Islamophobia and adult animation: the tyranny of the visual*

Narrativas islamofóbicas y series de animación para adultos: una tiranía de lo visual

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Abstract

In the present work three series of animation for adults will be examined in emission still in Spain: The Simpson, American dad! and Family Guy. Your gratuitousness, your accessible and "comical" language, and your attractive format allowed to million television viewers to approach not daily realities as can be the case of the persons' representation of other cultural contexts. From of the Cultural Studies that privilege an ideological reading of the culture, have been selected episodes of Arabic-Islamic subject, with the intention of examining some of the narratives islamophobics more generalized in the Arabic-Islamic culture.

Keywords

The Simpson, American dad!, Family Guy, Islamophobia, Cultural Studies.

Resumen

En el presente trabajo se examinarán tres series de animación para adultos: *Los Simpson, American dad!* y *Padre de Familia.* Su gratuidad, lenguaje accesible, cómico y atractivo formato han permitido a millones de televidentes acercarse a realidades no cotidianas como es el caso de la representación de personas de otros contextos culturales. Desde los estudios culturales, que privilegian una lectura ideológica de la cultura, se han seleccionado episodios de temática árabe-islámica con el propósito de examinar algunas de las narraciones islamofóbicas más generalizadas sobre la cultura árabe-islámica.

Palabras clave

Los Simpson; American dad!; Padre de Familia; Islamofobia; Estudios Culturales.

1. Introduction

Alexandre Astruc, in his article *Birth of a new avant-garde: The Camera-stylo* (1948) gave warning of the innovative new character of cinema emerging in the early nineteen fifties, stating that it would become "a medium for expression" of thought on society, "a language" in and of itself (1980: 208). He predicted the arrival of a new era of cinema, the "Camera-pen", and with it, he believed the cinematic industry would move away from the so-called "tyranny of what is visual" (1980: 208), the anecdote, the immediate, the image for its own sake. Astruc concerned about the terrifying and deformative power of cinematic narrative, thought that, at least until that moment, cinema had been nothing more than an art form of great possibility "but imprisoned by its own prejudices" (1980: 208). He could not ignore how cinema and television, from its origins, had influenced generations of people through narrative and content, images and opinions. This was the manner in which – as part of the French movement *Nouvelle Vague* and of which he was one of the theoretical precursors – he campaigned for cinema and television to move away from the tyranny of what is visual.

Toward the late fifties Horton and Wohl introduced the notion of a para-social relationship to analyze the illusion of intimate interaction, or *face to face* relationship between the viewer and television personalities – be it real or fictitious –. In this regard they indicated: "They 'know' such a persona in somewhat the same way they know their chosen friends: through direct observation and interpretation of his appearance, his gestures and voice, his conversation and conduct in a variety of situations"[1] (1956: 216). They warned therefore that in this role of the spectator people, whether consciously or not, passed all sorts of judgment and appraisals on television celebrities, they know who they like and identify with, or, on the contrary, those they don't appreciate and disregard. Without doubt there are undeniably positive effects to this illusion of intimacy of the para-social relationship[2] but, there are many negative effects conditioned by cultural prejudice of any nature.

Cinema, television, radio, *web* pages, newspapers, magazines and publicity have become the medium through which tyrannical iconography is produced and perpetuated, images shown through empty entertainment, a reality governed by prejudice. They are part of the ideological apparatus of the State (Althusser, 2005). Although they currently revolve around the State or a productive empire – albeit not in every case – it is still true that they possess an unmatchable representational and interpretive reach coinciding with the essential aspects of our argument.

What is frequently manifest today is how cinema and television continue to, through action and discourse, impose a determined rule of law so to speak. Indeed, not only have they sabotaged the deformative discourse that actively cooperated in the way the viewer saw the world, but, in conjunction with all other communication media, they are now likely the protagonists of their world view. Given all the previous, as Walter Lippmann warned, to sit in front of a screen is easy, everything is done by and for us "without more trouble than is needed to stay awake" (2003: 89).

