

The Arab and Muslim as Lusty Sheikhs, Terrorists and Despots in The Simpsons

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Abstract:

This paper has investigated the ways in which the Arab and Muslim are portrayed in one of the most influential prime-time American Sitcoms: The Simpsons. It took its theoretical bearings from Edward Said's works on Orientalism and from Linda Hutcheon's postmodernist theories on irony and parody. The portrayal of the Arab and Muslim in the animated sitcom is characterized by ambivalence and proves to be replete with political and social satire. The Simpsons do intertwine with American Geopolitics and adheres to the main satiric and ironic pop art stream in distorting the Arab and Muslim image by depicting them as lusty sheikhs, terrorists and despots.

Keywords: Arab and Muslim, Lusty Sheikhs, Terrorists, Despots, The Simpsons.

Introduction:

According to Edward Said "the representation of other societies and peoples involved an act of power by which images of them were in a sense created by the Western observer who constructed them as peoples and societies to be ruled and dominated, not as objects to be understood passively objectively or academically".¹ Thus Orientalism, as a style of thought and a system of ideas, has created a representation of the Orient and the Orientals, which serves to justify the actions of the West. Applying this to the cinema, one may argue that the representation of the Arab and Muslim in Western films is a creation aimed at preserving the status quo of the United States as the world police officer controlling, among others, the Arab and Muslim who are seen as the perfect "Other".² The United States, which lead the Western forces to rule the world, has equipped itself with effective weapons to bring everyone under control, and these weapons are not only military and economic forces but also Hollywood artistic creations and media productions which are believed to be "Soft Powers".

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Many would argue that the existence of so-called “Hawks” who dominate Hollywood is a mere myth and an overused phrase aiming at arousing sensibilities and inducing fake debates. Unfortunately, this myth has turned out to be a reality and an irrefutable fact. Those “Hawks” take control of Hollywood’s major studios and production companies and influence the choice and selection of the movies created and distributed across the globe. Fox Home Entertainment Company, the house where *The Simpsons* is born in 1987, is no exception since the wealthy businessperson Rupert Murdoch owns and directs it. Murdoch is believed to be one of those few people who determine what movies and TV shows must see the light because of his hawkish economic vision and his strong neoconservative political views and convictions. He is sometimes called the warmonger and oil imperialist because of his support to the Bush family. All this makes of Murdoch a perfect mixer of politics and business and inevitably media.³ With the aggressive promotion, Murdoch established a universal communications empire composed of the most prestigious and influential media companies such as *The Times of London*; Harper Collins Book Publishers, *The New York Post*, and *TV Guide* and more importantly, Intermix Media, the owner of the popular social network MySpace.com.⁴ It will be naïve, thus, not to assume that any Fox movie or sitcom will probably be out of the reach of the ideology and convictions of Robert Murdoch and influential people around him, like counsellors, art experts and lobbyists.

Jack Shaheen aware of the influence of Western ideologies and political orientations on Hollywood artistic productions could only pick out a few movies, such as *The Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), and some other TV shows that depict the Arab and Muslim fairly. He asserts that the American TV shows have always used the same stereotypes and clichés to depict Oriental men and women in the screen in limited ways. Far from being a theorist, Shaheen insists on the presence of a combination of what he calls the “Three B’s” to represent Orientals men and women.⁵ He, moreover, assumes that Hollywood moviemakers could never depict Orientals outside this trilogy which deplorably condemns Arab and Muslim men of being despots, terrorists or lusty sheikhs and their women of being, oppressed hijabi women, sex slaves or sensual belly dancers.

The main objective of this paper accordingly is the examination of the representation of the Arab and Muslim in *The Simpsons*. The probable stereotyped images, preconceived ideas and stigmas that characterize them will be dealt with in the different target episodes together with the factors that influence this kind of representation. Shaheen’s cinematic and media investigations help us attain this purpose.

