



Figure 1



Figure 2

FEMININITY IN DISNEY

Princess Jasmine as shown in Disney's Aladdin.

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Introduction

In 1992 Walt Disney Pictures released its animated film *Aladdin*, a film based upon the tales of 1001 Arabian nights.¹ Different elements from different stories extracted from this bundle are combined into one story. The film is about a young man who grew up on the streets of the fictional land Agrabah but unfolds into a hero and eventually uses his cleverness to become Sultan. He receives help from a magic carpet, a genie from a lamp and a princess that feels trapped inside her own castle. Together, they beat the evil counsellor of the Sultan who has been controlling the Sultan with the power of hypnosis. All of these narrative elements originated from real Arabian folklore as the stories in 1001 Arabian nights are a collection of tales that have been told to children in the Middle East for a long time before they were first published.² However, there were other elements added to the story in order to make it more suited for the American audience. For example, the fact that Aladdin is a self-made man that has put himself in the position where he could possibly become Sultan. Also, the wish of the genie to be freed from the lamp was not in the original Arabic folklore story. The film was a big success and it won two Oscars in 1993 for best music and best song.

The film raised questions among academics, especially about the representation of the Arabian culture in this Hollywood blockbuster. The role of the princess has also been examined, from a feminist perspective. The role of Princess Jasmine is an interesting object of study, because she is the only female character in the film and her cultural and ethnical background give her a unique position among Disney's female characters. Recently, an interesting development took place; in 2019 Disney released a live-action remake of *Aladdin*.³ According to Henry Jenkins, the production of new media content is influenced by the wishes of media consumers.⁴ The fact that Disney has chosen to remake one of its classic animated films is interesting because it shows that there was a demand for a renewing of the original film. For my bachelor thesis, I analyzed both of the *Aladdin* films and in particular the character Princess Jasmine. The main research question for my thesis will be: 'How does the character Princess Jasmine show that Disney has chosen to change their representation of femininity, when comparing the animation of 1992 to the live-action remake of 2019?' In order to answer this question I make use of three sub-questions related to the concepts knowledge, agency and authority which I have extracted from feminist theory. How does Princess Jasmine show that she has gained knowledge? How does Princess Jasmine show that she has gained agency? And finally, how does Princess Jasmine show that she has gained authority? I conclude that the role of Princess

¹ Ron Clements and John Musker, *Aladdin* (Walt Disney Pictures, 1992).

² Alan Menken, *A Diamond in the Rough: The Making of Aladdin* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afqrFqn7PJg>).

³ Guy Ritchie, *Aladdin* (Walt Disney Pictures, 2019).

⁴ Henry Jenkins, *Spreadable Media*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013) p. 35

Jasmine within the *Aladdin* films has become much more emancipated in the new live-action film compared to the animated film because she has gained knowledge, agency and authority. I end with a reflection on my research.

Theoretical Frame

First, I explain how my research fits in the academic debate around Disney's princesses. Then, I explain the academic concepts which I use in my analysis to make sense of my observations.

Positioning of my research

Lately the position of Disney's princesses has been subject of discussion among academics. According to Cassandra Stover, Disney has changed little girls into princesses from the very beginning.⁵ 'The dresses, the tiaras, the pink; countless parents watch their little girl embrace the princess way of life and struggle with the contradictory messages found in many of the films.'⁶ The influence that the Disney princesses have on the little girls that watch the films is undeniable. According to research done by multiple researchers such as Rebecca-Anne Do Rosario, the self-image of young girls is influenced by the way females are represented in Disney films.⁷ Disney princesses are role-models for girls during an important part of their childhood. Around the same time that children are exploring the world and learning about their gender and the behavioral expectations that come with it, Disney princesses are there for them to lead the way. According to Maaïke Bleeker, there is a certain power relationship between a person that is looking and a person that is being looked at.⁸ The person that is being looked at always holds power over what the person that is looking sees. Therefore, Disney's princesses possess the power to make little girls see what their future can be like. And that is exactly why they have been such an important object of research.

According to Stover, 'Disney princesses have often come under attack for promoting harmful, unrealistic body types and the narrow ideal of marriage as the happiest of endings for young women.'⁹ Sara Wilde adds that 'The animations focus on negative gendered portrayals, in most cases passivity and submissiveness of the heroine in relationships with other characters, in particular male

⁵ Cassandra Stover, 'Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess', *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University* 2, no. 1 (2013).