It is clear that the majority of non-western imagery of places such as Japan or Australia, or of other religions such as Judaism, Buddhism or Islam, is the product of hours of exposure to the television set. This is how an approach plagued with stereotypes, poorly interpreted topics and cultural symbols can break even the most basic norms of coexistence between distant peoples, cultures and religions. Cinema and television are todays most essential means of communication, people use both formats out of interest for the human drama they display, their conflicts, likes and dislikes, fears and desires, and as a consequence viewers becomes immersed and impregnated by the perspectives offered to them, in other words, the point of view said media decide to represent, and the situation from which they decide to tell the story.

As it is today we are currently in a context of uncertainty where our access to information is restricted, this is when "we notice a trait that marks a well known type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads" (Lippmann, 2003: 87).

The following pages analyze the televised narratives in adult animated series such as *The Simpsons, American Dad!* and *Family Guy.* Choosing these products was not a casual choice as some other researchers have voiced in concern, the durability of the message they spread is particularly long-lived in comparison to other cultural discourses in cinema or literature (Gandio, 2008: 12). In addition to the previous, free access, accessible language, comedy and attractive format have drawn in millions of people and exposed them to uncommon realities such as the representation of people from other cultural backgrounds. Here, and supported by other cultural studies that focus on an ideological interpretation of culture, and the discourse analysis offered by Edward W. Said in his work *Orientalism* (1978), a series of visual examples have been chosen for the purposes of this study, specifically 15 episodes on Arab-Islamic culture, for the purpose of examining some of the representational discourse that generalizes opinion of the aforementioned culture. The criteria behind the choice of these episodes is based on the increased presence of the topic over the collective 47 seasons of the series since their beginnings up until December of 2014; a sample of 15 episodes chosen out of a total of 1,125 episodes.

Our hypothesis is to corroborate with concrete examples the criticism and accusations of Islamophobia made against these cultural products which is understood as; promoting in aired discourse "prejudice, offense, messages of aversion and also fanatics that build scenarios in which they can commit hate crimes" (Sanchez 2015: 5). The study questions whether satire and caricature on the Arab-Islamic world manages to subvert current stereotypes, or, on the contrary, reinforce prejudice and old eastern clichés.

2. Animated series for adults: satire or Islamophobia?

These animated series have made the obvious bid to be as bold as possible in their handling of any topic, no matter how sensitive or controversial. However, this unfettered approach has not always been a welcome method. In 2006 *The Parents Television Council* accused the Fox group – all three series belong to the network – of being one of the biggest contributors to the distribution of negative depictions of religion on television[3]. Understanding "Religions" as creeds of "otherness", given that in 2010, at least in so far as *The Simpsons* are concerned, the Vatican assured the public they were "good catholics"[4]. This is far from the only controversy caused by their depiction of other cultures and/or minorities and their multiple reruns of the series[5]. In January of 2009 the following headline was published: "'*The Simpsons*' accused of Islamophobia in the UK"[6]. There was an echo of the same in another publication *El Mundo*: Homer *Matamoro Simpson*[7]. It even made its way onto *web pages* and *blogs*, dedicated watchdogs looking out for Islamophobia in animated series. The three series in question have earned themselves the ignominious top positions, where the opinion the caricatures of their Arab-Islamic characters are simple, inoffensive parody is not taken into consideration[8].

On all digital platforms what is evident is the lack of information of the "other" culture; as opposed to information the series use offensive scripts where the otherness of Arab or Islamic characters is associated with terrorism and violence. For some like Martin Correa this is only satire expressed through the use of stereotypes, a form of social parody that has "over time evolved to become, apart from entertaining, an smart ironic reflection of the society it is directed at" (2006: 188), it is a spectacularity and critique of American culture. For others the clearly depicted ideas and concepts "supported by the success and credibility of the series, become legitimate references, to the extent of becoming opinion makers" (Rodriguez, 2015: 110). The underlying reason for their opinion is that, if the viewers are unfamiliar with the culture, an abundance of ethno-racial

stereotypes in a bid for comedy will not always be decoded or adequately understood. In a manner of speaking they function the same way as the multiple allusions and cultural references found in all three series, when the spectator recognizes these references, they become fully participant, they feel satisfied they are witnessing a mockery of, a parody or an homage. However if they are not capable of recognizing them for what they are, they will not even realize that something has been lost in translation. It is in this fashion that the seed of Islamophobia finds fertile ground in the face of an audience unaware of the reality of the Arab-Islamic world. This means that any allusion to Islam goes largely unnoticed; not only do they become disjointed in and of themselves, they also reinforce the viewers internal prejudice.

