# The Representation of Middle Eastern Women in Aladdin Movie (2019): A Critical Discourse Analysis

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## Abstract in English

Abstract :
The present study is a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Aladdin (2019). It investigates how Hollywood utilises linguistic and discursive strategies to represent Middle Eastern women. It further examines the construction of the "self" and "other" dichotomy, exposing how speech upholds cultural hierarchies and power dynamics. The study aims to investigate the linguistic strategies employed to represent Middle Eastern women in Aladdin (2019), examine how intertextual elements in this movie contribute to shaping and reinforcing dominant portrayals of Middle Eastern women, and finally, how these representations align with or challenge Orientalist and gendered narratives about Middle Eastern women. A qualitative approach is utilised to examine three selected scenes from Aladdin (2019). It also employs an eclectic analytical model that integrates Fairclough's three-dimensional model, Quirk et al.'s modality analysis, Searle's speech act theory, Halliday and Matthiessen's transitivity system, and van Dijk's ideological square. The findings indicate that Aladdin (2019) depicts Middle Eastern women as oppressed characters by using transitivity, modality, metaphor, and intertextual references to support existing Western perspectives. By sustaining gender-based and cultural stereotypes, these strategies support hegemonic power structures and add to a larger Orientalist narrative..

## 1. Introduction

Cinema has a significant influence on Public opinion, and cultural conceptions are extremely influenced by Cinema, especially movies. Middle Eastern women's representation in Hollywood has long depended on simplistic stereotypes that support Orientalist and patriarchal narratives, such as the "oppressed victim" or the "exotic dancer" (Naficy, 2000; Shaheen, 2001; Abu-Lughod, 2013). Cinematic discourse has continued to use stereotypical tropes, although contemporary movies seek to challenge

these depictions by providing multidimensional and powerful portrayals (Dajani, 2019; Melhem, 2021).

Although previous studies have concentrated on visual and thematic components, there is still a lack of linguistically driven analysis that examines how discourse at various levels constitutes and reinforces these representations. This study explores how language at the micro, meso, and macro levels affects dominant ideas, enforces cultural binaries, and contributes to broader media-driven narratives regarding MEW through an analysis of a few Hollywood blockbusters.

This study fills this gap by conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis of Aladdin (2019), analysing how the film employs linguistic and discursive strategies to construct representations of Middle Eastern women. It adopts an eclectic approach to CDA that borrows from Fairclough's three-dimensional model, van Dijk's ideological square, Searle's speech act theory, Quirk et al.'s modality analysis, and Halliday and Matthiessen's transitivity system. This layered framework enables detailed examination of language use at micro (lexico-grammatical), meso (discursive), and macro (socio-cultural and ideological) levels.

Hence, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1.  What linguistic strategies are employed to represent MEW in Aladdin 2019?
2.  How do intertextual elements and speech acts in this movie contribute to shaping and reinforcing dominant portrayals of Middle Eastern women?
3.  How do these representations align with or challenge Orientalist and gendered narratives about MEW?

By focusing on untapped linguistic features and employing a rigorous CDA methodology, this study provides an original contribution to media representation research on Middle Eastern women. It not only adds to earlier visual and thematic examinations, but it also reveals the implicit discursive mechanisms through which ideology is brought into being and reproduced in world cinema.

## 2. Literature Review
## 2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

The multidisciplinary discipline of critical discourse analysis (CDA) studies language as a social practice. It sees discourse as a tool that both reflects and produces social realities, including power dynamics and ideologies, rather than just a way to communicate (Fairclough, 2013; van Dijk, 2001). In contrast with traditional discourse analysis, CDA concentrates on the relationship between language and social structures, exploring how discourse either reinforces or modifies these structures (Gee, 2014). Wodak and Mayr (2009) and Fairclough (2015) state that language use is inherently political and influenced by broader sociocultural and historical contexts. They also argue that discourse can affect social meanings. Therefore, many tools are provided by CDA to investigate how texts incorporate presumptions, stereotypes, and power dynamics.

CDA emerges out of an attempt to understand how language is used to perpetuate, contest, or maintain social inequities. Its central concern is to reveal ideologies that are masked in discourse and how discourse either reinforces or challenges systems of power (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998). This includes

analysing the impact of discourse on public opinion, the framing of ideologies, and the construction of social identities (Gee, 2014). Through studying how the disempowered employ language as a site of struggle, CDA analyses how social change is brought about by shifting power relations (Fairclough, 2001). Moreover, the method allows for more just practices of discourse by showing how ordinary language can uphold or subvert formulated power structures (Luke, 1997).

CDA is based on some guiding assumptions. They have been used by Fairclough (1995) to illustrate that first, discourse is a product and a process at once, located within specific social, political, and historical contexts; it is constitutive and produced. Second, it poses the strongest form of critique, trying to identify power relations that are hidden to tackle a set of social issues (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Third, CDA is eclectic by nature, drawing from the analysis of media, sociology, anthropology, and even linguistics to interrogate the role discourse plays in society.

