

Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp: How are Foreign Folktales Conveyed in Western Children's Literature?

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Abstract

This paper seeks to examine how the Middle Eastern folktale *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp* was retold to the Western children through critically analyzing 8 English versions of the story and an Arabic version to compare the different English versions to it. Through looking at the settings, the characters and the events as well as the cultural characteristics presented in the books, we found that most of the English versions were not faithful to the Arabic version- specifically the Disney version of Aladdin, which was the most Westernized one. Based on the findings of this study, we recommend that teachers, educators and parents should not rely on a single book to be the only source for providing information. Rather, they need to locate different books especially when introducing a certain culture.

Keywords: Arabic folktale, cultural representation, children's literature.

Introduction

Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp is an Arabic fairytale that was a part of the classic collection of *One Thousand and One Nights* (Arabic: *alf laylah wa-laylah*), also known as *Arabian Nights* in English. The original author and date of this collection are unknown. However, it is said that the first known reference to the *One Thousand and One Nights* in the Arabic literature was in the 9th century (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2012). *The stories of this collection became popular in Europe since Antoine Galland issued the first translation in French in the 18th century* (Irwin, 1994). It is also argued that “individual stories from the *Nights* had been included in medieval and Renaissance story collection” (Irwin, 1994, p. 42). The *One Thousand and One Nights* tells the story of a king named Shahryar who suffered from infidelity and decided to marry a new woman every night and execute her. In order to postpone her execution, Scheherazade, a newly married queen, tells a story to the king and after it ends, she begins another one. This makes the king eager to know the conclusion, so he postpones Scheherazade’s execution each time. This lasted for 1001 nights. The stories that Scheherazade tells to the king vary broadly. They contained love stories, tragedies, historical tales, comedies, poems, and burlesques and most of them depict legendary places, djinn, and magicians (New World Encyclopedia, 2008). The most well known worldwide tales from this collection are *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor*.

This paper seeks to critically analyze the Western versions of *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp*, which tells the story of a lazy impoverished boy called Aladdin, who lives in a poor condition with his mother. He accidentally finds a wonderful lamp that has a genie, which grants Aladdin all his wishes. With the help of the genie, Aladdin becomes rich and marries Princess Badr-al-Budur, the Sultan’s daughter (Johar, Bernag, & Attar, 1991). This story is very well known and has been retold in different languages and forms like children’s picture books, book chapters, films, cartoons, plays, and opera. Accordingly, this paper seeks to examine how *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp* was retold to the Western children in different story versions. More specifically, we would like to study the settings, the characters (such as Aladdin, the Princess, the Genie, and the Sultan), and the events as well as the visuals. The two research questions that guide our analysis are: (a) How different are the Western versions of *Aladdin* from the Arabic one in terms of the settings, main characters, and the events? (b) What are the overall cultural characteristics of the books? Again, *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp* is a famous story that has been retold in many languages since the early eighteenth century. However, there has not been sufficient research that examined how this Middle Eastern folktale is represented in the various Western versions. Therefore, answering these above questions hopefully, would help educators and/or parents to understand whether the different elements of a culture are appropriately or inappropriately depicted to children.

Literature Review

The theoretical framework of this study is drawn from the literary approach and the multicultural approach. The literary approach centers around “the aesthetic aspects of the text (e.g., plot, character development, setting, length and complexity of sentences, word choice, word order, figures of speech, and illustrations)” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 25). The multicultural approach will assist in the understanding of how the Middle Eastern story is depicted to the Western society. Furthermore, our theoretical framework is based on the belief

that “all literature is a cultural and historical product, emerging from a particular place and time, and reflecting particular cultural and temporal contexts” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 8).

Accordingly, Hassan (1995) argues that Arabic folktales mirror the Arabic culture’s values, morals, myths, social customs, and religious beliefs. She added that the major characteristics of the Arabic folktales are derived from the social and religious values of the Arabs like the protection of women by men, faith in God, hospitality to guests and strangers, honor, generosity, loyalty, and courage. Other components of Arabic folktales are the depiction of the king as a very powerful figure who has slaves and is never questioned; the hero as a brave and proud man/boy, and women as weak and need protection by men. Additionally, Hassan (1995) claimed that Arabic folktales very often include supernatural elements such as Jinn (or Genie) and Ghouls as well magical ones like a ring, a crystal ball, or a flying carpet. The author also stated that many Arabic folktales lack a logical explanation of a certain event, and they very often teach morals.

