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Satire in Swift and Voltaire: Towards a Humanist Dialectic

الهجاء في أعمال سويف وفولتير: نحو جدلية إنسانوية

Ola Kittaneh[1,*] & Fuad Muttaleb[2]

علا كتانة[1،*]، وفؤاد عبد المطلب[2]

[1]Department of English Language, Arab Open University, Jordan.
[2]Department of English Language, Faculty of Arts, Jerash University, Jordan

[1]قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، الجامعة العربية المفتوحة، الأردن.
[2]قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة جرش، الأردن

*Corresponding author: o_kittanah@aou.edu.jo

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Abstract

This article examines how the Enlightenment writers Jonathan Swift and Voltaire's attitudes and works resonate with our modern writers' concepts on the role of the humanist intellectual. Informed by Edward Said's recent theoretical concepts on the humanist intellectual, the article compares the way the two writers use the power of satire to achieve a humanist end that focuses on the pitfalls of identitarian thinking which often leads to national or religious fanaticism. There is certainly a need for Swift and Voltaire to be repositioned in relation with the broad contours of modern writers' notions of the intellectual. By reading the two writers contrapuntally, this article shows that Swift's criticism functions in a humanist and oppositional way to all forms of hegemonic and national entities, while Voltaire's criticism may be described as functioning in a semi-humanist way as its ultimate aim is to consolidate European prejudices. This is achieved by examining Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*

(1726) and 'A Modest Proposal' (1729), as well as Voltaire's *Zadig* (1748) and *Candide* (1759). The method followed in this study can be described as descriptive and analytical using the aforementioned titles as primary sources and the critical literature produced on them as secondary.

Keywords: Colonial Discourse, Exile, Humanism, Satire, Secular Criticism, Swift, Voltaire.

ملخص

تبحث هذه المقالة في كيفية توافق أعمال كتّاب عصر التنوير جوناثان سويفت وفولتير مع مفاهيم كتّابنا المعاصرين حول دور المثقف الإنسانوي. بناءً على المفاهيم النظرية الحديثة للمفكر إدوارد سعيد عن المثقف الإنسانوي، يقارن المقال الطريقة التي يستخدم بها الكاتبان قوة الهجاء لتحقيق هدف إنساني يركز على مآزق التفكير المتعلق بالهوية الذي غالبًا ما يؤدي إلى التعصب القومي أو الديني، ومن المؤكد أن هناك حاجة لإعادة تحليل اعمال سويفت وفولتير فيما يتعلق بالخطوط العريضة لمفاهيم الكتّاب المعاصرين حول دور المفكر. بينما يعمل نقد سويفت بطريقة انسانوية ومعارضة لجميع أشكال الكيانات المهيمنة، يمكن وصف موقف فولتير بأنه يعمل بطريقة شبه إنسانوية حيث أن هدفه النهائي هو دعم التحيزات الأوروبية. يتم تحقيق ذلك، من خلال تحليل أعمال ادبية مثل رحلات جاليفر (1726)، و"اقتراح متواضع" (1729) للكاتب سويفت، بالإضافة إلى زاديج (1748) وكانديد (1759) للكاتب فولتير. أما الطريقة المتبعة في هذه الدراسة فهي وصفية وتحليلية باستخدام نصوص العناوين المذكورة أعلاه كمصادر أولية، والأدبيات النقدية المنتجة عنها كمصادر ثانوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب الاستعماري، المنفى، الانسانوية، الهجاء، النقد العلماني سويفت، فولتير.

Introduction

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment marked the beginning of the modern age, when the scientific method and belief in reason came to hold sway over the Western world. This crucial development in science, as Everett Zimmerman (1983) discusses, resulted in an epistemological shift that glorified reason and gave rise to new forms of discourses that influenced the growth of several literary genres such as travel writing and political pamphlets. These genres possessed particular codes, giving the impression of facticity and authenticity through the use of empirical objectivity and scientific method (p. 141). It is these discourses of fact that the Enlightenment writers Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) and Voltaire (1694-

1778) engage with in their satires. Swift in *Gulliver's Travels* and 'A Modest Proposal', as well as Voltaire in *Candide* and *Zadig*, use some of the newly created methods for writing factually that appeared in the travel writing and political pamphlets, combining them with the mode of satire to comment metaphorically on society.