The Simpsons which is a political and social satire in the first place uses irony and parody to tackle serious and polemical topics described by many as deadly grounds. The sitcom’s parody which is, as May Ien Ang asserts, extensive and often irreverent is what makes its “raison d’être”,⁶ because a popular animated sitcom like *The Simpsons* has long been the source of debates and controversies among Americans themselves. It is worth mentioning that former US president George H. W. Bush attacked the animated sitcom in 1992 saying openly that he wanted American families to be “a lot more like *The Waltons* and a lot less like *The Simpsons*”, because its irony and satire would destroy American values.⁷ For that particular reason, we lean on Linda Hutcheon’s postmodernist theorization to approach “Caricature” and “Graphic Satire” in the sitcom’s target episodes. In our analysis, the term Arab or Muslim stands for Orientals and vice versa.

The Arab and Muslim, as Said and Shaheen would argue, are represented in Western literature and popular culture in confined ways, either as lusty sheikhs kidnapping white women and running after sex slaves, or as sultans enjoying belly dancers in their harems, or as Oriental despots subjugating their nationals in the name of patriotism and religion, or as bloody and crazy terrorists fond of blasting buildings, killing innocents and hijacking Western aeroplanes. These stereotyped and passed along images inherited from the early European novels and travel narratives and fuelled lately by parody in movies, manipulated press reviews and governmental reports have brought about the distortion of the real image of Oriental men for a long time.

The Arab and Muslim as Lusty Sheikhs:

Any dictionary would define the Arabic word “sheikh”, as follows: the respected head of an Arab tribe, a spiritual and religious Islamic ecclesiastic of a high grade, a trusted wise man, and a venerated guide of a Sufi order.⁸ However, this word has been used in the Western thinking to signify a variety of shifting stereotypes of Arab men; dangerous romantic Bedouin, kidnapper, rapist, and lately, greedy and lusty oil-rich man from a Gulf country. Lina Khatib asserts that historically speaking, the term “sheikh” had been popularized in 1921, by the famous movie, *The Sheik*, starring Rudolph Valentino.⁹ Valentino’s sheikh lures a Western woman into his bed and when she escapes the poor lady is again kidnapped by another Arab sheikh that contrives to rape her.¹⁰

When it comes to romance and sensual stories set in the Orient, Harlequin novels are probably the most representative literary works which perpetuate the almost same storyline of white women being kidnapped by an Arab sheikh. The Harlequin shelves are, thus, loaded with many novels on the sheikh and his love adventures in the desert.¹¹ *The Sheik*, written by E.M. Hull in 1919 is the first known Harlequin novel based on a romance between a white European woman and an Arab sheikh.¹² These literary works have initiated a new genre that continues until our times to influence the output of Hollywood movies and animated sitcoms like *The Simpsons*.

The Simpsons is hence considered no exception in reincarnating the image of the lusty Oriental man enjoying his courtesans and belly dancers in harems. In the episode entitled *Skinner’s Sense of Snow* (2000) Matt Groening and his fellow scriptwriters and cartoonists have managed in their usual ironic and satiric manner to depict an Arab lusty Oriental sultan through Homer Simpson, the centre of the sitcom’s events and the main character in terms of appearance and recurrence. The fact of Granting Homer the role of a lusty man in this episode is not done arbitrarily by Groening. Homer is perhaps the most suitable character in the whole animated sitcom that may depict the typical and average lazy and failed American citizen who always quests for superficial lifestyle and runs incessantly after immediate pleasures. The image of Homer in the sitcom is associated with beer, idleness, couch and TV.

Unlike in *Mypods and Boomsticks* (2008), where Homer makes a terrifying Oriental nightmare, he makes an enchanting Oriental dream full of sensations in *Skinner’s Sense of Snow* (2000). In the dream, Homer travels to a faraway unnamed Oriental land and starts to live his life

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like a sultan in his castle full of harems. This image of Homer seeking immediate pleasures has long haunted the imagination of Westerners and dwelt in their writings, movies and letters. The pleasures narrated in The Tales of The Arabian Nights are clearly recognizable in this episode since all the stereotyped elements of the feminine Orient are present. Said attracts our attention to the different myths that revolve around The Arabian Nights and nourishes Western literary output, which proved to be looking for sensuality in Oriental figures.¹³



