

სატირა როგორც პოლიტიკური იარაღი ჯონათან სვიფტის ნოველებში

Satire as a political weapon in Jonathan Swift's novels

ნანი გუჩმაზაშვილი

თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

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წინამდებარე სტატია იკვლევს სატირის, როგორც პოლიტიკური იარაღის მთავარ როლს ჯონათან სვიფტის რომანებში. კვლევა მოიცავს ავტორის მოკლე ბიოგრაფიას, პოლიტიკურ იდეოლოგიებს, რომლებიც საფუძვლად უდევს მის ოსტატურ სატირას, განსხვავებულ ტექნიკასა და შედარებას სხვა რომანისტებთან, როგორცაა ასევე გამორჩეული სატირიკოსი, ჯორჯ ორუელი. თითოეული ასპექტი მჭიდრო კავშირშია ერთმანეთთან და მიზნად სვიფტის ნაწარმოებებში სატირის მნიშვნელობის ამოცნობას ისახავს. ამ კვლევის შედეგები ცალსახად აჩვენებს, რომ სვიფტის მიერ ირონიისა და სარკაზმის ოსტატურად გამოყენება სცდება უბრალო კომედიურ დაცინვას და გამოიყენება როგორც ძლიერი მანქანა საზოგადოების ფარისევლობისა და მორალური კორუფციის გამოსავლენად. შედეგად ვასკვნით, რომ ირონია და სარკაზმი მწერლის ხელში შეიძლება გადაიქცეს ძლიერ რიტორიკულ ინსტრუმენტად. წინამდებარე კვლევის შედეგები ცხადყოფს, რომ სარკაზმს შეუძლია დაარღვიოს დადგენილი სტანდარტები და შეცვალოს მთელი რიგი გარემოებების აღქმა. კვლევა ხაზს უსვამს სვიფტის სატირულ შემოქმედებას, როგორც სოციალური ცვლილებების კატალიზატორს.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: როლი, სატირა, იარაღი

Keywords: Role, Satire, Weapon

Introduction

The focal point of this article is Jonathan Swift, renowned for his publicly recognized novels. Among his most celebrated works are "Gulliver's Travels" and the pamphlet "A Modest Proposal". However, Swift's novels delve deeper than their surface suggests. To truly grasp their essence, one must look beyond the superficial layers. Swift not only crafted narratives but also constructed a concealed history, serving as the foundational backdrop for his literary creations. His works have remained a subject of discourse for centuries, firmly establishing Swift as one of the foremost satirists.

Understanding the essence of satire is essential to appreciating Swift's work. Satire, a genre prevalent in both visual and literary arts, employs heightened irony to unveil the hidden realities concealed behind facades. Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" also utilizes satire to lampoon societal weaknesses, portraying characters with exaggerated stereotypes to create comedic scenarios aimed at prompting introspection. Satire, in essence, becomes a transformative tool, altering the personalities of characters and inviting reflection upon societal norms. Swift masterfully wielded satire as his primary instrument, leveraging environmental and social contexts to initiate political and intellectual resistance against societal corruption and manipulation. Swift's scathing critique of society aimed to provoke a response, igniting a battle for the alteration of societal values and drawing the attention of England.

In essence, Swift's literary arsenal, akin to a warrior's sword, cut through societal veneers with the precision of a pen, leaving an indelible mark upon the landscape of literature and societal discourse.

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative research approach to analyze the theoretical framework, political views, satirical techniques, and legacy of Jonathan Swift's works. The methodology involves a comprehensive review and synthesis of primary and secondary sources, including biographies, literary analyses, critical essays, and historical documents related to Swift's life and writings.

The primary data sources include Swift's own writings, such as "Gulliver's Travels," "A Modest Proposal," letters, and political pamphlets. These primary sources provide direct insights into Swift's thoughts, political views, and satirical techniques. Secondary sources encompass scholarly articles, books, and academic papers written by experts in the field of literature, history, and political science. These secondary sources offer critical analyses, interpretations, and contextualizations of Swift's works within the socio-political milieu of his time.