⁶ Cassandra Stover, 'Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess', *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University* 2, no. 1 (2013). P. 1.

⁷ Rebecca-Anne Do Rosario, 'The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess,' *Women's studies in Communication* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2004).

⁸ Maaïke Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011) p.133.

⁹ Cassandra Stover, 'Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess', *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University* 2, no. 1 (2013). P. 1.

counterparts.¹⁰ Do Rozario contradicts this statement by saying: 'The Disney Kingdom may still seem like a man's world, but it is a man's world dependent on a princess.'¹¹ These statements demonstrate the debate surrounding Disney's Princesses, on the one hand there are the researchers who claim that the princesses happiness was completely dependent on their marriage with a prince and on the other hand there are the researchers who claim that the whole film depended on the decision of the princesses to marry these princes. In other words, it's a discussion of whether or not the choices and decisions of the princesses really mattered for the outcome of the story. I agree with the statement made by Stover, since this statement was made about Disney's original animated films. However, I think that for the new live-action film the statement made by Do Rozario is more true. In my research I add to this field of research by analyzing Princess Jasmine and the difference between the way she is portrayed in the animated film and in the live-action remake of the animation. Analyzing a character is always subject to interpretation, as Philippe Hamon has described it: 'The character is both a reconstruction of the reader and a construction of the text'.¹² This means that, when analyzing a character, the researcher always has to keep in mind that their findings are not just based on what is visible in the film, but also on their own interests and background. My research will add to the field of research regarding Disney's princesses, but I need to put this disclaimer in place: my research is also dependent on my interpretations of the films which may be subject to my own cultural and political background.

Methodology

In my analysis, I describe how the character princess Jasmine has become more emancipated in the live-action remake compared to the animation. In order to do this I have analyzed both films and looked at a couple of YouTube videos that have helped me to pinpoint some of the important differences between the animation and the live-action film. For my analysis of the character princess Jasmine, I make use of three key terms that can help us to understand this development: Knowledge, Agency and Authority. If Jasmine's knowledge, agency and authority have gained, she has become more emancipated. This will answer my research question because it shows that Disney has chosen to give Princess Jasmine a more emancipated position in the new live-action remake than she had in the animation.

¹⁰ Sara Wilde, "Repackaging the Disney Princess: A Post-feminist Reading of Modern Day Fairy Tales", *Journal of Promotional Communication* 2, no. 1 (2014) P.133.

¹¹ Rebecca-Anne Do Rosario, "The Princess and the Magic Kingdom: Beyond Nostalgia, the Function of the Disney Princess," *Women's studies in Communication* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 57.

¹² Philippe Hamon, "De Semiotische status van het Personage," p.85.

In her chapter 'Knowledge as a battlefield', Kathrin Thiele describes how knowledge has become an issue within feminist theory.¹³ She refers to Virginia Woolf's text *A Room of One's Own* where Woolf describes how she was denied access to the university library because she was a woman. She states that knowledge is always subject to power and those who possess it, which means that the truth is defined by those who possess the power to call something the truth. The fact that for a very long time women were denied the access to knowledge, means that their version of the truth was never accepted as (part of) the truth. If Princess Jasmine has had an education and therefore gained knowledge in the live-action film, this will show she has a more emancipated position than the one she had in the animation.

According to Sue Thornham, one of the key ingredients for a more emancipated and feminist film is the agency for a female character. By giving a female character agency, she becomes an active agent rather than a passive object.¹⁴ Agency was described by Peter Brooker as 'the role of the human actor as an individual or group in directing or effectively intervening in the course of history'.¹⁵ In my own words, I use the term agency in my research to describe the amount of influence that the character has on the development of the story in the film. If Princess Jasmine's actions have an effect on the outcome of the story, this means that she had gained agency and is not a subject to or overpowered by the powerful men that she is surrounded by.

The last term I have used for my analysis is Authority. According to Constance Penley classical films have a tradition of connecting authority to masculinity.¹⁶ The person in charge is often a man and we can also find this in both the *Aladdin* films, as the Sultan is in charge of both the kingdom and the household of the palace, the absence of a mother figure for Jasmine forces her into a position of submissiveness. However, as I explain in the next chapter, Jasmine finds a way of becoming more authoritative in the live-action remake. For my analysis I understand authority as the power to control and rule over other people. If Princess Jasmine has gained the power to tell other people what to do, this means that she has gained authority and is therefore more emancipated than she was in the animation.