Whatever the case may be, involving these animated series with terrorism or the war against terrorism is a common practice. In 2013 a video was posted on *YouTube*: "Abhorrent montage of Family Guy depicting the Boston attacks"[9] which caused an uproar. A viewer had edited several episodes from the series linking Peter, the protagonist, with the Boston tragedy. However, in the first viewings of the montage most of the internauts and users that saw the video did not suspect it was not a real episode, they were utterly accustomed to the usual irreverent humor of the genre. The video was evidence of two main phenomena: first what we have already mentioned, the audience's inability to distinguish satire from truth and see their fears confirmed on screen, and, what ultimately concerns the present study most, their fear of Islam; and second, in line with what we have presented so far, the decision in the Middle East to adapt *The Simpsons* to an Arab audience. It had been adopted in 2005, with Egyptian voice actors. Homer was an avid soda drinker instead of beer, donuts were switched out for Arab cookies, and the name of the program was changed to *Al-Shamshoon*. They wanted a series that didn't make a mockery of their religion or way of life, and make it more acceptable to their audiences[10].

Definitively, and concluding some arguments early on in this paper, this particular triad of te-

levision productions has contributed to strengthening Islamophobic trends toward people from Arab-Islamic contexts through their use of certain topics and prejudice. The present study will focus on precisely these offensive narratives, addressing three main aspects: scenario, characters and Arabic.

3. The scenario: a journey through *One Thousand* and *One Nights*

Of the fifteen episodes analyzed in this study, only four of them move the story to an Arab and/or Islamic country. Specifically Afghanistan in "PVT", Iraq in "Saving Private Brian", and Saudi Arabia in "Stan of Arabia I and II". These scenic changes are not positive events, rather a step backwards in terms of civilization. In the case of Afghanistan, it is singled out as the place to find Bin Laden, Iraq is a battle field, and Saudi Arabia, where the cast of *American Dad!* moves for work purposes, is depicted as a desert, under a burning sun, and the cast surrounded by people in integral one-piece attire upon which they state: "Wait a minute! This isn't a promotion"[11]. The barbarity of the scene is intensified even more at the end of the 13th episode of *American Dad!* set in Saudi Arabia, where the protagonists are about to be stoned to death[12].

As a matter of fact, both the exterior and interior scenarios are based on preconceived images and topics. They are presented as very hot locations, insisting on resplendent sunshine in a cloudless sky, where camels abound and buildings are constructions out of plays such as One Thousand and One Nights. The imaginings of the series couldn't be further from the reality of the cities they supposedly depict. This is apparent when comparing the image taken from the episode "Saving Private Brian" (Family Guy) in Bagdad: a city with highways made of sand, surrounded by domes, minarets and passers by who are in their majority male, compared to a real image of the city[13]. The same is observed in the image of Riyadh taken from American Dad! compared to a real photo of the Saudi capital.

All this fictitious iconography puts the viewer in the midst of a discourse of the fantastical when compared to real photographs of modern 21st century cities. It doesn't seem like it could be such a common confusion, but the truth is that every so often stories like the following do appear: "Danish news channel uses image from the video game Assassin's Creed for a report on Syria"[14]. It would seem that whomsoever documented the image simply *googled* Syria and upon seeing the image of domes and minarets assumed it was Syria, given it matched the mental image the country often has in the imagining of any Arab city in western culture[15]. Furthermore, in American Dad! it borders on the absurd with camels riding the baggage claim belt at the Riyadh airport together with normal baggage, when in actual fact, the airport in question is one of the biggest in the world[16].