## 2.2 Major Approaches of CDA

Critical Discourse Analysis has a variety of frameworks which aim to analyse the relation between language, power, and ideology. This study employs two major frameworks, which are briefly discussed below:

**1) Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework**
Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework considers discourse as a form of social practice. This model comprises three interconnected levels: textual analysis (description), discursive practice (interpretation), and social practice (explanation) (Fairclough 1993, 2001). Language elements such as coherence, grammar, and vocabulary are examined at the textual level. While the production and consumption of texts in certain institutional contexts are taken into account at the discursive level. Lastly, the broader socio-political context that speech is located within is taken into consideration at the interpretation level. This framework emphasizes how language actively shapes and is shaped by institutional norms, ideologies, and power dynamics rather than being neutral (Fairclough, 1995; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002).

**2) Van Dijk's Ideological Square**
This framework underscores the function of language for establishing in-group and out-group identities. Van Dijk (1998) states four basic strategies: emphasising positive actions of the in-group, emphasising negative actions of the out-group, de-emphasising in-group faults, and downplaying out-group virtues. The hidden ways in which language promotes ideologies are illustrated in this model. For instance, the use of active voice frequently highlights out-group bad deeds, whereas passivation may be employed to cover up in-group ones. Particularly in the media and political discourse, institutional constraints and prevailing narratives influence text producers and consumers at the meso-level (van Dijk, 1998). At the macro-level, these linguistic patterns contribute to the normalisation of unequal power relations within society.

A comprehensive CDA that covers linguistic, institutional, and societal elements can be executed by researchers by integrating Fairclough's model with van Dijk's ideological square. Van Dijk's framework sheds light on the ideological principles underlying discourse, whereas Fairclough's model gives an organised approach to analysing how texts function within social situations. When combined, these methods enable an advanced understanding of how discourse either upholds or

challenges ideologies and power structures. The multidisciplinary nature of CDA and its commitment to uncovering hidden systems of dominance in everyday language use can be seen by their complementary capabilities.

## 2.3 Representation

Representation refers to how language constructs and conveys social realities, identities, and ideologies. It involves making rational choices about how to represent people, concepts, and events in discourse. Representation emphasizes how language is used to depict social actors, influencing perceptions (Baker & Ellece, 2011). Van Leeuwen (2008) underscores that even abstract texts reflect specific perspectives and sees all discourse as a representation of social practices.

According to Fairclough (2003), representation entails deliberate linguistic decisions that reflect ideological stances and is not neutral. Particularly through patterns of positive self-representation and negative other-representation, these decisions can contribute to biased depictions (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). Such representations shape public opinion and frequently maintain established power structures in media discourse (Fowler, 1991; Fairclough, 1989).

## 2.4 Media Discourse

The term "media discourse" describes how language, images, and stories are used in the media to create and spread ideas, affect public opinion, and maintain social norms (Fairclough, 2001). Since media texts are never objective and always express institutional power and ideological agendas, it is crucial to conduct critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1988a). Media can either support or contradict prevailing viewpoints through selective framing, language choices, and imagery (Fowler, 1991). Because social and political interests frequently influence how social actors—like gender, race, and ethnicity—are depicted, media discourse can be an effective tool for either reinforcing or challenging stereotypes (Macdonald, 2003; Dines & Humez, 2016). Hall (1980) points out that audience interpretation, which is affected by cultural and personal origins, also shapes meaning.

## 2.5 Feminism

Feminism rejects patriarchal structures that marginalise women and advocates gender equality in the social, political, and economic spheres (Victoria, 2008). It tackles diverse types of systemic oppression and has developed through waves, including liberal, radical, Marxist, and ecofeminist aspects (Tong, 1998). From basic rights to more general concerns like intersectionality, employment justice, and reproductive autonomy, feminism has grown throughout time.

Feminist narratives are used as a means of challenging conventional gender norms in media, especially film. Feminist ideas are reflected in films that dispel assumptions and portray women as strong, multifaceted people (Klarer, 2004; Bennett & Royle, 2004). These representations help larger initiatives for gender justice and encourage critical engagement with social norms.

## 2.6 Orientalism

Edward Said (1978) described Orientalism as the Western portrayal of Eastern societies as inferior, foreign, and backward. By portraying the East as the "Other," frequently through clichéd images derived from colonial and imperial agendas, this discourse upholds Western domination. Said (1998) differentiates between subtle forms of Orientalism, which quietly propagate stereotypes while claiming neutrality, and explicit versions, which transparently declare Eastern inferiority.

Hollywood frequently portrays Eastern cultures as mysterious or harmful, which contributes to the evolution of Orientalist narratives (Gülangör, 2011). Films such as Taken 2 (2012) perpetuate cultural dichotomies that marginalise the East and promote

the West (Mert, 2021).  By examining these portrayals, one can see how the media reinforces cultural hierarchies and supports Said's argument against reductive narratives.