Analysis

Before I started my analysis of the character Princess Jasmine, I have looked at a couple of YouTube videos that have helped me to pinpoint some of the important differences between the animation and the live-action remake. Although these videos are not specifically about Princess Jasmine, they

¹³ Kathrin Thiele, "Kenniss als Strijdtoneel", in *Handboek Genderstudies in Media, Kunst en Cultuur*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema and Liedeke Plate (Bussum: Coutinho, 2015) p.75-112.

¹⁴ Sue Thornham, *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1999) p. 55.

¹⁵ Peter Brooker, *A Glossary of Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2017) p.7.

¹⁶ Constance Penley, *Feminism and Film Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988) p. 2.

did help me to get a better understanding of how this character has changed in the new film compared to the original. I mention these videos throughout the analysis.

In my analysis of the character, I found that Princess Jasmine is more emancipated in the live-action film in three different ways. She is more educated and gained knowledge, she has gained agency and she has gained authority. I discuss each of these aspects in a separate paragraph.

Knowledge

How does Princess Jasmine show that she has gained knowledge?

An interesting adaptation in the live-action remake is the change of the harem girls that are present in the animation. In this film, Aladdin ends up in a room filled with girls that are dressed in traditional outfits for ladies of pleasure within the Arabic culture. Since the girls already know Aladdin's name, we can only imagine that he must have been visiting these girls before. He gets chased out of the room by a large lady with a broomstick, who is probably in charge of the girls. In the live-action remake, the girls have not been removed but rather adapted. Now, they wear regular clothing and are portrayed as schoolgirls. This adaptation is also mentioned in a YouTube video by WickedBinge called '10 Dark Things About The Original Aladdin The Remake Covers Up'.¹⁷ This new way of portraying the girls is less suggestive for Aladdin and more positive for the girls, but historically it is not more accurate. Girls did not attend school during the time that the story supposedly takes place and even if we were to assume that the timeframe of the live-action remake has been altered as well, education for women within the Arabic culture is still not very common. The choice Disney made can be understood given the fact that they were making a children's movie, but historically and culturally their choice cannot be supported so easily.

However, the sequence does help us understand another interesting movement within the live-action remake of the film: the addition of education and knowledge for the female characters. Just like the girls in the city, Jasmine has also received an education within this new film which she did not have in the animation. In the live-action film Jasmine possesses the knowledge to become Sultan in the end and she gets to ask critical questions about the background of the princes.

In the animation Jasmine does not have any interactions with anyone other than Raja and the Sultan up until the point where Aladdin gets arrested by Jafar. Jasmine then confronts Jafar and tells him to release Aladdin, but he informs her that Aladdin has been executed for kidnapping the princess. Jasmine is very upset about this and walks away crying, the Sultan then finds her and asks why she is upset. When she explains what has happened, the Sultan assures her that he will

¹⁷ WickedBinge, *10 Dark Things About The Original Aladdin The Remake Covers Up*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yod2KXxUI> visited on 13-11-2019.

discipline Jafar for overstepping. This moment shows that Jasmine does not have the authority to discipline Jafar in the animated film. But in the live-action remake, Jasmine discusses politics with her father and Jafar from the beginning of the film. The Sultan states that she has had the finest education regarding the govern of the country, but Jafar thinks that she does not have the required amount of experience to actually lead the country. Jasmine states that she wants to see more of her kingdom and learn more about it so that one day she can become Sultan herself and play out the ideas she has for the kingdom. In the animation Jasmine does not show any desire to become Sultan. In the live-action remake she actually becomes Sultan at the end of the film. Even though it has never happened in the history of the country, her father decides that she has proven herself worthy of the function.