Regarding interior scenes these are also loaded with cliché objects such as carpets – some of them even flying – genie lamps, genies, shishas and teapots[17]. In fact it is so much so that in the pilot episode of the first season of *American Dad!* when Stan, the protagonist – and lets not forget, a CIA agent – signs a contract with IKEA to furnish Iraq, he orders "two million lamps and five hundred thousand coffee tables"[18].

4. Characters: beards, terrorism, violence and burqas

The characters in the series have already been studied in research on gender issues although, in practically no case have there been intersectional approaches with other oppressive variables such as race, ethnicity, religion, social class or sexual preference (Reig & Mancinas, 2010; Analuisa, 2015; Feltmate & Brackett, 2014; Chacon $ Sanchez-Ruiz, 2009). In this sense, and from the perspective of our study focus, Arab-Islamic characters, the first thing that stands out is a scarce female presence. The total number of men depicted in Arab-Islamic contexts is 282 compared to 118 women. Among them there are twelve men with a full name, and among them, only one woman, the Iranian Linda.

In regards to their physical appearance, both the feminine as well as masculine characters, due to the fact they are supposedly originally from an Arab-Islamic nation, have darker skin; this at times is either a lighter color or especially accentuated and darker. Skin color takes on special importance in a scene from *Family Guy*. In the episode "Turban Cowboy" from the fifth season. Peter Griffin goes through a tollgate and is subjected to a skin tone comparison by the police. Those with darker skin are given a "*Not okay*", and the lighter skin tones an "*Okay*"[19].

Regarding the clothing of the male characters, in every episode analyzed in this study the male characters are wearing something on their heads – it may be a turban, a *tarbush* or similar – and of course a thick beard. These two elements, the headdress and beard in the case of men, are enough to characterize and stereotype supposedly eastern characters in the Modern Age and categorize them as the typical villain of that part of the world. Peter, the protagonist in the series *Family Guy*, is dressed in a thawb, tarbush, and "flesh colored sandals with very long toe-nails"[20] and, in this manner he officially becomes "very Muslim"[21]. In addition to the previous, his wife, Lois, asks why he is dressed that way and he explains: "look at me now I'm a Muslim"[22]. However, he does not seem to understand it all clearly, because just a few minutes later the viewer sees Peter finish his costume by adding a couple of castanets, like those of Hare Krishna.

Relative to the personality of the male characters, rarely do they refer to positive aspects, rather they attribute negative elements, elements such as violence, conflict and terrorism. This of course does nothing toward teaching "otherness" to viewers; it in facto invigorates feelings of rejection and misunderstanding that lead to marginalization of the Muslim population. If every time an Arab-Islamic character comes on screen and is represented as – and this is how it happens in almost every case – a terrorist, the viewers' minds inevitably associate Islam with terrorism, a presumption of guilt that is also taken advantage of by as-

sociations that feed on hate crimes. Some of the representations of these fictitious characters really are terrorists, and the other western characters in the storyline also believe they are terrorists, blandishing discourse on patriotism and national defense that are little more than camouflaged Islamophobia. In one way or another they are always linked to terrorist acts, bombings and suicide attacks. These animated series make Muslims public enemies of western democracy. The following are examples: Stan, from *American Dad!* episode "Homeland Insecurity", believes his neighbors, Bob and Linda Memari, for simply being Muslim – they aren't even Arabs, they are Iranians – are terrorists, literally "enemies of freedom"[23]. His paranoia goes to such an extreme that he spies on them, stalks them and locks them in a garden prepared for use as a detention camp. His obsession reaches such heights that, at a neighbor's party, when Bob bends over to get a beer, Stan dons a latex glove and lubricates it with cream to perform a rectal examination. In the same series, episode "Bush comes to dinner", Roger and Stan, at a dinner attended by President Bush, report they have been searching for "the terrorist mastermind responsible for tormenting our great nation", torturing and interrogating Danny, who they associate with terrorism and who they think knows the whereabouts of Bin Laden[24].