The theoretical framework section of the article integrates biographical details with historical context to provide a comprehensive understanding of Swift's background and

influences. Political views are examined through Swift's writings and historical events, with a focus on his stance towards religion, monarchy, political parties, and societal issues.

Overall, this methodology aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of Jonathan Swift's life, works, and legacy, drawing from a diverse range of primary and secondary sources to offer insights into his enduring impact on literature and political discourse.

The theoretical frame of the article

1. Biography and historical context

Jonathan Swift was an Anglo-Irish satirist and author. Jonathan Swift was born on 30 November 1667 in Dublin in the kingdom of Ireland. Jonathan's father was a lawyer from England, but after the Stuart Restoration, which took place in 1660 when Charles II returned as king after the period of Oliver Cromwell's Commonwealth, he settled in Ireland. Seven years later Jonathan was born and it is clear that he had English roots. Unfortunately, his childhood was not as carefree as other children' Jonathan's father died before his birth and his mother lived in another country. He lacked family warmth and care. During adolescence, new problems appeared but this time they were about health complications. Jonathan found out that he had Ménière's syndrome. It was a disorder of the inner ear that usually causes symptoms such as nausea, loss of hearing and balance, and frequent mood changes. But these difficult circumstances did not prevent him from becoming a great writer of history.

In terms of education, Swift didn't have much choice of universities. In the seventeenth century, Ireland had only one university, and that too in the capital, Dublin. It may be surprising but when Jonathan graduated from the university his degree was not as good as it should have been. Despite all of this, when Jonathan was in college he was known as a difficult and rebellious student, who was always surrounded by problems. His rebellious nature was later sharply reflected in his works.

As mentioned, the novelist lived in the 17th and 18th centuries, this was a time when political and religious conflicts were raging. Jonathan was Protestant. He was a clergyman, and a member of the Church of Ireland, the Irish branch of the Anglican Church. In 1688, The Glorious Revolution started. The revolution was begun between people who supported William and Mary, James's VII daughter. William and Mary took the crown as Protestant monarchs of Scotland, England, and Ireland, and those people who were loyal to the ideas of the Stuarts were also known as Jacobites. Their basic ideology was based on the faith that a king received his authority and powers from God and they hoped that could get an advantage by the change of monarch. Jonathan as a Protestant was scared of the Jacobite's victory and he went to his mother. This was a turning point in his life.

Jonathan took his first steps towards writing while in Leicester. gradually realizing that writing was his inner voice waiting to craft something extraordinary. He wanted to expand his range of vision. Jonathan was very ambitious and this quality of his personality made him more likely to create something worthwhile. Later rumors spread that Jonathan met the monarch who

offered him a commission in the army but the offer was declined by Swift. And when William III died Swift got degree of Doctor of Divinity from Trinity College. Upon Swift's return to England, he was entirely unknown to everyone. The first work that brought him fame was referred to as "A Tale of a Tub." At first, this work was published anonymously and it became a habit of Swift. "A Discourse of the Contests" and "Dissensions between the Nobles" and "Commons in Athens and Rome" (1701) also published anonymously.

Perhaps the rationale behind Swift's use of masking was rooted in the political context of his works. As time went on, Swift became more open about his political interests. He tried to convey all this in disguise, but not in such a way that it would be unclear to the reader. An excellent example of this is "Gulliver's Travels". Where Swift's political interests are disguised but not so strongly that we cannot recognize it.

2. Swift's political views

When discussing Jonathan's life, it's crucial to consider his political activism, which is intricately linked to his novels. His political views and the themes of his novels were closely intertwined. In general, the background says a lot about the author's style, and Swift was no exception. Swift was also involved in religious affairs. During the 18th century, religion essentially intersected with politics. Church and kingdom were constantly trying to maintain and increase their powers. In addition, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Swift was actively involved in political actions. Jonathan's political ideology was mainly directed against papal absolutism. He was a member of the Anglican Church, and he did not want to strengthen Catholicism because it would increase papal power.

