

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Mouloud Mammeri University of Tizi-Ouzou
Department of English



**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Magister in English**

Specialism: English

Option: Cultural Studies

Presented by:

Mr BOUCHAGRA Reda

Supervised by:

Professor GUENDOUDI Amar

Subject:

**The Representation of the Orient and the Orientals in the
American Animated Sitcom *The Simpsons***

Panel of Examiners:

Ms Sabrina ZERAR; Professor; Mouloud Mammeri University; _____ Chairperson

Mr Amar GUENDOUDI; Professor; Mouloud Mammeri University; _____ Supervisor

Mr Bouteldja RICHE; Professor; Mouloud Mammeri University; _____ Examiner

Mr Mouloud SIBER; Maître de Conférences A; Mouloud Mammeri University; _____ Examiner

Academic Year: 2017/2018

This page is intentionally left blank

In loving memory of my brother Issam Ismaël
(1981-2013)

To the dearest ones:

My mother and father;

illiterate but exalting the virtues of the erudite

Contents

Dedication	i
Contents	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Snapshots	v
List of Pie charts	vii
List of Tables	viii
Abstract	ix
Epigraphs	x
General Introduction	1
Review of the Literature	4
Issue and Working Hypothesis	8

Chapter I: The Representation of Oriental Spaces in *The Simpsons*

Introduction.....	15
I) Imagined/Imaginative Geographies.....	18
II) The Untamed and Aberrant Orient.....	32
II) Oriental Locations and Countries in <i>The Simpsons</i>	41
Conclusion.....	45

Chapter II: The Representation of Oriental Men and Women in *The Simpsons*

Introduction	47
I) The Representation of Oriental Men	50
II) The Representation of Oriental Women	63
II) Transient, Nameless and All-Dark Arab and Muslim Characters	77
Conclusion	85

Chapter III: The Representation of Two Other Major Oriental Communities in *The Simpsons*

The Indian Community and the Jewish Community

Introduction	90
I) The Representation of the Indian Community	93
II) The Representation of the Jewish Community	100
II) Comparison Between the Two Communities	105
Conclusion	108

General Conclusion	111
---------------------------------	------------

Bibliography	121
---------------------------	------------

Appendices	i
-------------------------	----------

Résumé

Acknowledgements

*I am very indebted to **Professor GUENDOUI Amar** who has accepted to supervise me. He has introduced me to great philosophical and literary theories such as Postcolonialism and Orientalism and contributed to the shaping of my analytical reasoning. I owe him majorly for his valuable time, patience and guidance at various stages in the preparation of this dissertation in spite of his tight schedule and academic commitments.*

*I wish also to extend my gratitude to **Professor ZERAR Sabrina** who has granted me the opportunity to take my knowledge to the next level and become an ambitious researcher in the scope of Cultural Studies. She launched and fostered Postgraduate Studies at the English Department of Mouloud MAMMERI University of Tizi Ouzou and has kindly accepted to be the chairperson in my dissertation defence. She has as well introduced me to the modules of Film and Music Studies which proved to be of great academic importance for my research.*

*My heartfelt thanks also go to the eminent **Professor RICHE Bouteldja** who has masterfully contributed to the moulding of my research by equipping me with the necessary methodological skills. He has introduced me to the most elaborate theories that my dissertation leans upon. Before I embark on Postgraduate research names such as Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Roland Barthes and Linda Hutcheon were unknown to me. He has as well helped me elaborate my statement of purpose and accepted to examine my dissertation.*

*I also feel indebted to **Doctor SIBER Mouloud** who has bountifully introduced me and my other colleagues to the modules of British literature and literary criticism and accepted to assess my humble dissertation with much gladness.*

List of Snapshots

Courtesy: All the snapshots figured in this dissertation are the property of Fox Home Entertainment Ltd.

The Video LAN Screenshot Software has been used to capture the snapshots without any form of edition whether by eliminating, adding or manipulating scenes and colours.

Chapter I:

1) Homer flies a magic carpet.....	P.20
2) The mighty genie appears	P.22
3) The genie orientalises the West	P.24
4) Homer in his harem enjoying his belly dancers.....	P.27
5) Lisa Simpson going Oriental and dressing like a belly dancer.....	P.28
6) Sensual Oriental belly dancers performing out-door.....	P.29
7) Marrakesh, timeless and out-of-date	P.32
8) Angry Oriental militia.....	P.35
9) Bart and his friends are landing.....	P.37
10) The freed Oriental women play with the boys on a beach.....	P.39
11) Homer Simpson preaching in front of an Oriental crowd.....	P.40

Chapter II:

12) Homer, the sheikh, enjoys a foot massage by a courtesan.....	P.54
13) A TV program featuring an Arab terrorist being interrogated.....	P.55
14) Lenny satirizing Osama Bin Laden	P.56
15) Bart featuring Al-Qaddafi.....	P.58
16) Saddam Hussein on target.....	P.59
17) Khomeini among the most evil people.....	P.60
18) Khomeini's T-Shirt - Ayatollah vs. (Ass)aholla	P.62
19) Assia Djebbar's name on the Noble Prize candidates list	P.65
20) Homer tips Princess Kashmir	P.68
21) Mulhouse wearing a niqab in Dearborn Campus.....	P.71
22) Oriental veiled woman praising <i>The Simpsons</i>	P.72
23) The Algerian Olympic Committee. All-dark figures.....	P.84

Chapter III:

24) Apu the shopkeeper, selling illegal fireworks	P.94
25) Apu being watched by a Canadian police officer.....	P.95
26) Homer the eunuch gazes at Sultan Apu with Annette	P.97
27) Apu enjoying a night of passion with Princess Kashmir	P.98
28) Homer is being worshipped by a group of Indians	P.99
29) Krusty and his father Rabbi Hyman	P.101
30) Springfield inhabitants making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.....	P.104

List of Pie Charts:

Pie Chart 1: The appearance percentage of the three main Oriental spheres.....P.43

List of Tables:

Table 1: The Indian Community vs. the Jewish Community.....	P.108
---	--------------

Abstract:

This Magister dissertation has investigated the representation of the Orient and the Orientals in the American animated sitcom *The Simpsons*. It took its theoretical bearings, substantially, from Edward Said's works on Orientalism then from Linda Hutcheon's postmodernist theories on parody and irony. It also leaned upon Roland Barthes's "Rhetoric of the Image" in analysing the snapshots, especially the usage of colours to convey non-verbal messages. The representation of Orientals in the sitcom is characterized by ambivalence, polyvalence and proves to be replete with social and political satire. Furthermore, parody which is a form of intertextuality constitutes the fuel to the sitcom's representation. The portrayal of Oriental spaces and people is based on preconceived images of *The Arabian Nights*, inherited from the early French and British Orientalist literatures and powered by contemporary American Islamophobic stereotypes of terrorism, despotism and aberrance. The sitcom proves to be intertwined with American geopolitics and adheres to the main Hollywood satiric and ironic Pop art stream. The comparison between the three Oriental communities, the Arab and Muslim, the Indian and the Jewish communities has shown to what extent the sitcom, at least the target episodes, is ambivalent and characterized by bias and double standard discourse, since the Arab and Muslim are depicted as outsiders and foreigners to the American "Salad Bowl" represented by the emblematic city of Springfield. *The Simpsons* belongs to the type of the strong and influential satiric shows, which are too direct and most of the time irreverent and sensibility-hurting.

Keywords: Representation, Orientalism, Parody, Irony, Satire, *The Simpsons*, Animated Sitcom.

“Oh! Marge, cartoons don't have any deep meaning. They're just stupid drawings that give you a cheap laugh.”

(Homer Simpson, *Mr Lisa Goes to Washington*, 1991)

“In claiming knowledge about “Orientals” what Orientalism did was construct them as its own (European) Other”

(Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick, 2008: 235)

“The ironist can openly wear any coloured hat: black, white, beige, or whatever and can defend or attack any set of sacred tenets”

(Robert Phiddian, 1995: 252)

General Introduction

General Introduction:

A Model UN Club meeting is in progress at Springfield Elementary School. Each one of the pupils is supposed to be a country's delegate. The principal, Seymour Skinner, is addressing them.

Skinner:

Ok, delegates, you leave tomorrow for the statewide Model UN, so this is our last chance to bone up. And bone we will!

... ..

All of the kids break into laughter, except Lisa.

... ..

Skinner: (to Bart) OK, Libya... exports!

Bart: Yes, sir, you American pig!

Skinner: (Chuckles), nice touch.

Bart: Uh, ahem, let's see...

Bart shuffles his blank papers, pretending to find something.

Bart: The exports of Libya are numerous in amount. One thing they export is corn, or as the Indians call it, "maize". Another famous Indian was "Crazy Horse". In conclusion, Libya is a land of contrast. Thank you.¹

Thus runs the conversation between Bart Simpson and Seymour Skinner, the Springfield Elementary School principal, who assigns the pupils to represent the city school as delegates in a statewide Model United Nations Club. Bart Simpson - the underachiever pupil as he proudly calls himself - endeavours to imitate the defunct Libyan leader Muammar Al-Qaddafi. However, he has chosen to wear a kaffiyeh, an agal and a Kamis² like those garments worn by oil-sheikhs from Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Qatar. This may lead anyone to think that Hollywood filmmakers do intentionally see and perceive all Orientals in general and the Arab and Muslim in particular

¹ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 11/S 9*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 1998)

² As the Century Dictionary defines them, a kaffiyeh is a small scarf worn by Arab Bedouins about the head and bound with a coloured cord called agal. Whereas the Kamis is a loose shirt, having sleeves reaching to the wrist, worn by men of Moslem nations.

as one entity, having the same “Oriental Psyche” and thinking with the same “Arab Mind”³ delineated by early Western authors and travellers in their writings. The reasons which may impel anyone to assume this attitude are the same reasons which impelled Edward Said, many decades ago, to issue his theories on Orientalism.

In fact, Said recounts in his seminal book *Orientalism* (1978) how he was amazed when reading Western literature about the Orient. Said states that the French poet, Gérard de Nerval who went on a voyage to the Orient, attempted to provide a description of his travels to Syria. However, what he was doing almost unconsciously was quoting William Lane on the Egyptians.⁴ So, because of this confusion, Western societies developed a kind of image of the homogenous and timeless Orient, as if the Orient, unlike the West, does not develop and stays the same. Said, hence, argues that this is one of the major problems with the Orientalist representation as it creates an image of uniform people living outside history, doomed to remain undeveloped, aberrant and incapable of defining themselves.⁵ The Orient is, therefore, something that is placid, still and eternal. This is simply, Said adds, contradicted by the fact of history.

Bart’s aforementioned ironic and “parodic” answer, if seen in Said’s postcolonialist eyes, reveals a bitter reality; things did not change too much from de Nerval’s era to Bart Simpson’s contemporary times. However, Orientalism, as a style of thought, has certainly metamorphosed and reincarnated into a new form. It shifted from the European French and British Orientalism to the American one. Moreover, its tools and implements became media discourse and Pop culture productions rather than exotic literature and travel narratives. And

³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 301

⁴ De Nerval’s book is entitled: *Un Voyage en Orient*. Historians assume that he stayed in the Orient from 1843 to 1851.

⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 301

what the two forms have in common, argues Said, is a kind of intellectual, ideological and political authority over the Orient within Western culture.⁶

Alternatively to Said's postcolonialist understanding applied on Bart's ironic and "parodic" imitation of the defunct Libyan leader; Linda Hutcheon's postmodernist theorization offers a different interpretation. Hutcheon argues that irony is a culturally volatile commodity, which is neutral and cannot be classified with either the forces of good or evil.⁷ She makes it also clear that irony is the intentional transmission of both information and evaluative attitude other than what is explicitly presented.⁸ The production and reception of irony and the "politics" mentioned in her book *The Theory and politics of Irony* (1995) does not seem to belong to any particular faith or confession. Robert Phiddian, echoing Hutcheon's attitude, asserts that the ironist can openly wear any coloured hat: black, white, beige, or whatever and can defend or attack any set of sacred tenets.⁹

Hence Hutcheon's essential point is that, politically and culturally, irony can be a risky business since it does not now mean only what it meant in earlier centuries, it does not mean in one country all it may mean in another, nor in the street what it may mean in the study, nor to one scholar what it may mean to another.¹⁰ The ironist's intention and the qualities of his language are always open to interpretation, misinterpretation, or no interpretation at all.¹¹ Thus, if we consider *The Simpsons* as a postmodern Pop art production then we should bear in mind that one of the main features that distinguish postmodernist art production is the fact that it takes what

⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 19

⁷ Robert Phiddian, "Irony in the Eye of the Beholder: *Southern Review*", vol. 28, no. 2. p. 252

⁸ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 11

⁹ Robert Phiddian, "Irony in the Eye of the Beholder: *Southern Review*", vol. 28, no. 2. p. 252

¹⁰ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 9

¹¹ Robert Phiddian, "Irony in the Eye of the Beholder: *Southern Review*", vol. 28, no. 2. p. 253

Hutcheon calls the forms of “self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statements”.¹² One way of creating this double or contradictory stance on any statement, she adds, is the use of parody: “citing a convention only to make fun of it”. As she explains, “parody - often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality - is usually considered central to postmodernist art production, both by its detractors and its defenders”.¹³

From Said’s and Hutcheon’s perspectives raise the problematic of this dissertation. Bringing into balance Said’s postcolonialist understanding and Hutcheon’s postmodernist theorization, an attempt will be made to watch *The Simpsons* with a very different eye. The representation of the Orient as a place and its inhabitants, the Orientals, particularly the Arab and Muslim will be dealt with; furthermore, we will equally study how the sitcom uses parody - which is a form of intertextuality - to portray the Orient as a culturally and politically stereotyped and imagined geographical space. It seems clear for both the viewer of the sitcom and the reader of the scripts that the representations of the Arab and Muslim in *The Simpsons* and that of the other ethnic groups are not knitted with the same thread. Accordingly, one may investigate ambivalence and double-standard discourse in this sitcom which is replete with social and political satire. This task will not be attainable without a comparison between the Arab and Muslim and the other major Oriental communities; Indians and Jews.

Review of the Literature:

The Simpsons, the far-famed American animated situation comedy, was created and developed by Matt Groening, Sam Simon and James L. Brooks and produced by Fox Broadcasting Company, one of the major international media companies owned by the Australian-born, media magnate Rupert Murdoch.¹⁴ It is believed to be the longest-running

¹² Linda Hutcheon. *The Politics of Post Modernism*, (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 1

¹³ Ibid., p. 93

¹⁴ No Specified Author, *Rupert Murdoch Biography*, <http://www.biography.com/people/rupert-murdoch-9418489>

American sitcom so far, since it made its airing entry on April 19th, 1987 on *The Tracey Ullman Show*, in a cartoon TV program called *Good Night*.¹⁵ The sitcom came quickly to be a first choice animated television show compared to all the other cartoons aired at the time. Many critics consider *The Simpsons* as a cultural and media phenomenon because with its 26 seasons¹⁶ and more than 500 episodes, the sitcom attained an esteemed status few television shows have ever attained. Russell Shorto echoing this assertion emphasises the importance of marketable aspects of *The Simpsons* and notes that:

“Merchandising for *The Simpsons* reported \$1 billion to date (2000): the show’s product endorsements are many (Butterfinger and Burger King head the list); licenses have been created for more than 1000 items, including T-shirts, dolls, PEZ dispensers, CDs, books, video games; and there is a multimillion-dollar market in hand-painted acetate cells”.¹⁷

The Simpsons, hence, has not only aroused feverish debates among media critics; it also generated a huge amount of books and academic papers since its launching. It may be difficult to the layman, actually, to be aware of this fact; however, it is worth mentioning that university courses in various fields like Television Studies, Media Studies, Cultural Studies, Humanities and Theology are taught using *The Simpsons* as a scientific instrument and an academic implement.

Leaving Springfield and the Possibility of Oppositional Culture (2004) is one the most illustrious books written about these short cartoons, which feature a yellow-skinned, boggle-eyed dysfunctional American nuclear family.¹⁸ In this book, John Alberti and other critics attempt to show how *The Simpsons* managed to position itself as an icon of counter thought in an urban culture sustained by huge media companies like Fox Broadcasting Company. They

¹⁵ John Alberti, ed., *Leaving Springfield and the Possibility of Oppositional Culture*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), p. xi

¹⁶ The 1st episode of the 26th season has been officially aired on September 28th, 2014.

¹⁷ Shorto Russell, *Homer’s Odyssey*, (US Weekly 22 May 2000), pp. 52-57. Web source: The Simpsons Archive.

¹⁸ John Alberti, ed., *Leaving Springfield and the Possibility of Oppositional Culture*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), p. xi

also tackle two of the most important aspects of today's societies, which are the commodity culture and the consumerist ideology. The first two chapters of the book focus on this theme, crucial in capitalist America, whereas the other chapters deal with themes that include the representation of the gay community, ethnic values and cross-cultural conflicts.¹⁹ Alberti, particularly, directs his attention on how *The Simpsons* in the heart of the Reagan presidency (1980-1988) managed to take satirical aim at the pieties of suburban American life.²⁰

Steven Keslowitz (2004), on his part, argues that the sitcom has managed to position itself as a work remarkably similar to great novels rather than a mere satirical animated sitcom by intertwining seriousness and satire. The author delineates in his study the nature of the themes presented in the sitcom which seem to cover all aspects of human existence and included history, politics, sociology, psychology and current events like sports championships and art conventions.²¹ Keslowitz also examines in the second section of his book the involvement of the American nuclear family through the Simpson family, and draws our attention to Homer's parenting techniques as compared with those utilized by Bill Cosby in the *Cosby Show*.²²

Religion is one of the major recurrent themes in *The Simpsons*. Shawn Bawlski (2010) shows that religious content appears in nearly 70% of episodes and that 11% of the episodes have religion as the main theme.²³ He also notes many episodes satirize and at the same time praise various aspects of Christianity in particular and other religions in general. Bawlski's assertion, accordingly, makes us wonder whether Homer Simpson's statement "*I'm gonna*

¹⁹ John Alberti, ed., *Leaving Springfield and the Possibility of Oppositional Culture*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), p. 273

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xi

²¹ Steven Keslowitz, *The Simpsons and Society: An Analysis of Our Favourite Family and its Influence in Contemporary Society*, (Michigan: Hats Office Books, 2004), p. 11

²² *Ibid.*, p. 2

²³ Shawn Bawlski, *Religious Pluralism in The Simpsons*: PhD thesis, (University of St. Andrews, 2010), p. 1

die! Jesus, Allah, Buddha, I love you all!”²⁴ can be interpreted as a sign of the American religious pluralism and tolerance or rather as a kind of mockery of religion. This as well may lead us to think that not only great playwrights like Shakespeare are ambivalent in their literature but also a TV hero such as Homer when using his funny punning and wordplay.

As far as media discourse is concerned the sitcom has been differently assessed by thinkers, be them liberal atheists, or conservatives for its portrayal of spirituality, religion and faith in contemporary societies. Mark I. Pinsky (2001) examines the dual relation of *The Simpsons* and religion. He argues that the sitcom dares to tackle religion with a kind of seriousness that most engaged and committed spiritual TV shows do not.²⁵ His book *The Gospel According to The Simpsons* covers such topics as how the sitcom treats other non-Christian religions like Judaism and how Protestantism maintains its rank as the most represented faith.²⁶ Beth Keller agrees with Pinsky to emphasise the Protestant Christian spirit of the animated sitcom:

“The show seems to promote the idea that following the law or being ethically good is all that is required to gain entrance to heaven...However the viewer is given a strong impression that *The Simpsons* represents protestant Christian family, so there is a dichotomy between the full truth from an evangelical perspective and the “truth” that is represented in “*The Simpsons*”.”²⁷

William Erwin and other authors tackle in their compendium of 2001 highbrowed themes like morality, Marxism, sexual politics, American Anti-intellectualism, Nietzsche’s philosophy and the virtues of being bad in today’s urban American society. This book leans on profound philosophical theories embraced by philosophers like Aristotle,²⁸ Roland

²⁴ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 3/S 4*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 1992)

²⁵ Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 15

²⁶ Ibid., p. 129

²⁷ Beth Keller, qtd. in Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 29

²⁸ William Erwin et al. ed. *The Simpsons and Philosophy: The D’Oh! of Homer*, (Peru, Illinois: Carus Publishing Company, 2001), p. 3

Barthes²⁹ and Kant³⁰ to comment on the impact of a Pop art production like *The Simpsons*. In addition to Erwin's analysis of philosophy in the sitcom, Andrew Horton examines a multitude of iconic cinematographic and TV productions to approach comedy as a perspective rather than a genre.³¹ He purposefully devotes part III of his book to the impact of *The Simpsons* on society drawing our attention to the nature of its scripts. He asserts that *The Simpsons* has the lion's share in TV prime time shows.³²

The Simpsons aroused unceasing debates among television critics, thinkers and academics. Yet one can safely assume that there remain shady spots, which need to be placed under the light of analysis. It is therefore high time to shed light on them. As pointed out in the opening of this dissertation, the ambivalent representation of the Orient as a geographical space and its inhabitants, the Orientals, particularly the Arab and Muslim, with their cultural, political and religious stereotypes and expectations will be dealt with. Moreover, a thorough examination of the two other major Oriental communities represented in the sitcom, the Indians and the Jews, will be taken into account in order to uncover the ways in which an animated sitcom like *The Simpsons* represents minorities. Relying on the appropriate theoretical and methodological instruments, one will attempt to provide a consistent analysis to that issue in order to shed light on what scholars like Linda Hutcheon calls the "unsaid" in the American animated sitcom of Fox Studios.

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

The Simpsons is chosen for analysis because it represents the typical Pop art production characterized by controversial themes with cultural, political, religious and social

²⁹ William Erwin et al. ed. *The Simpsons and Philosophy: The D'Oh! of Homer*, (Peru, Illinois: Carus Publishing Company, 2001), p. 392

³⁰ Ibid., p. 223

³¹ Editor's note: from the back cover page of the book of Andrew Horton (2000).

³² Andrew Horton, *Laughing Out Loud: Writing the Comedy-Centered Screenplay*, (Los Angeles: California University Press, 2000), pp. 6-32

edges. It is ultimately polemical yet appealing to viewers from all walks of life. Furthermore, it does not simply attempt to reflect reality, it re-creates and re-presents it. The sitcom has demonstrated a great success in its broadcasting and distribution across various countries, in many languages, and its remarkable adaptation into Arabic and French is no exception.³³ The success of the sitcom impels us to undertake the task of demonstrating the ways in which *The Simpsons* -through the storyline and the captured snapshots of the target episodes- relies on stereotyping, parody, exoticism and finally ambivalence to represent the Orient and its inhabitants. The focal point of the analysis will be the Arab and Muslim in relation to the other major Oriental communities figuring in the sitcom, the Indians and the Jews.

A good starting point to understand the messages expressed in any media program is to know the political orientation of its creators. Thus, it is no surprise to learn that the creators of *The Simpsons*, Matt Groening and his team of scriptwriters and designers belong to the “white, male and middle class Americans”³⁴. It is also believed that Groening and Fox owner, Rupert Murdoch are Falcons. Far from adhering to the discourse of the Conspiracy Theory and without being subjective, one can point out that the Arab and Muslim are thus not representing themselves; they are rather being represented by a Western media which may have its own strategies and aspirations.

The Simpsons may be seen from three different perspectives. It is first and above all an animated situation comedy, in other words, it is a set of motion pictures and images. It is also a social and political satire full of irony and parody, aiming at entertaining the audience. It derives its scenarios and storylines not only from other TV shows but also from political, literary, historical and spiritual sources. It is, therefore, as Jonathan Gray puts it, a prototype

³³ The Arabic adaptation of *The Simpsons* is entitled: *Al-Shamshun* (الشمشون) Shamshun Al-Jabbar is a legendary Arabic hero. <http://egypty.com/services/egypty-salon33.ap>.

³⁴ Stephen Coleman and Karen Ross, *The Media and the Public “Them” and “Us” in Media Discourse*, (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 5

of satiric intertextuality.³⁵ It is, finally and most importantly, a cultural and ideological discourse conveyed through the mass media. It is replete with American cultural hegemony and it is, likely, aiming at maintaining an effect on local TV audiences all over the world. Thus, it is -as Shari Ross Altarac (2007) assumes about similar TV programs- an attempt to dominate, invade, or subvert the cultural space of others suggesting a degree of coercion in the relationship by the Third World, which is on the periphery.³⁶

Starting from the point that *The Simpsons* is a motion picture one can, therefore, opt for Roland Barthes' thoughts of the "Rhetoric of the Image", expressed *Image, Music, Text* (1977). Barthes attempts in "Rhetoric of the Image" to analyse and interpret images and the messages that they vehicle. He inquires about the way meaning gets into the image, where it ends, and if it ends, what might be there beyond it.³⁷ Such are the inquiries that Barthes seeks to raise in "Rhetoric of the Image" focusing on commercials since they contain highly condensed "frank" and "emphatic" images aiming at convincing people to buy.³⁸ What Barthes applies to commercials can be hence applied to TV shows like *The Simpsons*. Semiotically, the animated sitcom can be analysed on both the "denotative" and "connotative" levels. The first thing which is apparent to the viewer is that the visuals of the show are made up of primary colours. This simple and yet smart use of visual technique is the cornerstone of *The Simpsons*.