This is frequent Islamophobic narrative present in these series that insistently repeats over and over again that being a Muslim is synonymous with being a terrorist. In the episode "Mypods and Boomsticks" of the series *The Simpsons* Moe, the owner of the bar Homer frequents, warns that, "This Bashir kid is Muslim, and there fore up to something"[25]. Homer, as credulous as he is alarmed, answers his friend Carl, who curiously is black: "If you want to stop Bashir and his war on American principles, you could discriminate against his family in employment and housing". Lenny, another one of the patrons and frequent friend adds: "Yeah, that's pretty patriotic"[26]. Homer himself is thought a terrorist in the episode "Homerland" when it is idly speculated

that it is weird he isn't eating pork and has stopped drinking beer and is seen kneeling on a prayer mat and mumbling a chant they assume is Arabic. To them it is clear he has been converted to Islam and is thinking of blowing up a nuclear plant[27]. The truth is he had only met a group of environmental activists that had forced him to change his lifestyle.

In other cases there are representations of self-proclaimed terrorists as is seen in the episode "Back to the Pilot" in *Family Guy*. Stewie and his dog Brian travel back in time to stop the events of 9-11. Brian, warned by his 'future self' gets on the plane and stops the terrorists[28]. In the same series, in the episode "PTV" Bin Laden appears announcing a new terrorist threat, his impersonated gravity is interrupted when he gets confused and says "radaman", instead of "Ramadan". Absurdity ensues with jokes and ridiculous props – a rubber chicken and huge glasses – [29]. The instance of absurdity leads the creators to represent Bin Laden arriving in Heaven and coming face-to-face with God in the episode "Mom's the word". *American Dad!* episode "Bush comes to Dinner" the aforementioned Osama Bin Laden is thought to be an employee[30] of MacMillan and Sachs Investments, a company in the fictional world of *American Dad*.

Concerning women of apparent Arab-Islamic ancestry situated in their countries of origin – as mentioned before in Iraq, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia – the women are always covered wearing one piece attire (mainly the *niqab* and *abaya*), which are normally referred to in the series as burqas[31]. In truth, not one of the 118 female characters in the series wears a burqa at any time, although it is true that they are wearing integral one-piece clothing[32]. These women, inserted in Arab-Islamic contexts are given the visible external attributes of Arab-Islamic identity as set by western stereotypical discourse. In this aspect they are derided and mocked; the following example is taken from the episode "Stan of Arabia part II" in *American Dad!* concerning the Saudi police code "two – twenty" which means a woman's ankles have been seen[33]. There's also the episode

"PTV" in the series *Family Guy* where a husband tells his wife – of whom we can only see her hands and eyes – "For Allah's sake put some clothes on"[34]. In this fictional representation bare skin is synonymous with democracy, therefore, when in the episode "Saving Private Brian" in Family Guy it is said that democracy has arrived in Iraq, we see as if by magic three local women wearing *niqabs* and hanging clean laundry turn into three porno-carwash girls[35].

Women in the Arab-Islamic context with their heads uncovered are non-existent; of the 118 women portrayed in the series only one appears with her head uncovered. We refer to the Iranian woman Linda – Stan's neighbor – who, of course, lives in the US. The stance the series takes on Islamic clothing therefore is that it is a cultural obligation and that women of Islam if they could, would not wear traditional attire. In general it is complicated to determine what is correct and what is not, especially in a scenario where individual agency, if it exists, may have been coerced by a structural repression in which the person had been raised since their infancy. However, the audience is denied a more varied representation of Muslim women with their heads uncovered, this in an effort to avoid destroying stereotypes and secular clichés. These representations, like Islamophobic narrative, recreate the knowledge possessed, and the reality they refer to. This is inherently dangerous because there is almost no alternative western imagining of a model different to this reconstruction. To defend the concept of a Muslim woman as something fixed and inalterable is to add yet another element of subordination which, under what is shown as a global epistemology, lays waste to any discrepancy and is counterproductive to any and all other models of subjective femininity that coexist in actual Arab-Islamic environments.

Lastly, relative to the personality of the aforementioned female characters, the narrative insists that said women are submissive and subdued. This is yet another Islamophobic narrative frequent in these animated series, the counterpart to male terrorist characters. The image of the subdued women, covered and obedient to her husband is repeated ad nauseam, but most of all in scenarios with Arab-Islamic contexts where these women are seen as literally downtrodden by men[36].

