

Islamophobic Irony in American Fiction: a Critical Analysis of Lorraine Adams' Harbor and John Updike's Terrorist

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Abstract

In this paper, we intend to examine two contemporary American novels, Lorraine Adams' Harbor (2004) and John Updike's Terrorist (2006) with the aim of investigating the Islamophobic irony in their descriptions of characters, views and incidents that are relevant to the Middle East. Our analysis of these novels is framed based on the modes of irony as discussed by Edwin Barton, Glenda Hudson, Claire Colebrook, Ellen O'Gorman, J. Jorgensen, Herbert Colston, Henry Conserva, Ross Murfin and Supriya Ray. Through our discussions of the employment of verbal irony, situational irony and dramatic irony, we conclude that the two writers make fun of the Muslim fanatics who view the wearer of hijab as a good Muslim. They also imply that the Muslim worldview is one-dimensional. In addition to that, they criticise the US employment of Muslim minorities in places which require high security because the loyalty of these workers, according to those authors, are questionable. In the same vein, they ridicule the voices that relate all the problems of the Middle East to the USA. In general, the different types of irony uncover the Islamophobic traits that pervade the two novels.

Keywords: Irony; Islamophobia; Arabophobia; John Updike, Lorraine Adams.

1. Introduction

This paper is intended to examine two contemporary American novels, Lorraine Adams' *Harbor* (2004) and John Updike's *Terrorist* (2006) with the aim of investigating their Islamophobic irony in their descriptions of characters, views and incidents that are relevant to the Middle East. Our analysis of the two novels will be framed according to various modes of irony as discussed by Edwin Barton, Glenda Hudson, Claire Colebrook, Ellen O'Gorman, J. Jorgensen, Herbert Colston, Henry Conserva, Ross Murfin and Supriya Ray. The paper is structured in five sections. After this introduction, a historical background of the US Islamophobia will be explained. Then, we will illustrate our own appropriation of the concept "irony" and its types that will frame our analysis in the preceding section. And finally, the conclusion will be presented in the last section.

2. Background of the Study: US Islamophobia

According to Irum Sheikh (2004: 25-6), "since the advent of the Cold War" and also since "the US foreign policy towards Israel after 1967," the American popular culture portrays the Arabs and "Muslims as dangerous and terrorists." To be more specific, the image of the Arabs and Muslims as terrorists has come to light after the Arab-Israeli conflicts and in particular "after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war" as quoted below:

Middle Eastern themes started to change with the 1960s. While the tropes of Arabian night, harems, sheikhs, mummies, and Arab villains still prevailed, a new image started to emerge after the establishment of Israel in 1948 and more specifically after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. This vilification and construction of the Muslim male as an increasingly violent and barbaric terrorist occurred alongside gradual acceptance of Israel and the merging of Israeli and American heroes (Sheikh 2004: 46).

In addition to Sheikh's argument above, Fawaz Georges (2003: 76) asserts that the West in general has seriously feared Islam in the late twentieth century when the Arabs fought Israel in 1973 "under" its "banner" and also when the Islamic Revolution took place in Iran in 1979. Therefore, the West and particularly the USA constructed an idea that Islam and Muslims are a threat for them.

Just like Sheikh and Georges, Akbar S. Ahmed (1991: 231-2) highlights the Western fear of Islam, but he relates that fear to the Western misunderstanding of Islam. For instance, he argues that:

Not being able to understand Islam fully and being impatient with it, the West will consider Islam as problematic. It will be seen as the main counterforce to Western civilization. Into the 1990s, an opinion is already taking shape of Islam as the major enemy after the collapse of communism. There are signs that some of the free-floating hostility directed against communism over the last decade will move toward Islam (Ahmed 1991: 230-231).