Satirist's attitude towards Irish politics is clear in the letter which he wrote to Alexander Pope. Alexander Pope was also an English translator, poet, and satirist. He was known as one of the most famous English poets of the early 18th century. In the letter, he informed Alexander that he was returning to Dublin but worried about the situation he would find there. Corruption was flourishing in Dublin, but the parliament was doing nothing. I'm quoting the words of the author: *"I am now returning to the noble scene of Dublin, into the grand monde, for fear of burying my parts, to signalize myself among curates and vicars, and correct all corruptions crept in relating to the weight of bread and butter, through those dominions where I govern."* (Schall, J. V. 2015, June 26). Author in disguise, as was typical of him, said that Justice was blind and perhaps deaf. Swift had a hope that his travel which was divided into four parts would wake up the society, but he was not sure that the society was ready to see his novel. In this particular case, "Gulliver's Travels" was meant, which we will certainly review in the article. Furthermore, the author considered that he would never find peace of mind until all honest men share his opinions. In addition to politics, misanthropy is discernible in Swift's letters. Some authors have argued that Jonathan Swift harbored a deep disdain for the human race, even equating them with animals. Leo Damrosch, in his book "Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World", discusses Swift's writings, including a quote where Swift refers to the natives as *"the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface*

of the earth.” (p.81) Damrosch notes that statements like these contributed to Swift's reputation for misanthropy, a characterization with which Swift did not entirely disagree. (Damrosch, L. 2013). However, if we evaluate objectively, we will realize that Swift hated only the inactive society, which was easy to manage by priorities. The primitive views of such a society killed the enthusiasm of man as an individual to develop. According to Jonathan himself, “*man is not a rational animal, but an animal capable of reason.*” (Carravilla Izquierdo. 1710, p. 6.). Swift told Alexander that he was slowly losing friends because of his views, yet made no effort to rekindle those relationships. Swift, J. (1725, September 29). Retrieved from Ourcivilisation.com. It's challenging to fully grasp Swift's complexity, his reluctance to engage with others becomes more understandable. While It is challenging to fully grasp Swift's complexity, it is easier to understand why was he reluctant to engage with people. Having touched upon the most memorable moments of Swift's life, now we can delve into a review of his novels which will further increase the awareness of the author himself and the satirical genre.

3. The uniqueness of Swift's work

Swift's work is quite diverse and interesting. Before we go directly to the discussion of great novels such as “Gulliver's Travels”, let's review one political pamphlet. “A Modest Proposal” is one of the political pamphlets that is extremely different and original. This pamphlet assures us that Swift's work is contrasting and unique. The work is carefully structured, with a clear argument supported by detailed reasoning and persuasive language. Swift's mastery of rhetoric and persuasion adds to its enduring impact. What made the author special, and why were his works outstanding? Leo Damrosch (2013) mentioned in his book “Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World” that “A Modest Proposal” is so skilfully constructed that it still has the power to startle, even if one has read it many times before. And for anyone who meets it for the first time, it explodes like a landmine. (p. 420)

In “A Modest Proposal”, Jonathan took steps that were dangerous and would cause criticism from society. He humiliated society by offering an embarrassing means of escape from starvation. He told everyone that if they sold children in the market to feed rich people, they would solve the problems of famine. But despite the intense criticism, some authors even recognized Swift's outstanding work. George Orwell, though critical of Swift's politics, confessed that he read it over and over and would put it on any list of “*six books which were to be preserved when all others were destroyed*” (Damrosch, 2013, p. 3)

Some people may think that Jonathan was an ordinary misanthrope who hated all races and expressed it cruelly, but those who have political knowledge of the 17th and 18th centuries will conclude that Swift was just trying to make the dirty truth obvious. He used animals as a weapon in the novels, which was a defining feature of his writing style. Animals allowed Swift to satirize human folly, vice, and hypocrisy indirectly. By depicting human characters as animals or by attributing animal-like qualities to them, Swift could highlight absurdities and contradictions in human behavior and society. In the final part of “Gulliver's Travels”, Gulliver

encounters the Yahoos, a primitive humanoid species, in the land of the Houyhnhnms, moments before encountering the horses themselves. Yahoos represent the worst aspects of humanity. Swift uses the Yahoos to satirize various aspects of human behavior, including greed, violence, and moral degradation. In the book, there are examples illustrating how the Yahoos, who are associated with humans, are portrayed as creatures trained by horses.