The style of drawing that is used for the hundreds of characters is also very basic. It is done on purpose, though, to give each character a sense of singularity. The colour yellow, in *The Simpsons*, is used to portray people from Anglo-Saxon origins like Homer and his nuclear family. Darker colours are used to portray "the Other" like Bachir, the Arabic boy and Apu,

³⁵ Jonathan Gray, *Watching The Simpsons: Television Parody and Intertextuality*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 19

³⁶ Shari Ross Altarac, *The Adaptation of U.S. Television Programs in Foreign Markets: How Japan and France Put Their Distinctive Spin on The Simpsons*, (California University, 2007), p. 7

³⁷ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p. 32

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33

the Indian shopkeeper. Barthes insists in “Rhetoric of the Image” that commercials and the manipulation of colours go hand in hand.³⁹ This smart way of manipulating colours is used by Matt Groening and his crew of creative cartoonists to make of *The Simpsons* an attractive candy shop to sell the American “Salad Bowl”⁴⁰ values and to promote and advertise its hegemony across the world. Thanks to the subliminal power of images this is oftentimes achieved without a single word uttered.

If we consider *The Simpsons* as a social and political satire, then Linda Hutcheon’s theories expressed in *The Politics of Post Modernism* (1989) and *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (1995) will be of great benefit for this dissertation. Hutcheon argues that irony relies heavily on knowledge shared within what she calls “discursive communities”.⁴¹ There is a vital relationship, she adds, between ironist, interpreter and cultural context that allows irony to happen. Hutcheon puts it clear that it is the community that comes first and that, in fact, enables the irony to happen.⁴² She moreover rejects the traditional definition of irony, which goes that it is the act of saying the opposite of what one means and suggests that irony is a semantically complex process of relating, differentiating, and combining the “said” and the “unsaid”.⁴³

Hutcheon also argues that irony is a culturally volatile commodity, and does not classify it exclusively with neither the forces of good nor with those of evil.⁴⁴ She, in the same way, assumes that irony is the intentional transmission of both information and evaluative

³⁹ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 32-35

⁴⁰ The old “Melting Pot” concept is giving way to new concepts such as “Salad Bowl”. This reflects the American orientation towards “Multiculturalism” rather than “Assimilation”. Joyce Millet, “*Understanding American Culture: From Melting Pot to Salad Bowl*”. Retrieved April 2nd, 2014 from https://www.culturalsavvy.com/understanding_american_culture.htm

⁴¹ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony’s Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 4

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 85

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Robert Phiddian, “*Irony in the Eye of the Beholder: Southern Review*”, vol. 28, no. 2. p. 252

attitude other than what is explicitly presented.⁴⁵ Moreover, she goes that the ironist's intention and language are open to interpretation, misinterpretation, or no interpretation at all adding that postmodern art productions' usage of parody consists of citing a convention only to make fun of it.⁴⁶ *The Simpsons* well-known "graphic satire" associated with creative punning and wordplay would probably fall into this category of "caricatural" parody, though it is often considered irreverent and sensibility-hurting.

The ideas of Edward Said on Postcolonialism and Orientalism will serve our analysis immensely. His seminal *Orientalism* (1978) and a good deal of his media appearances will help us decipher the ideological and cultural discourse conveyed by an animated sitcom like *The Simpsons*. Drawing upon the works of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, Edward Said asserts that Orientalism is related to hegemony and power.⁴⁷ He asserts that the West has always used Orientalism as a tool to colonise the Orient, both physically and culturally. Said also claims that the Orient is more than a geographical place; it is a European invention and Orientalism is a style of thought, which has characterised the output of many authors all along modern times, including philosophers, poets, political theorists, statesmen and novelists.⁴⁸

Said criticised, in *Orientalism*, the French author Gustave Flaubert for his denigrating description of Kuchuk Hanem,⁴⁹ a famous Egyptian dancer and courtesan he met in Wadi Haifa. He claims that Flaubert had rather read William Lane's description of the almehs and the khawals, dancing girls and boys, exactly like did Gérard de Nerval.⁵⁰ Accordingly, one may legitimately wonder whether Matt Groening and his crew of scriptwriters had made use of a preconceived image of the Orient inspired by the stereotype-based Western media

⁴⁵ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 7

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11

⁴⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 3

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 186

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

discourse conveyed through other movies and TV dramas, when they denigrated and confused Al-Qaddafi, a leader from North Africa, with Gulf Sheikhs in the controversial episode entitled *Das Bus* (1998).

The notions forwarded by Jack Shaheen, in his Documentary film *Reel Bad Arabs* (2006) and his book of 1984 *The TV. Arab* will come as a supplement to help us understand how Hollywood vilifies a people. Shaheen, very far from being a theorist, assumes in his academic studies that the negative portrayal of Arabs and Muslims in US films and TV dramas is as old as the beginning of cinema. He has argued that Hollywood studios and American televisions have perpetuated three stereotyped images about Orientals: “they are all fabulously wealthy, barbaric and uncultured Bedouins; they are sex maniacs with a penchant for white slavery, and they revel in acts of terrorism”.⁵¹ Therefore, those “aberrant” people inhabiting the mysterious “Arab Land”, as Shaheen calls it, cannot be depicted outside the trilogy of the “*Three B’s*”: *Bombers, Belly dancers or Billionaires*.⁵²

Jack Shaheen in his media appearances challenges the stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims used in Hollywood films and in Western televisions. He argues that TV executives permit those kinds of stereotypes because they really don’t know much about these people and their nations.⁵³ This fact makes investigating stereotypes, for Shaheen, an essential attempt at understanding the construction of the character of the “evil Oriental” in American cinema and TV dramas. Primarily, Shaheen calls our attention to the main cinematic ingredient used by directors, which he describes as the “*Instant TV Arab kit*”,⁵⁴ or “*Ali Baba kit*”, as a quick, easy and ready-to-use assembly of the stereotypical Oriental character in Hollywood movies. He states that:

⁵¹ Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV. Arab*, (Washington: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984), p. 4

⁵² Jeremy Earp, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. M. E. Foundation Video. 2006

⁵³ Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV. Arab*, (Washington: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984), p. 4

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5

“Property masters stock the kits with curved daggers, scimitars, magic lamps, giant feather fans, and nargelihs. Costumers provide actresses with chadors, hijabs, belly dancers’ see-through pantaloons, veils, and jewels for their navels. Robed actors are presented with dark glasses, fake black beards, exaggerated noses, worry beads, and checkered burnouses”.⁵⁵

Thus, Shaheen has taken upon himself the task of investigating, deconstructing and exposing stereotypes related to Orientals in American movies and TV dramas. He has also directed his research towards the unveiling of what he calls Hollywood racism against the Arab and Muslim. This racism is similar to that targeting the Jews, urging Shaheen to call “The New Anti-Semitism”.⁵⁶

Besides the negative “Orientalist” representation of the Arab and Muslim along the storyline of some episodes, the message, which other episodes convey, is surely one of tolerance aiming at appeasing the Muslims’ wrath. It has been heralded that the Council on American–Islamic Relations praised the episode entitled *Mypods and Boomsticks* (2008) and sent a “Thank-you Letter” to Groening. Hussam Ayloush, executive director of the CAIR in Los Angeles, wrote congratulating: “I applaud your effort in Sunday’s episode of *The Simpsons* to humanize American Muslims by challenging anti-Muslim sentiment in our society”.⁵⁷ Building on this, one will not overlook the context in which the sitcom’s seasons were produced and the possible relation and involvement between it and the American geopolitics. Furthermore, this dissertation will rely on international press reviews and associations reports to shed light on the representation of the Orient and Orientals in the longest-running American animated sitcom.

⁵⁵ Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV. Arab*, (Washington: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984), p. 8

⁵⁶ Jeremy Earp, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, M. E. Foundation Video. 2006

⁵⁷ [www.cair.com/Ayloush, Hussam \(2008-12-03\)/Thank you letter - Matt Groening. Council on American - Islamic Relations](http://www.cair.com/Ayloush,Hussam(2008-12-03)/Thank%20you%20letter%20-%20Matt%20Groening.Council%20on%20American%20Islamic%20Relations). Accessed June 18th, 2013 at 11:00 am

Chapter I:

The Representation of Oriental Spaces in *The Simpsons*

Chapter I: The Representation of Oriental Spaces in *The Simpsons*

Introduction:

The objective space of a house - its corners, corridors, cellar, rooms- is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel; thus, a house may be haunted or homelike, or prisonlike or magical. So, space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here.⁵⁸

Thus goes Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). Said, herein, gives an account of how imagination and figurative value contributes to the creation of an emotional perception of the East, as a poetic and magical space, by the West.⁵⁹ Said's work, does not come from nothingness, it is, substantially, built upon Michel Foucault's theories of discourse and power relations developed through knowledge.⁶⁰ Knowledge for Foucault is far from being innocent; it is rather associated with operations of power.⁶¹ This view is a basic and a recurrent theme in Said's *Orientalism* and clearly describes how writing and even thinking of the Orient produced different kinds of knowledge and contributed to shape power-resistance relations between the East and the West. Moreover, it demonstrates how the West endeavoured to create an Oriental space, which does not actually exist; An Oriental world inspired by the early European travel narratives and literary works like The Tales of *The Arabian Nights* which are replete with stereotyped images and stories. Said calls this, the invented and imagined Orient.⁶²

⁵⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 55

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 54

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things - An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p. 83

⁶² Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 1

What Said endeavoured to point out in *Orientalism* is the fact that the Orient is not conceived by the West as a geographical space, among other geographical spaces, with inhabitants defined on the basis of religion, culture or ethnic traits.⁶³ It is rather a pure construction of an Orient by the Western authors and travellers, because of the West's political and imaginary interests in an "Other". Hence the Orient, according to Said, is urgently needed to be everything the West was not, and vice-versa.⁶⁴ The Orient invented by the West was, accordingly, sentenced to appear as static, feminine, backward and irrational.⁶⁵ These stigmas allowed the West to believe itself to be progressive, virile, dynamic, modern and rational. This line of thought relies on an epistemological and ontological dichotomy between the Orient and the West.⁶⁶ This, therefore, implies a fundamental divergence in traditions, lifestyle, reasoning and mindset between the peoples of the West and those of the East.⁶⁷

Said, primarily, identifies the humanities, especially literature, as a crucial ingredient of Western hegemonic representation of the Orient. His main preoccupation was the 18th-century writings, such as the works of the French novelists Flaubert and Gérard de Nerval.⁶⁸ However, relevance in pointing out the influence of contemporary Pop culture and freshly released media productions on the emphasis of the cultural representation of the Orient by the West is very pertinent. It is transferable to what is happening in the trending Pop culture industry today and its predominant influence on the way people think and behave. Said's analysis of the "Western style for representing, dominating, restructuring, and even having

⁶³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 322

⁶⁴ Sut Jhaly, *Edward Said on Orientalism*. M. E. Foundation Video. 2003

⁶⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), pp. 138-182-220

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2

⁶⁷ Sut Jhaly, *Edward Said on Orientalism*. M. E. Foundation Video. 2003

⁶⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 8

authority over the Orient”⁶⁹ can be applied to shed light on the representation of Oriental spaces in the far-famed American animated sitcom *The Simpsons*.

The main purpose of this chapter, therefore, will be the careful examination of the ways in which the American Pop culture, conveyed through *The Simpsons*, depicts the Orient as a geographical space. This chapter will also attempt to explore the concept of “imagined/imaginative geographies”, introduced by Edward Said in the first part of *Orientalism* (1978). In this way, this chapter will rely on Said’s theoretical understanding of the aforementioned key concepts to probe a number of episodes of equal length in order to uncover the ways the sitcom attains this representation. A connection between the sitcom and *The Tales of The Arabian Nights* and similar works will be established to see the ways in which Matt Groening, Dan Castellaneta and their crew of scriptwriters and designers achieve their parody and intertextuality.

We will also expand the analysis to see how Matt Groening’s animated sitcom represents the Orient as a different geographical space stamped by chaos, tyranny, backwardness and out-of-date social and political tastes. *The Simpsons*, unlike the early travel narratives, does not only describe this presumed untamed part of the world through words but also through images replete with both directly perceived and subliminal messages. Thus, displaying images extracted from the target episodes and analysing what they might vehicle will constitute the core means to attain the above-mentioned purposes.

In addition to this, a thorough examination of the countries which are rightfully Oriental or conceived and thought to be so will be provided for the intention of disclosing and bringing into light the parts of the Orient which are more recurrent and frequently delineated by the sitcom plots. This will be achieved by statistical means to determine the probable

⁶⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 3

reasons which may lie behind the appearance of some Oriental regions to the detriment of others. Furthermore, we will expose the possible involvement of *The Simpsons* with American geopolitics and chief world issues, on the one hand and with Hollywood mainstream of media coverage and art production, on the other hand.

I-Imagined/Imaginative Oriental Geographies:

The Western representation of the Orient is not a recent fabrication. As expressed earlier, this representation has been operational and deep-rooted in the Western literary output ever since the first contacts with people from Oriental origins like Arabs, Moors, Persians and Muslims in general; down to the Middle Ages, the Crusade Wars and along the military Ottoman Caliphate expansion and conquests in Europe; and until the very days of the Third Millennium.⁷⁰ The West, hence, continues to promote almost the same inherited and passed along stereotypes for Oriental spaces. Whether the contact took place in the bygone days or has happened recently, the West, as Said puts it, preserves a persisting conceptualization of the Orient as a place of romance, adventure and exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes.⁷¹

The stereotyped images inherited from the early travel narratives, *The Arabian Nights* and some other similar works are recurrent in the animated sitcom created in Fox Studios and do adhere, to a certain extent, to the Orientalist depiction set by early Western novels and movies. It is assumed that these inherited images are used as a fuel to the contemporary Pop art productions lamps, and *The Simpsons* is by far no exception. This is primarily, asserts Professor May Ien Ang, due to the nature of the sitcom itself, which imposed itself as an

⁷⁰ Driss Redouani, *The Representation of Arabs and Muslims in Western Media*, (Meknes: RUTA, 2011), p. 3

⁷¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 1

iconic show and ushered a new style of parodic television programmes⁷². The sitcom's parody which is extensive and often irreverent, she adds, is what makes its "raison d'être".⁷³ A thorough examination of the animated sitcom reveals that since the very beginning of the airing of the first season in 1989, images of the Oriental spaces began to appear. However, the intensity and significance of appearance differed from season to season and from episode to episode.

In the controversial episode of 2008, entitled *Mypods and Boomsticks*⁷⁴ the creators of the sitcom depicted the stereotyped Orient with all its imaginary components inspired by *The Arabian Nights* and described recurrently by Western travellers and authors. The viewer of the episode will probably make the link between its setting, scores, garments and those of other previously watched movies. In the episode, Homer Simpson, the main character and the centre of the events, makes a terrifying nightmare when he is introduced to his son's new friend and classmate, the Jordanian boy Bashir. In the storyline of *Mypods and Boomsticks* Bashir's family is portrayed as Muslim newcomers who have recently arrived in the city of Springfield seeking to improve their social status and to live their "American Dream" like everybody in the quiet typical American city. The Jordanian family is quickly looked upon as notorious neighbours and suspicious strangers. The main causes of this belligerent attitude from the other inhabitants of the city are nothing but the Jordanians Oriental appearance, their Islamic faith and the job of the "nameless" father who is, in fact, a civil engineer specialized in the safe demolition of decrepit buildings.

⁷² Jonathan Gray, *Watching The Simpsons: Television Parody and Intertextuality*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 7

⁷³ May len Ang, qtd. in Jonathan Gray, *Watching The Simpsons: Television Parody and Intertextuality*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 7

⁷⁴ The title "*Mypods and Boomsticks*" is one of the sitcom's famous wordplay and punning. It refers to the Apple's tablet computer "I pad" and Dynamite Sticks. The episode carries on a complex storyline composed of two simultaneous sub-themes: High-tech negative effects on the mass and uncontrolled consumerism culture symbolized by "I pad" rush and American Islamophobia and terrorism psychosis which haunted the USA after the tragic events of 9/11, symbolized by Boomsticks.

In the nightmare, which is our main concern, Homer makes an unusual vision and travels to a faraway Oriental region whose name is not revealed. However, the viewer of the episode will easily deduce that the setting has much to do with Baghdad, Cairo or any similar Arabian antique city. The means of transportation which Homer uses to travel is nothing but a magic flying carpet like that portrayed in early Hollywood motion pictures. This, since the very beginning, has been an everlasting image in Hollywood movies and continues to be a core element in parodic cinematic representation. *The Simpsons*, as an animated sitcom which is powered and driven by other works, reincarnates, in this episode, the image of the famous Arabian boy Aladdin flying his magic carpet over Baghdad and rubbing his magic lamp to make the genie show up.



Snapshot 1: Homer flies a magic carpet

If we consider the above snapshot extracted from the aforementioned episode, we will infer that it tells the viewer much about the Oriental atmosphere sought by Groening and his crew of scriptwriters. Homer Simpson, though wearing pyjamas, is being shown as one of the imaginary characters of the tales of *Aladdin*, flying a magic carpet in a typically starry Saharan sky and rubbing the magic lamp to make the genie appear. The scene, which is happening during a nightmare, terrifies Homer, who stands for the average American citizen.

Oriental spaces are represented in various movies as places of the unknown and realms of uncertainty. Psychologically speaking the usage of the nightmare in the episode is meaningful in the sense that it expresses the Westerners' long-time fear and awfulness of the mysterious Orient.

Among the other things that fuelled Homer's Oriental nightmare, in *Mypods and Boomsticks*, is a terrifying genie like that described in the tales of *Aladdin*. The genie that is portrayed as powerful and endowed with supernatural abilities wickedly acts to transform things from a state to another totally different one. He, on the whole, changes the American Western culture into Oriental Arabo-Islamic culture. He, inter alia, turns the Springfield Christian church into an imposing and splendid mosque and he, moreover, transforms the "lovely" Reverend Lovejoy, one of the permanent characters of the sitcom, into an "ugly" bearded Muslim clergyman like those Mullahs⁷⁵ seen in the prime-time news and daring press reports. The genie transforms also the school bullies into a bunch of Arabic gang boys wearing extravagant garments like those seen in Egyptian movies. The evil of the genie does not have limits since he turns, as well, all the music CDs on the shelves of stores and shops into Cat Stevens music.⁷⁶

The elements that Matt Groening used to portray the nightmare are what media critic Jack Shaheen calls the "*Ali Baba kit*".⁷⁷ Hollywood filmmakers and Groening is definitely one of them, tend to stock Oriental garments, outfits, carpets, utensils and ready-to-use decors in their studios and use them to create an Oriental atmosphere of their imagination.⁷⁸ This is very common in Hollywood art productions and constitutes a core element in representing

⁷⁵ According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary* a Mullah is a title given in Muslim lands to someone learned in theology and sacred law, 1613, from Turk. *Molla*, Pers. and Urdu *Mulla*, from Ar. *mawla* "master," from *waliya* "reigned, governed." This term has been mediatised after the rise of Bin Laden.

⁷⁶ Cat Stevens: A former famous British Singer converted to Islam under the name of Yusuf Islam. Now he is a strong figure in the Islamic da'wah and Missionary Islamic action in the West.

⁷⁷ Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV. Arab*, (Washington: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984), p. 8

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

geographical spaces, cultures and ethnic specificities. The creators of the sitcom have used that famous “*Ali Baba Kit*” effectively to give the viewer the impression that he is watching something familiar and already recognizable. By parodying other works on the Orient Matt Groening and his team of scriptwriters and designers sought to provide the picture of the stereotyped Orient which dwells in the imagination of Western people since centuries; a place that conforms perfectly to the invented and imagined Orient described by early travel narratives and nonfactual stories and tales.



Snapshot 2: The mighty genie appears

The mighty genie in snapshot 2 extracted from the same episode appears and thanks Homer for having set him free and asks him whatever he wishes. This can be considered a classic parody of *Aladdin*'s and other movies grateful genies. However, what is really striking in *Mypods and Boomsticks* genie's appearance is the way the genie addresses Homer and the conversational tone he uses to express his unusual gratitude. The following passage excerpted from the episode's script tells much about the kind of genies Matt Groening sought to portray in his controversial animated sitcom:

“Hi, Homer! You rubbed. You must like me! You really, really like me! Good morning, Ramadan! Come to Crazy Fayed’s! Our prices are Hussein! ... Now I will destroy your decadent Western society”.⁷⁹

The genie’s talk to Homer looks, for the first observer, incoherent and some sort of nonsense since the supernatural creature utters some Arabic names randomly: “Ramadan, Fayed’s and Hussein” before finishing with a serious desire to harm: “I will destroy your decadent Western society”. This, in reality, is very far from being incoherent because the whole statement conveys ideas of destroying Western values and culture through irrational Arabic and Islamic figures. This once again conforms to the Western imaginary and stereotyped Orient haunted by evil genies and exotic creatures ready to take control and act evilly. Edward Said analyses this fact in his book *Orientalism* (1978) and emphasises the thirst of Westerners to portray the Orient- usually - as a place totally different from the West in the sense that it is irrational, supernatural and dangerously ruled by imaginary and exotic beings.⁸⁰

The Simpsons’ own contribution to the portrayal of supernatural creatures and exotic beings in *Mypods and Boomsticks* can be considered a stereotyped and parodic portrayal. Nevertheless, the sitcom has sprinkled it with its authentic “Simpsonian” spices, in the sense that the fact of empowering the genie of the aforementioned episode with wicked abilities not only to harm individuals but also to reduce to ruins specific societies and cultures is in itself a novelty and an unexampled Orientalist representation. One should note here that Matt Groening give the viewers the impression that by destroying Western decadent society and values, the genie has already chosen his camp; belonging to the Oriental sphere. Moreover, the fact of naming Fayed and Hussein is very meaningful and ushers a new kind of representation where supernatural, exotic and imaginary creatures like wicked genies are

⁷⁹ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 7/S 20*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2008)

⁸⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 1

associated with real detested Oriental figures who lived in this world and got involved in economic and political affairs with the West: the wealthy businessperson Dodi Al-Fayed⁸¹ who had been in love with Lady Diana till their tragic death in 1997 and the executed former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein.



Snapshot 3: The genie orientalises the West

In snapshot 3, also extracted from the same episode of 2008, the genie transforms a church into a mosque. If Edward Said has devoted a whole chapter in *Orientalism* to explain how the West needed to “Orientalise the Orient”,⁸² *The Simpsons* evokes the idea of the West’s constant fear of being “Orientalised”. The usage of the mosque shows another element used to depict the Orient in the sitcom; architecture and buildings. Hollywood filmmakers do heavily rely on exterior decors to make their productions about the Oriental spaces. Some directors opt for artificial made-on-purpose decors whereas others choose natural and authentic filming sites like the Saharan city of Nafta in the South of Tunisia or the Berber region of Ouarzazate in Southern Morocco.

⁸¹ Dominique Bonnet, “*Le Nid d’Amour à Saint Tropez*”, <http://www.parismatch.com/Royal-Blog/Royaume-Uni/Le-nid-d-amour-a-Saint-Tropez-ou-est-nee-la-romance-de-Lady-Diana-et-de-Dodi-Al-Fayed-l-ete-de-leur-mort-a-Paris-est-en-vente-698068#>. Accessed on September 06th, 2014

⁸² Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), pp. 49-65-167-181-325-228

When it comes to buildings and architecture to portray the imagined Orient in Western movies and TV dramas, the harem is perhaps the most recurring and most exploited Oriental decor and setting. The harem from the Arabic term (حرم-حریم - /herəm/) is applied to identify women's apartments in Arabic or Muslim households and it refers also to the part of a dwelling-house, which includes an enclosed courtyard, appropriated to the female members of a Muslim family, and so, purposefully, constructed to secure the utmost seclusion and privacy.⁸³ Historically speaking the function of the harem differed from era to era and from region to region in the Arabic and Islamic world.

Norman Mosley Penzer, the renowned British scholar interested in the scope of the institution of the harem, asserts that in the Arab world of the bygone days, females enjoyed some kind of freedom within their families and tribes. However, with the coming of Islam and the rise of Sharia law, the veiling and seclusion of women into harems became a common practice among people of a certain social status.⁸⁴ The most famous harem, he adds, is probably that of the sultans of the Ottoman Empire, dating from the 15th century and included the old and new palaces on Seraglio Point, Constantinople. It was abolished with the downfall of Sultan Abd al-Hamid II in 1909. The sultan's harem often contained more than 1200 women, all subject to the control of the sultan's mother and firmly guarded by nearly 500 castrated servants and eunuchs.⁸⁵

All the feelings, conceptions and impressions that the harem could convey have been the fuel to Western travellers and novelists. A world apart, hence, has been constructed around the harem, where reality commingles well with exaggeration and imagination. Edward Said asserts that an author like Flaubert associates the Orient with the escapism of

⁸³ The Century Dictionary (1889)

⁸⁴ Norman Mosley Penzer, *The Harem*. qtd. in "*The Inside Story of the Turkish Harem*", The Chicago Tribune. October 24th, 1937, New York: News Syndicate, p. 3

⁸⁵ Ibid.

sexual fantasy, in all of his writings.⁸⁶ He also asserts that authors like Emma Bovary and Frederic Moreau yearn for what they don't have in their bourgeois lives. The idea of the harem nourishes their daydreams packed inside Oriental clichés: harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils, dancing girls and boys; and influences their writings on the Orient.⁸⁷

Said argues that the West has always perceived places like harems through stereotypes and has applied them to portray the Orient as a place of romance and adventure and women secluded behind its walls as sexually available. Thus, the harem as space, according to him, is far from being an ordinary building; it is rather the centre of sexuality and lust in the Orient. However, a close look at history will reveal that harems were also actual places for family gathering for notable Orientals. The word harem itself has been always misunderstood because it originally referred to places protected and prohibited to intruders. Moreover, the harem refers to sacred places like the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina, which are forbidden to infidels.⁸⁸ Nancy Micklewright echoing this fact asserts:

“The harem of the Nineteenth century in the Middle East was an Orientalist construction, but it was also an actual place where real people lived...The harem, as well as all of its attendants, associations, occupies an unstable place in our discourse, shifting between versions of the real and the imagined”.⁸⁹

This way of describing Oriental spaces through the representation of the harem in early European literature has been passed down from one generation of authors to another and constituted a core element in the creation of the Orient depicted in movies and TV dramas of our days. *The Simpsons*, which proved to be a sitcom that lives on parody and available stereotypes, made no exception and has depicted, recurrently, secluded and enclosed life in Oriental harems.