**3. Methodology**
**3.1 Research Design**
This study employs a qualitative methodology to critically analyse how Middle Eastern women are represented in Aladdin (2019). Qualitative research emphasises depth over breadth and provides deep (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This type of research design fits media studies, where subjectivity and interpretation are crucial.
**3.2 Data Collection and Selection**
**a) Procedures**
The primary source of data is the animated live-action film *Aladdin (2019)*, focusing on the character of Princess Jasmine, the central Middle Eastern female figure in the narrative. To ensure the reliability and contextual accuracy of the linguistic data, the researcher followed a multi-step process:

1. The film was watched in full five times—twice for familiarisation, twice for scene identification, and once for transcription validation.

2. The complete movie script was obtained from Scripts.com and was cross-verified with the audio-visual content to ensure that the dialogue matched the spoken language accurately.

3. Multiple scenes were initially shortlisted based on their thematic relevance, and three scenes were ultimately selected after careful comparative screening:

Three scenes of the selected movie were chosen to be analysed by the researcher, as they are relevant to the study's goals. These scenes are the "Challenge Scene," in which Jasmine challenges authority, the "speechless scene" in which Jasmine sings her solo, and the "Sultan Scene," wherein she becomes the Sultan. These scenes were picked because they are essential to Jasmine's storyline and have thematic significance for resistance, gender, and power issues.
The selected scenes serve as representative samples that capture the general discourse trends surrounding the portrayal of Middle Eastern women in Aladdin (2019). To establish thematic validity and support general results, the broader analytical framework was applied to all relevant scenes, even if the analysis focuses on three senesce in particular.
**b) Criteria**
Scene selection was guided by a purposeful sampling technique (Maxwell, 1997) using the                                        following                                        standards:
i. A Middle Eastern female protagonist plays an essential role in the scenes.
ii. They cover fundamental topics like voice, resistance, and empowerment.
iii. These scenes' language displays discursive and ideological strategies.
iv. They signify crucial points in the storyline of the movie.
v. The scenes are accessible for triangulated analysis in both script and visual formats.
vi. These standards ensure that the chosen data are appropriate, rich, and suitable for a multi-layered CDA.


**3.3 The Eclectic Model**
An eclectic model of analysis is used in this study, this model combines linguistic, sociocognitive, and ideological techniques to examine discourse at three levels. At the micro-level, the textual analysis of discourse is guided by the lexical

choices including overwording, categorization, and metaphor of Fairclough (2001), the transitivity system of Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), and the modality of Quirk et al. (1985). Intertextuality and Speech acts theory, according to Searle (1969), are used to examine Fairclough's idea of discursive activity at the meso-level. Polarization strategies like "Us vs. Them" dichotomies and the justification of Western superiority are revealed using van Dijk's (1998) ideological square are studied at the macro level. These remarks are placed in the context of broader sociopolitical discussions on Orientalism and gender.

## 4. Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

### 4.1 Data Analysis
### 4.1.1 Scene One: Jasmine Challenges Gender Roles

**Background:** Jasmine argues with her father, the Sultan, about her desire to lead Agrabah, in the presence of Jafar (the Sultan's minister).

**Sultan**: *(frustrated)*
"My daughter, you must understand. A woman has never ruled Agrabah."

**Jasmine**: *(firmly)*
"But why not? If I am to be Sultan one day, why can't I rule?"

**Jafar**: *(interrupting, smugly)*
"Because tradition dictates otherwise. It is not a woman's place to lead."

**Jasmine**: *(angry, standing her ground)*
"Agrabah needs a leader who cares about its people. I see their struggles."

**Jafar**: *(mocking)*
"And how do you see from the palace walls, Princess?"

**Sultan**: *(placating)*
"Jasmine, your duty is to marry a prince who will rule beside you."

**Jasmine**: *(defiant)*
"Maybe I don't want to marry a prince! Maybe I can lead without one."

**Jafar**: *(sternly, to the Sultan)*
"You must remind your daughter of her place."

### 4.1.1.1 The Analysis

#### 4.1.1.1.1 Micro Level

**1) Vocabulary:**
**a) Overwording:**
Jasmine underscores her right to rule in: *"If I am to be Sultan one day, why can't I rule?"* Her choice for the role of the leader shows her concern for people: *"Agrabah needs a leader who cares about its people."* She also emphasises her refusal to gender expectations by saying, *"Maybe I don't want to marry a prince! I might be able to lead*

*without one."* These claims highlight women's rights, leadership potential, and presence while emphasizing an uprising against existing gender norms. Jafar's remark, *"It is not a woman's place to lead,"* asserts these norms and ties Jasmine's desire to tradition rather than skill.