"The Houyhnhnms keep the Yahoos for immediate use in huts not far from their dwelling; however, the remainder are dispatched to designated fields, where they excavate roots, consume various herbs, and scavenge for carrion" (Swift, 1950, p. 340)

4. Swift's satirical techniques

To Swift, his satirical techniques used in the novels were a method of repairing the world as far as he was able. Jonathan was not happy with what he saw coming, and that's why he started conveying reality with the help of satire. In "Gulliver's Travels", writing techniques are divided into three parts: verbal irony, situational irony, and dramatic irony. The first one was verbal irony, which had a huge impact. Verbal irony refers to the process of saying one thing while meaning another. Swift used positive words in relation to terrible and disgusting things as part of his strategy to express his contempt toward the situation. For example, in the first voyage, the author refers to the Lilliputians as "*the most ingenious people*," (p. 18) or when he uses high-sounding majestic adjectives for the Emperor. In addition, while traveling in Brobdingnag, Swift describes the giants as "*morally superior*" despite their moral defects.

The second technique is situational irony, which incredibly paints the picture, does not follow the expected norms, and cannot respond to the reader's expectations. Situational irony can be found in all four parts of "Gulliver's Travels". We can consider one illustration in the land of the Houyhnhnms, where horses are rational and wise creatures, while the Yahoos, human-like creatures, are irrational ones. In this situation, roles are exchanged.

The third strategy is more intense than others: dramatic irony is also a literary device where the audience or reader is aware of information that the characters have no knowledge of. This strategy creates suspense and tension, which causes more interest than expected, as the audience becomes conscious of situations differently than the characters. A notable example of this can be considered in Gulliver's case. When he trusts the Lilliputians without realizing their dishonest and unreliable nature, the readers actually realize the dark side of each society and accept Gulliver's naivety.

5. Satire used as a criticism of political figures and institutions

It comes as no surprise to note that Swift had a tense relationship with the monarchy and politicians. He harbored feelings of protest not only towards society but also towards autocracy. When Jonathan wrote "Gulliver's Travels", he expressed all his hatred and criticism there.

A less-known fact proves that Jonathan Swift had a complex relationship with Queen Anne. He hoped for her support, but unfortunately, his expectations were not fulfilled. Queen

Anne disliked Swift and refused to give her consent to his appointment to any church position in England. Despite Anne's wishes, St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin did not heed the queen's desires, and Jonathan was ultimately chosen as Dean. This fact further fueled the writer's determination; instead of giving up, he continued to express his political views. Therefore, Jonathan's work often reflected his observations on the political and social climate of the time. In "Gulliver's Travels", it is logical to assume that Swift used satire to criticize and dishonor Queen Anne. There is an episode in the first part of the book where Gulliver acts disrespectfully in the queen's palace to extinguish a fire, "*I had, the evening before, drunk plentifully of a most delicious wine called glimigrim, which is very diuretic. By the luckiest chance in the world, I had not discharged myself of any part of it. The heat I had contracted by coming very near the flames, and by laboring to quench them, made the wine begin to operate by urine; which I voided in such a quantity, and applied so well to the proper places, that in three minutes the fire was wholly extinguished*" (Swift, 1950, p. 62)

