



SATIRICAL PORTRAYAL OF SOCIAL NORMS IN WORLD FICTION

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Abstract: *This article describes how satire in world literature critiques and reflects societal norms and behaviors. Drawing from a range of literary works, it analyzes how authors use humor, irony, and exaggeration to expose social hypocrisy and challenge cultural conventions. The study emphasizes the enduring relevance of satire in promoting critical thinking and social reform through artistic expression.*

Keywords: *satire, irony, social norms, world fiction, cultural critique, humor, exaggeration, social reform*


Introduction

Satire has long served as one of literature's most incisive tools for examining and critiquing social norms. With its roots in sarcasm and comedy, satire enables authors to highlight the inconsistencies and defects present in social structures without resorting to direct conflict. Satire has served as a tool to encourage introspection and change in addition to providing entertainment, as seen in everything from Greek comedies to contemporary books. It reflects society through exaggeration, satire, and caricature, compelling readers to reconsider moral and ethical norms and the existing quo. Satire is important because of its special capacity to convey intricate social criticism in an approachable, frequently hilarious way. Satire disarms readers by hiding criticism behind humor, which increases their openness to difficult concepts. Satire has been used by writers of global literature to criticize topics like gender norms, governmental corruption, religious orthodoxy, class disparity, and cultural hypocrisy. These pieces' perceptive portrayals of institutional dysfunction and human foolishness frequently give them enduring significance.

Satire's versatility is one of its main characteristics. It is relevant in all times and cultures, whether it be used into humorous plots, dystopian settings, or allegorical narratives. Because satirized themes—like power abuse, moral deterioration, and pretense—are universal, these works are able to transcend their initial contexts and remain relevant to audiences today. By doing thus, they add to larger discussions of equity, justice, and the human condition.

Literature Review

The academic exploration of satire has highlighted its dual role as both a literary device and a sociopolitical commentary. Scholars like Mikhail Bakhtin and Northrop Frye have emphasized the satirical style as a critical mirror of human society, frequently situated between the tragic and the humorous. According to Frye, satire falls into the "low mimetic" mode, in which characters are perfect for criticism and ridicule since they are neither highly tragic nor completely admirable.



Studies conducted recently, such those by Dustin Griffin and Charles A. Knight, build on these concepts by analyzing the rhetorical devices used in satire. Griffin contends that through indirect argumentation, satire enables readers to engage in a moral discourse and discern between good and wrong. In order to improve critical literacy, Knight emphasizes the dialogic element of satire and demonstrates how it places the reader inside a network of opposing viewpoints.

Satire has been used to challenge social taboos in global fiction in a variety of cultural contexts. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* are renowned for their audacious criticisms of authoritarianism and imperialism, respectively. Salman Rushdie and Chinua Achebe are examples of modern authors who use satire to discuss postcolonial identity and religious extremism, while Voltaire's *Candide* parodies the intellectual optimism of the Enlightenment period. The influence of satire on public discourse is also studied. Satire novels frequently have a greater impact on public opinion and political attitudes than overt political treatises, according to literary sociology research. Satire can address contentious subjects that might be opposed in more overt ways because of its nuance and ambiguity.


Discussions

A variety of canonical and contemporary works provide rich examples of satire being used to interrogate social norms. In *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, satire is employed to dismantle the pretensions of Enlightenment rationalism and British imperialism. The fantastical lands visited by Gulliver are allegorical representations of societal flaws—Lilliputians embody petty political conflicts, while the Houyhnhnms satirize the idea of rational beings devoid of emotion. Swift exaggerates these worlds to absurdity, revealing the irrational foundations of supposedly rational systems.

Voltaire's *Candide* is another seminal satirical text. Through the protagonist's naive optimism and successive misfortunes, Voltaire critiques blind faith in philosophical determinism and religious institutions. The repetitive misadventures satirize the belief that "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds," ultimately ridiculing complacency in the face of human suffering.

In the realm of modern literature, George Orwell's *Animal Farm* provides a biting satire of Soviet communism. The allegorical tale uses anthropomorphic animals to depict the corruption of revolutionary ideals and the rise of tyranny. The famous line "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" encapsulates the manipulation of egalitarian rhetoric for authoritarian ends.

More recently, Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* satirizes patriarchal control through a dystopian narrative that exaggerates contemporary gender politics. The society of Gilead strips women of autonomy, echoing real-world debates on reproductive rights and religious fundamentalism. Atwood's satire is subtle yet scathing, making it a powerful feminist critique.



In postcolonial contexts, Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* uses satire to expose political corruption and neo-colonial power structures in Nigeria. The protagonist's ironic commentary and the exaggerated portrayal of corrupt politicians underscore the absurdity of post-independence governance.

Conclusion

Satire remains a powerful literary strategy for questioning, resisting, and reforming societal norms. Its capacity to provoke thought through humor and exaggeration enables authors to broach sensitive issues with subtlety and impact. From Swift to Atwood, world literature has consistently used satire to shine a light on hypocrisy, injustice, and absurdity within human societies. As both a cultural critique and a form of engagement, satire encourages readers not only to laugh but also to think—and perhaps, to change. Its enduring relevance confirms its vital place in literature and in the broader discourse on social transformation.

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