Swift and Voltaire struggled to proffer their oppositional ideas during a time marked by censorship. Because of the repressive system, they used the mode of satire to motivate readers' need for the stability of fact by exposing corruption, destroying the illusion, and most importantly, waking readers from their complacency and indifference. The roots of satire go far back to classical antiquity. It has had a place in attacking the dominant power of its day. Satire, as Arthur Applebee (1997) clarifies, started by the ancient Greeks but came into its own in ancient Rome where the 'fathers' of satire Horace and Juvenal had their names given to the two basic modes of satire. While Horatian satire is "playfully amusing", seeking to make change gently, Juvenalian one is often bitter, criticizing corruption with scorn and outrage (p. 584).

So, what kind of literary form is satire then? Satire's ambiguous status as a genre suggests some of difficulty in defining it. In view of this, Kathryn Hume (2007) recommends to "conceptualize satire and the satiric as a family defined by a bundle of features. No single feature needs to be present, just a substantial number of them" (p. 305). Such a policy allows a flexible treatment with a variety of satirical works. Literary scholars, including Hume, observe that satire seeks to make its criticism funny by employing a number of elements: attack, humor or wit which modifies the attack, self-display, exaggeration, moral or existential truth which is twisted or distorted, mockery or ironic disparagement, inquiry, a moral ideal, and a reformative aim (p. 305). Yet, though it is pretty a difficult task to give a precise definition of satire, Jonathan Greenberg points out in *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire* (2008) that:

In satire, evil, folly, and weakness are held up to ridicule – to the delight of some and the outrage of others. Satire may claim the higher purpose of social critique or moral reform, or it may simply revel in its

own transgressive laughter. It exposes frauds, debunks ideas, binds communities, starts arguments, and evokes unconscious fantasies. (p. 3)

As such, satire is a mode of writing that attacks something which is feared or disliked. It seeks to make its criticism funny and does so by employing a number of elements such as wit, humor, irony, exaggeration, and fantasy. Despite the humor, however, the moral purpose of satire remains primary. And because satire's principal purpose is seen as one of moral judgment or attack, the humor most closely affiliated with satire is that which Sigmund Freud calls "tendentious" humor: the targeted laughter of ridicule and mockery. Under the guise of a joke, Freud discusses, the idea is presented as if it is not serious: it is 'just a joke' (1991, p. 30). In this sense, the satirist wishes "to arouse [readers'] energy to action, not purge it in vicarious experience" (Quintero, 2008, p. 30).

The world we are living in today is largely a product of western humanism which mainly flourished in the Enlightenment. Western humanism, as Lidan Lin discusses (1997, p. 135), has identified itself as the struggle to place man at the center of the universe, and to defend the individual against any force whether theological, social, or cultural by means of rational thinking. The principles of religious tolerance, skepticism, criticism, and rational thinking are often thought to be a powerful legacy of the Enlightenment. Yet, it has been blamed for various kinds of catastrophes. It has been argued that despite its effort to free human beings from myth, it has actually led them back to it in a world where people embrace a fascist ideology, practice deliberate genocide, and develop weapons of mass destruction (Adorno & Max, 2002, pp. 70-73). While some have insisted that such humanism is responsible for the covert and sinister forms of power, surveillance, and domination (Foucault, 1984, p. 388), others have implicated it in European imperialism, hostility towards the *other*s and the most aggressive aspects of capitalism (Lin, p. 133). The critic Lin elaborates the latter critique further, arguing that "in limitlessly inflating the ego and inciting its desire for freedom, these thinkers (humanist thinkers) have neglected the subjectness of the other and have said relatively little about its ego, desire, and freedom" (p. 134).

Despite the multitude of accusations have leveled against it, humanism is still valuable for the prominent modern thinker Edward Said who never fails to admit its capacity to recapture the lost ideals of truth and reason. In other words, Eurocentrism, the white man's burden, and a whole series of man-made calamities are part of humanist history; and yet, Said believes (2004) "that it is possible to be critical of humanism in the name of humanism" (p. 10). He does not tackle the subject of humanism for the sake of producing a history of humanism. What concerns Said is humanism "as a useable praxis for intellectuals and academics who want to know what they are doing, what they are committed to as scholars, and who want also to connect these principles to the world in which they live as citizens" (p. 6).

