Project 3

Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope, two famous figures in the 18th century, used satire to not only entertain but to also critique their time's social norms. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and "A Modest Proposal", as well as Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, give insights into social issues common in 18th-century England. They use satire to show the nonsense and loss of morality in politics and society. This prompts readers to think about the need for a change in society and a reevaluation of standards.

In Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the story unfolds as a subtle study of human stupidity. He uses exaggeration and extremism as a method of conveying satire. Mocking blind devotion, he provides many examples of that in the fourth book. The Houyhnhnms are the ideal beings, embodying purity and representing a higher intellectual form. As Gulliver bows down to them, Swift says 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, p. 445) Another example is the Lilliputians' egg-cracking ceremony. This quote underscores Swift's exaggerated writing style and his mockery of higher power. Swift criticizes the pointlessness of politics in modern society using Lilliputian politics and the absurdity of their war as a means to tell the readers of the world they are trapped in.

Another instance is Gulliver's journey to other lands, like the floating island of Laputa. The trip shows the detachment of the ruling class from the utilitarian needs of society. Swift latches onto this theme throughout Gulliver's journey, using satire to expose the ruling class. He uses Laputa and its inhabitants as symbols. The Laputians' fixation with theoretical studies, while neglecting practical and useful uses, comment on the detachment of the smart and the rich from the real world and the absurdity of their pursuits. Swift ridicules the impracticality of experiments on Laputa, highlighting the inhabitants' obliviousness and refusal to better society. This detachment is captured in Swift's metaphor of "floating intellectuals," proving the separation between the ruling elite and pressing, real-world issues. Through this lens, Swift prompts readers to consider the absurdity of a detached ruling class, emphasizing the consequences of goals that go against the needs of the people.

In Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal," there is a dark turn in the narrative that confronts the reality of Ireland's poverty. Swift writes about an idea laced with satire. He suggests selling children to the meat market as a source of income. This story talks about the

dehumanizing effects of the economy and how the ruling class does not care what happens as long as they come out on top. This proposal, while being very disturbing, serves as a metaphor through which Swift shows the severity of Ireland's economy. The very notion of proposing such a morally wrong solution becomes a stark contrast to what the world wants one to see. The idea of this satire is to break the vision and prove the indifference that the ruling class has toward the suffering. Swift's intention is not to advocate for such a horrendous act but rather to shake society into recognizing the inhumanity of the current existing economy. As well as the urgent need for social and economic reformation. Through this satirical masterpiece, Swift forces the readers to confront the harsh reality of poverty and the injustices committed by those in power.

Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is a distinct poem that is filled with satire to the brim. Pope's story is a witty critique of the frivolous nature of aristocrats, believing that they can and will get anything in life. The poem is written as a mock-heroic epic and serves as a bite in the butt to the upper class's tendency for petty problems. The entire absurd situation revolved around a single lock of hair. Pope enjoys using dramatic language to emphasize the significance of this rather small issue. The line, "The adventurous Baron the bright locks admired" (Pope, p. 512, line 29), shows the upper class' misplaced priorities as he focuses all his attention on the lock of hair. This criticizes the shallowness of 18th-century aristocrats. Pope used satire not only to entertain but also to verbally attack the aristocrats and point out the ridiculousness of their issues.

Swift and Pope were two very important literary figures in their lifetimes. Though they focused on different social aspects, they both wielded satire as a tool to fight against the moral and social decay of 18th-century England. Swift's approach used the idea of travel as a new perspective. It examined diverse societies that symbolize the many different parts of human error. For example, the journey to Lilliput laughs at the many politics there, as seen in the meticulous egg-cracking ceremony. In contrast, Pope targets the aristocrats, using humor and irony to expose the distorted values of the upper class. The stolen lock of hair becomes a symbol, underscoring the misguidedness of their pursuits. In essence, both Swift and Pope critique society and politics, using satire as a powerful medium to spotlight the flaws in 18th-century England.

Swift and Pope use satire to offer a view of 18th-century England in their writings. Swift examines social foolishness using the disguise of a story. Whereas Pope pokes fun at the aristocracy's shallowness. Alongside individual criticism, the satire offers a wider view of human nature and society as a whole. In conclusion, Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope wittily used satire to their advantage in their works to criticize and poke at the social norms of the 18th century. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and "A Modest Proposal" laid bare the absurdities of politics, society, and human nature, while Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* showcased the meaningless concerns of the aristocracy. Through the powerful medium of satire, these authors hooked readers while leaving an incredible mark on the history of satirical literature.

Sources:

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