Furthermore, in her doctoral dissertation, Raina (2009) looked at the representation of Muslims in children’s and young adult literature books that were published in English and distributed in the United States. She mainly investigated the overall characteristics of the selected books as well as the background experiences of the authors, illustrators, and translators who write and distribute literature that reflect Muslim cultures within the U.S. The researcher employed a qualitative critical content analysis based on postcolonial theory to analyze 72 children and adolescent picture books and novels about Muslims that were published between 1985 and 2009. These books include biographies, historical fictions, and contemporary realistic fictions. The researcher found that most of the examined books emphasized stereotyped views of the Muslim world such as lack of education, poverty, deserts, camels, and tents. Other examined historical fiction books emphasized “old world tales of the Arabian Nights and harems” (p. 132) like corrupt and cruel husbands, polygamy, and harems. In terms of the background of the authors, illustrators, and translators, the researcher stated that most of the selected books are written by either outsiders to the cultures “who have crossed the boundaries of cultures on wings of imagination and research” or by insiders, “who realize their social responsibility and write from the heart” (p. 217). Nonetheless, many of these insiders depicted some unique cultural aspects to their home-countries in their stories that should not be generalized to include all Middle Eastern countries. The researcher implied that more books which authentically represent the Muslim culture should be published and distributed in the Western countries.

In addition, Ridouani (2011) critically examined how the Western media represents Arabs and Muslims and the effect that this has on the Western people. The researcher utilized a critical analysis for various sources of Western media that conceptualize Arabs and Muslims such as books, cartoons, articles, and movies. Based on the analysis of, for examples, Western media news reports, children animated movies like *Ali Baba the Mad Dog of the Desert* and *Disney’s Aladdin* as well as some art pieces of European painters and sculptors such as Jean-Léon Gérôme and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, the researcher found that Arabs and Muslims are misrepresented in the Western media by emphasizing a stereotyped depiction of the actions, thoughts, and intentions of Arabs and Muslims whether in printed, televised, or broadcasted media sources. Additionally, through analyzing the Walt Disney’s animated cartoon *Aladdin*, the researcher found that this version of *Aladdin* is very Americanized in terms of the characters’ appearances and names. For instance, the princess’s identity has been distorted in many ways; her name was changed from Badr Al-Buddur to Jasmine, her attire makes her look as a belly dancer instead of a noble princess, and the color of her complexion and her heavy make-up

present her as a sexual product. The researcher added that in the past, Arabs and Muslims were mostly viewed in the West by less-than-flattering images such as “erotic, primitive, ignorant, and slave traders,” and lately as “terrorist, fundamentalist, and blood-thirsty” (Esposito, 1992, pp. 180, 203 as cited in Ridouani, 2011). This biased representation has a negative impact on the Western public and makes them view Arabs and Muslims as demoniacs. Moreover, the researcher added that although there are other religions existing in the Arab world- other than Islam- like Christianity and Judaism, the two terms Arabs and Muslims are used interchangeable. That is, all Arabs are depicted as Muslims.

Most of the reviewed studies and articles generally looked at the portrayal of Arabs and Muslims in the media. None of the studies deeply examined how the Middle Eastern folktale of *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp* is rendered in English children's books. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the settings, main characters, and events of the Western versions of *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp*. It attempts to answer the following questions: (a) How different are the Western versions of *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp* from the Arabic one in terms of main characters, settings, and events? (b) What are the overall cultural characteristics of the books?

