptly intertwines past and present, North and South America, and various forms of media, including history, documentaries, storybooks, and myth, to highlight the complexities of indigenous women's experiences. This approach aligns with the broader movement in Indigenous literature to decolonize narratives and reclaim Indigenous identities. Furthermore, the play's themes resonate with the application of postcolonial and Indigenous feminist frameworks in understanding and addressing violence against Indigenous women, as explored by Luebke et al. (2021).

According to Gilbert (2009), the early 1990s witnessed the national recognition of several Indigenous women's dramatic works, with Monique Mojica being a key figure. Mojica has significantly contributed to indigenous drama in Canada, notably with the production of *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots in 1990-1991*. This production, as Gilbert notes, introduced Canadian audiences to the woman-centered model of Indigenous "story-weaving" (Gilbert, 2009, p. 526). In this version of the Pocahontas legend, Mojica confronts a complex set of images surrounding the representation of indigenous women constructed by popular cinema and European accounts of settlements across the Americas. The play traverses multiple periods, blending mythic and contemporary realms with the colonial settings of the 1607 Jamestown colony in present-day Virginia and Spanish conquests in Peru and Mexico. Additionally, Mojica emphasizes the diverse roles played by Indigenous women, bodily reinhabiting, and reconstructing the stereotypes of the traitor, whore, Indian princess, mistress, and Cigar Store Squaw, which have historically framed contemporary Indigenous women's struggles to establish meaningful positions within their communities (Million, 2009).

The structure of *Mojica's Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* is noteworthy. Only two actresses portray seventeen roles throughout transformations, symbolizing each lunar month's moon (Mojica, 1991, p. 16). This performance is technically supported by a combination of mime gestures, poetry, overlapping songs, and dances. The two actresses rapidly change characters on stage, transitioning fluidly along with shifts in scenes and transformations. This dynamic approach results in a powerful blend of the irrationality of the prevailing culture's view of Native American heroines, buried anger and sorrow beneath this perception, and the ongoing struggles of modern Native American women. The actresses remove layers of clothing to morph into different characters, symbolizing transformation. As the character of

* Corresponding Author. Email: ms.alanazi@psau.edu.sa

Contemporary Woman #1 embodies her foremothers, “a pile of cloth becomes a garment, a canal, a volcano” (Mojica, 1991, p. 16).

Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* follow the courageous journey of Contemporary Woman #1 as she seeks to retrace the lineage of her grandmothers as a means of healing (Mojica, 1991). Contemporary Woman #1 embarks on a journey with "no map, no trail, no footprint, no way home" (p. 19) and ultimately realizes that she can transform her situation from victimhood to victory by forging her own path. She accomplishes this by taking "a bucket of sand from the base of a tree; empties it centre stage; makes footprints" (p. 57). Accompanying her on this journey is Contemporary Woman #2, a modern Chilean-born individual, symbolizes a tradition of resistance, encompassing the survival of Andean women, the “Amanda” insurgents, and her personal experiences as a refugee. Both women have mixed blood and bear a blue spot on their spines, symbolizing their Indigenous heritage (p. 20).

Contemporary Woman #1 encounters four Indigenous women from different historical groups who define separate populations with mixed European and Native ancestry. Through colonizers, the white kings consider these women Indian princesses, yet her native community views them as traitors for their part in the mix of blood. La Malinche from Mexico holds the position of Nahuatl translator, military strategist, and Hernan Cortes's concubine who belonged to the Spanish Conquistador during the colonial period. The Deity, or Woman of the Puna, or Virgin of colonized Peru, stands for Quechua women who escaped Spanish rule to develop an Andean Mountain settlement after rebuffing Christian conversion (MacKenzie, 2016). The third historical group incorporates Indigenous spouses of Canadian fur traders who supplied their skills for guiding and translating as well as their sexual relations with early colonists. The multiple socially developed roles of Pocahontas serve as a means for her portrayal.

The main purpose of this study is to *examine* the representations of Native American women in *Mojica's play Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* (1991). The representation of Native American women in the play can be divided into several categories.

1. *Analyze* the misrepresentation of Native American women's historical figures in history, culture, and art.
2. *Critique* the romanticized image of the Native American woman as depicted in colonial narratives.
3. *Present* an alternative counter-narrative that *demonstrates* the Native American woman image from an Indigenous perspective, challenging the romanticized image constructed by the colonizer.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This critical literature review examines ten significant studies that explore the intersections of postcolonial studies, Indigenous feminism, and Native American drama, with a particular focus on Monique Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*. The review highlights both agreements and disagreements in the methodologies and findings of these studies, while also evaluating their strengths, limitations, and contributions to the decolonization of Indigenous women's narratives. The review synthesizes these works to provide a profound comprehension of the reclaiming and redefining of Indigenous women's stories within the decolonization framework.

Mackenzie (2020) focused on the theatrical subversion of colonial narratives by Indigenous women. Mackenzie examines how plays such as *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* resist gendered violence by presenting Indigenous women as active agents of decolonization. Similarly, Suzack (2015) highlights how Indigenous feminist ideals manifest in activism, drawing parallels between real-life social justice efforts and theatrical performances. Both studies agreed that Indigenous women use various forms of representation to oppose colonialism.

Green (2008) and Suzack et al. (2010) argued that Indigenous feminism must be integrated into broader feminist and decolonial movements. Green emphasizes the need for inclusive spaces that amplify Indigenous women's voices. This aligns with Ravande and Muley (2023), who explored Native American women playwrights' significant contributions to Indigenous theater, asserting that female playwrights are equally influential as their male counterparts in shaping Native American drama.

Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) provided a broader theoretical framework for understanding post-colonial theater, arguing that drama plays a crucial role in resisting imperialist forces. This aligns with Charles (2024), who explores how Indian princess mythology has shaped colonial narratives about Indigenous women, particularly comparing *Princess Pocahontas* with Mni-Akuwin.

All studies reviewed share a central theme of resistance to colonialism. Mackenzie (2020), Suzack (2015), and Green (2008) agree that Indigenous women actively resist colonialist stereotypes through art and activism. For example, Mackenzie and Suzack's analyses show that theatrical performances and feminist activism are essential for deconstructing colonial narratives.

Moreover, Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) and Suzack et al. (2010) agree that Indigenous women's artistic and intellectual contributions are vital to the decolonization process. These studies emphasize the role of performance and narrative in resisting colonialist portrayals of Indigenous women, particularly using language and reinterpretation of historical events.

Ravande and Muley (2023) further support this view by highlighting how female Native American playwrights, including Monique Mojica, challenge gendered and colonial oppression through their unique contributions to Native American theater.

While most studies agree on the role of art and activism in resisting colonialism, Suzack (2015) offers a slightly different perspective by focusing more on case studies of real-world activism such as land reclamation and environmental justice. This contrasts with Mackenzie (2020), who focused exclusively on theatrical subversion. Although both studies emphasize resistance, their approaches differ, one through activism and the other through art.

Green (2008) also slightly diverges in her focus on the theoretical integration of Indigenous feminism within mainstream feminist movements. While Suzack et al. (2010) focused primarily on Indigenous women's struggles within their unique cultural contexts, Green's broader feminist lens may overlook some of the specific challenges encountered by Indigenous women, such as maintaining cultural identity while navigating feminist discourse.

Mackenzie (2020) and Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) present strong arguments for the use of performance art as a medium for decolonization, offering detailed analyses of how plays such as *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* reinterpret colonial history. However, a limitation of these studies is their narrow focus on performance, potentially overlooking other forms of indigenous resistance such as activism or legal reform, which Suzack (2015) and Green (2008) explore.

Suzack et al. (2010) offer a comprehensive analysis of Indigenous feminism across multiple disciplines, but their broad scope may dilute the focus on specific theatrical works like those of Monique Mojica. Conversely, Ravande and Muley (2023) successfully balanced the historical and contemporary contributions of Native American female playwrights, but their focus remains limited to the North American context, leaving out the global Indigenous feminist movement discussed by Green (2008).

Charles (2024) provides a valuable historical analysis of the parallels between Princess Pocahontas and Mni-Akuwin, contributing to the understanding of how colonial myths have shaped Indigenous women's representation. However, this study's historical focus may limit its applicability to contemporary discussions of Indigenous feminism and drama.

Across the ten studies, the central theme is the role of Indigenous women in resisting colonial narratives through art, activism, and intellectual discourse. Theater has emerged as a critical medium for decolonization, as demonstrated by Mackenzie (2020) and Gilbert and Tompkins (1996). Green (2008) and Suzack (2015) highlighted the broader impact of Indigenous feminism on social justice movements.

A recurring theme is the importance of reclaiming Indigenous women's voices, whether through theater, activism, or scholarship. *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* serve as focal points in these discussions, illustrating the intersection of performance, feminism, and decolonization.

Most studies agree that Indigenous women play a central role in resisting colonialism. Mackenzie (2020) and Green (2008) highlight how feminist theory and Indigenous narratives challenge colonial stereotypes. However, there is some disagreement on the methods of resistance: Suzack (2015) emphasizes activism, while Mackenzie (2020) and Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) focus on theatrical performance.

Another point of divergence is the scope of analysis: Suzack et al. (2010) adopted a multidisciplinary approach, while Ravande and Muley (2023) focused solely on Native American female playwrights. Both approaches are valuable but offer different lenses through which to view indigenous women's contributions to decolonization.

The reviewed studies provide a comprehensive view of Indigenous women's resistance to colonialism through various media. However, a gap remains in the intersection of art and activism, particularly in terms of how Indigenous women balance these forms of resistance. Future research could explore how theatrical performances and real-world activism inform and strengthen each other in the broader decolonial struggle.

III. METHODOLOGY

The current study utilizes a descriptive method to investigate the romanticized misrepresentations of Native American women in Monique Mojica's play *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*. It draws upon postcolonialism and Indigenous feminism as the primary theoretical frameworks for analyzing the text. While the foundational ideas of postcolonial literary criticism can be traced to earlier works, such as Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the field significantly evolved during the 1990s. Notable contributions include Gayatri Spivak's *In Other Worlds* (1987), Ashcroft et al.'s *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990) and Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Postcolonial critics primarily focus on the literature produced by colonial powers as well as the works of those who were or were colonized. This theory delves into the dynamics of power, economics, politics, religion, and culture, particularly within the context of colonial dominance.

It is essential to investigate the concepts of imperialism and colonialism before delving into postcolonialism and Indigenous feminism. Although the terms colonialism and imperialism are often used interchangeably, they differ in function. According to Young (2001) imperialism consists of an empire that comes under bureaucratic central government control while fulfilling financial and ideological targets. In contrast, colonialism refers to a structure wherein an empire is established for habitation by several populations or for economic endeavors by a trading corporation (Young, 2001). Thus, imperialism involves the dissemination of ideology and political power from the metropolitan center, whereas colonialism represents the practice of imperialism on the periphery, away from the center.