Another moment in the remake where we get to see how Jasmine has had a better education in than in the animation, is when Jasmine asks prince Ali where the country Ababwa is located. In the animation Jafar is the only character that asks prince Ali where he is from since he has never heard of the country named Ababwa, Aladdin then answers that he came from much further than Jafar has traveled. The real whereabouts of the country are never questioned in the animation, but in the live-action remake real questions are asked about Prince Ali's background. Jasmine herself asks Aladdin to point out his country on one of her maps and he gets saved in this scene by the Genie who uses his magic to make the country appear on this map. This moment in the live-action remake is also mentioned in the YouTube video called 'Top 10 Small Details You Missed in Aladdin (2019)' by MsMojo. Aladdin finally wins over Jasmine when he tells her that it is not important where his country is situated on a map, he tells her that she should come and see the country if she actually wanted to know what it was like. This is of course exactly what Jasmine wants to hear, as she does not wish to stay in a palace and enjoy her rich life. Instead, she wants to go out and make a difference for the country. The love between Aladdin and Jasmine goes deeper in the remake than it did in the animation because it gets a much better foundation for a long lasting relationship. The Jasmine in the new film asks serious questions to the princes that come for her and does not let them play her with nice talk and gifts. In the live-action remake it is shown that Jasmine interviews the princes when they arrive at the palace and that she is critical about their answers to her questions, she stands in for what she is looking for in a future husband and has actual expectations for the princes to meet. The princes do not get to simply walk in and ask for Jasmines hand, they have to convince her that they are suited for the position and she plays an active role in deciding whether or not they have proven themselves worthy.

Agency

How does Princess Jasmine show that she has gained agency?

In the animated film it is explained that, according to the law in Agrabah, Jasmine must be married to a prince before her next birthday. Jasmine states that she only wishes to be married for love and that she wants to see the world before she settles down with a husband. She refuses to actually get to know any of the princes that have come to the palace up until this moment. The Sultan who is getting more and more frustrated and worried about his daughter, especially after prince Achmed tells him: 'good luck marrying that one off', is convinced by Jafar to marry Jasmine and Jafar if she does not find a prince on time. In the live-action remake, the Sultan does not make such promises, Jasmine agrees to do whatever Jafar wants after he tortures the Sultan. This adaptation shows that Jasmine possesses more agency in the live-action film than in the animation. At first it may seem like the scene has not been changed much, but Jasmine is no longer subject to her fathers' decisions, she stands in for herself and makes her own decisions regarding her marriage and her desire to become Sultan. The story develops according to these decisions of hers, she is not subject to other characters' decisions about her.

Another important moment where Jasmine shows her agency is during the song *One Jump Ahead*. In the animation, the song *One Jump Ahead* had the function of introducing Aladdin and Abu as characters and as partners in crime. During this song, Aladdin and Abu were running from law enforcers after stealing a loaf of bread at the market. The song still has the same function in the live-action remake, but in this film the song also introduces us to Jasmine and the chemistry she has with Aladdin. In the live-action remake Aladdin no longer runs from the law enforcers on his own, but he has Jasmine by his side. The scene therefore combines two scenes from the animation: the introduction of Aladdin and the scene where Jasmine has ran away from the palace and meets Aladdin in the market place. The scene refers to this second scene from the animation because it shows how Jasmine has to jump from one rooftop to the other using a beam for support. In the animation, Jasmine is really good at this and has no problem with the jump which does not make much sense given the fact that Jasmine has never left the palace before and it seems unlikely that she has learned such skills in the palace. In the live-action remake she is afraid to make the jump and only does so after a lot of support from Aladdin's side, introducing his famous line towards Jasmine: 'do you trust me?' which is the phrase that Jasmine later recognizes when prince Ali asks her to join him on a magic carpet ride. Also, in the animation Aladdin first falls in love with Jasmine because of her good looks when he sees her in the market place. In the remake, Aladdin falls in love with the courage she shows when she tries to steal something for the children at the market. This adds depth to the relationship between Aladdin and Jasmine but it also shows that Jasmine has more agency. Her good looks are a physical feature that Jasmine cannot manipulate much, but showing off her courage in front of Aladdin is an active decision she makes. This means that she gets him to fall in

love with her instead of being subject to Aladdin's decision: She decides how her relationship with Aladdin develops.