Methodology

Using a critical multicultural analysis (Botelho & Rudman, 2009), this study analyzes eight different English versions of *Aladdin's Wonderful Lamp*. An Arabic version of the story is also included in the analysis to compare the different English versions to it. The original story can be classified under the genres of fiction, folktale as well as fairytale. The text set was located through Internet searches, mainly by using *amazon.com*, as well as reading book reviews. The researchers reviewed over 15 books and eventually selected 9 books, including the Arabic version, based on the following criteria: (a) Illustrated picture books, (b) written for age six to ten, and (c) publication dates represent the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Accordingly, the researchers were able to select nine picture story books that mostly met the identified criteria. The publication years of the chosen versions are 1981, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1998, and 2005. The analysis process comprised of the following steps: The researchers (1) read each book individually, (2) recorded some comments, (3) compared their notes, and (4) organized and coded the information into a chart (Table 1). The data collection chart includes the following information for each book: (a) Title, (b) author and year of publication, (c) settings of the story, and (d) main characters and a brief description. Data was charted in this way to highlight the different and common characteristics between the different versions. The events of each story were not included in the chart. However, the events that are different were highlighted in the books and are discussed later on in the Data Analysis and Findings. Additionally, being insiders of the Middle Eastern culture, we were able to verify the authenticity of the illustrations which are also discussed in the following sections. After the coding process, critical multicultural analysis was employed to assist us examine “how identities are constructed, how texts are constructed, how society is constructed, and how language/discourse creates us as much as we create it” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 3).

Data Analysis

The data from our text set was coded in the following chart to assist us in identifying the differences and similarities between the nine versions of *Aladdin* in terms of the settings and the main characters.

Table 1. Text set information chart

Title	Author & Year	Settings	Main Characters
One Thousand and One Nights: Aladdin and the Magic Lamp (Arabic)	Johar, Bernag, & Attar (1991)	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aladdin, poor and lazy ○ Princess, Badr-al-Budur ○ Sultan, powerful ○ Magician, Moroccan ○ Father, Mustafa the tailor ○ Mother, works hard ○ Genie, ring ○ Genie, lamp
Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp	Lang (1981)	Persia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aladdin ○ Princess, no name ○ Father, Mustapha the tailor ○ Magician, African ○ Sultan, powerful ○ Mother ○ Genie, ring ○ Genie, lamp
Disney's Aladdin	Ferguson (1992)	Arabia; imaginary town of Agrabah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aladdin, thief ○ Princess, Jasmine ○ Sultan, less powerful ○ Jafar; Sultan's chief advisor (more powerful) ○ Iago; parrot ○ Abu; monkey ○ Rajah; a Bengal tiger (the Princess's pet) ○ Genie; lamp ○ Magic carpet

Title	Author & Year	Settings	Main Characters
The tale of Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp: A Story	Kimmel (1992)	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aladdin, poor, lazy, thief, and beggar ○ Princess, Shadjarr ad-Darr ○ Sultan, powerful ○ Magician, Moroccan ○ Father, Abbas the sandal maker ○ Mother, works hard ○ Genie, ring ○ Genie, lamp
Aladdin and the Magic Lamp	Hautzig (1993)	Persia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aladdin, an innocent and small poor boy ○ Princess, no name ○ Sultan, powerful ○ Magician, Egyptian ○ Father, no mention ○ Mother, works hard
Aladdin and the Magic Lamp	Stewart (1995)	Eastern City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aladdin; a lazy, spoiled, and poor ○ Princess, no name ○ Sultan, powerful

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Magician, African ○ Father, a tailor ○ Mother, works hard ○ Genie, ring ○ Genie, lamp
Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp	Eastman (1996)	Un-known	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aladdin, lazy ○ Princess, no name ○ Sultan ○ Magician, African ○ Father, not mentioned ○ Mother, jobless ○ Genie, ring ○ Genie, lamp
Aladdin and other tales from the Arabian nights	Kerven (1998)	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aladdin, poor and trouble-maker ○ Magician, Moroccan ○ Emperor ○ Princess Badr al-Budur ○ Mother ○ Genie, ring ○ Genie, lamp
Aladdin and the Enchanted Lamp	Pullman (2005)	China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aladdin, a troublemaker, lazy and poor ○ Princess, Badr-al-Budur. ○ Sultan of China, powerful ○ Magician, Moroccan ○ Father, Mustafa the tailor ○ Mother, works hard ○ Genie, ring ○ Genie, lamp

The Arabic version

In the Arabic versions of *Aladdin*, the narrator chose to set the story in China “to add mystery and romance to the tale. However, many of the story’s features remain essentially Arabic” (Kerven, 1998, p. 18). The chosen Arabic version in our text set (Johar, Bernag, & Attar, 1991) takes place in China too. All the names of the characters are Arabic. It can also be said that they are depicted as Muslims because of their frequent use of Islamic expressions.



Figure 1. Aladdin is Chinese (the Arabic version)

The following presents the main events of the tale in a chronological order to compare it later to the Western versions.