Post-colonialism is a broad cultural approach that examines power relations between different cultures or people, with language, literature, and translation playing crucial roles. A central concern of post-colonialism is to highlight "the struggle that occurs when one culture is dominated by another" (Bressler, 1999, p. 202). In this context, colonial culture

views itself as superior to colonized culture. Colonial authorities seek not only to assert their political control over the colonized territories and resources but also to impose what they consider to be superior European culture upon the colonized peoples, whom they regard as inferior and primitive. This imposition often results in a significant loss of cultural identity among colonized subjects (Mirabolfathi, 2024). The erasure of Indigenous identities and traditions has been systematically facilitated by colonial policies that prioritize European cultural supremacy while marginalizing Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems (Litt, 2023).

Indigenous feminism, as Green (2008) explains, focuses on the specific challenges faced by indigenous women, highlighting the intersection of gender, race, and colonialism (p. 23). It critiques both mainstream feminist movements for often overlooking Indigenous issues and indigenous communities, sometimes marginalizing the voices of Indigenous women. According to Green (2008), feminism is defined as “an ideology based on a political analysis that takes women’s experiences seriously” and a process “of organization and of action” (p. 20). She identifies the shortage of feminist research about Aboriginal women while observing that Indigenous liberation theory “has failed to notice how colonial oppression and racism operate differently for men and women alongside a tendency of sex-based discrimination, which many communities adopt”.

Indigenous feminism emphasizes the interconnectedness of gender, race, class, and colonialism. It recognizes that Indigenous women experience unique forms of oppression, distinct from those encountered by non-indigenous women and indigenous men. This framework advocates the inclusion of Indigenous women's voices in feminist movements and Indigenous communities, acknowledging the need to address the multiple layers of discrimination they face (Luthfia et al., 2023). Indigenous feminism also challenges dominant colonial structures by centering Indigenous knowledge systems and lived experiences, offering a decolonial perspective that seeks to dismantle systemic barriers to gender equality (DuPré & Fowler, 2023).

The analysis in this study draws on a close reading of Monique Mojica's play *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* and incorporates an examination of critical theories from scholars such as Helen Gilbert, Sarah Mackenzie, and Ric Knowles, among others referenced throughout this work.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *The Representation and Misrepresentation of Native American*

The theme of dislocation within one’s own homeland is a central motif in Mojica’s *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*. The play follows Contemporary Woman #1 as she grapples with a profound sense of disorientation, unable to reconnect with her roots due to the absence of any recorded history left by her grandmother and great-grandmother. Their experiences and struggles remain undocumented, leaving Contemporary Woman #1 feeling lost. This sense of displacement is vividly captured in her dialogue:

*No map, no trail, no footprint, no way home
Only darkness, a cold wind whistling by my ears.
The only light comes from the stars.
Nowhere to set my feet.*

No place to stand. (rising) No map, no trail, no footprint, no way home. (Mojica, 1991, p. 19)

In *Chocolate Women Dreams the Milky Way*, Mojica and Farnell (2023), asserts that her work seeks to narrate the history of Native women on the American continent. Her goal is to document stories from the female perspective of colonization, specifically highlighting their experiences as sexual commodities during the conquest.

The connection between Indigenous women and colonial land is a pivotal element in the discourse of colonization, symbolizing what European settlers perceive as the wild characteristics of Indigenous women's behavior. This association ultimately led to a dynamic of conquest, possession, and exploitation (Mackenzie, 2020, p. 10). According to Smith (2005), native bodies possess a fundamental vulnerability, which makes native lands similarly vulnerable. The Native woman's body was equated with the native land, both viewed as spaces for cultural and physical occupation.

The cultural struggles of Indian women, as depicted in the play, are most prominently represented through the contrasting images of the "Indian princess" and the "squaw". In contrast, for Indian men, the prevailing image of the past century has been that of the "war-bonneted 'warrior'" Green (1976). While visual representations of Indian women have been less frequent and more diverse, Patricia Albers and William James note in their analysis of postcards of Indian women that a common caricature of Indian women has been the depiction of the Indian 'princess,' with the visual representation of Indian women as 'maiden' or 'princess' becoming increasingly prominent throughout time Green (1976).

White male society historically focused its definitions of noble and savage traits in Indian women on three actions: rescue turned them into white wives, sexual exploitation occurred, or non-Indian men chose to leave their Indian heritage to be with them. North America's historical narrative about Indian princesses and squaws evolves through the following lines in Mojica's play:

Princess, Princess Amazon Queen. Show me your royal blood. Is it blue? Is it green? Dried and brown five centuries old, sang and baked, and covered with mold? Princess, priestess Caribe Queen, What are you selling today? Is it corn, tobacco, or beans? Snake oil or a beaver hat. Horse liniment, you just can't beat that! Princess, Princess, calendar girl, Redskin temptress, Indian pearl. Waiting by the water for a white man to save. She's a savage now—remember—can't behave. (1991, pp. 20-21)

The depiction of the Indian princess played a pivotal role in shaping the identity of Indian women in Canadian dramas. In *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, Native American women are portrayed as being caught between the extremes of the "noble" and the "ignoble savage" stereotypes (Knowles, 2003, p. 253). Mojica's play challenges these narratives by providing Native American women with a platform to voice their stories from their own perspective.