Snapshot 1: Homer, the sheikh, enjoys a foot massage by a courtesan

Snapshot 1, extracted from Skinner's Sense of Snow (2000) shows Homer Simpson featuring an Arab Sheikh in his harem, enjoying a foot massage from one of his belly dancers and courtesans. The women around him are extravagantly sensual and attractive because Matt Groening's cartoonists manage to make them look like Oriental beauties. The general atmosphere in this scene is that of The Arabian Nights delights and pleasures because everything the viewer can see has been designed purposefully to give that impression, even the carpet and the fruit basket. It is worth mentioning that this scene is part of a series of other similar scenes taking place in a dream. Homer's dream may symbolize the hidden desires of Western men who unlike the Orientals live a more or less stiff and complicated life characterized by hard work and professional achievements. The Westerners, hence, have always wanted to portray through the stereotyped image of the sheikh, the Oriental as the different "Other" which Said qualifies as urgently needed to be everything the Westerner was not, and vice-versa.

The Arab and Muslim as Terrorists:

The Arab and Muslim are not only represented as lusty sultans and sheikhs, but also as dangerous terrorists and crazy criminals aiming to threaten the American civilization and Western values. The image of the Oriental man has shifted from the lusty sheikh to that of the dangerous Muslim terrorist as a consequence of some tragic events like the rise of the Islamic Revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini and terrorist attacks, hijackings and sabotage of Western

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targets. Osama Bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri and other terrorists have fuelled the distortion of the image of Oriental men and have also taken part in making every Arab or Muslim man “the usual suspect”. Professor Evelyn AlSultany asserts that over the last three decades, Arab countries have come to represent terror in the American imagination, and the image of Arab men has, since then, become even darker than ever.¹⁴ 9/11 is a major turning point in this representation and can be considered as the alternative theme in American movies and Pop culture productions.

The Simpsons on its part has represented Muslim men, especially Arabs as terrorists in several episodes but the controversial episode of 2008 Mypods and Boomsticks can be considered the most representative one. The episode carries a two-fold storyline, one on consumerism and the other on terrorism. The plot goes that a Jordanian engineer and his family come to settle in Springfield, the quiet American city where a considerable number of ethnicities mingle and coexist in peace. The nameless man proves to be working for an American company of controlled and safe building demolition and part of his work consists of blasting decrepit buildings using authorized explosions. The man’s job and his Oriental dark complexion together with his Islamic religion make him suspected of being a dangerous terrorist who schemes to blast the principal mall in Springfield. Everybody in the city starts to fear the Jordanian man and his family, especially the idle guys who mingle every evening at Moe’s Tavern to gossip.

The plot of this episode is characterized by the most important two evils that might arise from actual and potential situations of fear: Islamophobia and xenophobia. Homer, in the episode, portrays the American zealous and patriotic citizen who seeks to defend his nation and fights for its integrity. However, he seems to be manipulated by media and urban legends and rumours circulating about Orientals when he starts suspecting the Jordanian man who proves to be his neighbour and the father of his son’s friend.

“Homer, this is serious. This Bashir kid is Muslim and therefore up to something.”¹⁵ This sentence uttered by Moe, the Springfield tavern owner and Homer’s friend, turns everything upside down in the episode. Homer, upon Moe’s advice and a movie he sees on TV, featuring an Arab terrorist wishing to blast a building but hopefully caught by the US agents, decides maliciously to invite the suspected Jordanian man and his family to set a trap to the “secret terrorist” and uncover his plot. Homer, after the main meal, asks the Jordanian man to cut a cake symbolizing the American flag using a huge knife and the Jordanian man whose name has never been revealed is astonished of such a strange behaviour. Homer’s craziness has no limits since he insults the man and his family saying that “They don’t like the taste of freedom”.¹⁶

Homer is immediately blamed by his own family, which represents the voice of tolerance and wisdom in this episode. His son Bart, who has befriended the Jordanian man’s kid Bashir, blames his father saying that he doesn’t have “to fear them because they have a different religion and their last names are Bin Laden”.¹⁷ Homer’s attitude towards the Jordanian man and his family symbolically shows the extent to which the ordinary and average American citizen is influenced by the media of his country and government. Media here is a brainwashing system that controls the minds of the crowd.