⁸⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 190

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Columbia Encyclopaedia

⁸⁹ Nancy Micklewright, qtd. in Marilyn Booth, ed. *Harem Stories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 239



Snapshot 4: Homer in his harem enjoying his belly dancers

In snapshot 4 extracted from the episode of 1997 entitled *Skinner's Sense of Snow* Homer is depicted as a great sultan resting on a divan in his harem, surrounded by beautiful courtesans and glamorous belly dancers. The general atmosphere conveyed through this episode is one of Arabian delights and pleasures. Roland Barthes' notions expressed in *Rhetoric of the Image* can be applied here to argue that Matt Groening and his crew of cartoonists have managed to create an Orientalised depiction loaded with "denotative" and "connotative" meanings. Barthes argues that apart from the linguistic message conveyed in TV commercials we are left with the pure image, which straightaway provides a series of discontinuous signs.⁹⁰ In the advertisement he analyses in his book, Barthes asserts that its "signifier" is the bringing together of the tomato, the pepper and the tricoloured hues (yellow, green, red); whereas its "signified" is Italy or rather "Italianicity".⁹¹ The creators of the sitcom have managed to construct a "signified" Orientalized image of the harem, using stereotyped "signifiers": garments, decors and atmosphere. A close look at

⁹⁰ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p. 34

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

snapshot 4 reveals that Shaheen's "Ali Baba's instant kit"⁹² has been used effectively: dancers wearing see-through pantaloons, a divan, feather fans and surprisingly some camels in the back of the scene.



Snapshot 5: Lisa Simpson going Oriental and dressing like a belly dancer

Snapshot 5 extracted from the aforementioned episode depicts Lisa Simpson, the smartest of the Simpson family and the most engaged and honest girl, going Oriental. The scene is happening during a dream made by Lisa when she falls asleep because of some kind of gas she inhales in a car's cabin. She is shown in the snapshot wearing a kind of Arabian belly dancer's garments and trying to look sensual next to Mulhouse Van Houten, her schoolmate and admirer. To add more Oriental flavour to the scene, the sitcom's scriptwriters and designers transform Mulhouse from a boy into a camel, which looks strikingly and strangely feminine. This scene comes to complete the imaginary moment of a stereotyped Orient characterized by sensuality and femininity. Oriental garments (and Oriental animals) therefore, - exactly like architecture and buildings - are used to create an imagined Oriental atmosphere in *The Simpsons*.

⁹² Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV. Arab*, (Washington: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984), p. 8

Thinking of the stereotyped Oriental harems full of exploited sexually available courtesans and belly dancers wearing sensual garments leads anyone to think that the Orient is a land of lust and femininity. Edward Said insists in *Orientalism* that the West always thought of itself, through its literature and cinema, as virile whereas it depicted the Orient as feminine. He makes it clear in *Orientalism* (1978) when he states that the Westerners always wanted to see the Orient as a passive “Other”, seminal, feminine, even silent and supine East.⁹³ Jack Shaheen echoing Said’s views asserts that the depiction of the Orient and its inhabitants falls in the stereotyped trilogy of what he calls the “*three B’s*”⁹⁴ and one of these B’s stands for the belly dancer.



Snapshot 6: Sensual Oriental belly dancers performing out-door

Snapshot 6 extracted from the episode of 2001 entitled *New Kids on the Bleck*, which is another controversial episode conforms to the imagined and stereotyped Orient of *The Simpsons*. The scene features a group of belly dancers wearing Oriental sensual garments and performing out-door on an open beach to a group of Western GIs. This image, invented by

⁹³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 138

⁹⁴ Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV. Arab*, (Washington: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984), p. 4

Western classical literature and nourished by the media and Hollywood movies is an important element in the portrayal of the land inhabited by Arabs and Muslims.

The various episodes analysed so far proved to be replete with stereotyped images of the invented and imagined Orient that Westerners insisted to create. The Orient portrayed in the sitcom, therefore, doesn't escape the outlook inherited from the early European literature and the classical Hollywood movies, in the sense that images of the Orient as a geographical space haunted by figures like mighty genies, flying carpets, mosques, harems and femininity are reincarnated recurrently.

In addition to the images analysed earlier, another stereotyped image of the Orient in the sitcom comes as the ultimate and utmost parody of other movies and literary works, it is that of the out-of-date and irrational Orient. The list of movies that depict the Orient in such a way can only be limitless but Paramount's *The Dictator* (2012) and Disney's *Aladdin* (1992) are the ones which intertwine with *The Simpsons* in depicting the Oriental spaces as static and out-of-date, where camels still roam the streets and people still live in an everlasting past.

Said puts it clear in *Orientalism* that Oriental spaces have long been stamped by backwardness and described as places lacking evolution, frozen and fixed eternally.⁹⁵ He asserts that a country like Egypt was an excellent case in point and he has shown how a member of the British Parliament like Lord Balfour was perfectly aware of how much it was important for the Western civilization to colonise Egypt. For Egypt was not just another colony: it was, until its annexation by England, the best academic prototype of Oriental backwardness; it was to become the triumph of English knowledge and power.⁹⁶ This attitude from an MP like Lord Balfour was common to most politicians and thinkers of the time and

⁹⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 208

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35

has been passed down from piece of literature to another until it became the standard norm for representing the Oriental spaces.

In the episode of 1991 entitled *Tree House of Horror II*, Matt Groening depicts the well-known city of Marrakech in Morocco. The city is among the fastest developing and prospering areas in the region and its name is related to the best tour destinations in the world. It is also an important hub in the economy of the Maghreb and hosts international forums on sustainable economy, global ecology, democracy and culture.⁹⁷ The creators of the sitcom, however, once again conform to the general atmosphere of the invented and imagined Orient and as a consequence, their depiction of the Moroccan city, in this episode, proves to be influenced by other previous works.

The storyline of the episode, which is complex as the usual, narrates what happened to the Simpson family when they went on an exotic trip to visit Morocco. Everything is fine until the family arrives at Marrakech International Airport where images of exotism, backwardness and out-of-date practices start to appear repeatedly. *The Simpsons* as a prime-time animated sitcom is very intertwined with current life and trending events and derives its plots and scenarios from fresh topics through parody. Nevertheless, the description of life in the thriving city of Marrakech proves to be that of a medieval city, though the chronological frame is set in 1991.

There exist many scenes in the aforementioned episode which are loaded with stereotyped elements that bring about the re-creation of a city living out of date: camels and camel riders in the middle of antique towns, servants roaming the streets with stuff over the head, beggars and all sorts of fallen and irrational people. As Said pointed out several times,⁹⁸

⁹⁷ No Specified Author, <https://www.madein-marrakech.com/fr/article-marrakech-capitale-de-la-liberte-la-democratie-et-la-prosperite-657.html>

⁹⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 302

the general atmosphere of Oriental spaces depicted in Western writings is one of a still, timeless and never changing space. He insisted in his media appearances and academic works that Western authors endeavoured to portray the Orient as a place inhabited by irrational, depraved and childlike people as opposed to the West which is virtuous and mature.⁹⁹ This stereotyped image of the static and backward Orient is perpetuated by early Western writings and is inherited by movies and TV dramas of our days. One can safely assume, therefore, that the depiction of Marrakech in *Tree House of Horror II* is influenced by the writings of early European travel narratives and other Hollywood movies. Snapshot 7 below, tells much about the usage of the same and everlasting Oriental ingredients.



Snapshot 7: Marrakech, timeless and out-of-date

II-The Untamed and Aberrant Orient:

The Mummy (1999) is probably, one of the movies full of the Oriental stereotypes which have been produced in Hollywood studios. It was created in Universal Studios and directed by Stephen Sommers. This film was a semi-remake of Universal's original Boris Karloff's horror film from director Karl Freund, *The Mummy* (1932)¹⁰⁰ and follows the

⁹⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 40

¹⁰⁰ No Specified Author, <http://www.filmsite.org/series-mummy.html>

pattern of adventure and action movies. The storyline is about some zealous archaeologists who, in search of hidden ancient treasures, accidentally release a deadly old curse.¹⁰¹ This movie conforms to the line of stereotyping the Orient as a place inhabited by greedy, unintelligent and aberrant people who live in a mysterious desert waste that Jack Sheehan, author of *Reel Bad Arabs*, has called “Arab Land”.¹⁰² Like *The Mummy*, *The Simpsons*, which is a satiric show in the first place and a sitcom living on parody, has followed this pattern and has had its share in representing the Orient as a geographical space very far from being endowed with positive features. Again the creators of the sitcom made usage of preconceived images of aberrance to portray it in ambivalent manners.

Powerful examples about the stereotyping of the Orient in the sitcom can be found in various episodes. *New Kids on the Bleck*, the controversial episode of 2001 analysed earlier, tells the story of Bart Simpson and other American teenagers, formed in a Boys-Band to sing Pop songs. The Boys-Band music is not really good and even their vocal organs can’t allow them to use high vocal techniques. Nevertheless, the American Army recruits them to serve overseas after employing state-of-the-art technology to improve their music, through a playback device. The choice of the army’s powerful men is not arbitrary because they want them to influence, convince and persuade their fans and lovers, especially teenagers, in their capacity of Pop music stars. After convincing their naïve parents, the boys are immediately sent to accomplish a heroic and patriotic mission in an unnamed Oriental country to free its persecuted inhabitants from their horrible despot. The mission proves to be two-fold, filming the Boys-Band’s first video song entitled “Drop Da Bomb” while making a real air assault to bomb their Oriental enemies.

¹⁰¹ No Specified Author, <http://www.filmsite.org/series-mummy.html>

¹⁰² Jeremy Earp, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. M. E. Foundation Video. 2006

The country's name is never disclosed along the events of the plot; however, the name of the executed former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein is mentioned. The storyline of *New Kids on the block* follows the Orientalised image of a place governed by despots who subjugate their nationals and rule them by force and intimidation. The episode conveys some subliminal messages which evoke the idea that Oriental citizens are living under the mercy of despots and they are in urgent need for salvation; and this salvation is naturally the mission of the enlightened and brave Westerner. This deep-rooted and recurrent stereotyped cinematic pattern of representing the enemy as someone to tame and to civilize, which *The Simpsons* follows, has always been present in Hollywood movies like *Rambo* series but and intensified by the events of 9/11. Aware of this fact Edward Said links this image present in media to cinematic productions and politics. He asserts that:

“In the demonization of an unknown enemy, for whom the label “terrorist” serves the general purpose of keeping people stirred up and angry, media images command too much attention and can be exploited at times of crisis and insecurity of the kind that the post-9/11 period has produced...But what has really been lost is a sense of the density and interdependence of human life, which can neither be reduced to a formula nor be brushed aside as irrelevant. Even the language of the war is dehumanizing in the extreme: “We’ll go in there, take out Saddam, destroy his army with clean surgical strikes, everyone will think it's great, said a congresswoman on national television”.¹⁰³

If we consider snapshot 8 extracted from the aforementioned episode, we will figure out that the viewer is told much about the representation of the Orient as a place ruled by aberrant people who express themselves in violence and war. The scene features a group of armed men, all angry and willing to make an assault on an American warplane flying nearby. Although all the armed men are having the physical traits of Muslim and Arabic men, the viewer of the episode will be confused and will never know their original nationality and to what part of the Orient they really belong. The creators of the sitcom once again prove to be

¹⁰³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. xix

ambivalent in the sense that they don't name the country where the events are happening. But by deductive reasoning, the viewer may easily guess that the events are normally taking place in an Iraqi city since the name of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein is mentioned in the Pop song performed by the Boys-Band while dropping the bomb on their supposed Oriental enemies.



Snapshot 8: Angry Oriental militia

What has been expressed about the probability of Iraq to be the real country depicted in the episode will quickly vanish because the flag of the Syrian Free Army fighting Bashar Al-Assad is strangely marked on the military car that is used by the militia in scene 8. It is worth mentioning that the Civil War or as some would call the Syrian Revolution, which is part of the Arab Spring freedom movement, started only in 2011 whereas *New Kids on the Block* had been aired ten years before, in 2001. This can be interpreted as a mere coincidence but *The Simpsons* has long been famous, or rather infamous, for predicting world and major events to happen. Emily Yahr from Washington Post, one of the journalists who have taken upon themselves the chore of investigating this strange fact, has found that Fox's animated sitcom has bizarrely predicted the future tens of times. In addition to the Syrian flag she, inter

alia, has named the famous NASA 3-D Printing Scandal, the 2014 Seahawks-Broncos Super Bowl Final and more than 30 other future events.^{104 105}

Arab media, on their part, were rather sceptical and doubted the spontaneous prediction of the Syrian Free Army flag because the whole story is scented with the smell of the Conspiracy Theory, they assert.¹⁰⁶ In a broadcast on the Egyptian TV channel Al-Tahrir, Rania Badawy, one of the influential news anchors warned the viewers and aroused their sense of caution to what she deliberately qualified concrete video evidence which “suggests that the bloodshed happening in Syria today was premeditated.”¹⁰⁷ “The opposition flag was created before the events took place,” Badawy asserted. She, moreover, added that the episode “raises many question marks about what happened in the Arab Spring revolutions and about when this global conspiracy began”.¹⁰⁸

What really matters to us in the storyline of *New Kids on the Block* is not the controversial debate induced by the prediction of a civil war before it is truly declared and the probable ideological disputes and controversies it may stimulate and arouse. Our main concern is how the episode intertwines with the early European literature and recent movies or even politics and world events to represent Oriental spaces as places of chaos and aberrance urgently in need of taming. Matt Groening and his crew of cartoonists have always reincarnated the image of the underachiever, the rebel and the renegade through the character of Bart Simpson. However, in this episode, they present him as a music lover who looks

¹⁰⁴ Emily Yahr, “*The Simpsons’ accused yet again of predicting the future — this time, the war in Syria*”.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2014/05/07/the-simpsons-accused-yet-again-of-predicting-the-future-this-time-the-war-in-syria/>

¹⁰⁵ The Telegraph investigators rather describe these strange predictions by “life imitate *The Simpsons*”

¹⁰⁶ Staff Writers, “*The Simpsons’ Syria ‘conspiracy’ report causes media reaction*”.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/2014/05/08/Egypt-TV-channel-claims-The-Simpsons-predicted-Syrian-crisis.html>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pk-7JkdCLI>

¹⁰⁸ Staff Writers, “*The Simpsons’ Syria ‘conspiracy’ report causes media reaction*”.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/2014/05/08/Egypt-TV-channel-claims-The-Simpsons-predicted-Syrian-crisis.html>

forward to excelling as a Pop star with his Boys-Band composed, ironically, of all the Springfield school underachiever pupils and bullies like Ralph, Mulhouse and Dolph.



Snapshot 9: Bart and his friends are landing

Bart Simpson and his fellow singers/soldiers: Mulhouse, Ralph and Dolph are depicted in scene 9 extracted from the aforementioned episode as brave American GIs like those seen in Hollywood movies and TV news. This demonstrates to what extent the image of the American commando is important in representing Americans as saviours and heroes urgently needed in regions of chaos and disorder, like the Orient. The four well-equipped Boys-Band members, in scene 9, are spectacularly jumping from their war jets and descending with parachutes after dropping the bomb on enemy targets and destroying them. The boys are proudly singing in unison:

“There’s trouble in a far-off nation. Time to get in love formation. Your love’s more deadly than Saddam. That’s why I gotta drop da bomb!”¹⁰⁹

This scene has always been depicted in American movies since the beginning of the century and reminds us of the courageous and determined American soldier who has always

¹⁰⁹ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 14/S 12*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2008)

taken upon himself the duty of restoring peace around the world through the means of armed force. The cinematic archive is full of examples of American heroes volunteering overseas for the sake of democracy, freedom and human welfare; and the far-famed American commando Rambo is the most prominent example of the Western brave soldier who goes beyond enemy lines to spread peace and democracy and returns home safe and proud of his deeds. The picture of Rambo is associated with the taming of despots and world troublemakers in Oriental countries like Sudan, Afghanistan and many other Arabic and Muslim regions. *The Simpsons*, thus, in *New Kids on the Bleck* reincarnates the character of Rambo who tames the Orient, through Bart Simpson.

Assuming the fact that Oriental spaces are mainly lands of aberrance and despotism implies the existence of persecuted and oppressed innocents living in constant fear and agony. Many Hollywood movies have chosen as the main theme freeing Orientals and saving them from their oppressors: *Delta Force* (1986) starred by Chuck Norris, *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) and Clint Eastwood's *American Sniper* (2014) are only examples. In *New Kids on the Bleck*, the plot goes that Bart and his friends make an assault on a belligerent military area and destroy it in no time. Their efforts are quickly rewarded when they manage to set free the inhabitants from their cruel Oriental despots. Among the oppressed inhabitants, the boys have set free a group of veiled young women who welcomed their assault on the armed militia with much love and enthusiasm. The gratefulness of the freed young women is depicted in the episode as priceless since they not only remove their veils and hijabs but also, unreservedly, wear sexy bikinis and enjoyed playing games with Bart and his friends on an open beach. Snapshot 10 extracted from *New Kids on the Bleck* tells much about the kind of freedom the Orientals, especially women, may get from the Westerners; not only a physical freedom but also a psychological and cultural emancipation.



Snapshot 10: The freed Oriental women play with the boys on a beach.

In addition to the image of the chaotic Orient ruled by despots and inhabited by oppressed citizens, *The Simpsons* has also depicted the Oriental spaces as backward and strange to the norms. In the episode entitled *The Greatest story ever D'ohed!* (2010) Matt Groening and his crew of cartoonists have depicted the Middle Eastern country of Jordan which is an important part of the region's Peace Process and a major Western ally renowned for its balanced policy. Jordan is also an Arabic country in fast evolution in terms of economy and human development; it is also thriving in terms of culture, medical care and citizenship and, according to the World Bank, during the past 25 years the Hashemite Kingdom has improved life expectancy to attain 71 on the whole.¹¹⁰ However, the country is mainly depicted as a desert and a blank space full of dunes and camels in the aforesaid episode. Matt Groening, through the plot of *The Greatest Story Ever D'ohed!*, manages to convey the idea that Arabic and Muslim countries are almost alike in the sense that they are underdeveloped, out of date, dangerous, mysterious and unpredictable. The use of the mysterious "Arabian

¹¹⁰ Farid M. A. and Hassan Djelloul Al-Saci [https:// books.google.dz/books?id=9muSEMvtqxC&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=human+and+life+development+in+Jordan&source=bl&ots=F61sz5tiPV&sig=4dqs3g6vBqdYaKJT0lbic5dicZY&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=](https://books.google.dz/books?id=9muSEMvtqxC&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=human+and+life+development+in+Jordan&source=bl&ots=F61sz5tiPV&sig=4dqs3g6vBqdYaKJT0lbic5dicZY&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=)

Desert” to express the West’s fear of Oriental spaces is very recurrent in the early European travel narratives and Orientalist literature. Hollywood movies, as well, have found in the “Arabian Desert” an abundant source for plots and themes. *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) is probably the most representative one.



Figure 11: Homer preaching in front of an Oriental crowd

Homer Simpson is depicted in snapshot 11 extracted from the aforementioned episode delivering a speech in front of a crowd of Oriental men from different faiths. He ironically proposes to unite them under one religion, saying that he shall call them “ChrisMuJews!”¹¹¹ The Oriental spaces are hence, portrayed as lands inhabited not only by evil and dangerous people but also by naïve and unintelligent Bedouins in need of the Westerner’s intervention and help. This, indeed, reminds us of the mission Lawrence of Arabia had taken upon himself to unite the scattered Arab tribes against the Turkish Empire. Homer Simpson, in this episode, seems familiar to the viewer because he is reincarnating the classical and everlasting image of the intelligent and omnipotent Western man who wears the Bedouins local clothes and garments speaks tribal tongues and vernaculars, behaves in Oriental manners and dares to explore the unknown.

¹¹¹ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 16/S 21*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2010)

III-Oriental Locations and Countries in *The Simpsons*:

Unlike the Americans, the French and British - less so the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss - have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western Experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other.¹¹²

Thus goes Edward Said in his definition of the Orient. He makes it clear in his writings that Europe has always perceived the Orient as a place of wealth and riches and considered it "an integral part of the European material civilization and culture". He adds, "Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles".¹¹³ For that reason, European nations gave for themselves the permission to colonize this part of the world in order to annex it and to take profit of its resources. The questions, which one may actually ask are: what is the Orient? and what are its geographical limitations? Dictionaries supply various definitions and descriptions. However, these definitions are all influenced by the different ideologies that rule the world. Etymologically, the term Orient derives from the Latin word "Oriens" meaning "East", literally "Rising". The use of the word "Rising" refers to the regions East of Europe. Traditionally, these regions were referred to as the "Levant", the regions of Syria and Lebanon now.¹¹⁴

Historically speaking, the term "Middle East" has probably appeared during the mid-nineteenth century in the British India Office. Peter Beaumont (1988) asserts that the term became more widely known when the American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan used it

¹¹² Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 1

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ The Online Etymology Dictionary

in 1902 to indicate the region which is situated between Arabia and India.¹¹⁵ However, many other regions, which do not belong to this sphere, came quickly to be considered parts of the Oriental sphere. North Africa, the Horn of Africa, the former Muslim Soviet Republics and Southeast countries like Bangladesh are all Oriental according to mainstream European system of thoughts. This classification is based not only on ethnic traits of the inhabitants of the different Oriental countries but also on the Islamic religion and culture.

The Simpsons portray almost every corner of the Orient and some locations are described in detail and recur several times. In the episodes watched and analysed so far, Egypt and Turkey, for instance, are present in several plots and appear repeatedly. Djibouti, a small African nation, is mentioned only once.¹¹⁶ Some other places are mentioned as being Oriental or featuring Oriental traits but their geographical locations are not revealed like the mysterious Arabic palace seen in the episode of 1993 entitled *The Last Temptation of Homer* and the various harems which haunted Homer's dreams. Additionally, the Oriental regions, locations and spaces are either represented through shots or only mentioned in dialogues as mere geographical regions or appearing in screen captions. Algeria's name, for instance, appeared in a banderol carried by the Algerian Olympic Committee, in the controversial episode of 1991 entitled *Treehouse of Horror II*.

When it comes to the representation of Oriental countries¹¹⁷ the Middle East has taken the lion's share in the sitcom in terms of recurrence. Countries like Egypt, Syria, Iraq, the Occupied Territories, Pakistan and Iran are portrayed in several episodes and scenes taking place in these regions can only be described as abundant. This statistical fact is certainly due to the specificity of the region and its direct and strong link to global issues and regional

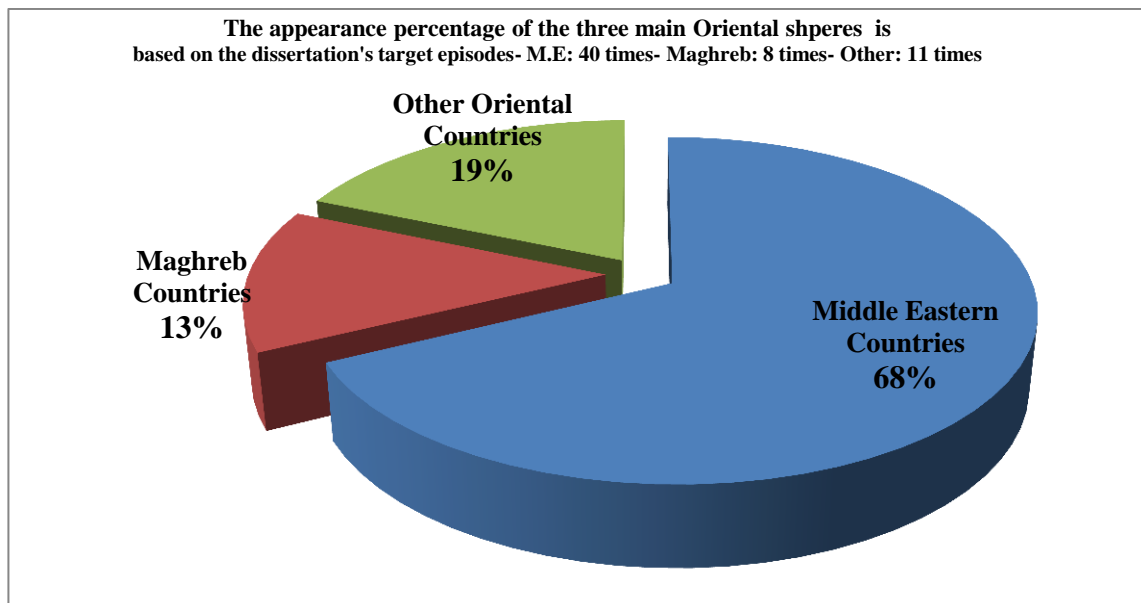
¹¹⁵ Peter Beaumont et al., *The Middle East: A Geographical Study*, (London: David Fulton, 1988), p. 16

¹¹⁶ Djibouti was depicted in the episode entitled *Flaming Moe* (2011) through a Djiboutian presumed Marathon runner competing with Homer. So the stereotype of the good running Djiboutian is used by the sitcom to represent this minor country situated in the Horn of Africa.

