

Representation of the Eastern Hero as an Extra-Cultural "Other" Based on the Theory of Roland Barthes (Case Study of the Animation of Aladdin)

Abstract

In the discourse of Eastern studies, what the Western media presents about itself and the other is a structure that has been formed under the influence of the creator's position. In this discourse, the West produces knowledge about the image it represents of the East, thus legitimizing its superiority over the other. This article strives to investigate the origins of the representation of the East in the Western media by examining the animation of Aladdin produced by the Walt Disney Company, in the Eastern discourse. By portraying different nations, the Disney company opened a window of unfamiliar cultures to children, and as a result, children's knowledge of the world and foreign cultures was shaped by the definition presented in the animations of this company. Based on Stewart Hall's theory of representation and using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, the present research analyzes the selected work in the five codes. Based on this approach, it is sought to investigate how the East is represented in the mentioned animation? The results of these studies indicate that although the work in question has artistic, literary and technical values, it contains the biased view of the creator, which can lead to the formation of the audience's perception of Eastern culture, which is far from the truth.

Research aims:

١. Discovering the explanation of power is explained in the West through media representations with a case study of the Aladdin animation.
٢. Examining the role of media representation strategies and discovering the influential implications in creating the construction of the East from the perspective of the West with a case study of the Aladdin animation.

Research questions:

١. How is the East represented as another culture from the point of view of the western creator in the Aladdin animation?

٢. How is the relationship between the discourse of the West and the other explained in the Aladdin animation?

Keywords: Aladdin animation, representation, Barthes semiotics, Eastern studies, Western outlooks

Introduction

The West has constantly attempted to present a definition of the East to the world from its own point of view, and the media has been responsible for a significant part of this task. In the contemporary era, media such as cinema and television have played a significant role in creating the image that the West represents of the East due to the mass audience they have; however, this trend has been criticized by Eastern experts. Thus, from the point of view of this discourse, the West, by observing the East, studies its features and produces knowledge regarding its various aspects and characteristics. This produced knowledge can be completely biased and ultimately in favor of the producer and thus be in favor of his/her increasing power. In fact, regarding Eastern studies, the West represents an image of the "other", who was always absent and unable to speak, which leads to the production of a construction that is the basis of the cooperation of knowledge and power. In the meantime, the media that are in charge of creating programs for children can be influential in the formation of children's thinking about the world and its concepts with their way of representing the society. The American Walt Disney Company is one of the largest companies that is responsible for the production of programs and entertainment for children at the global level and with a mass audience. The upcoming research examines the representation of the East and the Eastern culture in the animation of Aladdin, which is one of the few works of this company that focuses in the mentioned geographic area and this is accomplished by explaining Stuart Hall's theory of representation as the theoretical framework of the discussion. Also, in the method part, Roland Barthes semiotics model is used to analyze this work. It should be noted that in this article, "East" refers to an approximate area of West Asia, which is introduced as "Middle East" in the discourse of East studies and is represented in the mentioned work. In this sense, it appears that by

creating the animation of Aladdin, the Disney company has introduced an exotic and violent society without a legal and humane structure as what is considered as an Arab land.

The background related to the study of Eastern discourse in animation is limited, and most of the researches are in the field of literary and cinematographic works. However, in ۱۹۹۴, "Eric Smudin", an American lecturer and researcher, published a book entitled "Disney Discourse" in which he investigated the impact of this company's products on domestic and international consumers with an interdisciplinary approach. In ۲۰۰۱, Jack Shaheen, a lecturer and researcher in the field of racial and ethnic stereotypes, wrote a book called "Roll the Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Humiliates People" which clearly focused on the representation of Arabs in Hollywood works. In Iran, limited researches have been done in this specific field. Azam Deh Sufiani (۲۰۱۳) published a book titled "Child, Animation and Television" in which he investigated racial, ethnic and gender stereotypes in Disney's works.

The research method is based on content description and analysis, and data collection is completed in the form of documents as well as direct observation. For this purpose, sequences from the Aladdin animation have been selected using the purposeful sampling method, and in its analysis, the scientific induction method has been used with reference to the semiotic pattern of Barrett's quintet ciphers; thus, by putting together the partial information in the sequences (including everything that is transmitted to the audience audibly or visually) and examining it in the subset of the five codes and measuring it with Stuart Hall's constructivist theory of representation, the general results have been achieved.

Conclusion

In today's world, "power" is not synonymous with the use of "force", but with the establishment of meaning. The West, as a part of the world that has attempted to dominate other lands, has always strived to define the East according to its own interests. The media definitely plays an active role in achieving this goal as it has the power to weaken or strengthen a thought in the mind of its audience with the help of representation and to institutionalize its desired meaning in the mind of the viewers. In this article, an attempt was made to study the perspective of the West from the East for children by examining the animation of Aladdin produced by the Disney Company. In response to the research question, "How is the East of the Earth represented in Aladdin animation?", it can

be said that after applying Barth's five codes in five selected scenes from the film and examining the amount, type and strategies of representation; and also, considering the discourse "The West and the Other" seems that this work has not been completely biased in the only production that Disney Company has created in the setting of the lands of West Asia. Although the clear and obvious implications in this text, at first glance, seems to be only space creation in order to advance the narrative, but there are cases in this animation that expresses the Eastern society as a violent and poor land with unjust laws in the field of women's rights, citizenship rights, law Punishment, distribution of wealth and social welfare. In fact, the audience is faced with an exotic society under the pretext of seeing a Middle Eastern city, which is also a mixture of all the eastern lands and it can be a representative of each and every all. Intercultural differences in West Asian societies have not been respected and have not been mentioned. Agrabah, in which the narrative takes place, is represented as a unified and homogeneous, but chaotic East. atmosphere and character building by resorting to stereotyping to a set of mostly exaggerated and in many negative cases reduced and parallel to that violent acts, oppression, passivity, extreme laws and incommensurate with human dignity and not considering the right for women and the inability of government institutions to manage the land; and all acts are demonstrated as a natural and normal entity in this geography. Undoubtedly, the East, like any other society, faces political, ethnic, class and social issues, nonetheless, in this animation, not only do we never see an unbiased view from the producer's side, but generally with the help of stereotyping and naturalization, the images are exaggerated. A combination of these issues has been represented.

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