A third important difference between the animation and the live-action film regarding Jasmine's agency lies in an insight into what could have happened to Aladdin if Jasmine had not decided that he was worthy of marrying her, which the live-action remake provides. The live-action remake also emphasizes the similarities between Aladdin and Jafar a lot more than the animated film. Jafar gets told by one of the guards in the beginning of the film that he was not born to be Sultan and that he will always come second to the Sultan. Later the Sultan himself points out to Jafar that he needs to remember his place. Aladdin is also told on multiple occasions throughout the film that he is not born to be with Jasmine and that he should not expect a woman like her to fall for a man like him. Jafar himself tells Aladdin that he was once a common thief, he tells Aladdin that the rules do not apply if he knows how to be like him. He states: 'steal one thing and you're a thief, steal a kingdom and you're a sultan.' He shows Aladdin that they are not so different and that he can become just like him if they collaborate. In the animation, Jafar dresses up as an old prisoner that is in the same dungeon as Aladdin after he is arrested in the market place. He tells Aladdin that he needs a young pair of legs to enter the cave of wonders and that Aladdin can keep the treasure after he has delivered him the lamp. Aladdin is therefore fooled into coming with Jafar and entering the cave of wonders. In the live-action film Aladdin is kidnapped by Jafar and his men after he has broken into the palace to see Jasmine. Aladdin is no longer making an active decision to follow Jafar, but he is forced to do what Jafar wants. Both men want to become something they were not born to become. If Jasmine had not decided to marry Aladdin, chances are that he would have fallen for the temptations and had become like Jafar. Therefore, Jasmine's newly gained agency is of great significance to the live-action film.

Authority

How does Princess Jasmine show that she has gained authority?

In the animation, The Sultan makes a statement after Jasmine has refused to spend time with prince Achmed that 'her mother wasn't nearly so picky'. Of course this line can be interpreted as a moment of self-mockery of the Sultan, he states that, if Jasmine's mother had been picky she would not have married him. But it can also be interpreted as a moment of reflection that the Sultan has on his own marriage and realizes that he and his wife were not married for their love for each other and had different reasons for getting married. The animation does not provide any further information about Jasmine's mother, the live-action remake however adds a lot on this part. It is explained that Jasmine's mother was very beloved among the people of Agrabah and that the whole country was shocked when they learned she had been killed. The Sultan states that he has grown very protective of his

daughter because of what happened to his wife. The queen was originally from the country Sherabad, which is now an ally of Agrabah. The YouTube video by MsMojo called 'Top 10 Problems That Aladdin (2019) Fixed' also mentions the added background story regarding Jasmine's mother.¹⁸ In the live-action film, Jafar has plans to invade Sherabad because he thinks the country is weak and would be better off if Agrabah took over. But the Sultan and Jasmine both disagree because Sherabad is the land of the queen and a loyal ally to the country. The facts that Jasmine's opinion regarding these political matters is incorporated in the new film and that she has the power to control stop Jafar from invading Sherabad, shows that she possesses more authority in this film than she did in the animation.

Coming back to the possible love interests for Jasmine that present themselves at the palace. In both films there is only one prince shown that comes to visit Jasmine. In the animation, this prince is Achmed, he almost runs into two small children on his way to the palace. Aladdin steps in and saves the two children, he then addresses the prince and he put Aladdin in his place stating: 'You were born a street rat, you will die a street rat and only your fleas will mourn you.' (This famous line from the animation has been reserved in the remake, it is now delivered by Jafar instead of prince Achmed.) The next scene in which we see prince Achmed is when he exits the palace after he has been rejected by Jasmine and attacked by Raja. In the live-action remake, the only prince that is shown is prince Anders. He is more friendly than prince Achmed, a European looking prince from Scandinavia who does not appear to be very intelligent. The prince seems to be a reference to white privilege, as he assumes from the beginning that he will receive whatever he wishes, including Jasmine. He never has any direct contact with Aladdin and Jasmine does not seem to be very impressed by him. In one scene Jafar tells the Sultan that an alliance with prince Anders would be good for the country but he refuses to force Jasmine into marrying him. The addition of prince Anders as a character shows an example of western imperialism in the Arabic world. According to Sandra Ponzanesi, western imperialists would see women as an object of control when colonizing new territory.¹⁹ They would come to the country with the expectation that they could simply marry any princess they met there because they were white and educated and the country would be better off with them in charge. By marrying the princesses they would win the trust of the people because they would not protest if their princess was on their side. By portraying prince Anders as a foolish self-absorbed Scandinavian prince, the film shows how most of the suppressed people actually saw their white oppressors: as people that did not understand their culture and their country and that

¹⁸ MsMojo, *Top 10 Problems that Aladdin (2019) Fixed* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwEMZPKLOI4> visited on 13-11-2019.