¹¹⁷ The comprehensive list of Oriental countries and locations placed in the dissertation appendices shows that Middle Eastern regions are more recurrent than the other Oriental regions.

agitations. It goes without saying that media and art productions like *The Simpsons* are strongly involved with geopolitics and international topicality such as wars, diplomatic discords and fights over profits.

Lina Khatib (2006) makes it clear when she assumes that the Middle East is at the heart of the political debate today. She asserts that with the events of 9/11, the war on Iraq and shifting US interests in the on-going Palestinian–Israeli dispute, the region is perceived globally as a place of conflict that is no longer confined to its geographical setting.¹¹⁸ She adds, so while until recently intrinsic details about political matters in the Middle East were largely confined to a place outside the immediate Western imagination, today the media across the globe are granting the Middle East a central position.¹¹⁹ Khatib also assumes that this applies not only to news coverage but also to fiction. Cinema and TV, as a powerful tool of cultural production, stand at the heart of the representation of the modern Middle East.



Pie Chart 1: The Appearance percentage of the three main Oriental spheres¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Lina Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 1

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Statistically based on $F_i \text{ Middle East} = 40$, $F_i \text{ Maghreb} = 08$, $F_i \text{ Other Oriental Countries} = 11 / \text{Total} = 59$.

The Simpsons, thus, makes no exception in following the Hollywood tradition of intertwining politics and art production. The sitcom through the use of parody and satire managed to tackle many issues related to Middle Eastern countries such as American-Iraqi agitated relations and discords especially in the episode of 1992 entitled *Kamp Krusty* which was aired in the period succeeding the Second Gulf War. The episode featured an American female secret agent sent behind the enemy lines to assassinate Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi-American agitated relations, thus, continued to fuel the American fear of Oriental despotism which metamorphosed into a fear of terrorist attacks plotted by the old enemy of American democracy Saddam Hussein. The episode of 2001 entitled *New Kids on the Block*, tackled earlier, is set in a typical Iraqi war zone like Fallujah or Basra and the theme is exporting American democracy and values to a region tormented by despotism and terrorism. Saddam Hussein, once again, is targeted by a group of American GIs. Bart Simpson, the Springfieldian underachiever and delinquent boy featured a warplane pilot dropping a bomb over Iraq and proudly singing: “*Your love is more deadly than Saddam, that’s why I gotta drop the bomb*”.¹²¹

The episode of 2010 entitled *The Greatest Story Ever D’ohed* is set in Jordan and the Occupied Territories or as the international community calls it Israel. Matt Groening and his team of scriptwriters tried to tackle the Palestinian-Israeli issues differently. The use of political satire reaches its peak in this episode that mocks the two fighting camps. Homer Simpson, the representative of the average American citizen, goes to accomplish pilgrimage in the Holy Lands with a number of his Springfield neighbours. Although the man has always been depicted in the sitcom as a shallow man, he miraculously manages to turn wise and pious and does his best to establish peace in the land of the three monotheistic religions by inviting them to forget their discords and embracing a new form of coexistence. Homer, who

¹²¹ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 14/S 12*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2001)

dares to put his nose in a business which is not his own, ironically mixes up faith and politics and delivers a kind of sermon advising an Oriental but heterogeneous crowd saying: “Attention! Christians, Muslims and Jews...you shall be called ChrisMuJews!”¹²²

Conclusion:

The American animated sitcom *The Simpsons* through the storyline of the target episodes analysed so far has endeavoured to represent the Orient as a geographical space, its inhabitants and its culture. It proved to be very linked to other movies and cinematic productions since it relied heavily on parody and intertextuality. The sitcom, as well, made usage of preconceived images inherited from the early travel narratives and outstanding literary works of French and British authors. The imagined Oriental spaces depicted in the sitcom’s target episodes seem to conform to the stereotyped Orientalist discourse analysed by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*. Thus, the Orient of *The Simpsons* far from being always real relies heavily on the images inspired by *The Arabian Nights* to create a world of fantasies, magic, irrationality and exoticism. The elements that Matt Groening and his crew of cartoonists have used, especially in *Mypods and Boomsticks* (2008), are the same and everlasting elements used by classical Hollywood movies: Aladdin’s genie, flying carpets and belly dancers performing to the lusty sultan in luxurious harems.

In episodes like *Treehouse of Horror II* (1991) the sitcom depicts an imagined backward Orient living out of date and haunted by beggars, thieves and strange creatures, which need to be civilized. Moreover, in the episode of 2011 entitled *New Kids on the Blecch* the sitcom draws the picture of a chaotic Orient living in anarchy and disorder. This untamed and aberrant Orient of *The Simpsons* is a place governed by despots like Saddam Hussein, Al-

¹²² Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 16/S 21*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2010)

Qaddafi and dangerous terrorists, to be urgently eradicated for the purpose of establishing law and bringing freedom and welfare to the oppressed citizens. *The Simpsons* adheres to what Edward Said describes as the general colonial discourse inherited since centuries and passed along through writings and movies, which insists on the Western “Mission Civilisartice”¹²³ to set places like the Orient free and to enlighten its “ignorant” inhabitants who seem to live in an everlasting past.

Statistically, the number of countries, locations and places appearing and mentioned in the sitcom is considerable. One should note here that almost all Oriental countries are depicted in the sitcom’s target episodes. Many regions are only mentioned in dialogues and screen captions whereas others take valuable portions in the storyline of some episodes. When it comes to the representation of Oriental countries, the Middle East takes the lion’s share in the sitcom in terms of recurrence and this is due to its specificity as a region of agitations and political conflicts. *The Simpsons* proves, thus, to be no exception in following the Hollywood tradition of intertwining politics and art production in representing the Oriental spaces. The creators of the sitcom through the use of parody and satire have managed to tackle many issues related to Middle Eastern countries such as American-Iraqi agitated relations and discords, Palestinian-Israeli peace issue and Oriental despotism.

¹²³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 169

Chapter II:

The Representation of Oriental Men and Women in *The Simpsons*

Chapter II: The Representation of Oriental Men and Women in *The Simpsons*

Introduction:

...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.¹²⁴

According to Edward Said's above assertion, 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 Orientals who are seen as the perfect "Other".¹²⁵ 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".

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

¹²⁴ 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

¹²⁵ Ibid.

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.¹²⁶ 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.¹²⁷ 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 Orientals 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.¹²⁸ 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.

¹²⁶ <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/general/news/2004/07/16/933/who-is-rupert-murdoch/>

¹²⁷ No Specified Author, *Rupert Murdoch Biography*, <http://www.biography.com/people/rupert-murdoch-9418489>

¹²⁸ Jack G. Shaheen, *The TV. Arab*, (Washington: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984), p. 8

The main objective of this chapter accordingly is the examination of the representation of Oriental men and women 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. It is believed that Springfield, the city where the plots of the sitcom are set, is the perfect prototype of the American “Salad Bowl” due to the variety of its characters who come from all walks of life and ethnic origins. We will, thus, see the place that characters from Oriental origins like the Arab and Muslim take in terms of appearance and importance. The postcolonialist understanding of Edward Said backed up with Jack Shaheen’s cinematic and media investigations will 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”,¹²⁹ 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.¹³⁰ For that particular reason, we will 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 will stand for Orientals and vice versa.

¹²⁹ May Ien Ang, qtd. in Jonathan Gray, *Watching The Simpsons: Television Parody and Intertextuality*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 7

¹³⁰ Markus Hünemörder, “*The Simpsons and Politics: E Pluribus Springfield*”, downloaded from <https://www.americahaus.de/simpsons>. Accessed September 28th, 2014.

I-The Representation of Oriental Men:

Oriental men, 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.

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.¹³¹ 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.¹³² 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.¹³³

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

¹³¹ Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913) and Century Dictionary (1889)

¹³² Lina Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics and the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World*, (London: I.B. TAURIS, 2006), p. 78

¹³³ Ibid.

with many novels on the sheikh and his love adventures in the desert.¹³⁴ *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.¹³⁵ 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) analysed in Chapter I, 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 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*

¹³⁴ http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/2587._Sheikh_Romances

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

Arabian Nights and nourishes Western literary output, which proved to be looking for sensuality in Oriental figures.¹³⁶



Snapshot 12: Homer, the sheikh, enjoys a foot massage by a courtesan

Snapshot 12, 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.

¹³⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 23

The Oriental men 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 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.¹³⁷ 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 Oriental 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.

¹³⁷ Evelyn AlSultany, “*Reclaiming Identity: Dismantling Arab Stereotypes*”. Retrieved April 2nd, 2013. <http://www.arabstereotypes.org/why-stereotypes/what-orientalism/sheiks-terrorists>

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."*¹³⁸

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"*.¹³⁹

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"*.¹⁴⁰ 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.

¹³⁸ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 7/S 20*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2001)

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

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.¹⁴¹ 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.¹⁴²



Snapshot 13: 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 13 above shows the program Homer sees before going islamophobic. Oriental aggressiveness and pugnacity talk.

¹⁴¹ Stephen Coleman and Karen Ross, *The Media and the Public “Them” and “Us” in Media Discourse*, (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 5

¹⁴² *Ibid.*



Figure 14: Lenny satirizing Osama Bin Laden

Snapshot 14 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 Oriental 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.¹⁴³ 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".

¹⁴³ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1645170/>

In addition to sheikhs and terrorists, Oriental men 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.¹⁴⁴ 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.¹⁴⁵

The Simpsons has depicted many Oriental 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.¹⁴⁶ 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. Matt Groening and his team of cartoonists and scriptwriters made use of the already existing and stereotyped characteristics of Oriental

¹⁴⁴ <http://energyatthemovies.com/tag/oil-2/>

¹⁴⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 102

¹⁴⁶ Jeremy Earp, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. M. E. Foundation Video. 2006

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 15: Bart featuring Al-Qaddafi

Snapshot 15 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 addressing a speech at the United Nations 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*”¹⁴⁷ is readapted by Bart Simpson 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 16: 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 agent¹⁴⁸ 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

¹⁴⁷ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 14/S 9*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 1998)

¹⁴⁸ She is, in fact, the illegitimate daughter of the Jewish character Krusty the clown.

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”.¹⁴⁹ This kind of political attitudes has a great influence on how people think and behave and moreover represent the “Other”.



Snapshot 17: Khomeini among the most evil people

Scene 17 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.¹⁵⁰ 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

¹⁴⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. xix

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.nps.gov/moru/index.htm>

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”.¹⁵¹ 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 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”.*¹⁵²

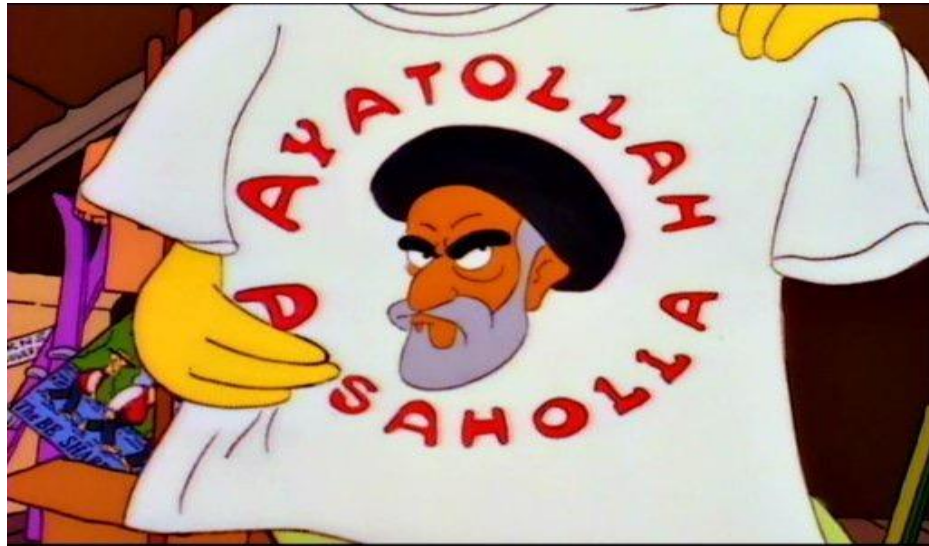
The episode of the talk show receives positive feedback from TV viewers as they watch it live because they believe that Homer is the last “American truth teller” especially when he sobs and laments. Lenny, one of Homer’s friends, comments on Homer sobbing on TV saying: *“When a guy who loves America cries, it makes him super straight”*. This demonstrates once again the effect of television on people and how it shapes their way of thinking and dealing with political and major issues.

Said asserts that an Islamic figure like Ayatollah 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:

¹⁵¹ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 10/S 23*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2012)

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

Satanic Verses.¹⁵³ 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 18: 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

¹⁵³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 347

family doesn't need it. She spontaneously requests Homer saying: "*Can we get rid of this Ayatollah T-shirt? - 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*".¹⁵⁴ 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.¹⁵⁵ 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.

II-The Representation of Oriental Women:

The most celebrated moments in Flaubert's Oriental travel have to do with Kuchuk Hanem, a famous Egyptian dancer and courtesan he encountered in Wadi Haifa. He had read in Lane about the almehs and the khawals, dancing girls and boys respectively, but it was his imagination rather than Lane's that could immediately grasp as well as enjoy the almost metaphysical paradox of the almeh's profession and the meaning of her name.¹⁵⁶

Thus goes Edward Said describing the bonds that tied Flaubert to Kuchuk Hanem, the Egyptian belly dancer he met in Wadi Haifa. Hollywood has always been faithful to the tradition set by Gustave Flaubert and other European novelists in representing Oriental women in the way they did. The more or less negative portrayal of Oriental women has existed from the early beginning of the Seventh Art and Hollywood cinematic industry has been interlacedly accordant with the stereotypes of the sexually available courtesans, the

¹⁵⁴ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 13/S 7*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 1996)

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 186

sensual belly dancers and more recently, the filthy Arab whores and street hookers roaming Cairo and Beirut streets at night and dwelling in hotels to earn their bread.¹⁵⁷

Thus, Hollywood directors and lately TV producers have overtaken the early European authors and travellers and participated in their turn in the representation of Oriental women. Laurence Michalek, echoing this, assumes that a considerable number of romantic movies were set in Arab countries, and North Africa itself hosted nearly 87 American productions in the 1920s. He adds that most of the plots of these movies revolved around the institution of the harem and all the concepts it may vehicle.¹⁵⁸ It is hence true that the depiction of Oriental women revolves around the themes of femininity, sexuality and sensuality; however, other images can be traced in the history of this representation.

The image of the partially or totally veiled oppressed Arab and Muslim women is a familiar one and constitutes an alternative to the other stereotyped images. One should note here that the depiction of veiled Oriental women in movies and in early European literature is not a recent fabrication. Said asserts that the literary output of a novelist like Gerard de Nerval is replete with images of veiled women roaming the streets of towns. These women, Said adds, are not necessarily oppressed in the eyes of such a novelist. “Gerard De Nerval is predisposed to recognize that the Orient is “le pays des rêves et de l’illusion”, which, like the veils he sees everywhere in Cairo, conceal a deep, rich fund of female sexuality”.¹⁵⁹ The two images, that of the sexual belly dancer in the harem and that of the oppressed hijabi woman are in fact two sides of the same coin as they sentence the Oriental woman to live eternally in clichés and stereotypes related to her body.

¹⁵⁷ Abdeen Jabara, “Time For a Change.” *Cinéaste*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1989, pp. 2-2. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23803055.

¹⁵⁸ Laurence Michalek, “The Arab in American Cinema: A Century of Otherness.” *Cinéaste*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1989, pp. 3-9. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23803056.

¹⁵⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 182

The Simpsons, as a prime-time animated sitcom, considers no exception in representing Oriental women; it depicts them in more or less stereotyped and unrealistic ways. However, few times Oriental women were granted their right to be decently pictured in the sitcom. Assia Djebbar,¹⁶⁰ the Franco-Algerian eminent writer is chosen and defended by Lisa Simpson in a bet on the Nobel Prize Awards in *Elementary School Musical* (2010). The storyline of the episode recounts that Lisa and the other kids in the neighbourhood are watching TV when a program about the Nobel Prize Awards starts. Each one of the kids choose a candidate and they write down all the names on a paper, as part of a bet-game. Lisa chooses Assia Djebbar because she believes that she is the most suitable and the most favoured among all the other candidates for the literary award.

BETTING POOL				
	Martin	Milhouse	Database	Lisa
Physics	Oliver Williamson	Vers Rubin	Lena Hau	Steve Harris
Chemistry	Richard Zare	W.E. Moerner	B.L. Feringa	Kenkichi Sonogashira
Economics	Jagdish Bhagwati	Bengt R. Holmstrom	Avinash Dixit	Elhanan Helpman
Literature	Amos Oz	Umberto Eco	Ian McEwan	Assia Djebbar
	Thich	Ingrid	Piedad Cordoba	Hu Jia

Snapshot 19: Assia Djebbar's name on the Noble Prize candidates list

Snapshot 18 shows the name of Assia Djebbar among other candidates chosen by Lisa for the Nobel Prize Awards: Steve Harris, Kenkichi Sonogashira, Elhanan Helpman and Hua Jia. Unfortunately, Lisa loses the bet when the names are announced on TV, but she gets upset and defends Djebbar's right to win the Literature Nobel Prize fervently. Her positive attitude towards the Franco-Algerian writer seems strange in the whole target episodes of the

¹⁶⁰ Assia Djebbar is a French eminent writer from Algerian Berber origin. She was an effective member of the prestigious Académie Française. She was a candidate for the Literature Noble prize many times.

sitcom because Arabic and Muslim women like Djebbar are predominantly portrayed negatively and stereotypically. Lisa's defence of Djebbar's right to win the prize is probably originating from feminist convictions rather than ethnic reasons. The smart young daughter of Homer Simpson, in *Elementary School Musical* (2010), defends Djebbar not because Djebbar is Oriental but defending her as a woman. Lisa, all along the episodes of the sitcom represents the zealous feminist, and her convictions and beliefs differs totally from her narrow-minded father and her underachiever brother Bart. Both Homer and Bart stereotypically symbolize the average American citizen who quests for an easy lifestyle without much effort and never cares about civil rights and universal values.

Aside from the somewhat decent and realistic depiction of Assia Djebbar in *Elementary School Musical* (2010), Oriental women are, recurrently, represented in the sitcom as belly dancers and sexually available courtesans since the very beginning of the airing of the first season. *Homer's Night Out* (1990) particularly, marks the debut of the long course of unrealistic representation of Arabic and Muslim women. The dancing body of the voluptuous "almehs and khawals" described centuries ago in the early European literature and travel narratives is reincarnated anew in another - modern - body, that of the professional exotic dancer named Princess Kashmir.¹⁶¹

The storyline narrates that Homer is invited to attend a party organized by his co-worker Eugene. The party takes place in a nightclub called the Wet T-shirt Nite, where a sensual belly dancer named Princess Kashmir performs. Homer and all his friends gather and the party starts, everybody is pleased as they drink, gossip and have fun until the belly dancer enters and starts her show. Everyman in the nightclub covets Princess Kashmir's body and admires the way she dances, and watches her serpentine moves with lusty eyes. At a certain

¹⁶¹ Scientific and academic honesty impels us to recognize that there is no proven evidence that Princess Kashmir is really Oriental because we didn't come across the slightest information that proves this fact. However, her name and her belly dance make us assume that she might be Oriental.

moment of the show, Homer joins the dancer on stage and starts dancing with her and tipping her generously but bizarrely as if he is the possessor of her body. Everything goes alright until Bart arrives and sees his father behaving so. He maliciously takes a picture of him tipping the dancer with a spy camera and makes copies of the scandalous picture for his friends at school. The picture goes viral and everybody in the city of Springfield blame Homer's attitude.

Homer's reputation is ruined because of this picture and things start to fall apart around him; his relationship with his wife, his boss, his neighbours and most of his friends starts to deteriorate. Hopefully, things start to turn well when his wife accepts his repent provided he apologizes for Princess Kashmir who is treated as an object with no ability to resist Homer tipping her and taking possession of her body. Marge, Homer's beloved wife represents the sound of tolerance and wisdom all along the seasons of the sitcom and the words she told her husband in the episode: "*Women are not just mere objects!*"¹⁶² shake off the nebula from Homer's conscience.

Homer's attitude in this episode evokes, as Edward Said would agree in many ways, Flaubert's fascination by Kuchuk Hanem to the point of dreaming of dominating the woman.¹⁶³ Said insists that the depiction of the resistless and supine belly dancer's body in early European literature is a symbolic depiction of the Orient itself. He asserts that "the scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader, or the soldier was in, or thought about, the Orient because he could be there, or could think about it, with very little resistance on the Orient's part".¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 10/S 1*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 1999)

¹⁶³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 6

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*



Snapshot 20: Homer tips Princess Kashmir

Snapshot 19, extracted from the aforementioned episode shows Homer and his friends enjoying the delights of Princess Kashmir who is depicted as the typical and dominated resistless belly dancer described by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*. Princess Kashmir like Kuchuk Hanem, Salammbo, Salome and the Queen of Sheba, is self-sufficient, by her emotional carelessness as she dances indifferently with everyman in the nightclub. She is a display of impressive but verbally inexpressive femininity as the expression of her femininity comes out by itself from the “undulation” and “serpentine” of her body. She is another version of carnal female temptation and a disturbing symbol of fecundity, peculiarly Oriental in her luxuriant and seemingly unbounded sexuality as she attracts men’s eyes and hearts by her charm.¹⁶⁵

Virginia Keft-Kennedy in her approach to interpret the Oriental dominated belly dancing body in Western literature asserts that Emily Apter in her book *Continental Drift* (1999) discusses Eastern dancing in colonialist accounts and fictional texts. She argues that Apter has devoted a whole essay entitled *The Dance of Colonial Seduction* to provide her own reading of Flaubert’s *Salammbo*. In her analysis, Apter draws a parallel between the

¹⁶⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 187

languages used to describe Oriental dancing and colonialist desire for domination.¹⁶⁶ She notes that in Flaubert's descriptions of Salamambo dancing, there is a marked repetition of words relating to "serpentine" and "undulating movements" of the dancer's body. These descriptions, she suggests, "encrypt what Laucan and other thinkers would call the "line of desire", injecting colonial looking into its exotic visual object.¹⁶⁷ She explains that rhetorically the repetitions of "undulation" and "serpentine" in the description of Orientals dancing manifest a desire through the evocation of waving, bending lines grounded in the long and complex decorative history of the Moorish Arabesque.¹⁶⁸ Building on this analysis one can safely assume that Princess Kashmir's body is depicted in *The Simpsons* as an exotic visual object, not only to be seen but also to be dominated. The fact of tipping her by Homer evokes the duality of body and money in the long-rooted cinematic tradition.

The Simpsons' representation of Oriental belly dancers is frequent in the sitcom's target episodes. However, only Princess Kashmir is given a name and an identity. Most of the belly dancers depicted in the sitcom are nameless and transient characters since they appear only once. In *Skinner's Sense of Snow* (2000) tackled earlier, a whole harem is depicted with all its components: divans, Arabian delights and most importantly Oriental sensual belly dancers wearing see-through garments. The aforementioned episode of 2001 entitled *New Kids on the Blech* is also an episode full of Oriental stereotypes of belly dancers. It features a group of probably Iraqi belly dancers performing out-door in front of the camera after the American GIs have set them free from their Oriental oppressors and strikingly from their hijabs. The women not only dance but also sing a song in a reverse order. The song goes "YVAN EHT NIOJ". This looks non-sense for the first observer but when read from right to left the song goes: "JOIN THE NAVY". This coded and subliminal message is very

¹⁶⁶ Virginia Keft-Kennedy, *Representing the Belly-dancing body: Feminism, Orientalism and the Grotesque*. University of Wollongong: Thesis Collection. 2005, p. 16

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 17

meaningful since it praises the American military intervention in the Orient to set its inhabitants free, especially the oppressed women. Here again, the domination of the Orient goes through the domination of the female body.

Oriental women have also portrayed stereotypically as alienated and oppressed in Western literature and movies for a long time. The elements used to depict oppression are nothing but hijabs, veils, chadors and niqabs which are in fact part of the traditional garments worn by Eastern women in general and Arabic women in particular; and have nothing to do with fatalism, backwardness and oppression. Veiled women, though nameless and transient, are represented recurrently in *The Simpsons* and they constitute the background in several scenes featuring Oriental spaces.