Said's main thread insists that "secular criticism", "exilic consciousness" and "worldliness" are the very conditions of possibility for a new "Humanism" that would empower intellectuals towards formulating just resolutions against inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history. Unlike the "specialist" who promotes the ossification of ideas and cliché, Said's humanist intellectual has "a critical consciousness", resists fitting into any particular tradition of thought, and cannot be tamed, governed, bought or guided by nationality, state of power, or special interests. In his influential essay 'Secular Criticism', which opens *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), Said presents the following argument:

But on the important matter of a critical position, its relationship to Marxism, liberalism, even anarchism, it needs to be said that criticism modified in advance by labels like "Marxism" or "liberalism" is, in my view, an oxymoron. The history of thought, to say nothing of political movements, is extravagantly illustrative of how the dictum "solidarity before criticism," means the end of criticism. (p. 28)

As such, the proper role of a humanist intellectual is not to become immured in doctrine, and not to adhere to party discipline but to remain forever skeptical of orthodoxy. Criticism, for Said, has to be secular, not religious.

Said considers the intellectual's identity as a materially located text in this world. This worldliness is reflected in the form of representing the voices of the deprived and oppressed people all over the world regardless of religious or national filiations. Unlike the disinterestedness of the traditional humanist who is complicit with the identity of the local, Saidian humanist is identified by an ambulant exilic consciousness. In his book, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004)), Said asserts with great energy:

It is especially appropriate for the contemporary humanist to cultivate that sense of multiple worlds and complex interacting traditions, that inevitable combination...of belonging and detachment, reception and resistance. The task of the humanist is not just to occupy a position or place, not simply to belong somewhere, but rather to be both insider and outsider to the circulating ideas and values that are at issue in our society or someone else's society or the society of the other. (p. 76)

In this sense, Said's humanism helps to act in the determinate world of representation that is in and out of it. He uses the term "humanism" as an inclusive umbrella rubric to cover the local and the remote, the past, and the present and the dominant, and the subaltern. Such criticism functions in an ethical way as its ultimate aim is to take the side of the oppressed peoples all over the world.

In the same way, the oppositional intellectual, as Said insists, experiences the world from the standpoint of an exile. For him, exile is the condition through which one can truly understand humanity. In his book *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), Said states: "exile for the intellectual in this metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and, alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation" (p. 39). This feeling of restlessness is the definition of the intellectual who lives in either physical or metaphorical exile. However, the intellectual's obligatory physical exile intensifies the anger which in turn deepens the defiance in the intellectual's works and attitudes. This sense of restlessness

enables and empowers the intellectual to make history anew by engendering and embracing new models of thought and maps of existence.

Drawing upon Edward Said's theoretical concepts on the role of the humanist intellectual in *Representation of the intellectual* (1994) and *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004), the article compares the way Swift and Voltaire use the power of satire to achieve a humanist end with penetrative insight. The method followed in this study can be described critically as descriptive and analytical using the aforementioned titles as primary sources and the critical literature produced on them as secondary. The study conducts mainly a comparative literary study. It thus explores the connections of literature with history, philosophy, politics, and literary theory. Comparative literature is, as Henry Remak clarifies, "the comparison of one literature with another, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression" (1961, p. 3).

Swift: The Humanist

Swift, the Anglo-Irish writer and Anglican Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, is one of the greatest masters of satire. As a public intellectual, Swift took it upon himself to adopt the role of the humanist critic. Swift's works are certainly much more than satiric books; rather, they are a kind of satiric exhibit of "savage indignation," (in Quintero, 2008, p. 263) to quote Swift on himself, against all forms of deviant authority.