Table 2. The chronological order of the events

Aladdin is a poor, lazy boy who had lost his father, Mustapha the tailor, and lived with his mother in a miserable condition. Aladdin refused to work.

A Moroccan magician approached Aladdin and pretended to be his uncle who had been outside of the country for many years. He told Aladdin that he wanted to see his mother and have a meal with them. Aladdin's mother was suspicious because her husband had never said that he got a brother. Nonetheless, she was deceived by his tears and words about her husband.

On the following day, the alleged uncle asked Aladdin to come with him to buy him clothes and find him a job. However, the alleged uncle took Aladdin out of town into a deserted place and told him to gather some sticks in order to set a fire. After the fire had started burning, the magician added some powder to it and began murmuring some unintelligible utterances. Aladdin got scared and tried to escape, but the magician grabbed him and punched him in the face. Then, he told Aladdin that he wanted him to get inside this cave which had a treasure and bring him a lamp. He gave Aladdin his ring to supply him with power.

Aladdin fantasized about the treasure and got inside the cave. He was amazed with the fine stones, gold, and fruit trees. He grabbed the lamp and wanted to get outside. However, he got trapped in the cave because a large stone had blocked the cave entrance. The magician was waiting outside tried to remove the stone, but he could not. He waited and waited, and out of desperate, he left.

Aladdin got scared and began praying. He unintentionally rubbed the ring that was given to him by the magician, and in a surprise, a giant genie appeared. The genie told Aladdin that he was his servant and would do whatever he wanted. Aladdin told him that he wanted to get out of his trap. And this was answered.



After the lamp and the fine stones, both Aladdin's life and his mother's had changed. They became rich. Once, Aladdin saw the Sultan's daughter, Badr al-Budur, and he decided to marry her. His mother went to the Sultan to ask for her hand. She took with her precious jewels. The Sultan was fascinated by the present and told her to wait for three months because his advisor's son had already asked for the Princess's hand too, and the Sultan wanted to see if the advisor's son would be able to bring a pricier present than Aladdin's.

Before the completion of the 3 month period that was set by the Sultan, the Princess got married to the advisor's son and Aladdin felt very sad. After the marriage ceremony had been over and the bride and groom had gone to their palace, Aladdin ordered the Genie of the lamp to bring him the Princess in order not to be touched by the groom. So, the Genie obeyed Aladdin's commands; the Princess was brought to Aladdin and her groom was locked in a room. This reoccurred for three nights.

Then, Aladdin's mother went to the Sultan and asked for his daughter's hand. The Sultan said that Aladdin must provide forty golden plates filled with precious jewels carried by black slaves. And this was answered, so Aladdin and the Princess got married.

The magician came back after he had heard about Aladdin's wealth and started to look for the lamp and get revenge from Aladdin. He pretended to be a lamp street-seller, and the Princess mistakenly gave him the magic lamp as an exchange for a new one. The magician ordered the Genie to transfer Aladdin's palace and the Princess to Morocco.

The Sultan could not believe his eyes after the palace had gone. And he started to mourn for his daughter's loss and decided to throw Aladdin in prison. In prison, Aladdin remembered the magic ring and rubbed it. The Genie said that he could not bring the Princess and the palace back because he was less powerful than the Genie of the lamp. However, he was able to take Aladdin to Morocco.

The Princess was joyful by seeing Aladdin whom she met a plan to get rid of the magician. Aladdin told Badr al-Budur to wear a beautiful robe, offer the magician a poisoned drink that was prepared by Aladdin, and tell the magician that she had forgotten about Aladdin and wanted to say with him. After sipping from the poisoned drink, the magician died immediately. Then, Aladdin ordered the Genie to get them back to China and the Sultan was very happy.

The magician's brother knew about what had happened and decided to go to China to get revenge for his brother. There was an old woman named Fatima who was a religious figure and many people visited her. The magician's brother killed this woman, wore her clothes, and pretended to be her. The Princess asked this woman to come and live with them in the palace. Fatima started to tell the Princess that they were missing some things in the palace that would protect them. Aladdin asked the Genie for these things and the Genie told Aladdin about the real identity of Fatima. While Aladdin was alone in his room, the magician's brother wanted to stab him with a knife. However, Aladdin took the knife and stabbed him instead. He explained to the Princess why he had done so.