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Stephen Coleman and Karen Ross (2010) argue in their analysis of media effects on people that the twenty-first-century public witnesses itself more than any public in history but unfortunately, it does not control its own image.¹⁸ They explain that the mediated public is vulnerable to misrepresentation by media images that fail to reflect its diversity and complexity. They take television as an example, which is in certain perspectives considered more dominant and powerful than other media. They emphasise also how its “controllers and senior producers” do belong mainly to the white, male, and middle-class portion of society, and as a consequence these TV seniors are often accused of not understanding other sections of the public whose experiences are simply different from their own.¹⁹



Snapshot 2: A TV program featuring an Arab terrorist being interrogated

Coleman and Ross analysis, if applied on Homer’s xenophobic and islamophobic attitude towards the Jordanian Muslim newcomers reveals that Groening has in fact mocked the American Islamophobia through the exposition of the devastating effects of media on a man like Homer. Snapshot 2 above shows the program Homer sees before going islamophobic. Oriental aggressiveness and pugnacity talk.



Snapshot 3: Lenny satirizing Osama Bin Laden

Snapshot 3 also extracted from the same episode of 2008 features Lenny, one of Homer's best friends and a close co-worker, showing a kind of badge. Ironically, the picture of Bin Laden is on the badge but the terrorist's name has been changed to Osama Bin Sleepin'. This kind of ironic representation of Arab and Muslim figures reminds us of the controversial film entitled *The Dictator* (2012), written, starred and directed by the British Comedian Sasha Baron Cohen. Sasha mocks Arabic leaders in his film using comic and grotesque satire; he portrays and reincarnates the image of the typical Oriental despot who suddenly turns a democracy seeker.²⁰ Sasha was invited by The Simpsons team to voice Jacob in the episode entitled *The Greatest story ever D'ohed!* (2010). Jacob depicts an unusual and funny Israeli tour guide who welcomes tourists in Jerusalem and comments on almost everything: history, geography and politics. Sasha remained faithful to his irony and satire since he depicts the inhabitants of Gaza and Palestinians in general as being living under the mercy of their rulers who are in fact dictators wearing the masks of freedom fighters. Unfortunately, his depiction of Gaza and its inhabitants proved to be biased in many ways since he ironically changes Gaza Strip to "Gaza Strip Club".

The Arab and Muslim as Despots:

In addition to sheikhs and terrorists, the Arab and Muslim are represented as despots in *The Simpsons* repeatedly. The Western fear of being threatened by Oriental despots in their most important source of power and energy: oil, has fuelled this kind of representation in Western media and influenced the output of Hollywood. The Oil Crisis of 1970s and early 1980s was a nightmare for Western governments in general and the American government in particular. Media companies, thus, in their tradition of intertwining art and politics were there to make that nightmare even worse. A considerable number of movies on the topic of Oriental despots threatening the West's economy and welfare have seen the light successively. *The Formula* (1980), starring Marlon Brando, is one of the major movies released after the Oil Crisis of 1970s and presented oil as a sort of damn rather than a source of energy.²¹ The West's assumptions concerning Oriental despotism are clearly recognizable in such movies as Said would assume. Said asserts that the West always believed that an Oriental lives in the Orient differently from a

Westerner; he lives a life of Oriental ease, in a state of Oriental despotism and sensuality, imbued with a feeling of Oriental fatalism.²²

The Simpsons has depicted many Arab and Muslim leaders on many occasions and made them look ridiculous and pathetic. This is not considered an exception since the sitcom is known for intertwining art and the politics influenced by “Right-Wingers and Falcons” in the media, as Shaheen would agree.²³ Saddam Hussein of Iraq, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, and Muammar Al-Qaddafi of Libya, for instance, were represented in various episodes, be it a mere mention by name in a dialogue. The sitcom, though too direct and irreverent, never meant to offend the Oriental audiences, but Oriental despots have been harshly criticized and mockery has been a basic ingredient in their representation. Groening and his cartoonists made use of the already existing and stereotyped characteristics of Oriental despots in other Hollywood movies and in the US published governmental reports. They have used stereotyped facts to mock Al-Qaddafi and to show him as megalomaniac, illiterate and even goofy in the episode entitled Das Bus (1998). They have as well used stereotypes of firmness, harshness and totalitarianism to depict Saddam and stereotypes of malice and ambivalence to represent Khomeini and his Iranian clergymen.