One characteristic of satire is that it is often created within a specific historical context. It makes reference to the real world and speaks about specific individuals and situations (Quintero, 2008, p. 198). Swift in his satires intends to provide a historical context "to set future ages right in their judgment" about historical facts of their past (Fox, 1989, p. 350). His masterpiece of satire 'A Modest Proposal' is among the prominent political pamphlets in the English language in which Swift attacks the English rule and exploitation of Ireland in the eighteenth century. As Ruben Quintero (2008) clarifies, it was written in a time when the Irish were subjects of a political discourse in which they were systematically reduced to sub-human and savage status (p. 199). In the *Proposal,* Swift

reveals his oppositional position toward Britain's tyrannical exploitation of Ireland which entails poverty and suffering for the Irish. The writer's ultimate goal is to help the oppressed people regardless of national or religious filiation. The speaker who seems interested in progress, carries out a demographic and economic study, and after systematic analysis and calculation, offers a shocking and baffling solution to the effects of poverty and its consequent disease and starvation in Ireland, namely, eating the Irish infants as a remedy for poverty and hunger to improve the economy and reduce the population. This suggestion is not intended to be taken seriously of course, but to demonstrate that by reducing humanity to statistics, and morality to rationality, amoral acts can be justified. The satire provides enough clues to its complex combination of ironic statements that a reader can grasp the intended meaning. For example, one of the surprising aspects of the *Proposal* is the way in which the speaker unemotionally counts the number of Irish populations to estimate the number of wives who ''are breeders'' and so to figure the number of infants who will be available for his plan (Swift, 2008, p. 6). This focus on the numbers diverts the reader from noticing the extent to which any recognizable idea of morality is absent from the speaker's argument. Swift, in the essay, criticizes the veneration of reason which is used as a mere tool for achieving ends without questioning the justifiability of the ends themselves. Such veneration centrally occupies the Enlightenment mind. Swift constructs a political pamphlet that is fantastical in its creativity, and outrageousness. However, the purpose of this satire is to deliver a very pointed commentary of particular realities, facts, and truths beyond fiction. This is intrinsic to all satires, but "A Modest Proposal" provides an excellent demonstration of this paradoxical dynamic of truth and untruth as it tells truths about reality by a radically literary means.

By employing the weapon of satire, swift attempts to persuade the English to deal with the Irish as concrete and living human beings. Accordingly, his attitude is congruent with Said's strong humanist appeal to sympathize with the *other*, which means, as Said puts it, "to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others [rather] than only about us" and to avoid "trying to rule others […] trying to put them

into hierarchies" (1993a, p. 336). Swift uses the mode of satire to provoke a darker kind of laughter. For Swift:

The successful satiric attack would make others uneasy, anxious, on edge, and would vex the world. The satirist's job is to peel away and expose unpleasant truths […] to wound with words […] But how much more terrifying is it to imagine an attacker who does not face us directly, who is privy to our secret weaknesses or misdeeds, and who is concealing the precise mode, timing, and full significance of the eventual onslaught on those vulnerabilities? (Quintero, p. 574)

This satirical work reflects the spirit of Swiftian oppositional stance that exposes unpleasant truths and works against grave injustices in the world regardless of national filiations. Unlike traditional enlightenment writers, Swift upholds a new humanism that works against the pitfalls of identitarian thinking which leads to national and religious fanaticism.

Though Irish by birth and education, Swift considered his residence in Ireland a form of exile. His anger, which is intensified by his physical exile, is not directed at England but at certain corrupted institutions that thwarted his efforts to civilize the "savages" in his country. The concept of exile is of great importance in Said's accounts of the intellectual. In his article, 'Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginal' (1993b), Said throws light on the way Swift's literal and metaphorical exile deepens the defiance in his attitudes which in turn empowers him to engender creative resistance. He points out "Jonathan Swift, who […] spent the rest of his life as an exile in Ireland. An almost legendary figure of bitterness and anger—savage indignation he said of himself in his own epitaph—Swift was furious at Ireland, and yet its defender against British tyranny" (p. 374). For Said, Swift's sense of exile, of living between different realities, fuels his "savage indignation" toward any hegemonic system that claims the truth. Being contented would have softened Swift's impetus to be a passionate champion of the rights of the Irish, and would impede him from producing his counter-narratives and dissent satires. Swift thus can be linked with Saidian humanist secular critic who has a critical consciousness, resists fitting into any particular tradition of thought, and

cannot be tamed, bought, or guided by nationality, state of power, or special interests.