¹⁹ Sandra Ponzanesi, "De Kolonie als Strijdtoneel", in *Handboek Genderstudies in Media, Kunst en Cultuur*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema and Liedeke Plate, (Bussum, Coutinho, 2015). p. 137.

were only interested in spreading their own principles because they were so convinced that they were better than everyone else. Jasmine and her handmaid even make fun of Anders' accent and stupidity and therefore show how disrespected the imperialists actually were. The fact Jasmine gets to put this white man in his place shows that she has more authority in the remake than she did in the animation.

Within the live-action remake, there are more occasions where Jasmine gets to show off her authority. In the animation there are no servants shown in the palace, so Jasmine never gets to express any sort of authority. She only gets dominated by the male characters that are present in the palace. In the remake Jasmine has several moments in which she is asked for her opinion or put in a situation where she has to take responsibility. The most explicit of these scenes is the scene in which she wins the trust of the head of the guards, Hakim. After he is persuaded to serve Jafar, Jasmine manages to win his trust by asking him to be loyal to her and convincing him that she will be better to him than Jafar ever will. Hakim is a male character but he is still dominated by Jasmine, which shows that Jasmine is in a much more emancipated position and capable of leading people instead of being subordinate to all the other characters. She even gets to sing a song about it, in the animation Jasmine did not have a song of her own, in which she states that she 'won't be silenced' and that she 'won't go speechless'.

In addition to this, there are numerous interesting changes that have been made in the song lyrics of the film. The YouTube video by Flicks And The City called '12 Disney Mistakes FIXED In ALADDIN (2019)' also mentions some of the adaptations in song lyrics.²⁰ In the opening song of the film 'Arabian nights' the lyrics were point of discussion from the first release of the film. In the very first version of the film, the song described the homeland of the narrator as 'where they cut of your ear if they don't like your face, its barbaric but hey it's home' this was later changed to 'where it's flat and immense and the heat is intense, it's barbaric but hey it's home'. This change was because Disney got a lot of criticism for putting a line about cutting of someone's ear in a children's movie. In the 2019 live-action remake the line has been changed to 'where you wander among every culture and tongue, its chaotic but hey it's home'. This change has probably been made because in nowadays society it can be expected that an audience would not appreciate a film that calls another culture 'barbaric'. This alteration therefore shows that modern day values and political correctness have been included in the new film. The song 'prince Ali' has been altered for the live-action remake as well. Instead of singing 'he has got slaves he's got servants and flunkies' the lyrics are now 'he's got ten thousand servants and flunkies' this alteration was probably made because it would not be

²⁰ Flicks and The City Clips, *12 Disney Mistakes Fixed in Aladdin (2019)*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=533mowxA4eI> visited on 13-11-2019.

appropriate for prince Ali to have slaves in the new film. In the same song another line was changed, where the animated Genie tells the Sultan that prince Ali 'heard your princess was a sight lovely to see' he now states that prince Ali 'heard your princess was hot, where is she?' this line may seem like it is more insulting for the princess than the first one, but in the film Jasmine is actually insulted by the song, so her reaction makes more sense with the new line being present. In the animation Jasmine is so offended by the song that she walks away and wants nothing to do with the new prince that has traveled to the palace to meet her, she states that she is 'not a price to be won'. In the live-action film Jasmine is not pleased with the assumption that the princes have about her, but instead of childishly walking away from the situation she shows off her dignity and pride so the men can see that she is not a price to be won rather than hearing it from her. The live-action film has even added an entire scene (the harvest feast) where Jasmine can show that she is not easily impressed by some well-chosen words or dance moves, she wants to be treated with the respect that a woman of her status deserves and has gained a capability to make changes to the way the other characters behave around her and talk about her.

