

**Misrepresentations of eastern elements in disney's cartoon series  
*aladdin* (1992, 1994, 1996).**

**A critical discourse analysis approach**



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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents who brought me up with immense affection and care, whose good exemplary characters have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve.

I also dedicate this humble achievement to my loving and caring wife '*Shazi*' for her support and motivation to meet all the challenges of life.

I am thankful to all my family members, brothers and sisters, for their respect and care in all walks of my life and particularly providing me the opportunities of higher education.

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## ABSTRACT

Cartoon movies, as cinematic and cultural products, have long been the subject of academic research along the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The present study aims to investigate the misrepresentations of Eastern cultural values in the Western cinematic discourse, which is often biased and imperialistic. The present study investigates the triangular connection amongst the *Aladdin* series, the Orient and certain Western (USA) political agendas in order to answer the research questions regarding the relationship between the *Aladdin* series and the Orient, different devices used to present the distorted image of the Orient and lastly the effects of the misrepresented reality on the minds of the audience. The primary texts of the present study are the three *Aladdin* cartoon films. Critical Discourse Analysis is used to study the phenomenon of mis(representations) of social and cultural values in the *Aladdin* series (1992, 1994, 1996). The selected content (text) and cultural signs (scenes and images) are analyzed through the semiotic analysis method. A considerable block of literature related to the “*Disneyization*” of the Middle East and to the political-cultural hegemony of America has been reviewed, in order to establish the theoretical grounds for this study. Upon a close analysis, the results of the present investigation indicate that different types of violence, bias, gender inequality and vilification of the Middle Eastern culture have been discovered in the Western cinematic discourse regarding Eastern values. In the selected primary texts cultural (mis)representations of dress codes, language symbolism, moral values and social relations are found. Therefore, the present study concludes that the *Aladdin* series contains misrepresentations of the Eastern cultural values as well as stereotypes regarding the Oriental realm. The Middle East is presented as inferior, oversexualized, underdeveloped and as a dangerous place to live in. All three movies of the *Aladdin* series are simultaneously focused and analyzed in the present study. Its knowledge addition consists in the fact that this epistemological endeavor will be beneficial for the students of cultural and media studies as well as for the senior generations, such as their parents. They will have access to a better comprehension of the cartoons’ connection to cultural values, as well as to the political agenda(s) behind them. The study contains original work except as specified in the acknowledged citations. The present study is part of a growing body of research on cartoons in their cultural contexts. Future researchers may investigate the post 9/11 abrupt change in Disney’s and Hollywood’s interest to produce ‘West-specific’ cartoons and films. These post

9/11 cinematic products tend to focus on Western cultural values, rather than on Oriental ones. Disney's movie *Lilo & Stitch* (2002) and *America's heart and souls* (2004) are produced on cultural values of the Western hemisphere.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	i
Acknowledgement .....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Images .....	viii
Glossary .....	x
<b>CHAPTER ONE.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>INTODCUTION</b>	
1.1.Overview of the Topic .....	12
1.2.Introduction of the Topic .....	12
1.3.Background of the Study .....	14
1.4.Objectives of the Study.....	16
1.5.Research Questions.....	16
1.6.Contributions of the Research.....	16
1.6.1.Intellectual Contributions.....	17
1.6.2.Social Contributions.....	17
1.7.Purpose and Applicability of the Study .....	17
1.8.Implications of the Study .....	18
1.9.Outline of the Study .....	19
<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
2.1. Overview of the Chapter.....	20
2.2.Norman Fairclough and his Approach of CDA .....	20
2.3. The <i>Aladdin</i> Series (1992, 1994, 1996) .....	21
2.4. Time and Setting of <i>Aladdin</i> Series(1992, 1994, 1996).....	22
2.5.Stereotypes Regarding the Middle Eastern Culture.....	24
2.6. The <i>Aladdin</i> Series(1992, 1994, 1996) and the Middle East.....	26

2.7. Good Equals Beauty <i>versus</i> Evil Equals Darkness.....	27
2.8. Omissions and Changes in the Original Discourse of <i>Aladdin</i> .....	28
2.9. Influencing the Audience through Cartoons.....	29
2.10. The <i>Aladdin</i> Series (1992, 1994, 1996) and the Orient.....	31
2.11. American Political Agendas and Cultural Hegemony.....	33
2.12. Misrepresentation of Muslims in the <i>Aladdin</i> Series(1992, 1994, 1996).....	35
<b>CHAPTER THREE.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>METHOD AND METHODOLOGY</b>	
3.1. Overview of the Chapter.....	38
3.2. Research Design.....	38
3.3. Method and Methodology.....	38
3.4. Data Collection and the Nature of the Data.....	39
3.5. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework.....	40
3.6. Ethical Considerations.....	41
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>	
4.1. Overview of the Chapter.....	42
4.2. Elements of the Eastern Culture in the <i>Aladdin</i> series (1992,1994, 1996).....	42
4.3. Poor and Hungry People of the Middle East.....	45
4.4. Violence and Cruelty in the Middle East.....	48
4.5. Dressing, Costumes and Make-up of the Characters.....	54
4.6. Images of Romance and Sexuality.....	58
4.7. Misrepresentation through Music and Lyrics.....	60
4.8. Arabs as Disloyal and Deceptive People.....	64
4.9. Images of Gender Inequality.....	65
4.10. Materialism, Lust of Wealth and Power.....	68
4.11. Abusive Language.....	73
4.12. Good <i>versus</i> Bad Arabs.....	73
4.13. American Popular Culture in the Middle East.....	76