Categorisation of "Islam" and "Muslims" as the "enemy" of the West has led to a feeling of hatred and "fear of Islam" against Islam. This panic and abhorrence have been labelled as "Islamophobia". According to Jackie Dreyer (2010), the term "Islamophobia" has "been present in American society since the 1980s, coming into more frequent usage on and after Sept. 11, 2001." This concept means "prejudice against, or an irrational fear of, Islam or Muslims" (Dreyer 2010). Just like Dreyer, Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg (2008: 7) allege that the "term 'Islamophobia' ... makes the antagonism toward Islam and Muslims that is inherent in so much of American mainstream culture." This "fear" and "antagonism" is "particularly evident in the editorial choices of broadcasters and newspapers [especially after] the September 11 attacks" (Gottschalk & Greenberg 2008: 7). In addition to the fact that the 9/11 incidents reinforced the feeling of Islamophobia, Yunnis Stivachtis (2008) argues that these "events" have also resulted in "a significant degree of sympathy for the U.S. and its citizens in many parts of the world."

While many people think that the 9/11 terrorist incidents reinforced the American phobia of Islam, Bobby Ghosh (2010: 17) claims that American fear of Islam has not reached the serious "levels" of the European fear. He elaborates that:

Islamophobia in the U.S. doesn't approach levels seen in other countries where Muslims are a minority: there is no American equivalent of France's ban on the burqa or Switzerland's new law against building minarets ... Muslims feel safer and freer in the U.S. than anywhere else in the Western world. Two American Muslims have been elected to Congress, and this year, Rima Fakhri became the first Muslim to be named Miss USA (Ghosh 2010: 17).

However, even though Ghosh attempts to lessen the US Islamophobia, he confesses elsewhere that: "this year, at least six mosque projects across the U.S. have faced bitter opposition" (2010: 17). As an example of these prejudiced oppositions, "in Temecula, Calif., a group in July brought dogs to a protest where Muslims were praying, knowing full well that the animals are regarded as unclean to Islam. And the rage against Muslims is by no means limited to proposed mosque" (Ghosh 2010: 18). According to Tommy Franks (2010), this irrational antagonism towards the Arabs and Muslims occurs because "most Americans believe that most Muslims support terrorists. [Therefore,] to be hostile toward Muslims is seen by some Americans as natural, normal and patriotic." This stance is reflected in the American literature's stereotypical image of the Arabs and Muslims as terrorists as will be shown in the two novels.

The term "Islamophobia" is sometimes used as a synonym for "Arabophobia" which means a strong hatred and fear of the Arabs. For instance, Neil Clark (2003) argues that "Arabophobia has been part of western culture since the Crusades." The word "Arabophobia" is used here while the author refers to Islamophobia because he links the discussion with the "Crusades" which were not only against the Arabs, but against Islam and all Muslims. In fact, separating Arabophobia from Islamophobia might be difficult because, as Ali M. Mazrui & Alamin M. Mazrui (2001: 159) explain, "Arabophobia is intricately connected with Islamophobia." In this paper, Islamophobia will be utilised to include Arabophobia.

3. Theoretical Framework: Irony and Its Types

According to Edwin Barton and Glenda Hudson (2004: 102-3), the word “irony” is derived “from the Greek *eioneia*, meaning feigned ignorance, dissembling. In ancient Greek comedy, one of the stock characters, the *iron* ... outwits other characters by deceiving them; he deliberately uses words that convey precisely the opposite of his real thoughts, feelings, or intentions.” The term “*iron*” refers to “a dissembler” that is simply a person “who says less than he thinks” (Barton and Hudson 2004: 102-3). Thus, the Greek origin of the word “irony” merely centres on its meaning of “deceiving” and “dissembling”, but this is insufficient.

The definition has explicitly been developed when Claire Colebrook (2004: 15) argues that “irony is saying something contrary to what is understood.” In fact, this explanation seems to be obvious because irony is a form of allusion whose meaning is double. Similarly, the doubleness in meaning is stressed by some critics such as Ellen O’Gorman (2004: 11) who considers “irony as a mode of speaking which establishes an unquantifiable distinction between a statement and its meaning.” O’Gorman attempts here to illustrate the difference between the explicit and implicit “meaning”. This difference is difficult and “unquantifiable” because, as O’Gorman (2004: 11) adds: “the ironic statement does not mean what it says, yet it has a meaning which is both separate from and associated with the statement.” This indirectness and ambiguity sometimes occur through metaphorical language. J. Jorgensen et al. (1984: 112) argue “that an ironist uses a figurative meaning opposite to the literal meaning of the utterance.”