5. Language or linguistic genocide of the language of otherness

In the linguistic aspect it is especially significant, despite having specifically chosen fifteen episodes dealing with Arab-Islamic content, in none of those episodes do the characters speak Arabic. If language is considered a way of looking at the world and understanding it, the series under analysis herein that opt to not represent the Arab-Islamic reality prefer to understand and look at the world under their own parameters. The names of commercials are in English[37], not even in both languages, as could perfectly well be the case with the real *Burger Kings* in the Middle East which, although they don't always appear on billboards in just Arabic, they do tend to combine both. We have seen what happened with the airline company from Saudi Arabia, whose real planes use lettering in both languages[38]. Through this absence the audience perceives that "the Arabs" reject everything that is inherently theirs – their idiosyncrasy – with their intent being to de-racialize, leading them to pick which cultural models they will use from the dominant group. As Fanon affirmed "the black Antillean would be whiter, in other words, closer to the true man, depending on how much more they make the French language theirs" (2009: 44).

In spite of the facts there are exceptions which, despite being different are still not rooted in fact. On several occasions dialogue goes thusly: "Salam malecum"[39], but the actual Arabian greeting sounds very different – [*as-salam alaykum*] – making Arabic caricaturesque and almost leading to, through repetition, what other researchers have dubbed "racial coding of accents" (Giroux, 2001: 113).

The rest of the linguistic dramatizations are also absurd. Something like Arabic is spoken in *American Dad!* when a souk vendor shouts af-

ter having his merchandise thrown about[40], but it is not Arabic, nor any other language. Or in *The Simpsons* when Lisa thinks her father, Homer, has converted to Islam when she finds him kneeling on a carpet and hears him talking unintelligibly, she thinks it is Arabic[41]. In the series they also name typical dishes such as in a case in *American Dad!*[42] this is not Arabic either but meaningless gobbledygook, or another case in *Family Guy* where they talk of another typical dish, *fooshnooks*, in an Arabic language that again, is not Arabic, and that Mahmud describes as "chicken that has been yelled at for two hours then run over by a Mercedes", after tasting it Peter affirms "You can really taste the fear"[43].

Terminamos este apartado dedicado a la lengua We end this section dedicated to language with a scene from the episode "Midnight Rx" in *The Simpsons.* Homer smuggled pharmaceutical drugs across the border from Canada and had never been stopped given his American appearance which had earned him the trust of the border police. However, on one of his trips he travels with a darker skinned friend, a friend who gets burnt while drinking coffee and complains from the pain unintelligibly because his tongue is burnt. Flanders, Homer's neighbor, decides to cover his head with a wet towel to refresh him. Under this guise, and uttering incomprehensible sounds, and dark skin, the border police make the obvious conclusion: "Stop him, he's expressing his faith, eh!"[44]. At that moment six Canadian Mounties appear fully armed and surround the car.

All of the previous shows, despite how humorous the picaresque can be, use linguistic invention for comedy in pseudo-thematic cultural products, in this case, in episodes about the Arab-Islamic world. The case could be made that culturally speaking languages have been invented on many occasions. An obvious example would Tolkien and his Sindarin, or George R. R. Martin's Dothraki. But the truly incendiary nature of the examples described herein is that they don't invent a language, rather they make a mockery of one that already exists.

6. Conclusions

The analysis of the three series chosen for the study, the fifteen themed episodes and more than three hundred minutes of content, show how the toxic trend starting in the Hollywood of the sixties, the dangerous pattern of stereotypes used to represent the Arab-Islamic world and the majority of ethnic minorities, through derogatory images of their clothes and traditions, is very much alive (Shaheen, 2001). The sample chosen for this study frankly displays the undeniable western ethnocentrism of how real Arabs and/or Muslims are perceived and later portrayed on television; it represents a violation of the constitutional right to freely choose and practice religion and ultimately weakens the principles of social justice and leads to negative reactions from society at large. Through this audiovisual material narrative Islamophobia is clearly evident, and attacks the "otherness" of the Arab-Islamic context. It is a far-gone conclusion that the creators are nowhere near an approach based on critical ethnological science; there is no desire to express knowledge of reality of another culture. The creators would rather concentrate on recreating, over and over again, prejudice and a repertoire that seemingly has no end.