## b) Categorisation

The distinction between men and women is evident in this scene, Jafar and the Sultan stand in for the patriarchal systems, while Jasmine is presented as an extraordinary woman beyond social expectations. Extreme traditionalism is evident in Jafar's restriction of leadership to gender: *"Because tradition dictates otherwise."* The Sultan also affirms his daughter's responsibility in marriage, although in a less strict manner: *"Your duty is to marry a prince who will rule beside you."*

## c) Metaphor:

Jasmine uses a metaphorical expression to describe leadership as fostering: *"Agrabah needs a leader who cares about its people,"* wherein Jasmine compares her future rule with Jafar's authority. Jafar's question: *"And how do you see from the palace walls, Princess?"* further creates metaphorical barriers between Jasmine and her people. This reveals Jasmin's constrained viewpoint as a result of traditional gender stereotypes.

## 2) Grammar:
## a) Transitivity:

By utilizing the material process*, "A woman has never ruled Agrabah"* is a negative remark that suggests a submissive female role; the Sultan uses history as a determining factor. In contrast to this is provided by Jasmine's active material process, which highlights her awareness and willingness to rule: *"I see their struggles."* In addition, Jafar uses a relational approach to establish gender roles by limiting leadership to men: *"It is not a woman's place to lead."* Last but not least, Jasmine challenges the idea underlying her subjection rather than the behavioral framework by posing the question, *"If I am to be Sultan one day, why can't I rule?"*

## b) Modality:

The deontic modality of the Sultan's sentences, *"My daughter, you must understand…,"* indicates Jasmine's obligation to be aware of and adhere to the traditions of her time. Another deontic modality can be seen by Jasmine's query, *"Why can't I rule?"* in which she challenges the possibility of becoming the Sultan in context with social norms. Jasmine's statement: *"Perhaps I don't want to marry a prince!"* Since she is unsure of her ability to rule, she frames an epistemic modality with the words, *"Perhaps."* Finally, Jafar uses the deontic modality: *"You must remind your daughter of her place,"* placing a duty on the Sultan through custom.

### 4.1.1.1.2 Meso Level

## 1) Intertextuality:

The scene symbolizes more general feminist ideas. It discusses the battles women fight against oppressive patriarchal systems. Themes of women seeking leadership roles and challenging traditional values, especially about female empowerment, are common

in Western storytelling. Furthermore, because it portrays the Middle East as restrictive and repressive toward women, it is consistent with Western feminist discourses.

**2) Speech Act:**

The Sultan emphasizes the patriarchal aspect of gender norms through the directive speech act, *"My daughter, you must understand,"* which orders Jasmine to adhere to the customs. Jafar stresses that gender rules and traditions are more powerful than the Sultan and maintains patriarchal dominance in Eastern countries when he instructs the Sultan, *"You must remind your daughter of her place."* In this scene, assertive verbal acts are used repeatedly. The Sultan first declares that *"A woman has never ruled Agrabah,"* and then he describes the existing customs: *"Jasmine, your duty is to marry a prince who will rule beside you."* Secondly, Jasmine violates gender conventions by using an assertive speech act: *"Maybe I don't want to marry a prince!"* in a statement of belief, *"Agrabah needs a leader who cares about its people,"* as well as "Perhaps I can lead without one." I observe their difficulties. And lastly, Jafar's words: *"Because custom demands differently."* The forceful assertion that *"It is not a woman's place to lead"* refers to social conventions.

### 4.1.1.1.3 Macro Level

Gender stereotypes and patriarchal power in the Middle East are significantly promoted throughout the discourse of this scene. The negative or repressive aspects of patriarchy are symbolised by Jafar's character, whilst Jasmine's father represents the positive aspects. Additionally, the rhetoric of this scene presents Jasmine as a modern feminist whose defiance is consistent with gender equality ideals in the West.

This scene further includes cultural representations. It depicts Agrabah as a Middle Eastern location, presenting its norms and customs as archaic and constrictive, necessitating Jasmine's disobedience. These representations are consistent with Orientalist narratives that depict Middle Eastern countries as authoritarian, archaic, and backwards. It also has a character with Western influences, Jasmine, who rejects these customs and conventions.

In essence, this scene of *Aladdin 2019* operates as a model of feminist resistance within a patriarchal society. It utilizes the aforementioned linguistic and ideological strategies to portray Jasmine as a revolutionary character and progressive force against traditional gender norms. In the meantime, it also aligns with Orientalist discourse, as it frames Middle Eastern norms and traditions as backward and restrictive, contrasting them with Western feminism as the way of progress.

### 4.1.2 Scene Two: Jasmine Becomes Sultan

**Background:** The Sultan finally acknowledges Jasmine's worth, making her the new ruler.

**Sultan**: *(to Jasmine, solemnly)* "You have shown me courage and strength. You are the future of Agrabah."

**Jasmine**: *(softly, emotional)*: "Baba... does this mean...?"

**Sultan**: *(smiling)*: "You shall be the next Sultan."

**Jafar** (furious, with the guards): "This is an outrage! She cannot rule!"

**Hakim** (guard, stepping forward): "The law says otherwise, Jafar."

**Jafar**: *(desperate, grabbing the lamp)*: "I wish to be the most powerful sorcerer!"

**Jasmine** (standing on the throne steps, addressing the people): "Agrabah is my home. I vow to serve you as your leader."