The previous definitions and discussions have consciously or unconsciously stressed on one type of irony that is “verbal irony, in which the meaning intended by the speaker differs from the meaning understood by one or more of the other characters” (Barton and Hudson 2004: 104). However, this is not the only form of irony. Herbert Colston (2007: 136) distinguishes between four types: “Socratic irony”, “dramatic irony”, “situational irony” and “verbal irony”. In the next paragraphs, we will explicate the meanings of these types.

According to Colston (2007: 136), “Socratic irony is the pretence of ignorance of a given topic, for pedagogical purposes.” Socrates was pretending as ignorant to allow his debaters to present the knowledge they have first. Then, after examining their information, Socrates explains and argues to prove his own points of view. His behaving as ignorant is a form of irony because he is not ignorant. Thus, Socratic irony refers to a situation in which people utilise this strategy of Socrates.

Regarding the “dramatic irony”, Colebrook (2004: 176) illustrates that “if the audience sees or knows more than a character, or if a character’s speech is undermined by subsequent action, then we can say that there is a dramatic irony, an irony that plays on a disjunction between character and audience point of view.” In this type of irony, the “audience” or “reader” is quite aware of the meaning, just like the narrator and author of the work. Only a particular fictional or dramatic “character” is the victim of that irony. This explanation coincides with Henry Conserva (2006: 17) who argues that by “using the dramatic irony a humorist lets the audience and perhaps one or more characters know something that the other characters don’t.” Thus, Conserva means that some “characters” in the same work might realise what is meant behind the irony used by other characters. In fact, the dramatic irony is always relevant to the plot and events of the story of literary works or drama.

In addition to that, some scholars assume that “cosmic or tragic irony” is not a form of the dramatic irony but it stands on its own. According to Colebrook (2004: 175), the “cosmic or tragic irony” refers to a situation “where the expectations of a character or community are thwarted by life’s events, events which often seem to pass judgement on life or that seem to be the outcome of fate.” The death of Romeo and Juliet at the end of Shakespeare’s play can be a good example of this “fate”.

Irony can also be situational. This type is similar to the verbal irony but with a special emphasis on certain “situations”. Ross Murfin and Supriya Ray (2003: 223) argues that “situational irony, also called irony of situation, derives primarily from events or situations themselves, as opposed to statements made by an individual, whether or not that individual understands the situation is ironic. It typically involves a discrepancy between expectation and reality.” In his attempt to explicitly explain this type of irony, Simon Philipps (2005: 7) provides an example below:

An example of situational irony is the story of the kings of Siam. In order to punish noblemen they would give them a sacred white elephant as a present. The noblemen could not reject it, but had to spend a lot of money taking care of the animal.

The discrepancy between expectation and reality described in the definition becomes quite clear here. If you get a present you usually do not expect that will have to spend a lot of money on maintaining it afterwards.

We have illustrated in the previous discussions the definitions and different types of irony and how irony is used to give an opposing and unexpected meaning. In the next section, we will analyse the two American novelists' use of irony by examining their sarcastic employment of views and also their sardonic portrayals of characters.