Aladdin and Badr al-Budur lived happily ever after. They had a lot of children. And Aladdin became the Sultan of China after the Sultan's death.

This version of *Aladdin* contained most of the components of Arabic folktales identified by Hassan (1995) in the literature review section. Faith in God was strongly reflected in most of the story events by, for example, praying to God. Moreover, the hero Aladdin was first introduced as a lazy boy, and then was transformed into a proud, brave, and generous man. The Princess is portrayed as a weak person who needed protection by the Sultan and then Aladdin.

She did not have a voice in the story. She did not decide whom to marry. The Sultan is ultimately powerful. He has a lot of wealth and slaves. His commands are answered without questioning. He only cares about his daughter. After his daughter had disappeared, the Sultan ordered for the execution of Aladdin without even hearing from him. The inclusion of supernatural and magical elements is another characteristic of traditional Arabic folktales such as the magic ring and lamp in this tale. Additionally, Arabic folktales very often include certain numbers such as *three*, *seven*, and *forty* which assumed to contain spiritual meanings for many Arabs (Hassan, 1995). In this tale, the Sultan ordered Aladdin to bring him forty plates that are filled with jewels and fine fruits. Furthermore, many events lacked logic. For instance, Aladdin was never questioned by the Sultan or the Princess about his wealth and his ability to answer the Sultan's unfeasible commands without any trouble. Another important characteristic of Arabic folktales is that the righteous side always prevails and this was true of the evil magician and Aladdin.

The English Versions of *Aladdin*

Settings. From Table 1, it can be understood that three out of the eight English versions were faithful to the Arabic version in terms of location as they were set in China. However, the other five versions were set in places such as Persia, an imaginary place in Arabia, and an unidentified Eastern country. For instance, the Disney version of *Aladdin* (Ferguson, 1992) was set in a fictional place in Arabia called Agrabah. The 1981 version that was retold by Andrew Lang, according to the review by Reed Business Information (2005), is considered "the gold standard [and] the most complete and compelling account of Aladdin's life". However, the story was set in Persia and not in China. Nonetheless, the facial features of the characters can be recognized as Asians as can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Persian with Asian facial features (Lang, 1981)

Characters. Aladdin is described as a poor lazy boy as well as a trouble maker in almost all versions, except in Hautzig (1993) as an innocent, small, poor boy. He was also identified as a thief in Kimmel's (1992) and Ferguson's (1992) versions. Aladdin is visualized in different ways. For instance, in Hautzig (1993), Aladdin is depicted as a European boy in the drawings of Hautzig's (1993) as in Figure 3, as an Asian boy (Figure 4) in most versions (even in the ones that were set in Persia such as in Lang's (1981)) wearing Middle Eastern clothes in Kimmel's (1992), and as an Arab in the Disney version as in Figure 5.



Figure 3. Aladdin as a European boy (Hautzig, 1993)



Figure 4. Aladdin is a Chinese boy (Kerven, 1998)



Figure 5. Aladdin is a Middle-Eastern boy (Ferguson, 1992)

The Princess's name was not preserved as *Badr al-Budur* in all versions except in Pullman's (2005) and Kerven's (1998). She had no name in some versions (Eastman, 1996; Hautzig, 1993; Lang, 1981; Stewart, 1995) and different names in other versions (Ferguson, 1992; Kimmel, 1992). The Princess was named *Jasmine* in the Disney version (Ferguson, 1992) and *Shadjarr ad-Darr* in Kimmel's (1992). *Shadjarr ad-Darr* is an uncommon name in Arabic. After conducting some research on this name, we found out that it was the name of the Sultana of Egypt in 1250 (Waddy, 1980) and it means 'Tree of Pearls'. In all of the examined versions, except in the Disney version, the Princess has no voice. She does not choose her groom. However, in the Disney version (Ferguson, 1992), the Princess, Jasmine, has a stronger personality and her voice is heard. She refuses to get married to Jafar, her father's advisor, and she has a love affair with Aladdin. In terms of the Princess's clothing, there were some contradictions in some versions. For instance, in Hautzig (1993), the Princess is depicted with a veil in the beginning of the story when Aladdin sees her for the first time, and without veil when she is talking to the magician at the end of the story as in Figures 6. In Kimmel (1992) and Ferguson (1992), the Princess was depicted as a belly dancer rather than a Princess. Figure 7 shows how Princess Jasmine is presented in the Disney version.