Snapshot 4: Bart featuring Al-Qaddafi

Snapshot 4 is extracted from the episode entitled Das Bus (1998) where Bart Simpson is featuring Al-Qaddafi. He and his friends are asked to represent the Springfield Elementary School in a model UN club. In the scene, Bart depicts the defunct Libyan leader giving a speech at the U.N. General Assembly. Al-Qaddafi is a North African leader who claims to be of Berber origin and defends Berber culture, customs and language. However, Bart, in his ironic imitation of Al-Qaddafi, looks more like a leader from a Gulf country because he wears typical Arabian garments like the Khaliji Kamis, the Kaffiyeh and the agal. In Das Bus Al-Qaddafi is mocked at and shown as a goofy delivering a meaningless speech in front of the other nations’ leaders. The usage of his most known sentence to curse America and Americans “American Pig”²⁴ is readapted by Bart in the episode to curse Seymour Skinner, the school principal. This picture, which is true and existing, is inspired by Al-Qaddafi’s strange behaviour in the international arena leading media to always pick all his odd attitudes and speeches and use it to mock him repeatedly. Sitcoms like The Simpsons, famous for their exaggeration and irreverence, are

therefore very influenced by what happens in politics and global issues, and this has always been an abundant source for its irony and parody.



Snapshot 5: Saddam Hussein on target

Saddam Hussein, the former Iraqi president is being shown as a dangerous target to be eliminated by a Jewish-American female agent²⁵ in the episode of 1992 entitled Kamp Krusty. In the episode, the plot narrates the story of a depressed secret agent sent behind enemy lines in Iraq to eliminate Saddam Hussein and once she arrives there she makes all the necessary arrangements to attain her target. However, she can't kill Saddam because he is very protected by his armed men of the Republican Guard. The Gulf War has been a source for movies for a long time and The Simpsons has followed this tradition of balancing between real politics and stereotyped representation. Edward Said has explained how the language of the war during that period reached its peak and how it became dehumanizing in the extreme. Said expressed his disappointment when he heard a congressional representative addressing the media that: "We'll go in there, take out Saddam, destroy his army with clean surgical strikes, and everyone will think it's great".²⁶ This kind of political attitudes has a great influence on how people think and behave and moreover represent the "Other".