<b>CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	
5.1. Overview of the Chapter.....	80
5.2. Key Findings .....	80
5.2.1. The <i>Aladdin</i> Series as an Oriental Discourse.....	81
5.2.2. Misrepresentations of the Oriental Values in <i>Aladdin</i> Series.....	81
5.2.3. The <i>Aladdin</i> Series as Personification of American Hegemonic Agenda .....	82
5.3. Delimitations of the Study.....	82
5.4. Recommendations.....	83
5.5. Conclusion .....	84
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>APPENDIX A .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>APPENDIX B.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>APPENDIX C.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>APPENDIX D.....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>APPENDIX E.....</b>	<b>102</b>

## LIST OF IMAGES

Image		Page
1.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), An opening scene of <i>Aladdin</i> (1992)	43
2.	A comparative view of Agrabha palace ( <i>Aladdin</i> , 1992) and Taj Mahal (Agra, India)	45
3.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Poverty in Agrabha	47
4.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Violence represented by Agrabha royal guards	50
5.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Violence against women in Agrabha	50
6.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Jafar uses magical force to hypnotize Sultan	52
7.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Aladdin's costume before and after meeting with Genie	55
8.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Jasmine's Americanized and Middle Eastern look	56
9.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Jafar a dark man with dark purposes	57
10.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Romance between Jasmine and Aladdin	59
11.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Veiled dancers entertaining Aladdin and Abu	66
12.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Jasmine serves Jafar as his enchained servant	67

13.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Aladdin with “the magic lamp” and its Genie	70
14.	<i>Aladdin and the King of Thieves</i> (1996), Robbery in a royal marriage	72
15.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992), Positive characters, Aladdin, Jasmine and Sultan	75
16.	<i>Aladdin</i> (1992, 1996), Negative characters, Jafar, forty thieves and royal guards	76

## GLOSSARY

<b>Terms &amp; Abbreviations</b>	<b>Definition</b>
The <i>Aladdin</i> series (1992, 1994, 1996)	<p>It refers to a series of three films produced by the Walt Disney Company:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Aladdin</i> (1992)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Aladdin 2: The Return of Jafar</i> (1994)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Aladdin 3: Aladdin and the King of Thieves</i> (1996)</p>
Aladdin	The name of the protagonist of the <i>Aladdin</i> series(1992, 1994, 1996), he is the central character of three movies
Agrabha	It refers to the fictitious city of the Middle East where most of the scenes of the <i>Aladdin</i> series (1992, 1994, 1996) are set.
The Palace	It refers to the palace of Agrabha where Sultan, the ruler of Agrabha lives with his daughter Jasmine
The magic lamp	It is a mysterious, magic lamp which was found inside the cave of wonders and a powerful genie is imprisoned in it.
Genie	The powerful masculine fay of the magic lamp who could fulfill three desires of the possessors of that lamp
Abu	A pet monkey, a friend and the sidekick of Aladdin
Rajha	A young male tiger, the only friend of Jasmine, he lives with her in the royal

	palace
Iago	A mischievous parrot, the friend and advisor of Jafar who is the villain in the films, and it keeps changing its owners on the bases of his own benefits.
The Flying Carpet	A piece of carpet which was found by Abu in the cave of wonders. It remains with Aladdin and Abu throughout the three movies.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Overview of the Chapter

This chapter gives an overview of foundational grounds of the study. It unfolds the primary cause of the chosen topic Critical Discourse Analysis of the distorted images of the Eastern values in Disney cartoon series *Aladdin* (1992, 1994, 1996). It reveals the relationship between aim, objectives and research questions of the study. Moreover, it also sets the pace, pattern and nature of whole study. It gives an overview of the expected outcomes of the present research in form of contribution and applicability.

### 1.2. Introduction of the Topic

Cartoons are considered one of the most popular entertaining activities for both adults and children. The animators use the power of language and images to influence the minds of the target audience according to their agendas (Hassan & Daniyal, 2013). Cartoons are not only a source of entertainment but they also contain and convey deep and hidden messages. Moreover they may advance an “imperialistic” discourse (Sultana, 2014).

The aim of the present research is to investigate the misrepresentations of the Eastern cultural and social values in Disney cartoon series *Aladdin* (1992, 1994, 1996). Much has been written on the subject of politicized funding behind the Hollywood movies’ agendas and on the deleterious portrayal of Asian Muslims and Islam. Therefore, films and cartoon have been studied as a source of projection of different cultures and agendas in both positive and negative ways. Dawson (2009) argues that global political powers allocate substantial

funds to their film industries in order to reinforce their imperialistic agendas globally and to maintain their hegemony over the less dominant cultures outside the Western geo-cultural boundaries (Dawson, 2009).