In fact, in "Gulliver's Travels", there is no direct identification of the inhabitants of all four countries with real historical figures. Swift simply used fictional characters and settings as a satirical tool to comment on political and societal issues. However, sometimes readers can find connections between fictional characters and reality. As mentioned above, Jonathan was deeply involved in politics, serving as a clergyman and later as a political pamphleteer in support of the Tory party. Because of this, he criticized political institutions like the Whigs and the general ideology of political parties. By using exaggerated titles, Swift made a series of allusions that were identifiable to his contemporaries as critical of Whig politics. Jonathan Swift employs the allegorical representation of the high-heel and low-heel political parties as a satirical commentary on the triviality and absurdity of political divisions. The High Heels represent Tories; the Low Heels, Whigs. "*There have been two struggling parties in this empire, under the names of Tramecksan and Slamecksan, from the high and low heels of their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves*" (Swift, 1950, p. 51)

In addition, Swift draws a parallel between the religious conflict between Lilliput and Blefuscu and contemporary European politics, highlighting the folly and absurdity of strife in both realms. This episode vividly highlights the folly of the conflict's premise, while Swift unveils the tragic reality of countless lives lost in senseless wars across Europe. "*It is computed that eleven thousand persons have at several times suffered death, rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end*" (Swift, 1950, p. 53)

According to Jonathan, the devil is the inventor of lies, even though this art has been refined by others over the years, and politicians make use of it. Swift's main goals were to fight greed and detachment, which seem to be inherent in every political leader. However, we know that Jonathan judged not only the politicians but also the society, which accepted lies disguised as art.

6. Comparison of Jonathan Swift and George Orwell

Existing research mainly focuses on Swift and his work; however, it's important not to overlook the broader context. Swift was not the sole satirist in a world where satire served as a vehicle to convey truth. Another prominent satirist was George Orwell, an English novelist, essayist, and journalist. Nowadays, Orwell is among the most famous English-language essayists of the twentieth century. It is worth mentioning that Swift's and Orwell's writing styles were similar, but not so much as to be considered identical.

Before directly discussing the authors, let's note one aspect: satirical literature is often divided into two different categories as well—Horatian and Juvenalian. The main difference between them lies in the fact that Juvenalian satire is harsher than Horatian satire. The former employs exaggeration and self-deprecation to identify foolishness; Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" belongs to this type, while the latter includes George Orwell's works, such as "Animal Farm" and "1984". Juvenalian satire is more disdainful and abrasive, using strong irony and sarcasm.

Like Jonathan Swift, Orwell was also involved in political issues. His political views changed over time, but two facts remained consistent: the writer was a socialist, and he believed in democratic socialism but was against totalitarianism until his death. In his opinion, totalitarianism, as a political order, was focused on absolute power and dominance. In a totalitarian regime, only the welfare of the ruling elites was valued. For George, examples of such orders were German Nazism, Soviet Communism, and Italian Fascism. But in the case of socialism, everything was different. Orwell once said that nationalism is 'the lunatic modern habit of identifying oneself with large power units and seeing everything in terms of competitive prestige.'

As we see, both satirists were passionate about politics and used their pens as a weapon. But would they agree if they lived in the same era? The answer might surprise you. According to reliable sources, such as The Orwell Foundation (1946), Swift was against social progress or reform, a viewpoint that really contradicts their supposed harmony. Aside from the fact that for Orwell, Jonathan did not stand out with a good personality, he was also politically and morally incorrect. Perhaps even if Swift had a chance to judge, he would not agree with George, but one statement is obvious: they have both created captivating and significant novels.

Do these two, "Gulliver's Travels" and "1984", share similarities or differences? First of all, "Gulliver's Travels" portrays humanity with a humorous tone and absurd situations in order to reveal society's deplorable behaviour and feebleness. "1984", in contrast to "Gulliver's Travels", depicts a dystopian future in which individuality and freedom are vanished. A totalitarian government eradicates everything different and specific, using technology. One noteworthy difference is that Jonathan could not use technology as an enemy like Orwell; for him, the main enemy of the public was society itself, led by dirty politics. However, the two novels have one thing in common, both societies are oppressed and degraded by influential people. For instance, Winston Smith, the main character of "1984", was only allowed to express one emotion: love for the Party. Orwell painted a situation in which husbands and wives were not permitted to love each other; this is definitely Juvenalian satire, as it bitterly condemns human immorality and folly.