Snapshot 6: Khomeini among the most evil people

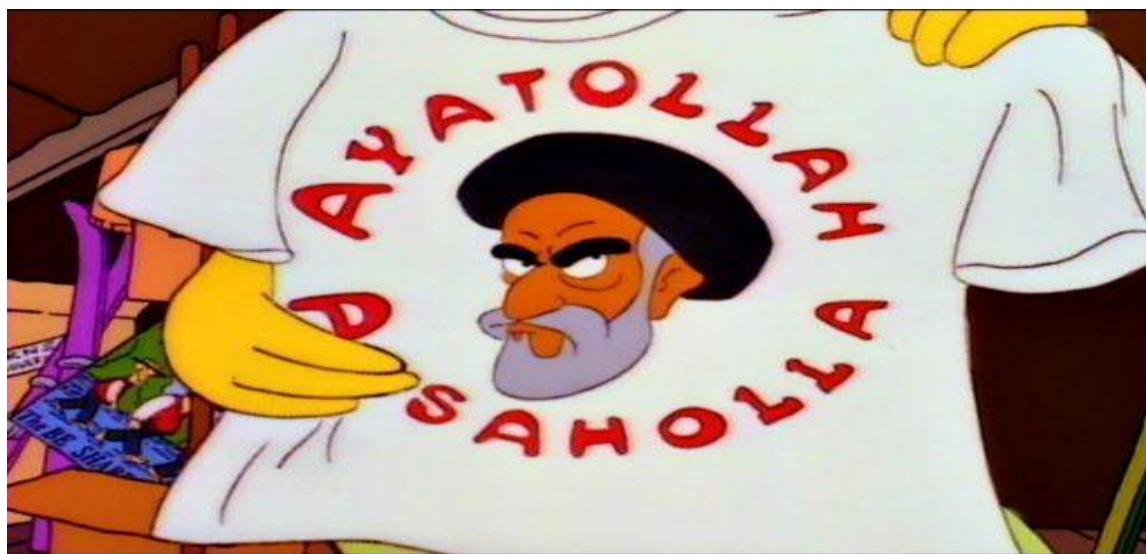
Scene 6 above, is extracted from the episode of 2012 entitled Politically Inept, With Homer Simpson. The former Iranian leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khomeini is depicted with the most evil people in history, according to the American perception. The scene features Homer lamenting in front of Mount Rushmore National Monument. The Monument established in 1925 and dedicated in 1927 is found in the Black Hills. It commemorates the memory of four US presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt.²⁷ The storyline of this episode recounts that Homer achieves immense notoriety among social media users after a video of him protesting in the airport goes viral. He becomes quickly a popular figure on the internet thanks to the political and social criticism he podcasts. Later on, he comes to be the preferred guest of all TV talk shows and his fame increases as he becomes the last “American truth teller”.²⁸ After some time he launches his own talk show entitled “Politically Inept, With Homer Simpson” where he, ironically, analyses political and economic issues and defends his nations’ values and interests. In one episode of the talk show Homer’s analysis proves to be crazily profound but satiric to the core. Let’s consider the following excerpt from the episode’s script:

“Zoomy, zoomy, zoomy”. (And Homer shows the US map on a large screen) --
 “Dateline: Nebraska -- A high school principal has decided that football is too dangerous, so he's replacing it with soccer -- Are you ready for Irish announcers with lyrical accents? "Oh, that's a lovely touch -- Oh, such a beautiful forms -- If we lose football, we lose the blitz, cheerleaders, Rudys, Ochocincos, something for fat kids to play -- (Sobbing) Ochocincos -- (Sobbing) Oh, yeah, that's right”. (Then the large screen displays the picture of Mount Rushmore National Monument with the heads of the former four US presidents carved on it. Immediately the heads of the four presidents transform into the heads of the most hated people to Americans: the former Chinese president Mao Zedong, Evil Doctor

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Doom, the lesbian icons of the sitcom Patty and Selma Bouvier and more importantly the former Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini) – “It’s already happening, people.- Hoard your toilet paper -- Shoot the mailman! (Sobbing): Shoot the mailman”.²⁹

The episode of the talk show receives positive feedback from TV viewers as they watch it live because they believe that Homer is the last “American truth teller” especially when he sobs and laments. Lenny, one of Homer’s friends, comments on Homer sobbing on TV saying: “When a guy who loves America cries, it makes him super straight”. This demonstrates once again the effect of TV on people and how it shapes their way of thinking and dealing with political and major issues. Accordingly, Said asserts that an Islamic figure like Khomeini achieved notoriety and became the subject of controversies, derision and hatred after the rise of his Imamate in Iran and the famous Fatwa he issued against Salman Rushdie, the author of the controversial book: *Satanic Verses*.³⁰ Televisions across the globe exploited this political outcome immediately to improve their “viewing rates”. This has been lately exploited by Hollywood largest studios to create a more or less real image of Ayatollah Khomeini.



Snapshot 7: Khomeini’s T-shirt - Ayatollah vs. (Ass)aholla

The Simpsons mocks Khomeini, as an Oriental despot, in other episodes using all sorts of comic situations. In *Two Bad Neighbours* (1996) the mockery reaches its peak and proves to be very intertwining with what happens and even what happened many years ago in the global political arena. If we carefully consider snapshot 18 above, we will notice that the picture of Khomeini in the T-shirt is associated with two words, the first one is neutral and denotes only the religious status of the Iranian leader: “Ayatollah”. However, the second one is loaded with political connotations and subliminal meanings: “Assaholla”, which is a vulgar wordplay meaning “asshole”.