In the episode of 2001 entitled *Holidays of Future Passed*, Matt Groening and his team of cartoonists depict America in the upcoming 30 years. The episode, through the family of the Simpsons, foretells the future of the nation from ordinary events like marriage to major social and cultural mutations like the prevailing of Islamic Sharia law.¹⁶⁹ The Islamification of America is hence a side theme in the episode and proves to be very loaded with cultural, social and political satire. Matt Groening and his crew of scriptwriters depict through Mulhouse Van Houten, a pathetic character in the sitcom, an American man who suddenly becomes allergic to all Christmas-related items. Surprisingly, the psychologically unwell man finds refuge in the city of Dearborn, Michigan where niqabs, Islam and Sharia law predominate.

In the storyline, Lisa Simpson gets married to Mulhouse Van Houten and helps him cope with his seasonal allergies bizarrely provoked by Christmas-related items. Desperate

¹⁶⁹ The Columbia Encyclopaedia goes that Sharia is the religious law of Islam. As Islam makes no distinction between religion and life, Islamic law covers not only ritual but every aspect of life. A general agreement was reached, in the course of the formalization of Islam, to base Sharia on three main roots: the Qur'an, the prophet's tradition (Sunna), the consensus of the Muslims (Ijmaa) and reasoning by analogy (Qiyas).

Mulhouse suggests to Lisa the idea of moving temporarily out of Springfield saying: “I could nurse my allergies in one of the non-Christmas celebrating states.” Lisa advises him saying: “you could go back to Michigan. It is still under Sharia law”. Mulhouse replies: “Yeah! But they always make me wear a veil”.¹⁷⁰ Then Mulhouse goes to Dearborn disguised in a niqab which covers all his body except his eyes and mingles with the majoritarian Muslim community there. Snapshot 21 below tells much about the Islamification of Dearborn.



Snapshot 21: Mulhouse wearing a niqab in Dearborn Campus

Matthew A. Henry has commented on the nature of political satire in *Holidays of Future Passed* (2001). He asserts that the viewers can see once again how cultural trends quickly become incorporated into a sitcom like *The Simpsons*.¹⁷¹ He explains that the viewer, especially the layman would be bewildered by what has been advanced about the Islamification of Dearborn in the future. However, the well-informed viewer would easily catch the allusion the episode takes on the currently debated issue of Islam and Sharia law which have originated from the tragic events of the 9/11 and got intensified by the election of Barrack Obama who was suspected by the general opinion and papers like *The New Yorker* to

¹⁷⁰ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 9/S 23*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2001)

¹⁷¹ Matthew A. Henry, *The Simpsons; Satire, and American Culture*, (New York: Macmillan, 2012), p. 186

be a “secret Muslim” and anti-American.¹⁷² He adds that Anti-Muslim sentiment grew bigger and bigger to sweep Dearborn, a city considered the first host of Arab and Muslim communities.¹⁷³ *The Simpsons*, again and again, intertwines satire and politics to depict current events. The association of the veil and Dearborn in the episode shows the exaggerated and unrealistic fear of Western media of the Islamification of America.



Snapshot 22: Oriental veiled woman praising *The Simpsons*

Snapshot 22 is extracted from the episode of 1993 entitled *The Last Temptation of Homer*. The scene is featuring the Springfield TV News coverage of an Oriental crowd rejoicing. The reasons for the Orientals festivities are not clearly described because the report was too short and abrupt. However one can deduce that the locals in that Oriental region are showing their gratitude to the Westerners who have probably set them free from a local militia. The totally veiled young lady in the scene is holding Homer Simpson’s picture and warmly shouting: “*The Simpsons be praised...Springfield be praised*”,¹⁷⁴ then she finishes her overwhelming gratitude attitude with a piercing “ululation”.¹⁷⁵ The Oriental crowd in this

¹⁷² Matthew A. Henry, *The Simpsons; Satire, and American Culture*, (New York: Macmillan, 2012), p. 186

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 9/S 5*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 1993)

¹⁷⁵ The Century Dictionary goes that ululation is kind of howling, as of the wolf or dog; a wailing. It is also a long loud emotional utterance made by women in Oriental countries to express joy, excitement and mourning.

scene is depicted heterogeneous and made up of people from all walks of life: the old, the young, women, men and children and what they share in common is nothing but veils, chaos and aberrance. A close look at the scene reveals that all the people act in disorder and anarchy while holding weapons of all sorts and shouting and firing their guns. However, at the forefront of the scene, Groening's cartoonists have chosen to put a woman wearing a niqab.

All what has been advanced so far to interpret the ways in which Oriental men and women have been represented is in *The Simpsons* is purely originating from the postcolonialist understanding of such a deadly ground. Linda Hutcheon would not agree with Edward Said in many respects since its own understanding is built upon postmodernist decoding of Pop culture and art in general. Hutcheon argues that irony is neutral and its production and reception do not seem to belong to any particular faith or confession.¹⁷⁶ In other words, Hutcheon's understanding invites us to see *The Simpsons* differently, as a free art that has no enemies. Thus, its irony cannot be classified with either the forces of good or evil¹⁷⁷ since it is an intentional transmission of both information and evaluative attitude other than what is explicitly presented.¹⁷⁸

Assuming the fact that *The Simpsons* is a biased animated sitcom which pursues a specific political and ideological agenda dictated by Rupert Murdoch the "Hawk" and his "Think Tank" will quickly vanish if the viewer watches a considerable number of episodes selected from varied seasons. By doing so, the viewer will effectively elaborate a deeper and broader understanding of the sitcom and will figure out that it satirizes not only Orientals or any other ethnic group but also America and Americans themselves. The viewer will as well detect that the sitcom's irreverent and exaggerated usage of cultural, religious and ethnic stereotypes is a basic ingredient in representing all nationalities, faiths and governments.

¹⁷⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 11

¹⁷⁷ Robert Phiddian, "Irony in the Eye of the Beholder: *Southern Review*", vol. 28, no. 2. p. 252

¹⁷⁸ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 11

Jack Shaheen's arguments for a Western film industry influenced and dominated by the ideologies and political orientations of the so-called "Hawks" and neoconservatives is not really established on a firm and tough basis when it comes to a sitcom like *The Simpsons*. Throughout the course of its existence, the sitcom proved to be a "free electron" in a world governed by ideologies and political agendas. Hutcheon assumes that the ironist has no enemies in the sense that the production of irony doesn't imply denigrating what is being represented and satirized. Thus, the irony of *The Simpsons* falls in this understanding; though Groening's popular and beloved sitcom has induced haters and detractors than any other show. Former US president George H. W. Bush was one of those who couldn't stand the sitcom's irony and harsh criticism of politicians and politics. Although he is one of the closest friends and allies of Murdoch, Bush attacked the sitcom in 1992 saying openly that he wanted American families to be "a lot more like *The Waltons*¹⁷⁹ and a lot less like *The Simpsons*" because, according to him, its irony and satire would destroy American values.¹⁸⁰

Dr Markus Hünemörder from Munich University in his episode-per-episode analysis of political satire in *The Simpsons* argues that the sitcom which may look like an ordinary animated sitcom is, in fact, a social, cultural and especially a political satire. He asserts that "the show satirizes many aspects of American society and politics and assumes that political satire in *The Simpsons* most often contains a kernel of truth, then exaggerates it to the point of craziness",¹⁸¹ in this manner, *The Simpsons* "questions and subverts American political authority by displaying the crazy side of political issues and institutions".¹⁸² *The Simpsons*, according to him, "is obviously not conservative, but it rather looks closer to liberals because, during the early years, conservatives criticized *The Simpsons* as a bad influence on children".

¹⁷⁹ A critically-acclaimed CBS TV series of the 1970s. Based on the life of author Earl Hamner. Narrates the life of a rural family living in Virginia. https://www.delsjourney.com/closeups/us/waltons/waltons_story.htm

¹⁸⁰ Markus Hünemörder, "*The Simpsons and Politics: E Pluribus Springfield*", downloaded from <https://www.americahaus.de/simpsons>. Accessed September 28th, 2014

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

However, “Liberals too sometimes criticize the show for not attacking social wrongs more directly”. Markus Hünemörder asserts that the sitcom satirizes both conservatives and liberals by exposing their political stupidity.¹⁸³

From the very beginning, the sitcom has taken upon itself the criticism of political parties in America. The Springfield Republicans who are generally depicted as belonging to the White, Christian and rich portion of society are vampires who meet in a castle and behave like a secret society.¹⁸⁴ Montgomery Burns, one of the permanent characters of the sitcom, is the richest businessperson in Springfield and the owner of the nuclear plant where Homer works. He is the ironic prototype of the selfish, Republican Capitalist in the sitcom’s plots. The Springfield Democrats on their part didn’t escape the sitcom’s irony as they are represented in the sitcom as women, gays and minorities meeting at a humble salad bar.¹⁸⁵ *The Simpsons* is hence drawing upon more or less real stereotypes about American politics and spicing it with its unique and authentic Simpsonian irony.

Mocking the Congress and the laws it passes is another aspect of *The Simpsons* political satire and irony. Hünemörder assumes that the sitcom has satirized a great deal of the most controversial political issued laws, starting from illegal immigration, gay marriage, sexual segregation and ending with gun control and environment issues. The sitcom also mocks recurrently the “fake” American patriotism nourished by media and public wrath after 9/11 and the war on Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁸⁶

Hutcheon’s postmodernist theorization suggests that politically and culturally, irony can be a risky business since it does not now mean only what it meant in earlier centuries, it does not mean in one country all it may mean in another, nor in the street what it

¹⁸³ Markus Hünemörder, “*The Simpsons and Politics: E Pluribus Springfield*”, downloaded from <https://www.americahaus.de/simpsons>. Accessed September 28th, 2014

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

may mean in the study, nor to one scholar what it may mean to another.¹⁸⁷ The ironist's intention, she explains, and the qualities of his language are always open to interpretation, misinterpretation, or no interpretation at all.¹⁸⁸ The viewer, according to Hutcheon has the total authority to decipher and read all what irony and satire can vehicle in function of his personal and already-acquired opinions. Applying this to the sitcom's social and political satire of the Orientals depicted in the target episodes, one can only assume that the interpretation of this satire may vary from viewer to viewer. In fact, the reading of the sitcom's irony is the pure product of the audience itself.

Accordingly, the sitcom's depiction of Oriental men in *Mypods and Boomsticks* (2008) as suspected terrorists was the dominant line of representation, at least in the eyes of the majority of the Arabic and Muslim beholders. However, many others have considered the episode's satire as a kind of challenge to the Islamophobia that swept America after 9/11. It has been announced that the Council on American-Islamic Relations in Los Angeles praised the aforementioned episode of 2008 and sent a Thank-you-letter to Matt Groening. Hussam Ayloush, the executive director of the CAIR, wrote congratulating, "I applaud your effort in Sunday's episode of *The Simpsons* to humanize American Muslims by challenging anti-Muslim sentiment in our society".¹⁸⁹ In *Mypods and Boomsticks* (2008) Groening, in fact, starts his satire by mocking Steve Jobs who has been given ironically another name: Steve Mobs. Along the storyline of the episode, the Ipad rush is harshly criticised and Americans are shown as slaves to Steve Jobs, therefore to consumerism. Uncontrolled consumerism which is an evil of our times is associated in the episode with Islamophobia which is another evil sweeping Western nations. Homer is shown in *Mypods and Boomsticks* as a victim of media and urban legends circulating about Arabic and Muslim people. Groening through the

¹⁸⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 09

¹⁸⁸ Robert Phiddian, "Irony in the Eye of the Beholder: *Southern Review*", vol. 28, no. 2. p. 252

¹⁸⁹ [www.cair.com/Ayloush, Hussam \(2008-12-03\)/Thank you letter - Matt Groening. Council on American-Islamic Relations](http://www.cair.com/Ayloush,Hussam(2008-12-03)/Thank%20you%20letter%20-%20Matt%20Groening.Council%20on%20American-Islamic%20Relations). Accessed June 18th, 2013 at 11:00 am

usage of the somewhat real stereotype of the Oriental “potential terrorist” manages to mock the American Islamophobia through the exposition of the devastating effects of the brainwashing media on an average American citizen like Homer.

The Simpsons in its irreverent social and especially political satire proves to be non-aligned since it makes no distinction between America and the rest of the world; as it makes no distinction also between American and non-American politicians and statesmen. The ironic representation of Oriental countries like Iraq, Libya and Iran in the target episodes analysed so far proves to be based on clichés and stereotypes; and this is, in fact, no news since the sitcom, as noted before, lives on parody, intertextuality and preconceived images. *The Simpsons* creativity lies in exploiting those stereotypes but in an exaggerated manner to achieve its satire or more accurately its “graphic satire”. In this way, the sitcom can be compared to “caricatures” which “have evolved from an initial rejection of perfection into an artistic medium that serves to exaggerate imperfections in external and eventually internal human features”.¹⁹⁰ The conception of “graphic satire” has been backed up by the usage of funny and “comical wordplay and punning” in the sitcom to satirize Khomeini the former Iranian leader: Ayatollah - Assaholla, Apple owner: Steve Jobs - Steve Mobs, Al-Qaida founder: Osama Bin Laden - Osama Bin Sleepin’ and the American flag: Star-Spangled Banner - Bart-Mangled Banner.

III- Transient, Nameless and All-Dark Arab and Muslim Characters:

Along with the Simpson nuclear family which is composed of Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa, little Maggie, their cat snowball and their dog Santa, *The Simpsons* includes an

¹⁹⁰ No Specified Author, “*The Globalization of The Simpsons: A Study of Satire in International Media*”, <https://medium.com/@benkurzrock/theglobalizationofthesimpsonsastudyofsatireininternationalmedia-e0c0bf5aace1>. Accessed June 1st, 2014

appreciable number of characters from all walks of life: gods, politicians, co-workers, family relatives, teachers, thieves, local celebrities, unemployed, couch potatoes, fools and astonishingly, some imaginary creatures such as extra-terrestrials. The sitcom also compromises characters from all origins and ethnic backgrounds that interact and mingle in the emblematic city of Springfield¹⁹¹ and shape its everyday life. The assiduous viewer of the sitcom is acquainted to watch permanent and recurrent characters such as Krusty the clown and his father Rabbi Hyman who are Jewish, Ned Flanders and his family who are Flemish, tavern owner Moe Szyslak who is Eastern European, Willie the school ground speaker who is Scottish, Fat Tony D'Amico and Luigi who are Italians, Apu and his wife Manjula and their octuplets who are Indians.

Springfield, therefore, symbolizes the perfect prototype of the American “Salad Bowl”, where all the ethnic groups coexist in concordance and harmony without being threatened by the loss of national identity and menaced by cultural assimilation. The most noticeable aspect of the city is its promotion of the values of Multiculturalism and ethnic diversity; this can be easily perceived after watching only a few episodes. What is also noticeable in Springfield is the ethnic stereotyping that revolves around its people, their religion and their culture. The Chef and the Mafioso are always Italians; the shopkeeper is always Indian, the evangelist preacher is always an Afro-American and the local church priest is an Anglo-Saxon Protestant. It is therefore obvious and apparent to the very eye that Springfield hosts almost all ethnicities and allows them to keep their subtle specificities and traits. The questions which one should legitimately arise are: what place do Arab and Muslim

¹⁹¹ The US Postal Service has issued in 2012 a list of the most common post office names within the country and the city name of "Springfield" has figured 35 times. The question of which Springfield is *The Simpsons* city has long been debated until Groening declared to *The Smithsonian Magazine* that the sitcom's Springfield was named after Springfield, Oregon, where he grew up. Groening had hoped that by keeping the true state's name secret, fans would believe their own Springfield was the inspiration. <http://www.usmagazine.com/entertainment/news/the-simpsons-matt-groening-reveals-springfields-state-oregon-2012114>. Accessed April 3rd, 2013

occupy in Springfield? What are their names and roles as characters in the sitcom's episodes? Are they permanently figuring in the plots? How and what do they look like?

All along the preparation of this dissertation, a considerable number of episodes have been probed for the sole purpose of selecting and limiting the corpus. We have been able to watch approximately 508 episodes from season 1 (1989) to season 25 (2013) taking into account note taking, snapshot capturing and searching the historical and chronological context of each theme and sub-theme in the target episodes. The first finding that has caught our attention is the absence of permanent Oriental characters from Arab and Muslim origins in the sitcom. If the Indians are represented by Apu, and if the Jewish are represented by Krusty and the Italians are represented by Luigi, the Arab and Muslim actually have no official characters that might speak for and impersonate them. The Arab and Muslim hence turn out to be transient and fleeting figures rather than full-time and real characters in a powerful prime-time and a long-running sitcom like *The Simpsons*. They do not take part in the daily life of a rainbow city like Springfield and they do not constitute a significant part of that American "Salad Bowl" open to everybody and "everything".

It is true that the sitcom makes usage of other American and non-American non-permanent characters to tackle specific themes and topics, these characters are generally special guest icons like Pop stars, politicians, reality TV figures and outstanding people in their fields. One can name Bill Gates, George Bush, Mel Gibson, Mick Jagger and Rupert Murdoch himself. These guest figures are depicted as foreigners to Springfield and their roles are limited in terms of importance and time. In *Mypods and Boomsticks* (2008) Steve Jobs appeared for less than a minute and Bush appeared for two or three minutes in *Two Bad Neighbours* (1996), the two men, however, are considered luckier than other famous people who were only mentioned by name. Should we then consider the many transient and fleeting

Oriental figures encountered in some episodes as guest icons? The answer would certainly be no because those figures that appeared almost once were strikingly nameless, like all the terrorists, belly dancers, ordinary veiled women and people in the background of scenes. This is considered our second finding when watching and investigating the target episodes.

Except for the few times when the Arab and Muslim figures were given names, the general line of representation tended to make usage of unnamed Oriental people. Saddam, Al-Qaddafi, Khomeini, Bin Laden, Princess Kashmir¹⁹² and Assia Djebbar, only mentioned by name in a screen caption; are deliberately the only Arab and Muslim names that stuck in memory. Strikingly most if not all of those Oriental figures are infamous and detested figures according to the mainstream of Western culture, politics and system of ideas. Semantically, making usage of nameless characters is very meaningful in literature; cinema and television because sometimes this is done ad hoc to intentionally distort the image, underestimate the personality and more importantly to deny the existence of such people.

Elizabeth Joy analysis of the Voiceless Savage in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* can be applied to approach the idea of the nameless Arab and Muslim figures in *The Simpsons* since it is widely known in Cultural Studies that depriving a man of having a name and silencing him are both related to operations of power and resistance. Elizabeth Joy asserts that she was most struck by Conrad's allusion to the concept of a "voice", which she considers a kind of tool for empowerment.¹⁹³ She explains that to an author like Conrad, the ability to speak and more importantly, to be understood is an affirmation of one's place and power and she describes this as a "gift of expression".¹⁹⁴ She, moreover, assumes that Conrad reduces the

¹⁹² Again scientific and academic honesty impels us to recognize that there is no proven evidence that Princess Kashmir is really Oriental because we didn't come across the slightest information that proves this fact. However, her name and her belly dance, as noted before, make us assume that she might be Oriental.

¹⁹³ Elizabeth Joy, *The Voiceless Savage*. <https://blog.nus.edu.sg/modernismandempire/2009/09/09/the-voiceless-savage/> Accessed April 3rd, 2013

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

native to a series of grunts which Chinua Achebe describes as “rudimentary souls of Africa”.¹⁹⁵ Should we then consider that *The Simpsons* by depriving the Arab and Muslim figures of names has denied their existence, at least as members of the American “Salad Bowl” of Springfield? Or should we interpret this as a stolen “gift of naming” which aims probably at undermining their power as individuals and nations? Providing consistent answers to these questions is really no child’s play especially when we know that the analysis of the basic visual aspects of the sitcom reveals that the Orientals from Arab and Muslim origins are not “Yellow” in a captivating “Very Yellow” sitcom. This is our astounding third finding.

“An animator came up with *The Simpsons*’ yellow and as soon as she showed it to me I said: this is the answer! Because when you’re flicking through channels with your remote control, and a flash of yellow goes by, you’ll know you’re watching *The Simpsons*”. Matt Groening once told the BBC.¹⁹⁶ Groening’s justification for the dominant yellow colour in his animated sitcom is plausible from a psychological standpoint. Yellow is becoming much in vogue in painting the characters of prime-time cartoons, SpongeBob Squarepants and Jake are only examples.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, yellow is perhaps the best colour to attract attention and to catch the sight of the viewers. For this particular reason, this catchy colour is used for safety measures to paint hazardous public works vehicles such as heavy trucks, bucket trucks and bulldozers.

Roland Barthes’s analysis of the usage of colours in TV commercials can be applied to give a deeper interpretation of the usage of colours to paint characters in *The Simpsons*. In *Rhetoric of the Image* Barthes focuses on commercials because they contain highly condensed

¹⁹⁵ Elizabeth Joy, *The Voiceless Savage*. <https://blog.nus.edu.sg/modernismandempire/2009/09/09/the-voiceless-savage/> Accessed April 3rd,2013

¹⁹⁶ Peter Cambridge, *Hot seat: The Simpsons creator Matt Groening*. http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_6260000/newsid_6262500/6262584.stm

¹⁹⁷ Penn Collins, *Yellow for Cartoon Characters*. <https://www.good.is/articles/cartoon-characters-yellow>

“frank” and” emphatic”¹⁹⁸ images, though they are very short in time. He also draws our attention to the usage or rather the manipulation of colours to convey messages both directly perceived and subliminal.¹⁹⁹ The choice of colours in commercials is not arbitrary argues Barthes because apart from the linguistic message conveyed in a TV commercial the viewers are left with the pure image which straightaway provides a series of discontinuous signs.²⁰⁰ Barthes supplies his explaining with illustrations from a real French TV commercial and goes that its “signifier” is the bringing together of the tomato, the pepper and the tricoloured hues (yellow, green, red); to create a “signified” which is Italy or rather “Italianicity”.²⁰¹

Thus, Barthes invites us to reconsider our understanding of the usage of colours in TV and therefore in motion pictures because colours are loaded with “denotative” and “connotative” meanings which can create and convey messages of great significance like the “sense of nationality” and “ethnic belonging.” In Algeria, for instance, the usage of colours supplies great possibilities for the different local ethnic groups to express their belongings and situate their identities in the public and shared sphere. In this sense Berber tribes of Kabylia evoke and reclaim their identity through the usage of a “combination of green and yellow” which are, in fact, the colours of the Kabyle Broom tree called locally “Wezzu”. The Sufi orders scattered all over the country distinguish themselves from other congregations by adopting a kind of mono-coloured banner representing their creed. The members of Cherifian tribe of Awlad Sidi Abid in Eastern Tébessa refer to themselves as the “Holders of the Green Banner” in their poetic and mystical “Dhikr”.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p. 33

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 32-35

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Prof. Sadi Eren defines “Dhikr” as an explicit and clear order of the Noble Quran to Muslims aiming at making them remembering and commemorating God both orally through recitations and heartily through meditation. www.questionsonislam.com/whatdoesdhikrmean.

Building on the understanding of the usage of colours in Barthes's "Rhetoric of the Image" one can safely assume that the visuals of the sitcom are ultimately basic and the style of drawing that is used for the hundreds of characters is not as complicated as other cartoons such as the Japanese Manga. This is done on purpose by Groening and his cartoonists to achieve their "graphic satire" focusing on the sitcom's profoundness in terms of ideas and meanings. Each character in the sitcom is unique and specifically designed to appear as important as any other character. However, almost all the characters share the same yellow complexion.

The colour yellow in the sitcom is certainly standing for "white" in real life and this twist in manipulating colours is not a novelty in motion pictures. The concept of "whiteness" in literature and movies has been replaced by "yellowness" in the sitcom. In the episode of 1992 entitled *New Kid on the Block* Bart Simpson falls in love with an older girl who has moved next-door. He spends a good time in the bath cleaning his skin again and again before dating her. Lisa curiously asks him why he is doing so. He replies: "*Sometimes a guy just likes his skin to look its yellowest.*"²⁰³ This shows that yellow in the sitcom is used to create a sense of nationality and belonging to the dominant ethnic majority in Springfield and by far in America. Yellow is therefore used to portray people from the Caucasian origin in general and the Anglo-Saxons in particular, like Homer and his nuclear family, their neighbours the Flanders and most of Homer's relatives and friends. Darker colours, especially dark brown, are used mainly to portray "the Other" like Bachir, the Arabic boy and Apu, the Indian shopkeeper. It is worth mentioning here that Krusty the Jewish clown and all his relatives are painted in yellow, exactly like Homer and all the Springfieldians, though Jewish are not Caucasians and Anglo-Saxons. Thanks to the subliminal power of colours the sitcom oftentimes manages to convey messages without a single word uttered. The fact of drawing

²⁰³ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 8/S 4*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 1992)

the Arab and Muslim in dark brown all the time can be interpreted as an exclusion of this ethnic group from belonging to the American “Salad Bowl” of Springfield.



Snapshot 23: The Algerian Olympic Committee. All-Dark figures.