Conclusion and Reflection

The analysis shows how Princess Jasmine has become more emancipated in the new live-action film that was released in 2019, compared to the animated film which was released in 1992. I have evaluated this change in emancipation on three different levels (knowledge, agency and authority) and because Jasmine has become more emancipated on these three levels, it is fair to say that she has become more emancipated as a character. It is possible that Disney is attempting to turn their characters into more appropriate role-models for their audience. In order to say whether or not this is the case, more research is required. This research adds to the academic debate regarding Disney's Princesses because it gives us more insight in the change they made in how Princess Jasmine represents femininity in these two popular films. The research also shows that this female character has become more important to the story, which is a clear statement from Disney's side that they have seen the change in mindset in society and wish to create a more political correct environment for their audience to grow up with. Disney has chosen to adapt their animated film according to nowadays discourse surrounding the topics of feminism and gender equality. Their new live-action film shows that they have taken knowledge of the critiques about their princesses and chosen to adapt their films accordingly.

Reflection

This research has done a good job at staying close to the case study and letting the subject lead the way in the analysis. The downside to this kind of research is that it may appear to be less academic

because it does not reference other research so much. My goal was to stay as close to the case study as I possibly could, without losing the academic relevance and aim of the research. Still, it needs to be said that in my analysis I have focused mainly on the narrative aspect of the films, the cinematographic friction of comparing an animated film to a live-action film has not been mentioned. The YouTube video called 'Aladdin BLOOPERS, DELETED SCENES & BONUS Clips' by Flicks And The City Clips also provides more insight in the challenges and difficulties the producers faced when adapting the animation into the live-action remake.²¹ I have chosen to include the methodology into my theoretic framework because the concepts that I used are the key element in my analysis and by explaining what they entail, I have explained my method as well. Putting my methodology in a separate section would have meant that I had to repeat myself in explaining these concepts and since I had a limitation regarding the amount of words I could use, I figured it would be better and more logical to combine my theoretic framework and methodology.

When doing my analysis there were a couple more things that I noticed and that I could not incorporate into this research. For example I noticed how the live-action film seems to provide new information that was left out in the animation. Right from the beginning, in the opening scene of the film there is an important difference to be noticed. Where the 1992 animated film introduces the story by letting an anonymous peddler capture the audiences interest with a lamp that according to him has an interesting backstory, the 2019 live-action remake starts at a lamp-shaped boat where two children will hear an entertaining story from their father. In both films the narrator of the story, the peddler and the father on the boat, are played by the same actors that play the role of the Genie. At the end of the remake we learn that the father of the children on the boat is the Genie because he and Dahlia decide they want to get married, have two children and sail the world with their boat. The boat is smaller than other boats and shaped like a lamp to imitate the Genies' 'tiny living space' as he describes the lamp to Aladdin. In the making of the animation 'a diamond in the rough', it is explained that for the first film, the plan was to return to the peddler at the end of the film and show that he is also the genie in his human shape after he has been freed from the lamp. However, this scene ended up being cut from the animation. The YouTube video called 'Top 10 Differences Between Aladdin (2019) & Aladdin (1992)' by MsMojo also mentions this explanatory adaptation.²² The remake therefore answers to a fan theory that has been part of the *Aladdin* franchise, and shows that the narrator of the story is the Genie after all. Also, in the animation, Aladdin never speaks of his parents but in the live-action remake he explains that they died when he was still young. The theme

²¹ Flicks and the City Clips, *Aladdin Bloopers Deleted Scenes & Bonus clips* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSdEoty4lok> (visited on 13-11-2019).

²² MsMojo, *Top 10 Differences Between Aladdin (2019) and Aladdin (1992)* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUOhAY-X8vo> visited on 13-11-2019.

of parenthood seems to be a lot more important in this new film. Possibly this is because the audience watching the film might have watched the animation themselves and are now parents and will ask more questions about the parents of the main characters. Another option would be that the audience wants the new film to include some new information that they did not get in the animation. This would be in line with Henry Jenkins' theory that new extensions of a storyworld always need to incorporate some new information so the audience will feel like they are rewarded for watching the new film as well.²³ This could also be an interesting topic for further research, to find out how the live-action film extends the storyworld from the animation in the same way a transmedia franchise would extend their storyworld by adding other media platforms to the franchise.