### 4.1.2.1    The Analysis

### 4.1.2.1.1 Micro Level
### 1) Vocabulary:

### a) Overwording:

The Sultan's statement: *"You have shown me courage and strength,"* describing Jasmine as showing courage and strength, emphasizes a notable shift in women's roles in Middle Eastern society. Similarly, *"You are the future of Agrabah,"* attributing the future of the country and its people to a woman, puts a great responsibility on her. Jafar's description of Jasmine's enthronement as *"outrage"* reflects the traditional perspective of the gender norms in this culture. He considers Jasmine being the Sultan an offence to the men of the country. Additionally, Jafar's wish to be the most powerful sorcerer underscores the amount of power required to cope with this change.

### b) Categorization:

A distinction between genders is implied in the discourse of this scene. Jasmine's hesitation: *"Baba... does this mean...?"*   This reflects her astonishment at her father's decision, referring to a stereotypical categorization between men and women, especially concerning leadership. The same distinction is asserted by Jafar's statement:  *"This is an outrage! She cannot rule!"*

### c) Metaphor:

The Sultan metaphorically describes Jasmine as the future of the country, presenting a dramatic shift in the current norms and traditions. He gives a female character a significant role as the new ruler and attributes the future of her people to her. Furthermore, Jafar's description of the Sultan's decision as an *"outrage"* underscores the current perspectives of society concerning women. The statement depicts the people of this country as looking at women as unfit to rule and never accepting them.

### 2) Grammar:

### a) Transitivity:

Since this scene is relatively short, it has a small number of transitivity processes. In the first material process, the power transfers from father to daughter by the Sultan's

statement: *"You shall be the next Sultan."* Similarly, the relational process is utilized by the Sultan to attribute Jasmine as a symbol of progress rather than just a leader: *"You are the future of Agrabah."* Another relational process is in Jafar's sentence: *"This is an outrage,"* when he attributes the adjective 'outrage' to Jasmine's role as a leader. Meanwhile, Jasmine uses the relational process: *"Agrabah is my home",* claiming that she belongs to this country. Hakim utilizes the verbal process: *"The law says otherwise, Jafar."* Stating the shift in the current gender norms, allowing women to rule. Furthermore. It is also utilized by Jasmine as she promises her people to serve them and to be a good ruler: *"I vow to serve you as your leader."*

## b) Modality:

The use of modality in this scene is rare, though the deontic modality, *"You shall be the next Sultan,"* is utilised by the Sultan to signify a radical shift in power dynamics. He declares that a woman can rule and she will be a good Sultan as she represents the future of the country. In contrast, the rationalist perspective is represented by Jafar's negative modal: *"She cannot rule!"* He attempts to deny Jasmine's agency and reflects the rigid patriarchal worldview.

### 4.1.2.1.2 Meso Level

## 1) Intertextuality:

Again, the theme of women's rising to power draws on Western feminist narratives. Such a narrative is found in Disney adaptations, including *Elsa in Frozen* and *Merida in Brave*. In addition, the ascension of Jasmine mirrors a continuous Hollywood trend of reimagining female characters from passive figures to active leaders. These representations align with Hollywood's tendency to depict the Middle East as backwards, reinforce Western-influenced characters as strong and independent, and reflect their movies as highly affecting the Eastern audience.

## 2) Speech Acts:

The first declarative speech act is in the Sultan's statement: *"You shall be the next Sultan."* He formally declares Jasmine to be the official ruler after him. Additionally, an expressive speech act is used by Jasmine, reflecting her emotional response and marking the personal significance of her transformation in: *"Baba… does this mean…?"* Jasmine conveys hope and surprise at the same time. Jafar uses the directive speech act: *"This is an outrage! She cannot rule!",* attempting to forbid Jasmine's rule. Furthermore, Jasmine uses a Commissive speech act: *"I vow to serve you as your leader,"* committing to the people of Agrabah.

### 4.1.2.1.3 Macro Level

Hollywood frequently seeks to represent a particular image of the Middle East, particularly Middle Eastern women. In this scene, the broader ideological, societal, and cultural themes cover power structures and dynamics in the Middle East, gender representation of Middle Eastern women and feminist discourse, and Orientalist discourse reinforcing the Western perspective of the East.

Jasmine's rise to Sultan challenges the current traditional gender norms in Middle Eastern society. The scene represents a progressive shift in leadership dynamics, allowing women to rule and giving them agency. At the beginning of the scene, Jasmine is portrayed as merely a princess and a potential wife. After the shift, she gained notable empowerment by gaining political authority from the Sultan. Furthermore, Jafar's character, specifically his angry response, represents gendered opposition. He considers the practical difficulties faced by female leaders in cultures where men dominate.