If we consider snapshot 23 extracted from the episode of 1991 entitled *Treehouse of Horror II* we will easily notice that all the members of the Algerian Olympic Committee have a look-alike physical appearance characterised by their dark brown complexions. The fact of drawing almost all Arab and Muslim characters in dark brown will, accordingly, incite us to start believing that from a physiological standpoint there is no difference between an Iranian, a Sudanese, a Lebanese, a Kurd, an Indonesian and an Algerian from Berber origin. It is obviously demonstrated that Western authors, travellers, and lately filmmakers, and Matt Groening in one of them, have tended to perpetuate the inherited image of the uniform Orientals who think, act and look alike. Edward Said asserts In *Orientalism* that the Committee of Concerned Asia Scholars, primarily composed of Americans, led a revolution in the 1960s to review and revise East Asia Studies; the African Studies and the Third World specialists were similarly challenged by revisionists. “Only the Arabists and Islamologists still function unrevised”, Said adds.²⁰⁴ “For them, there are still such things as an Islamic society, an Arab mind, an Oriental psyche. Even the ones whose speciality is the modern Islamic

²⁰⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 301

world anachronistically use texts like the Koran to read into every facet of contemporary Egyptian or Algerian society”.²⁰⁵

Conclusion:

The representation of Oriental men and women in *The Simpsons* has been the main purpose of this chapter. The Arab and Muslim’s cultural, religious and ethnic stereotypes have been dismantled and deconstructed to uncover the ways in which the sitcom portrays them in the target episodes. 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 Oriental men 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 Oriental man shift 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

²⁰⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 301

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 Oriental men.

The sitcom also depicts the Oriental men as despots ruling their countries by force and subjugating their oppressed compatriots. Images of Arabic and Muslim leaders recur 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.

When it comes to Oriental women, *The Simpsons* considers no exception in representing them; it depicts them in more or less stereotyped and unrealistic ways. However, few times Oriental women are granted their right to be decently pictured in the sitcom. Assia Djebbar, the Franco-Algerian eminent writer is chosen and defended by Lisa Simpson in a bet on the Nobel Prize Awards in *Elementary School Musical*. This can be considered a positive representation of Oriental women because *The Simpsons* through the storyline of many other episodes manages to adhere to the general line of stereotyped misrepresentation of the Arabic and Muslim women. This is, mainly, due to the influence of the preconceived images

inherited from the writings of the early French and British novelists. The sitcom, in a way or in another, fabricates an eroticized and romanticized Orient full of belly dancers and courtesans. The dancing body of the voluptuous “almehs and khawals” described centuries ago in the early European literature and travel narratives is reincarnated anew in another - modern - body, that of the professional exotic dancer named Princess Kashmir, in the episode entitled *Homer’s Night Out*.

The image of the partially or totally veiled oppressed Arabic and Muslim women constitutes an alternative to the other stereotyped images in the sitcom. In *Holidays of Future Passed* and *Homer’s Last Temptation* images of veils, chadors and niqabs are abundant and unfortunately associated with Sharia law and the fear of the Islamification of America. The two images, that of the sexual belly dancer in the harem and that of the oppressed hijabi woman are in fact two sides of the same coin as they sentence the Oriental woman to live eternally in stereotypes and clichés revolving around her body.

When it comes to the analysis of the sitcom’s characters the first finding that has caught our attention is the absence of permanent Oriental characters from Arab and Muslim origins. Unlike the Indians, the Italians and the Jewish, the Arab and Muslim actually have no official characters that might speak for and impersonate them in the sitcom. The Arab and Muslim hence turn out to be transient and fleeting figures rather than full-time and real characters in a powerful prime-time sitcom like *The Simpsons*. These characters do not take part in the daily life of a rainbow city like Springfield and they do not constitute a significant part of that American “Salad Bowl”. Moreover, except for the few times when the Arabic and Muslim figures are given names in the target episodes, the general line of representation tend to make usage of unnamed Oriental people. Saddam, Al-Qaddafi, Khomeini and Bin Laden, were among the few Arabic and Muslim names heard in the sitcom. Semantically, making usage of nameless characters is very meaningful in literature; cinema and television because

sometimes this is done intentionally to distort the image; underestimate the personality and more importantly to deny the existence of such people.

Colours, as Roland Barthes would argue, are used to create a sense of nationality and belonging. Yellow is the prevailing colour in the sitcom and it stands for white in real life. It is used to depict the dominant ethnic majority in Springfield and by far in America. Yellow is therefore used to portray people from the Caucasian origin in general and Anglo-Saxons in particular, like Homer and his nuclear family whereas darker colours, especially dark brown, have been used to mainly portray “the Other” like Bachir, the Arabic boy and Apu, the Indian shopkeeper. It is worth mentioning here that Krusty the Jewish clown and all his relatives are painted in yellow, exactly like Homer and all the Springfieldians, though Jewish are not Caucasians and Anglo-Saxons. Thanks to the subliminal power of colours the sitcom manages to convey messages without a single word uttered. The fact of drawing the Arab and Muslim in dark brown all the time is interpreted as an exclusion of this ethnic group from belonging to the American “Salad Bowl” of Springfield.

All what has been advanced so far to interpret the ways in which Oriental men and women have been represented is in *The Simpsons* is purely originating from Said’s postcolonial understanding of such a deadly ground and Jack Shaheen’s cinematic investigations. Linda Hutcheon would not agree with these postcolonial theorists in many respects since its own understanding is built upon a postmodernist decoding of Pop culture and art in general which suggests that irony is neutral and its production and reception does not seem to belong to any particular faith or confession. *The Simpsons* as a political and social satire cannot be conceived as a biased sitcom which pursues a specific political and ideological agenda dictated by Murdoch the “Hawk”, because this quickly will vanish if the viewer elaborates a deeper opinion on the sitcom by watching several episodes from varied seasons. By doing so, any viewer will effectively figure out that *The Simpsons* satirizes not

only Orientals or any other ethnic group but also America and American themselves. Rupert Murdoch himself, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and former US president George H. W. Bush are targeted by the sitcom's irreverent irony and satire from the early beginning.

The sitcom's depiction of Oriental men in *Mypods and Boomsticks* as suspected terrorists is the dominant line of representation, at least in the eyes of the majority of the Arabic and Muslim beholders. However, many others like Hussam Ayloush have considered the episode's satire a kind of challenge to the Islamophobia that swept America after 9/11 and mocked Americans who turned to be manipulated by the urban legends circulating about Orientals, and victims of the brainwashing media. *The Simpsons* creativity lies in exploiting the ethnic, cultural and religious stereotypes available but in an exaggerated manner to achieve its satire or more accurately its "graphic satire", and in this way, the sitcom can be compared to "caricatures". The association of "caricatures" and "graphic satire" with the usage of funny and "comical wordplay and punning" in the sitcom has allowed it to freely satirize and mock people from all ethnicities, denominations, cultures and walks of life.

Chapter III:

The Representation of Two Other Major Oriental Communities in *The Simpsons*

The Indian Community and the Jewish Community

Chapter III: The Representation of Two Other Major Oriental Communities

in *The Simpsons*:

The Indian Community and the Jewish Community

Introduction

There, as a case in point, Druzes, Christians, Muslims, and Jews hobnob easily because— someone quips—Arabs are simply Jews on horseback, and all are Orientals at heart. The unisons are made between general categories, not between categories and what they contain.²⁰⁶

Edward Said argues in the quote above, that Arabs and Jews are both Orientals at heart. His assertion puts us in front of a fact that is undeniable and never contradicted by history, Arabs and Jews who both come from the East and share almost the same physical traits and Semitic traditions, are in reality closer to each other than any other ethnic groups. If the Druzes, Persians, Berbers and Turks are also considered peoples of the East, the Indians too, should be regarded as Orientals in the sense that they too come from the East and share the habits, customs and mindset of Orientals. Westerners have always represented Orientals in variable ways since the early beginning. The European authors, travellers, politicians, thinkers and lately Hollywood filmmakers have depicted those peoples of the East and moreover contributed to the construction and sometimes to the distortion of their existing image. The Pop culture productions constituted no exception in this process of imagining and thinking about the Orientals and *The Simpsons* is perhaps the best prototype of the animated sitcom that deals with the ethnic, cultural and religious specificities of such peoples.

²⁰⁶ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 102

Along with the Simpson small family which is composed of Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa, little Maggie, their cat snowball and their dog Santa, *The Simpsons* includes an appreciable number of characters from Anglo-Saxon and non-Anglo-Saxon origins who interact smoothly in the emblematic city of Springfield and shape its everyday life. The viewer who is used to watch the sitcom is acquainted with watching permanent and recurrent characters such as Kumiko, Gogo Yubari and Master Sushi Chef who are of Japanese origin; Tyler's sisters and Paul Anka who are of Canadian origin; Gine Vendetti and Johnny Tightlips who are of Italian origin; Rita La Fleur, Bleeding Gum Murphy and Lou who are Afro-Americans and Viktor, Slava and Fatov who are of Russian origin.

In addition to the aforementioned characters, there are others who are thought to be from Oriental origins like Krusty the clown and his father Rabbi Hyman, their friend and relative Sophie Krustofsky, the school bully Dolph Starbeam, Artie Ziff, Mr Bergstrom and Mort Goldman. These characters are among the many other Jewish figures that live permanently in the sitcom's city of Springfield, where they mingle with the other Springfieldians and take part in the daily life of this colourful city. Indians likewise take part in Springfield's daily life, and are represented by Apu Nahasapeemapetilon, his wife Manjula, their octuplets,²⁰⁷ Sanjay, Gheet, and Pahusacheta. Strikingly, all the Indian characters figuring in the sitcom's episodes share the same and difficult-to-pronounce family name: "Nahasapeemapetilon" and are always depicted as being the members of one large traditional family. This is considered one of the many stereotypes revolving around them in *The Simpsons* and clearly makes an allusion to their uncontrolled and high birth rates.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ The Century Dictionary defines an Octuplet as One of a group of eight children born from the same mother during the same birth.

²⁰⁸ Aishvarya Singh explains that the Indian store owner with a big family comes to mind quite often, as does the sari-clad helicopter mother. The stereotypes that have already been established require much more to break, and we can only hope that Hollywood starts to look beyond Apu as the Indian character mould. Due to the widespread acceptance of these stereotypes, Indians have, in a way, lost their true identity in most places around the world. <http://culture.affinitymagazine.us/how-hollywood-continues-to-stereotype-indian-people/>

Therefore, it is noticeable that in the symbolic city of Springfield ethnic stereotyping revolves around its inhabitants, their religions, customs, social norms and cultures. The stereotype which is, in reality, a simplified and a standardised general image or a set of characteristics that a lot of people commonly use to represent a particular type of person or thing, is considered a cornerstone not only in literature and movies but also in TV programs like animated sitcoms. *The Simpsons* hence relies heavily on these generalizations because it has found them beneficial to promote its success, attract large audiences and improve its “viewing rates” as a prime-time TV show watched worldwide. This is perhaps due to the simplicity of stereotypes which entertain the viewer without much effort from his part to grasp the plot.

The city of Springfield, in many respects, symbolizes the perfect prototype of the American “Salad Bowl”,²⁰⁹ where all the ethnic groups coexist in concordance and harmony without being threatened by the loss of national identity and menaced by cultural assimilation. The most noticeable aspect of the city is its promotion of the values of Multiculturalism and ethnic diversity and this can be easily perceived after watching only a few episodes. The main purpose of this chapter, accordingly, will be the examination of the representation of the two other major Oriental communities figuring in *The Simpsons*; the Indians and the Jews. Their ethnic, cultural and religious traits will be dealt with together with the position they occupy in the sitcom in terms of appearance, recurrence and importance. A comparison will be provided at the end of this chapter, for the sole purpose of uncovering the eventual bias and ambivalence in the representation of communities in the sitcom, at least in the target episodes.

²⁰⁹ Early scholars argued that a single culture would prevail: the so-called “Melting Pot”. As it became clear that not all communities got assimilated, but some instead retained distinctive economic, political and cultural patterns long after arriving in the USA, a discussion of a “Third Way” has emerged - the “Salad Bowl” - where immigrants could become “American” and integrate whilst maintaining some cultural distinction. Arun Advani and Bryony Reich, *Melting Pot or Salad Bowl: The Formation of Heterogeneous Communities*, (London: University College, 2015), p. 3

I- The Representation of the Indian Community:

The Indian community is represented in the sitcom, mainly, through the character of Apu and his family composed of his wife Manjula, their octuplets, his brother Sanjay, his nephew Jamsheed and his niece Pahusachetan. All these Indian characters are permanently depicted in the sitcom's episodes and Apu sometimes takes the lion's share in some plots in terms of appearance. Other Indian characters are depicted in the sitcom and are given minor roles; they are generally guest icons like Ghandi or unnamed and transient figures that appear only once or twice. Actually, Apu remains the most Indian character represented in the sitcom's episodes, and he not only stands for himself but also for all the Indians and therefore mirrors the Indian culture, religion, customs and stereotypes.

When it comes to stereotypes, *The Simpsons*, as mentioned earlier, is widely known for being a sitcom that lives on preconceived images and clichés. Parody is another feature of the sitcom and when associated with stereotyping the sitcom's satire happens. Like the Arab and Muslim, the Indian community doesn't escape stereotyping and are recurrently depicted in more or less limited and confined ways. The first stereotype that revolves around Apu and his countrymen is their jobs and occupations. Apu is the perfect stereotyped prototype of the neighbouring shopkeeper who mingles and interacts with his neighbours in his workplace. In the sitcom, Apu owns and operates a small shop called the Kwik-E-Mart, where he sells almost everything to his customers including illegal items and spoiled food.

In the episode of 1996 entitled *Treehouse of Horror VII*, Apu is depicted as the shopkeeper who sells illegal items prohibited by the law of the United States. In the storyline, Apu convinces Homer to buy fireworks to celebrate July 4th, the American Independence Day. He maliciously hides all the suspected commodities in the back-room of his shop and sells them secretly to trusted neighbours. Moreover, manipulating customers to buy things

they don't need is one of the most stereotypes related to Apu; he even plays on prices and commodity information to gain extra dollars. In the same episode of 1996, Apu is depicted as a "secret thief" who rips off customers when he exaggerates and overstates the goods he sells. A customer steps in the Kwik-E-Mart and asks for a 29 cent stamp and ruthless Apu replies darlingly in his heavy Indian accent: "that's \$1.85Sir!"



Snapshot 24: Apu the shopkeeper selling illegal fireworks²¹⁰

A media critic and reviewer from *Hindu Voice UK* has commented on representing Apu as a ruthless but funny shopkeeper manipulating his customers in the sitcom saying that: "...as a Hindu you either love or you hate him. He's either refreshingly hilarious or an insulting stereotype. He could well be one or the other, or even both". And he adds "But as far as I'm concerned it really doesn't matter. One thing that has been central towards *The Simpsons*' continual success is that no character featured is shown as perfect...But in many ways, he does live up to the typical Indian stereotype fashioned by the West".²¹¹

²¹⁰ Snapshot 24 depicts Apu holding illegal fireworks. However, there is no marketable fireworks brand name as the one in the snapshot: M 320. M 320 is rather a 40mm grenade launcher in use with US regular and special operations forces. <http://www.americanspecialops.com/special-ops-weapons/m320-grenade-launcher.php>

²¹¹ *Hindu Voice UK* Reviewer, *Apu of "The Simpsons", Positive Hindu Character or Degrading Stereotype?* <https://hinduperspective.com/2014/02/19/apu-nahasapeemapetilon-postive-hindu-character-or-degrading-stereotype/>

The image of the shopkeeper that sticks to Apu all along the episodes of the sitcom is not the only stereotype that revolves around him and his countrymen. From the early beginning of his appearance, Apu is depicted as an illegal immigrant who arrives in the United States with his family to work and live a better life. He is portrayed as an educated man who holds a PhD in Computing from a local institute in India; however, he struggles to gain another higher degree at the University of Springfield. The assiduous viewer of the sitcom will easily make an overall picture of Apu as an illegal alien who does not owe allegiance to living and working in the USA despite his above-average intellectual abilities.

Consequently, Apu is depicted in a constant quest for naturalisation because he eagerly wants to become a full US citizen to the point of changing the Indian names of his octuplets to American funny ones²¹². The inhabitants of Springfield are always good to him and try their best to help him get the American citizenship and integrate college. Homer particularly feels sorry for him sometimes and accompanies him to pass tests and learn American customs and lifestyle. In the episode of 2013 entitled *Homerland*, Homer and his father help Apu cross illegally the US-Canadian borders for business but the Mounted Police of Canada catches them in flagrante delicto and mistakes Apu for a terrorist.



Snapshot 25: Apu is being watched by a Canadian police officer

²¹² Apple Pie, Superman, Pepsi, Manifest Destiny, Lincoln, Condoleezza, Freedom.

In snapshot 25 extracted from the aforementioned episode, Apu is depicted as a border crosser having troubles with a police officer on the Canadian frontiers. In fact, all Indian immigrants face the same problem when they cross the borders as they are suspected and mistaken for terrorists and smugglers. This reality is recurrent in today's American society and *The Simpsons* simply exaggerates it. Apu, as noted before, symbolizes the illegal US alien who holds a higher university degree but cannot benefit from the privilege of enjoying full rights to travel and work. The creators of the sitcom convey through this representation a picture of a sad reality in countries like India. Indians; according to *The Simpsons* immigrate to the USA to have better lives and prosper economically. However, they remain apart from full integration in the American "Salad Bowl". Like Apu, they endure the "Double Absence"; since they are neither full citizens in their homelands nor full citizens in their host countries.

Apart from being a stereotyped shopkeeper and an illegal immigrant questing for naturalization, Apu is depicted many times as an Oriental guy tired of his old-fashioned wife and eagerly in pursuit of love affairs with white women. In the episode of 2002 entitled *The Sweetest Apu* the storyline narrates that Apu starts to feel fed up with his life of a hard worker which lacks liveliness and animation. Moreover, he begins to disgust his wife and his eight babies who turn to be as sources of troubles for him. At a certain moment of the plot, Homer and Bart enter the Kwik-E-Mart to buy beer for the American Civil War re-enactment of the Battle of Springfield. After serving them Apu confesses to Homer that he can no more stand his unloving wife and starts complaining saying: "*I work 22 hours a day and then I go home to a wife who will not touch me. The Indian rope trick has become the Indian nope trick*".²¹³ At that moment, Annette, the beverage girl, steps in and begins to refill the beverage machine. Apu greets her: "*Hello, Annette*" and she replies seductively: "*How's life, handsome?*" and Apu responds: "*Oh, take a penny, leave a penny*". Apu at his surprise addresses Homer

²¹³ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 19/S 13*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2002)

saying: “Hey, she called me handsome” and spontaneous Homer replies without hesitation: “She likes you”.²¹⁴

After the re-enactment of the Battle of Springfield, Homer brings back the empty beer keg to Apu in order to get the deposit. Surprisingly, he hears giggles and moanings coming from a cabinet at the back of the shop and discovers Apu making love with Annette. Shocked by what he has seen Homer runs home with the scandalous and shameful acts of Apu in his mind. At night Homer makes a dream and sees Apu in an Oriental harem, where Annette is among the harem secluded women. He sees himself wearing Oriental garments of castrated boys and serving Apu who resembles a sultan. The dream comes to its denouement when Apu orders Homer saying: “avert your eyes, eunuch.”²¹⁵ Poor Homer wakes up terrified and rushes to the dictionary to fetch the meaning of the strange word “eunuch”.



Snapshot 26: Homer the eunuch gazes at Sultan Apu with Annette

There is an allusion in *The Sweetest Apu's* Oriental dream that Indians are like Arabs, lusty when it comes to Western women. Other episodes in the sitcom feature Western women fascinated by the charms of the Oriental Apu to the point of going Oriental. In *Lisa's Pony*

²¹⁴ Matt Groening et al, *The Simpsons: E 19/S 13*, (Beverly Hills: 20th Century Fox Entertainment, 2002)

²¹⁵ Ibid.

(1991) Princess Kashmir²¹⁶ is depicted as an admirer of Apu who lures her into temptation. She, despite her qualities of a professional dancer, shows great love to Apu and treats him as a boyfriend. Western literature and cinema are, in fact, replete with stories about white women falling in love with Oriental men and risking their social status and even their lives for the purpose of having a relationship with exotic men outside their ethnic circle.



Snapshot 27: Apu enjoying a night of passion with Princess Kashmir

Western literature and lately movies tended, as well, to perpetuate another stereotype about Orientals in general and Indians in particular. The West has always seen the East as a land of backwards, aberrant people and barbarians which must be conquered and colonized. The Whiteman in Western imagination has been considered a God to be worshipped by the naïve Orientals. This fact, described by Edward Said as a style of thought in his book *Orientalism*, was a mere justification to the Western hegemony over the Orient and its people. According to Said, a cluster of assumptions and commonly held beliefs touching on everything from the spice trade to ideas of Oriental despotism, sensuality and splendour dominate Western perceptions of the East. These bear little relation to reality, but “define the West as its contrasting image, idea, personality and experience”.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Again, scientific honesty impels us to recognize that there is no proven evidence that she is really Oriental.

²¹⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 2



Snapshot 28: Homer is being worshipped by a group of Indians

Scene 28 extracted from the episode of 2006 entitled *Kiss Kiss Bang Bangalore* shows a group of Indian men falling face down onto the ground in complete surrender and prostration to Homer. The storyline recounts that Homer is commissioned by his boss Mr Burns to represent the Springfield nuclear plant in India. Although, he his IQ is below average, Homer learns the philosophy of self-sourcing and manages to fascinate the locals and to become more than a hero in their eyes. The naïve locals who are impressed by the Western people and civilization worship him as a divine being that comes rightly to make their lives better. Homer in this plot impersonates the Whiteman, who is considered superior and therefore has the burden of responsibility to assist, rule and dominate the Orientals.

Said, in his book *Orientalism*, discusses the idea of the “White Man’s Burden”. He calls our attention to the “Mission Civilisartice” that the West has taken upon itself to civilize the “aberrant and backward” Orientals.²¹⁸ This presumed “Mission Civilisartice” is also considered by Said and other postcolonial thinkers as a justification for the domination of the Orient and to the taming of its people. Modern colonial movements used slogans such as enlightenment and welfare to sugarcoat its greed to other territories’ riches and wealth. This

²¹⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 169

stereotype has been passed along and inherited from generation to generation until it became the norm in representing Oriental peoples like Indians in literature and cinema.

Focusing on the cultural and behavioural traits of Apu who represents the Indian community in Springfield, Lindsay Marie carefully dissects and dismantles the process of creating the stereotyped Indian image in the sitcom, asserting that:

“At times the oversimplification of cultural bodies may seem to be a harmless practice—Apu, for example, is often viewed as a comedic scapegoat, rather than damaging stereotype—but, in reality, the deeply ingrained prejudices resulting from this exercise perpetuate long-standing institutional oppressions. The relationship between the West and India has historically followed a pattern of violence due to colonization efforts undergone by the British and French. It was during the reign of the East India Company that “India”, as we have come to recognize this signifier, was invented through European dialogues in art and literature. Apu’s representation could be viewed as an evolution of concepts which had their start in this period; he remains a background, servile player to the Simpson clan, who in turn assume the position of the hegemonic “American” citizenry”.²¹⁹

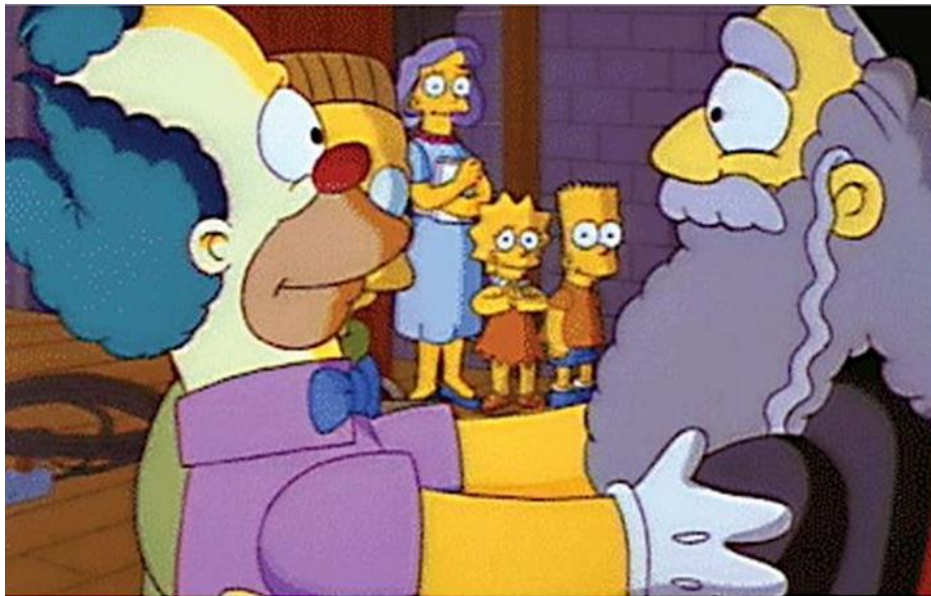
II-The Representation of the Jewish Community:

The Jewish community is mainly represented in the sitcom’s episodes through Krusty the clown. This iconic character of *The Simpsons* has the lion’s share in terms of appearance and importance and sometimes constitutes the centre of the plots and events, better than Homer himself. However, a good number of other Jewish characters are recurrently figuring in the sitcom’s episodes like Krusty’s father Rabbi Hyman, the school bully Dolph Starbeam and Mel Brooks, the news anchor of Springfield’s Channel 6. There are also other Jewish figures that are considered guest icons and non-permanent characters like politicians, legendary figures and celebrities. Actually, Krusty remains the most conspicuous Jewish

²¹⁹ Marie Lindsey, “Edward Said’s Orientalism & The Simpson’s Treatment of the South Asian Subject” <https://illiterocracy.wordpress.com/2014/04/01/edward-saids-orientalism-the-simpsons-treatment-of-the-south-asian-subject/>

character in the sitcom and exemplifies the successful Jewish entertainer and the typical TV funny clown who makes the joy of kids and adults in Springfield while filling his pockets with Springfieldians' money.