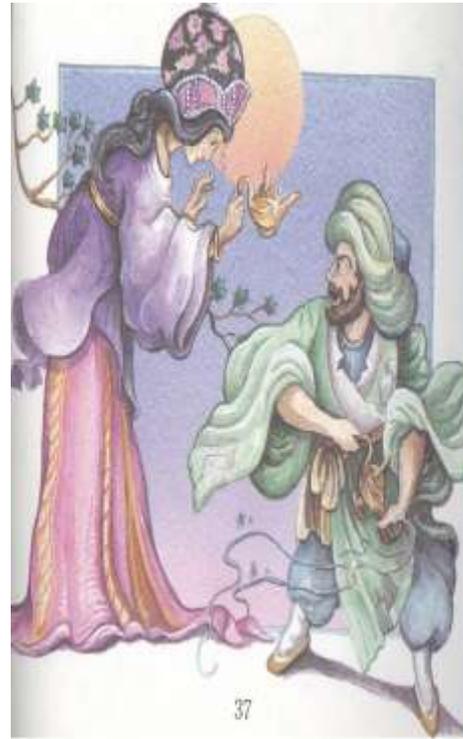


Figure 6. The Princess was wearing her veil but no veil with the magician (Hautzig, 1993)



Figure 7. Princess Jasmine presented as a belly-dancer (Ferguson, 1992)

In other versions, women, including the Princess, were visualized in a confusing and misrepresenting way of Arab Muslim women; they cover their faces and show their bellies (Kimmel, 1992; Pullman, 2005) as in Figure 8.

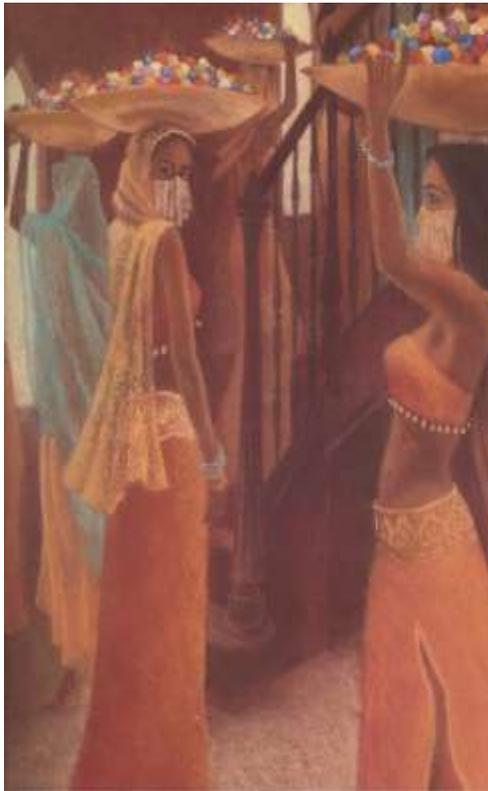


Figure 8. Women covering their faces but not their entire bodies (Pullman, 2005)

From this misrepresentation, it might be inferred that in Islam women can show their arms and bellies as long as they cover their faces. This depiction of Arab Muslim women might confuse the reader who is a stranger to the Muslim culture. Also, in Kimmel (1992), the Princess and other women were depicted in the drawings with pets such as cats, dogs (Figure 9 is an example), and tigers, which is an uncommon thing in Arab culture, so the author mixes the Western and Arab cultures.



Figure 9. *The Princess carrying a cat* (Kimmel, 1992)

Aladdin's mother did not have a name even in the Arabic version. Her job was not clearly mentioned. In the Disney version, there was no inclusion for Aladdin's mother and father. In most versions, she was depicted as a Chinese old woman except in Hautzig's (1993), her appearance brings to mind the paintings of women in the Renaissance art, and hardly give the impression of being Arab as can be seen in Figure 10.