In the storyline of the episode Marge Simpson; Homer’s beloved wife is cleaning the loft when she finds a box full of old and used stuff. Among the stuff she finds, is the T-shirt with the picture of Khomeini on it. Marge wants to get rid of it because she believes that the family does not need it. She spontaneously requests Homer saying: “Can we get rid of this Ayatollah T-shirt?”

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- Khomeini died years ago". Homer in his usual ironic manner replies: "But, Marge! It works on any Ayatollah: Ayatollah Nakhbadeh, Ayatollah Zahedi...even as we speak, Ayatollah Razmada and his cadre of fanatics are consolidating their power".³¹ Homer's irony has limits since he decides to sell the T-shirt to some passers-by, asking them whether Ayatollah was really right in considering himself better than America.³² This satiric picture mirrors the American society terrorized by the rise of political Islam in the world and The Simpsons once again makes usage of the matter and proves to be very linked to politics and global issues in its representation of Oriental men.

Conclusion:

To put it in a nutshell, we can safely assume that Groening and his team of scriptwriters and cartoonists make usage of the preconceived stereotypes and clichés to depict the Arab and Muslim as sheikhs and sultans running after immediate pleasures and enjoying the luxury of Oriental sexuality in their harems. Homer Simpson, in many episodes, features the rich sultan surrounded by his belly dancers and courtesans and most of the scenes depicting him so, take place in dreams; this shows to what extent the image of the Oriental men in the harem haunts the Western imagination. This representation is not a recent fabrication as it is inherited from the early writings of French and British authors Like Gerard De Nerval and Gustave Flaubert, who travelled to the Orient and encountered its people. The Arabian delights narrated in The Arabian Nights have been clearly recognizable in episodes like Skinner's Sense of Snow since all the stereotyped elements of the feminine Orient are present.

In other episodes the image of the Arab and Muslim shifts from the sheikh to that of the dangerous terrorist aiming at destroying Western civilization and values. Bin Laden is satirized in Mypods and Boomsticks through wordplay and punning. His name is changed to Osama Bin Sleepin' in a badge carried by Homer's co-worker Lenny. Other nameless Oriental men are depicted as ruthless and crazy terrorists ready to threaten America and its allies. This shift in the representation of Oriental men in the sitcom is certainly influenced by terrorist attacks and hijackings, which generated an unprecedented feeling of Islamophobia and hostility towards all what stands for the Arab and Muslim. 9/11 and the rise of Al-Qaida are considered major turning points in the representation of the Arab and Muslim as terrorists in media and cinema and The Simpsons constitutes no exception. Intertwining Pop culture and politics is, hence, a major cornerstone in the sitcom's representation of the Arab and Muslim

The sitcom also depicts the Arab and Muslim as despots ruling their countries by force and subjugating their oppressed compatriots. Images of Arabic and Muslim leaders recurred so many times in the sitcom; Saddam, Al-Qaddafi and Khomeini are the most represented ones. This image, to a great extent, conforms to the general colonial discourse which insists on the presumed assertion that Orientals live in a constant state of despotism and cannot rule and govern themselves unless assisted by Westerners. This, as Edward Said and other theorists would agree, is a mere justification to colonialism and military intervention. The image of the Oriental despot, in the sitcom as in other Hollywood productions, is fuelled by the rise of Oriental leaders like Saddam, Al-Qaddafi and Khomeini, who is personally satirized not as an Ayatollah but as an Assaholla.

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¹ Edward Said, qtd. in Lina Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics and the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World*, (London: I.B. TAURIS, 2006), p. 7

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²⁴ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 14/S 9*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 1998)

²⁵ She is, in fact, the illegitimate daughter of the Jewish character Krusty the clown.

²⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. xix

²⁷ <https://www.nps.gov/moru/index.htm>

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³⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 347

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