The excerpt from *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* reflects the deep-rooted stereotypes that have shaped the portrayal of Indian women in North American history. The portrayal of Indian women in Canadian dramas has significantly influenced the depiction of Indian princesses. Mojica's play situates Native American women between the perceptions of "noble" and "ignoble savages" (Knowles, 2003, p. 253). Mojica empowered these women by letting them tell their stories.

As an Aboriginal playwright, Mojica is acutely aware of the male-dominated representation of native women in colonial literature. She draws attention to the theme of sexual violence, which pervades nearly all of Native women's stories in her play. Men often portray these women as objects of sexual exchange, highlighting the dehumanization and exploitation they endure.

Each of Mojica's historical female characters represents the original mother of a mixed-blood nation. While stigmatized by their own people as traitors, they are celebrated by the colonizer as the "good native". Despite being condemned by their people as "translators, traitors, mistresses, and whores" (Knowles, 2003, p. 252), these Indigenous mothers of mixed-blood nations are elevated by the colonizer as Indian princesses. However, these Indigenous grandmothers were misrepresented and maligned in the colonial cultural narratives. In Mojica's portrayal, these historical female figures are treated as property by men, sexually exploited, and violated (MacKenzie, 2016).

The purposeful resistance of Mojica to the colonialist written history of Indigenous women is demonstrated in her violation of the romanticized representations of both the good Indian and the ignoble native in *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*.

B. *La Malinche as Mexico's Symbolic Mother*

The colonizer praises Malinal for her intellect and loyalty. The historical texts of the colonial period refer to her as an important figure whose support led to Conquistador success against the Aztecs. Her actions were similar to those of a biblical heroine, with colonial narratives portraying the Malinal as the ultimate Indian princess, a great mother, and a protector of foreigners (Cypess, 1991, p. 9).

The play recounts Malinal's painful stories vividly. Mojica's portrayal of Malinal emphasizes that she was betrayed by her people and treated "like so many pounds of gold... Stolen! Bound! Caught! Trapped!" (p. 24). She was given to the captors, who desired only their abilities as a translator. According to Restall (2003), the true Malinal either fell victim to slave traders who stole her or was sold into slavery until she worked as a servant among the Chontal Maya who lived in Tabasco. Spanish received Malinal among eleven other female servants that Chontals presented to him in 1519 (Restall, 2003). She was baptized as Marina and given to one of the Cortes' captains. The Spanish captain discovered that Malinal possessed linguistic abilities that let her understand the native languages of people they encountered on their journey.

Mojica's play challenges the romanticized colonial image of Malinche, presenting her as a powerful and liberated figure. Mojica's portrayal of Malinche is one of anger, loudness, and strength, symbolized by being "armed with a volcano" (Mojica, 1991, p. 22). Unlike the historical depiction of Malinche as submissive and silent, Mojica's version portrays her as fierce and volatile: In response to the attacks of Contemporary Woman #1, Contemporary Woman #2, and her descendants, Malinche holds her head high and affirms her identity as a strong Native woman: "My name is Malinali. Not Dona Marina, not Malinche, La Chingada! [the whore]" (p. 22). She emphasizes her role as the symbolic mother of the Mexican mixed-blood nation by stating, 'You are the child planted in me by Hernan Cortes, who begins the bastard race...you deny me?' (p. 22). Furthermore, Malinali identifies herself as a talented and intelligent woman, possessing "the power of words" as she can communicate with both the Maya and Mexican people. She describes herself as a "strategist" and a "dangerous" woman (p. 23).

Mojica clearly emphasizes that Malinal was betrayed by her own people. As a slave, Malinal was indifferently "passed on" to Cortes, where she was "claimed as value by a man in metal" (Mojica, 1991, pp. 23-24). Malinal expresses her frustration with her descendants, stating, 'You say it was me who betrayed my people, but it was they who betrayed me' (24). Malinal, serving as both a servant and an unwilling mistress, mastered the language of her captors, securing her significant role in the Spanish expedition. Subsequently, she became Cortes' mistress and bore him a son (Restall, 2003, pp. 82-83). Through her association with Spanish Conquistadors, she was elevated to the status of a princess.

In *Transformation Three*, Malinche is cursed by Contemporary Woman #2 as a slave, villain, or traitor (Mojica, 1991, p. 22). Despite this, Malinche attempted to help Contemporary Woman #2 understand the colonial history that led to her subjugation. "What is my curse?" Malinche asks, 'My blood cursed you with your broad face? Eyes set apart? Black hair? Your wide, square feet. Or the blue spots you wear on your butt from birth?' (p. 22). In these words, she challenges her descendants to acknowledge their connection to her through blood and heritage.

Malinche continues to remind her descendants, "Anything alive here is alive because I stayed alive!" (p. 25), asserting that her survival ensured the continued existence of Mexican people. She confronts them by asking, 'What is it they say about me?' and responds, "That I opened my legs to the whole conquering Spanish Army" (p. 23). These confrontational questions emphasize the misrepresentation of the legacy.

Malinche continues to insist on her identity as an "intelligent woman", a "strategist", and a "dangerous figure of power", highlighting her capacity to "change her words", which reflects her translation skills (p. 23). Mojica's portrayal of Malinche emphasizes her strength as a powerful Indigenous woman who, despite the brutal mistreatment by the colonizers, survived through intelligence and resilience.