4. Discussion and Analysis

Although we have argued earlier that there are many types of irony: Socratic irony, verbal irony, situational irony, dramatic irony and tragic irony, our analysis of the two novels will merely be divided into three sections. This is because these respective novels only employ three types as will be shown in the following discussions:

4.1. Verbal Irony

As illustrated earlier, Barton and Hudson (2004: 104) defines “verbal irony [as] the meaning intended by the speaker [which] differs from the meaning understood by one or more of the other characters.” In other words, “verbal irony” is “saying something contrary to what is understood” (Colebrook 2004: 15). This indicates that critics need to uncover the “distinction between a statement and its meaning” (O’Gorman 2004: 11). Updike uses this kind of irony with the purpose of showing the contradiction of some Muslim fundamentalists such as Ahmad in the novel whose preoccupation with the hijab leads him to maltreat his mother. To make this argument clear, we will highlight the story’s synopsis. The story centres on an eighteen-year Arab-American boy called Ahmad. He is the only child of an Irish-American nurse [Terry] and an Egyptian exchange student. His father left the USA after he had finished his studies leaving Ahmad with the American mother. The absence of his father leads him to trust a Yemeni imam, Shaikh Rashid and a Lebanese-American named Charlie, both of whom brainwash him to become a suicide bomber in Lincoln Tunnel. However, Jack Levy—a Jewish American who works as a “guidance counsellor at Central High School” where Ahmad studies—realises that Ahmad is deceived. The story ends when Jack knows about Ahmad’s mission and marvellously succeeds in convincing him to stop driving the truck that is planned to blow up the tunnel.

Back to the argument, the narrator reveals that while Terry notices Jack “Levy’s eyes ... fix on her jauntily demure head scarf, she laughs and explains, ‘He wanted me to wear it. He said if there was one thing he wanted for his graduation it was his mother not looking like a whore’” (Updike 2006: 114). In fact, Terry’s explanation to Jack about Ahmad’s persistence in making her wear the hijab before she attends his convocation is loaded with a mocking tone against Ahmad’s fanatic discourse. This can be realised when through the use of the word “demure” which means “modest” or “shy” which does not characterise Ahmad’s mother at all. In fact, the way she “laughs” and her own definition of herself as a “whore” reflect her brazen manner. Terry’s implicit opposition to Ahmad’s insistence is an expected reaction for two main reasons. Firstly, Terry is not a Muslim to be asked to wear the hijab. Secondly, the perception that by wearing the hijab, she will “not [be] looking like a whore” illustrates that Ahmad is a simple-minded fanatic. The hijab cannot preserve the purity of women because people behave according to their will, not according to their clothes.

Reinforcing the previous argument, there are a large number of prostitutes in countries that force women to wear hijab. For instance, although wearing the hijab in Iran is compulsory, Hamideh Sedghi (2007: 239) claims that “there are an estimated 300,000 prostitutes in Iran, including 84,000 in Tehran.” These statistics confirm that the hijab is not the measure of one’s morality or abstinence from illicit sexual relationship. Thus, the mocking tone of the mother, particularly when she tells Jack that her son forced her to do that in order “not [be] looking like a whore”, is allusively intended to censure the discourse of Ahmad and other fundamentalists as simplistic and reductive.

Unlike Updike, Adams ridicules the double standards of the US foreign policy in the Middle East. We will first summarize the story. Adams’ *Harbor* is about the illegal migration of the Arabs and Muslims to the USA and centres particularly on the Algerians. The text also highlights other issues such as Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism and explores the Algerian civil war that erupted in 1992 between militant Islamists and the Algerian army. The story starts when the protagonist, Aziz, who serves as a soldier in the army, runs away from Algeria because of that civil war. He stows away on an oil tanker and arrives in Boston, USA. Aziz makes his way to Boston city with no passport nor any documents. Exhausted, he falls unconscious, and a religious Egyptian man takes him to his flat. When he recovers, he goes to his cousin, Rafik. Aziz realises that the Algerians and other Arabs in Boston are involved in a large number of illegal acts such as shop-lifting, fraud and even terrorism.