Jonathan truly made a part of society think about its inability to do so, even though the theme of political injustice and fraud in the modern world has not disappeared. However, many writers took inspiration from Swift; while some disagreed with his ideas, others embraced his insights. Some notable scholars and critics, including Norman Jeffares and Irvin Ehrenpreis, have written about Swift's works. They lived in the twentieth century and studied Swift's life with great interest. References: Norman Jeffares, A. (1976). Jonathan Swift. London: Longman. Ehrenpreis, I. (1962–1983). Swift: The Man, His Works, and the Age.

We can consider John Anthony Burgess as an outstanding satirist of the next generation of writers. He was a British comic writer and composer. Burgess created a dystopian satire named "A Clockwork Orange". For more clarity, dystopia is interpreted as an imagined world or society in which everything is atrocious and terrible. The success of "A Clockwork Orange" was immensely rapid; a movie was even made based on the book. The novel is known worldwide for being a controversial piece of literature.

Burgess, like Swift, employed irony and satire in his book "A Clockwork Orange," yet one detail stands in contrast. What catches the reader's eye most is the language used in the book, which is not traditional English; instead, an invented version called Nadsat is employed. Anthony, like Jonathan, did not trust politicians or public officials and opposed the Soviet regime. Together with Swift, the epoch and political background were chief sources of inspiration for the novelist. Throughout the book, Anthony shows his loathing for regulations adopted by the state, in which people were victims. As the state tried to control its citizens, it became harder to manage them. A Clockwork Orange follows the plot of a teenage boy, Alex participates in a scientific experiment aimed at inducing violent thoughts.

Numerous satirical authors share conceptual proximity to Swift, allowing for the identification of both similarities and differences among them. However, one undeniable fact remains: Swift's enduring influence on satire as a genre and on satirists as writers is unmistakable.

Conclusions

In conclusion, Jonathan Swift stands as an iconic figure in the realm of satire, leaving an indelible mark on literature and political discourse. His works, notably "Gulliver's Travels" and "A Modest Proposal," continue to captivate readers with their depth of insight and biting commentary on society and human nature.

Swift's literary genius lies not only in his ability to craft engaging narratives but also in his astute use of satire as a tool for social critique. Through his writings, Swift exposed the flaws and follies of his contemporary world, challenging readers to confront uncomfortable truths about power, corruption, and injustice.

While Swift's political views were often controversial and his misanthropy apparent, it is essential to recognize the complexities of his character and the historical context in which he lived. Swift's upbringing in a turbulent political and religious landscape undoubtedly shaped his worldview and influenced the themes of his works.

Moreover, Swift's legacy extends far beyond his own time, inspiring generations of writers and thinkers to employ satire as a means of challenging authority and advocating for change. His influence can be seen in the works of later satirists like George Orwell and Anthony Burgess, who likewise used irony and wit to expose societal ills. Swift's unique techniques, including verbal, situational, and dramatic irony, allowed him to skilfully criticize political figures and institutions, challenging societal norms and calling for change. Swift's use of animals as a satirical device further underscores his ability to shed light on the absurdities and contradictions of human behaviour and society.

In sum, Jonathan Swift's contribution to literature and satire is immeasurable, leaving an indelible imprint on the literary landscape and serving as a timeless reminder of the importance of speaking truth to power. As we reflect on Swift's life and works, we are reminded of the enduring relevance of satire as a force for social change and the enduring legacy of one of history's most formidable satirists.

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ავტორის შესახებ:

ნანი გუჩმაზაშვილი არის ივანე ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის მესამე კურსის სტუდენტი, სწავლობს ინგლისური ფილოლოგიის საბაკალავრო პროგრამაზე.

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