Figure 10. *Aladdin's mother neither looks Chinese nor Arab* (Hautzig, 1993)

At the beginning of most versions, it is told that Aladdin's father, Mustapha the tailor, is dead. In one version (Kimmel, 1992), Aladdin's father was given a different name and profession; *Abbas, the sandal maker*. The magician was identified as Moroccan in some versions, similar to the Arabic version, and as African in others. The Disney version was completely different from the Arabic one. The Sultan's advisor, Jafar, was assumed to be the magician. The Sultan, who was referred to as the Emperor of China in Kerven (1998), is very powerful in all versions and never questioned except in the Disney version; he looks less powerful in front of his evil advisor Jafar.

Other important characters are the Genie of the ring and the Genie of the lamp. They were present in all versions except in the Disney one. The Genie of the ring was not included in the Disney version. However, other characters were added such as the magic carpet and the animals; Abu the monkey, Iago the parrot, and Rajah the tiger who is the Princess's pet. All these characters in the Disney version were not part of the Arabic story. This can be regarded as the Disney formula or style; the inclusion of objects and animals (Figure 11) that are given human characteristics.

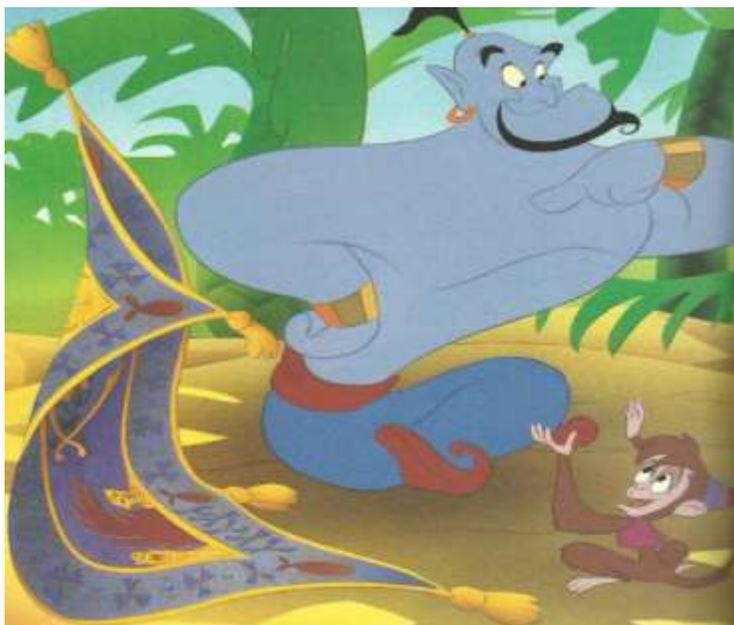


Figure 11. The Genie, magic carpet, and Abu in the Disney version (Ferguson, 1992)

Events. Most of the examined versions included the same events of the Arabic version and the same sequence except for the bolded events in Table 2. We are not definite whether these two events, the marriage of the Princess to the Sultan's advisor's son and the inclusion of the magician's brother, were part of the earlier retold Arabic versions or only in this one (Johar, Bernag, & Attar, 1991). There are some insignificant differences in some events such as in Hautzig's (1993), when the magician first met Aladdin, he gave him gold; silver dirham in Kimmel's (1992); and 10 dinars in Pullman's (2005). In the Stewart (1995) version, the magician just introduces himself as Aladdin's uncle and takes him directly to the garden where the lamp is hidden without meeting Aladdin's mother. Additionally, in all of the versions, the ring is given by the magician except in Pullman's (2005); the ring was found in the cave and then worn by Aladdin. The Disney version (Ferguson, 1992) was not faithful to the Arabic version; some major events were different. For instance, it begins with Jafar, the chief advisor of the Sultan trying to reclaim the magic lamp from a tiger-shaped cave and failed. Aladdin accidentally meets the Princess in the marketplace. Then, Aladdin is thrown in jail for thievery. Jasmine orders to be released, but Jafar tells her that he has been executed. After that, Jafar frees Aladdin and takes him to the cave to get him the magic lamp. Aladdin and Abu find a magic carpet, a magic lamp, and lots of jewels. Jafar tries to kill Aladdin when he hands him the lamp, but Abu bites Jafar and gets the lamp back and the carpet. However, both Aladdin and Abu get stuck in the cave. Unintentionally, Aladdin rubs the lamp, and a Genie appears and helps him get out of the cave. Then, Aladdin asks the Genie to make him a Prince so he can flatter Jasmine. Jafar proposes to

