

A Semiotic and Rhetorical Analysis of American Anti-Islam and Pro-Islam

Cartoons: A Comparative Analytic Study

Abstract

"Islamophobia" and "Islamofacism" are two concepts widely spread after the 9\11 attacks in America. During the first decade in the 21th century, American writers, authors, and cartoonists launch a fierce attack against the "ugly face of Islam". The 9\11 attacks give the West a chance to wage a soft war against Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), not by weapons, but by media. The American administration uses its military in responding to the attackers. However, the media attacks are incomparable. One of the most effective media weapons is the cartoons. Hundreds of anti-Islam cartoons are depicted in the last decade. In contrast, pro-Islam cartoons are depicted as a response, and hence this phenomenon is worthy of research. Responding to such incidents, this research is devoted to analyzing the semiotic and rhetorical content of two kinds of cartoons: opposing and defending Islam. For this purpose, the researcher applies four models: Salvatore Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor (1991), Siegfried Jäger's Dispositive Analysis Method (2005), Sonja K. Foss's Theory of Visual Rhetorics (2005) and Theo Van Leeuwen's Discursive Construction of Legitimation (2008). The four models are applied to 18 cartoons divided into 9 anti-Islam cartoons and 9 pro-Islam cartoons. Every cartoon is separately analyzed in terms of semiotics and rhetorics. After analysis, the cartoons are compared to each other in a separate chapter to display the implications of their findings. The research reveals the visual and textual analyses to answer the following questions concerning the categorization of

the cartoons content:does it express a freedom of speech, or reveal an abusive content? Whichcategory is linguistically richer than the other?

Key Words: semiotics, rhetorics, Islamophobia, anti-Islam, pro-Islam