Additionally, by presenting Middle Eastern countries as inherently patriarchal, the scene adheres to Hollywood's Orientalist themes. To achieve gender equality, Western-style progressivism is often necessary. The filmmakers indicate that Jasmine's leadership is a departure from traditional practices by using the Sultan's change of heart to symbolise the adoption of Western female values.

### 4.1.3 Scene Eight: Jasmine Sings "Speechless"

**Background:** Jasmine refuses to be silenced by Jafar, leading to her powerful solo, Speechless.

**Jasmine** (*singing*):
"Here comes a wave"
"Meant to wash me away"
"A tide that is taking me under"

**Jafar**: (*mocking*)
"You are a girl. You will do as you are told."

**Jasmine** (singing, more forcefully):
"But I can't cry"
"And I can't start to crumble"
"Whenever they try"
"To shut me or cut me down"

**Guards**: (*moving to detain her*)

**Jasmine** (*singing louder*):
"I can't stay silent"
"Though they wanna keep me quiet"
"And I tremble when they try it"
"All I know is I won't go speechless"

**Jafar**: (*angry, to the guards*)
"Seize her!"

**Jasmine** (*shouting back*):
"I will take these broken wings"
"And watch me burn across the sky"

(The guards hesitate, moved by her words.)

### 4.1.3.1 The Analysis

#### 4.1.3.1.1 Micro Level

#### 1) Vocabulary:

##### a) Overwording:

Jasmine's repeated phrases concerning her silence emphasise her refusal to be silenced. These phrases appear several times in the song: *"A tide that is taking me under," "To shut me ...", "I can't stay silent"* and *"... I won't go speechless"*. This repetitive structure by Jasmine builds intensity, portraying her struggle against patriarchal forces in a continuous battle. Additionally, Jafar's speech represents the other side of the battle, as he talks to her in a way that makes her feel guilty if she demands gender equality: *"You are a girl. You will do as you are told.",* this is also emphasized in Jafar's order to the guards*: "Seize her!"*

##### b) Categorisation

Jasmine defines her identity in her lyrics by aligning herself with strength and resistance. In her poetic line, *"I will take these broken wings,"* she signifies revolution and resilience, while in *"Watch me burn across the sky,"* she claims her empowerment and transformation. In contrast, Jafar's statement, *"You are a girl. You will do as you are told,"* positions Jasmine as powerless within the traditional hierarchy. This categorizes women as obedient and submissive in this society. Furthermore, Jasmine is represented as a Western-influenced character demanding freedom, agency, and power, while Jafar is represented as an Eastern character who refuses these demands. This gives another type of categorization between Western traditions and norms (self), and Eastern ones (other).

##### c) Metaphor:

Metaphorically, Jasmine describes her societal norms as oppressive forces in her line: *"Here comes a wave, meant to wash me away."* She describes these norms as a wave wanting to erase her voice and diminish her rights. This wave metaphorically symbolizes power dynamics, representing male control as inescapable. In addition, *"I will take these broken wings and watch me burn across the sky,"* evokes women's freedom; it operates as a metaphorical description which positions Jasmine as a phoenix rising from oppression and giving women a rebirth. Finally, Jasmin links voice to agency in the line: *"Though they wanna keep me quiet,"* implying that erasing a woman's power begins in silencing her voice.

#### 2) Grammar:

##### a) Transitivity:

The material process in this scene is stated by Jafar in his command to the guards: *"Seize her!"* He represents the patriarchal authority enforcing control through direct

actions. In contrast, Jasmine uses the material process: *"I will take these broken wings"* to reclaim her active agency and freedom. Furthermore, Jasmine expresses her inner conflict, acknowledging fear but refusing to overcome it: *"And I tremble when they try it."* Finally, Jafar constructs Jasmine's identity in opposition to leadership in the relational process: *"You are a girl. You will do as you are told,"* reinforcing rigid gender roles.

### b) Modality:

To reinforce absolute patriarchal control, Jafar uses a deontic modality in his command: *"You will do as you are told."* Meanwhile, Jasmine counters this with epistemic modality: *"All I know is I won't go speechless."* She asserts her certainty in resistance and challenges Jafar's imposed certainty. Furthermore, deontic modality appears in *"But I can't cry"*, *"And I can't start to crumble"* and *"I can't stay silent"* in Jasmine's song and contains the negative form of the modal verb 'can', expressing different shades. In the first one, Jasmine expresses an inability to cry due to her inner strength. In the second one, she may be expressing either the same inability or her refusal to crumble, suggesting determination. Finally, she refers to her self-imposed restriction to stay silent and she must speak to refuse injustice.