C. *Deity, Woman of the Puna, and Virgin of Colonial Peru*

The Woman of the Puna symbolizes Quechua women as well as Peruvian women who declined colonial Christianization during Spanish rule while seeking refuge in mountainous territories and lived "without men" (14). Puna is still considered as "women's land" (14). They are described as defiant women who refuse to turn their backs on "the mother ways" of life (36) Mojica's woman of the Puna, is betrayed by her "father, brother, uncle and husband" (Mojica, 1991, pp. 36-37). Puna and her "sisters" gather secretly, "herding together, honoring the mother, living without men" and demanding that "purity be reclaimed" purity be reclaimed' (37). The Woman of the Puna and her companions refuse to be overwhelmed by social rejection but remain angry. Their eyes are "spitting fire" and they "refuse to weep," but assert: "We hung ourselves, slit our throats, cut the breath of our male children" (36).

Mojica's *Deity*, the woman of the Puna, and the virgin of colonial Peru are arguably the play's most intricate characters. These figures represent female deities who were usurped by the Catholic Church and transformed into virgins (Mojica, 1991, p. 14). Colonial authorities portrayed these warrior-like women in a dark, romanticized manner, depicting them as inhumane and savage. In her play, Mojica challenges the colonial narratives surrounding these Indigenous women, giving them a voice to tell their stories.

Deity is the Earth's mother. She receives multiple names and titles that combine warrior, creator, rebel, and destructor characteristics. The Deity personifies Earth's maternal power as well as her capacity as a mother to all beings without marital bonds. In Mexico, Malinal delivers a mixed-blood nation in parallel to how the Deity delivers her Peruvian offspring from "Puna's membranes, muscle, blood, and bone." Independent of whether she was seized forcibly or went willingly to a Spanish miner or Portuguese sailor, she maintained her existence (Mojica, 1991, p. 36).

The Virgin describes how she was transformed into a virgin, explaining that her balance was destroyed and she was "scrubbed clean, made lighter, non-threatening, chaste, barren... sexless, without fire, without pleasure, without power, encased in plaster and painted white" (Mojica, 1991, p. 37). Mojica's depiction of these warrior-like women presents them as cultural preservatives. People view them as protectors of both Indigenous spiritual customs alongside defenders of indigenous ways of life from an improper system of governance (Silverblatt, 1987).

The *Deity*, Woman of the Puna, and the Virgin symbolize the legacy of Indigenous and mixed-blooded women's resistance. These women were abused by the colonizers and labeled witches, murderesses, and infidels (Silverblatt, 1987, p. 197). Early historical accounts written by Franciscan monks and Spanish inquisitors portrayed them as non-conformists and baby killers who murdered their male children (Silverblatt, 1987, p. 208). Mojica, however, presents these women not as pitiful victims of colonization but as survivors who were betrayed and forced to flee their homes. Their use of violence was depicted as a response to colonial abuse (Mojica, 1991, p. 36).

D. *Marie, Margret, and Madeline: the Mothers of the Métis Nation*

In her work *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society: 1670-1870*, Van Kirk (1996) examines the social development of female individuals in the North American fur trading industry. White male-female marriages with Indigenous women became widespread during the fur trade period for a brief duration, and these unions were encouraged by colonial authorities to strengthen alliances with Indigenous groups. Most of these marriages followed Indigenous customs rather than European ceremonies, a practice known as "marriage after the customs of the country." Indigenous brides in these unions were referred to as "country wives" (p. 50), a term that diminishes the significant contributions of Indigenous women in the fur trade industry.

The indigenous wives, Margret and Madeline, along with Marie, were married to Canadian fur traders. Mojica utilized Transformation Nine to explain how early fur traders maintained complicated partnerships with their Indigenous wives (MacKenzie, 2016). The playwright portrays these women as the "three faces" of the many Cree and Métis Indigenous women who "portaged across Canada with white men on their backs" (Mojica, 1991, p. 14), only to be "systematically discarded" (p. 48) and replaced by white brides. Despite having only two actresses playing these three characters, Mojica gives each woman a specific role as part of the first Indigenous women who helped Canada's colonialists serve as domestic helpers and romantic partners and cultural translators.

Mojica highlights the significant role that Indigenous women play in the fur industry. Marie, the first fur trader's wife, emphasizes traders' dependence on Indigenous women, stating that they had "no one to make moccasins, to cook for them, to show them where to pick berries, to make canoes... no one to help them. No one to help them" (Mojica, 1991, p. 41). This play underscores the essential contributions of fur traders' wives, whose work and impact on the fur industry have been largely ignored and overlooked in colonial historical accounts. Each wife depicted in the play is shown to fulfill specific duties vital to the traders' survival and success.

Marie, the Moccasin maker, is depicted as practical, stoic, hardworking, and always ready to help traders. She proudly identifies herself as "the best moccasin maker" (p. 41). Her real name is *Atchegoo Isquee' oo* (p. 43) and she is married to a French man. Marie was sent by her father to assist the first colonists in the new country.

Marie explains that Indigenous wives of fur traders had numerous responsibilities, such as "making moccasins, stringing snowshoes, teaching them [the fur traders] to walk in the snow, making canes... hunting, fishing, storing food for the winter, and teaching them how to survive" (p. 42). Her role in the fur industry is significant, and she specifically describes her contribution: "1 pair of moccasins per day per man divided by four women times 15 men on a one-year expedition equals 5,475 pairs of moccasins per man per year... so many moccasins!" (p. 41).

