

Good example of essay on satire in gullivers travels by jonathan swift vs. satire...

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



“ Gulliver’s Travels” by Jonathan Swift is considered one of greatest satirical literary works in the world literature heritage. To the great extent “ Candide” ranks Voltaire on the same level of significance as one of the greatest satirists in the world literature.

Satire is “ a technique employed by writers to expose and criticize foolishness and corruption of an individual or a society by using humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule”. (Literary Devices) The goal of satire is improving humanity by means of criticizing and mocking its foolishness and weakness. In satire a writer uses fictional characters, which actually hint at real people in order to expose their features to everyone and thus to condemn or mock in front of everybody. Satire may be pointed towards one person, a group of people, a country or the whole world in general. Satiric criticizing is aimed at improvement of those who is laughed at with his weaknesses.

In both literary works, “ Gulliver’s Travels” by Jonathan Swift and “ Candide” by Voltaire, the main characters serve as satirical instrument that help the authors to express their ideas and views. Both characters are the tools of irony. Thus, a reader can understand irony and satire through the actions of Gulliver and Candide. At the same time, the characters do not understand that they are being mocked; they remain naïve and completely oblivious to what they are and to the situation they put themselves in.

“ Gulliver's Travels” is a unique literature work, and it was obvious as soon as the book saw the world. Swift wrote it not to entertain but to vex the world, as he admitted himself. This book was an indictment for all Englishmen in general and also for philosophers, politicians and scientists in

particular. Swift's intention of influence on public with this book is best seen in his tone. Dr. Bowdler deleted many important elements from the original work in order to make a book for children. That included bawdy scenes, coarse language, and, what was the most important change – Swift's satiric tone that made the "Gulliver's Travels" truly original and meaningful.

Bowdler had many reasons for changing the original Swift's book, but mainly he did that for the ordinary people who were largely uneducated; thus, they would not have been able to grasp the whole meaning of Swift's irony.

The instrument of Swift's satiric method is exaggeration. With seriousness and understatement the writer shows virtue and then suddenly turns it upside down into a vice, parodying and burlesquing. Swift also likes to debunk foolish and unreasonably sentimental attitude to children. Thus, at birth Lilliputian children are wisely taken from their parent and are given to the State in order to be brought up in the right way.

Swift is a great name-caller and a master of puns. Thus, Laputa, the island of pseudo-science, in Spanish means "a prostitute". In Swift's times people were taught to worship science as goddess, and the writer mocks and ridicules those who made science a prostitute and convert from it.

Blind devotion is also satirized in "Gulliver's Travels". While leaving the Houyhnhnms, Gulliver says that he "took a second leave of my master, but as I was going to prostrate myself to kiss his hoof, he did me the honor to raise it gently to my mouth." (Swift) Swift's brilliant genius of satire could really have not been understood by ordinary uneducated people, especially the section on the Houyhnhnms. Many people did not understand that the writer was transforming what seemed to be a virtue into vivid vice. Later,

Gulliver idealizes horses, as they are the embodiment of pure reason. First, it seems that this is what Swift means: they are ideal as all humans have to be, until the author exposes their real nature: these creatures are dull, ignorant and unfeeling; they do not feel pleasure from sex; they know no melancholy, sadness or joy. This idea of ideal creatures is not occasional. Swift used satire as a tool for communicating with his reader for more than twenty five years. He was disappointed in life and expressed his complains in satirical form in order to defense from his enemies and against the whole humankind. In the last adventure of Gulliver Swift expressed his attitude to the concept of ideal: he placed the main character between two symbols – of gross sensuality and sterile reason. To Swift, a man was a creature who has both beginnings in himself: sense and nonsense, and there is always a fight between what a person is and what he is able to do.

Swift was definitely not the optimist of his time. In contrast with great majority of his contemporaries, who believed that science was the mankind's triumph, Swift's attitude to these ideas was very critical. He considered that science, as well as reason, needed restrictions and limits and also a good measure of humanism. He mocked absolute devotion to everything, but especially to science. Being a man of high moral principles, Swift was shocked but his contemporaries' philosophy of overindulgence. Thus, scientists from Laputa and Houyhnhnms became the symbols of the very bottom to which science and reason were carried down. With his " Gulliver's Travels" Swift tried to give people new moral standards and to show that politics and science can have dirty games of their own.

" Candide" by Voltaire is a satiric tale that mocks the general optimism

brought by the philosophers and scientists of the Enlightenment era. Just as Gulliver, Candide travels and clings to his tutor's teaching. He believes Pangloss' idea that " all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds."

(Voltaire) " Candide" tell a reader about numerous adventures of a young man, during which he sees suffering, hardships and comprehends that life is not the same as he had in his little sheltered and safe paradise.

Candide is the embodiment of Voltaire's attitude to all the optimists of the Enlightenment era whose believes he considered to be absurd. The writer totally refuses to believe that everything that happens is for the best.

Throughout the whole novel Voltaire attacks the idea that things are for " the best of all possible worlds". (Voltaire) This creates a satiric contrast to natural disaster and people's mistakes. When Candide reunites with blinded Pangloss he asks if everything that happens wrong is devil's fault. Pangloss' answer is simple: " the disease was a necessity in 'the best of all possible worlds', for it was brought to Europe by Columbus' men, who also brought chocolate and cochineal, two greater goods that well offset any negative effects of the disease". (Voltaire)

Voltaire satirizes all kind of organized religion in " Candide". That particular criticism is closely connected to his optimism satire. The majority of religions state that everything happens according to God's will, and that he has his own purpose for the things to happen. However, during his travels Candide sees so much sufferings and grief that it is impossible to believe that all those disasters happen to people on God's will. On the opposite, Candide realizes that God cannot allow that to happen, so he does not exist at all. This religious satire of Voltaire also mocks hypocrisy and foolishness of

religious officials: thus, a Jew buys himself a sex slave, a monk goes to a prostitute, a friar steals.

As well as Swift, Voltaire mocks political situation. Satire in “Candide” helps a reader to see all the inconsistencies in policy and also two-facedness of people in government. Governors have long and dominant names, multiple titles that show their pride and vanity. However, that are shallow, mean and unworthy, as people’s sufferings do not touch the governors. This idea is illustrated in Candide’s dialogue with Martin, as they discuss who is more miserable: “I can only hope presume that there are millions of people on this earth who are many times more to be pitied than King Charles Edward, or Emperor Ivan, or Sultan Achmed.” (Voltaire)

Apart from religion and politics, Voltaire also mocks any kind of formal social system. He satirizes the aristocracy using numerous titles and rich physical descriptions. In the satire of the Baron of Westphalia Voltaire uses understatement: “The Baron was one of the most powerful lords in Westphalia, for his castle had not only a gate, but windows.” (Voltaire) All in all, throughout the whole story Voltaire uses the contrast between luxurious aristocratic life and the sufferings of poor people in order to satirize all the downsides of the optimistic attitude of his contemporaries.

Works cited:

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