The most important stereotype that revolves around Krusty, therefore, is his occupation as an entertainer and a showbiz figure. He is always depicted cheerful and laughing out loud in the public sphere but depressed when alone making him a victim of alcohol and debauchery. Krusty, in the sitcom, never takes off his colourful clown mask and makeup as if he seeks to hide his sad face and therefore his sad life. This is probably another stereotype related to the “diasporan Jews”²²⁰ living in America and elsewhere, they are victims of their expatriation and hard labour to achieve professional and social success.



Snapshot 29: Krusty and his father Rabbi Hyman

²²⁰ “Diasporan”, adj. from “Diaspora”, Greek: “Dispersion”, Hebrew “Galut”, “Exile”. It is the dispersion of Jews among the Gentiles after the Babylonian Exile; or the aggregate of Jews or Jewish communities scattered “in exile” outside Palestine or present-day Israel. Although the term refers to the physical dispersal of Jews throughout the world, it also carries religious, philosophical, political, and eschatological connotations, as much as the Jews perceive a special relationship between the land of Israel and themselves. Interpretations of this relationship range from the messianic hope of traditional Judaism for the eventual “ingathering of the exiles” to the view of Reform Judaism that the dispersal of the Jews was providentially arranged by God to foster pure monotheism throughout the world.

Encyclopaedia Editors, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Diaspora-Judaism>

Snapshot 29 is extracted from the episode of 1991 entitled *Like Father Like Clown*. Krusty is depicted hugging his father Rabbi Hyman in a warm moment. However, this hug hides the principal cause of Krusty's sadness and depression caused by his own father. Rabbi Hyman is introduced for the first time in this episode and he becomes a permanent character in the sitcom. Unlike his son who is a clown and a show businessperson, Rabbi Hyman is depicted in *Like Father Like Clown* and in other various episodes as a stiff Jewish clergyman ashamed of his son's occupation. He is, in fact, a devoted Rabbi who wants his son to follow his rabbinical steps. Krusty struggles to harmonize his occupation with the inconveniences that might have with his Jewish faith. This image of the TV star and successful showbiz person who manages to preserve the teachings of his religion is another stereotype proper to the Jewish community in literature and movies. Matt Groening and his crew of cartoonists have always tended to portray Jewish people as pious and strictly conforming to the commandments of their religion, wearing their traditional garments and observing their religious holidays rigorously.

When it comes to religion in the sitcom, Judaism can only be considered as lucky as Protestantism in terms of representation. In the episode of 1999 entitled *Simpsons Bible Stories*, a series of dreams depict the story of the well-known Jewish Exodus. The storyline goes that Bart features the character of the prophet Moses at his early childhood, while Lisa features Miriam. In the plot, Moses is astonished to learn that the Israelite slaves are obliged to wander in the desert for forty long years and Miriam helps him cope with the new situation imposed by the Exodus. *The Simpsons* tackles such a serious religious topic as the Exodus ironically but conveys almost all the aspects of this concept to the viewer indirectly.

Mark I. Pinsky in his book *The Gospel According to The Simpsons* analyses the representation of Jewish and Judaism in *The Simpsons* and establishes a comparison between it and other religions in terms of appearance and importance. He argues that an animated

sitcom like *The Simpsons*, though satiric and ironic to the core “demonstrates a more intuitive understanding of American Jewish history, Jewish religion and culture and Judaism’s place among all the other varieties of belief and identity in America”.²²¹ He also expresses his wish to see more Jewish content in the sitcom because, as he argues: “when they do it, they do it very well”.²²² He also asserts that Rabbis seem to like both the latent and blatant portrayal of Judaism in the sitcom because the representation of Jews in *The Simpsons* is really positive and encourages understanding among society at large.²²³

It is hence pretty clear that the Jewish community is luckier in its representation in the sitcom since the cultural and religious stereotypes that revolve around it are not really negative like those revolving around the Arab and Muslim and to a lesser extent around the Indian community. Besides, the Jewish faith is well depicted along the different target episodes which portray it in detail. Jack Wertheimer,²²⁴ provost of the Jewish Technological Seminary explains this bright representation in the sitcom and argues that “Jews have achieved respectability, and Judaism is treated with a great deal of acceptance within American society”. Mark I. Pinsky echoing this view asserts that: “it is not surprising that Judaism, although a target of satire like other faiths, denominations and institutions in the series, is accorded considerable respect. As with most Hollywood productions, there is a good representation of Jews on the creative side. “Jews play a disproportionate role in several key sectors of American society” including the media”.²²⁵ Moreover, Pinsky draws our attention to the scriptwriters of the sitcom who are mostly Jewish like their orchestrator Matt Groening

²²¹ Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 144

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Jack Wertheimer, qtd. in Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 129

²²⁵ Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 129

and Fox Owner Rupert Murdoch himself. He also asserts that despite their atheism or secularism, the Jewish writers of *The Simpsons* represent their faith well.²²⁶



Snapshot 30: Springfield inhabitants making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem

Snapshot 30 is extracted from the episode of 2010 entitled *The Greatest Story Ever D'ohed*. In this controversial episode tackled earlier, The Simpson family joins a Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where they encounter Jacob, a rude but funny Israeli tour guide voiced by Sasha Baron Cohen.²²⁷ While Krusty visits Jerusalem mainly to search his genealogical roots, the other inhabitants of Springfield make a spiritual journey through the city and visit the most important holy sites including the Mosque of the Rock of the Dome. A close look at snapshot 30 reveals that the Springfieldians are rather looking like Muslims Hajis going to Makah on board of a plane. This can be interpreted as a kind of irony and satire and an allusion to the three monotheistic religions which can coexist in peace in Jerusalem.

When it comes to the Jewish characters figuring in the sitcom, one can only say that they are abundant, at least when compared to the Arabic and Muslim ones. They are also

²²⁶ Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 129

²²⁷ Sasha Baron Cohen voiced Jacob the tour guide in this episode. He is also the producer and writer and main actor in the controversial movie *The Dictator*.

permanent characters who appear recurrently along the different seasons of the sitcom. They are also depicted as full American citizens who live in the “Salad Bowl” of Springfield and benefit from full rights to work, travel and socialize. Unlike the other Oriental communities, the Jewish of *The Simpsons* are not dark brown. They are rather yellow and hence portrayed as normal Americans, not as immigrants or illegal aliens like Apu and his family. In earlier chapters we have argued that yellow stands for white in real life and it is therefore used to portray people from Caucasian origin in general and Anglo-Saxons in particular, like Homer and his nuclear family, whereas darker colours especially dark brown are used mainly to portray “the Oriental Other” like Bachir, the Arabic boy. This demonstrates that the Jewish characters in the sitcom are conceived as normal white Springfieldian citizens.

III-Comparison Between the Indian and the Jewish Communities:

It will pose no difficulty to one and all to recognize the differences and similarities between the two Oriental communities examined in this chapter. Both Indians and Jews have been depicted stereotypically in *The Simpsons* and preconceived ethnic and cultural clichés constituted a cornerstone in their representation. Yet, this representation has not been knitted with the same thread, in the sense that a dichotomy in stereotyping has been clear to the very eye. One would argue here that the stereotype can be a simple exaggeration of reality in order to create irony and satire and achieve the task of entertaining the audience. However, behind the laughter, a distortion of reality and a re-creation of a totally new damaging and scapegoating image may be brought into existence. This can lead to harmful psychological and societal effects such as the loss of self-esteem, feelings of racism and hatred. Actually, there can be no resolute rule about stereotypes and the harms they may engender; it is up to the people targeted by them to estimate whether they are harmful or not.

Indians are depicted in the sitcom mainly through the character of Apu. He and his countrymen are represented as being the members of a single large traditional family sharing the same long and difficult-to-pronounce family name: “Nahasapeemapetilon”, this makes a direct allusion to their uncontrolled and high birth rates. *The Simpsons* hence uses this stereotype and exaggerates in its usual irony to create its own portrayal of Indian families living in Springfield. On the contrary, Jewish characters are represented as being the members of varied families and having different and distinct family names. Krusty the clown and his father Rabbi Hyman belong to the Krustofsky family; Dolph belongs to the Starbeams, Artie has Ziff as a family name and Mel, the news anchor, belongs to the Brook family. Unlike the Indian large families, Jewish families are represented as rather small ones, exactly like the typical American nuclear families.

Indians are also shown as shopkeepers. The job of Apu who owns and operates the Kwik-E-Mart sticks to him all along the episodes of the sitcom, though, real Indians living in the United States come from all walks of life: engineers, scientists and artists. The stereotype of the neighbouring shopkeeper is not harmful in itself and can be interpreted positively because job-related stereotypes constitute the cornerstone in animated sitcoms like *The Simpsons*. However, what is really considered degrading is the ruthlessness that sticks to Apu’s profession. He is depicted throughout the sitcom as a “secret thief” ripping off customers and playing on commodity information and prices to illegally increase his income. Jews on their part are depicted differently, in the sense that the sitcom creators have managed to show them as people coming from all walks of life: clergymen, journalists, artists and school bullies. Yet, the profession of Krusty as a TV clown and a showbiz icon is given much importance. Krusty, unlike ruthless Apu, is depicted as the typical Jewish star and the victim of alcohol and debauchery who hides his sadness behind a mask that he never takes off in order to provide laughter for the inhabitants of Springfield.

Indians are, moreover, depicted as illegal immigrants arriving in the United States with their large families to prosper economically. They do not owe allegiance to living and working in the USA despite their above-average intellectual abilities and professional skills. Consequently, they are in a constant quest for naturalisation because they eagerly seek to become full US citizens and significant members of the “Salad Bowl”. As for the Jewish characters figuring in the sitcom, one can only say that they are abundant, at least when compared to the Indian ones. They are shown as full American citizens who live in the “Salad Bowl” of Springfield and benefit from full rights to work, travel and socialize. Contrarily to the Indians, the Jews of *The Simpsons* are not struggling to go American, they are rather seeking to harmonize their American lifestyle with the inconveniences that might have with their Jewish faith and traditions. The image of Krusty as a popular TV star and a successful showbiz figure who manages to preserve the teachings of his religion is highlighted all along the episodes of the sitcom.

In addition to what has been advanced, Indian sexuality is depicted in a number of episodes and Apu is represented as an Oriental guy tired of his unloving old-fashioned wife and eagerly in pursuit of love affairs with white women around him. Furthermore, Indians are depicted as naïve and even aberrant people impressed by the Westerners and their civilization to the point of worshipping Homer Simpson. The Jews, unlike the Indians, are introduced as “People of the Book” from the early beginning and the aspects of their Jewish religion like the “Exodus” have are depicted along the different target episodes. The Jews, too, are painted in “yellow” like all the inhabitants of Springfield who are from the Caucasian origin, and this manipulation of colours establishes a major contrast between them and the Indians who are painted in “dark brown”; and therefore are excluded from being full Springfieldian citizens.

The following table sums up the comparison between the Indian community and the Jewish community and facilitates the distinction between their representations in the sitcom.

E G T R H O N U I P C S	Semiotically Painted in Colour	Recurrence in Storylines and plots	Citizenship in Springfield	Mindset and Mentality	Family	Jobs	Reception By native viewers and critics
I N D I A N S	Dark Brown	Average	Illegal Aliens Seeking Naturalization	Ruthless Lusty Aberrant Naive	Large Traditional	Mainly Shopkeepers	Negative
J E W S	Yellow	Important	Full Citizens Seeking Promotion	Depressed Pious Coping with the modern lifestyle	Rather small American- like	Showbiz icons Clergymen Varied	Positive

Table 1: The Indian Community vs. The Jewish Community in *The Simpsons*

Conclusion:

The main purpose of this chapter has been the examination of the two other major Oriental communities represented in *The Simpsons*. This has been done to shed light on the ways the sitcom achieves its portrayal of the cultural, ethnic, and religious aspects of the Indian and Jewish characters living in Springfield. We have come to the conclusion that stereotyping constitutes the core means in representing the aforementioned communities and preconceived clichés associated with irony and satire are the cornerstones in the sitcom's target episodes.

Both communities have are depicted stereotypically; however, this depiction is not knitted with the same thread, in the sense that a dichotomy in the usage of stereotypes is clear to the very eye. We would safely assume herein that the stereotype which is a standardised set of characteristics that some people tend to use in order to write, imagine or think about other

people can be a mere exaggeration of reality in order to create a mental perception or produce laughter. Nevertheless, the stereotype can also engender harmful psychological and societal effects, because behind the laughter a distortion of reality and a re-creation of a totally new damaging image may be brought into existence.

When it comes to the Indian community in *The Simpsons* one can say that its representation is achieved mainly through the character of Apu. The most obvious stereotype that revolves around him and his countrymen is related to their families. They are shown as being the members of a single large traditional family sharing the same long and difficult-to-pronounce family name: “Nahasapeemapetilon”. The creators of the sitcom consider no exception in exaggerating this existing fact which clearly makes an allusion to the infamous Indian uncontrolled and high birth rates. *The Simpsons*’ far-famed tradition of employing job-related stereotypes doesn’t spare all the communities including the Indians. Apu is shown as a shopkeeper who owns the Kwik-E-Mart where he ruthlessly sells expired products and overstates prices in order to illegally increase his income. This degrading image of the “secret thief” ripping off customers is reiterated along the various episodes of the sitcom.

In addition, Indians are portrayed as illegal aliens in a quest for naturalization; they are also, despite their intellectual abilities, excluded from being significant members of the American “Salad Bowl”. While the sitcom’s characters descending from Caucasian origin are painted in yellow, Groening’s designers have rather chosen to paint Indians in dark brown in a twist to emphasize their Oriental roots and establish a contrast between them and the general yellowish atmosphere of Springfield. Moreover, Indians don’t escape sex-related stereotypes as they are depicted as lusty Orientals eagerly in pursuit of love affairs with white women around them. They are also the victims of the long-rooted cinematic tradition of representing Orientals in general as aberrant and naïve people impressed by the Westerners and their civilization.

The Jewish community on its part is been represented stereotypically, but it is less harmed by the sitcom's irony and satire when compared to Indians. Contrarily, the Jewish characters which outnumber the other Oriental characters are represented as being the members of varied families and having distinct family names. Krusty the clown and his father Rabbi Hyman, for instance, belong to the Krustofsky family whereas Dolph belongs to the Starbeams. This depiction, unlike that of the Indian one, shows that the Jewish families are rather small ones, exactly like the typical American nuclear families.

Krusty is depicted as a depressed TV clown and a showbiz icon that provides laughter for the inhabitants of Springfield. Yet; this doesn't confine the other Jewish characters to job-related stereotypes since Groening and his designers tend to show them as ordinary people coming from all walks of life: clergymen, journalists, artists and school bullies. The Jews of *The Simpsons* are luckily depicted as full American citizens who live in the "Salad Bowl" of Springfield and benefit from full rights of citizenship. Contrarily to the Indians, they are not struggling to go American, they are rather seeking to harmonize their American lifestyle with the inconveniences that might have with their Jewish religion which is well highlighted.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion:

In the course of the elaboration of this dissertation, dealing with the representation of the Orient and the Orientals in the far-famed American animated sitcom *The Simpsons* proved to be a thought-provoking and a challenging academic task because a prime-time sitcom like *The Simpsons* has always been famous or rather infamous for being irreverent, ambivalent, difficult to interpret and easy to misinterpret. However, a considerable number of episodes selected from various seasons have been watched for the sole purpose of limiting the corpus and establishing a work plan. We have been able to probe approximately 508 episodes from season 1 (1989) to season 25 (2013), taking into account snapshot capturing, note taking and searching the historical and chronological context of each theme and sub-theme in the target episodes and scripts.

As pointed out in the introduction to this dissertation, we have examined the Orient as an imagined geographical space and a Western stereotyped perception based on the early European writings and inspired by images inherited from *The Arabian Nights*. We have as well analysed the Orient as a place stamped by clichés of chaos, aberrance and out-of-date political and social tastes. Furthermore, we have made a statistical attempt to uncover the possible intertwinement between the sitcom and American geopolitics in representing some Oriental regions to the detriment of others. In addition, we have endeavoured to examine the ways in which the sitcom portrays Oriental men and women; and the place the Arab and Muslim characters occupy in the plots in terms of recurrence and importance.

The focal point of our analysis has been the Arab and Muslim. However; a comparison between them and the other two major Oriental communities, the Indians and the Jews, has been established to uncover the ways Groening and his cartoonists have depicted the cultural, ethnic and religious aspects of such peoples. We have taken our

theoretical bearings from the understanding of eminent theorists like Edward Said, Linda Hutcheon, Roland Barthes and many other researchers and thinkers.

The Simpsons through the storyline of the target episodes analysed in Chapter I has endeavoured to represent the Orient as a geographical space, its inhabitants and its culture. The sitcom is influenced by other Hollywood movies and cinematic productions since it relies heavily on parody and intertextuality. The sitcom, as well, has made use of preconceived images inherited from the early European travel narratives and outstanding literary works of French and British authors. The Orient of *The Simpsons* also is not always real since it leans, to a great extent, upon the images inspired by *The Arabian Nights* to reconstruct a world of magic, fantasies, irrationality and exoticism. The ingredients that Matt Groening and his crew of cartoonists have used to reinvent their Orient have been the same and everlasting cinematic ingredients used by classical Hollywood movies; antique Arabian cities, luxurious harems, flying carpets and Aladdin's mighty and wicked genie which has been unprecedentedly associated with real detested Oriental figures like Saddam Hussein.

The Simpsons also depicts an imagined backward Orient living out of date and strangely haunted by irrational creatures, beggars, thieves and all sorts of fallen people which need to be civilized and enlightened. Furthermore, the sitcom draws the picture of a chaotic Orient living in anarchy, disorder and despotism. This untamed and aberrant Orient of *The Simpsons* is represented as a place governed by despots like Muammar Al-Qaddafi and dominated by dangerous Muslim terrorists to be urgently eradicated for the sole purpose of establishing order and bringing freedom and welfare to the Oriental oppressed citizens. What many postcolonial thinkers have qualified as the inherited general colonial discourse which insisted on the Western "Mission Civilisartice" is a basic assumption in the making of *The Simpsons*.

Statistically, the number of Oriental countries and locations fully depicted or only mentioned by name in dialogues or screen captions in the sitcom is considerable. Almost all Oriental regions are depicted in the sitcom's plots, though this depiction varies in importance and recurrence from one country to another. When it comes to the representation of Oriental countries, the Middle East has taken the lion's share and this is due to its specificity as a region central to world topicality and news coverage. *The Simpsons* is thus no exception in following the Hollywood tradition of intertwining politics and Pop art in representing the Middle East as a place of agitations and political conflicts. The creators of the sitcom by way of parody and satire take on the difficult task of approaching issues related to Middle Eastern countries such as American-Iraqi agitated relations, Palestinian-Israeli peace issue and Oriental despotism.

The representation of Oriental men and women in *The Simpsons* is the main purpose of Chapter II. We have taken the core of dismantling Arab and Muslim's cultural, religious and ethnic stereotypes in an attempt to uncover the ways in which the sitcom portrays those people. Groening and his crew of scriptwriters and cartoonists make use of stereotypes and clichés to depict Oriental men as sheikhs and sultans enjoying the luxury of Oriental sexuality in their harems. Homer Simpson has featured the rich sultan surrounded by his belly dancers and courtesans and most of the scenes depicting him so, take place in enchanting dreams. This confirms that the stereotyped image of the Oriental man in the harem continues to haunt the Western imagination and to confine Arab and Muslim men to the Oriental sensuality of *The Tales of The Arabian Nights*.

The depiction of the Oriental man in the sitcom has shifted from the romantic image of the sheikh to the dark image of the dangerous terrorist aiming at destroying Western civilization and values. Bin Laden, as well as many other nameless Muslim terrorists, are depicted as ruthless and crazy fanatics motivated by irrational enthusiasm and ready to

threaten America and its Western allies. This shift in the representation of Oriental men in the sitcom and elsewhere is certainly influenced by terrorist attacks and hijackings which generated an unprecedented feeling of Islamophobia. 9/11 and the rise of Al-Qaida are considered major turning points in the representation of the Arab and Muslim as the bad guys in cinema, and *The Simpsons* is no exception because intertwining Pop culture and politics proves to be a cornerstone in the sitcom's art mechanisms.

The depiction of the Oriental man in the sitcom also involved the infamous image of the Muslim terrorist and that of the evil Oriental despot. The Arab and Muslim men are thus represented as megalomaniac leaders ruling their nations by means of force and fire and subjugating their oppressed compatriots in the names of religion and fake patriotism. Saddam, Al-Qaddafi and Ayatollah Khomeini are the most represented leaders and their depictions, to a great extent, conform to the general colonial discourse which insisted on the assertion that Orientals live in a constant state of despotism and cannot rule and govern themselves unless assisted by Westerners. This portrayal of the image of the Oriental despot, in the sitcom as in other Hollywood productions, has been fuelled by the rise of the Islamic Iranian Imamate in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini who is satirized as an "asshole", and motivated by the dysfunctional behaviour of Al-Qaddafi who is harshly depicted as a crazy leader.

When it comes to the representation of Oriental women in *The Simpsons*, Groening and his crew of scriptwriters haven't spared them from being depicted stereotypically. They are, in fact, granted their right to be decently and realistically pictured in the sitcom only a few times. Assia Djebbar, the Franco-Algerian eminent author, has been chosen and defended by the fervent feminist Lisa Simpson in a bet on the Nobel Prize Awards in one episode. This relatively positive representation of Djebbar remains an exception in the selected episodes because *The Simpsons* manages to adhere to the general line of stereotyped misrepresentation of the Arabic and Muslim women.

Due to the influence of the preconceived images inherited from literary works like the Tales of *The Arabian Nights* and the writings of the early French and British novelists, the sitcom repeats, in a way or in another, an eroticized and romanticized image of the Oriental belly dancer and courtesan. The dancing body of the voluptuous Kuchuk Hanem described more than a century ago by Gustave Flaubert is reincarnated anew in other - modern - bodies that of the professional dancer named Princess Kashmir, and in those of the many unnamed and transient belly dancers envisioned in dreams.

The image of the partially or totally veiled oppressed Arabic and Muslim woman constitutes an alternative to the other stereotyped images in the sitcom. Veils, chadors and niqabs are ubiquitous in the studied episodes and are associated with Sharia law and the fear of the Islamification of America. The two images, that of the sexual belly dancer in the harem and that of the oppressed hijabi woman are two sides of the same coin as they sentence the Oriental woman to live eternally in stereotypes and clichés revolving around her body.

Concerning the analysis of the sitcom's characters, the first finding that has caught our attention has been the absence of permanent characters from Arabic and Muslim origins. Unlike the other ethnic groups, the Arab and Muslim actually have no official characters that might speak for and impersonate them in the plots. They have hence turned out to be transient and fleeting figures rather than full-time and real characters in a powerful prime-time and a long-running sitcom like *The Simpsons*. They aren't thus granted the opportunity to be significant inhabitants of the American "Salad Bowl" of Springfield. Moreover, except for the few times when the Arab and Muslim figures are given names in the target episodes, the general line of representation tended to use unnamed Oriental people. Semantically, depriving a character of the "gift of naming" is very meaningful in literature and cinema because sometimes this is done intentionally to distort the image; underestimate the personality and more importantly to deny the existence of such people.

Yellow has been the prevailing colour in the sitcom and it stands for white in real life. It is used to depict the dominant ethnic majority in Springfield and by far in America. Yellow is therefore used to portray people from the Caucasian origin in general and Anglo-Saxons in particular, like Homer and his nuclear family, whereas darker colours, especially dark brown, is used to portray the “Oriental Other”, like Bachir, the Arabic boy and the lookalike members of the Algerian Olympic Committee. As Roland Barthes would agree, the sitcom through the subliminal power of colours has managed to convey messages without a single word uttered. Semiotically, the fact of drawing the Arab and Muslim in dark brown all the time is interpreted as a second exclusion of this ethnic group from belonging to the American “Salad Bowl” and this manipulation of colours establishes a major contrast between them and the other ethnic groups.

The main purpose of Chapter III has been the thorough examination of the representation of the two other major Oriental communities figuring in *The Simpsons*; the Indians and the Jews. Their ethnic, cultural and religious stereotypes have been dealt with together with the position they occupy in the sitcom in terms of appearance, recurrence and importance. We have been able to provide a comparison between them for the sole purpose of uncovering the probably existing bias and ambivalence in the representation of communities in the sitcom, at least in the target episodes. Both communities are indeed depicted stereotypically; however, this depiction is not knitted with the same thread, in the sense that a dichotomy in the use of stereotypes is clear to the very eye.