Most of them do not preserve their Islamic and Arabic traditions; they go to nightclubs and drink alcohol. Aziz imitates them, goes to nightclubs to drink alcohol and search for women as well. After two years, his brother, Mourad, gets a Green Card and travels legally to the USA. He easily finds a security job in the airport. Aziz leaves Boston and goes to New York because the FBI has started to suspect the illegal activities practiced by the Algerians in Boston. In New York, an old Yemeni man, Tahir Hussain, assists Aziz and employs him in his shop. Aziz meets Antar, a dangerous terrorist, and other Arab Islamists who attempt to convince Aziz of the jihad. Aziz refuses to be one of them and goes back to Boston. Just then, the FBI arrests him and many young Arabs but fails to detain the terrorists, who were able to leave America shortly before the arrest took place. Mourad and his girlfriend run to Mexico and Aziz is deported to an unknown place. The story ends but the future of Aziz and the other young Arabs is still unknown. In addition to that, the real terrorists are still free.

In the story, Dhakir tells Ghazi that America is angry because the “military” “coup” in Pakistan threatens democracy. However, he adds that when an Islamic party in Algeria was “about to rule” the country after it had won in the parliamentary election, the Americans themselves supported the Algerian army to make a “military” “coup” and to cancel the results of the election. This contradiction is satirised in the conversation below:

“Can I tell you something? They are afraid of Islam. They are afraid. That is why they are boiling. Do you know what the Americans are doing now? They are behind everything, everything, everything in the home country.”

“Ah-hah.”

“They are the ones behind what happened. In Pakistan, they were not happy about it because it was the military; they were not happy about that. And they were demonstrating their discontent by shouting why, why, why? And when the others were about to rule Algeria, they asked the army to make a coup. And they were telling them what actions to take. They were behind everything.”

“They were behind every thing?”

“The CIA is everything. You have no idea what they are doing in the world. I swear, you cannot imagine. I tell you, every thing you have seen is bullshit. There is nothing left. Nothing left. It is over. Didn’t they say that it will arise from the Arab Maghreb?” (Adams 2004: 260-1).

The comparison between the US reaction towards the Pakistani and Algerian “military” “coups” tends to lampoon the US administration. Dhakir’s point of view above reflects the opinion of the Muslim masses around the world who believe that the West does not support democracy in the Middle East because it is “afraid” that the Muslim World might appear again as a great empire. In the Medieval Age, the Christian Europe was powerless compared to the Muslim World. Islam united the Arabs, Persians, Turks, and Moors as well as gave them courage to conquer various lands around the world, including some parts of Europe, to spread the words of God. Therefore, if there is a free election in the Middle East, Muslim nations might vote for rulers whom the Europeans and Americans do not want. Having supported the Algerian army who cancelled the election and killed the democracy just because the winner was Islamic party, the USA gives an impression that it is still “afraid of Islam”. Just like her ironic allusion to the American Islamophobia, Adams also in the same quotation employs dramatic irony. This will be discussed later in the next section.

In brief, verbal irony has been employed by Updike and Adams to show an implicit criticism on certain aspects. While Updike merely derides the discourse of the fanatic Muslims, Adams satirises the US double standards, especially when they support democracy all over the world, but not in countries where Islamists can win. This double standard implies that the Americans are Islamophobic.

4.2. Dramatic Irony

Updike allusively mocks the Muslim fundamentalists who simply view the Americans as infidels. For instance, when Ahmad adopts the discourse of his imam, he divides people into friends and enemies, or in religious terms into believers and infidels. This can be seen in his response to Joryleen: “My teacher at the mosque says that unbelievers are our enemies. The Prophet said eventually all unbelievers must be destroyed” (Updike 2006: 66). While the author presents Ahmad’s ideas in this quotation, he indeed ironically employs them to propagate the notion that the discourse of the Muslim fanatics is intolerable. By this dramatic irony, readers and also Joryleen are aware that Ahmad is under the influence of an Islamic fundamentalist discourse.