Marie further clarifies the broader purpose of native women, explaining that their duties included "translating/navigating/building alliances with our bodies/loyalties through our blood" (p. 43). Through Marie's account, it becomes evident that Indigenous wives were not only domestic helpers but also essential participants in the fur trade industry.

These valuable Indigenous women, who were the daughters and granddaughters of the founders of Canada and who "birthed the Métis" (p. 46), were also treated as objects of trade. This is vividly demonstrated in the story of Margret, the second fur trader's wife in the play. Margret, known by her native name *Wahithee'oo* (p. 45), is portrayed as being sensitive, poetic, and angry. She frequently turned to alcohol to numb the pain in her situation. Margret becomes the youngest of three wives when her husband takes her to his position as home guard captain. Due to his unsuccessful hunting performance, her husband brought her into the fort while he brought back sugar, flour, and brandy.

Margret explains that in situations without any other trade goods available, men give away women in place of transaction. Fathers as well as uncles, brothers, and husbands offer us in exchange for knives along with axes, muskets, and liquor (p. 45). This shows how indigenous women, like Margret, were subjugated by their white fur trader husbands and treated as commodities rather than partners.

The tragic story of Madeline, the third Indigenous fur trader's wife in the play, highlights how Métis foremothers were controlled by men. The arrival of a white woman drastically alters the life of an indigenous fur trader's wife. Madeline is portrayed as fiery, loud, and angry as she confronts the rejection she faces. She admits that she has attempted to poison the new Mrs. Johnston. After being married to Mr. Johnston for fifteen years, he decided to take a white English wife and "turn off" Madeline, sending her to live with Mr. Campbell.

MADELINE: I married James Johnson years ago. He easily won my father's favor—my father—as the chief factor? James was considered a suitable match. Two days! They gave me only two days to leave. Fifteen years null and void. Null and void in two days! This is called "turning off." "Turned off," he said. "The only way to tell you, Madeline, is that you have been turned off." However, James has always been more than generous to you, Madeline. All your belongings can accompany you. There is a house where you can live with Mr. Campbell, who has been kind in accepting your husband's offer. (Mojica, 1991, pp. 46-47)

Madeline is "disposed of, discarded, replaced" (p. 48), following the arrival of the white woman. Indigenous women are transferred and traded by men, and Madeline embodies Indigenous women who are mistreated by European traders and men in their communities. With the arrival of the white wife, the Indigenous wives of the traders are considered "no longer women" (p. 47).

Mojica's *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots* highlights the painful history of Indigenous women's mistreatment in early Canada. The play ensures that the audience understands the pain, violence, isolation, and devaluation of these women. The text emphasizes the critical motherhood role and translation work besides guidance services that Métis women provided toward nation building during that time. Mojica's research allows indigenous women married to fur traders to escape historical invisibility, which reveals their essential role as major figures in early colonial times and the fur-trading business (MacKenzie, 2016).

E. *The Four Representations of Princess Pocahontas*

Pocahontas, born as Matoaka of the Powhatan band of Virginia, is portrayed as one of the great Indigenous grandmothers of America's mixed-blood populations (Mackenzie, 2020, p. 50). Historically, Matoaka achieved fame because she used her head to protect Englishman Captain John Smith when her father, Chief Powhatan, held a war club above his head in order to execute him (Tremblay, 2002). Following this act, several colonial sources have suggested that Princess Pocahontas fell in love with Captain Smith. However, other accounts claim that she was kidnapped by John Rolfe, a tobacco tycoon and compatriot of Captain Smith:

Mojica's play seeks to offer an alternative narrative to the romanticized version of Pocahontas. In the play, Mojica presents four representations of Pocahontas: Matoaka, the Powhatan girl; Princess Pocahontas, the "good Indian" and savior of John Smith; Lady Rebecca, the Christianized wife of John Rolfe; and the Storybook Pocahontas. Matoaka, Pocahontas, and Rebecca reflect the three stages of Pocahontas' real life and her three known names. Viewers can find similar social constructions of Pocahontas in the storybook adaptation of the character that comes from John Smith's popular tale and its subsequent artistic manifestations (Mackenzie, 2020). By re-examining Pocahontas's story, Mojica encourages the audience to reconsider historical narratives shaped by colonial perspectives. She highlighted the importance of indigenous voices reclaiming their histories and sharing their stories from their own perspectives.

The first representation of Princess Pocahontas is Matoaka, a young indigenous girl who embraces her transition into womanhood. Matoaka is depicted as the "strong, fast, free" daughter of Chief Powhatan (Mojica, 1991, p. 32). The play suggests that she is nearing readiness for marriage. She shows a nubile ceremonial dance that belongs to the Deer clan traditions through which girls transform into women. Near the end of the dance, young Matoaka declares, "The moon is

mine" (p. 35). Unlike the folkloric image in the storybook, Matoaka is portrayed as a powerful, independent, young, and native woman.

Lady Rebecca's character represents the second portrayal of Princess Pocahontas in the play. Lady Rebecca's first words on stage express her emotional state: 'My heart is on the ground' (p. 29). Princess Pocahontas, Matoaka, was "kidnapped," taken from her family, trapped, encircled, and abandoned to perish, with her heart on the earth (Mojica, 1991). Mojica incorporates an ancient Cheyenne saying, "A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground" (p. 60), to allude to Matoaka's abduction and her father's hesitance to save her. Matoaka was but a child when she encountered Captain James and was not significantly older when she was abducted and compelled to marry Rolfe.