### 4.1.3.1.2   Meso Level

### 1)  Intertextuality:

The discourse of this scene draws upon real-world feminist resistance. Jasmine's defiance aligns with Western narratives of female empowerment. The theme of transformation in feminist literature is depicted in the phoenix-like imagery in *"Watch Me Burn Across the Sky."* This particularly aligns with the Western pop culture representations of oppressed women breaking free. Additionally, the Western-influenced characters who are frequently depicted as strong and revolutionary are also reflected in this scene, contrasting them with Eastern characters, which reflects an Orientalist discourse, viewing the Western perspective of the East.

### 2)  Speech Act:

A declaration of self-determination is said by Jasmine in the assertive speech act: *"All I know is I won't go speechless,"* to directly oppose Jafar's control. While Jafar uses his authority and reflects his control in the directive speech act: *"Seize her!"* Additionally, Jasmine reveals her internal struggle in the expressive speech act: *"And I tremble when they try it,"* making her resistance more humanized and relatable. Similarly, she uses expressive speech acts: *"But I can't cry"* and *"And I can't start to crumble",* expressing her internal feelings. Two Commissives are utilized by Jasmine in*: "I can't stay silent"* and *"All I know is I won't go speechless",* referring to her future actions. The representative speech acts (Assertive) appear in different lines in Jasmine's lyrics, such as: *"Here comes a wave", "Meant to wash me away", "A tide that is taking me under", "Whenever they try to shut me or cut me down", "Though they wanna keep me quiet" and "And I tremble when they try it"* in which, she is representing the nature of the societal force in which lives.

### 4.1.3.1.3 Macro Level

The scene represents a clear gendered power struggle as well as an Orientalist narrative and cultural representation. Gender representation is achieved by the struggle between Jafar (representing males) and Jasmine (representing females). Through the linguistic tools and participant utilization in both micro and meso levels, the scene reflects a clear battle between the two genders fighting against each other. Jafar uses force and dismissive language to control Jasmine, representing authoritarian patriarchy. Jasmine uses the song to resist him, claiming agency and challenging traditional norms. Jasmine's voice is utilized as a tool of empowerment. Additionally, the final move of the guards' hesitation suggests a challenge to patriarchal norms as they are moved by her words, not Jafar's authority.

In addition, the scene draws on Western feminist narratives about the Middle East. It depicts Jasmine as a liberated woman resisting her society and oppressive culture. Jafar's controlling nature reinforces the Orientalist stereotype of Middle Eastern men as oppressive toward women. The Western-style empowerment used by Jasmine positions her as a Western symbol within a Middle Eastern setting. Furthermore, the metaphor of speech as power reflects the Western ideals of self-expression and individualism. It reinforces the contrast between Eastern oppression and Western feminism.

In conclusion, the performance of this song operates as a personal rebellion and ideological revolution. Through linguistic and discursive strategies, Jasmine is portrayed as an empowered woman who challenges patriarchal norms and traditions in her society, reinforcing Western feminist and Orientalist narratives. The struggle between female agency and patriarchal silencing is highlighted through Jasmine's lyrical defiance and Jafar's authoritarian language.

## 4.2 Discussion of Results

The analysis of Aladdin (2019) reveals that discursive and linguistic strategies are used to create a complex and controversial image of Middle Eastern women. At the micro, meso, and macro levels of the analysis, the findings illustrate how language, power, and ideology interact to influence audience perceptions of gender and culture.

### 4.2.1 Micro-Level: Linguistic Representation

The micro-level examination illustrates that Princess Jasmine's character undergoes internal processes of transitivity and modality. Constructive empowerment processes reveal that relational violence through phrasing such as "Jasmine, the future of Agrabah" bestows her with "strength" and proves that she is appreciated more for her attributes than her deeds. However, she still manages to add action and emotion via the material and mental processes, "I see their struggles," "I vow to serve you," suggesting some defiance toward the passivity often imposed on women.

Modality marks the juxtaposed lines of authority and obligation placed on Jasmine, especially the deontic ones such as "You shall be the next Sultan," and "You must understand." Jasmine navigates those imposed modal parameters to assert some

bare minimal autonomy as dominant man-societies reign traditions upon her. Her struggle appears in her epistemic modality, "Maybe I can lead," showcasing a power shift, portraying some of her empowerment journey. All together, the micro-level analysis reveals a complexity informing simultaneously both Orientalist and patriarchal discourses aimed at dominating Jasmine through words while de facto capturing her in a language of negotiation and constraints framework.

### 4.2.2 Meso-Level: Discursive Practice

The pragmatic and intertextual components, particularly speech acts, further contextualize Jasmine's depiction at the meso-level. Jasmine is placed within the broader Western feminist cinematic tendency of transforming passive princesses into active leaders via the use of intertextual references, especially to other Disney stories like Frozen and Brave. Furthermore, to be consistent with dominant Hollywood narratives, this intertextuality shows how Western standards are imposed on Eastern settings.