The images these series broadcast are tremendously simplistic and frankly false, and without doubt closely linked to politics, more so in the current US context. The Palestinian – Israeli conflict, in which the US has unequivocally supported Israel; the embargo on Arabian oil in the 70s, the Iranian revolution, the attack on the Twin Towers and the war in Iraq, the previous all condition how Arab-Islamic society is depicted in American media. This connects politics and show business for the express purpose of vilifying an entire culture through the use of derogatory stereotyping, robbing humanity of an entire people. As Quin and Mchamon warn us, only those who represent an annoyance or some form of threat are victims of stereotype (1997: 146).

Islamophobia today is a social, political and cultural challenge. To unmask Islamophobic narra-

tive in products for the wider audience, expose the way they are produced and denounce said productions is one of the ways that may subvert the intended message. Curiously, it is through all these defamatory scenes that we learn not what Arabs and/or Muslims are really like, but what visual tyranny is and how it is broadcast through communicational media, and the notable influence they have on public opinion.

Notes

1. The original: "They 'know' such a persona in somewhat the same way they know their chosen friends: through direct observation and interpretation of his appearance, his gestures and voice, his conversation and conduct in a variety of situations".

2. Edward Schiappa, Peter E. Gregg and Dean E. Hewes article affects this point, "The Para-social Contact Hypothesis" in Communication Monographs, Vol. 72, No. 1, 2005, pp. 92 – 115.

3. Learmont, M. (2006, December 14th). "PTC unhappy with TV's religious stereotypes". Variety. Taken on May 16th 2017 from http://variety com/2006/scene/markets-festivals/ptc-unhappy-with-tv-s-religious-stereotypes-1117955772/

4. See "«The Simpsons» are good Catholics… according to the Vatican". (2010, October 18th). Religión Digital. Información religiosa de España y el mundo. Taken on May 16th 2017 from http://www. periodistadigital.com/religion/vaticano/2010/10/18 religion-iglesia-simpson-vaticano-catolicos-islam-evangelicos.shtml

5. The multiple reruns we refer to are what makes the present study a current issue, even decades after their initial release. Not only do all three animated series continue to air but, as indicated in Atresmedia in Spain in January 2016, the 552 episodes of the first 25 seasons have been broadcast 19,600 times on Antena 3 and Neox. This means each episode has been aired a mean of 35 times. See Rubio, J. (2016, January 29th). "We have seen an episode of 'The Simpsons' a mean of 36 times". El País. Taken on May 16th 2017 from https://verne.elpais.com/ verne/2016/01/29/articulo/1454071133_965314.html

6. See "'The Simpsons' accused of Islamophobia in the United Kingdom". (2009, January 14th). FormulaTV. Taken on May 16th 2017 from http://www. formulatv.com/noticias/10009/acusan-a-los-simpson- deislamofobica-en-el-reino-unido/)

7. Rey, N. (2009, January 16th . "Homer «Matamoros Simpson»". El Mundo. Taken on May 16th 2017 from http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2009/01/15/teletridente/1232044989.html

8. See the websites Animated TV Show and Islamophopia or the blog Studies in Popular Culture, associated with a course given at Koç University.