In the play, Matoaka asks, 'What owe I to my father? I waited not one year in Jamestown, a prisoner? If my father had loved me, he would not value me less than old swords, guns, or axes" (Mojica, 1991, p. 31).

After a year of imprisonment, Matoaka was forced to convert to Christianity, renamed Rebecca, and married Rolfe (Custalow & Daniel, 2007, p. 64). Matoaka not only gave Rolfe "the seeds to create his hybrid tobacco plants", but also "created a hybrid people" by giving birth to their son, Thomas (Mojica, 1991, p. 31).

Pocahontas, the third representation of the well-known Indian Princess in Mojica's play, is portrayed as the female version of the "noble savage." This version of the Pocahontas is constructed by colonial discourse in opposition to the degraded image of the squaw (Lyytinen, 2011, p. 79). The widely told Princess Pocahontas story derives from the primary source material that John Smith developed in his *General Historie of Virginia*, which he published in 1624. Mojica uses the historical account given by Smith to portray Pocahontas as a modernized Native American princess who tried to defend Jamestown colonists from her own tribal members.

The *storybook Pocahontas* represents the concluding depiction of Princess Pocahontas that appears in the play. The playwright shows Pocahontas as a satirical graphic representation of the 1624 John Smith creation, which later received additional embellishment through theatrical works, literary pieces, and motion pictures during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.

In the section *Storybook Pocahontas*, Mojica humorously parodies the figure of Pocahontas as reconstructed in colonial literature and paints her as more of a caricature. This is evident in the lines: "NO!" Oh, he has such big balls; he has such beautiful blue eyes; he has such blonde hair; and it is so lovely the way he winks," then quickly, "No! (cupping captain's head) Kill him! I do not wish that his brains, everything in them, should spread all over the side of the stone! (Mojica, 1991, pp. 27-28). The enactment of this dialogue goes as follows: Playing along the line of irritation, she exclaims, "Stop! (in the name of love) I think I love him," then a dramatic and feigned swoon: "Oooh (swooning, hands at cheeks) He's so cute" (Mojica, 1991, pp. 27-28). In fact, through this actually almost caricatural representation, Mojica is parodying the European dream of the Native American woman and the European hero. Using a stage/play performance that imitates colonial narratives in a caricature fashion, Mojica deconstructs the colonizers' depiction of Indigenous women as exotic objects of colonial consumption, a la Pocahontas.

Storybook Pocahontas represents Indigenous people by calling them "fiendish red men" on page 29, while this labeling undermines outdated stereotypes that work to reduce Native women to ineffective stereotypes. Pocahontas presents the image of a bookish Indian princess who befriends white settlers while loving a captain and associating with her brutal Indian father (Mojica, 1991). In this version, she disavows her culture and father.

By presenting the character of *Storybook Pocahontas*, Mojica deconstructs the stereotypical image of Pocahontas as a noble, savage, and romantic heroine. She challenges the simplistic and sanitized versions of Pocahontas's story, which overlooks the complexities of her life and the colonial violence she endured.

V. CONCLUSION

To inspire and empower Indigenous and mixed-blooded women, Monique Mojica brought several Indigenous female characters to the stage to deconstruct false colonial portrayals. In *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, Mojica introduces famous Native American historical figures such as La Malinche, the four representations of Pocahontas, the Mothers of the Métis Nation (Marie, Margret, and Madeline), and the Deity, the Woman of the Puna, and the Virgin. This play critiques how indigenous cultures and histories are misrepresented or appropriated in Western narratives. Mojica emphasizes how these portrayals often strip Indigenous figures of their agency, reducing them to symbols that serve as colonial agendas. By presenting both the colonial narrative and the postcolonial counternarrative of these historical female figures, Mojica effectively resists the romanticized colonial portrayal of Native American women in her play.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The study suggested that the methods of engaging Indigenous women's stories as literature should be extended to assert further decolonization and cultural restoration. It also calls for a better engagement of Indigenous feminist work in postcolonial and feminist scholarship. Furthermore, there is a need to look at this matter on how theatrical works and productions, such as *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*, would be capable of fostering culture building and repair. The study also recommends that the educational programs be done through Indigenous theater as a way of explaining to the students some of the ways in which Native women have been misrepresented by colonial history. Last, it advises for

more engagements of academics and Indigenous populations in order to guarantee that Indigenous individuals need to be effectively involved in academic discussions.

Future research could look at how, in building this bridge between the show and activism, the colonial mentality is dismantled for Indigenous women. Other such future studies might examine other Indigenous plays to further expand the understanding of how Indigenous women's narratives are being performed and reclaimed across diverse cultures. In addition, cooperation with Indigenous feminists or interdisciplinary work of different movements, such as environmental or social justice, may be helpful in future works because they reveal endless colonization struggles more extensively. Even expanding the coverage beyond non-American Indigenous women will also be of value to the field, for example, comparing their experience in other parts of the world.

FUNDING STATEMENT

This research is supported by Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University (Grant number: PSAU/2024/R/1445).