Having repeated the word “unbelievers” twice in the excerpt above and the stress on Ahmad’s “enemies” who should be “destroyed”, the author makes it clear that his propagation of Ahmad’s voice is indirectly intended to negate those fanatics such as Ahmad and his imam in the novel. To be fair to Updike, we must indicate that his derision above shows an opposition to the discourse of the Muslim fundamentalists only, not the Muslims in general. This is because he elsewhere highlights some good characteristics of the Muslim World. For instance, he admires the parents’ love towards their daughters in Islam, a contrast from the American way of parental love as quoted below:

The American way is to hate one’s family and flee from it. Even the parents conspire in this, welcoming signs of independence from the child and laughing at disobedience. There is not that bonding love which the Prophet expressed for his daughter Fatimah: *Fatimah is a part of my body; whoever hurts her, has hurt me, and whoever hurts me has hurt God* (Updike 2006: 165-6).

In fact, the novelist allows the reader into Ahmad’s mind and indirectly reveals how Ahmad compares Islamic and US culture. While the narrator highlights that the American “parents” who “conspire” to support their children’s “independence” and also do nothing to stop their “disobedience”, he in contrast appraises the “bonding love which the Prophet expressed for his daughter Fatimah”. Thus, by showing his admiration to these aspects of Islam, Updike allusively exposes that he is not against Islam; he is only against the Muslims who adopt fundamentalism.

Adams utilises another form of dramatic irony. She makes one of her fictional characters poke fun at the others. In one instance, the dialogue between two of her Algerian characters shows an irony of the Arab voices that relate everything negative in the Middle East to the USA and its CIA. Adams shows evidence that she ridicules the US double standards in the Middle East as discussed in the previous section. Dhakir and Ghazi’s repetition of the word “everything” in their dialogue that “they are behind everything, everything, everything in the home country” and their repeated use of “nothing left” (Adams 2004: 260-1) are indeed intended to deride Dhakir’s voice that connects all Algerian problems to the USA and its CIA. In addition to that, Adams’ derision of the voices that relate all the problems in the Arab World to the USA is also used elsewhere in the novel. For instance, when Ghazi thinks that the CIA is behind all the troubles in his country, Aziz replies that:

The CIA lives in this place, Virginia, where Heather’s father lives. You have seen pictures she has. Look on her dresser. It is green and velvet and every where forests and houses like French castles. No one from the CIA wants to sleep on dirt and eat sand to make a mule out of a man in a country no one in America ever heard of, except maybe when they mistake it for Nigeria. The sound of a man dying in Algeria is not even a whisper in the world. Arab man dies in Palestine, it is five orchestras, every instrument playing. Palestine boy huddled under his father, killed by a Jew, everywhere his picture goes. But where are the photographs of the Muslim *djeddat* killed by Muslim men in Médéa? Who makes this? It is not the Jew. It is not the CIA. It is *us. Us* (Adams 2004: 278)

Adams employs Aziz’s voice to reflect her own point of view. Aziz does not agree with Ghazi’s perception that associates Arab problems to the CIA, USA and the Jews. His explanation carries ironic undertones: the Americans do not even know where Algeria is “except maybe when they mistake it for Nigeria”. This sarcasm indicates that the Americans are not responsible for the Algerian problems and other Arab countries. He gives the example of the “Muslim *djeddat*”—Algerian slang word meaning Algerians—who were “killed by” other “Muslim” in the “Médéa” Province. This alludes to the massacres discussed earlier. Aziz asks: “Who makes this? It is not the Jew. It is not the CIA. It is *us. Us.*” The stress on the pronoun “us” foregrounds the idea that the people who link Algerian problems with the USA are irrational. In fact, this does not depart from the truth because the murders and massacres which occurred during the Algerian civil strife were either committed by the militant Islamists, or the army. In other words, the aggressors were Algerians, not Americans.

To end the discussions of this section, we can claim that the two American writers employ dramatic irony in their novels to ridicule certain events and issues. Updike makes fun of some Muslim fundamentalists and Adams mocks the Arabs who attribute all their problems to the USA. Hence, the two authors utilise dramatic irony to oppose the Arab and Muslim viewpoints.

4.3. Situational Irony

Situational irony is similar to verbal irony, but it focuses merely on specific “situations”.