the Princess but Aladdin shows up as 'Prince Ali', so she rejects Jafar. Jasmine goes with Aladdin to a trip around the world on the magic carpet. Afterwards, Aladdin is captured by Jafar, but the Genie rescues Aladdin whom then returns to the palace and exposes Jafar's plan. Iago, the parrot, steals Aladdin's lamp and gives it to Jafar who orders the Genie to make him the Sultan. With the help of the magic carpet, Aladdin returns to the palace and tells Jasmine to distract Jafar in order to retrieve the lamp. However, Jafar has not been deceived and transforms himself to a giant cobra. After a big fight, Aladdin is able to defeat Jafar. Finally, the Sultan changes the law to let the Princess marry Aladdin, and the Genie has been freed. From what preceded, it can be seen that the Disney version of *Aladdin* has a different plot and characters from the Arabic version.

Findings

Based on the analyzed data, this section attempts to answer the two research questions of the study:

- I. *How different are the Western versions of Aladdin from the Arabic one in terms of settings, characters, and events?*

With regard to settings, some authors chose to set the tale in Persia (Hautzig, 1993; Lang, 1981), a fictional place in Arabia (Ferguson, 1992), and unidentified Eastern country (Stewart, 1995). However, other authors kept the settings in China which is the same as in the early Arabic versions of the tale (Kerven, 1998; Kimmel, 1992; Pullman, 2005). In terms of the characters, they were, to some extent, similar to the Arabic versions. However, some authors did not preserve the Princess's Arabic name *Badr al-Budur* as in Kimmel (1992) and Ferguson (1992). Moreover, the illustrations were somewhat confusing; Arabic names with Chinese facial features and women covering their faces and wearing belly-dancer-like outfits. The Disney version was the most different one in our book set from the Arabic version. For instance, new characters that did not exist in the Arabic version, such as Jafar and the different animals and objects with human characteristics, were added. Moreover, we found several references to different tales from *Arabian Nights*. For instance, Aladdin impersonates a prince named Ali Ababwa; an obvious reference to the protagonist from *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*.

- I. *What are the overall cultural characteristics of the books?*

Critical multicultural analysis of the text set has revealed that most of the cultural characteristics of Arabic folktales were preserved in the English versions such as the supernatural elements, faith in God, protection of women, powerfulness of the king, the proud, brave, and generous hero, the lack of logic in some events, and the victory of good on evil. Nonetheless, as can be seen from the Data Analysis section, there was a mix between the Arabic culture and the Western one in some versions (Ferguson, 1992; Hautzig, 1993; Kimmel, 1992, Pullman, 2005). For instance, there was a misrepresentation of Arab women's outfits; wearing a belly-dancer-like clothes and covering their faces with veils. Furthermore, we found that the Disney version of Aladdin was the most Westernized one in our book set in terms of the characters' appearances and names as well as the events. For instance, the Princess's identity has been heavily diverged. Her attire and personality were remote from the Arabic version as well as the general cultural characteristics of Arabic folktale. She falls in love with Aladdin and goes with him on a magic carpet ride around the world. In addition, a major cultural difference in this version is the presentation of the Sultan as a weak person in front of his advisor which is not a common cultural component of Arabic folktales.

Conclusion

Introducing Arabic folklore to children through the use of *Aladdin*, *Aladdin's Disney* is not recommended because it is extremely westernized, and it does not preserve the essence of the cultural features of Arabic folktales. However, Kerven's version might be a faithful version to the Arabic one in terms of settings, characters, and most of the events. Additionally, it has some explanatory notes (visual and text) on the margins of the page for unique Arabic cultural concepts. This version has also other tales from the *Arabian Nights*. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that "no single book should be relied on as the sole source of information about any country or culture" (Lechner, 2007, p.1). Teachers need to locate different books for a classroom use, as they should not rely on a single book to introduce a certain culture.

For further research, we recommend a deeper analysis of how gender, class, race, and/or power is/are constructed in other versions of *Aladdin*, particularly the Disney version because it is the most accessible one to children. Another potential study is to examine other Arabic folktales from the *Arabian Nights* like the well known English versions of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor* since they are available to children as story books and animated movies. Finally, it would be interesting to look at different earlier versions of *Aladdin*, or other tales from the classic collection of the *Arabian Nights*, and see whether and/or how they have evolved over time.

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