As a satirist, Swift ridicules any hegemonic systems or worthless conventions that assume they have the answer, and challenges the roots of the conventions themselves to illuminate their inadequacy. He constantly sets theory against practice to show its worthlessness. In the third voyage of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Swift ridicules the veneration of science in the eighteenth century by critiquing its absurdity. The world of Laputa incorporates abnormal habits and customs, because every aspect of their life is based on futile scientific theories. A clear example is when Gulliver is invited to dine in the king's palace in which he observes that the Laputans cut food into standardized mathematical figures:

Shoulder of Mutton, cut into an Æquilateral Triangle; a Piece of Beef into a Rhomboides; and a Pudding into a Cycloid. The second Course was two Ducks, trussed up into the Form of Fiddles; Sausages and Puddings resembling Flutes and Haut-boys, and a Breast of Veal in the Shape of a Harp. The Servants cut our Bread into Cones, Cylinders, Parallelograms, and several other Mathematical Figures. (Swift, Rawson, & Higgins, 2005, p. 148)

Swift here sets theory against the practice to show its inadequacy. He uses irony and exaggeration to ridicule the use of impractical science which distracts humans from other important concerns. Another sharp example that reflects the same perspective on science when the scientists of the Grand Academy of Lagado attempt to extract "sunbeams out of cucumbers" and turn "human Excrement" back into food (p. 167). However, the attack of science is delivered indirectly and modified by Swift's employment of humor, wit, and fantasy which are the satire's requirements.

Besides attacking the veneration of science, *Gulliver's Travels* is a satire on pedantry and abuses of learning which seems to be one characteristic of Swift's literary topics. He writes that there is a pedantry in learning and that pedantry "is properly the over-rating any kind of knowledge we pretend to" (in Kerby-Miller, 1950, p. 268). For Swift,

pedantry amounts to lack of real learning. In another chapter in *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift satirizes the dogmatic forms of English learning that has the power to maintain a study course for making military missiles and weapons to serve England's colonial occupation of other countries by arguing:

To show the miserable Effects of a confined Education. […] I told him [the king] of an Invention discovered … to make a certain Powder; into a heap of which the smallest Spark of Fire falling, would kindle the whole in a Moment, although it were as big as a Mountain; […] That, the largest Balls thus discharged, would not only Destroy whole Ranks of an Army at once; but better the strongest Walls to the Ground; sink down Ships with a Thousand Men in each, to the Bottom of the Sea; and when linked together by a Chain, would cut through Masts and Rigging; divide Hundreds of Bodies in the Middle, and lay all Waste before them. (Swift, Rawson, & Higgins, 2005, pp. 122-123)

As it is clear, the tone is harsh and the judgment is angry. It reflects Swift's criticism of the abuses of learning which has led to produce a military weapon used in a non-humanist way. The satire has the power to debunk intellectual pretension and political hegemony by ridiculing spurious reasoning and exposing accepted ideas as unjust and absurd.

Voltaire: The Traditional Enlightenment Intellectual

Voltaire was in trouble for writing satires against the absolutist monarchy of his own day where the king had unquestioned supreme authority and had to flee to England to stay in exile (Fraser, 2012, p. 198). Voltaire's most popular work *Candide* is a philosophical, social, and political satire. It offers a satire of Leibnizian Optimism, which is considered by Voltaire a cruel philosophy used by the powerful as a tool to keep people in awe. Pangloss, Candide's tutor, becomes more and more ridiculous as he insists on his optimism despite an improbable sequence of catastrophes. For Voltaire, to be always an Optimist necessarily entails accepting corruption. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, the philosopher who reasons the creeds of Optimism thinks that it is not in God's power to create a perfect world, but among possible worlds, He creates the best.