9. See "Abhorrent montage of 'Family Guy' depicting Boston attack". (2013, April 18th). EuropaPress. Taken on May 16th 2017 from http://www.europapress.es/chance/tv/ noticia-aberrante-montaje-padre-familia-atentados-boston-20130418132740.html

10. El-Rashidi, Y. (2005, October 14th). "D'oh! Arabized Simpsons Aren't Getting Many Laughs". The wall street journal. Taken May 16th 2017 from https://www.wsj.com/article_email/SB112925107943268353lMyQjAxMDE1MjE5NDIxNTQxWj.html

11. See episode "Stan of Arabia part I" (Ep. 12, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox (7'45").

12. See episode "Stan of Arabia Part I" (Ep. 12, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox.

13. See episode "Rough Trade" (Ep.16, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox.

14. Moreno, A. (2013, March 11th). "Danish news channel uses image from the videogame «Assassin's Creed» for a report on Syria". FormulaTV. Taken May 16th 2017 from http://www. formulatv.com/noticias/29876 informativo-danes-utilizo- imagen-videojuego-assasins-creed-reportaje/

15. We refer to the «West» in the same manner in which we could refer to the «East», not because we are trying to attach these terms to an essentialist perspective, rather because both are especially vague concept and in and of themselves fictional elements transformed into stereotypes.

16. See episode "Homeland Insecurity" (Ep. 6, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox.

17. See episodes: "Homeland Insecurity" (Ep. 6, S.1) and "Stan of Arabia Part II" (Ep.13, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox. Also the episode "Midnight Rx" (Ep.6, S.16), The Simpsons, 20th Century Fox.

18. See episode "Pilot" (Ep.1, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox (4'01").

19. See episode "Turban Cowboy" (Ep. 15, S.11), Family Guy, 20th Century Fox (14'56").

20. See episode "Turban Cowboy" (Ep. 15, S.11), Family Guy, 20th Century Fox

21. See episode "Turban Cowboy" (Ep. 15, S.11), Family Guy, 20th Century Fox (14'06").

22. See episode "Turban Cowboy" (Ep. 15, S.11), Family Guy, 20th Century Fox (2'06").

23. See episode "Homeland Insecurity" (Ep. 6, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox Fox (4'22").

24. See episode "Saving Private Brian" (Ep. 15, S.5), Family Guy, 20th Century Fox (10'48").

25. See episode "Mypods and Boomsticks" (Ep.7, S.20), The Simpsons, 20th Century Fox (10'48").

26. See episode "Mypods and Boomsticks" (Ep.7, S.20), The Simpsons, 20th Century Fox (11'09").

27. See episode "Homerland" (Ep.1, S.25), The Simpsons, 20th Century Fox.

28. See episode "Back to the Pilot" (Ep. 5, S.10), Family Guy, 20th Century Fox.

29. See episodes: "PTV" (Ep.14, S.4), Family Guy, 20th Century Fox (0'26").

30. See episode "Bush comes to Dinner" (Ep.10, S.2), American Dad! 20th Century Fox.

31. See episode "Stan of Arabia Part I" (Ep. 12, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox.

32. For a more detailed analysis of the generalizing and explosive mechanisms of plural identities through the use of clothing in western fiction, see Romero Morales, Yasmina, 2015.

33. See episode "Stan of Arabia Part II" (Ep.13, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox (2'04").

34. See episode "Pilot" (Ep.1, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox (4'15").

35. See episode "Saving Private Brian" (Ep. 15, S.5), Family Guy, 20th Century Fox.

36. See episode "Stan of Arabia Part II" (Ep.13, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox.

37. See episodes: "Stan of Arabia Part I" (Ep. 12, S.1) and "Stan of Arabia Part II" (Ep.13, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox.

38. See episodes: "Stan of Arabia Part I" (Ep. 12, S.1) and "Stan of Arabia Part II" (cap.13, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox.

39. See episodes: "Stan of Arabia Part I" (Ep. 12, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox (19'39") and "Mypods and Boomsticks" (Ep.7, S.20), The Simpsons, 20th Century Fox (9'58").

40. See episode "Stan of Arabia Part II" (Ep.13, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox

41. See episode "Homerland" (Ep.1, S.25), The Simpsons, 20th Century Fox.

42. See episode "Stan of Arabia Part I" (Ep. 12, S.1), American Dad! 20th Century Fox.

43. See episode "Turban Cowboy" (Ep. 15, S.11), Family Guy, 20th Century Fox (10'56").

44. See episode "Midnight Rx" (Ep.6, S.16), The Simpsons, 20th Century Fox (14'10").

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