Secondly, it would be interesting to continue the research that I did by analyzing other Disney princesses that appear in both an original animated film and a live-action remake. Based on my own research I can state that Princess Jasmine has become more emancipated in the new film, but in order to say something about Disney becoming more female-friendly, more research is necessary. For example Belle from *Beauty and the Beast*, Mulan and Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* could be analyzed in order to find out if Disney is really making an effort in changing their female characters into proper role-models for their audience. Although part of this research is self-explanatory because of the change in mindset regarding political correctness and feminism that took place in between the release dates of the original animated films and their new live-action remakes. Sex scandals and movements such as #Metoo have led to a different discourse around women and femininity. It is interesting to see how this change in mindset has affected the way in which these characters represent femininity, and how Disney has chosen to join in on the new discourse.

Finally, there is one topic which I hoped I could discuss in my research but in the end I did not have enough space to do so. This topic has to do with the representation of the Arabic world within the *Aladdin* films. Since the Islamic state has been causing a lot of fear in the average western citizen, it is interesting to see how this fear has been translated in children's movies about this place. This topic could be linked to the representation of women in Disney films because women in Arabic countries have different values than women in the western countries. They seem to be just fine with the lives they live, even though many western people would state that they are being suppressed by men. The differences between our perceptions need to be investigated more if we ever want to come to a better understanding of each other's cultures and want to peacefully coexist together. From a postcolonial perspective it would therefore be interesting to see how the western representation of the Arabic world within the *Aladdin* films has changed and what this says about our western perception and understanding of the Arabic world.

²³ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

Summary

This research compares the animated film Disney's *Aladdin* (1992) to its live-action remake, Disney's *Aladdin* (2019). The research focusses on the character Princess Jasmine and how she represents femininity in both these films. The research shows that the way in which femininity is represented in the live-action film is much more emancipated than the way in which femininity is represented in the animated film. The research does so, by evaluating the character Princess Jasmine on three different parameters. These parameters are three concepts which are extracted from feminist theory: Knowledge Agency and Authority. Because the character shows in the live-action film that she has gained in these three areas compared to the animated film, it is concluded that she is more emancipated in this new film. This research adds to the debate about Disney's Princesses because it compares a new film to an original film and therefore is able to say something about the change Disney has made regarding their representation of femininity. In order to say if Disney film are becoming more emancipated all together, more research is needed. This research did a good job at staying close to the case study which is analyzed, but it could have done better by including a comparison of the two different types of films that are analyzed (an animation and a live-action film). Because the difference between these two types of cinematography might influence the way in which the characters are shaped as well and this difference is now not recognized within the research.

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Figure 1. "Princess Jasmine" as shown in Disney's *Aladdin* 1992. Front page.

Figure 2. "Princess Jasmine" as shown in Disney's *Aladdin* 2019. Front page.

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Appendix

Verklaring Intellectueel Eigendom

De Universiteit Utrecht definieert plagiaat als volgt:

Plagiaat is het overnemen van stukken, gedachten, redeneringen van anderen en deze laten doorgaan voor eigen werk.

De volgende zaken worden in elk geval als plagiaat aangemerkt:

- het knippen en plakken van tekst van digitale bronnen zoals encyclopedieën of digitale tijdschriften zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het knippen en plakken van teksten van het internet zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het overnemen van gedrukt materiaal zoals boeken, tijdschriften of encyclopedieën zonder aanhalingstekens of verwijzing;
- het opnemen van een vertaling van teksten van anderen zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing (zogenaamd “vertaalplagiaat”);
- het parafraseren van teksten van anderen zonder verwijzing. Een parafrase mag nooit bestaan uit louter vervangen van enkele woorden door synoniemen;
- het overnemen van beeld-, geluids- of testmateriaal van anderen zonder verwijzing en zodoende laten doorgaan voor eigen werk;
- het overnemen van werk van andere studenten en dit laten doorgaan voor eigen werk. Indien dit gebeurt met toestemming van de andere student is de laatste medeplichtig aan plagiaat;
- het indienen van werkstukken die verworven zijn van een commerciële instelling (zoals een internetsite met uittreksels of papers) of die al dan niet tegen betaling door iemand anders zijn geschreven.

Ik heb bovenstaande definitie van plagiaat zorgvuldig gelezen en verklaar hierbij dat ik mij in het aangehechte BA-eindwerkstuk niet schuldig gemaakt heb aan plagiaat.

Tevens verklaar ik dat dit werkstuk niet ingeleverd is/zal worden voor een andere cursus, in de huidige of in aangepaste vorm.

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