Since God is both omniscient and omnipotent and since He wishes that his creatures should be happy and content, nasty things that happen to them could be part of the grand universal plan (Beeson, 2009, p. 53), a creed which Voltaire constantly mocks in the course of *Candide* with the expressions "of all possible of all possible castles" (Voltaire, 2006, p. 6) or "of all possible baronesses" (p. 4). Voltaire deliberately ridicules this vision in the oversimplification of Pangloss's deduction "the more individual misfortunes there are, the more all is well" (p. 12). On his quest for wisdom, traveling from Westphalia via Portugal to Paraguay to Turky and then back again to Europe, Candide, the naïve protagonist, suffers repeated rapes, torture, beatings even murders. Despite the catastrophic quality of his experiences, he maintains a positive attitude. But ultimately, on his way back from Eldorado, he changes his mind when he encounters a black slave lying on the ground, missing his left leg and his right hand:

My God!' said Candide in Dutch. 'What are you doing lying here, my friend, and in this dreadful state?' — I'm waiting for my master, […] replied the Negro. — 'And" "is it Mr. Van der Hartbargin,' said Candide, 'who has treated you like this?' — 'Yes, sir,' said the Negro, 'it is the custom. We are given one pair of short denim breeches twice a year, and that's all we have to wear. When we're working at the sugar-mill and catch our finger in the grinding-wheel, they cut off our hand. When we cry to run away, they cut off a leg. I have been in both of these situations. This is the price you pay for the sugar you eat in Europe. (p. 48)

In an attempt to make the world better, Voltaire, satirically, denounces humankind's capacity for cruelty and injustice by offering the worst example of man's inhumanity to man. The horrors of reality help to refute Pangloss's reasoning and convince Candide that Pangloss's creeds, like any philosophy that deals with metaphysical rather than practical reality is inadequate. The tone of the satire is harsh, the judgment is angry and the comedy is big, cruel, and crude. Consequently, the satirical structure of *Candide* suggests that Voltaire can be linked with Saidian humanist intellectual who denounces corruption, defends the weak and more importantly, motivates the reader to become a satirist, one who casts off masks and sees things as they really are. However, the univocal reading of

Voltaire's satires might conceal the presence of imperialism in this canonical text.

Although he appears as a humanist intellectual who condemns slavery and colonial exploitation, Voltaire might be seen as hostile to the Orient, and thereby his stance as intellectual may be described as functioning in a semi-humanist way. In *Candide*, despite his condemnation of slavery and colonial expansion, Voltaire is accused of making fortune out of the slave trade and colonial exploitation (Wootton, 2000, p. xlii). His sympathy with the pitting spectacle of the black slave who missed his left leg and his right hand is not because he is a slave, but because the slave has been harshly tortured by his master. Such an idea is elaborated by Nicholas Cronk who goes on to add that Voltaire's "views about race, deserve more study [as] he insists on the irreducible differences between races" (2009, p. 7). As such, Voltaire's attitudes towards the liberal principles of equality and justice are contested and ambiguous.

In *Candide* and *Zadig*, the East is a world of chaos without moral norms or scientific reason. Unlike Swift who repeatedly levels scathing criticisms on the reason upheld by many of his contemporaries and ridicules the veneration of impractical science, Voltaire encouraged science and writes essays lauding the contributions of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton, who are viewed as the precursors to the rise of Enlightenment thought. As David Beeson discusses, Voltaire's period witnessed the beginnings of the scientific revolution initiated by Newton's work. He himself played a vital role in spreading scientific knowledge in Europe, and even tried to become a scientist (2009, p. 48). In view of this, considering the Enlightenment definition of reason as a quality that was developed through a scientific method, oriental cultures were not considered reasonable. As Richard Butterwick concludes, the main body of Enlightenment treatises and essays were concerned with correcting backwardness and guarding against ignorance, the enemies of reason (2008, p. 8). Civilized individuals are judged according to the worth of their ideas and knowledge, and those outside the European model of civilization were judged by an entirely different set of criteria. Therefore, Voltaire's reason dictates a new dogmatism.

Because of the contradictory nature of his attitudes, Voltaire's satires must be read "contrapuntally" to illuminate this contradiction. Said's most innovative contribution to identifying the nature of the imperial project is his formulation of a mode of reading that he terms 'contrapuntal'. We read a text contrapuntally, as Said discusses, "when we read it with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England" (1993a, p. 78). In this sense, it is a technique by which a counterpoint is established between the imperial narrative and the post-colonial perspective, a "counter-narrative" that keeps penetrating beneath the surface of Western texts to elaborate the pervasive presence of imperialism in Western culture.