REFERENCES

- [1] Bressler, C. E. (1999). *Literary criticism: An introduction to theory and practice*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- [2] Charles, E. R. (2024). A Western Pocahontas: Myth, Reality, and Memorialization for Spotted Tail's Daughter, Mni-Akuwin. *Western Historical Quarterly, Volume 55, Issue 2, Summer 2024*, pp. 105–126, <https://doi.org/10.1093/whq/whae020>.
- [3] Custalow, L. & Daniel A. L. (2007). *The True Story of Pocahontas: The Other Side of History*. Fulcrum Publishing.
- [4] Cypess, S. M. (1991). *La Malinche in Mexican Literature: From History to Myth*. University of Texas Press. <https://doi.org/10.7560/751316>
- [5] DuPré, L., & Fowler, L. (2023). Steering through Métis feminism. *Pawaatamihk: Journal of Métis Thinkers*. <https://doi.org/10.36939/pawaatamihk/vol1no1/art36>
- [6] Gilbert, H. (2009). "Contemporary Aboriginal Theater." In Coral Ann Howells and Eva-Marie Kröller (Ed.), *The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521868761>
- [7] Gilbert, H., & Tompkins, J. (1996). *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (1st ed.). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203421062>
- [8] Green, J. (2008). *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*. Zed books. Retrieved from <https://www.scribd.com/document/477357669/Joyce-Green-Making-Space-for-Indigenous-Feminism-Zed-Books-2008-pdf> on October 23, 2024.
- [9] Green, R. (1976). The Pocahontas Perplex: The image of the Indian woman in American vernacular culture. *The Massachusetts Review, 16*(4). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110978926.150>
- [10] Knowles, R. (2003). "The Hearts of Its Women: Rape, Residential Schools and Re-Membering." In Sherrill Grace and Albert-Reiner Glaap (eds.), *Performing National Identities: International Perspectives on Contemporary Canadian Theatre*. Vancouver: Talonbooks.
- [11] Litt, P. (2023). Settler colonial theory and Canadian cultural nationalism. *Settler Colonial Studies, 13*, 438–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2023.2218057>
- [12] Luebke, J., Hawkins, M., Lucchesi, A., Klein, K., Weitzel, J., Deal, E., Ruiz, A., Dressel, A., & Mkandawire-Vahlmu, L. (2021). The Utility of Postcolonial and Indigenous Feminist Frameworks in Guiding Nursing Research and Practice About Intimate Partner Violence in the Lives of American Indian Women. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 32*(6), 639–646. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659621992602>
- [13] Luthfia, K., Juliasih, J., & Saktiningrum, N. (2023). Indigenous feminism for American Indigenous women portrayed on *The Plague of Doves* by Erdrich. *Rainbow: Journal of Literature, Linguistics and Culture Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.15294/rainbow.v12i1.65856>
- [14] Lyytinen, M. (2011). "The Pocahontas Myth and Its Deconstruction in Monique Mojica's Play Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots." In S.E. Wilmer (Ed.), *Narrative Performance and Representation*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021989410384818>
- [15] Mackenzie, S. (2020). *Indigenous Women's Theatre in Canada: A Mechanism of Decolonization*. Fernwood Publishing.
- [16] MacKenzie, S. E. (2016). *White Settler Colonialism and (Re)presentations of Gendered Violence in Indigenous Women's Theatre* (By University of Ottawa & Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies). Retrieved from: <https://ruor.uottawa.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/22633720-58e8-44f4-adc6-4a56444cc26f/content> on October 23, 2024
- [17] Million, D. (2009). Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History. *Wičazo Ša Review, 24*(2), 53–76. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.0.0043>
- [18] Mirabolfathi, Z. (2024). An exploration of the cultural teachings seen in post-colonial Indigenous literatures: Learning across the divide. *Abstracts of the 5th World Conference on Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.62422/978-81-968539-1-4-047>
- [19] Mojica, M. (1991). *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*. Toronto: Women's Press. <https://doi.org/10.3138/ctr.64.009>
- [20] Mojica, M., & Farnell, B. (2023). Chocolate Woman Dreams the Milky Way. *Indigenous North American Drama: A Multivocal History*. Birgit Dawes ed. SUNY Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12183449>
- [21] Ravande D. B. and Muley, A. A. (2023). "Native American Female Playwrights and Their Role in Growth and Development of Native American Drama: An Overview." *IJFMR, 5*(5). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i05.8190>.
- [22] Restall, M. (2003). *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195160772.001.0001>
- [23] Silverblatt, I. (1987). *Moon, Sun and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/94.3.912>

- [24] Smith, A. (2005). *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Cambridge: South End Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822374817>
- [25] Suzack, C. (2015). Indigenous feminisms in Canada. *Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 23(4), 261-274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2015.1104595>
- [26] Suzack, C., Huhndorf, S. M., Perreault, J., & Barman, J. (2010). *Indigenous women and feminism: Politics, activism and culture*: University of British Columbia Press. <https://www.ubcpres.ca/indigenous-women-and-feminism> on October 23, 2024.
- [27] Tremblay, G. (2002). "Reflections of Pocahontas; The Things Colonial Angels Witness, Inside View; The Things Colonial Angels Witness, Outside View." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*, 23(2). <https://doi.org/10.1353/fro.2002.0044>
- [28] Van Kirk, S. (1996). *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society:1670-1870*. Watson and Dwyer Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.2307/482032>
- [29] Young, R. J. C. (2001). *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119316817>

Maha Suliman Alanazi holds the position of assistant professor in English literature within the Department of English Language and Literature at the College of Sciences and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, located in Alkharaj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Dr. Alanazi's research interests span various fields, including interdisciplinary studies in literature, post-colonial literature, minority literature, indigenous literature, cultural studies, and areas such as feminist dystopia and political drama.