According to Murfin & Ray (2003: 223), “situational irony, also called irony of situation, derives primarily from events or situations themselves, as opposed to statements made by an individual, whether or not that individual understands the situation is ironic. It typically involves a discrepancy between expectation and reality.” In the following discussions, we will analyse how the two writers utilise this type of irony when they implicitly attempt to criticise history.

Updike satirises the situation in which the US administration employs some “minorities” in sensitive places to protect the country. His description of that condition is loaded with an ironic undertone, particularly when he indicates that many of these “minorities” are the main source of trouble as described below:

The majority of the security personnel were recruited from the minorities, and many women, especially older women, recoiled from the intrusion of black or brown fingers into their purses. The dozing giant of American racism, lulled by decades of official liberal singsong, stirred anew as African-Americans and Hispanics, who (it was often complained) “can’t even speak English properly,” acquired the authority to frisk, to question, to delay, to grant or deny admission and the permission to fly. In the land of multiplying security gates, the gatekeepers multiply also. To the well-paid professionals who travelled the airways and frequented the newly fortified government buildings, it appears that a dusk underclass has been given tyrannical power (Updike 2006: 43).

Although the excerpt above seems to focus on the “African-Americans and Hispanics” and other “minorities” mainly “black or brown fingers”, its ironic tone displays the author’s refusal in employing “minorities” at “security gates”. Having portrayed these minorities as intruders and “underclass”, Updike makes it clear that he stands against the US “official liberal singsong” and the rights which have caused these minorities to exhibit their “tyrannical power”. In fact, Updike’s emphasis on the words “security”, “gatekeepers” and “airways” is an allusion to the terrorists’ penetration of the US security in airports and also to their success in destroying the “newly fortified government buildings”. The word “buildings” alludes to World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. In general, through the irony discussed in this paragraph, Updike makes fun of his country’s excessive trust in the minorities who, as he has claimed earlier, are not loyal to the USA.

Just like Updike, Adams also allusively attempts to criticise the employment of minorities in US airports. This can be seen in the character of Mourad who leaves Algeria to the USA. When Mourad arrives in the USA, he gets “a security job at the airport” (Adams 2004: 76). The narrator reveals that “the owner of the security company told him he had a future that was bright if he ‘kept his nose clean’”. The manager’s advice to Mourad that must “keep his nose clean” carries an ironic undertone because it shows that the minorities in the USA, or probably Arab-Muslims in particular, are expected to cause trouble. This anticipation leads the manager to caution Mourad. Thus, the treatment of Mourad’s work at the “airport” is similar to Updike’s sentiment earlier about the weakness in the US. Both Updike and Adams cast aspersions on the employment of minorities as security officers, as though implying ironically that these are the people who will jeopardise security of American airports.

Based the previous discussions, we can claim that the two American novelists use situational irony to deride the administration of their country that employs minorities to guard security gates.

5. Conclusion

Verbal irony, dramatic irony and situational irony have been employed by the two writers to reinforce certain notions that mostly coincide with the viewpoints of the authors. For instance, Updike makes fun of the Muslims who view the wearer of hijab as a good Muslim. He also mocks those Muslims who maltreat their mothers and those who consider the Americans as infidels. He therefore implies that the Muslim worldview is one-dimensional. In addition to that, he criticises the US employment of minorities in places which require high security because the loyalty of these workers are questionable. He also opposes the disobedience and total independence of the American children. In the same vein, Adams is similar to Updike in her allusive opposition in relation to the issue of employment of minorities in US high-security places. Although she ridicules the voices that relate all the problems of the Middle East to the USA and its CIA, she attacks the US and Western double standard towards democracy in the Muslim World. The writers’ use of verbal irony, dramatic irony and situational irony shows Islamophobic traits. They place their emphasis on the Muslims, Arabs, Quran, imams, beard, hijab, Islamists in distorted ways. It seems to be the two writers exaggerate in the portrayal of Islamic fundamentalism to justify the US war on terror.

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