Throughout the eighteenth century, there was a widespread interest in the East and much of the scholarly attention was devoted to the European re-discovery of the East, a re-discovery that took many forms, from travelers' accounts to serious academic studies of Eastern religions and cultures, and was paralleled in literature, in both England and France, by the taste for Oriental tales (Frances, 1991, p. 175). As Said points out in his *Orientalism* (1978), these accounts were diverse, but stories that told of encounters with Eastern people emphasized stark differences in appearance, beliefs, and practices. In order to legitimize imperialism, Western institutions construct a static, devious, passive, and inscrutable Orient. This construction is premised upon the difference between the Occident and the Orient. It is through this process of 'othering' that the Occident is able to "Orientalize" the East. Such construction has a political dimension and is clearly exemplified in imperialism. By means of this discourse, the West is able to create those of the "Orientals", whose sharp difference from the Occident helps creat that binary opposition by which Europe's own identity can be established (p. 3-5). As such, Said's *Orientalism* manifests a whole cultural story, that of Europe's will-to-power over the *other*.

Placing Voltaire in this historical context empowers the reader to perceive the ways in which aesthetic production had to meet the political and colonial demands of the time. Voltaire's both satires *Candide* (1759)

and *Zadig* (1748) take place in the eighteenth-century Orient. The Orient is present through multiple recurring images: obedience to religious superstition, monarchical absolutism, betrayal and primitivism. In *Candide*, Morroco is a world of chaos without moral norms. Through the old woman's story, for instance, Voltaire satirizes Islam which entails nothing but immorality and savagery. When she was young, the old woman and her mother were captured and raped by brutal Moorish. She narrates:

Morocco was bathed in blood when we arrived. The fifty sons of the emperor Muley-Ismael each had his own followers, which in effect meant fifty civil wars—blacks against browns [...] I was witness to a fight the like of which you in your European climates just never see. The Northern races are simply not hot-blooded enough. They don't have that thirst for women that they have in Africa. It's as if you Europeans had milk in your veins, whereas it is vitriol, fire, that flows in the veins of the inhabitants of Mount Atlas. […] A Moor grabbed my mother by the right arm […] In the end I saw all our Italian women and my mother torn apart, […] and never once did they fail to say the five daily prayers ordered by Muhammad. (2006, p. 24)

By thinking of the passage contrapuntally, one can easily notice that the writer contrasts civilized white with savage brown-skinned men. The Orient Muslim, is described perverted, despotic, sensual and aberrant, while the Occident is presented as rational and disciplined. Europeans are described as having "milk" flowing in their veins, while the inhabitants of Mount Atlas have "vitriol, fire" in theirs. In describing European blood as "milk", an image evocative of positive qualities such as wisdom, rationalism, and perfection, Voltaire is creating a hierarchy for the two cultures; that is, this elevation debases Morocco for its incapacity for reason and accordingly, self-rule. Morocco thus needs a wise West to take care of it, to claim sovereignty over its land in order to lead the country into civilization. Moreover, there is a profound irony of Islam which is circulated as savage. Yet, Muslims do not miss the five prayers. By means of this discourse, Voltaire is able to establish the Orient as the antithesis of reason and humanity; with no advantage when compared with the

Occident. Based on Said's *Orientalism*, this way of knowing the *other* effectively demonstrates the link between knowledge and power, for it 'constructs' and dominates Orientals in the process of knowing them. In view of this, Voltaire's stance does not correspond with Said's strong appeal to sympathize with the other, "to think concretely and sympathetically, contrapuntally, about others [rather] than only about us" and to avoid "trying to rule others […] to put them into hierarchies" (1993a, p. 336). Consequently, unlike Said's secular critic whose worldliness is reflected in the form of representing the voices of the deprived peoples all over the world regardless of religious or national filiations, Voltaire's stance may be described as functioning in a semi-humanist way as it may be concluded that it consolidates European imperialist enterprise.

Beside *Candide*, *Zadig* tells tales of power, seduction and betrayal by the exotic Orient. Voltaire's portrayal of the East is fed off ethnic prejudices. He ironically disparages the worlds of Baghdad, Egypt and Arabia Petra which are appeared as absurd. The satire provides enough clues to its complex combination of attack statements that a reader can grasp the intended meaning. For instance, in the court of sultan Moabdar in Baghdad, neither logic nor morality is prevalent where maximal punishments are senselessly imposed (Voltaire, 2006, chapters 1,8,16).