When it comes to the Indian community in *The Simpsons* we can safely assume that Groening has managed to use all sorts of clichés and stereotypes to confine this Oriental community to its long-rooted image of cinematic and literary “scapegoats”. Indians, in fact, are represented mainly through the character of Apu who lives up to the typical Indian stereotype fashioned by the West. Exaggerated family-related stereotypes are the fuel to their

depiction as members of a single large traditional family, sharing the same long and difficult-to-pronounce family name: “Nahasapeemapetilon”. Moreover, *The Simpsons*’ far-famed tradition of employing job-related stereotypes confines Apu and his countrymen to the job of the neighbouring ruthless shopkeeper who sells expired products and overstates prices. This degrading image of the “secret thief” ripping off customers is striking to him along the various episodes of the sitcom.

In addition, Indians are depicted as illegal aliens in quest for naturalization because they are excluded from being significant members of the American “Salad Bowl”. While the sitcom’s general atmosphere is perfectly yellowish, Groening’s designers have rather chosen to paint Indians in dark brown in a semiotic twist to emphasize their Oriental roots and establish a contrast between them and the other inhabitants of Springfield. Indians, moreover, don’t escape sex-related stereotypes as they are described as lusty Orientals tired of their old-fashioned wives and in pursuit of love affairs with white women around them. They are also the victims of the long-rooted denigrating cinematic tradition of representing Orientals as aberrant and naïve people impressed by the Westerners and their civilization.

The Jewish community, too, is represented stereotypically. However, it is less harmed by the sitcom’s irreverent irony and satire when compared to Indians and by far to Arabs. The Jewish characters which outnumber the other Oriental characters are represented as being the members of varied, normal and small American-like families, and are granted the opportunity to have distinct family names. This somewhat bright depiction of the Jewish family, unlike that of the Indian family, makes a clear allusion to the well-known Jewish Diaspora which has always succeeded to coexist in multicultural societies and managed to establish a sort of equilibrium between Jewish religion and customs on the one hand and modern lifestyle on the other hand.

Krusty, the major Jewish character in the sitcom, is all the time depicted as a depressed TV clown and a showbiz icon that provides laughter for the inhabitants of Springfield. Yet; his depiction does not confine the other Jewish characters to job-related stereotypes since Groening and his designers show them as ordinary people coming from all walks of life. The Jews of *The Simpsons* contrarily to the Indians, are not painted in dark brown to emphasise their Oriental origin, they are rather painted in yellow, and thus, are luckily depicted as full American citizens who live in the “Salad Bowl” of Springfield and benefit from the full rights of citizenship. They are also spared from being depicted as desperate people struggling to go American; they are rather shown as successful citizens seeking to harmonize their American lifestyle.

As stated earlier *The Simpsons* is always famous, or rather notorious, for being irreverent, ambivalent, difficult to interpret and easy to misinterpret. This long-running animated sitcom has generated a huge amount of criticism by both its admirers and haters, because it lures everybody into the temptation of dismantling and reconstructing its irony and satire mechanisms. All that has been advanced to interpret the ways in which Oriental men and women are represented in *The Simpsons* originates from Edward Said’s postcolonialist understanding of such an academic ground and Jack Shaheen’s cinematic investigations. However, Linda Hutcheon’s theorization has provided us with a dissimilar vision which proved to be built upon a postmodernist decoding of Pop culture and art in general.

Hutcheon has drawn our attention to perceive irony in *The Simpsons* as neutral and to figure out that its production and reception cannot belong to any particular political orientation, faith or ideology. We have hence understood that *The Simpsons* as a political and social satire must not be conceived as a biased sitcom which pursues a specific political and ideological agenda dictated by “Hawks” and “Falcons”, because this has vanished when we have elaborated a deeper opinion on the sitcom by watching several episodes selected from

varied seasons. We have been able to discover that *The Simpsons* satirized not only the Arab and Muslim but also America and Americans themselves, including Rupert Murdoch and his ally George H. W. Bush.

The sitcom's depiction of Oriental men as suspected terrorists has been the dominant line of representation, at least in the eyes of the majority of the Arab and Muslim beholders. However, we have figured out that many other Muslims such as Hussam Ayloush, have considered some episode's satire as a kind of challenge to the Islamophobia that swept America after 9/11. Groening, in fact, has mocked Islamophobic Americans who turned to be manipulated by the urban legends circulating about Muslims and has ironically shown them as victims of their own brainwashing media.

The Simpsons seemed to us very creative in the sense that it has exploited the ethnic, cultural and religious stereotypes available but exaggerated them to achieve its satire or more accurately its "graphic satire", and in this way, we have approached the sitcom as "caricatures" and discovered that the association of "caricatures" and "graphic satire" together with the usage of funny and comical "wordplay and punning" in the plots allowed *The Simpsons* to freely satirize people from all ethnicities, religions, cultures and walks of life.

Nevertheless, it will pose no difficulty to one and all to recognize the differences and similarities between the three Oriental communities represented in *The Simpsons*. All of them are indeed depicted stereotypically in the many target episodes and parody; ethnic and cultural clichés constitute a cornerstone in their representation. Yet, this representation is not knitted with the same thread, in the sense that a dichotomy in the usage of stereotypes is obvious. Actually, the astounding absence of permanent characters from Arabic and Muslim origins has impelled us to assume that these people are deprived of having official characters that

might speak for and impersonate them in the sitcom. Moreover, the fact of using unnamed and transient look-alike dark figures to depict the Arab and Muslim has caught our attention and invited us to wonder whether this technique is done to deliberately exclude these Orientals from belonging to the “Salad Bowl of Springfield”.

Bibliography

Bibliography:

I- Primary Sources:

A- Videos:

Groening, Matt et al. *The Simpsons: Episode 4, Season 9*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1998.

———. *The Simpsons: Episode 3, Season 4*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1992.

———. *The Simpsons: Episode 7, Season 20*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2008.

———. *The Simpsons: Episode 14, Season 12*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2001.

———. *The Simpsons: Episode 7, Season 3*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1991.

———. *The Simpsons: Episode 8, Season 12*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2000.

———. *The Simpsons: Episode 16, Season 21*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2010.

———. *The Simpsons: Episode 5, Season 9*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1993.

———. *The Simpsons: Episode 1, Season 4*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1992.

- . *The Simpsons: Episode 10, Season 6*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1994.
- . *The Simpsons: Episode 1, Season 25*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2013.
- . *The Simpsons: Episode 24, Season 7*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1996.
- . *The Simpsons: Episode 10, Season 4*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1992.
- . *The Simpsons: Episode 6, Season 3*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1991.
- . *The Simpsons: Episode 3, Season 1*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1990.
- . *The Simpsons: Episode 10, Season .1*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1987.
- . *The Simpsons: Episode 3, Season 1*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1987.
- . *The Simpsons: Episode 19, Season 13*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2002.
- . *The Simpsons: Episode 8, Season 3*. Beverly Hills, California: 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 1991.

B- Episodes and Scripts Archives:

<http://www.simpsonsarchive.com/guides/ql.html>

<http://www.epguides.com/Simpsons/>

http://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/episode_scripts.php?tv-show=the-simpsons

II- Secondary Sources:

A-Books:

Alberti, John. ed. *Leaving Springfield and the Possibility of Oppositional Culture*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004.

Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana Press, 1977.

Beaumont, Peter et al. *The Middle East: A Geographical Study*. London: David Fulton, 1988.

Booth, Marilyn, ed. *Harem Stories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010.

Coleman, Stephen and Ross, Karen. *The Media and the Public "Them" and "Us" in Media Discourse*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Erwin, William et al. ed. *The Simpsons and Philosophy: The D'Oh! of Homer*. Peru Illinois: Carus Publishing Company, 2001.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.

Gray, Jonathan. *Watching The Simpsons: Television Parody and Intertextuality*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

- Henry, Matthew A. *The Simpsons; Satire, and American Culture*. New York: Macmillan, 2012.
- Horton, Andrew. *Laughing Out Loud: Writing the Comedy-Centered Screenplay*. Los Angeles: California University Press, 2000.
- Hubers, Sebastian. *Political and Social Satire in The Simpsons*. Norderstedt: Auflage, 2006.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- . *The Politics of Post Modernism*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- I. Pinsky, Mark. *The Gospel According to The Simpsons*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.
- Keslowitz, Steven. *The Simpsons and Society: An Analysis of Our Favourite Family and its Influence in Contemporary Society*. Michigan: Hats Office Books, 2004.
- Khatib, Lina. *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics and the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World*. London: I.B. TAURIS, 2006.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin, 1978.
- Semmerling, Tim Jon. *Evil Arabs in American Popular Films: Orientalist Fear*. Austin: Texas University Press, 2006.
- Shaheen, Jack. *The TV. Arab*. Washington: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984.
- B- Theses and Dissertations:**
- Altarac, Shari Ross. *The Adaptation of U.S. Television Programs in Foreign Markets: How Japan and France Put Their Distinctive Spin on The Simpsons*. California University, 2007.

Bawlski, Shawn. *Religious Pluralism in The Simpsons*: PhD thesis. University of St. Andrews, 2010.

Keft-Kennedy, Virginia. *Representing the Belly-dancing Body: Feminism, Orientalism and the Grotesque*. : Thesis Collection. The University of Wollongong. 2005.

C- Scholarly Articles and Newspaper Reviews:

Advani, Arun and Reich, Bryony. “*Melting Pot or Salad Bowl: The Formation of Heterogeneous Communities*”. London: University College, 2015.

Jabara, Abdeen. “*Time For a Change*.” *Cinéaste*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1989, pp. 2–2. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23803055.

Bonnet, Dominique, “*Le Nid d’Amour à Saint Tropez*”, *Paris Match*, (1996).

<http://www.parismatch.com/Royal-Blog/Royaume-Uni/Le-nid-d-amour-a-Saint-Tropez-ou-est-nee-la-romance-de-Lady-Diana-et-de-Dodi-Al-Fayed-l-ete-de-leur-mort-a-Paris-est-en-vente-698068#>. Accessed September 26th, 2014

Lindsey, Marie, “*Edward Said’s Orientalism & The Simpson’s Treatment of the South Asian Subject*”. <https://illiterocracy.wordpress.com/2014/04/01/edward-saids-orientalism-the-simpsons-treatment-of-the-south-asian-subject/>. Accessed October 26th, 2014

Michalek, Laurence. “*The Arab in American Cinema: A Century of Otherness*.” *Cinéaste*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1989, pp. 3–9. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/23803056.

Phiddian, Robert. “*Irony in the Eye of the Beholder*”: *Southern Review*, vol. 28, no. 2. (1995), p. 252

Redouani, Driss. “*The Representation of Arabs and Muslims in Western Media*”. *Meknes. RUTA*, vol. 3 (2011)

Shorto, Russell. "Homer's Odyssey": US Weekly (2000), pp. 52-57. Web source: *The Simpsons* Archive. Accessed November 2nd, 2013

Yahr, Emily, "The Simpsons' accused yet again of predicting the future — this time, the war in Syria". <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2014/05/07/the-simpsons-accused-yet-again-of-predicting-the-future-this-time-the-war-in-syria/>. Accessed February 24th, 2014

Joyce Millet, "Understanding American Culture: From Melting Pot to Salad Bowl".

Retrieved April 2nd, 2014 from:

https://www.culturalsavvy.com/understanding_american_culture.htm

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/general/news/2004/07/16/933/who-is-rupert-murdoch/>

No Specified Author, "The Globalization of The Simpsons: A Study of Satire in International Media".

<https://medium.com/@benkurzrock/the-globalization-of-the-simpsons-a-study-of-satire-in-international-media-e0c0bf5aace1>. Accessed June 1st, 2014

Elizabeth Joy, "The Voiceless Savage".

<https://blog.nus.edu.sg/modernismandempire/2009/09/09/the-voiceless-savage/> Accessed April 3rd, 2013

Penn Collins, "Yellow for Cartoon Characters". <https://www.good.is/articles/cartoon-characters-yellow>

Peter Cambridge, "Hot seat: The Simpsons creator Matt Groening".

http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/newsid_6260000/newsid_6262500/6262584.stm

D- International Organisations Documents:

Hussam Ayloush “*Thank you letter*” to Matt Groening. Retrieved from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) website: www.cair.com on June 18th, 2013

E- Documentary Films:

Jeremy Earp, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. Media Education Foundation Video. 2006

Sut Jhaly, *Edward Said on Orientalism*. Media Education Foundation Video. 2003

F- Speeches and Lectures:

Evelyn AlSultany, “*Reclaiming Identity: Dismantling Arab Stereotypes*”. Retrieved April 2nd, 2013. <http://www.arabstereotypes.org/why-stereotypes/what-orientalism/sheiks-terrorists>

Edward Said, “*Imperial Continuity: Palestine, Iraq and US policy*”. The Walker-Ames Lecture Series. 2003

Edward Said, “*Orientalism*”. Columbia University Lectures. 2003

Noam Chomsky, “*Seventh Edward Said Memorial Lecture*”. Adelaide University. 2011

G- Web Miscellaneous:

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/media/2014/05/08/Egypt-TV-channel-claims-The-Simpsons-predicted-Syrian-crisis.html>. Accessed September 26th, 2014

Hünemörder Markus, “*The Simpsons and Politics E Pluribus Springfield*” <https://americahaus.de/simpsons>. Accessed September 28th, 2014

http://www.goodreads.com/list/show/2587._Sheikh_Romances. Accessed Sept. 26th, 2014

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1645170/>. Accessed September 25th, 2014

<http://energyatthemovies.com/tag/oil-2/>. Accessed September 27th, 2014

Farid M. A. and Hassan Djelloul Al-Saci

<https://books.google.dz/books?id=9muSEMvtqxkC&pg=PA3&lpg=PA3&dq=human+and+life+development+in+Jordan&source=bl&ots=F61sz5tiPV&sig=4dqs3g6vBqdYakJT0lbic5dicZY&hl=fr&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiA56TitPSAhUFUhQKHWscBYgQ6AEIUjAH>. Accessed September 26th, 2014

Website Authors, Rupert Murdoch Biography, <http://www.biography.com/people/rupert-murdoch-9418489>. Accessed September 26th, 2014

<https://www.nps.gov/moru/index.htm>. Accessed September 9th, 2014

No Specified Author, <http://www.filmsite.org/series-mummy.html>. Accessed September 26th, 2014

No Specified Author, <https://www.madein-marrakech.com/fr/article-marrakech-capitale-de-la-liberte-la-democratie-et-la-prosperite-657.html>. Accessed October 4th, 2014

<http://egypty.com/services/egypty-salon33.ap>. Accessed December 20th, 2013

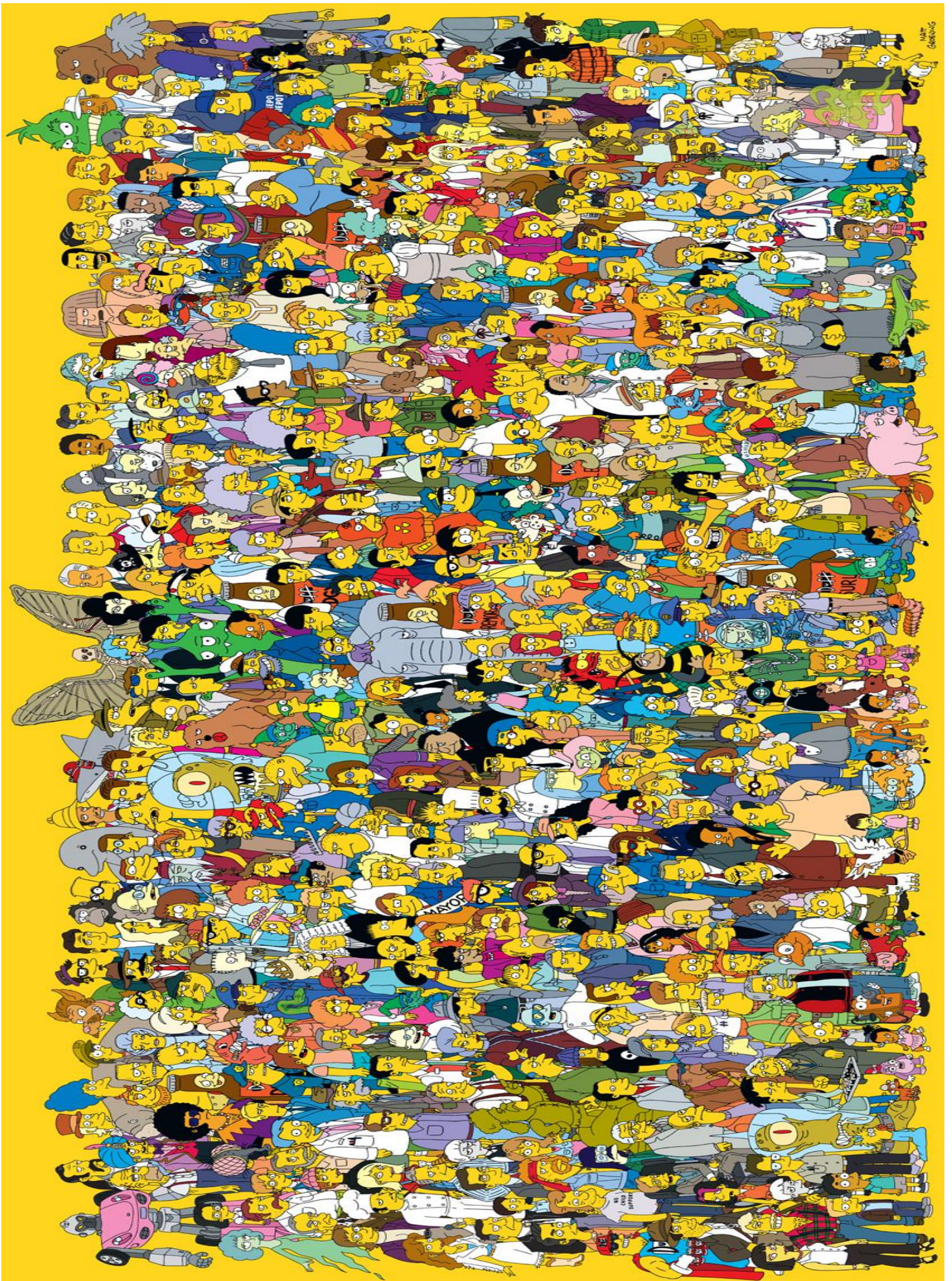
Encyclopaedia Editors, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Diaspora-Judaism>

<http://culture.affinitymagazine.us/how-hollywood-continues-to-stereotype-indian-people/>

<http://www.americanspecialops.com/special-ops-weapons/m320-grenade-launcher.php>

Appendices

The Simpsons Comprehensive Characters Portrait. There are no permanent characters from Arab and Muslim origins
Courtesy: Fox Entertainment Company Ltd.



Council on American Islamic Relations "Thank-you-letter" To Matt Groening

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CAIR Thanks Fox for 'Simpsons' Episode Challenging
Islamophobia

(LOS ANGELES, CA, 12/3/08) - The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) today called on American Muslims and other people of conscience to thank the Fox television network and the creator of "The Simpsons" for a recent episode that used comedy to challenge Islamophobia.

The episode, which aired Sunday evening and is titled "Mypods and Boomsticks," highlights anti-Muslim sentiment by featuring a young Muslim character named Bashir and his family who face prejudice after moving to Springfield. In the program, Homer Simpson wrongly suspects that Bashir's family is involved in a terror plot. Bart Simpson befriends Bashir and defends him from bullies.

To view the entire episode, go to:
<http://tinyurl.com/6jgq4y>

CAIR's Greater Los Angeles Area office (CAIR-LA) sent a letter today to the show's creator Matt Groening thanking him for challenging anti-Muslim prejudice.

The letter said Sunday's episode "brought to light how Americans can work toward mutual respect and inclusion by getting to know their neighbours." It went on to state: "The episode also builds on the values that have made America the great nation it is - a nation in which citizenship is about finding common ground and building a better society. American Muslims have been doing just that by making daily contributions to our society that often go unrecognized."

"Because of its acceptance in popular culture, comedy is often one of the best vehicles for challenging stereotypes and intolerance," said CAIR Executive Director Nihad Awad. "Fox and Matt Groening are to be congratulated for tackling the disturbing phenomenon of Islamophobia."

CAIR, America's largest Islamic civil liberties group, has 35 offices and chapters nationwide and in Canada. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue,

protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

- END -

CONTACT: CAIR-LA Communications Coordinator Munira Syeda, 714-776-1847, info@losangeles.cair.com; CAIR National Communications Director Ibrahim Hooper, 202-488-8787 or 202-744-7726, E-Mail: ihooper@cair.com; CAIR Communications Coordinator Amina Rubin, 202-488-8787, E-Mail: arubin@cair.com

Oriental Countries in *The Simpsons*:

A Comprehensive Alphabetically Arranged List of the Episodes Watched

1-Afghanistan:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Camp Krusty*
- b- *New Kids on the Block*
- c- *Marge VS. Singles, Senior, Childless Couples and Teens and Gays.*
- d- *She Used to Be My Girl*

2-Algeria:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Treehouse of Horror II*
- b- *Boy Meets Curl*

3-Azerbaijan:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Lisa the Drama Queen*
- b- *Boy Meets Curl*

4-Bangladesh:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Like Father, Like Clown*
- b- *I'm with Cupid*

5-Djibouti:

It was mentioned once in the following episode:

Flaming Moe

6-Egypt:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Dead Putting Society*
- b- *Homer vs. Lisa and the Eighth Commandment*
- c- *Saturdays of Thunder*
- d- *Grampa vs. Sexual Inadequacy*
- e- *Lost Our Lisa*

7- Indonesia:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Bart Gets Hit by a Car*
- b- *Bart vs. Australia*
- c- *Catch 'Em if You Can*
- d- *Million Dollar Maybe*

8-Iran:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Home Sweet Homediddly-Dum-Doodily*
- b- *Bart on the Road*
- c- *Politically Inept, With Homer Simpson*
- d- *Two Bad Neighbours*

9- Iraq:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Kamp Krusty*
- b- *Bart's Comet*
- c- *Mulhouse of Sand and Fog*
- d- *New Kids on the Blecch*

10-Isreal-The Holly Lands:

It was mentioned as Israel and Palestine in one episode:

The Greatest Story Ever D'ohed

11-Jordan:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Mypods and Boomsticks*
- b- *Stealing First Base*
- c- *The Greatest Story Ever D'ohed*

12-Kuwait:

It was mentioned once in the following episode:

Bart to the Future.

13-Lybia:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *The Otto Show*
- b- *Das Bus*

14-Morroco:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Treehouse of Horror II*
- b- *C.E. D'oh*

15-Pakistan:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *My Sister, My Sitter*
- b- *Bart to the Future*
- c- *Worst Episode Ever*

16-Saudi Arabia:

It was mentioned once in the following episode:

Behind the Laughter

17-Somalia:

It was mentioned once in the following episode:

Judge me Tender

18-Sudan:

It was mentioned once in the following episode:

How Munched is That Birdie in the Window?

19-Syria:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Lisa vs. Malibu Stacy*
- c- *The Greatest Story Ever D'ohed*
- d- *New Kids on the Block*

20-Tunisia:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Bart the Lover*
- b- *Lost Verizon*

21-Turkey:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Lisa's First Word*
- b- *Brother's Little Helper*
- c- *Lisa the Iconoclast*
- d- *C.E. D'oh*
- e- *Mobile Homer*

22-Turkmenistan:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

- a- *Brake My Wife, Please*
- b- *Stealing First Base*

23-United Arab Emirate:

It was mentioned once in the following episode:

The Devil Wears Nada

24-Uzbekistan:

It was mentioned once in the following episode:

Boy Meets Curl

25-Yemen:

It was mentioned in the following episodes:

a- *I'm with Cupid*

b- *Gone Maggie Gone*

Résumé :

Cette thèse de magister a examiné la représentation de l'Orient et des Orientaux dans la sitcom Américaine « Les Simpson ». Elle a pris ses repères théoriques, essentiellement, des œuvres d'Edward Saïd sur l'orientalisme et des théories postmodernistes de Linda Hutcheon sur la parodie et l'ironie. Elle s'est également appuyé sur la « Rhétorique de l'Image » de Roland Barthes dans l'analyse des clichés, en particulier l'utilisation des couleurs afin de transmettre des messages non-verbaux. La représentation des Orientaux dans la sitcom a été caractérisée par l'ambivalence, et la polyvalence et elle s'est avéré être remplie de satire sociale et politique. En outre, la parodie qui est une forme d'intertextualité a constitué le cheval de bataille de la sitcom. La représentation des espaces et des personnes orientaux a été basée sur des images préconçues des *Mille et Une Nuits*, héritées de la littérature orientaliste française et britannique d'antan et alimentés par des stéréotypes contemporains d'Islamophobie américaine, de terrorisme, de despotisme et d'aberrance. La sitcom a prouvé être entrelacée avec la géopolitique américaine et adhère au courant du pop'art satirique et ironique d'Hollywood. La comparaison entre les trois communautés orientales, l'Arabo-Musulmane, l'Indienne et la Juive a montré dans quelle mesure la sitcom, au moins les épisodes cibles, était ambivalente et caractérisée par le biais et le discours du « double standard », puisque les Arabo-Musulmans ont été présentés comme des étrangers à la mosaïque américaine appelée « Salad Bowl » représentée par la ville emblématique de Springfield.

Mots clés: Représentation, Orientalisme, Parodie, Ironie, Satire, Les Simpson, Sitcom Animée.