The discourse's frequent occurrence of directive and aggressive speech actions highlights how power is used and challenged. Male characters' directives serve to limit and restrict Jasmine's independence, while her forceful claims challenge established norms. Jasmine's voice is further raised by the commissive act ("I vow to serve you"), which represents a political and personal commitment to leadership. Despite being defined by Western narrative standards, these findings show a performative shift in gender roles within the discourse.

### 4.2.3 Macro-Level: Ideological and Cultural Implications

On a broader ideological level, the movie's portrayal of Princess Jasmine upholds orientalist dichotomies while also adopting feminist discourse. As an example of empowerment, her rise to prominence reflects Western feminist values. However, by publicly presenting traditional Middle Eastern customs as backward, this empowerment is achieved. This is similar to the "self vs. other" dichotomy (Said, 1978), which depicts the West as the path to freedom and the East as the area of restraint.

A popular orientalist narrative is followed in the movie: Jasmine is the modern, progressive voice in a patriarchal society that needs to "catch up" with her ideals. Jafar's anger and the Sultan's eventual capitulation represent a clash of opinions that can only be reconciled through embracing Western values. Therefore, rather than being an inevitable consequence of her cultural setting, Jasmine's empowerment is a projection of foreign (Western) values onto an imaginary Eastern framework. 9

### 4.3 Conclusions

With a focus on Princess Jasmine, the present research aims to investigate the linguistic and ideological strategies utilized to present Middle Eastern women in Aladdin (2019). The study addressed four main areas by using a multi-level Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The following are the conclusions derived from the findings:

1. **What linguistic strategies are employed to represent Middle Eastern women in *Aladdin* (2019)?**

The movie establishes Jasmine's character through a combination of relational, material, and mental processes, according to the micro-level study. Material and mental processes are used less frequently, suggesting limited agency, while relational processes characterise her metaphorically (e.g., "You are the future of Agrabah"). The constraints imposed on Jasmine and her attempts to overcome them appear in modality, notably deontic and epistemic. These language strategies place her in a conflict between empowerment and submission, implying a partial defiance of traditional representations without completely escaping from them.

2. **How do intertextual elements in this movie contribute to shaping and reinforcing dominant portrayals of Middle Eastern women?**

By placing Jasmine under a Western feminist paradigm, the analysis shows how intertextual components and speech acts in Aladdin (2019) support prevailing representations of Middle Eastern women. Jasmine's empowerment is based on Western ideals rather than local conditions, as evidenced by allusions to figures like Elsa and Merida. By expressing resistance in ways that are recognizable to Western audiences, her speech acts—particularly aggressive and commissive forms—reinforce this alignment. These tactics imply that true empowerment must adhere to Western discursive norms, which ultimately perpetuates Orientalist narratives even when they suggest female agency.

3. **In what ways do these representations align with or challenge Orientalist and gendered narratives about Middle Eastern women?**

The macro-level analysis indicates that although Jasmine achieves political agency and refuses gender norms, her independence is portrayed as a break from Middle Eastern tradition rather than a progression within it. This is consistent with Orientalist tropes, which portray the West as liberated and the East as backward. Even while the story questions gender roles, the solution is presented in terms of Western standards, which suggests an implied criticism of Eastern cultural norms.

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## Abstract in Arabic

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المستخلص:

هذه الدراسة هي تحليلا نقدياً للخطاب في فيلم (علاء الدين 2019). حيث تستقصي كيفية استخدام هوليود للاستراتيجيات اللغوية والخطابية لتمثيل المرأة الشرق أوسطية. وتستكشف كذلك كيفية بناء ثنائية "الذات" و " الاخر", وكيف يسهم الخطاب في تعزيز التسلسلات الهرمية الثقافية وديناميكيات السلطة. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى التحقيق في الاستراتيجيات اللغوية المستخدمة في تمثيل المرأة الشرق أوسطية في فيلم علاء الدين 2019، ووظائف التناص في هذه التمثيلات، وأخيرا كيف تتماشى هذه التمثيلات مع السرديات الجندرية والاستشراقية. يوظف الباحث منهجاً بحثياً نوعياً لاختبار ثلاث مشاهد مختارة في هذا الفيلم مستخدماً انموذجاً انتقائياً يجمع بين نموذج التحليل ثلاثي الابعاد لفيركلوف، المربع الايديولوجي لفان دايك، أفعال الكلام لسيرل، الأفعال الناقصة لكويرك واخرون، وأفعال التعدي لهاليدي وماثيسين. واظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة ان فيلم علاء الدين 2019 غالباً يمثل المرأة الشرق أوسطية كشخصيات مضطهدة باستخدام أفعال التعدي، والافعال الناقصة، والاستعارة، والاشارات التناصية بما يدعم وجهات النظر الغربية السائدة. ومن خلال تعزيز الصور النمطية الجندرية والثقافية، تعمل هذه الاساليب في ترسيخ هياكل السلطة المهيمنة وتغذية السردية الاستشراقية الأوسع.