In *Zadig*, Voltaire's oriental female characters such as Semira, Azora and the beauteous Lady Missouf are portrayed as trivial, unfaithful and fickle in attitude: the declaration of Semira that "she had an unconquerable aversion to one-eyed men" (p. 112) despite Zadig's injured eye in the process of defending their love; the frustrated attempt of Zadig's wife Azora to cut off his nose for the sake of her lover (114); the exotic Egyptian wife Lady Missouf who is unfaithful, seductive and fickle in attitude. Zadig entreated Missouf's husband to take some pity and compassion on the Missouf, whom he beats unmerciful (p. 157-158). Voltaire's satirical tale not only repeats the recurring images in Orientalist discourse of Arab women as unfaithful but also as a voiceless group in need of liberation. Women are considered property by the Arab men who surround them, regardless of their social rank. Arbogad, for example, is

not worried or concerned with the women he sells. They are simply commodities from which he makes a profit. He explains to Zadig that "I have taken several Ladies Prisoners in the Course of my Excursions; I keep none of them for my Part; and as to such as more handsome than ordinary, I make the best Market I can of them, without enquiring who they are" (p. 148).

Ironically, however, the same sense of inferiority keeps plaguing Zadig himself whose image as a virtuous philosopher is seriously damaged. Despite his sharp deductive power and incisive moral insight, Zadig is obstructed by his own ego and self-pity. He is also depicted as obedient to traditions such as that of flattering royalty. The process of recycling these views throughout *Zadig* constructs Voltaire's prejudiced accounts of Arab people in persistent stereotypes.

By repeating and emphasizing the recurring images in his literary discourse, Voltaire creates the image of the Orient as inferior to justify domination. Such abuse committed in the name of humanism is anchored in the traditional dominant discourse of the West in the Enlightenment era. If regarded from this angle, Voltaire's views are not compatible with Said's secular criticism. Secular criticism, for Said, is a need for the intellectual's actual or metaphoric exile from 'home'; a criticism that is freed from the restrictions of intellectual specialization, and advocacy of what Said calls "amateurism" in intellectual life. Unlike professionalism which would force an intellectual to be disinterested in political intervention and kills one's sense of excitement and discovery, amateurism connects the intellectual with his worldly vocation. This worldliness, of the writer's own position in the world, enables the intellectual to "speak truth to power" (1994, p. xvi).

Conclusion

This study has provided a thorough and critical analysis of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and 'A Modest Proposal', as well as Voltaire's *Zadig* and *Candide*. Drawing upon Edward Said's recent theoretical concepts on the humanist intellectual, it compares the way Swift and Voltaire use the power of satire to achieve a humanist end. The study has concluded that

unlike Swift whose criticism functions in a humanist and oppositional way to all forms of hegemonic and national entities, Voltaire's criticism may be described as functioning in a semi-humanist way as its ultimate aim is to support his European biases.

Swift, on the one hand, occupies an exilic space, nourishes secular prospective, and develops a worldly attitude. The interrelation between these three notions empowers the writer to adopt a perpetual humanism that works against the pitfalls of identitarian thinking which often leads to national and religious enthusiasm. Swift's criticism involves a radically subversive political and social act rather than a simple recuperative endeavor. He bitterly indicts colonialism, and the general European convictions about cultural supremacy.

On the other hand, Voltaire's humanist position is contested. The study has illustrated that Voltaire's textual and imaginative representations of the Orient, whether consciously or unconsciously, consolidated imperial authority. It has further explained that although Voltaire's satires seem to show a sympathetic attitude towards the East, he does not seriously question the legitimacy of European imperialism. As a satirist, he portrays himself as the only voice of truth, the defender of justice, a moral man disgusted by the corruption and loss of morality that surrounds him, who is compelled to write satirically to denounce the chaos of the world which is inhabited by individuals identified by corruption and depravity. Nonetheless, the situation, in reality, is far more complicated than these idealizations suggest. He sees justice nowhere comprehensively embraced in either theory or practice; and where it gained ground, it is partial, and fragile.

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