

Women in the Middle East: Princess Jasmine

Fahad Alzahrani

Abstract—This paper is about the role women in the middle east in Film Aladdin:Princess Jasmine

Introduction

The release of Disney's romance Aladdin, the attention has been paid to the bright scenes, Arabian, nights, adventure, and culture. The Disney's product has attracted millions of viewers all over the world because of the enjoyable quality, setting, place, and brightness of the protagonists. The movie is just a sort of unrealistic parody on the Arabian culture, since not all elements of culture have been presented in the movie. This particularly concerns the representation of Middle East women, and Princess Jasmine. Initially, Disney announced that he was planning to remake the aesthetics of the movie and many viewers were waiting the release in the hope of a new vision on the Eastern culture. However, there were still certain misconception, wrong stereotypes, and biases regarding the main heroes, background and many other elements of the movie. For instance, princess Jasmine possesses an elephant and a tiger, which is impossible for the place they reside. Medieval Arabia is not presented in regard to the historical outlooks, distorting the viewers' outlook on Middle East culture. Disney's Jasmine fit in all other female characters created by the director. Since the picture was created over two decade ago, the heroine was similar to the 1990s Disney females who had a rebellious personality.

Problem Statement

Few research studies have been dedicated to the criticism of the depiction of Muslim and Middle East culture in Disney's cartoons. But most of the representations are either negative or Americanized ones. Specifically, Jasmine's identity does not fit the genuine Arab culture, in term of costumes, physical appearance, character, and sexuality. Some of the actions in which Princess is involved do not correspond to the duties and roles which should be performed by medieval princesses in the Arab countries. Apparently, Walt Disney's major goal was to increase the target audience and make the animated movie more popular among the viewers. The extensive overview of literature provides very few examples when Arab and Muslim women are represented appropriately. Furthermore, most of research studies refer to women in the context of the analysis of the Arab culture in general. Therefore, the analysis of the cartoon *Aladdin* could introduce new implication for the evaluation of misinterpreted portrayals of women. The focus of the research is Princess Jasmine who is inadequately represented in the story (Eltantawy, 2007). In the studies, most of the scenes and elements of costumes, as well as behavior have been criticized and compared to the veritable image of an Arabian women to prove that Princess Jasmine could not be regarded as a model that

could be fit in the Oriental culture, beginning from the misrepresentation of scenes and ending with the distorted image of female sexuality. In this respect, the literature review presented below will uncover the problem and define further routes for analyzing the currently existing stereotypes in Disney's cartoons, particularly in Aladdin's Princess Jasmine.

Literature Review

The analysis of the Hollywood representation of the Arab world should start with the overall views of the Americans on the Middle East culture. There are many research studies dedicated to the analysis of representation of Muslims in the Arab world. In this respect, Ridouani (2011) has also dedicated his study to the analysis of the Western media and how it conceptualizes Arab and Muslims. The author states, "the main concern will focus on the analysis of the distorted images, fabricated views, overgeneralization, which typically characterize the Western representation of Muslim with reference to some particular incidents chiefly the Gulf War" (Ridouani, 2011, p. 1). To support the idea, the studies show that the misrepresentation of Eastern world is not a current fabrication, but it takes deep roots in the distorted Western conceptualization since the first relationships established between the two worlds, particularly during the Crusade Wars, as well as during the Arabs' expansion to European. The western views focus on different stereotypes presented for Arab and Muslim people.

In the studies by Shaheen (2000), the attention has been paid to the analysis of Hollywood, along with the inadequate representation of the Arab world. There are many movies and films which distort the overall attitude to the Middle East settings, as it has been presented in the 1999 movie *The Mummy*. Additionally, the scholar believes that some Americans are still imprisoned because of their prejudices and false stereotypes. The research study also introduced the evaluation of media portraits, with the emphasis placed on the movies and televisions which depict Arabian identities.

Analysis

The analysis of the literature review shows that Princess Jasmine is represented as the one who does not fit the current image of an Arab female. This specifically concerns the analysis of the heroine's costumes, behavior, manners, traditions, relationships with family, and her outlook on marriage and relationships. The latter is even a more complicated matter because it contradicts the traditional norms accepted in Arab culture. In the cartoon, the oriented audience is children from American families who strive to see American models of families, in which the equality is given both to men and women. However,

the true is that Arabian women were never adjusted to these norms and are not sexualized in the way it is usually represented in the American media. Second, the literature review and the analysis of the movie itself should also be correlated with the analysis of the gender roles and the representation of femininity in Disney movies, which are not always presented in relation to the specifics accepted in diverse cultures. Taking a deeper look into Disney's films, particularly the gender roles performed by girls, it is possible to conclude that all of them could be adjusted to the stereotypes and perceptions in Americanized audience.

Conclusion

While conducting analysis of the cartoon Alladdin, particularly the representation of Arab female heroines, the attention should also be given to gendered stereotypes and ideologies depicted in the films because they dependent largely on societal values during the period of production. In this respect, The Disney's Princess Jasmine reflects and reinforces the ideals of femininity of the time, distorting the actual cultural affiliations and religious concerns. Reiterating these motives, the film fails to conform to the traditions and perceptions of the Muslim Audience. As a result, Jasmine is portrayed as an Americanized version of an Arab woman whose physical appearance and character fits the commonly accepted ideals. Her costumes reminds more of that of a belly dancer rather than the princess. Her physical appearance and make up is also aimed at revealed her sexual appeal. Her character is also reminiscent of other Disney's female characters, who are brave, wit, intelligence, and beautiful. The concept of beauty is decisive in Disney's production, but these stereotypes could have a negative influence on the young girls' perception of the reality, in which beauty and appearance should not be the key to the success in relationships.

1996).

We suggest to include the policy about the suppliers of the marijuana instead of spending huge budget to start the awareness campaign for the citizen of the United States. To reduce the percentage of the drug adductors, the federal government impose duties of the adults to talk about the negative impacts of marijuana through the awareness support of the awareness campaigns

Bibliography

- Eltantawy, N. M. A. (2007). U.S. newspaper representation of Muslim and Arab women post 9/11. *Georgia State University*, 1-390.
- Ridouani, D. (2011). The representation of Arabs and Muslims in Western media. *School of Arts and Humanities*, 3. 1-15.
- Shaheen, J. G. (2000). Hollywood's Muslim Arabs. *The Muslim World*, 90 (1-2), 22-42.